

Examination of the Tunbridge Wells
Borough Local Plan

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Hearing Statement

**Matter 11: Retail, Town
Centres and Community
Facilities (Policies STR/RTW1,
ED8, ED9, ED10 and EN6)**
**Issue 3: Primary Shopping Areas
and Retail Frontages**

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Matter 11 – Retail, Town Centres and Community Facilities (Policies STR/RTW1, ED8, ED9, ED10 and EN6)

Issue 3 – Primary Shopping Areas and Retail Frontages

Inspector’s Question 1: [re. justification for Primary Retail Frontages]

What is the justification for the proposed Primary Retail Frontages? How do they differ from the remainder of the Primary Shopping Areas?

TWBC response to Question 1

Introduction

1. The NPPF, at paragraph 86b) requires planning policies to “*define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas and make clear the range of uses permitted in such locations, as part of a positive strategy for the future of each centre*”.
2. The approach towards Primary Retail frontages is set out within Local Plan Policy ED 11 – Primary Shopping Areas and Retail Frontages. The purpose of this policy is to designate Primary Shopping Areas and retail frontages in accordance with paragraph 86 of the NPPF, where at criteria 86b) it requires planning policies to “*define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas and make clear the range of uses permitted in such locations, as part of a positive strategy for the future of each centre*”.

Consideration

3. The intention of Policy ED 11 is to provide the policy approach for Primary Shopping Areas and Retail frontages across the borough.

4. Specifically, in terms of retail frontages, it is considered by the Council that it is beneficial to maintain retail frontages at ground floor level of the Primary Shopping Area in order to provide an active frontage within a given centre, but acknowledging that alternative uses, such as residential would be beneficial within the Primary Shopping Area at upper floors.
5. Policy ED 11 would therefore allow residential uses at upper floors within town centres. Again, this approach is informed and supported by guidance and recommendations provided within the Retail, Commercial Leisure and town centre uses study 2021. Town centre living is specifically referred to at paragraph 8.21 of the study [[CD 3.86a](#)].
6. It is considered that Policy ED 11 provides an appropriate approach to Primary Shopping Areas and retail frontages in accordance with the NPPF.

Inspector’s Question 2: [re. proposals for outside of the Primary Shopping Area but within the Town Centre]

How would a decision-maker react to a proposal for a change of use away from a main town centre use outside the Primary Shopping Area, but still within the Town Centre?

TWBC response to Question 2

Introduction

7. Paragraph 86b) of the NPPF requires planning policies to “*define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas, and make clear the range of uses permitted in such locations, as part of a positive strategy for the future of each centre*”.
8. Furthermore, at paragraph 86f) the NPPF recognises “*that residential development often plays an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and encourage residential development on appropriate sites.*”
9. Policy ED 9 sets out the guidance by which decision makers should consider development proposals within the defined town and rural service centres. Policy ED 11 of the Local Plan provides guidance on the types of uses which are considered appropriate within the defined Primary Shopping Area.

Consideration

10. It is considered that the policy approach provided within Policies ED 9 and ED 11 is appropriate and gives clear guidance to decision-makers when considering development proposals.
11. Criteria 1 of Policy ED 11 makes it clear that commercial uses (Class E) should remain the predominant uses within the defined Primary Shopping Area and the defined Primary Shopping Frontages. However, it also refers to non-commercial uses such as residential being appropriate above ground floor within these designated areas.
12. In terms of the consideration of a development proposal for a non-main town centre use, outside of the defined Primary Shopping Area, but within the defined Town Centre, this would be considered under Policy ED 9 – Defined Town and Rural Service Centres. This policy allows for planning permission to be granted for development “of a range of

appropriate uses where they contribute to the vitality and viability of the centre and/or respond to changing needs/trends over the life of the Local Plan”.

13. This therefore allows for the permission of non-main town centre uses within the area that falls outside of the defined Primary Shopping Area, but within the defined Town Centre. This approach is considered to be in conformity with Paragraph 86 of the NPPF – in particular criteria b) and f).