

Economy and Investment Cabinet Advisory Committee – 4 March 2015

Head of Economic Regeneration & Planning

District Centres – Briefing Paper

Overview

This briefing paper identifies the role and function of District Centres within the City & County. It outlines recent regeneration activity and considers potential mechanisms for investment that may be of interest to the CAC's future research.

1. The importance of vibrant district centres in supporting local communities and economies

The City & County has a wide range of District Centres that are well placed to serve the main concentrations of the resident population. District Centres are an important part of the retail hierarchy and are significant to the social and economic fabric of community life, meeting the needs of local residents for most day-to-day shopping purchases and helping to support other essential services. The development and enhancement of these centres, particularly in areas of proposed residential growth, will help to sustain communities, reduce the overall length of car journeys and provide essential shopping facilities to meet the needs of less mobile persons within the community.

The national and local planning policy context for District Centres is set out in Appendix 1.

2. Swansea's District Centres

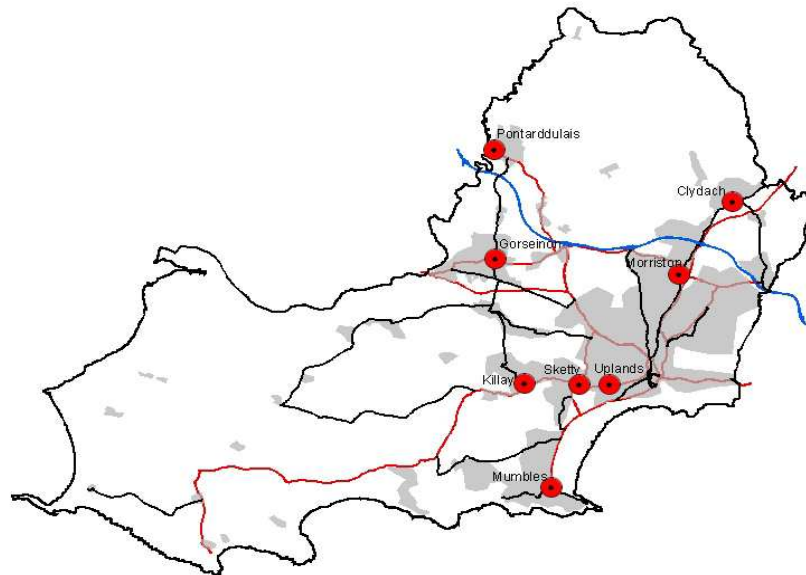
A District Centre is a large grouping of shops, together with other appropriate supporting non-retail facilities and services, which are laid out to collectively form a coherent shopping centre. They normally feature more than 50 units and serve population catchments of greater than 15,000. The majority of District Centre commercial units are shops, and normally include at least one anchor supermarket and/or large store that sells mainly convenience goods.

Convenience goods' are those items purchased on a regular basis for relatively immediate consumption such as food, drinks, newspapers, magazines, tobacco and confectionary. 'Non-retail facilities and services' encompass a range of uses besides retail (Class A1). This includes banks, building societies, restaurants, cafés, pubs, launderettes, healthcare facilities, public libraries, leisure facilities, places of worship and buildings for community uses. Not all of these uses will be present in every District Centre.

District Centres are considered second only to the City Centre in terms of sequential order in the established retail hierarchy. Therefore, whilst the primary

focus for significant new retail and enterprise development within Swansea is the City Centre, where this is not feasible or appropriate such investment should be directed towards District Centre locations.

Traditional district shopping centres are distributed across the County at the following locations:



The Council's UDP designates the shopping park at Fforestfach, known as 'Parc Fforestfach', as a 'modern district centre'. However this area comprises only 15 units in mainly large format, warehouse style buildings that are typical of out-of-centre retail parks, together with a large foodstore. It is also supported by a large area of adjacent free car parking that caters to the needs of the car borne shopper. In view of the markedly different character and form of Parc Fforestfach as compared to the traditional district centres identified above, this area has been excluded from this review.

3. District Centre Profiles

Each of the City & County's District Centres has been appraised in terms of their characteristics, form and function. These appraisals have taken into account various criteria, including: catchment area; population within walking distance; number and range of shops; supporting non-retail facilities; accessibility by non-car travel modes; and level of car parking provision. Appendix 2 summarises the quantitative data collated as part of the above appraisals. It highlights the number of A1 shops and the proportion of shops in relation to all commercial units. The prevalence of post offices, pharmacies and pubs within each Centre have been separately identified in view of the importance attributed to their retention in national guidance.

The size of the catchment area for each District Centre has been estimated using Geographical Information System (GIS) techniques. This provides broad indications of potential population demand based on drive times. Since these are indicative figures, with inevitable overlap of catchment areas, they are intended only to illustrate the relative differences between each District Centre. The potential walk-in catchment population for each Centre is also identified.

A brief profile of each District Centre summarising their key characteristics attributes and boundaries is set out in Appendix 3. The profiles highlight certain local issues, such as traffic problems and poor retail representation that could pose challenges to maintaining vitality and attractiveness. The boundaries of all District Centres in Swansea were appraised and agreed during the formulation of the UDP (2008). The boundary plans also highlight the location of all Council owned/leased car parks that serve each area. These boundaries have been reviewed as part of the LDP process and were included as part of the recent public consultation on the Draft Proposals Map. The proposed amendments to the boundaries are shown in Appendix 4

4. A snapshot of regeneration activity in district centres and nearby sites

Gorseinon - 2001-2005 major Regeneration initiative funded by WG/CCS as a response to closure of Bryngwyn Works

- § Establishment of Regeneration Trust - Pentre Mentre
- § Redevelopment of Bryngwyn Works - housing
- § Refurbishment of industrial units - West St, Garngoch
- § Infrastructure works at Garngoch Ind Estate
- § Environmental Improvements to approaches to Town and Town Centre - Bus Station (GH for spend details)
- § 46 Building Enhancement grants in Town Centre worth £347,623

Clydach - 2001-04 major community led regeneration initiative

- § Construction of Forge Fach
- § Establishment of Development Trust
- § Environmental works to Town approaches
- § Major investment in infrastructure and property improvements at Players Estate
- § £230k invested in Town Centre public realm
- § 15 property grants worth £130k awarded in Town Centre

Western Valleys SRA - TIG Programme 2011-13

- 4 property grants worth £74k awarded in Town Centre (High St and Hebron Road)

Pontarddulais Western Valleys SRA – TIG Programme 2011-13

- 5 Property grants worth £54k awarded in St Teilo Street
- Private sector investment (Tesco and Housing projects)
- Public Realm Enhancement Programme (Griffiths contract 2013) with total spend of £531k (including Tesco S106 funding)

RDP 2011 – 31 Dec 2014

Various improvement projects completed via RDP in Pontarddulais, on the main high street as well as in the comprehensive school grounds and Coed Back Park.

Institute refurbishment St Teilo Street (RDP/Western Valleys SRA)	£375k
Llandeilo Talybont churchyard/access and interpretation	£10k
MultiUse Games Area – Pontarddulais comp	£39k
Canolfan y Bont	
• Centre management/operation over 3 years	£115k
• Roof strengthening work	£12k
• Solar panels	£7k
Noakes car park improvements St Teilo Street	£17k
Pontarddulais heritage/walking route signage	£3k
Outdoor classroom pathway access Pontarddulais Comp	£4k
Pontarddulais Scout hut upgrades	£6k
Pontarddulais Railway Station enhancements	£12k
Pontarddulais – Coedback park	<u>£8k</u>
	Total £583k 1 Mar

Mumbles 2002- 2012

- Mumbles Tourism Investment Programme - various public realm infrastructure and environmental improvements including new railings, fencing, lighting, bollards and bins.
- Street lighting improvement scheme completed on Mumbles Road from the junction with Newton Road to Verdi's café. Also new replacement play equipment has been installed at Southend gardens
- Swansea Bay Strategy & Action Plan prepared by the City and County of Swansea in February 2008 which set out a range of policies and proposals for new developments and enhancements for the Bay and

identified a number of key projects to be brought forward for Mumbles. Major new schemes including Mumbles Pier and foreshore, and Oystermouth Square will be largely private sector led and funded. The City and County of Swansea has put significant effort and resources towards supporting these projects, by preparing planning guidance and ensuring extensive engagement has been undertaken with the community in particular on the Pier and foreshore scheme.

- Tourism and heritage projects include restoration and conservation work at Oystermouth Castle along with the provision of new visitor facilities and educational space. This £3 million scheme has been funded through the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Welsh Government through Cadw, the European Regional Development Fund and Visit Wales. A small visitor facility at Knab Rock includes public toilets, showering facilities, changing rooms, an office and a tourism information distribution point.

5. Mechanisms for securing future investment

(A) The Local Development Plan

Recognising and responding to issues and pressures facing District Centres is considered essential if their continued health and success is to be maintained. These issues are set out in Appendix 6 together with the current policy response. This policy position is currently being reviewed as the LDP is reaching a critical stage in its formation with the anticipated publication of a Deposit Draft in early Summer 2015.

One of the important pieces of technical evidence required to underpin the Council's future retail policy and strategy will be an up to date County wide retail assessment. Measures to support the future viability and attractiveness of the County's District Centres are clearly an integral to this and are sought as part of a current contract for a retail and leisure capacity and impact study. The findings of this study will inform the Draft Deposit Plan and will also involve the following areas of work in relation to District Centres updating the work last carried out in 2009:

- Undertake health check assessments and identify proposals/strategies for enhancing District Centre's role as viable community hubs. This should include appraisal of:
 - Key health indicators
 - Current patterns of usage of centres and their vitality;
 - Deficiencies or gaps in existing provision;
 - Specific threats to future vitality and viability;
 - The existing and future role/function of centres;
 - Designated boundaries of centres; and
 - The suitability of existing definitions of primary and secondary frontages

- Undertake a household survey using an appropriate sample size and covering an appropriate geographic area that considers City Region spending patterns. The survey should be designed to establish shopping habits of households within the defined cordon for convenience and comparison goods and leisure spending – including at District Centres

Identified environmental and physical infrastructure deficiencies arising out of this assessment will feed into the 'Infrastructure Planning Study' for the LDP for consideration of whether they would be eligible for Community Infrastructure Levy funding, or if contributions from up to 5 developments would need to be pooled for funding through S106 agreements. Certain specific improvements have already been identified for Pontarddulais via the Transportation and Development Study by Report Hyder Consulting (UK).

(B) Traditional Grant Funding Sources

In terms of future grant funding opportunities for regeneration work, there is scope to consider applying to HLF funding for Townscape Heritage funding for Morriston, linked to Hafod Copperworks regeneration. There would also appear to be scope to bid to new RDP in the autumn for contributions towards Clydach, Gorseinon and Pontarddulais. However, in a deteriorating financial climate, grant pots, match funding and staff resources to manage projects will prove increasingly difficult.

(C) Other Delivery Mechanisms

As the Council shifts from deliverer to facilitator, the CAC may wish to research alternative delivery mechanisms for investment in district centres. These may include:

i) Community Action Transformation Fund. The Fund, established by the City and County of Swansea to support the delivery of the Community Action strand of the Sustainable Swansea project, will provide initial funding to assist community groups to run council services locally and/or facilitate the transfer of community assets. The aim is to facilitate the building of community capacity for self-help, to utilise community assets to support local action, to increase and support voluntary sector provision and to increase co-production.

ii) Town Teams. One of the Portas Review (of the future of high streets) recommendations was to create Town Teams. The Review suggests a Town Team could include key landlords, large and small shopkeepers, council representatives with specific knowledge of planning and development, the mayor or MP, other local businesses and service providers, and local residents. The aim would be to establish a visionary, strategic and strong operational management team, focused on developing a sustainable and relevant offer for the future. The Town Team could also establish a community digital portal facilitating a frank and creative exchange of views between stakeholders. An online portal would allow people to share information, volunteer for local

schemes, find those who hold specialised knowledge, develop local delivery networks or simply access essential local services. As such the Town Team would meet in real time online to progress the daily and longer term needs and aspirations of their community.

iii) Business Improvement Districts. These are business led partnerships which are created through a ballot process to deliver additional services to local businesses. A Business Improvement District (BID) is a defined area in which a levy is charged on all business rate payers in addition to the business rates bill. This levy is used to develop projects which will benefit businesses in the local area.

There is no limit on what projects or services can be provided through a BID. The only requirement is that it should be something that is in addition to services provided by local authorities. Improvements may include, but are not limited to, extra safety/security, cleansing and environmental measures.

The body managing the BID is often a private company but can be a partnership with the local authority. Most BID bodies are not-for-profit companies. It is responsible for developing and implementing the proposal which sets out how the BID will operate. It will provide the local authority with this proposal along with the business plan and the financial management arrangements for the BID body.

The local authority will manage billing and the collection of the levy and will hold the levy in a ring-fenced revenue account on behalf of the BID body.

Business Improvement Districts have been set up in a number of countries, the first established in Canada in 1970. There are estimated to be almost 1000 BIDs in the US, 185 in the UK (32 BIDs in London alone).

British BIDS, the industry body representing UK BIDs, outline the function of BIDs: -

- to help businesses decide and direct what they want for their area;
- enabling businesses to be represented and have a voice in issues effecting their area;
- ring-fencing the BID levy for use only in the BID area;
- increase footfall;
- improve staff retention;
- reduce business costs;
- promote the area;
- facilitate networking opportunities with neighbouring businesses;
- assist in dealing with the Council, Police and other public bodies.

Swansea BID focuses on delivering improvements to car parking and transportation, safety and security, cleanliness and tidiness, monitoring and

assessment of the offer (e.g. through mystery shopper exercises), and marketing and promotion.

iv) Development Trusts. Development trusts are set up to tackle local issues and to improve the quality of life in their community. They are community organisations which:

- are owned and managed by the local community;
- aim to achieve the sustainable regeneration of a community or address a range of economic, social, environmental and cultural issues within a community;
- are independent but seek to work in partnership with other private, public and third sector organisations;
- aim to reduce dependency on grant support by generating income through enterprise and the ownership of assets. All trading surpluses are principally reinvested in the organisation or the community.

There is no set form of legal structure, and a development trust may be registered as a company limited by guarantee, a community interest company or an industrial and provident society. Many register as charities.

There are some 500 development trusts operating in the UK.

v) Community Interest Companies. A CIC is a new legal form of social enterprise, as an alternative to charities and provident societies. Providing a CIC benefits the community and does not exist for political aims, there are few restrictions on its activities e.g. a CIC may: -

- run trading enterprises to support communities;
- run a business to generate profits to support activities which benefit a community;
- benefit the community more directly, such as by running day centres, providing transport or operating other services in the community.

A CIC must make a Community Interest Statement and pass the CIC “Community Interest Test” to satisfy the Regulator that the CIC’s activities will be conducted for the benefit of the community. Every CIC must: -

- meet the Community Interest Test;
- file an annual CIC report and accounts;
- keep the community in touch with its activities;
- only use its assets and profits for the benefit of the community specified (known as the “asset lock”);
- be registered at Companies House as any other company but supplemented by a Community Interest Statement.

Appendix 1: National and Local Planning Policy Context

National Policy

Specific guidance for District Centres is set out in Chapter 10 of Planning Policy Wales (PPW). The guidance emphasises that the key national objectives are to:

- promote established town, **district**, local and village centres as the best locations for retailing, leisure and for other functions complementary to it;
- enhance the vitality, attractiveness and viability of town, **district**, local and village centres;
- secure accessible, efficient, competitive and innovative retail provision for all communities in Wales; and
- promote access to these centres by public transport, walking and cycling.

PPW makes clear that the emphasis on Town and District Centres as the most appropriate locations for new retail and other community facilities is in the interests of: sustaining communities; contributing to sustainable travel patterns; and safeguarding the vitality, attractiveness and viability of established shopping centres.

Technical Advice Note (TAN) 4: Retailing and Town Centres provides guidance on planning matters affecting the vitality and viability of District Centres. The TAN states that retail applications likely to have a large impact on a District Centre require an impact assessment. This assessment should provide evidence of its likely economic impact, as well as other impacts, upon established retail locations. This includes consideration of any cumulative effects.

Local Policy

Adopted Council policy in relation to District Centres set out in the 2008 Unitary Development Plan www.swansea.gov.uk/udp states:

Policy EC5

Developments of an appropriate type and scale that maintain or improve the range and quality of shopping facilities within designated district centres will be encouraged, along with improvements to the physical environment and the accessibility of such centres for public transport users, cyclists and pedestrians.

‘Developments of an appropriate type and scale’ are defined as those that: are compatible with the type and scale of existing outlets; are in keeping with the function and character of the centre within which they are proposed; and have no

significant adverse impact on the amenities of those living within or adjacent to the centre.

Proposals for uses other than retail (Class A1) are only be permitted where they would not have a detrimental impact on the shopping role and character of the centre and would not adversely affect the vitality, viability or attractiveness of the centre or surrounding centres, or the amenity of nearby residents.

Within traditional district shopping centres the conversion of shops or other commercial units at first floor level to residential use can, in some instances, support retail facilities and assist regeneration initiatives. At ground floor level, proposals for changes of use from commercial to residential are only supported on the fringes of existing centres where such development would help to consolidate the retail core and reinforce the vitality and viability of the centre.

The Council document 'District Centres, Local Centres and Community Facilities', available at <http://www.swansea.gov.uk/spg> was adopted as supplementary planning guidance in 2010 and identifies 8 District Centres of varying form and character that policy must strive to enhance:

- Mumbles
- Killay
- Sketty
- Uplands
- Gorseinon
- Pontarddulais
- Morriston
- Clydach

Appendix 2: District Centre Quantitative Data (2009)

Criteria	District Centres							
	Mumbles	Killay	Sketty	Uplands	Gorseinon	Pontarddulais	Morrleston	Clydach
Indicative catchment population (10 minute drivetime)	40,900	95,200	125,000	107,600	41,800	13,000	101,800	46,700
Population within 400m	1922	962	2345	3777	2838	1550	3157	1556
Population within 800m	3614	3846	6910	10675	6362	3663	6790	3707
Total no. of premises/facilities*	123	45	74	74	164	141	176	77
No. of A1 shops	77	20	28	35	59	43	59	21
No. of Supermarkets or medium sized convenience stores	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1
Pharmacy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Post Office	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
A1 shops as % of commercial units**	67	44	41	51	39	47	37	41
No. of A3 units	15	5	13	11	22	13	25	8
No. of A3 units that are hot food take aways	3	2	7	5	10	6	12	5
Community outlets within District Centre boundary***	Place of worship (X4) Community Hall Police Station				Infants School Place of worship	Place of worship (X3) Police Station GP Surgery Public Library	Place of worship (X3)	Public Library Police Station
Dedicated off-street car parks for public use	✓✓✓	✓	✓	X	✓✓✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓
Level of on street/byway parking spaces within defined boundary	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓

The data presented in the table correct at time of surveys in 2009

*Total no. of premises/facilities refers to all individual units/premises/facilities that lie within the defined District Centre boundary

**No. of commercial units is not the same as the total no of units/premises/facilities as it excludes health centres, police stations, community halls, libraries, places of worship and residential

***In some instances community outlets are located immediately adjacent to, rather than being within, District Centre boundaries. In those instances the community outlet is not featured in the matrix.

Appendix 3: District Shopping Centre Profiles and Boundaries

Mumbles

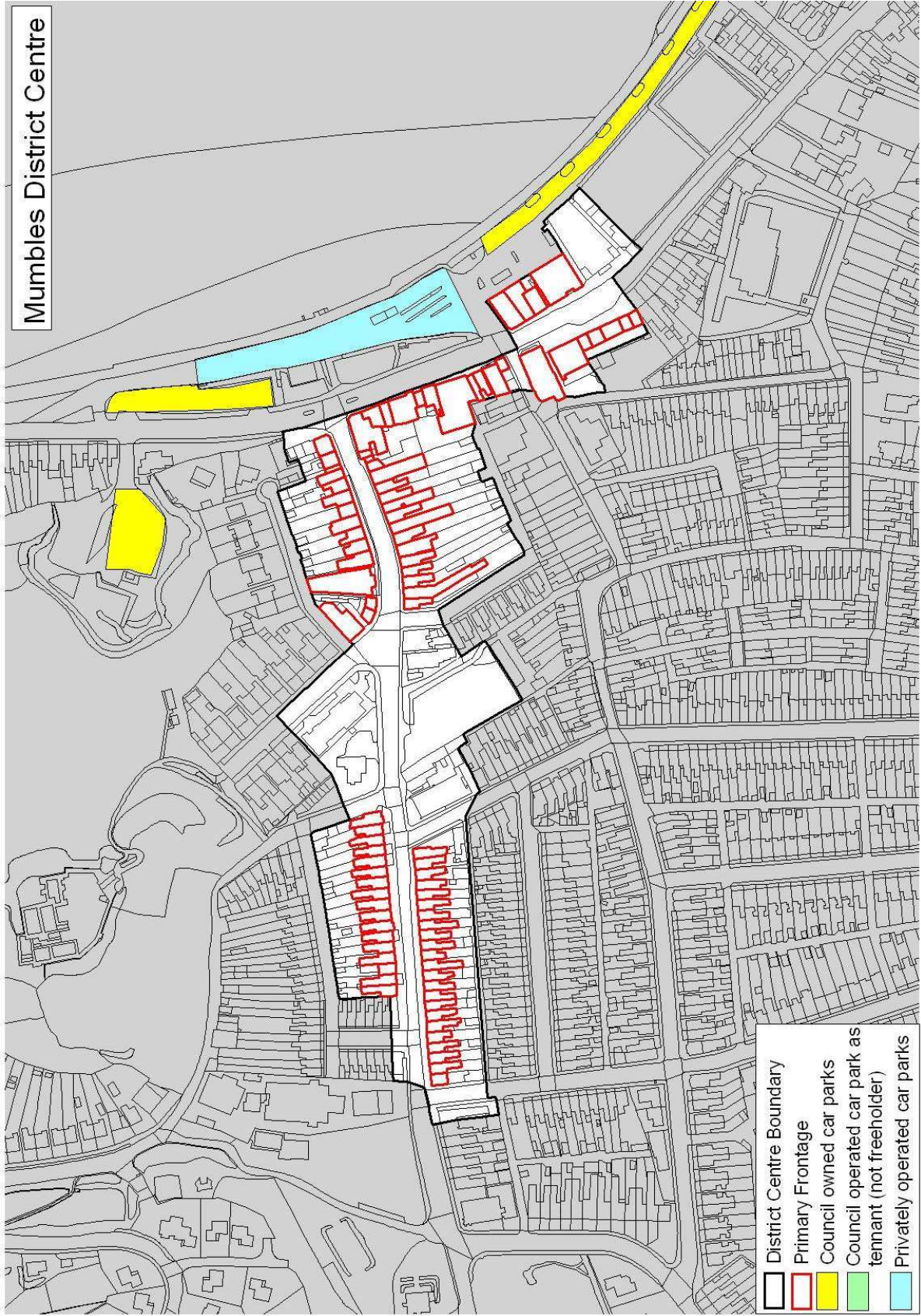
- M.1 Mumbles lies approximately 7km to the west of Swansea City Centre, and is situated on the southern curve of Swansea Bay in close proximity to the Gower AONB. As well as providing services and facilities for residents, it is also an important Centre for tourists and visitors, particularly during the summer months. The character of the area takes much from its close association with the sea, and original role as a fishing village. Many of the properties date back to the 19th Century and make a significant contribution to the area's townscape. A Conservation Area abuts the District Centre boundary at its southern end, which extends southwards and encompasses much of the attractive seafront.
- M.2 Mumbles District Centre is broadly an 'L' shape, focused on Newton Road and Mumbles Road. Newton Road can be broadly divided into 'upper' and 'lower' sections, with both considered to comprise primary retail frontage. The District Centre features a wide range of shop units, including two medium sized supermarkets on Mumbles Road, arcade units at both Castleton Walk and Tivoli Walk, and various 'boutique style' shops on Newton Road dedicated to higher end fashion and furnishings. The arcade and boutique shopping opportunities contribute much to the distinctive character of Mumbles. The high number of A1 shops as a percentage of all commercial units (between 60-70%) is far greater than any other District Centre and is illustrative of the ongoing success of Mumbles as a shopping destination.
- M.3 As well as featuring a number of cafés, bars, pubs and restaurants, Mumbles District Centre incorporates a range of other non-retail uses and facilities. This includes banks, estate agents, salons, places of worship, and office space (mainly upper floors). Centrally located on Newton Road is a large community hall (The Ostreme Centre) and Mumbles community police station.
- M.4 Located outside, but within close proximity to, the District Centre boundary are: Mumbles Library and community hall on Dunns Lane; leisure facilities on Mumbles Road (tennis courts and bowling green); a primary school on Newton Road; and Oystermouth Castle and its surrounding grounds. The Castle provides an impressive backdrop and a resource for visitors and residents alike.
- M.5 A large development site of approximately 1.2ha at Oystermouth Square occupies a prominent seafront location adjacent to the District Centre boundary. The site is the subject of an adopted development brief for a mixed use scheme to include an appropriate blend of retail, leisure, and hotel uses. There is also a vacant site on Newton Road opposite the police station, which extends to around 0.25ha. A planning application for a mixed

use development featuring 18 apartments on upper levels and 1440m² of retail (Class A1), 218m² of food and drink (Class A3) space on the ground floor fronting Newton Road was approved in 2010 subject to a section 106 agreement which has yet to be signed (2008/1199 refers). A large amusement centre on Mumbles Road (Tivoli) has recently been granted benefit of planning permission for:

Conversion and adaptation to a mix of uses comprising 3 Class A1 general retail units and a Class A1 food retail unit on the ground floor, storage for Class A1 food retail unit together with a Class A3 restaurant unit on the first floor, a health spa unit on the first floor intermediate mezzanine and a Class A3 bar unit on the second floor. The construction of 2 Class A3 units on adjacent land and reconfiguration of existing associated parking area and the subdivision of 512 Mumbles Road from a Class A1 food retail unit to 2 Class A1 general retail units (2014/0681), which was approved August 2014 subject to a legal agreement.

- M.6 Mumbles is well served by frequent bus services that connect to the City Centre. It also has a large number of off-street parking facilities. In total, the number of spaces within a short walk of the Centre is in excess of 200. This includes Pay and Display facilities at a number of points along Mumbles Road. Visitor parking currently available at the Oystermouth Square development site may reduce, depending on the precise nature of future redevelopment proposals for the site. Parking is also available on-street on Mumbles Road, Newton Road, Castle Avenue and other adjoining residential streets. These offer free parking but some spaces are restricted to short stay only.

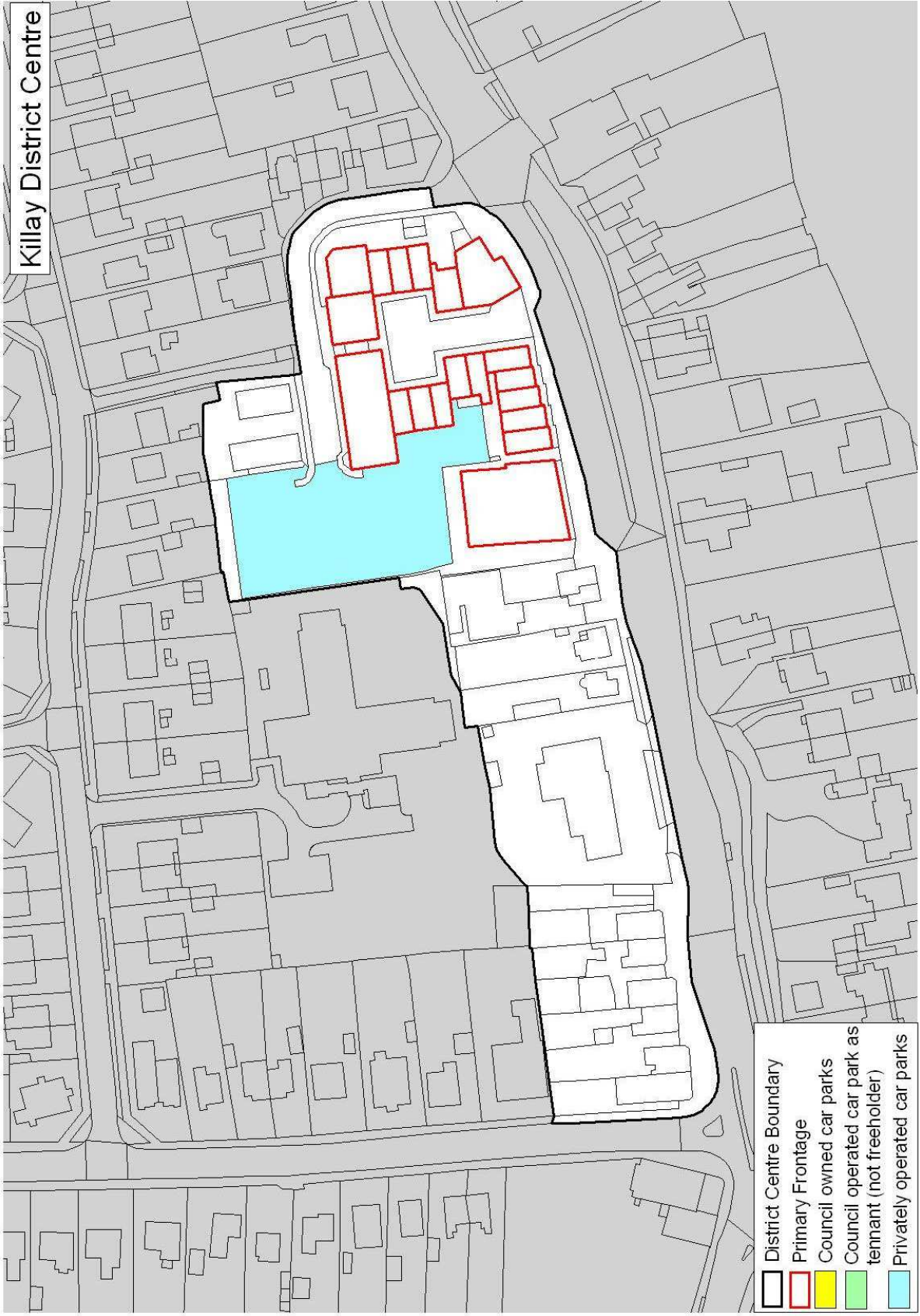
Mumbles District Centre



Killay

- K.1 Killay District Centre is dominated by a 1960's precinct known as Swan Court that lacks character and has a rather dated appearance. It lies approximately 5km west of Swansea City Centre and is the smallest of all the District Centres in Swansea. It has a frontage onto Gower Road as well as a number of units arranged around the Swan Court Precinct at its eastern end, which is the focus of the primary retail area. The Precinct has a concentration of A1 shop units but also features non-retail uses including a bank, restaurant, pub and day nursery. There are two small supermarkets within the Centre, each being less than 1000 sqm gross floor area. A1 shops also front Gower Road on its north side, but west of the supermarket these are noticeably less concentrated than the Swan Court Precinct. Retailing along this frontage has been diluted by incremental Use Class changes. Existing non-retail premises along the Gower Road frontage include a betting shop, salon, opticians, pub, offices and a residential property.
- K.2 The total number of units/premises within the defined boundary is 45, which is less than the minimum number of 50 units normally expected for District Centres. However there are a further 12 commercial units/facilities that lie within very close proximity, and it is on this basis that the critical mass is considered sufficient for Killay to warrant District Centre designation. Those commercial units and services located outside the defined District Centre boundary include a pub and estate agent fronting the south side of Gower Road, and a doctor's surgery and chapel on Goetre Fawr Road. There are also a number of units west of the defined centre fronting Gower Road, including a cosmetic clinic, estate agent, funeral home as well as A1 shops.
- K.3 Parking facilities are available on-street at marked bays on Gower Road (approx 30 spaces). In addition, an off-street car park comprising around 60 spaces is accessed via Cygnet Close. Hourly bus services run on Gower Road which connects to the City Centre as well as surrounding residential areas at Upper Killay, Dunvant and Derwen Fawr.

Killay District Centre

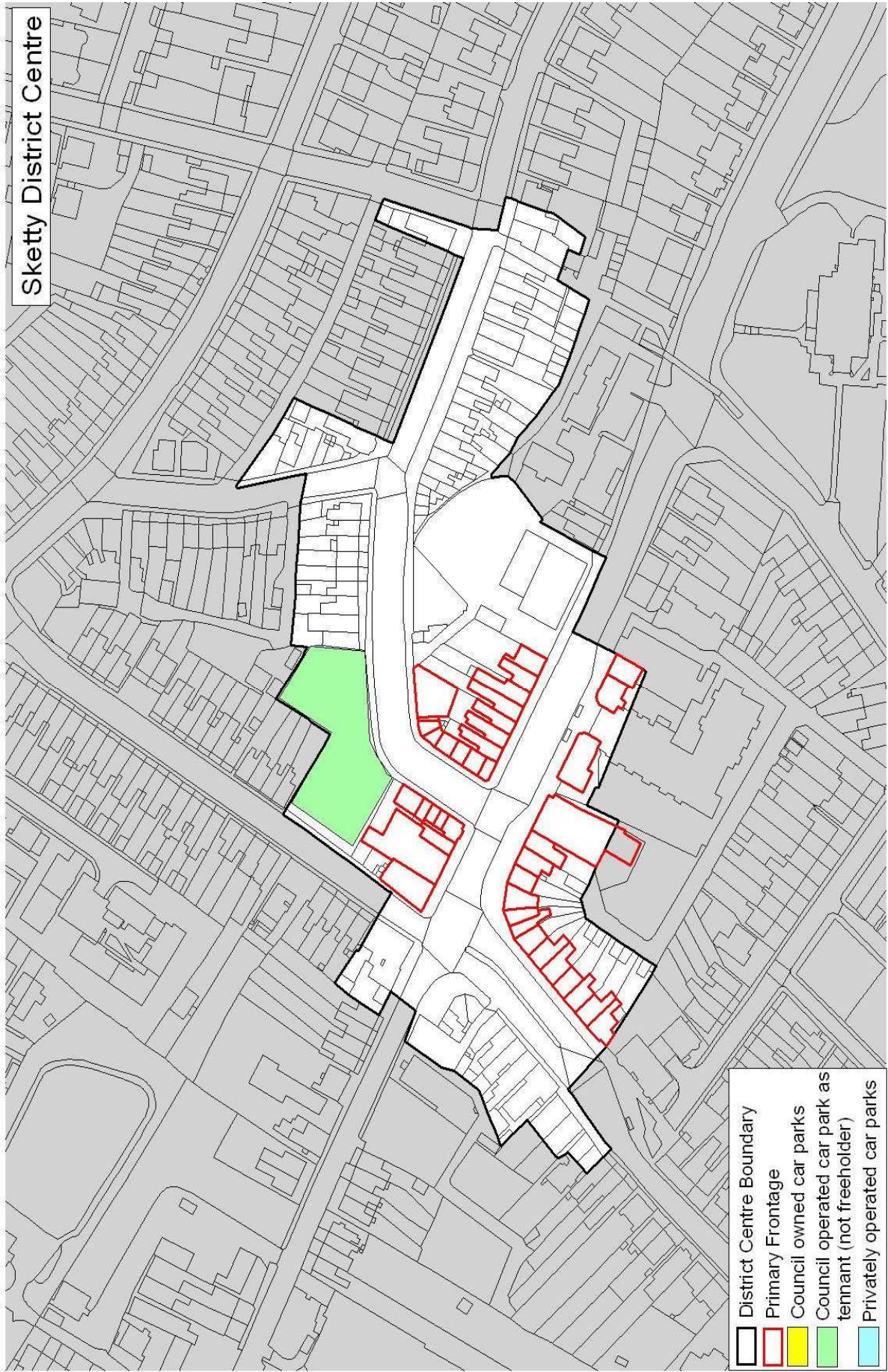


- District Centre Boundary
- Primary Frontage
- Council owned car parks
- Council operated car park as tenant (not freeholder)
- Privately operated car parks

Sketty

- S.1 Sketty District Centre is located approximately 2.5 km from the City Centre and is just over a kilometre west of the nearby Uplands District Centre. Although not one of the largest in terms of unit numbers, it has a sprawling, fragmented layout that extends along a number of streets that intersect with Gower Road, mainly Vivian Road, Dillwyn Road and Eversley Road. There is also a scattering of shops near the junction of Vivian Road and Frogmore Avenue and a public library on Vivian Road; however these lie outside the designated boundary and as such have been omitted from the analysis in Appendix 2
- S.3 In total there are 74 premises within the defined District Centre boundary. A1 shops include 2 mini market convenience stores on Gower Road, each less than 1000 sqm gross floor area, which lie at the heart of the primary retail frontage. The Centre features a range of other uses including A2 units (banks, estate agents, betting office), a number of A3 units, B1 offices and vehicle repairs (B2 use). Also within the District Centre boundary is the petrol filling station on Gower Road.
- S.3 Sketty benefits from being located on a high frequency bus route that links to the City Centre and other areas. A Pay and Display car park is located off Eversley Road, which provides around 40 spaces. There are also limited on street parking facilities, with the majority located on Eversley Road. Car parking regularly occurs at the bus lay-by located on the south side of Gower Road, contrary to traffic regulations in the area. Levels of traffic congestion and incidences of indiscriminate parking detract from the District Centre.

Sketty District Centre

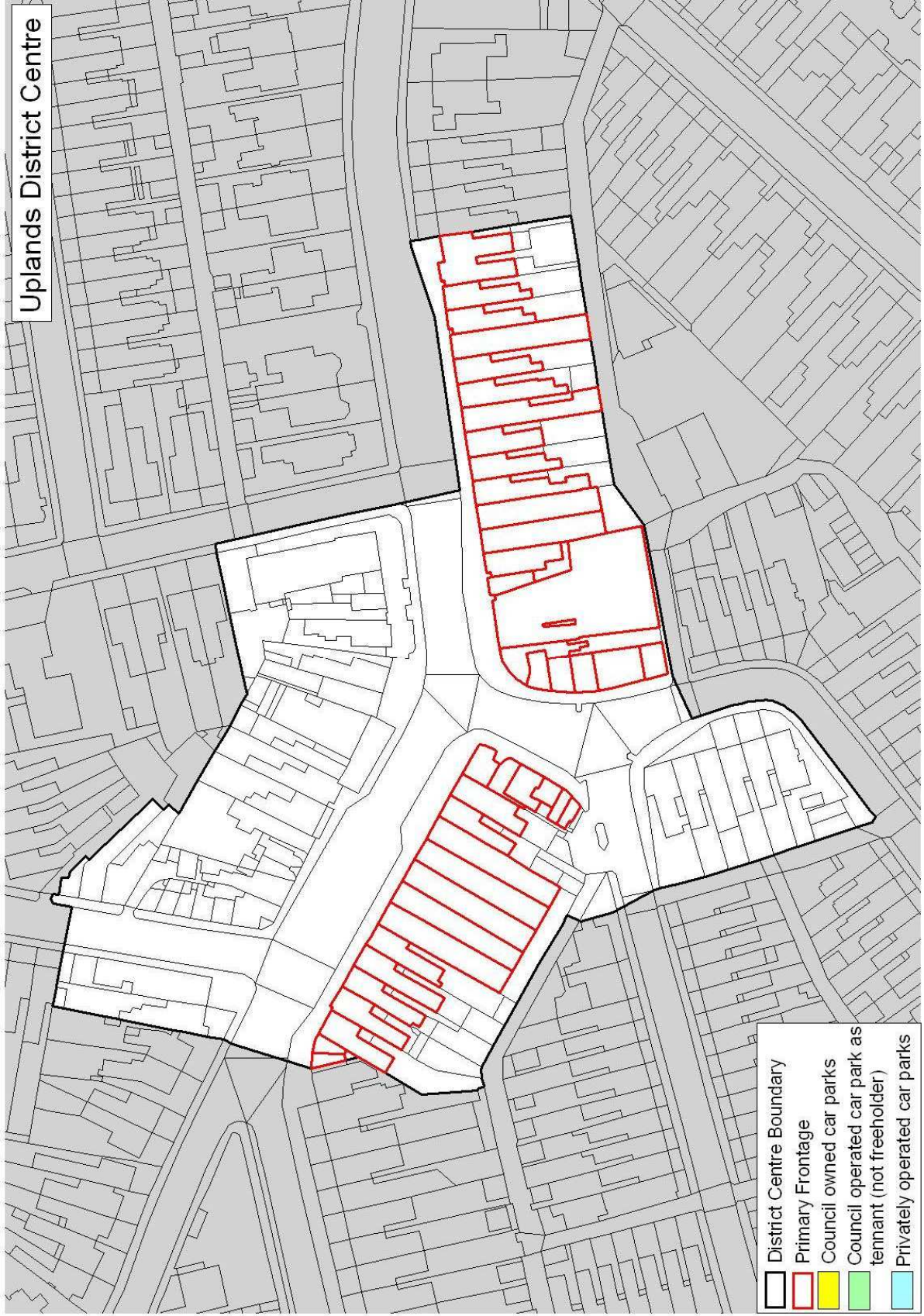


- District Centre Boundary
- Primary Frontage
- Council owned car parks
- Council operated car park as tenant (not freeholder)
- Privately operated car parks

Uplands

- U.1 The District Centre at Uplands is the nearest to Swansea City Centre, which is located less than 1 kilometre to the east.
- U.2 Like Sketty District Centre, which is located just over a kilometre further west, Uplands is divided at its centre by a signalised junction where congestion at peak times is a common problem. Uplands Crescent is a major arterial road from the City Centre to areas in west Swansea, and as such is subject to high vehicle flows. Similar to Sketty, the District Centre at Uplands has a scattered form with units distributed across the intersecting streets, including Gwydr Square, Gwydr Crescent and The Grove. Levels of congestion and road severance make the Centre less pedestrian friendly than other District Centres.
- U.3 Broadly half the 74 units within the District Centre are A1 shops; however there is also a relatively high number of A3 units that punctuate the retail frontage at its centre.
- U.4 Whilst Uplands is highly accessible by public transport, with frequent services running on Uplands Crescent, a lack of parking facilities is a significant issue affecting the District Centre. There is no dedicated off street car park and the availability of on-street parking is limited. This gives rise to regular incidences of parking infringements, which includes vehicle parking in bus lay-bys on Uplands Crescent, and general congestion.

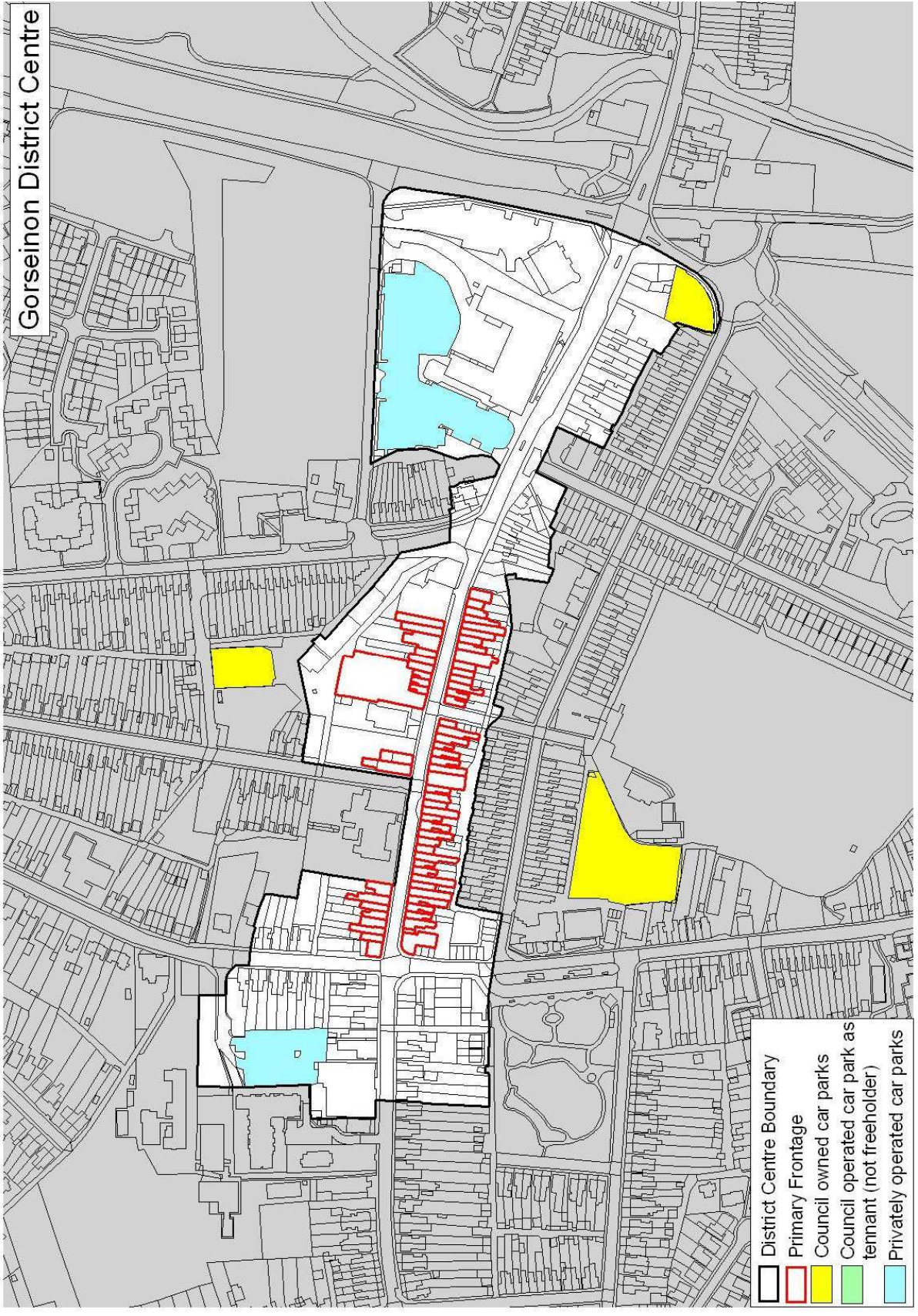
Uplands District Centre



Gorseinon

- G.1 The District Centre at Gorseinon is located to the north west of Swansea, around 7 km from the City Centre, and is one of the largest Centres in the County. It has more than 160 units within its defined boundary and benefits from a wide range of uses and services, the majority being located on High Street/Alexandra Road. Whilst broadly a linear Centre, a number of units are also located on adjoining streets at its western end at the junction of Alexandra Road and West End. Some environmental enhancements have been carried out, which provides a good standard of pedestrian surface for the primary retail area.
- G.2 The main focus for A1 shops is High Street, particularly at its western end which is the focus of the primary retail frontage. A concentration of A1 shops is also found at Alexandra Road. The District Centre has a number of pubs and a significant proportion of other A3 outlets, including hot food take away outlets. Gorseinon Infants School is located centrally at the junction of Brighton Road and High Street but lies outside the defined District Centre boundary. Characteristic of Gorseinon District Centre is the high number of B1 offices at the western end on Alexandra Road, Pontarddulais Road and West End.
- G.3 There are currently two supermarkets that anchor the Centre to the east and there is a mini market convenience store of less than 1000 sqm gross floor area towards the western end. A former supermarket to the east forming part of a 'precinct' of six units has closed following the development of two new supermarkets on separate edge of centre sites to the north and east within the past 5 years. Asda Stores Ltd secured planning permission for a 5,375 sq m store that opened in 2010, whilst Aldi gained permission for a 1,650 sq m store. The Garngoch Industrial Estate is located less than 1km to the east of Gorseinon District Centre. This Industrial Estate contains a number of retailers, which are generally large format traders, as well as a food store. Whilst there may be some degree of linked trips between these areas, further proliferation of unrestricted retailing at this out-of-centre Industrial Estate could pose a threat to the future vitality and viability of Gorseinon District Centre.
- G.4 Gorseinon benefits from its own bus station at West End and as such is highly accessible by public transport. There are also a high number of free off-street parking spaces that serve the District Centre. Parking areas are located at both the eastern and western ends adjacent to the supermarkets. In addition Lime Street car park has over 200 spaces. A number of other small car parks are accessed via Brighton Road and Lime Street. On street parking is also available and is generally restricted to 1 hour maximum stays.

Gorseinon District Centre

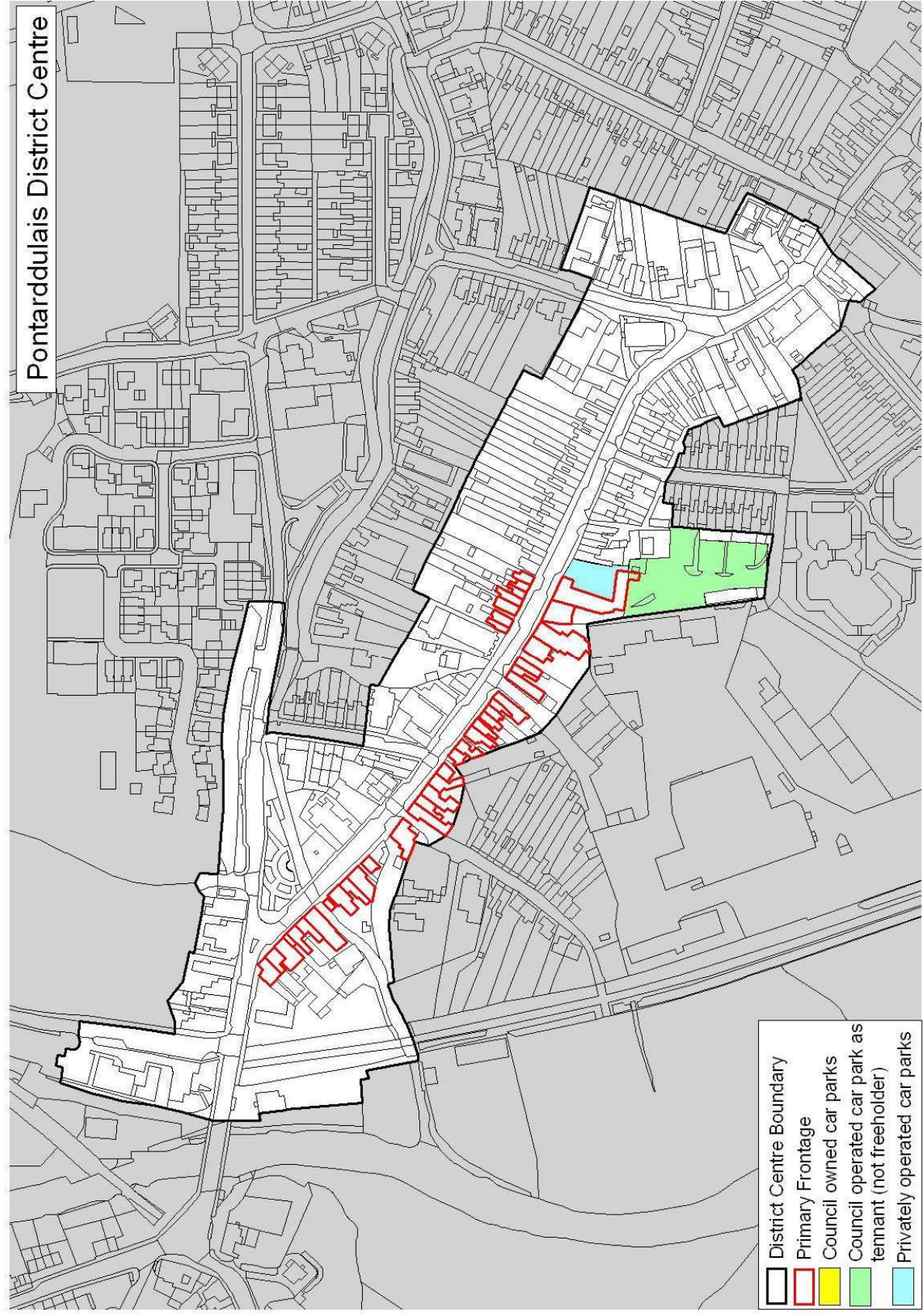


- District Centre Boundary
- Primary Frontage
- Council owned car parks
- Council operated car park as tenant (not freeholder)
- Privately operated car parks

Pontarddulais

- P.1 Pontarddulais District Centre is located the furthest distance from Swansea City Centre and lies adjacent to the boundary with Carmarthenshire in the north west of the County. It is a large District Centre of over 140 units/premises and has a very linear form that extends along St Teilo Street, which is one way in a westerly direction. Environmental enhancement works along this street have provided upgraded paving, as well as tree planting and street furniture.
- P.2 A1 shops account for around 50% of all commercial uses within the District Centre. The primary frontage is considered to be along the southern side of St Teilo Street. Pontarddulais also benefits from a good representation of non commercial premises/facilities, including a public library, police station, places of worship and a GP surgery.
- P.3 The retail frontage along St Teilo Street is punctuated by a range of other uses, and as such there is a lack of continuous shop frontages in parts of the Centre. The prevalence of residential dwellings interspersed with the commercial units is a prevailing characteristic. There is a particular concentration of residential properties on the north side of St Teilo Street close to the junction with Dulais Road.
- P.4 A medium size convenience store is located centrally on St Teilo Street. Additionally a large superstore (approx 4,000 sq m) with associated petrol filling station was granted planning permission in 2009 on a site adjacent to the District Centre boundary off New Road and has since been built.
- P.5 Pontarddulais District Centre is served by regular bus services. Until the superstore was built off street parking facilities were few with the majority of vehicle parking opportunities restricted to on-street bays on St Teilo Street. Parking is time limited in these spaces. The main off street car park is located off centre at Water Street (36 spaces). There is also a poorly located site at the rear of the existing convenience store (34 spaces) and a small site off St Teilo Street that is limited to only a few spaces and suffers from poor access/egress arrangements. However the new superstore has a large surface level car park of around 320 spaces that is available to all shoppers and visitors to Pontarddulais and not just patrons of the store.

Pontarddulais District Centre

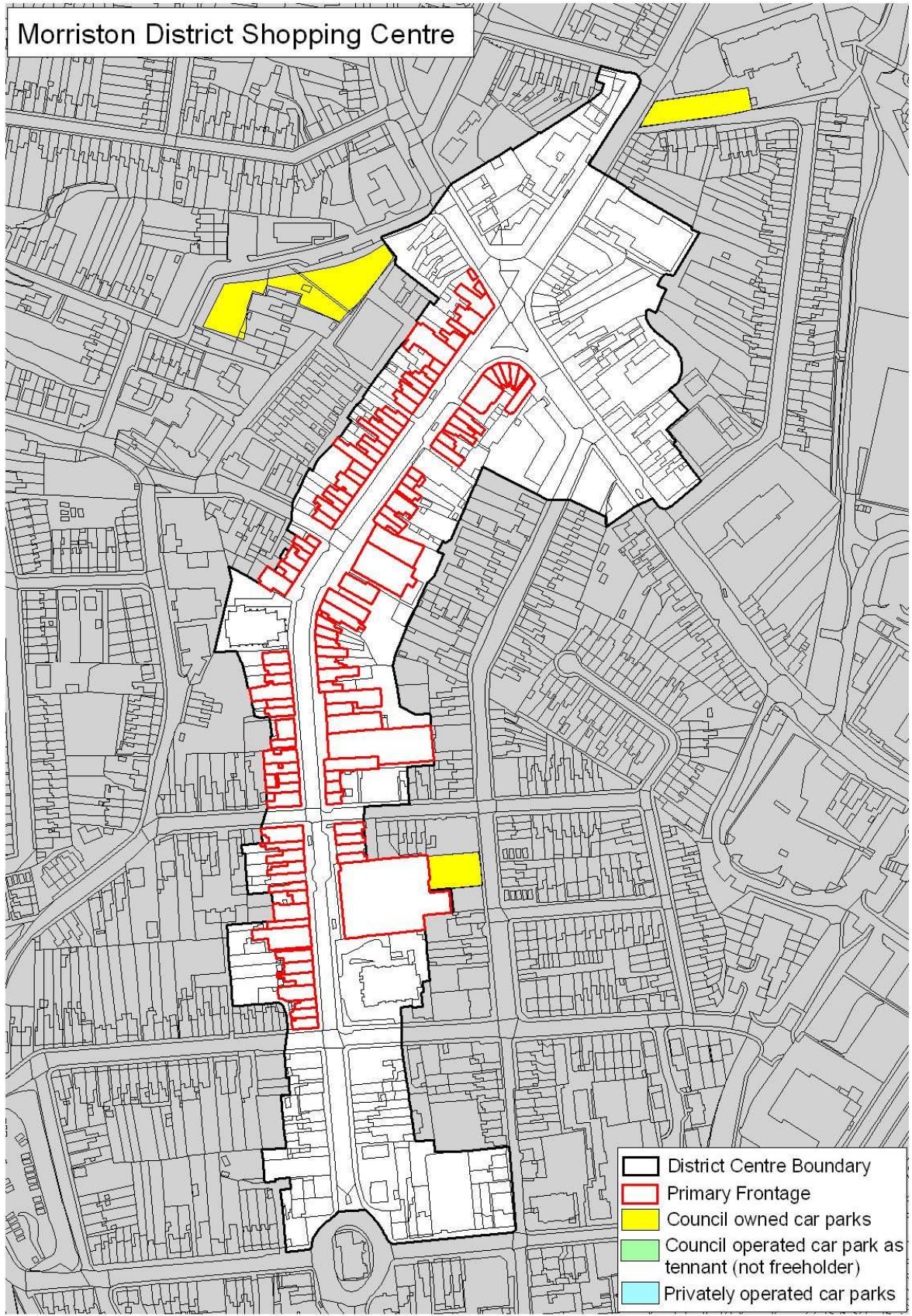


- District Centre Boundary
- Primary Frontage
- Council owned car parks
- Council operated car park as tenant (not freeholder)
- Privately operated car parks

Morrison

- MO.1 Located around 5km north of the City Centre, the District Centre at Morrison is the largest in the County in terms of unit numbers with nearly 180 premises. It is a well established District Centre serving a number of surrounding communities in north east Swansea. It offers a good range of shops and services and a large primary retail frontage; however the frontage has been incrementally eroded by changes to non retail uses.
- MO.2 Morrison faces the double challenge of competition from two nearby out-of-centre retail parks that provide both convenience and comparison goods shopping. The Enterprise Park at Llansamlet is located less than a kilometre to the east of Morrison and has long been recognised as posing a significant threat to the ongoing viability of Morrison District Centre. Additionally, the Morfa Retail Park is two kilometres south of the Centre. Both retail parks include large superstores, bulky goods retailers and some fashion retailing that can also be found on traditional high streets.
- MO.3 Whilst much of the Centre lies within a Conservation Area, it incorporates a number of buildings of poor quality and physical condition besides those that are well kept and have architectural merit. Its character is varied, featuring intricate historic buildings such as the Tabernacle Chapel, as well as new, functional designs with no distinguishing features.
- MO.4 Morrison is highly accessible by public transport, with services connecting the District Centre with outlying residential areas as well as the City Centre. On street parking is available along the length of Woodfield Street and connecting residential streets. In addition, around 120 spaces are available in off-street car parks.

Morrison District Shopping Centre



- District Centre Boundary
- Primary Frontage
- Council owned car parks
- Council operated car park as tennant (not freeholder)
- Privately operated car parks

Clydach

- C.1 Clydach District Centre is situated in the north east of the County, close to the boundary with Neath and Port Talbot. It is a long established Centre that serves a relatively large catchment area. It has a linear form with the vast majority of properties fronting onto High Street. It features around 80 units/premises which include a library, doctor's surgery, police station and pubs. It also includes a supermarket on the southern side of High Street and a small convenience store at the junction of High Street and Heol y Nant.
- C.2 The proportion of A1 shops is significantly less in Clydach than in other District Centres, with the frontage regularly punctuated by non-retail uses such as Class A3 and B1 offices. A new health centre and pharmacy accessed off High Street is situated outside, but adjacent to, the defined boundary. The primary retail frontage is relatively small and focused on the area around the convenience store and post office. Similar to Pontarddulais District Centre, there is also a high incidence of residential dwellings interspersed between the commercial and service units.
- C.3 Clydach has benefited from environmental improvement initiatives that have upgraded the public realm, pedestrian areas and overall visual appearance of the Centre. Notwithstanding this, some of the properties are in a generally poor condition.
- C.4 The Centre is served by regular bus services that connect to surrounding residential areas and Swansea City Centre. Car parking is provided by on street parking bays on High Street and an off-street car park that provides 65 spaces.

Clydach District Centre



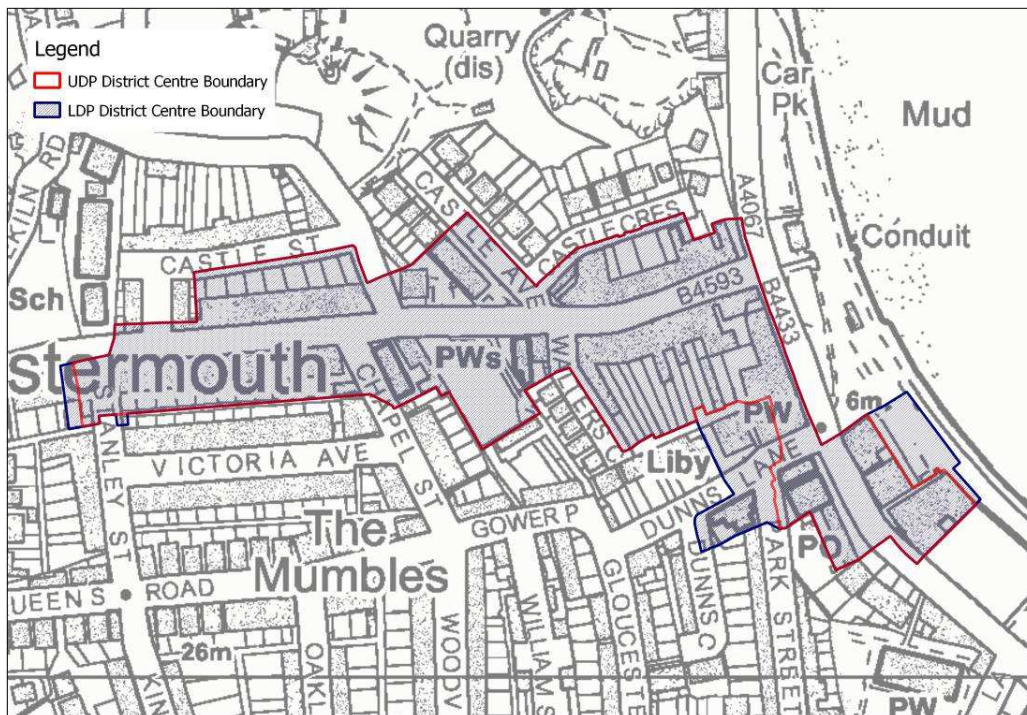
Appendix 4: Proposed Amendments to District Centre Boundaries

The maps below illustrate the proposed amendments to the currently defined District Shopping Centre boundaries as published as part of the recent Draft Proposals Map consultation. 4th Dec 2014 to 16th January 2015. These changes primarily reflect changes of use and new build that has occurred in recent years

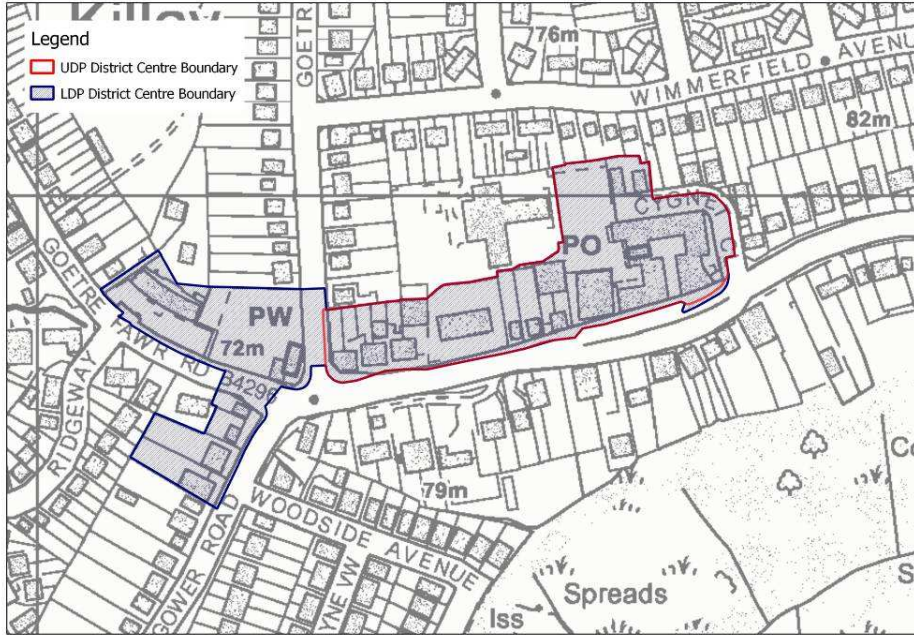
There are minor amendments proposed to expand all District Centres with the exception of Sketty. The existing boundaries are highlighted in red and the areas proposed to be incorporated are outlined in blue. The resultant District Centre is shaded. All locations apart from Mumbles, Sketty and Killay have also contracted in part as indicated by the non-shaded areas within the red boundary line. The qualitative data set out in Appendix 2 needs to be updated to reflect these changes.

The strategic retail policies of the LDP as set in the adopted LDP Preferred Strategy (2014) are also set out below.

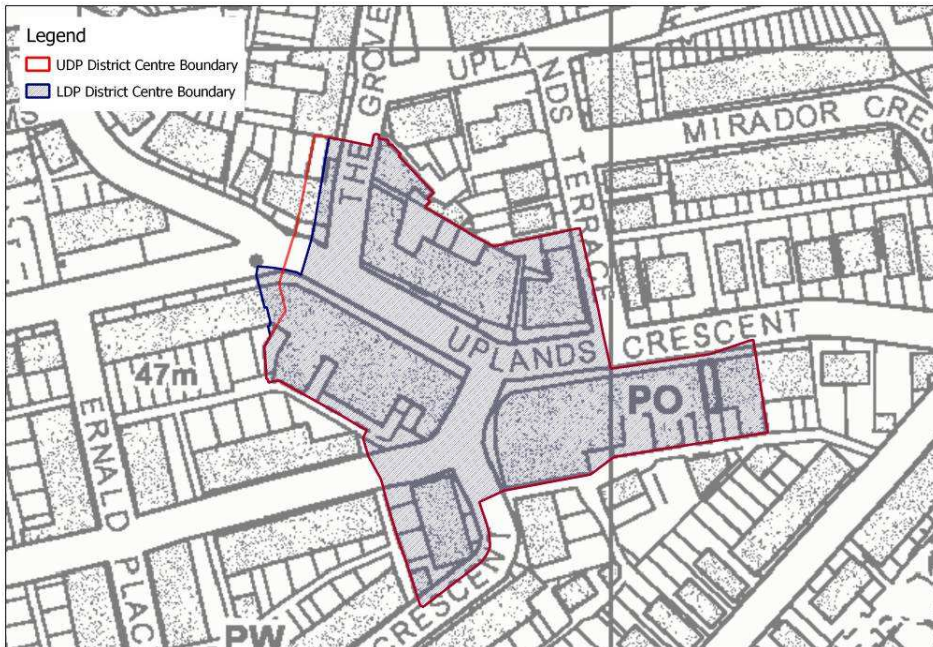
Mumbles



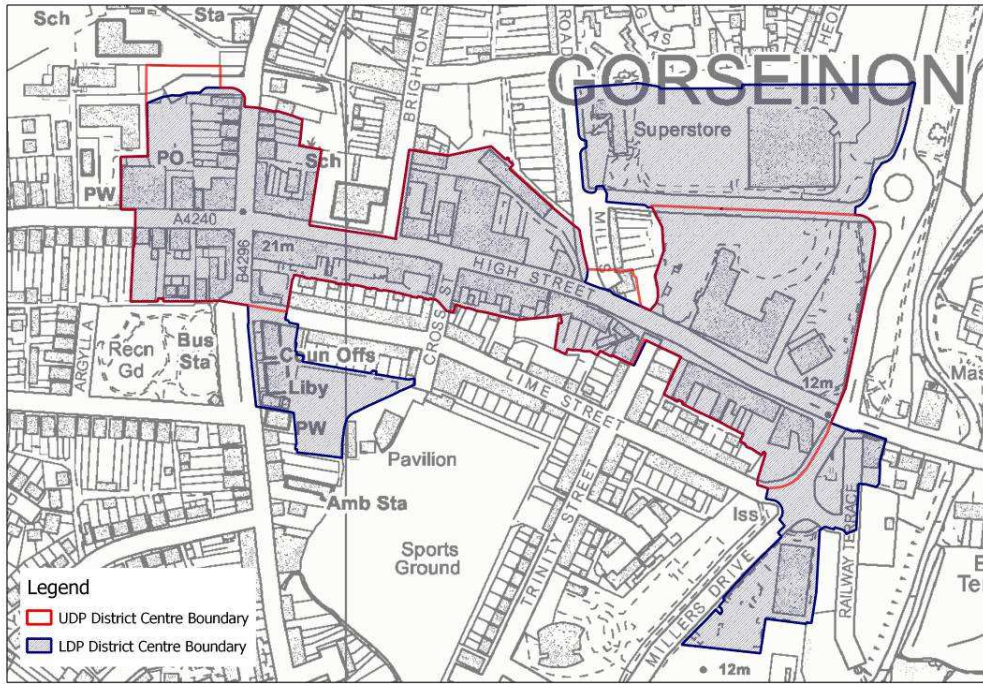
Killay



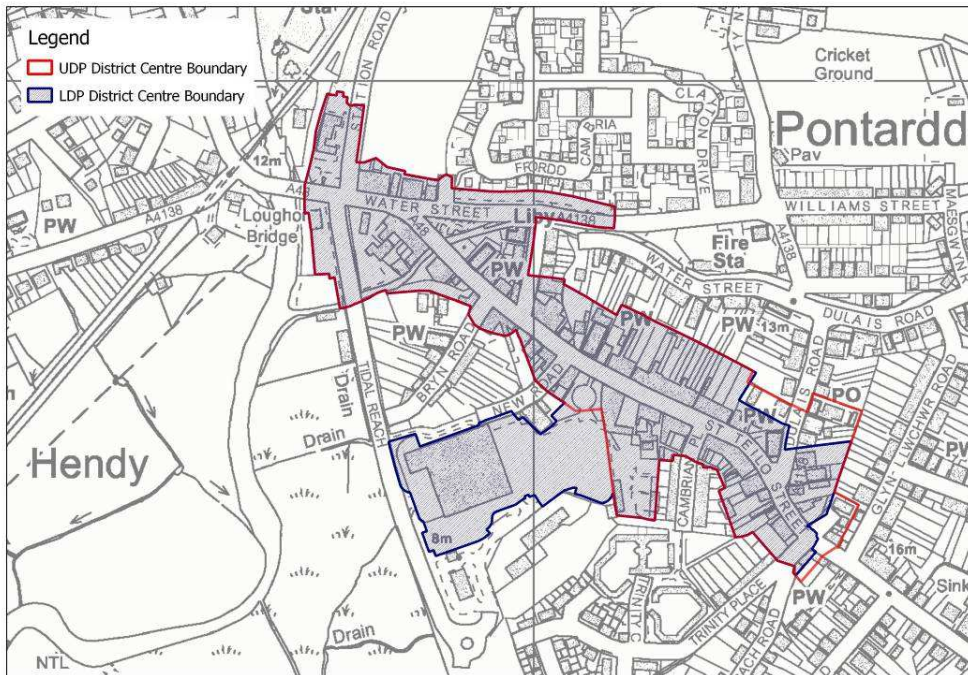
Uplands



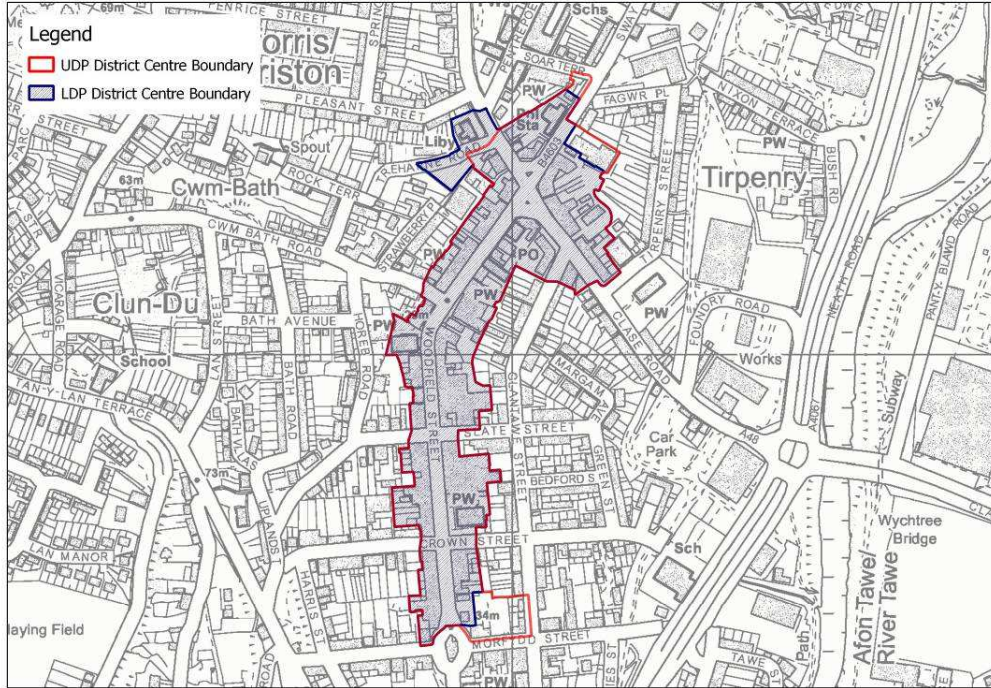
Gorseinon



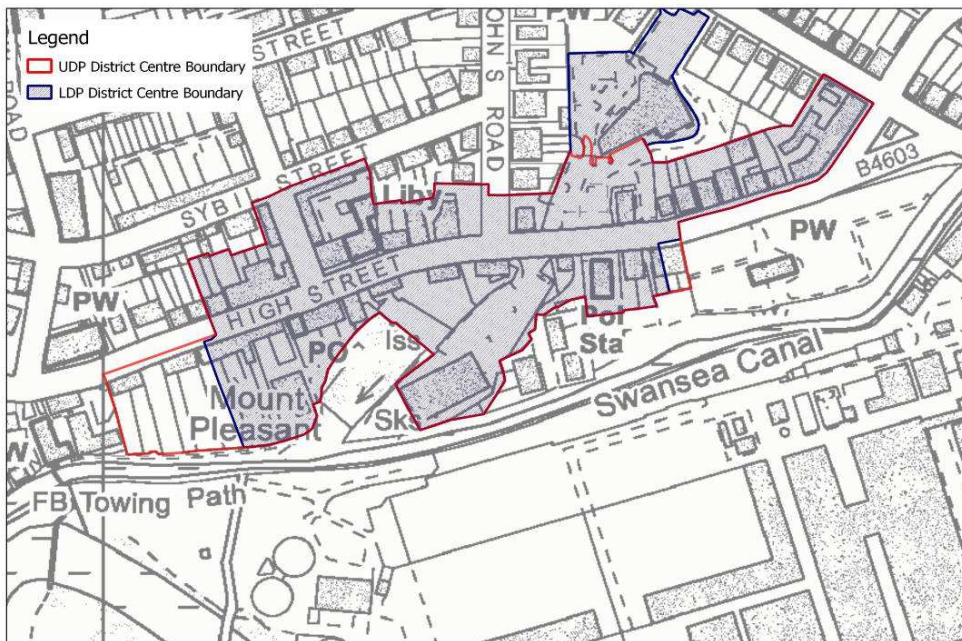
Pontarddulais



Morrleston



Clydach



LDP Preferred Strategy Retail and Leisure Policy

Retail and Leisure

- 7.40 *The retail and leisure industry is of major economic and social significance to the County, providing large numbers of jobs and underpinning much of the commercial activity within district centres and Swansea City Centre. It is imperative that the LDP provides clarity as to the preferred location for development of this nature, and in particular highlights the importance of delivering new retail and leisure investment within the City Centre.*
- 7.41 *The future success of Swansea City Centre as a destination and place to visit is heavily reliant on its ability to create the right balance of retail and leisure experiences, along with supporting uses.*
- 7.42 **District Centres** *also need to retain appropriate retail opportunities to ensure they are vibrant and attractive locations that are well provided to support the communities they serve. This includes providing for an appropriate range and choice of convenience retailing facilities to meet day to day shopping needs.*
- 7.43 *Alongside facilitating appropriate retail and leisure development within centres, it is imperative that policy is clear in terms of the strategy for out-of-centre retailing.*

Policy 10: Retail and Leisure

*Retail and leisure development that is best located within the City Centre or **District Centres** will be resisted at out-of-centre locations unless exceptional circumstances justify a departure from this principle and a specific unmet need for the development is identified.*

Within the City Centre, retail and leisure development will first be directed towards suitable sites and premises within the defined retail and leisure core, to provide an appropriate critical mass of facilities and attractions.

Key Objectives:

- *Support development that positions Swansea as an economically competitive place and an economic driver for the City Region*
- *Reinforce and improve the City Centre as a vibrant regional destination for shopping, culture, leisure, learning and business*
- *Ensure Swansea represents a strong commercial investment opportunity for developers and other partners to deliver the Council's priority regeneration schemes*

- Encourage development of town and **district centres** as focal areas for regeneration
- Ensure that communities have a mix of uses and facilities to create sustainable inclusive neighbourhoods that help to bring about wider social benefits and allow community life to flourish

- 7.44 The policy makes clear there will be a sequential requirement for developers to exhaust all appropriate options within the City Centre and **District Centres** in the first instance. Within the City Centre it highlights a sub area referred to as the 'retail and leisure core', which will be the focus for any significant investment. The definition and delineation of this core area will feature in the Deposit LDP and is necessary to ensure that future investment is appropriately focused, as opposed to sporadic, and supports the ongoing viability of the City Centre.
- 7.45 Leisure development includes appropriate commercially and publically provided uses within Use Classes A3, D1, D2 and Sui Generis, which incorporates a range of food and drink, recreation, arts and cultural provision.
- 7.46 The policy makes clear that retailing will not be supported at locations outside the City Centre or **District Centres** where this is considered to threaten or undermine the future vitality, viability or attractiveness of in-centre locations. Swansea City Centre in particular has suffered significantly as a result of the extent of out-of-centre retail development that has come forward at a number of locations, which evidence shows will pose a huge threat to the future success and viability of the City Centre as a destination unless further proliferation is contained. Evidence indicates that appropriate leisure uses can be equally pivotal to the success of City Centres as attractive and viable destinations. Leisure has a particularly important role within Swansea City Centre, including sustaining a broad appeal to both day and night time economies, in view of its status as the commercial focus for the City Region. The policy allows for a sufficiently pragmatic approach to be taken when considering retail or leisure proposals outside centres. It recognises there may be instances where an unmet need is identified and additional individual circumstances justify a departure from the overarching principle to permit development outside a defined centre. Whilst it is not appropriate to seek to define in this document all possible exceptional circumstances that could apply to the policy, examples could include proposals that would rationalise an existing out of centre facility or a proposal that is assessed as giving rise to an overriding positive transformative impact in terms of community regeneration.

7.48 *The Deposit LDP will contain detailed policies relating to retail development at individual sites as well as providing a clear policy context relating to the new retail hierarchy, **District Centre** regeneration, out-of-centre retailing, large format (bulky goods) retailing and small-scale retail at neighbourhood level. The new retail hierarchy will be based on a thorough review of the function and characteristics of existing retail locations within the County, including how these have evolved over time and their future role.*

Appendix 5: Challenges Facing District Centres

Development Trends and Consumer Choice

The issues outlined below were identified for the UDP but are equally as relevant to the emerging LDP. Shoppers are increasingly able to choose from a diverse range of retail locations and sources. As well as the City Centre and traditional District and Local Centres, people can choose between, for example, out-of-centre superstores, retail parks, or on-line shopping and catalogues.

As in many other parts of the UK, supermarkets and superstores have become increasingly dominant in Swansea as suppliers of the full range of convenience goods, as well as an increasing range of comparison goods items. The notion of the 'one stop shop' journey has become a well established shopping pattern in this context, particularly at larger superstores. Whilst some of these are located within Centres, many are to be found at edge-of-centre and out-of-centre sites. Large food stores that do not integrate with Centres, particularly those that 'over provide' for the catchment population, can lead to significant trade diversion and disinvestment within Centres that can ultimately have an adverse effect on their vitality and viability. Conversely, appropriately sized, well integrated stores can generate linked trips and have a positive influence on the health of a Centre. It is this latter approach that is supported by UDP policy and current national guidance.

Swansea has a number of out-of-centre retail parks that provide opportunities for both comparison and convenience goods shopping. These are served by large areas of free parking and are an attractive prospect for many, particularly for the car borne shopper. The range of goods available at such locations has traditionally not been diverse, generally being limited to bulky items, however there is increasing pressure to remove restrictions and thereby open up such locations for unrestricted retailing. In the interests of sustaining the vitality and viability of District and Local Centres, the Council seeks to resist such pressures for out-of-centre retailing. This approach is a key element of UDP policy.

Internet shopping has become an increasingly popular method by which households are choosing to shop. The long term impact of online retailing on 'the high street' is the subject of ongoing research, however there are obvious concerns regarding the loss of footfall and trade. The traditional District Centre clearly needs to acknowledge and respond to these increased choices available, as well as the demands amongst consumers for flexibility and convenience. There are a number of factors that can influence whether a Centre is perceived as providing an attractive choice for shoppers, which includes:

- presence of anchor stores
- number of convenience shops and specialist/niche retailers
- presence of well used complementary facilities such as healthcare and other similar community uses

- levels of traffic congestion, the availability/cost/convenience of parking facilities, and accessibility by other travel modes
- extent to which shops are aligned to their potential customer base in terms of, for example, age and income
- extent to which the Centre has an attractive character and/or heritage
- environmental quality and degree of maintenance of public spaces
- recognisable events or schemes to draw in shoppers (such as, support for independent stores initiatives)
- marketing, promotion and management strategies

Population Changes

The Swansea UDP identifies Pontarddulais, Clydach and Gorseinon, as particular growth areas within the County. These areas benefit from housing and employment allocations made within the Plan, which are intended to help support and reinforce their shopping centres. In this context it is important to sustain a sufficient critical mass of units and range of uses within these District Centres to support anticipated levels of future growth, which includes retaining adequate food shopping provision. Whilst not specifically identified as growth settlements, the County's other District Centre areas are also anticipated to see population increases within their catchment areas.

In some suburban locations and rural parts of the County, populations have declined and/or shifted in their age structure and socio-economic composition. De-population and/or reductions in higher spending age groups can place increasing pressure on the ability of areas to maintain healthy and viable Local Centres and community facilities.

Economy and Investment

Economic trends at both national and local levels directly affect development choices and influence patterns of investment. Certain Centres more than others, particularly those in less affluent areas, have difficulties in encouraging investment and such problems are intensified in times of economic downturn. Furthermore, falling sales and downward pressure on prices squeezes margins and ultimately lead to lost profits for retailers.

Perhaps the most visible illustration of a lack of investment in Centres is a high proportion of vacant properties. Whilst a certain level of vacancy is an inevitable and necessary feature in order to facilitate responses to market changes, unacceptably high levels can have a material adverse impact. Vacant units can lower the visual appeal of a Centre and can reinforce problems of falling investment confidence and expenditure. Whilst the prolonged vacancy of units

should be avoided, it should not be at the expense of unacceptable development or the loss of an adequate supply of units required for future retail use.

Similar to high levels of vacancy, deterioration in the condition of buildings and areas of public space within or near Centres can also have adverse effects on their attractiveness, and can ultimately result in the reduction of footfall and expenditure.

Use Class Changes

As in many other authorities, in recent years Swansea has witnessed a significant rise in the number of planning applications for use class changes away from retailing within Centres. Whilst appropriate supporting uses can complement retail shops, the shopping function of District can be eroded by incremental planning consents for non-retail use. Consequently, when considering such proposals it is vital that an assessment is carried out on the impact of the proposed change of use on retail frontages, as well as the overall impact upon the vitality, attractiveness and viability of the Centre.

Travel and Mobility

Rising levels of car ownership have significantly increased personal mobility and have probably been the greatest single influence on shopping patterns. High levels of personal mobility have provided the opportunity for residents to travel outside traditional catchment areas, in particular to out of town centres served by large areas of free parking. This has increased competition and pressure on District Centres in retaining their traditional local population base.

District Centres are unlikely to ever be able to compete with retail parks in terms of the number of parking spaces provided, however it is crucial that efforts are made to ensure travel to traditional Centres is as convenient as possible. As well as parking provision, shoppers will respond positively to: legible signing; frequent and good quality public transport; good disabled access; and quality cycle routes and facilities.

Planning Policy Response to Challenges

Primary and Secondary Frontages

Within District Centres, certain retail frontages have particular importance in terms of retaining their character and function. The boundary plans set out in Appendix 3 identify the primary retail frontages from the more secondary areas within each District Centre. Those units that lie outside the highlighted primary frontage are considered, by default, to form part of a more secondary retail area.

'Primary frontages' are found in those areas representing the core retail activity. They are generally centrally located within a Centre. These frontages should retain a high proportion of A1 shops, and such units should not be isolated amongst non-retail uses in order to safeguard the established shopping function. They are normally characterised by higher rental values, footfall and concentrations of national and/or international retailers. 'Secondary frontages' are found in areas of more mixed commercial character, where the incidence of non-retail uses such as restaurants, banks and other financial institutions may be higher. Units located within a secondary frontage will often have lower rateable values than primary areas, although this is not always the case.

Safeguarding A1 Shop Units

In order to promote a successful retailing sector it is vital that District Centres should retain a high proportion of Class A1 retail shops. National planning policy guidance emphasises the importance of ensuring ground floor use class changes are not permitted where this would create a predominance of non-retail uses that would lead to an unacceptable dilution of the retail frontage or undermine the attractiveness of the Centre.

To help determine what constitutes an appropriate proportion of Class A1 retail shops, the following thresholds have been adopted by the Council:

Minimum % of A1 shops to be retained within District Centres	Frontage	
	Primary	Secondary
	50%	35%

Proposed use class changes where the proportion of A1 shop units within defined primary and secondary frontages would fall below these thresholds will not normally be permitted. The figures specified reflect an appraisal undertaken of the proportion of A1 shops within District Centre frontages in Swansea and reflect the minimum proportions to be maintained to ensure they remain lively, attractive and commercially viable. In some instances it will be more appropriate to retain a higher proportion of retail shops than the minimum thresholds specified, depending on factors such as the character of the frontage and the nature of the units that the frontage comprises.

In order to establish the proportion of A1 units within a given frontage, measurements are based on ground floor units only. Any assessments should provide a proportional figure based on the number of A1 units as a percentage of the total number of all units within the particular frontage identified, and also a measurement of A1 unit frontage length as a percentage of the total frontage length in question. Both these figures are taken into account in determining the

suitability of a proposed change to non-retail use. Extant, unimplemented planning permissions for non-retail use are taken as a non retail unit for the purpose of calculations. In the absence of any such permissions, vacant properties are allocated to their previous permitted use.

There are instances where the minimum thresholds specified have already been undermined in certain frontages, due to incremental use class changes that have occurred. In these circumstances the thresholds should be seen as an aspiration to ultimately redress the existence of a diluted frontage, and as such further erosion by proposed non-retail uses will not normally be permitted.

Notwithstanding these thresholds, a flexible approach will sometimes be needed to allow a deviation from the figures in certain cases. This is only considered appropriate in circumstances where the applicant clearly demonstrates the proposed A2 or A3 use would: generate footfall akin to a retail use; bring increased vitality to the area; positively enhance the relevant frontage by virtue of its design; and satisfactorily address the criteria set out in UDP Policy. Examples include a retail orientated bank or coffee shop that incorporates a high quality, street focused shop front, which may be as equally appealing within the street scene as a retail use of the premises.

Non-Retail Development

Whilst retailing should continue to underpin District Centres, a broad range of appropriately located supporting non-retail facilities and services are encouraged to help safeguard their wellbeing. Well planned mixed use developments within Centres can bring vibrancy, add vitality, and reduce the need to travel to access a range of facilities. In this context, the Swansea UDP and supplementary guidance align with national guidance by encouraging an appropriate, complementary mix of uses in Centres.

It is vital however that non-retail uses are appropriately located within a Centre in order to safeguard its vitality, viability and future role as a community resource. Change of use proposals to non-retail uses within a Centre should not be permitted where this would result in an unacceptable imbalance of non-retail uses in comparison to retail uses or where a proposal would have an adverse impact on its primary shopping function. The full range of criteria for determining change of use proposals is set out in UDP Policy.

As well as maintaining minimum unit shop numbers and frontage lengths for retailing purposes, it is important to avoid localised concentrations of non-retail uses or arrangements that isolate A1 shops within a primary frontage. Determining the appropriateness or otherwise of a non-retail proposal will inevitably require an assessment within the context of surrounding units. For example, whether it would serve to isolate a section of the retail centre, cause an unacceptable break in the flow of retail units and/or lead to a predominance of non-retail uses.

It is important to maintain a critical mass of shopping units within a legible, contained area in order to sustain the viability and attractiveness of a Centre. Maintaining a continuous shop frontage is crucial in this regard. The isolation of A1 shops and the clustering of non-retail uses can disrupt the continuity of shopping streets, reduce footfall and deaden frontages. To avoid such scenarios, within most primary frontages, no more than two non-retail uses should be adjacent to each other, and between individual or groups of non-retail uses there shall be at least two intervening A1 shops. Three adjacent non-retail uses may exceptionally be permitted in larger District Centres only, where there is an otherwise sufficient concentration of A1 retail shops in the vicinity and the proposed change of use would not deaden the frontage.

Important shop premises and units sited in visually prominent locations should remain in A1 retail use. The length and prominence of the unit frontage, its relative location to important shopping frontages and architectural/design features of a building are all relevant factors to consider.

Whilst the loss of a single A1 unit to a non retail use may not in itself undermine the retail vitality and viability of the Centre, cumulative impact will be a consideration.

A3 food and drink uses

In general terms, A3 uses are considered an appropriate use within District Centres. Such uses can meet the needs of residents and visitors to a Centre, add vibrancy to an area and contribute positively to vitality and viability. There will however be instances when the prevalence of A3 uses will need to be controlled due to concerns over adverse impact on amenity and retail function.

The proliferation of A3 uses will be resisted where this would have an unacceptable adverse impact on the character of an area or frontage, or where this would reduce the opportunities for a wider range of other non-retail uses to be established. District Centres that offer less choice of supporting non-retail uses due to over-dominance of A3 units are generally less attractive and not consistent with policies aimed at maintaining the vitality and viability of Centres.

Commercial frontages can be deadened by over concentrations of certain A3 development, such as hot food take-away establishments orientated towards evening trade that close during the day time and units that deliver food only. Where such concerns are overriding, planning permission will be refused.

Concentrations of such uses can also generate hotspots of activity around the premises and compound problems of noise and disturbance sometimes generated by large numbers of patrons, particularly during the evening. In some instances such problems can lead to instances of crime and anti-social behaviour. Planning permission will be refused where it is considered that

clustering of A3 uses would give rise to unacceptable impacts of this kind.

The use of outside areas by customers for drinking, eating and sitting out will not be permitted where significant noise and disturbance or loss of privacy is likely to be caused to residents and occupiers of nearby properties and cannot reasonably be controlled by an effective planning condition restricting the hours during the day when such areas can be used.

Planning conditions may be used to secure various controls and improvements in the operation of A3 uses and mitigate potentially unneighbourly effects. Where appropriate this will include requiring the provision of appropriate litter bins in or near the premises and the installation of appropriate filtration equipment to reduce cooking smells.

Financial and professional services

Banks, financial institutions and other similar professional services within A2 Use Class can provide important services for the community and their retention within District Centres will be encouraged. However such uses will not be allowed to dominate primary shopping frontages and unit frontages must be sensitively designed.

Where such uses are considered permissible they will be required to incorporate a glazed, open window display that affords clear views from the adjacent street into the property to show activity within the premises and support a lively street scene.

Betting shops have become an increasingly visible use within some Centres. They can in some instances enhance the range of facilities available in a Centre and generate additional footfall where such a service does not currently exist. Betting shops will not however be permitted in locations where the proposed window display would offer less activity and interest for passing shoppers, or fail to support a lively street scene. Planning conditions will be imposed where appropriate to ensure unit frontages and window displays do not deaden retail frontages.

Leisure facilities

Appropriate Class D2 leisure uses can benefit Centres and, with adequate attention to safeguarding amenities, contribute to a successful economy. The provision of a wide range of leisure facilities at locations across the County is an important element of the Council's leisure and recreation strategy and UDP policy prioritises the City Centre and District Centres for such development (UDP Policy HC18 'Leisure Facilities and Areas' refers). Such facilities should be of an appropriate scale and should not undermine the vitality and viability of Centres. They should not give rise to any unacceptable deadening effect on the relevant frontage, for instance by virtue of their opening hours, design or window display.

Amusement centres are most appropriately sited in secondary shopping areas or in areas of mixed commercial developments. They will not normally be acceptable in primary shopping frontages, close to housing, or near schools, places of worship, hospitals and hotels. They will also be unlikely to be supported in Conservation Areas or other places of special architectural, historic, landscape or natural environment character.

Other non-retail uses

B1 offices at ground floor level typically have a deadening effect and will not generally be permitted. D1 uses can in some cases have a similar deadening effect, and will require careful consideration of matters relating to shopfront design, activity at ground floor level and proposed opening hours.

Change of use from commercial to residential at ground floor level will only be permitted on the fringes of District and Local Centres, and only where such development would serve to consolidate the primary retail function and provide a cohesive and viable commercial core of sufficient critical mass.

Opening Hours

Information regarding opening hours is required to be submitted to assist assessment of the impact of any proposed change of use, particularly in terms of generated footfall, patterns of pedestrian movement and impact on amenity. Premises that are regularly closed to the public during typical shopping hours can have a deadening effect at certain locations, which should be avoided.

The opening times of establishments will be controlled where appropriate in order to mitigate any adverse effects upon the enjoyment and amenity of nearby residential properties and businesses. Where necessary opening hours will be controlled by means of planning conditions, the nature of which will depend upon the use proposed, its location and the characteristics of surrounding properties.

Use of Upper Floors

Change of use proposals at upper floors from residential to commercial use will not normally be supported where the existing residential use is not already adjacent to a commercial use. This approach is consistent with UDP policy (Policy HC8 'Over the Shop Housing' refers) and national guidance aimed at retaining the number of homes at sustainable, brownfield locations. Such an approach serves to support existing commercial premises and supporting services within the relevant Centre, and ultimately helps sustain vitality and viability.

Planning applications for change of use at upper floors to commercial uses will be resisted if levels of acoustic insulation would not be sufficiently effective to protect the amenities of residents in adjoining rooms/buildings.

Vacancy

The possibility of retail premises lying unoccupied for an extended period will be a material consideration in determining the suitability of a proposed use class change. There is a need to balance concerns about the incremental loss of retail units that can dilute shopping function with the desire to avoid excessive, longstanding vacancy that can have an adverse impact on attractiveness of a Centre.

Where retail premises have been vacant for some time, proposals for changes to non-retail uses will need to be supported by evidence to demonstrate the extent of marketing that has been carried out to secure a retail occupier. Marketing and advertising should normally be for a minimum of 12 months and be of a nature that is reasonably likely to reach potentially interested occupiers.

Similarly, marketing evidence will also be required in instances where a unit is currently occupied by a retail use but the applicant proposes to change the use class on the grounds the existing business will cease trading and it is argued another retail occupier cannot be found.

Accessibility and Parking

Vehicle parking to serve new development in District Centres should comply with the Council's adopted standards. There are particular amenity concerns arising from hot food takeaway establishments that generate increased incidences of on-street vehicle parking close to the premises. In those instances where this would give rise to noise nuisance, congestion or other highway safety concerns such as restricting the free flow of traffic, planning permission will be refused.

Other Guidance

Developments within, and on the edge of, District Centres must be appropriate in terms of their type and scale. They should be compatible with established outlets/premises, be of a scale that does not over dominate the facilities at the Centre, and be in keeping with its character and function.

The expansion of Centres outside defined boundaries into adjacent residential properties will not normally be permitted. Exceptions to this may include instances where the application site relates more clearly to the adjoining commercial frontage than the residential properties alongside it, and instances where the site would provide a unit of alternative dimensions and characteristics than would otherwise be available within the Centre and that is attractive to potential investors.

There is a need to retain an adequate level of provision for food shopping together with post offices and pharmacies within District Centres. Proposals that would unacceptably reduce such provision will not be permitted. In some instances conditions will be attached to a planning permission to restrict future

trading to the particular use proposed and prevent an alternative use in the same Use Class. For example, a condition might restrict a restaurant or café from operating as a hot food takeaway establishment or wine bar, if the additional noise and nuisance to arise from these uses are considered likely to have an unacceptable impact.

Where appropriate, improvements to the physical environment and condition of buildings within Centres through the planning application process will be encouraged. Parts of some District Centres have Conservation Area status. Proposals within or adjacent to Conservation Areas and/or Listed buildings must not harm either the character of the area or have an adverse impact on key buildings.