

Small and independent shops

9.48 Small shops, often run by independent traders and providing specialist shopping, help to sustain the diversity, vibrancy and character of our centres and smaller shopping areas and provide suitable premises for local businesses. As the retail market changes there is a trend towards fewer larger shops. Many residents have expressed support for measures to encourage small shops and initiatives to encourage and promote retail diversity and entrepreneurialism in the borough.

9.49 The Council aims to provide an adequate supply of retail floorspace with a range of small and large units in town centres to meet the needs of different types of businesses. However, the Council's powers to help protect and promote small and independent shops are limited. For example, in most cases planning permission is not required to prevent adjacent shops being combined into larger premises.

Policy TC5 Small and independent shops

The Council will promote the provision of small shop premises suitable for small and independent businesses.

We will:

- a. expect large retail developments to include a proportion of smaller units;
- b. attach conditions to planning permissions for retail developments to remove their ability to combine units into larger premises, where appropriate; and
- c. encourage the occupation of shops by independent businesses and the provision of affordable premises.

9.50 The Council will resist the loss of shop premises in our centres where we consider that this would harm the character, function, viability and vibrancy of the area, however the Council cannot influence the occupier of individual premises or the type of goods and services they provide.

Provision of small shops as part of new developments

9.51 The Council will support and encourage the provision of small shop units as part of retail developments and will seek provision of small shop premises suitable for small and independent businesses in large retail developments, typically those over 1,000 sqm. As a guide, small units are considered to be those that are less than 100 sqm of gross floorspace, although we will take into account the character and size of shops in the local area and the function of centres when assessing the appropriate scale of new premises.

9.52 The Council recognise that provision of small shop units may not be appropriate in every large retail development, therefore in seeking premises for small and independent shop premises the Council will consider the character and function of the centre, having regard to the centre specific profiles set out in the

supplementary planning document Camden Planning Guidance on town centre, retail and employment.

- 9.53 In addition to the above, we will encourage developers and owners to seek independent occupiers for small units, where possible and provide premises at affordable rents to encourage small businesses. This will be achieved through the use of planning obligations. We will work with developers to assess how such provisions can be taken forward as part of new developments. 'Independent occupiers' will be broadly considered to be businesses with no more than five stores. Affordable rents are considered to be those significantly lower than the market rate and would normally be applied to accommodation for smaller, independent businesses.