

- Policy 3.16 (New Retail Outlets in Town Centres) states that the development of additional retail uses (A1) will be permitted within PSF areas, and the development of financial and professional services (A2) and food and drink uses (A3) will be permitted within SSF areas, subject to criteria set out in Policy 3.17 (see below).
 - Policy 3.17 (Change of Use in Retail Areas) seeks to resist the loss of A1 class units within PSF areas. Change of use of A1 class units to A2 and A3 class units will be permitted where the vitality and viability of the area is not prejudiced; the change does not result in an unacceptable concentration of similar uses; and the existing shop frontage is retained.
- 2.20 The notes on page 380 of the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 state that these frontages will continue to be used for development management purposes until they are reviewed through the North Dorset Local Plan Part 2 or in a neighbourhood plan. In the interim, the Council will also have regard to the recommended frontages as identified within this study. In making any decisions the Council will use the most up to date policy in relation to uses in these areas and this is Policy 12 of North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 that is in keeping with national policy at this time.

Joint Retail Assessment Christchurch Borough Council, East Dorset District Council, North Dorset District Council, and Purbeck District Council Volume 1 & 2 (2008)

- 2.21 This joint town centre and retail study was produced in 2008 and included an assessment of the main town and district centres within the four local authority areas. The recommendations and projections within this study helped to inform the preparation of the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 (2016).
- 2.22 The Joint Retail Assessment Volume 1 identified capacity for both new convenience and comparison goods floorspace in Blandford, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton. The evidence-based document put forward a number of broad areas of possible action the Councils could pursue in order to maintain and enhance the role of the shopping centres. These included:
- improving the range and choice of shops and services in all centres by intensification and the re-occupation of vacant units;
 - maintaining a high quality environment within each centre;
 - incorporating measures to improve accessibility and public transport to district and local centres; and
 - incorporating measures to bring forward development opportunities to improve the availability of modern premises suitable for new occupiers.
- 2.23 Volume 2 of the Joint Retail Assessment suggested that the strategy for accommodating growth in North Dorset in particular should be based on maintaining existing market shares over the plan period, and reducing the existing level of shop vacancies. The assessment recommended that Shaftesbury, Gillingham, Blandford and Sturminster Newton should be defined as Town Centres, and Stalbridge should continue to be designated as a district centre. However, it should be noted that although the Joint Retail Assessment identified Stalbridge's designation in 2008 as a district centre, it was in fact a local centre, as per its designation in the 2003 Local Plan. Therefore we expect that the report should have recommended Stalbridge moving up the hierarchy to become a district centre. Marnhull was identified as having only limited retailing which is spread around the settlement and, on this basis, it was recommended that it should no longer be designated as a Local Centre within the retail hierarchy. A number of changes to shopping frontages within the four main centres were also recommended.