

Camden's centres and other shopping areas

- 9.12 The Council will ensure that development in its centres is appropriate to the character and role of the centre in which it is located and does not cause harm to neighbours, the local area, or other centres.
- 9.13 Camden's centres and designated shopping frontages are set out in the Local Plan Policies Map.

Protected frontages

- 9.14 The Council has identified key frontages within Camden's centres to which further policy and guidance apply. These protected frontages are identified as either primary or secondary frontages and are shown on the Local Plan Policies Map.

Permitted development rights

- 9.15 The Council seeks to protect the vitality and viability of its centres through application of the retail policies and through the control of shopping and other town centre uses on protected frontages. Under permitted development rights planning permission is not required for many changes of use between retail and other town centre uses, meaning the Council cannot apply our planning policies for town centres in these instances.
- 9.16 The government has introduced a number of new permitted development rights that affect town centres. These include the new rights to:
- change from A1 retail or A2 financial services to A3 restaurants and cafes (subject to prior approval);
 - change from A1 retail to A2 financial services; and
 - change from A1 retail or A2 financial services to D2 assembly and leisure uses (subject to prior approval).
- 9.17 The above permitted development rights that are subject to prior approval from the Council are subject to the change of use not having unacceptable effects on noise, odour, waste, transport and highways and if located in a key shopping area the sustainability of that shopping area.

Policy TC2 Camden's centres and other shopping areas

The Council will promote successful and vibrant centres throughout the borough to serve the needs of residents, workers and visitors.

We will:

- a. seek to protect and enhance the role and unique character of each of Camden's centres, ensuring that new development is of an appropriate scale and character for the centre in which it is located;
- b. provide for and maintain, a range of shops including independent shops, services, food, drink and entertainment and other suitable uses to provide variety, vibrancy and choice;
- c. make sure that food, drink, entertainment and other town centre uses do not have a harmful impact on residents and the local area and focusing such uses in King's Cross and Euston Growth areas, Central London Frontages, and Town Centres (Refer to Policy TC4 Town centre uses);
- d. support and protect Camden's Neighbourhood Centres, markets and areas of specialist shopping, local shops; and
- e. pursue the individual planning objectives for each centre, as set out in supplementary planning document Camden Planning Guidance on town centres and retail, and through the delivery of environmental, design, transport and public safety measures.

The Council has designated primary and secondary frontages in its centres, which are shown on the Local Plan Policies Map. We will:

- f. protect the primary frontages as locations with a high proportion of shops (A1) in order to maintain the retail function of the centre; and
- g. protect the secondary frontages as locations for shops (A1) together with a broader range of other town centre uses to create centres with a range of shops, services, and food, drink and entertainment uses which support the viability and vitality of the centre.

The Council's expectations for the mix and balance of uses within frontages for each designated centre are set out in Appendix 4.

Housing above and below shops

The Council supports the development of housing within centres and Central London including above and below shops where this does not prejudice the town centre function and particularly the ability of the ground floor to be used for town centre uses.

Housing in protected frontages

In order to protect the retail and town centre function of our centres the Council will only permit conversion of retail and other town centre uses to residential use on the protected frontages where it does not harm the role and character of the centre, including maintaining the supply of shop premises in centres across the borough.

Neighbourhood Centres

The Council will seek to retain convenience shopping for local residents in Camden's Neighbourhood Centres and will ensure that development in them does not harm the function, character or success of that centre.

Design of new retail spaces

New retail spaces should be of high quality, provide generous storey heights and incorporate room for signage.

Protecting and enhancing the role and character of Camden's centres

- 9.18 The Council will protect and enhance the role and character of each of Camden's centres by assessing proposals against this policy and the centre specific guidance set out in Appendix 4 and the supplementary planning document Camden Planning Guidance on town centres and retail. Appendix 4 sets out the mix of uses that the Council expects on primary and secondary frontages, including:
- the minimum proportions of shops (A1 use); and
 - the maximum proportions of food, drink and entertainment uses (A3, A4, A5 uses).

Housing above and below shops

- 9.19 The Council supports development of housing within centres where they do not cause harm to the vitality and viability of these centres, for example by limiting the use of the premises at the ground floor for retail or other town centre uses. In accordance with Policy A4 Noise and vibration the Council will not permit development of housing in locations with high levels of noise unless appropriate attenuation measures are provided. With regard to housing at basement or lower ground floor level, habitable rooms will not be permitted in areas at risk of flooding (refer to Policy A5 Basements). The Council will also take into consideration the centre specific objectives set out in Camden Planning Guidance.

Housing in protected frontages

- 9.20 Due to high demand for housing and high housing prices in Camden shop units across the borough and particularly those in the Neighbourhood Centres face pressure for conversion to residential use. Shop premises that are converted to homes are likely to stay in residential use even if local market forces swing back in favour of retail uses, whereas changes of use between town centre uses are more flexible over the longer term. The Camden Retail Study anticipates demand for additional retail floorspace in designated centres throughout the Plan period. Camden seeks to protect the role and character of the designated centres. The most significant way we can protect the function of centres is by ensuring that sufficient ground floor premises remain in retail or other town centre uses.

Neighbourhood Centres

- 9.21 Camden has 37 neighbourhood centres which cater for the day to day shopping and service needs of their local populations. The neighbourhood centres are spread across the borough and vary in size and in role. They contain a range of uses including shops, food and drink uses, doctor and dentist surgeries and financial and professional services and often have housing on upper floors. Housing is the Council's preferred use above ground floor level in neighbourhood centres and we will promote the residential use of vacant or underused floors.
- 9.22 Commercial and community uses are considered acceptable uses of upper floors provided they do not cause harm to the amenity of existing residents or introduce activity that would prejudice future residential use on other levels or in neighbouring properties.
- 9.23 The Council will seek to retain a strong element of convenience shopping for local residents in Camden's neighbourhood centres and ensure that any development in them does not harm the function, character or success of that centre. We will take into account the individual character of the centre when assessing development proposals but, as a guide, we will resist schemes that would result in less than half of ground floor premises in a neighbourhood centre from being in retail use or in more than three consecutive premises being in non-retail use. We will also take into account any history of vacancy in shop units and the prospect of achieving an alternative occupier for vacant premises. Applications for food, drink and entertainment uses will be carefully assessed to minimise the impact on local residents and the local area.



Design of new retail spaces

- 9.24 All units for retail and other town centre uses on protected frontages in Camden's centres and shopping areas should be designed to provide high quality retail space. In particular shop units should provide generous storey heights and space for signage. For most locations the Council will expect a minimum storey height of approximately 4.5m, which provides approximately 3.5m clear internal height. In some key shopping areas even higher storey heights may be necessary to provide spaces that are suitable for larger shops. Such locations include the Central London Frontages and in particular the primary frontages. In these locations the Council may require storey heights of 6m, providing approximately 5m clear internal height.