

7. Retailing

Local Plan Aim

To foster a sustainable pattern of retail provision that meets the needs of, and is accessible to, the whole community.

Key Objectives

1. To meet the demand for new shopping facilities within the Borough in locations which reduce the need to travel and are accessible by foot, cycle and public transport.
2. To consolidate and enhance the vitality and viability of Dartford town centre as the Borough's main mixed-use shopping centre.
3. To maintain the role of Bluewater as a regional shopping centre.
4. To safeguard the role of district and local shopping centres in providing convenience shopping and service facilities for local communities.
5. To safeguard the role of rural shops in providing convenience shopping for local communities.

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1. With the exception of Bluewater, the vast majority of comparison floorspace in the Borough is located within Dartford town centre. The remainder is found in the district and local centres, or retail warehouses on the edge of the town centre or within the urban area. Existing convenience goods floorspace is located in either Dartford town centre or the district and local centres. *An upgraded Sainsbury's supermarket has been relocated within the town centre and a new ASDA foodstore has opened at Station Road, Greenhithe.* There are no edge-of-centre or out-of-centre convenience stores in the Borough. *Bluewater regional shopping centre provides a high order retail facility. It complements the retail offer provided by the town and district centres. There is no stand alone foodstore attached to or located within the shopping centre.*

7.2 Policy Context

7.2.1 PPG6 – 'Town Centres and Retail Developments' – recognises that many of the recent retailing trends have had adverse effects upon the health of town centres and that, if they go unchecked, they could lead to the decline of many town centres. Key features of the guidance are:

- an emphasis on a plan-led approach to promoting development in town centres, based on an assessment of need, through general policies and the identification of locations and sites for development;
- emphasis on the sequential approach to selecting sites for all development, including retail; and
- support for local centres as these will help reduce dependence on the car.

7.2.2. Government guidance issued in the form of a Parliamentary Answer in February 1999 states that retail and leisure proposals within an existing centre, or within a local plan allocation, should not be required to demonstrate that they satisfy the test of need, *provided that retail needs have been assessed through the local plan process*, but that elsewhere they should.

7.2.3 PPG13 – 'Transport' - promotes shopping in existing centres which are more likely to offer a choice of access, particularly for those without the use of a private car. *Where there is a clearly established need for retail development and it cannot be accommodated in or on the edge of existing centres, PPG13 states that it may be*

appropriate to combine the proposal with existing out of centre developments, provided that improvements to public transport can be negotiated. Local authorities are encouraged to use new technology to promote urban renaissance and reinforce the role of existing town, district and local centres.

7.2.3a *RPG9 – Regional Planning Guidance for the South East encourages local planning authorities to assess the need for retail development in their area and to identify which town and district centres should be the preferred locations for growth. The guidance advocates that local authorities should avoid extending edge-of-centre and out-of-centre development while more central options exist.*

7.2.4 The Thames Gateway Planning Framework (RPG9a) recognises that, as the economy of Thames Gateway strengthens, there will be new opportunities for retailing. The role of existing centres – as emphasised in PPG6 – together with the need to fashion development patterns that both minimise the need to travel and promote transport choice, suggests that new retail facilities should be located within the communities they will serve.

7.2.5 The retail policies of the 1996 Kent Structure Plan (KSP) reflect the sequential approach set out in PPG6 and require that provision of new retail development should be based on the essential requirements and future trade potential of different sectors of retailing. To guide the Local Plan policy approach the Borough Council employed consultants to assess the demand for, and locational requirements of, the various retail sectors to 2011.

7.3 Background

7.3.1 Over the last 20 years retail floorspace in Dartford town centre has increased by over a quarter (27%). It peaked at 78,000 sq m in 1992, but fell to 74,000 sq m in 1997. Convenience (food) floorspace grew by 14% between 1976 and 1997. Comparison floorspace grew by almost a third over the same period. Since the late 1980's vacancy rates in the town centre have fluctuated between 5% and 7%, similar to neighbouring centres.

7.3.2 The composition of the town centre's shops has changed over the years. This is expected to continue as a consequence of national retailing trends, coupled with the attraction of Lakeside and Bluewater regional shopping centres.

7.3.3 The town centre continues to perform an important convenience-shopping role. *The relocation and upgrading of the Sainsbury's supermarket within the town centre has helped to support and consolidate this important role.* There are no edge-of-centre, out-of-centre or out-of-town convenience stores in the Borough. ~~The relocation and upgrading of the Sainsbury's supermarket within the town centre will help support and consolidate this important role. An ASDA foodstore has been developed at Station Road, Greenhithe and provides retail facilities for the local community.~~

7.3.4 The Bluewater regional shopping centre opened in March 1999 and the planning permission provides for 156,600sqm of retail, leisure and catering facilities. The centre intentionally has no food superstore. Whilst the centre is located on what is presently the southern edge of the urban area north of the A2, it will form an integral part of a new area of major development at Eastern Quarry and Ebbsfleet by 2014 towards the end of the Plan period.

~~7.3.5 In preparing the current Kent Structure Plan in 1994 the County Council undertook an assessment of need for additional retail floorspace up to the year 2001. This indicated that in North Kent prospects would be dominated by Bluewater, which~~

~~would absorb the expenditure growth of North Kent in the short term. Also given the additional competition of the Lakeside centre at Thurrock, there was likely to be very limited potential for new proposals in North Kent. Accordingly, the Structure Plan advocates that such potential as may exist should be channelled to the improvement of existing town centres.~~

- 7.3.6 As part of the Local Plan Review process retail consultants have undertaken an assessment of retail demand in the Borough ~~over the plan period up to 2011.~~
- 7.3.7 ~~There is limited scope — less than 6,000 sq m — for additional comparison goods floorspace to the year 2001, generally confirming the Structure Plan assessment. Beyond 2001 there is likely to be increasing scope for new floorspace. At 2006 this is estimated to be in the order of 17,000 sq m rising to *The consultant's study identifies scope for 27,000 sq m at of additional comparison floorspace to 2011.* This confirms that the centralisation of non food provision within Dartford town centre should be maintained. *An assessment of suitable sites for new retail development that meet the requirements of the sequential approach has been undertaken. This identified two sites: one within the identified town centre at Westgate Road and the other at the north eastern edge of centre (North West Quadrant). Together these sites have capacity to accommodate around 17,000 sq m of the 27,000 sq m identified total need.* Some minor floorspace may be required elsewhere in the Borough to serve the needs of those living in new housing developments, perhaps in the format of further local shops. *In the absence of additional suitable sites within or adjacent to the town centre the Plan makes provision for the remaining 10,000 sq m of the identified comparison floorspace demand to be provided at Bluewater.* The vast majority of the scope for additional floorspace should be concentrated in Dartford town centre in order to strengthen the vitality and viability of this focal point of the Borough's offer.~~
- 7.3.8 'Value' retailing is a major strength of the town centre and the importance of the more mainstream value retailers to Dartford's shoppers is an indication of the way forward for the town centre. This reflects the results of a user survey undertaken in the summer of 1997 by consultants for the Council.
- 7.3.9 Two main options to maintain and improve Dartford town centre's position in the retail hierarchy would be the expansion of non-food retail warehousing or the introduction of a factory outlet centre. The latter suggestion raises particular transport and environmental issues which would require further study to assess the implications.
- 7.3.10 When existing convenience (food) provision and commitments are taken into account there is no further scope *in quantitative terms* for additional convenience provision ~~over the Plan period to 2011~~, although there may be scope for additional floorspace in qualitative terms where this would sustain update or upgrade the centre's convenience offer. The Council's policy is to locate all main food retail provision in-centre. This would not preclude the provision of local shops or small-scale convenience goods stores to serve the needs of new housing developments or at the identified new neighbourhood centres.

7.4 General Retail Development

- 7.4.1 Dartford town centre's catchment has continued to be affected by the influence of Bexleyheath to the west and Gravesend to the east, and ~~more recently in more recent years~~ the Lakeside Regional Shopping Centre and Bluewater. The town centre has undergone substantial change, yet it remains an important focus within

the Borough, providing a good range of shops and services as well as the popular Thursday and Saturday markets.

- 7.4.2 This Plan makes provision for substantial residential and employment development, which will give rise to demand for additional retailing facilities.
- 7.4.3 Dartford town centre and the identified district and local centres provide a range of retail and service, social and community facilities. *A new foodstore and local shopping facilities have been developed at Station Road, Greenhithe to replace and consolidate local shopping facilities lost through new road construction.* New local centres are proposed at the major new mixed-use developments, ~~at Station Road, Greenhithe to replace and consolidate local shopping facilities lost through new road construction,~~ and at Watling Street, Dartford as part of new residential development. These centres will help to provide a range and distribution of retail provision that will help underpin the Plan's sustainable development strategy.
- 7.4.4 ~~Dartford town centre,~~ The proposed new neighbourhood centres at ~~Station Road, Greenhithe and land~~ south of Watling Street, existing district and local centres and the new local centres within the major development sites will be the preferred locations for any retail development (*both convenience and comparison shopping*). Proposals will be expected to widen the range of retail offer available to residents in order to retain a greater share of retail spending within the Borough, and reduce the need for residents to have to travel outside the Borough to satisfy their shopping requirements. ~~The existing and proposed centres are the preferred location for additional new retail floorspace.~~ Westgate Road and, the North West Quadrant *and Bluewater (see policies TC8 & TC9)* will be the preferred locations for ~~the vast majority of comparison retail floorspace only, generated over the Plan in the period to 2011.~~

Convenience Shopping

- 7.5.1 The food stores are the most important anchors in Dartford town centre. This Plan seeks to maintain and enhance the viability and vitality of the town centre and to safeguard the role of district and local centres in providing convenience shopping.
- 7.5.2 In view of the lack of need for new convenience goods floorspace and the important anchor role that convenience shopping performs for the town centre, the general policy approach is to resist any additional convenience floorspace other than that which directly relates to the needs of the residential communities at the major development sites identified in this plan or where it would benefit existing identified centres. New convenience retail floorspace within the defined Dartford town centre will be expected to bring qualitative benefits to the town centre through sustaining, updating, upgrading and promoting its convenience retail offer. Elsewhere new convenience floorspace will only be acceptable in district and local centres where it ~~related to the need of the immediate local community~~ *reflected the scale and function of the centre*, or would sustain, update or upgrade its convenience offer.

7.6 Comparison Shopping

- 7.6.1 Proposals for non-food development outside the defined town centre and the identified ~~edge of centre site at the North West Quadrant~~ *north eastern and southern edges of centre policy areas and at identified allocations* will have to demonstrate that there are no available, suitable or viable sites ~~within the town centre at these~~

~~locations and that there is an identified need for the retail floorspace, and that the proposal will not harm the prospects of bringing about the comprehensive development of the North West Quadrant.~~ The proposals will also need to demonstrate that they will not affect the vitality and viability of existing or proposed centres. The development should also support and underpin the Plan's sustainable development strategy, and not materially affect the amount of land identified for other purposes, such as residential or employment.

~~7.6.2 The retail consultant's assessment of scope for additional non food floorspace over the period to 2011, whilst based upon robust and reasonable assumptions is in reality very likely to need to be updated well before 2011, due to factors such as changes in retailing practices, business innovation as well as the socio-economic characteristics of new residents. The Council considers it prudent for this review of the Local Plan to identify sites to cater for additional non food floorspace to meet locally generated need over the period to 2006. Proposals for additional floorspace above this level will need to demonstrate need.~~

7.6.3 The policy approach to Bluewater is set out in policy R2 below.

R1 Retail Development: Sequential Approach

1. Proposals for retail development (*convenience and comparison goods*) will ~~only~~ be permitted at the following locations:

- ~~a) Dartford town centre;~~
- ~~b) the North West Quadrant;~~
- ~~c) Station Road, Greenhithe;~~
- d) land south of Watling Street *Dartford (proposed new neighbourhood centre)*;
- e) existing district and local centres; or
- f) in new local centres within the major new mixed-use developments.

Retail development will only be permitted at the above centres if it:

- i) sustains or enhances the range or quality of shopping provision and the vitality and viability of the centre; and
- ii) is in keeping with the scale and character of the centre and is of a scale to meet the demand arising from within the catchment.

~~2. Other than at the North West Quadrant, proposals will only be permitted on the edges of Dartford town centre, as defined on the Town Centre Inset Proposals Map, if:~~

- ~~a) there are no available, suitable or viable sites within the town centre;~~
- ~~b) there is a proven need for the retail floorspace; and~~
- ~~c) the development would not harm the prospects of bringing about the comprehensive redevelopment of the North West Quadrant.~~

2. Proposals for comparison goods development will also be permitted at the following locations:

- a) *Dartford town centre*;
- b) *Bluewater (up to a maximum of 10,000 square metres)*; and
- c) *The identified North eastern and Southern edge of centre policy areas if:*
 - i) *there are no available, suitable or viable sites within the town centre;*
 - ii) *there is a proven need for the retail floorspace; and*
 - iii) *the development would not harm the vitality and viability of the town centre.*

3. Proposals for retail development (*convenience and/or comparison*) outside Dartford town centre, the *North eastern and southern edge-of-centre policy areas, Bluewater,*

district and local centres and identified sites will not only be permitted unless where they demonstrate there are no available, suitable or viable sites in the at these identified locations. Proposals should:

- a) demonstrate a need for the retail floorspace;**
- b) not harm the vitality and viability of Dartford town centre, district or local centres;**
- c) ~~not harm the prospects of bringing about the comprehensive redevelopment of the North West Quadrant;~~**
- d) be accessible by public transport, bicycle and on foot;**
- e) not lead to an adverse effect on the character and amenity of the area;**
- f) ~~be of a scale to meet the demand arising from the local area;~~ and**
- g) not be on sites allocated for other uses on the Proposals Map.**

7.7 Dartford Town Centre

7.7.1 PPG6 places great emphasis on the importance of the sequential approach to selecting sites for retail development. The Local Plan identifies town centre and edge-of-centre boundaries and primary and secondary shopping frontages. The approach to town centre and edge-of-centre development is set out in the Dartford Town Centre chapter in policies TC1, TC2 and TC3, whilst the approach to primary and secondary frontages is set out in policies TC4 and TC5.

7.8 Bluewater

7.8.1 Bluewater regional shopping centre opened in March 1999. The centre has an overall permitted floorspace of 156,600 sq m of which 139,350 sq m is retail floorspace (this includes 2,250 sq m for the sale of food and convenience goods) and 17,275 sq m of leisure floorspace. The centre provides over 300 retail units, restaurants, cafes and bars, a multi-screen cinema, and 13,000 car parking spaces. There is no stand-alone foodstore attached to or located within the shopping centre. *In its opening two years the centre attracted around 25 million visitors a year, 11% of whom travelled by bus.*

~~7.8.2 The deadline for submitting reserved matters pursuant to the original permission expired at the end of December 1997. Proposals for revisions to approved reserved matter submissions, which are not 'de minimus' and proposals for additional new floorspace will require a fresh planning application. The levels of floorspace at the centre (permitted and subject to determination) provide 139,350 sq m of retail floorspace, of which 2,250 sq m is for the sale of food and convenience goods, and 17,275 sq m of leisure floorspace.~~

7.8.3 Government guidance (February 1999) on the expansion of existing retail and leisure facilities in out-of-centre locations requires that they are treated as if they were new development and that any proposal for expansion of such shopping ~~at these~~ centres will be expected to demonstrate the need for additional facilities and show that such additional facilities could not be accommodated on sites in more central locations, in accordance with the sequential approach.

~~7.8.4 Dartford town centre is the preferred location for additional convenience and comparison shopping floorspace and leisure facilities. There is limited scope for additional comparison floorspace over the Plan period. The Dartford Town Centre chapter identifies sites for additional retail and leisure facilities. In view of this the Council will not permit additional leisure, comparison and convenience floorspace at Bluewater. Other uses such as hotel and conference facilities will not be permitted.~~

~~7.8.5 Once the centre has established a settled trading pattern it may be reasonable to review the policy approach, but not before 2001. Any review will include factors such as:~~

- ~~• the level of car borne visitors at peak trading times compared to the 13,000 car parking spaces;~~
- ~~• the potential for incorporating additional uses which would result in linked trips without generating unacceptable levels of additional car borne traffic or the need for additional car parking facilities; and~~
- ~~• the ability of development to encourage reduction in private car usage.~~

7.8.5a *The Council's retail consultants' assessment identified scope for up to 27,000 sq m of comparison goods floorspace to 2011. An assessment of suitable sites within Dartford town centre and the north eastern and southern edge-of-centre policy areas has identified sites capable of providing up to 17,000 sq m net increase in floorspace. No other suitable sites have been identified which are capable of providing for this level of outstanding demand in either the town centre or north eastern and southern edge-of-centre sites.*

7.8.5b *It is important that Bluewater remains an attractive location for high quality retailers, to ensure that the centre does not compete directly with Dartford and Gravesend town centres. There is an opportunity at Bluewater to accommodate up to 10,000 sq m of additional retail floorspace within the shopping centre. Some of this space could be accommodated through the relocation of existing centre management and community activities within the site. The Plan provides for the provision of up to 10,000 sq m additional comparison floorspace above that provided for by planning permissions granted on or before the end of December 1997.*

7.8.5c *Bluewater not only offers a pre-eminent position for retailing in Europe but it is also a premier leisure destination and a growing tourist attraction. Many of the visitors perceive shopping to be a leisure activity in itself. Providing additional leisure facilities for shoppers will enhance tourism in the area and help to maintain Bluewater's role as a regional shopping centre, by attracting a wider audience and encouraging return visits. Leisure facilities should not be located at Bluewater if they can be suitably located and can be viable in town centre or identified edge of centre locations. Rather, leisure facilities at Bluewater should aim to complement other leisure uses found in Dartford town centre and elsewhere in the Borough. Proposals for new leisure facilities should focus on uses which will gain most benefit from being located in a regional shopping centre and which have synergy with it. Leisure uses should also enhance the experience for visitors to Bluewater without conflicting with its primary retailing function and the adequacy and availability of the car parking provision which supports it. The existing three villages at Bluewater should act as a focus for new leisure facilities, facilitating connectivity between the retail triangle and its landscaped setting. This also creates potential to develop active corridors from Bluewater into the surrounding communities.*

7.8.5d *The design and layout of the existing shopping centre was guided by masterplan principles. These principles, covering design and siting, highway and transport and landscaping, played an important role in guiding the design of the shopping centre, including its location and orientation within the site, its relationship with the open space and the treatment of the entrance vista into the site. The principles are reproduced at Appendix 13a. Any additional development at Bluewater should continue to be guided by these principles to ensure the continuing integrity of the overall scheme.*

7.8.5e *Outline planning permission has been granted for a 150-180 bed hotel, including meeting facilities, health and fitness facilities, and a maximum of 200 car parking*

spaces at land adjacent to the north west lake. It is the intention that this should be a four star quality hotel to complement and build upon the existing quality of Bluewater.

7.8.5f To encourage better usage of existing car parking as well as greater usage of public transport, cycling and walking, Policy R2 limits car parking to 13,000 spaces, including the 200 associated with the proposed hotel. It will be important that new development is well served by public transport. This may require the enhancement of public transport services and facilities serving and within the site. The enhancement of Greenhithe Station is a priority to reflect its role as a key interchange for Bluewater.

7.8.5g Bluewater is a high quality development that has won a number of prestigious awards and is an exemplar of quality within Kent Thameside. The Council wishes to ensure that future developments will not detract from or mar the quality of the scheme or its landscaping. A masterplan will be sought prior to the submission of any planning applications. The masterplan should demonstrate:

- that the level of development provided for by Policy R2 could be accommodated within the site taking account of the masterplan principles set out at Appendix 13a;
- how the masterplan principles have guided the form and landscaping of the proposed development, including its interrelationship with the existing shopping centre and hotel permission; and
- the measures that will be taken to encourage greater public transport patronage and non-car usage, including:
 - safeguarding the proposed alignment for Fastrack and making a financial contribution to ensure its delivery;
 - enhancing public transport links within the site;
 - providing improved pedestrian and cycling links into the centre; and
 - the enhancement of Greenhithe Station.

R2 Bluewater

At Bluewater Regional Shopping Centre the following policy approach will be adopted:

- ~~1. proposals for additional retail (use classes A1, A2 and A3), recreational and leisure floorspace (use class D2) and hotel and conference development (use class C1) will not be permitted;~~
- ~~2. proposals for change of use resulting in food and convenience* floorspace that exceed the floorspace level stipulated in the original permission (May 1990) will not be permitted;~~
- ~~3. proposals for change of use to hotel and conference uses (use class C1) will not be permitted;~~
- ~~4. proposals for change of use to leisure (use class D2) should not result in levels of leisure floorspace greater than that permitted pursuant to the original permission; and~~
- ~~5. proposals for additional car parking provision, over and above the existing 13,000 spaces, will not be permitted.~~

1. Additional comparison goods floorspace (up to a maximum of 10,000 square metres gross external area over and above that permitted or trading at 30 June 2001) and leisure floorspace will be permitted where it is demonstrated through a masterplan that the overall level of development can be accommodated on the site and will:

- a) comply with the masterplan principles set out at Appendix 13a;**

- b) not detract from the existing landscaped setting;**
- c) not generate a requirement for additional car parking spaces;**
- d) not generate any additional traffic that cannot safely and efficiently be accommodated on the existing highway;**
- e) enable and promote increased patronage by public transport**
- f) safeguard the Fastrack route, provide a financial contribution to ensure the delivery of the safeguarded Fastrack route at Bluewater and dedicate the land required for that purpose;**
- g) provide for the extension of public transport services and bus stops within the site;**
- h) make provision for improved pedestrian and cycle links into the site from Bean Road across the main entrance road following existing desire lines and make provision for improved cycle parking;**
- i) maintain a dedicated shuttle bus service to and from Greenhithe Station or some equivalent service that fulfils that objective; and**
- j) provide public transport stops and services to ensure that no facilities within the site are more than 400 metres from them.**

2. the amount of food and convenience* floorspace will be limited to that permitted or trading at 30 June 2001;

3. proposals for additional hotel and conference facilities over and above that permitted at 30 June 2001 and change of use to hotel and conference uses (use class C1) will not be permitted;

4. proposals for additional car parking provision, over and above the existing 13,000 spaces, will not be permitted.

NB: * Food and Convenience are defined as food, drink and other frequently purchased low value goods, for example household cleaning materials, newspapers, tobacco and confectionery.

7.9 Ebbsfleet

7.9.1 Dartford and Gravesham Councils have resolved, subject to appropriate agreements being reached, to grant outline planning permission for mixed-use development at Ebbsfleet of up to 790,000 sq m floorspace for employment, residential, hotel and leisure uses, and supporting retail and community facilities. The resolution provides for 16,750 sq m gross floorspace falling within use class A1 in Dartford Borough.

7.9.2. National, strategic and district planning policy emphasises the importance of existing town centres and local centres and resists retail development which undermine their vitality and viability. The scale and mix of retail provision at Ebbsfleet should reflect the demands of the future working population, the travelling population associated with the new station and the residential community resulting from the development, and should grow in line with and not in advance of the expansion of those catchments.

7.9.3. The policy approach towards retail development at Ebbsfleet is set out in policy MDS1 in the Major Development Sites chapter.

7.10 Major Development Sites

7.10.1 In addition to Ebbsfleet, major mixed-use development sites are identified in the Plan for new urban villages at North Dartford, Eastern Quarry, Swanscombe Peninsula (West), and ~~Greenhithe Riverside~~ *Ingress Park* (see Major Development Sites

chapter), and walkable neighbourhoods at Stone Castle and Bexley and West Hill Hospitals (see Major Development Sites and Development and Design chapters). These new urban villages and walkable neighbourhoods may generate demand for new local shopping facilities. These facilities should be of a scale and range that relate primarily to the needs of the residents and employees, be located such that they underpin and support the Plan's sustainable development strategy and should grow in line with and not in advance of the expansion of the local community.

7.10.2. The policy approach towards retail provision at these sites is set out in policies MDS2-5 and MDS7 in the Major Development Sites chapter and policy DD3 in the Development and Design chapter.

7.11 — Station Road, Greenhithe

~~7.11.1 Major residential and employment developments have occurred in the Greenhithe area. Local shopping facilities have been lost as a result of the completion of Crossways Boulevard. An area of 4.2 hectares of land bounded by the River Thames, Station Road and Crossways Boulevard is identified for mixed-use development where the major element will be retailing facilities, primarily food retailing, that serve the needs of the local area.~~

~~7.11.2 Outline planning permission, subject to legal agreement, has been granted for a food store of 4,100 sq m gross floorspace along with 550 sq m, gross floorspace of A1 uses in the form of three retail units, on land at the southern end of the site.~~

~~7.11.3. Station Road, Greenhithe is identified as a new neighbourhood centre (policy DD9) where use classes A1, A2 and A3 (provided the use does not dominate the centre) leisure and community facilities (which serve the immediate locality), small scale commercial facilities and residential development will be permitted.~~

~~7.11.4 The site is strategically located on the confluence of the proposed new linear parkland in St Clement's Valley and the River Thames. Development proposals will be expected to make provision for a Green Grid north south route along Station Road, together with connectivity to it and provide public access, including pedestrian access, to the river and along the river front, where an important feature will be the creation of a public realm on the river front.~~

~~7.11.5 The site provides the opportunity to enhance the streetscape of Station Road continuing the 'village' nature established in the High Street. Housing development will be encouraged in the north east sector of the site.~~

~~7.11.6 Because of the site's riverside setting proposals for the northern part of the site should make the most beneficial use of the riverside setting and be appropriate to, and enhance the quality of, the public realm.~~

~~7.11.7 In view of the above a development brief will need to be agreed with any developer prior to the submission of a planning application to ensure an acceptable overall scheme.~~

R3 — Station Road, Greenhithe

Land is safeguarded at Station Road, Greenhithe for comprehensive mixed-use development, including a new neighbourhood centre, where the major element will be

- ~~retail facilities that serve the needs of the Greenhithe area. Proposals will only be permitted if they:~~
- ~~1. are formulated on the basis of a development brief or master plan to cover the whole site, which should be agreed with the Council prior to the submission of a planning application;~~
 - ~~2. provide for mix of uses which are of high design standards and provide for a high quality environment;~~
 - ~~3. provide housing in the north-east part of the site, to create an urban streetscape on Station Road;~~
 - ~~4. provide pedestrian access to the River Thames and along the river front;~~
 - ~~5. make provision for a north-south Green Grid corridor;~~
 - ~~6. provide a foodstore of no more than 4100 sq m gross floorspace;~~
 - ~~7. provide retail units which have a combined gross floorspace of no more than 550 sq m, of which no more than 33% may be used either when built or subsequently for A3 uses; and~~
 - ~~8. are readily accessible by public transport, bicycle and on foot.~~

7.12 District and Local Shopping Centres

7.12.1 District and local centres in the Borough, in both the urban and rural areas, perform an important role for local communities as a location for retail and service facilities and for the employment they provide. They also help to reduce dependence on the car. District and local centres have been subject to similar pressures to those in the Dartford town centre, and in many cases, their health and vitality is under as much threat as that of the town centre, in particular from out-of-town food superstores.

7.12.2 PPG6 encourages local authorities, through their planning policies and actions, to encourage a wide range of facilities in district and local centres, consistent with the scale and functions of the centre, to meet people's day-to-day needs, and reduce the need to travel. Local planning authorities are also advised to encourage appropriately-sized, local supermarkets and seek to retain post offices and pharmacies in existing local centres, and to discourage their inclusion in out-of-centre retail developments by imposing appropriate conditions.

7.12.3 There are three shopping centres in the Borough which perform a district centre function serving the day to day needs of the immediate area: Longfield, Swanscombe High Street and Temple Hill Square. The Council aims to safeguard the retail function of these centres as far as possible and to enhance their environment. Proposals for uses which do little to foster use of the centre by the local community for its immediate day to day needs and which do not, therefore, need to be located at such centres will be refused. Proposals for uses other than for retail (use class A1) such as office based uses (classes A2 and B1a) and food and drink establishments (class A3) will, therefore be judged according to the above considerations.

7.12.4 Where it can be shown that a unit in a district or local centre is no longer viable for retail purposes and that it has remained unlet for a substantial period of time, despite genuine and sustained attempts to let it on reasonable terms, alternative uses will be considered. The terms on offer should compare with other similar premises and locations being let or sold for retail use. The extent of marketing carried out will be an important factor.

7.12.5 Policy R4 will be applied to existing district and local centres, to local centres developed within the major new mixed-use developments at Eastern Quarry, Swanscombe Peninsula West and East and within walkable neighbourhoods at Greenhithe Riverside *Ingress Park*, North Dartford and Stone Castle and *the*

proposed new local centres at ~~Station Road, Greenhithe and Watling Street, Dartford.~~

R4 District and Local Shopping Centres

Retail development will be permitted in the district and local shopping centres as listed below and identified on the Proposals Map where the proposals are of a scale appropriate to the function of the centre. Proposals for changes of use or redevelopment of shops (in use class A1) to other uses will only be permitted where the following criteria are met:

1. the site is not in a conspicuous location;
2. the proposal does not involve a prominent building;
3. the nature and character of the use(s) proposed, including the level of activity associated with it, will not have an adverse impact on amenity, including disturbance and nuisance;
4. genuine and sustained attempts to let the premises for use class A1 uses on reasonable terms have proved unsuccessful; and
5. there are no adverse cumulative effects of ~~new~~ concentrations of single uses, including loss of retail outlets, traffic, parking and local residential amenity.

Proposals for changes of use from classes A1, A2 or A3 to residential accommodation will not be permitted where the building is in a prominent position or within the retail core of the centre. ~~Evidence will be required that genuine and sustained attempts to let the premises for use class A1 uses on reasonable terms have proved unsuccessful.~~ Proposals for business use (use classes B1 and A2), including office use, on upper floors will be permitted except where this would involve the loss of existing residential accommodation or give rise to on street parking problems in the vicinity.

District Centres:

- a) Temple Hill Square
- b) Swanscombe High Street
- c) Longfield

Local Centres:

- a) Henderson Drive
- b) Craylands Lane/Milton Street , Swanscombe
- c) Old Bexley Lane, Maypole
- d) Chastilian Road
- e) Dartford Road (West), Dartford
- f) Shepherds Lane
- g) Dartford Road (East), Dartford
- h) Mead Road, Dartford
- i) Lowfield Street/Hawley Road, Dartford
- j) Darenth Road, Dartford
- k) East Hill, Dartford
- l) Colney Road/St Albans Road, Dartford
- m) Colney Road/St Vincents Road, Dartford
- n) The Brent, Dartford
- o) Princes Road, Dartford
- p) London Road, Stone
- q) Fleetdale Parade, Dartford
- r) London Road, Horns Cross
- s) Summerhouse Drive, Joyden's Wood
- t) Birchwood Drive, Joyden's Wood

- u) Main Road, Sutton-at-Hone
- v) Green Street Green Road, Lane End
- w) High Road, Wilmington
- x) Station Road, Greenhithe

7.13 Food Stores

7.13.1 ~~Outline planning permission, subject to legal agreement, has been granted for a new food store at Greenhithe.~~ The major mixed-use development sites proposed in this Plan will generate demand for new local convenience shopping facilities. Policies MDS1-5 and MDS7 6 provide for convenience shopping provision at these sites commensurate with the needs of residents and employees. This apart, there is no scope for additional quantitative convenience provision over the plan period. There may, however, be justification for improving the qualitative food offer in Dartford town centre or the identified district and local centres to improve their viability and vitality. Proposals for qualitative improvements in convenience shopping in existing identified centres will be considered against policy R1.

7.13.2 Where there are no available, suitable or viable sites within the preferred locations identified in policy R1 convenience shopping proposals will be required to provide evidence of need and that the development will not affect the vitality and viability of existing and proposed centres. The development should also support and underpin the Plan's sustainable development strategy, and not materially reduce the amount of land identified for other purposes, such as residential or employment. Proposals for convenience shopping will be considered against policy R1.

7.14 Takeaway and Drive Through Food Shops Restaurants

7.14.1 Shop or restaurant premises which provide or include a hot food takeaway service, while they may provide a useful local facility, can cause problems because of their hours of operation or simply because of their location if they are in a residential area. The temporary, on-street parking frequently associated with takeaway food shops can interfere with the free flow of traffic and create congestion and potential highway safety problems. The Council will look closely at any such potential problems in dealing with specific proposals.

7.14.2 Proposals for takeaway food shops in Dartford town centre primary and secondary shopping frontages are covered by policies TC4 & TC5.

7.14.3 Where appropriate planning conditions will be imposed concerning hours of opening, the control of fumes and odours, the retention of parking areas, ~~and~~ shop front treatment, *and the provision of refuse bins.*

R5 Takeaway and Drive Through Food Shops Restaurants

Proposals, including changes of use, for, or including, a hot food takeaway service will not be permitted where:

1. there would be an adverse effect on nearby properties or residential amenity;
2. there are inadequate parking facilities;
3. access arrangements and the local highway network are unsuitable;
4. there are inadequate facilities for dealing with smells or the storage and collection of refuse; or

5. the design and location of extractor plant and ducting would adversely affect local amenity.

7.14.4 A more recent phenomenon is the development of drive through facilities based on car borne customers. The impact of this type of facility, both in land use and traffic terms, is likely to be more significant than the individual takeaway unit in an existing centre. Consequently very careful assessment is necessary. Proposals for free-standing drive through restaurant and hot-food takeaway businesses will be assessed against policy R1 and subject to the criteria in policy R5. *The location of such facilities should be well served by public transport and accessible to pedestrians and cyclists to provide staff and customers with the opportunity to travel means other than by car.*

7.15 Shopping in Rural Areas

7.15.1 PPG6 recognises that village shops, whether standing alone or ancillary to other uses, for example public houses, petrol stations or farms, can play a crucial role in maintaining villages as viable communities.

7.15.2 Outside the identified district and local shopping centres proposals for new retail provision or extensions to existing retail facilities will be assessed against policy R1. The rural area of the Borough lies within the Green Belt, and proposals which satisfy the criteria in policy R1 will not be permitted if they would harm the open character and visual amenity of the Green Belt or detract from the rural character of the locality.

7.16 Garden Centres and Retail Nurseries

7.16.1 With changes in agriculture and increasing leisure time, the formation and expansion of retail nurseries and garden centres has increased generally, and they are becoming increasingly attractive to visitors especially at accessible roadside locations. Garden centres tend to cater for people who arrive by car.

7.16.2 Proposals for new garden centres or retail nurseries or extensions to existing facilities will be assessed against policy R1. Depending on the scale and location of the proposal it will usually be necessary to use planning conditions or agreements to restrict the kind of goods which can be sold. This will protect the vitality and viability of the existing centres (Dartford town centre, district and local centres) and prevent large scale increase in car-based trips for purchases of a type and size that can readily be bought in typical town centre shops. Planning conditions and agreements will also be used to limit the range of goods available, to control the sale of plants and other products imported to the site from elsewhere, and preclude the change of use of garden centres to other retail or business uses.

7.17 Petrol Filling Stations

7.17.1 Most petrol filling stations now provide for retail sales to the public, with many new developments having a specifically designed shop. In recent years the range of goods sold has tended to grow to include foodstuffs. The scale of retail sales generally makes these outlets unlikely to threaten the viability of local shops. Generally they supplement the range of retail facilities available to the public, especially as they often stay open outside normal shop hours.

7.17.2 Proposals for new or extended retail sales areas at petrol stations will be assessed against policy R1.

7.18 Retail Warehousing

- 7.18.1 There are limited retail warehouse facilities within the Borough. These are on sites in and near the town centre. As a consequence residents often have to travel outside the Borough to make such purchases.
- 7.18.2 Structure Plan policy R4 encourages the location of new retail warehouses within existing town or district centres or on the edge of such centres.
- 7.18.3 Bulky goods retailing is already a successful element of the town and the Council's retail consultants have advised that there is potential for this to be encouraged. It is considered that the development and promotion of quality non-food retail warehousing and its integration with the retail core will strengthen Dartford town centre's offer.
- 7.18.4 The Plan identifies ~~two sites for non-food uses: at the North West Quadrant on the edge of Dartford town centre for non-food retail development (policy TC9) which may include non-food retail warehousing; and at Westgate Road (policy TC8). These sites are sufficient to accommodate the estimated need for additional non-food floorspace that will be generated to the year 2006. The provision of retail warehousing elsewhere in the Borough would be likely to have an adverse effect on the town centre. Proposals for retail warehouse facilities elsewhere in the Borough will therefore need to demonstrate that there is additional need to that provided or capable of provision on the TC9 site. Elsewhere, proposals for retail warehousing will be determined by policies R1, DD11 and other relevant policies in the Plan.~~

R6 — Retail Warehousing

~~Proposals for non-food retail warehousing other than at site TC9 will not be permitted unless they:~~

- ~~1. demonstrate a need for the retail floorspace;~~**
- ~~2. will not harm the vitality and viability of Dartford town centre, nor the prospects of bringing about the comprehensive development of site TC9;~~**
- ~~3. are accessible by public transport, bicycle and foot;~~**
- ~~4. will not materially prejudice the provision of other land uses; and~~**
- ~~5. are of a high standard of design.~~**

Appendix 13a - Masterplan Principles for Bluewater (Condition 3 of DA/95/00030/FUL) (Policy R2)

Design/Siting

- i) *High quality design and layout will be provided throughout the scheme, carefully integrating landscaping, lakes and built development and allowing visitors to orientate themselves easily as well as being aesthetically pleasing from inside and outside the buildings.*
- ii) *Importance of entry from north-east site entrance vista for visitors as a 'front door' – leisure village, lakes and landscaping should be the dominant features.*
- iii) *Important and essential role of water – maximisation of access to water from all parts of the scheme, maximisation of visual benefit (increased visibility, addition of features which add interest), philosophy of water flowing out through the scheme.*
- iv) *Retail centre will be centrally located, primarily two level and laid out in a triangular configuration with department stores at apexes, with a definite hierarchy between the department stores, malls and parking decks. High quality materials will be used and directed towards light colours – emphasis of natural stone, pre-cast units and masonry etc. Built leisure facilities will be concentrated in 'leisure villages'. These will provide a link from the main shopping core to the external environment, into which they will open out, and incorporate water as a key feature.*
- v) *Recycling facilities for both tenants and customers will be provided at appropriate points around the scheme.*
- vi) *All areas to be designed for those with mobility difficulties.*
- vii) *Commitment to provision of public art.*
- viii) *Roof treatment shall form part of overall design, integrating plant and equipment, and there will be no views into the central service area on the approach to the site.*
- ix) *Decked car parks will be bright, well-lit, and maintain views towards pedestrian entrances.*

Leisure

- i) *Provision of a variety of water-based leisure activities and areas of informal open space.*
- ii) *Leisure activities will be focused on the leisure villages and the lake areas, each area having its individual character to include fishing, family activities and quieter nature conservation area.*

Highway

- i) *Internal highways including parking areas shall be efficient, safe and well-integrated into the landscape.*
- ii) *Main site access from the north-east will be linked via dual carriageways to a distributor road.*

- iii) *Parking will be provided in the form of generously sized decked and surface spaces designed to minimise walking distances from main entrances to the scheme, with clearly defined pedestrian routes where appropriate, and disabled and family parking close to scheme entrances.*
- iv) *Servicing arrangements will minimise pedestrian/vehicular conflict and provide adequate capacity.*

Other Forms of Transport

- i) *Positive provision for public transport, reflected in location, design quality, and capacity.*

Bus station should:

- *provide easy access to the core of the centre*
- *Be designed as an attractive, spacious main entrance to the retail centre in a landscaped environment*
- *provide sufficient capacity for short and long term needs (by later expansion if necessary) and acknowledge the potential of Bluewater as a public transport hub.*

Bus stops will also be provided in key locations around the scheme. Not only retail but leisure elements of the scheme should be readily accessible. Both the bus station and coach park shall be designed for a high level of comfort and safety, with a covered waiting area.

- ii) *Taxi drop off/pick up points will be provided at appropriate locations.*
- iii) *Pedestrian and cycle links into the quarry will be provided as well as conveniently located cycle racks.*
- iv) *LRT – commitment to future provision, reflected in consideration of potential future routing and arrival points.*

Landscaping

- i) *Landscaping philosophy based on a series of overlapping spaces which change in nature to reflect the use and character of different areas – Bean Road will be integrated with the surrounding rural landscape.*
- ii) *Provision will be made for nature conservation.*
- iii) *Lake areas are an essential and central element, which will be well integrated with the rest of the scheme and landscaped to enhance their attraction and reflect their use, will improve ecological diversity and will be managed in an environmentally friendly way.*