

CHAPTER 5: SHOPPING:

5.1 Policy Context

National and Local Factors

5.1.1 Nationally major changes have taken place in the last decade in the nature of shopping provision. These changes have been influenced by a number of factors including:-

- significant increases in consumer spending since the 1980s.
- increasing car ownership and a greater willingness to travel some distance to shop. In Stafford Borough the Census shows that the level of car ownership (households with at least one car) has risen from 72.4% in 1981 to 76.9% in 1991.
- changes in the marketing and investment strategies of the major retailers. Retail companies are constantly adapting to changing economic and social conditions.

5.1.2 These factors have led to :

- the continuing movement of retailing away from traditional town centre locations.
- decentralisation of retailing taking several forms including: free standing superstores and retail warehouse parks and most recently the growth of hybrid centres which comprise fashion retailers, variety-type stores and fast food outlets as well as the traditional retail warehouse park operators. These new developments can take on the role of sub-regional centres competing directly with existing town centres.
- increased development pressures on out-of-town sites with good access to the primary road network.
- a marked trend towards larger shops and the dominance of multiples in the High Street.
- as a consequence of these trends a threat to the vitality and viability in established shopping and town centres.

5.1.3 Government guidance places considerable emphasis on town centres and their role in the life of the community. Town centres perform a variety of functions and are characterised by a number of different land-uses, which are often interdependent. Retailing is a major land user within a settlement and often underpins its historical development. The maintenance of a high quality retail environment is often crucial to the overall well being of a town centre. Retailing is also an important industry in the local economy, it provides jobs

and services to the local community as well as to its hinterland. Government policy is clearly aimed at maintaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of town centres and it is important that the policies and land-use framework in this plan provides the means for this to be achieved.

5.1.4 Structure Plan policies reflect government advice and support town centres by directing most major new shopping developments to sites within or adjacent to the centre, and this policy is central to the local plan philosophy.

5.1.5 Retailing is a major generator of travel demand. The development of new retailing provision in locations which have the greatest degree of accessibility by foot, bicycle or public transport are preferable to those which cater mainly for shopping by private car. It is considered that town centres and sites adjacent to them offer the greatest opportunity for maximising accessibility to the majority of the resident population by means of transport other than the private car.

Shopping Policy Aims & Objectives

5.1.6 Retailing is constantly adapting to changing economic and social conditions. Decentralisation of retailing has resulted in the growth of out-of-town food supermarkets, retail warehouse parks (sale of bulk goods such as DIY and more recently other high street operators) and comparison goods centres. Set against this trend is the continuing provision of shopping facilities in existing town centres.

5.1.7 Some forms of retailing are better suited to out-of-town locations where there is less congestion and retailer requirements can be more economically met. These include; large amounts of floorspace at low rent levels, coupled with car parking close to the store and good access to the primary road network. Retail Warehouse Parks have proved successful in such locations and have tended to complement rather than threaten town centre retailing.

5.1.8 Given that the majority of comparison and convenience shopping is currently provided in Stafford and Stone town centres, the future success of these shopping centres is closely linked to the ability of the 'town centre' to attract new investment, shoppers and other visitors. The health of the high street is dependent not only upon shopping provision, but also accessibility to the town centre and quality of the physical environment including; public open spaces with places to sit, and the physical appearance of existing buildings and shopper amenities.

5.1.9 With the exception of uses considered appropriate to a retail warehouse park the main aim of shopping policies is to provide a range of high quality shopping facilities in an attractive environment centrally located and easily accessible by all workers and residents in the Borough. This means good pedestrian access as well as being easily accessible by public and private transport. It is considered that existing town centres fulfil this role and provide a natural focus for a range of activities including shopping.

- 5.1.10 The policies in this plan are designed to support existing shopping centres by increasing their attractiveness and encouraging new retail investment within them and not inhibiting competition between retailers.
- 5.1.11 It is therefore considered that it is in the interests of a majority of shops (and other town centre businesses which rely on attracting visitors) to guide as much change as possible to within the defined shopping centres. This general policy will also make the towns more attractive to visitors thus complementing policies in the tourism section of this plan, as well as helping to fulfil the environmental aims of the Plan. [This approach will assist in reducing the need to travel by concentrating rather than dispersing shopping trips as well as providing an opportunity to maintain and enhance public transport services. Town centres can also become a focus of foot and cycle path networks.]
- 5.1.12 It is recognised that there will continue to be the need for change within the range of retail outlets in a shopping centre. If this can happen within the town centre and not result in any significant decentralisation, then it will help ensure the continued vitality and health of these shopping areas.
- 5.1.13 With regard to existing provision within the defined shopping centres of Stafford and Stone the shopping policies in this Plan seek to:-
- enhance the vitality and viability of the existing shopping centres.
 - protect the retail character of shopping provision of Stafford and Stone town centres through the identification of core primary, primary and secondary retail frontages; and
 - protect and enhance other local shopping facilities in Stafford and Stone to meet daily shopping needs.
- 5.1.14 With regard to future provision of shopping facilities in the Borough, the shopping policies in this Plan seek to:-
- concentrate major new shopping developments in or adjacent to existing shopping centres of Stafford and Stone as defined on the proposals map;
 - increase the range and quality of shopping in existing centres;
 - protect and enhance the physical appearance of shopping centre core areas through environmental improvements;
 - promote opportunities for investment in new food retail development within or adjacent to existing town centres; and
 - maintain existing levels of shopping provision in rural settlements.
- 5.1.15 The shopping centres of Stafford and Stone are defined on the inset maps of the Proposals Map.

5.2 Shopping Provision Within the Borough

- 5.2.1 Retailing is an important industry in the Borough providing a significant number of jobs. Retail provision varies throughout the Borough in terms of function, scale, location and type of retail units. For example, the function of Stafford town centre as a shopping centre differs to that of a village centre or other developments such as a retail warehouse park.
- 5.2.2 Stafford and Stone town centres provide the largest concentration of shopping facilities within the Borough both in terms of convenience outlets and comparison goods shopping. In residential areas there are a number of local centres which sell a limited range of goods. In rural areas major village centres such as Eccleshall, Gnosall, Hixon, Weston and Great Haywood provide for the every day shopping needs of the local population.
- 5.2.3 Historically, the majority of new retail investment has been successfully accommodated within or adjacent to existing shopping centres. The Guildhall centre and the new Sainsburys development at Chell Road provide two recent examples of town centre retail investment in Stafford. Apart from the sale of bulk goods, such as those found on a retail warehouse park and other local provision, there are no out-of-town supermarkets or retail developments in Stafford and Stone.
- 5.2.4 It is considered that past patterns of retail investment have served to maintain a balance between convenience and comparison goods shopping in existing town centres. It is anticipated that the continued concentration of retailing within the defined shopping centres of Stafford and Stone will create a more attractive and accessible shopping area, for all sections of the population including the less mobile and those who do not own a car and rely on public transport, in which measures to improve the environment can be economically provided.

POLICY SHO1 - RETAIL PROPOSALS GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

Proposals for retail development within or adjacent to Stafford and Stone shopping centres, as defined on the proposals map for Stafford as the Town Centre Inset and Shopping Boundary and on the proposals map for Stone as the Town Centre Shopping Boundary, will normally be permitted provided that they:-

- (a) do not adversely affect the historical and/or architectural character and setting of those shopping-centres and adjoining areas;*
- (b) do not give rise to unacceptable vehicular and/or pedestrian traffic conditions;*
- (c) do not detract from and where possible improve accessibility by public transport, foot or bicycle;*
- (d) do not give rise to any adverse impact upon sites of nature conservation importance;*
- (e) do not result in the loss of Protected Open Space as defined on the Proposals Map;*
- (f) where appropriate will contribute to a range of environmental measures including provision of or improvement to; cycle parking facilities, bus shelters, paving and landscaping, lighting, litter bins, other street furniture and recycling facilities;*
- (g) provide appropriate servicing arrangements and operational access in accordance with the Borough Council's parking standards;*
- (h) provide safe and convenient pedestrian movement, with improved or new links to surrounding areas, including residential development and provide satisfactory means of access and facilities for people with mobility problems;*
- (i) where appropriate, provide convenient and secure shoppers' car parking in accordance with the Borough Council's car parking standards.*

These considerations will also apply, where appropriate, to all retail development proposals in the Plan Area.

Town Centres: Vitality and Viability

- 5.2.5 As a major land user, shopping makes an important contribution to the health and continued viability of Stafford and Stone town centres. Shopping is an important function of any town centre and a necessary feature in everyone's life. The attractiveness of a particular shopping centre is determined by a number of factors including the character and scale of existing shopping facilities.
- 5.2.6 This is reflected by; the level of choice (ranging from independent specialist traders to large numbers of High Street multiples), variety in terms of size of shop units (ranging from small fashion boutique type shops to large department stores), variety in terms of goods sold and variety in terms of quality to serve all sectors of the population (ranging from up market designer wear shops to the second hand market). It is considered that any loss or erosion of existing provision could have serious knock-on effects in the long term and lead to a gradual decline in retail activity in the main shopping areas.
- 5.2.7 Shopping, however, is not the sole contributory factor to the vitality and viability of a town centre. Vitality and viability stems from the range and quality of activities which take place. Variety and activity are essential elements to the continued health of the town centre. Other land uses and activities such as; offices, businesses, cultural and entertainment facilities, restaurants, public houses, housing, accommodation and tourist attractions all have their role to play. Town centres have different but complementary land uses both during the day and evening. These can reinforce each other rather than being in conflict and can serve to attract local residents and visitors to the town centre for shopping, leisure and cultural activities at all times.
- 5.2.8 The quality and attractiveness of Stafford and Stone town centres relies upon a number of elements including; a clean, secure, attractive environment designed for pedestrian use, convenient and well managed traffic access, parking close to the centre, traditional activities such as markets, good access for pedestrians and cyclists as well as public and private transport. During the plan period, any substantial loss or gradual decline of any activities or reduction in the quality of existing provision is likely to be detrimental to the vitality and viability of those centres. In terms of future retail provision, the cumulative effects of out-of-town centre development could seriously affect the vitality and viability of the existing shopping centres.
- 5.2.9 Town Centres are also major attractors. They can act as nodes for public transport networks: one journey can serve several purposes. Development in town centres can therefore help keep private car use to a minimum, thus reducing exhaust emissions and potential air pollution. [The maintenance of viability and vitality in town centres can assist in "reducing the need" to travel and maintaining and enhancing public transport].
- 5.2.10 The Borough Council will seek to maintain the vitality and viability of shopping provision in Stafford and Stone town centres by;

- (i) the promotion of new shopping development opportunities within or adjacent to those shopping centres as defined on the proposals map.
- (ii) encouraging a high standard of design in new retail development or refurbishment of existing shopping facilities particularly with regard to locations within a Conservation Area.
- (iii) the application of frontage policies that seek to protect the retail character of those centres.

Protection of Retail Frontages

- 5.2.11 Guiding new shopping development to the existing shopping centres and immediately adjoining areas, as defined on the Stafford Town Centre and Stone Area Inset maps, is intended to prevent the dispersal of facilities from and loss of attractiveness and viability of, these shopping centres.
- 5.2.12 As shopping centres are a focus of activity and are usually well located in terms of catchment area and road access, they are inevitably attractive to other businesses as a trading location. One possibly damaging trend in town centres is the growth of non-retail uses in the main shopping streets. The principal concern is that if such uses are uncontrolled it could lead to the break up of continuous shop frontages and/or dilute the retail function of the centre or have detrimental effect on the shopping environment, both of which would damage the vitality and viability of the centre by reducing its attractiveness to shoppers.
- 5.2.13 Allowing too much non-retail use (in particular finance, property and legal services in the high street) can bring about a number of disadvantages. Firstly, each new bank or building society represents the loss of one retail unit for comparison shopping thereby reducing existing provision, level of choice and creating dead space and secondly, such uses tend to have less interesting shop window displays. The latter, although important, should not be exaggerated. Loss of shop units can fragment and disrupt the appearance of a shopping centre and can result in further distances to walk between shops. The gradual disintegration of a prime shopping frontage, as retail units are lost, can make an area less attractive to shoppers and potential investors.

5.2.14 It is accepted that sustaining the character and vitality of shopping areas is best achieved by allowing flexibility in the use of retail floor space. The Use Classes Order (1987) was aimed at removing the need to apply for planning permission for change of use between essentially similar activities. Part A of the 1987 Order comprises three types of uses generally found in shopping areas. These include; general retail and personal services (A1), financial and professional services (A2) and hot food etc. (A3). Clearly it is important to achieve the right balance between the proportion of retail to non retail uses in centres and individual shopping frontages in order to preserve the essential retail character and maintain the best range and quality of service to the local community.

Frontages : Core Primary and Primary

5.2.15 Shopping frontages within a town centre often have different characteristics and therefore this Plan contains Policies for three types of frontages within Stafford and Stone town centres and these are identified on the proposals map. These are:-

- Core Primary shopping frontages
- Primary shopping frontages
- Secondary shopping frontages

5.2.16 'Core Primary' is the basic definition of main shopping frontages within Stafford town centre. Core Primary frontages are those which historically have been the main focus for shopping provision and/or environmental improvements and also represent those locations with the highest rental values. The Guildhall Centre is a key element in the retail core of Stafford Town Centre, accordingly it is considered that the core primary frontage policy should also be applied to the frontages within this shopping centre.

5.2.17 Those streets defined as 'Primary frontages' are considered to represent other important shopping areas where the Borough Council wish to retain a high percentage of A1 uses. In Stafford town centre, Primary frontages are currently concentrated in the northern sector of the shopping centre although the Borough Council is concerned to secure the regeneration of the retail use of the southern part of the town centre and these streets are included within the definition of Primary frontages.

- 5.2.18 In defining these frontages the following factors have been taken into consideration.
- (i) that they are the most important frontages for retailing units in a centre;
 - (ii) that they are well used and as a result generate considerable pedestrian activity when compared with secondary frontages;
 - (iii) that they are based on those streets with the highest rental values and therefore represent prime retail locations;
 - (iv) that although there may be a significant proportion of service uses appropriate to a shopping frontage this does not detract from its essential retail character;
 - (v) that they are the location of the main shopping units.
- 5.2.19 It is considered that in Core Primary frontages up to 25% of non A1 uses can be accommodated (in Primary frontages up to 30%) without detriment to the attractiveness and efficiency of the shopping centre.
- 5.2.20 In some retail frontages, such as Market Square in Stafford, the extent of non A1 uses is now so great that it is considered that any additional non A1 uses in this area would seriously affect the character of the shopping frontage and compromise its primary retail purpose. Market Square forms part of the main pedestrian spinal route in Stafford town centre and has recently been the focus of a pedestrianisation and environmental improvement scheme.

POLICY SHO2 - CORE PRIMARY AND PRIMARY RETAIL FRONTAGES

In Core Primary and Primary Retail Frontages as defined on the Proposals Map proposals for Class A2 and A3 uses will be treated on their merits providing that they would not lead to a concentration of, or exacerbate an existing concentration of non A1 uses.

In Core Primary frontages a concentration means more than 25% of linear ground floor frontage in non A1 uses.

In Primary frontages a concentration means more than 30% of linear ground floor frontage in non A1 uses.

5.2.21 **Frontages: Secondary**

Where the predominance of retailing has declined and become seriously fragmented by non-retail uses, the frontage can no longer be considered of primary importance to a shopping centre and its retail function. However, such frontages can provide an opportunity for a broader range of uses and can act as a suitable location for non-retail uses inappropriate in other parts of a centre. Such frontages, where retailing is relatively weak and where the Council considers it not appropriate to promote the re-establishment of retailing as a primary function, are classed as secondary frontages.

POLICY SHO3 - SECONDARY RETAIL FRONTAGES

In Secondary Retail Frontages, as defined on the Proposals Map, Class A2 and Class A3 uses, will be acceptable.

Upper Floor Uses in Commercial Centres

5.2.22 The Borough Council wish to ensure that the valuable space above shops which is often underused or vacant, is made capable of beneficial use. Many upper floors were originally intended for residential use and in most cases this will continue to be the preferred use. Encouraging residential uses in town centres can increase the number of people present during the evenings giving increased security at night.

5.2.23 Fuller use of upper floors, whether for residential use or other business/commercial uses can also result in better maintenance of the building fabric and where the use is a restaurant or other leisure activity, could increase the liveliness of the centre outside working hours. If upper floors are left underused or vacant for a long period of time they can rapidly begin to look untidy, result in poor maintenance and detract from the visual qualities of the townscape.

POLICY SHO4 - VACANT AND UPPER FLOORS

Proposals which bring into use the unused or vacant upper floors of buildings within town and settlement centres, will be acceptable, providing that the retail use of the ground floor is safeguarded.

Control of Food and Drink (A3) Uses

5.2.24 In addition to their prime role as retail centres, town centres also have an important role in providing entertainment and refreshment facilities during the day and evening. Food and drink uses which include public houses, restaurants and take-away food shops have significantly different characteristics to Class A1 uses. However, such uses, if allowed to dominate main shopping streets can break up the shopping frontage and detract from the quality of the environment causing problems associated with inappropriate

opening hours, noise, litter, smells and conflict with the movement of pedestrians and traffic. Given these potential difficulties policy SHO5 provides guidelines for the appropriate location for Class A3 uses.

- 5.2.25 Outside existing commercial areas new A3 uses can provide for new facilities, for example, new public houses in major housing developments. In addition such uses can play an integral and positive role in tourism and leisure developments. It is important that any new A3 uses respect their setting and do not give rise to nuisance.

POLICY SHO5 - CLASS A3 USES

Proposals for Class A3 uses will be most appropriately located in existing commercial areas.

Proposals for such uses outside existing commercial areas will be considered with regard to:

- (a) the potential effect on the amenity of any nearby residents.***
- (b) the potential effect on the built and rural environment.***
- (c) the relationship with existing or proposed tourism and leisure facilities.***

Environmental Improvements in Town Centres

- 5.2.26 A good quality environment is vital in attracting shoppers and future retail investment. A clean, litter free, traffic free, pedestrian friendly town centre with good access and shopper amenities such as places to sit, gardens, parks, toilets, telephones, good street lighting, sign posting and well maintained buildings all contribute to create a feeling that such a centre is convenient, attractive, pleasant to shop in and successful. The continued vitality and viability of Stafford and Stone town centres cannot be left to chance. They require continued and pro-active management.
- 5.2.27 The Borough Council has adopted the approach of Town Centre Management as a way of implementing the policies outlined in the above paragraph. It is a strategy to sustain and enhance the viability and vitality of town centres in a practical way and through a partnership approach. Using the policy framework established throughout the Local Plan, town centre management brings together other functions and responsibilities of not only the Borough Council, but also the other key players.
- 5.2.28 It is considered that the continued concentration of shopping facilities in Stafford and Stone town centres creates a more attractive and accessible shopping area in which measures to improve the environment, in particular the segregation of vehicular and pedestrianisation movement, can be more easily and economically provided.
- 5.2.29 The centres of Stafford and Stone will be made more convenient and attractive, with particular emphasis being given to:-

- The level of car parking and location of car parks near the town centre. The Borough Council will seek to limit parking provision to levels which will not cause traffic problems or affect road safety.
- provision for cyclists, including secure cycle parking facilities.
- removal of through traffic and development of pedestrianised zones.
- improving access for public transport, emergency services and service vehicles.
- improved access for those with mobility problems. In the case of individual shop design, the Borough Council will seek to secure adequate access arrangements for the less mobile.
- provision of additional visitor facilities and shopper amenities.

5.2.30 In addition policies in this plan seek to:

- protect the historical and/or architectural character of a shopping centre and its setting. The majority of Stafford and Stone shopping centres are both within a Conservation Area. This gives the Borough Council special controls over the scale, design and location of new development.
- protect important public open spaces. Urban open space which is considered to be worthy of retention for a variety of reasons is identified on the Proposals Map as 'Protected Open Space'.
- Secure environmental improvements as an integral part of any retail scheme.
- Seek to achieve a high quality of design in any new development and a satisfactory landscaping scheme to comply with Policy SHO16

Stafford Town Centre

5.2.31 Stafford Town centre provides the largest concentration of shopping facilities within the Borough serving a substantial area of central Staffordshire. The centre has a range of shops with a balance between comparison and convenience goods and functions as one of the main town centres in the County.

5.2.32 Stafford town centre is considered to offer an attractive and compact shopping environment with convenient incidental open space, leisure, public transport and car parking provision. Stafford has the benefit of a comprehensive network of bus routes, the majority of which circulate in the town centre, reinforcing its role as the main concentration of shopping facilities in the Borough and providing good access for those without private transport. Recent public and private sector investment includes the Town

Centre pedestrianisation scheme and completion of the Guildhall undercover centre and Sainsburys supermarket at Chell Road.

- 5.2.33 Shopping provision in the town centre is concentrated in the central and northern areas extending from Market Square up to and including the Sheridan Centre. This focus has been established over a number of years and has led to the gradual decline in shopping provision in the southern area. There is a need to encourage retail investment in the southern area of Stafford town centre which would draw shoppers to this sector and enhance its vitality. Recent environmental improvements have been carried out to the bank of the River Sow opposite the existing Tesco foodstore which emphasises its close integration with the rest of the town. The southern sector is considered to form an important element in the overall shopping facilities of the town centre.
- 5.2.34 Shopping provision in the northern sector is characterised by larger units, the presence of High Street multiple retailers and an extensive pedestrianised area. Shopping provision in the southern sector is complementary to the core shopping area. In general, these units are much smaller, occupied by independent retailers and located on busy traffic routes through the town centre. Between these two sectors is Greengate Street which is considered to provide an important pedestrian link and shopping area within the town centre.
- 5.2.35 In addition to those shopping areas, recognised by virtue of the frontage protection policy, there are other pockets of shops within Stafford and Stone town centre. These shops, often located in a stand alone position, are also important to the overall level of shopping provision within the town centre. Proposals resulting in the loss of A1 uses outside the defined frontages, will be considered having regard to the surrounding uses and general character of the area.
- 5.2.36 There is a particular need to protect the existing retail character of streets in the shopping centre of Stafford. This concern is reflected in the designation of Core Primary and Primary Retail Frontages within the town centre as shown on the Stafford Area Inset Map. Such a designation does not preclude other uses. It is recognised that a limited amount of non-retail uses such as banks, building societies, cafes and take-aways provide complementary services in retail areas.

**POLICY SHO6 – DEFINITION OF CORE PRIMARY FRONTAGES :-
STAFFORD**

For the purposes of policy SHO2, the Core Primary Shopping Frontage in Stafford Town Centre is defined as the following on the Stafford Area Inset Map:

6-12 Greengate Street

50-58 Greengate Street

1-5 Greengate Street

10-15 Greengate Street

Units 1 and 2 Guildhall Centre

Units 3 - 7 Guildhall Centre

~~Units 9 – 15 Guildhall Centre~~
~~Units 19 – 29 Guildhall Centre~~
~~Units 31 – 36 Guildhall Centre~~
~~Units 37 – 41 Guildhall Centre~~
~~10-15 Market Square~~
~~17 and 18 Market Square~~
~~Units 16 and 18 Guildhall Centre~~
~~1 and 2 Gaolgate Street~~
~~38 – 42 Gaolgate Street~~
~~4 – 12 Gaolgate Street~~
~~14a – 21 Gaolgate Street and 2 Mount Row~~
~~22 – 37 Gaolgate Street~~

~~**POLICY SHO7 - DEFINITION OF PRIMARY SHOPPING FRONTAGES:
STAFFORD**~~

~~*For the purposes of policy SHO2, the Primary Shopping Frontages in Stafford Town Centre is defined as the following on the Stafford Area Inset Map:*~~

~~5,7,8,12a Bridge Street - Shipley Amusements~~
~~3 - 4 Bridge Street - Bank of Scotland~~
~~31 - 33 Bridge Street~~
~~34 - 49 Greengate Street~~
~~18 - 25 Greengate Street~~
~~15 - 17 Greengate Street~~
~~1 - 18 Mill Street~~
~~35 - 48 Mills Street & 37 Greengate Street~~
~~1 - 5 Market Square~~
~~6 - 7 Market Square~~
~~1 - 7 Market Street~~
~~Co-op Store - 17 Crabbery Street~~
~~19 - 35 Crabbery Street~~
~~Princes Street (Co-op Store)~~
~~20-34 Princes Street~~
~~11a-13 Stafford Street & side of 20 Princes Street~~
~~2 Princes Street - side of 18 Princes Street~~
~~Side of 12 Gaolgate Street and Stafford Street~~
~~14 - 22 Stafford Street~~
~~5 - 22 Princes Street~~
~~2 - 20 Mount Row and Sheridan Centre~~
~~1 - 7 Mount Row~~
~~St. Mary's Mews~~

~~**POLICY SHO8 - DEFINITION OF SECONDARY SHOPPING FRONTAGES:
STAFFORD**~~

~~*For the purposes of policy SHO3, the Secondary Shopping Frontages in Stafford Town Centre is defined as the following on the Stafford Area Inset Map:*~~

~~1-5, 5a, 5b, 5c & 6 Lichfield Road~~
~~1 - 4, 1a & 1b Friars Terrace~~

~~141 - 149 Newport Road and 5 Bridge Street~~
~~30- 35 Mill Bank~~
~~Conservative Club - 10 Church Lane~~
~~37 Gaolgate Street - 1 Salter Street~~
~~12 - 20 Salter Street~~
~~21 Eastgate Street, Surgery, Salter Street~~
~~4 - 10 Salter Street~~
~~Alleyway off 49 Greengate Street~~
~~1 - 5 Martin Street~~
~~17 & 18 Martin Street~~
~~17 Greengate Street - 3 Tipping Street~~
~~Riverside Frontage~~

5.2.37 Existing shopping provision could be further enhanced and the central shopping area made more attractive by:

- pursuance, through policies in this plan and the development control process, of high design standards both for any new development or alterations to existing development, with particular attention to shop fronts and advertisements:
- fuller pedestrianisation
- sympathetic consideration of proposals for complementary leisure and recreation facilities;
- promotion of improvements to the more insensitive of modern developments, particularly rear-servicing areas, car -parks and certain shop and supermarket units.
- maximising opportunities provide by new development to secure new and improved footpath and cycleway links to surrounding residential areas. This could be achieved by improvement of links based on the Green Network as defined on the proposals map.
- other small scale environmental improvements.
- improvements to waiting facilities for public transport.

5.2.38 A route for a footpath link along the northern bank of the River Sow from Bridge Street to The Mill is shown on the Proposals Map Inset for Stafford. The Borough Council will pursue the scheme as resources allow and in conjunction with developers of associated or adjoining sites where it is reasonable to do so.

Stone Town Centre

5.2.38 Stone offers a range of shopping facilities with an emphasis on convenience goods and a high proportion of independent retailers. The High Street offers the main focus of retail activity and this Local Plan intended that this should be maintained during the plan period. New shopping development should be confined to within or adjacent to the shopping centre. This will ensure the

future vitality and viability of shopping facilities and the town centre as a whole.

- 5.2.39 The centre offers an attractive shopping environment currently hampered by the heavy use of the High Street by through traffic. The construction of the Stone Town Centre by-pass and its subsequent pedestrianisation has enhanced the shopping environment, making it more pedestrian friendly and providing opportunities to install appropriate street furniture. This in combination with other small scale environmental improvements will promote its attractiveness as a shopping destination for the public.
- 5.2.40 Like Stafford town centre, the retention of ground floor frontage premises in shopping uses along primary shopping frontages of the High Street and the conversion of property currently in non-retail use to shopping use is desirable in the interests of promoting the vitality of the existing shopping centre. Many ground floor frontage premises to High Street are currently occupied by non-retail uses. In view of this fragmentation of the shopping frontage, any further encroachment of such uses into primary frontages will be firmly resisted. Frontages are shown on the Stone Area Inset Map.

**POLICY SHO9 - DEFINITION OF PRIMARY SHOPPING FRONTAGES :
STONE**

For the purposes of Policy SHO2, the Primary Shopping Frontages in Stone Town Centre is defined as the following on the Stone Area Inset map:

**55 - 75 High Street
40 - 66 High Street
41a - 53 High Street
Market Place, High Street
6 High Street to 38 (Crown Hotel) High Street
11 High Street to 39 High Street**

**POLICY SHO10 - DEFINITION OF SECONDARY SHOPPING FRONTAGES:
STONE**

For the purposes of Policy SHO3, the Secondary Shopping frontages in Stone Town Centre is defined as the following on the Stone Area Inset Map:

**1 - 16 Station Street
The Old Post Office (Granville Square)
2 - 18 Radford Street
1 - 9 Radford Street
1 - 7 High Street
1 and 2 Lichfield Street
3 - 11 Lichfield Street
The Garden Centre, Stafford Street and
rear of 6 High Street (opposite)**

5.2.41 The shopping centre of Stone could be enhanced by:-

- seeking appropriate levels of car parking provision
- maximising opportunities provided by, for example, the various pedestrian 'alleys' off the high Street and the Trent and Mersey Canal;
- re-use and conversion of buildings currently either disused or in some other use;
- maintaining and where possible improving accessibility by public transport, walking or cycling.

Out-of Town Centre Shopping

Convenience Goods

5.2.42 Convenience shopping provision tends to follow a number of trading formats and broad size categories, each with their own operating and locational characteristics. Within the Borough convenience provision ranges from:-

Local shopping facilities:-

Primarily small food stores which may form part of a shopping parade and includes; corner shops, grocery stores and a village 'general store'.

Sub-District facilities

Smaller food stores in urban areas outside of Stafford and Stone town centres or a small supermarket within a village. This category would include for example; the Co-op stores at Rising Brook, in Stafford and Eccleshall.

Supermarkets or Superstores:-

Single level, self-service stores selling mainly food or food and non-food goods. Such developments have dedicated car parks and are located on stand alone sites or part of a major out-of-town development. Currently such shopping facilities (Tesco and Sainsburys in Stafford) are within or adjacent to existing town centres.

5.2.43 Nationally, due to constraints in town centres, increasing space requirements, the need for improved access and increasing levels of car ownership, many national food retailers have tended to look for larger sites, both within urban areas and on out-of-town sites. This trend towards out-of-town has now become established in many areas.

5.2.44 It is considered that the accommodation of major new food retail developments in existing town centres has to date, maintained a balance between convenience and comparison goods shopping provision in those centres. There are no modern out-of-town food retailing facilities in the Borough although there are a number of small convenience stores within local shopping parades and rural settlements. Stafford town centre has maintained its accessibility to the car-borne shopper and supermarket operators have continued to find suitable sites within or adjacent to the existing centre.

5.2.45 It is recognised that it is not the function of the planning system to preserve existing commercial interests or to inhibit competition between retailers or different forms of retailing and that the retail sector must generally be able to respond to consumer needs and demands. However, an important aim of the shopping policies in this plan is to maintain and enhance existing shopping provision within established shopping centres. There are distinct advantages to encouraging new investment in major convenience stores within or adjacent to these centres. These include; their central location, accessibility by public and private transport, pedestrian links with the town centre and spin offs for

existing town centre traders, and the possibility of securing through voluntary planning agreements, contributions to public transport facilities, footpaths and cycle networks which further benefits the town centre's accessibility.

- 5.2.46 Therefore, any proposals for large out-of-centre convenience stores must be carefully assessed taking account of a number of factors including economic impact, environmental considerations, traffic generation, reducing the need to travel particularly by private car and amenities of local residents. Where such developments are considered by the Borough Council to be likely to give rise to a significant loss of convenience outlets in existing centres or in the long term threaten the vitality and viability of an existing shopping centre, permission will not normally be given.
- 5.2.47 ~~In order to provide for future demand the following site has been allocated for food retail development and is illustrated on the Proposal Inset Map for Stafford as Proposal RET1 Land at Queensway/ Lammascote Road, Stafford~~
- 5.2.48 Proposals for medium sized convenience stores (for example a Kwik Save, Netto or small Co-op unit) will be encouraged to locate within or adjacent to existing town centres and recognised local shopping centres with a small parade of shops. In particular such proposals should not adversely affect the continued vitality and viability of existing local or district centres.

~~POLICY SHO11 - LARGE CONVENIENCE STORES~~

~~*The development of large convenience stores within or adjacent to the defined shopping centre boundaries of Stafford and Stone (as defined on the Inset Maps) will normally be acceptable. Proposals in other locations will only be acceptable where:-*~~

- ~~(i) *the Borough Council is satisfied that the proposal will not adversely affect the continued vitality and viability of Stafford and Stone town centres;*~~
- ~~(ii) *the highway network is capable of accommodating the traffic generated or is capable of acceptable improvement by the developer without serious local detriment;*~~
- ~~(iii) *the site is easily accessible by public transport;*~~
- ~~(iv) *there will be no environmental detriment or nuisance to any neighbouring residential accommodation by virtue of noise or other nuisance;*~~
- ~~(v) *the proposed development will not adversely affect a site of local or national nature conservation importance.*~~

Durable Goods

- 5.2.49 Nationally, the main area of expansion of durable goods sales out-of-centre has been the growth of retail warehouse parks. During the past decade a number of developments have taken place. There are two out-of-centre retail warehouse parks at Queensville and Greyfriars in Stafford accommodating uses which because of their large floorspace requirements could not be accommodated within existing centres without detrimental effect on the townscape and which by virtue of the uses they contain are complementary to existing centres rather than in competition. These areas will be the focus for retail warehouse development that cannot be accommodated within the existing centres.
- 5.2.50 In general, retail uses of a specialised nature which require extensive areas for the display of goods and include; DIY stores, garden centres and showrooms, will be acceptable in such locations.
- 5.2.51 One national trend which could affect the vitality and viability of existing shopping centres is the expansion of retail warehouse parks to include large comparison goods units which compete directly with traditional high street shops. It is recognised that a number of retailers trading concept can only be satisfied within a large retail warehouse and as such in town sites are not appropriate. This is largely because sites in town can be; difficult to obtain, expensive in terms of rent and rates, difficult to service and difficult for customers to pick up goods particularly where main shopping streets are pedestrianised.
- 5.2.52 In order to provide for future demand, a site has been allocated for retail warehousing and is illustrated on the Inset Proposals Map for Stafford as RET2 Land at Staffordshire General Infirmary - Stafford. Full details of this proposal are given at paragraphs 5.3.11 to 5.3.22.
- 5.2.53 Whilst the retail warehouse format has proved successful for many retailers, the shopping policies in this plan are aimed at protecting and enhancing existing shopping provision. Where such developments, individually or as a result of the cumulative effects of such proposals, are likely to seriously threaten the continued vitality and viability of an established shopping centre, planning permission will not be given.
- 5.2.54 Where permission is granted for development on existing retail warehouse parks, floorspace limits will be imposed through the use of conditions to prevent such locations developing into smaller (hybrid) shopping centres which will compete directly with Stafford and Stone shopping centres.

~~POLICY SHO12 – QUEENSVILLE AND GREYFRIARS RETAIL WAREHOUSE PARKS~~

~~Planning permission will normally be given to applications including showrooms and stores retailing goods of a bulky nature within the Queensville and Greyfriars Retail Warehouse Parks as shown on the Stafford Area Inset Map.~~

~~POLICY SHO13 – RETAIL WAREHOUSE PARKS CONTROL OF GOODS SOLD~~

~~When approving any development within a retail warehouse park, the Council will normally impose conditions such that the shopping role of established centres is protected. These conditions may specify, amongst other things, minimum and/or maximum store sizes, and the type of goods to be sold.~~

~~POLICY SHO14 – DURABLE GOODS RETAILING GENERAL~~

~~Other applications for the sale of durable goods on a Retail Warehouse Park or elsewhere will be considered against the following criteria;~~

- ~~(a) the Borough Council is satisfied that singly or in a combination with other outstanding retail proposals, the vitality and viability of Stafford and Stone town centres will not be adversely affected;~~
- ~~(b) the proposed development is satisfactory in terms of road safety, highway capacity, car parking, design and impact on the local environment;~~
- ~~(c) the site is easily accessible by public transport, by foot or by cycle;~~
- ~~(d) the proposed development will not adversely affect a site of local or national nature conservation importance.~~

Local Shops

5.2.55 In general, policies in this plan aim to guide new shopping development towards established town centres. It is recognised that some types of smaller shops can provide a vital role in local communities. A number of small shopping parades, groups of shops and individual corner shops are found throughout Stafford, Stone and the villages. These shops contribute to the overall level of shopping provision in the Borough and can help to provide an accessible local service. The availability of shops to meet local needs is particularly important to those without transport and for those people with disabilities who are unable to make journeys to larger centres or food stores to shop for their every day needs.

5.2.56 The importance of remaining facilities cannot be underestimated and it is important to protect existing viable shop units that meet local needs and

prevent their change of use to non-food uses. This plan seeks to preserve the best service possible for local residents.

- 5.2.57 In case of new development, favourable consideration will be given to proposals for village shops and post offices in rural areas and individual neighbourhood shops in urban areas which are intended to cater for the immediate locality.

POLICY SHO15 SMALL SCALE RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

Applications for small scale retail development, outside the defined shopping centres of Stafford and Stone, will be allowed where they will not be in conflict with residential amenity or the character of the built environment and where they satisfy servicing, parking and access requirements.

Landscaping Provision in New Retail Development

- 5.2.58 The Borough Council expects that all proposals for retail development within the Borough will be accompanied by landscape proposals having due regard to opportunities for positive enhancement of townscape. Landscape and townscape proposals should be based upon consideration of townscape benefits at the initial stages of development proposals and so integrated into the overall development scheme. Landscaping should not just be on left over pieces of land but carefully considered as part of the overall layout of a scheme. Opportunities may exist to establish or improve links between the town centres and residential areas through the provision of footpaths and/or cycleways.

POLICY SHO16 - DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS FOR NEW RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

New retail development should be well designed and, where appropriate, incorporate landscaping proposals which make a positive contribution to the character of the built environment.

Landscaping proposals submitted with applications should indicate the species, size, density and location of trees and shrubs in sufficient detail to enable the contribution of the scheme to the townscape to be assessed.

5.3 Proposed Allocations for New Retail Development

Proposal RET1 Retail Development of Land at Queensway/Lammascote Road, Stafford

The Borough Council allocates the site indicated on the Stafford Area Inset Map as RET1 for food retailing.

Location

- 5.3.1 The site has a central location with high development potential. The site is located approximately a quarter of a mile from Stafford's principal shopping centre and is adjacent to the town centre ring road.

Background and Description

- 5.3.2 The site comprises an area of 3.77 hectares which includes the Fire Station and Council Depot.
- 5.3.3 This area, which is considered to be adjacent to the Town Centre as defined on the Stafford Town Centre Inset Map, is bounded to the north-west by Queensway, to the west by Riverway and to the south by the River Sow. Along the riverside is a public footpath which provides an important pedestrian link into the main shopping centre.
- 5.3.4 Any development will be expected to be sympathetic to its riverside location. The River Sow lies within Stafford's Green Network as defined on the proposals map and therefore the opportunity exists to improve the environmental quality of this area of Stafford.
- 5.3.5 Development proposals will also need to take account of a site of archaeological importance (No. 3175, unknown road) which lies adjacent to the site.

Design and Landscaping

- 5.3.6 The prominence of the site requires that any development must be of a very high design standard and include high quality landscape provision. Development proposals should include retention of the public footpath by the River Sow and enhancement of this pedestrian link to the town shopping centre.

Water Supply and Drainage

- 5.3.7 Although the site lies outside of the flood plain of the River Sow, the Environment Agency will require a detailed level survey from the developer and will recommend minimum finished floor levels. The Environment Agency will require 8 metre maintenance margin on either side of the River Sow. Lammascote Drain runs along the eastern boundary of the site; Grantham

~~Brundell and Farran consultants will specify the requirements for the maintenance of this watercourse.~~

~~5.3.8 The developer must ensure that there is adequate capacity in the public sewerage system. Several major sewers cross this site, which is of strategic importance to the Stafford drainage system being adjacent to the Lammascote Pumping station. No development will be permitted to take place over these sewers. Access to the pumping station and sewers for repair, maintenance and operations must be maintained at all times. The presence of development could also affect the structural integrity of the public sewers.~~

~~5.3.9 Failure of the public sewerage system in this locality, including the pumping station, would have a catastrophic effect on the environment in particular major pollution of the River Sow. An agreement under the provision of Sections 55/56 of the Water Industry Act 1991 for the provision of water supply mains to serve the proposed development may be required.~~

Highways and Access

~~5.3.10 A traffic study undertaken by the County Council suggests that off-site highway improvements will be required and that development may need to be constrained by the ability of the highway network to accommodate increased traffic. The timing of the development may require some reconsideration to be given to the proposals included in the study, although these are likely to be changes in detail rather than of substance.~~

PROPOSAL RET2 – Retail Development of Land at Staffordshire General Infirmary, Stafford.

The Borough Council allocates the site indicated on the Stafford Area Inset map as RET2 for retail warehousing purposes.

Location

~~5.3.11 The site is located on the edge of Stafford Town Centre. The area is bounded to the east by Foregate Street and to the south by Sainsbury's. To the west is the River Sow and the Doxey Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest. The River Sow is part of Stafford's Green Network. The site immediately adjoins the defined existing Greyfriars Retail Warehouse Park to the north.~~

Background and Description

~~5.3.12 In order to ensure the continued vitality and viability of the town centre it is desirable that pressures for new retail development are focused into the town centre or on land on the edge of the town centre.~~

~~5.3.13 Whilst there are two retail warehouse parks in Stafford, both of these are now virtually fully occupied and it is appropriate to provide a site for future requirements that not only helps to underpin the town centre but is accessible~~

to all sectors of society. The proximity of the infirmary site to the town centre achieves these objectives.

- 5.3.14 — At present, some residents of the town travel considerable distances to Stoke-on-Trent, Cannock and Merry Hill where a wider choice of retail warehouse space is provided. By providing for more of that demand in Stafford, this local plan proposal will also encourage a reduction in shopping journeys, a saving in mileage travelled and a reduction in the reliance on the car.
- 5.3.15 — The main hospital building makes a significant contribution to the townscape of this area of Stafford. The Borough Council wish to see the main hospital building retained whilst allowing development to the rear of the site. This site will provide an opportunity to improve the environmental quality of this area of Stafford.
- 5.3.16 — Given the prominence of the site, and the retention of the main part of the hospital building, any development should be of a high design standard and include landscaping provision. As part of the site, the corner of Glover Street and Foregate Street will require particularly careful handling. The design and layout of the development should make provision for servicing the area by public transport and exploit the opportunities for the pedestrian links between the site and the town centre.

Water Supply and Drainage

- 5.3.17 — An agreement under the provisions of Sections 55/56 of the Water Industry Act 1991 for the provision of water supply mains to serve the proposed development may be required.
- 5.3.18 — The Environment Agency has recently produced an aerial survey of this area. The survey indicates that a strip of land adjacent to the river and on the same side as the site, some 60 metres wide, is subject to flooding. The River Sow, (main river) is situated to the rear of this site and the precise extent of the river floodplain will require identification by a level survey. In addition an 8 metre access/maintenance strip must be maintained adjoining the on-site watercourse. Surface water drainage will be to the local drainage system.
- 5.3.19 — The developer must ensure that there is adequate capacity in the public sewerage system. Foul water on-site separation of flows will be required.
- 5.3.20 — In addition to the above, there is also a need to ensure that any drainage from development of this site does not adversely affect the Doxey-Tillington Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest wetland system.

Highways and Access

- 5.3.21 — Primary vehicular access on to the site is currently from a minor road feeding into the A34 and is shared with the Superbowl development and existing retail warehousing. Development proposals should not include direct access on to the site from Foregate Street. The alternative means of access is via Greyfriars Place. Since the highway authority has stated that the northerly

~~junction with Foregate Street has no reserve traffic capacity, it is desirable to provide a high capacity roundabout junction at the southern junction of Greyfriars Place with Foregate Street. This should not prejudice Foregate Street's primary function as a through route for traffic.~~

- ~~5.3.22 In view of the site's established land use which already results in traffic disgorging into Greyfriars Place, it would prove difficult to oppose change of use or redevelopment. In addition, the site's proximity to the town centre will enable it to encourage shoppers to have less reliance on the car and to assist this a lower level of car parking provision will be sought. The criterion for determining the development ceiling would be where new development caused unacceptable interruption to the free flow or safety of traffic on Foregate Street. Detailed proposals for the site will be the subject of a Traffic Impact Assessment and any off-site highway works will be undertaken at the developer's expense.~~