SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REVIEW OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SHOPS POLICY

JANUARY 2009

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APPENDICES

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OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF THE REPORT

Slough Borough Council has expressed the intention to revise its Neighbourhood Shops Policy following concerns regarding the inflexibility of the current policy which was adopted in December 2002.

The objective of this independent research report is to review the current Neighbourhood Shops Policy and to provide recommendations and an evidence base to support modification of the existing policy. The report focuses on the following:

- The Sustainable Communities Agenda and the need to ensure that local resources meet the needs of local communities.
- The current and medium term economic climate – both nationally and in the Borough of Slough.
- The key issues with the existing policy as experienced by Colliers CRE in letting and managing the shops portfolio on behalf of People 1st.
- The current demographics of the catchment areas of the shops portfolio and changes since the adoption of the original Neighbourhood Shops Policy.
- The right balance between retail shops and A3 uses and how this could be achieved through policy.

We are confident that this report will assist the Council in revising its Neighbourhood Shops Policy.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Neighbourhood shops continue to play an important role in local communities by providing day to day convenience goods and services and are an essential element in creating a 'sustainable community' as they minimise the need to travel. The protection of local shops is vital as they offer accessible shopping facilities for all local residents and in particular the elderly, disadvantaged and less mobile groups in the community. Black and ethnic minority businesses are also often found in neighbourhood centres because of historic and economic factors. These businesses are an important source for providing goods and services to the black and ethnic minority community and also to the wider community.

Neighbourhood retailing sales, which include local shops and parades, have grown significantly in the UK over the past five years, outperforming town centres. This is a result of consumers becoming more time pressed leading to an increasing trend for convenience top up shopping. In recent years, however, the larger food store operators have entered the neighbourhood market and have put many smaller independent retailers under pressure. This is particularly pertinent in the current economic climate which is hitting all retailers hard, but especially small local traders, many of which are struggling to survive.

Slough Borough Council's current Neighbourhood Shops Policy is very restrictive with regard to change of use and will not generally allow an A1 shop to convert to A2 or A3/A4/A5 use. From Colliers CRE's experience of managing the Council's neighbourhood shops portfolio, it is apparent that, in a number of cases, despite significant attempts to find a prospective A1 tenant that is deemed 'acceptable' for an available unit, there has been limited interest and units are being left vacant for a considerable length of time.

Retail and consumer trends have changed since the policy was originally adopted in 2002 and we believe that the list of 'acceptable neighbourhood uses' does not reflect the current needs of the people living and working in the catchment areas of Slough's local shops and parades and is, therefore, in need of modification. Furthermore, despite the role of neighbourhood shops as providing convenience 'top up' goods and essential services, many of the uses on the current list are defined as comparison goods. Whilst there is indeed scope for some comparison goods retailers, the basic purpose of the neighbourhood shops should not be compromised.

It is our view that an acceptable distance to walk to local shops is 500 metres and, in order to ascertain the needs of those in the catchment area, we recommend that a resident survey is conducted once every five years as a minimum. The results can then form the basis of the revised 'acceptable neighbourhood uses' guide, which should be divided into 'essential' and 'desirable' goods and services.

When assessing a potential tenant for a vacant unit, preference should be given to those uses which are considered essential; however, consideration should then be given to non-essential A1 uses for which there is recognisable local demand. Following an acceptable period of marketing, applications for change of use will then be considered, taking into account the length of vacancy, the accessibility of the parade and the amount of non-A1 use or non essential/desirable uses existing in the parade. For those parades that have a road frontage we would suggest a maximum of 50% of non-A1 use or non essential/desirable uses for small parades (up to and including 6 units) and 60% for medium sized parades (7 to 10 units). Larger defined neighbourhood centres will have a higher shopping function so the need to protect A1 uses is greater. Therefore, we recommend a maximum of 30% non-A1 use or non essential/desirable uses on these parades; however a more flexible approach can be taken on competing uses in these locations if it is judged that the tenants can both survive jointly and trade successfully.

The Council's neighbourhood shops portfolio should be flexibly managed with early identification of tenants who are experiencing problems. For essential 'anchor' tenants the Council could consider greater flexibility in terms of the timing of rental payments, although this must be supported by clear evidence of financial hardship. This may also be appropriate for other tenants in exceptional circumstances, such as the difficult economic climate affecting the UK retail market at present. We advocate carrying out a tenant survey every two years as a minimum to establish their views regarding rental levels, trading issues, tenant mix, general facilities etc.

In recent years, difficulty has been experienced in attracting key tenants to vacant units and the introduction of an incentive scheme should be considered for specific uses that have been identified as benefiting the local community. This may include a rent free or reduced rent period at the beginning of a lease term or an upfront cash payment.

1. BACKGROUND CONTEXT

Neighbourhood Retailing in the UK

1.1 According to Verdict, in 2007 sales in the UK neighbourhood retail market, which includes local shops and parades, totalled £45.9 billion – up from £41.1 billion in 2002 and representing growth of 11.7%. Although this level of sales growth was considerably lower than the out-of-town market, which grew by 21.9% over the same five year period, and non-store retailing (57.7%), it was a better performance than that achieved by town centres, which experienced sales growth of only 7.8%.

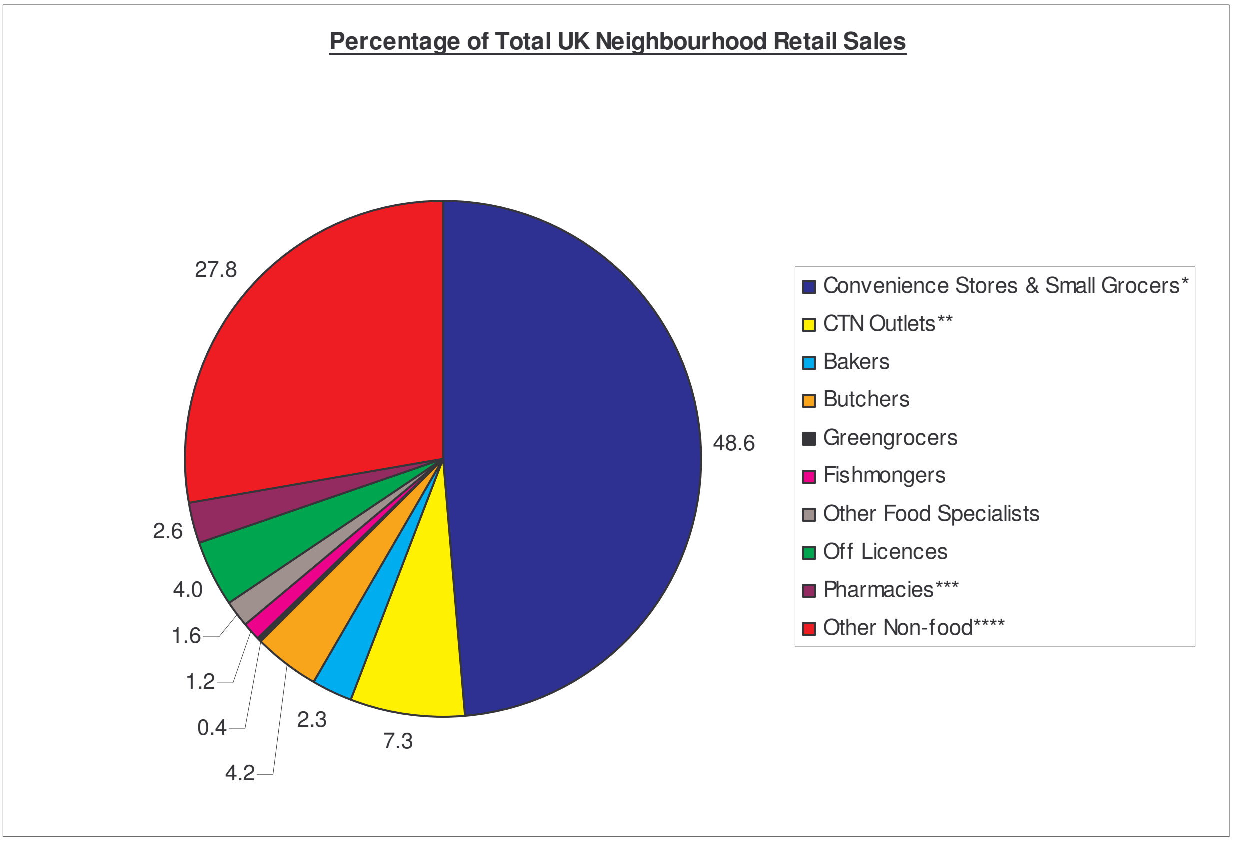
1.2 The driver of sales growth in the neighbourhood retail market has been food, which accounts for almost 60% of sales in the market. In today's market consumers are increasingly time pressed and this has led to trends towards convenient top-up shopping. Both Tesco and Sainsbury's have moved into the neighbourhood retail market over the past five years to exploit this trend which has provided a challenge for independent retailers and small chains to compete. As a result many independents are rushing to join symbol groups in order to raise standards and create an identifiable brand and symbol groups are, in turn, competing aggressively for new members.

1.3 Rapid growth of out-of-town grocery retailers, boosted by the popularity of one-stop shops and the customer-focused approach to retailing, has put a lot of pressure on smaller neighbourhood retailers over the past decade. This has also been exacerbated by the growth in non-food retailing in supermarkets, which has affected non-food neighbourhood retailers who often specialise in one sector. This has caused many independent neighbourhood retailers – food specialists, general food stores and other non-food specialists – to close down.

1.4 Verdict reports that in 2007 total neighbourhood retail floorspace in the UK (including local shops/parades) stood at 82.3 million sq ft, down from 85.1 million sq ft five years previous, equating to a fall of -8.6%. The total number of stores in the neighbourhood retail market also decreased, falling from 112,752 in 2002 to 103,106 in 2007.

1.5 In 2007, convenience store retailing accounted for 48.6% of the neighbourhood retail market. Food specialists (butchers, bakers, greengrocers, fishmongers etc) had a 9.7% share, CTNs (confectionery, tobacconist & newsagent) 7.3%, off licences 4.0% and pharmacies 2.6%, leaving other non-food retailers with 27.8% (see **figure 1.1**).

Figure 1.1:



Source: Verdict Research 'UK Neighbourhood Retailing 2008'

*(*includes small supermarkets; **includes book specialists; ***includes health & beauty specialists, but excludes NHS prescription income; ****other non-food retailers include those selling DIY, clothing & footwear, furniture & floor coverings, electricals, second hand goods, photographic & optical goods)*

1.6 It is estimated that the neighbourhood retail market will continue to outperform the town centre between 2007 and 2012, though the margin will be far smaller than previously experienced. Growth in sales in the neighbourhood market is expected to slow to 6.8% due to the limited opportunity for leading players to make further acquisitions and boost productivity of existing space on a large scale. This compares to estimated sales growth of 6.1% for town centres (source: Verdict Research *'UK Neighbourhood Retailing 2008')*.

Neighbourhood Retailing in the Borough of Slough

1.7 The current Neighbourhood Shops Policy for the Borough of Slough was adopted in December 2002 and covers all neighbourhood and local shops owned by the Council. Slough Borough Council supports the retention of local parades and the policy seeks to encourage uses which meet the needs of local people.

1.8 The neighbourhood and local shops owned by the Council are listed in **Figure 1.2** below:

Figure 1.2 – Breakdown of Slough Borough Council's Neighbourhood Shops Portfolio

Address	No of Units	Ward
9-14 Anslow Place	6	Haymill
51-55 Cheviot Road	3	Foxborough
5-13 Harrison Way	5	Cippenham
74-104 Knolton Way	8	Wexham Lea
279 Long Furlong Drive	1	Britwell
9 Minster Way	1	Langley St. Mary's
14-24 Parlaunt Road	6	Foxborough
84 St Andrews Way	1	Cippenham
252-254 Scaffell Road	2	Haymill
2-12 Stoney Meade	4	Chalvey
228-260 Trelawney Avenue	17	Kederminster
296-308 Trelawney Avenue	7	Kederminster
45-97 Wentworth Avenue	27	Britwell
	88	

Source: Slough Borough Council

1.9 People 1st (Slough) is responsible for managing these shops on behalf of the Council and in April 2007 instructed Colliers CRE to provide estate management and valuation services in respect of the shops portfolio.

1.10 The role of Colliers CRE includes being responsible for marketing any vacant units and dealing with assignments, subletting and change of use. When conducting these duties, Colliers CRE must refer to the Neighbourhood Shops Policy and advise People 1st on whether a prospective tenant meets the guidelines outlined in the policy.

1.11 In reviewing the Neighbourhood Shops Policy, consideration must be given to the Council's 'Key Priorities' which include:

1. Creating safe, environmentally friendly and sustainable neighbourhoods;
   - Deliver cleaner and safer neighbourhoods.
   - Adopt a green and sustainable approach to managing and developing the environment.

2. Improving lives for those in need and creating thriving communities;
   - Focus on vulnerable people and those living in poverty.

3. Ensuring excellence in customer services;
   - Deliver excellent customer focused services in an excellent customer environment.

2. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

2.1 The Communities Plan (Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future) was launched by the Government in February 2003 and sets out a long term programme of action for delivering sustainable communities in both urban and rural areas. The aim is to raise the quality of life in communities through increasing prosperity, reducing inequalities, more employment, better public services, better health and education and tackling crime and anti-social behaviour.

2.2 Sustainable Communities should 'meet the needs of existing and future generations' and some key requirements are:

- A flourishing local economy to provide jobs and wealth;
- Effective engagement and participation by local people, groups and businesses, especially in the planning, design and long term stewardship of their community, and an active voluntary and community sector;
- Sufficient size, scale and density, and the right layout to support basic amenities in the neighbourhood and minimise use of resources (including land);
- Good public transport and other transport infrastructure both within the community and linking it to urban, rural and regional centres;
- Good quality local public services, including education and training opportunities, healthcare and community facilities, especially for leisure.

2.3 Local Authorities are seen as having a critical role in achieving sustainable communities, working alongside Central Government. A set of shared priorities were agreed as a common focus, which were then transferred into a 'Community Strategy' involving Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements.

<u>Social Objectives</u>

2.4 An important element is to actively engage people to help shape their own sustainable community. With regard to neighbourhood shopping parades, it is, therefore, considered necessary to ascertain the views of the local residents as to what they would like to see in parades and which uses they consider to be essential and those which are desirable.

2.5 One of the objectives of a Sustainable Community is to improve the quality of life of older people and local shopping parades are an essential feature in meeting their needs. Many elderly people are unable to travel very far and are reliant on public transport and shops located in their neighbourhood are, therefore, invaluable in providing day to day goods and services. This is also the case for those groups in the community who are disabled or disadvantaged.

Economic Objectives

2.6 Promoting the economic vitality of localities plays a vital part in the Sustainable Communities Agenda. Local Authorities are required to encourage and support local businesses and employment opportunities and to create an environment where trade will be successful. Local shopping parades provide an outlet for local businesses to operate but they must be managed effectively by the Council in order to maintain their vitality and viability.

Environmental Objectives

2.7 The environmental aim of Sustainable Communities is to reduce reliance on car travel and promote forms of transport which reduce emissions, such as public transport, walking and cycling. By providing day to day essential goods and services within a reasonable distance of people's houses, this encourages a healthier lifestyle and negates the need for people to travel outside of the local neighbourhood.

3. THE CURRENT NEIGHBOURHOOD SHOPS POLICY

3.1 The Neighbourhood Shops Policy was created to provide all stakeholders with a clear indication as to what the Council hopes to achieve from retaining the local shops and parades. It is imperative that these shops meet the needs of the local community in order to maintain their vitality and viability.

3.2 For a parade/shop to be successful there needs to be sufficient demand for the product/service from the local community and the policy states that '*The Council will find ways for local people to express their views as to what they would like to see in parades'* (Paragraph 3.2) and *'The Council will give preference to uses which demonstrably meet local needs and/or create employment opportunities.'* (Paragraph 3.3).

3.3 Secondly, the Council recognises the need to create strong local businesses which are commercially viable; particularly as the parades produce a valuable source of income which funds the Council's housing services (Paragraph 3.4).

3.4 A fundamental element of ensuring that the neighbourhood shops/parades are a success is creating a good 'tenant mix'. This is a key consideration when looking at changes of use and the existing Neighbourhood Shops Policy states:

- In parades where there are existing A3 uses (restaurant/hot food takeaway) uses, the Council as landlord will not generally allow a shop to change its use to Class A3 (restaurant/hot food takeaway). When considering any applications due consideration will be given to 3.3 above, as well as other estate management issues such as the vitality of the parade and cross-trading (i.e. duplication of trades and competition issues).
- Change of use to A2 (financial services) will only be considered if it does not have a detrimental affect on the remainder of the parade.
- Changes of use to community use will be considered on its merits and local circumstances.
- Uses which compete with existing trades in a parade will generally not be considered.

3.5 To assist in identifying acceptable uses the Council compiled a guide of uses that are considered to be 'neighbourhood uses' (see **Figure 2.1** below).

Figure 2.1: Neighbourhood Shops/Parades – Acceptable Uses

Art Shop	Furniture Shop
Baker	Gift/Card Shop
Beauty Salon	Greengrocer
Bookmakers	Hairdresser
Butchers (including Halal butchers)	Health Food Shop
Car Accessories	Ironmongers/Hardware Shop
Carpet Shop	Launderette/Dry Cleaners
Chemist	Locksmiths
Children's Clothing/Baby Shop	Off-licence
Chiropodist	Opticians
Clothing	Medical Clinic
Computer Shop	Music/Record Shop
Confectioner/Tobacconist/Newsagent	Pet Shop
Cycle Shop	Sports Shop
Dental Clinic	Toy Shop
Doctors Surgery	TV Rental Shop
DIY	Shoe Repairs
Electrical Shop	Post Office
Fishmongers	Charity Shop
Florist	Small Supermarket

Source: Slough Borough Council

3.5 With regard to Slough Borough Council's planning policy, policy S2 of the adopted Local Plan - Protection of Small Shops/Parades' - was directly applicable to neighbourhood, local parades and other smaller centres. This policy was, however, not saved when a review took place in September 2007.

3.6 Policy S1 – Retail Hierarchy – reveals that of the units owned by the Council, the following fall within defined centres:

- Trelawney Avenue – Neighbourhood Centre
- Wentworth Avenue – Neighbourhood Centre
- Parlaunt Road – Local Centre
- Harrison Way – Local Centre
- Knolton Way – Local Centre

3.7 The Council's previous approach (Policy S2) was to resist the loss of locally important shops. This was not in conflict with the estates management policy (as outlined in paragraphs 3.1 to 3.5 above).

3.8 The proposed Slough Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2006-2026 states that *'all of the existing neighbourhood and local shopping parades will be encouraged to improve the environment and facilities that they provide so that they can adapt to meet the diverse needs of the local population.'*

4. THE CURRENT NEIGHBOURHOOD SHOPS PORTFOLIO

Location

4.1 The Neighbourhood Shops Portfolio owned by Slough Borough Council consists of 88 shops divided between 11 different locations – nine parades and two stand alone units (we have included 84 St Andrew's Way in the Harrison Way parade). These are shown in **Figure 7.1** following page 18.

Role and Function of the Neighbourhood Shops

4.2 Neighbourhood shops and parades play an important role in the shopping hierarchy. They cater almost exclusively for local neighbourhoods and tend to serve quite a limited catchment area.

4.3 Verdict states that *'neighbourhood stores provide convenient sites for top-up, meal solution and distress purchases. Consequently, retailers in the neighbourhood are less subject to comparison shopping than those elsewhere, which is an important distinction between this channel and the town centre. The comparatively small average store size and high number of independent stores are distinctive features.'*

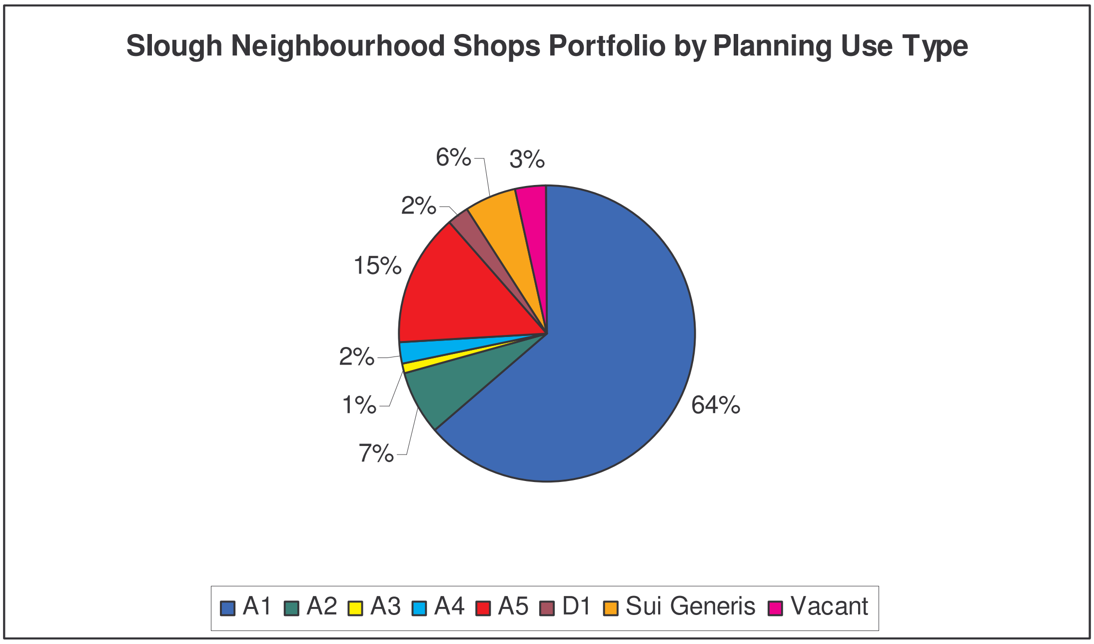
4.4 One of the main purposes of local shops and parades is to ensure that all members of the community have access to basic amenities. This includes those who are disadvantaged, elderly or disabled and do not have access to a car and/or cannot travel long distances.

4.5 Neighbourhood shops provide significant economic, social and environmental benefits as they are able to meet the various shopping needs of residents and visitors in the most sustainable way. The need to travel is reduced and opportunities for walking, cycling and using public transport are increased.

Uses

4.5 **Figure 4.1** shows that of the 88 neighbourhood shops owned by Slough Borough Council, 56 units are in A1 use, equating to 64%. A5 (hot food takeaway) accounts for 15% (13 units) of the portfolio, followed by A2 which has a 7% share. Only 3% of the total number of neighbourhood shop units owned by the Council are currently vacant.

Figure 4.1:



Source: Slough Borough Council

Guide to Use Classes Order

A1 Shops – Hairdressers, undertakers, travel agencies, post offices, dry cleaners, internet cafes etc.
A2 Financial & Professional Services – Banks, building societies, estate & employment agencies, professional financial services, betting offices.
A3 Restaurants & Cafes
A4 Drinking Establishments – Public houses and bars
A5 Hot Food Takeaways
D1 Non-residential Institutions – Places of worship, health centres, crèches, museums, libraries etc.
Sui Generis – Any use not falling within a specific class category e.g. launderette, taxi company.

5. THE CURRENT AND MEDIUM TERM ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

National

5.1 The UK economy contracted by 0.5% q/q in the third quarter of 2008 and is now in recession in all but name. Economic forecasters are expecting growth in the fourth quarter to fall by as much as 1.0% q/q. This fall will be driven by weaker consumer spending as uncertainty over future incomes increases. Claimant count unemployment is rising sharply and we believe it will reach 1.15 million by the end of 2008, before climbing to a 13 year high of 1.90 million during 2009. An easing in oil prices and industrial capacity pressures caused CPI (Consumer Price Index) inflation to fall from 5.2% to 4.2% in the last two months.

5.2 Fears over high inflation have now given way to fears of something far worse; a period of prolonged price deflation. In November and December, the Bank of England took strong action to arrest the economic decline by cutting interest rates by 150 basis points and 100 basis points respectively. The Bank of England is likely to continue to respond aggressively with significant interest rate cuts, possibly reducing base rates as low as the 0.00-0.25% range seen in the US by late spring. It is hoped that this may revitalise the housing market and improve flailing consumer confidence. This is unlikely to prevent CPI inflation falling well below target and possibly even turning negative as food and fuel prices decline. Meanwhile, RPI is now expected to fall as low as -2.0% in late 2009 as the effect of falling mortgage repayments enters calculations. Assuming fiscal policy does not deviate significantly from the Pre-Budget Report announcement and Bank of England policy does not extend far beyond cutting interest rates, the prospects for the UK in 2009 are grim. Consensus December forecasts indicate GDP growth of -1.7%, but the risks to this forecast must surely be weighted to the downside.

5.3 Growth forecasts for 2010 have also been downgraded recently, with some commentators expecting negative growth for the first half of the year. We see some merit in this argument but would tend to remain in line with consensus, expecting some form of recovery by the second quarter of 2010. GDP growth for 2010 is, therefore, forecast to be in the range of 1.0-1.5%. We anticipate that by this time there will be something resembling a 'normal' lending market, both to consumers and businesses. The start of a new credit cycle will be vital to getting the UK economy back on track, although it is hoped that the Bank of England and other financial regulators will ensure the cycle is better managed this time around. Medium-term forecasts suggest that GDP growth will return to historical trend rates of 2.3%-2.6% by 2011.

The Borough of Slough

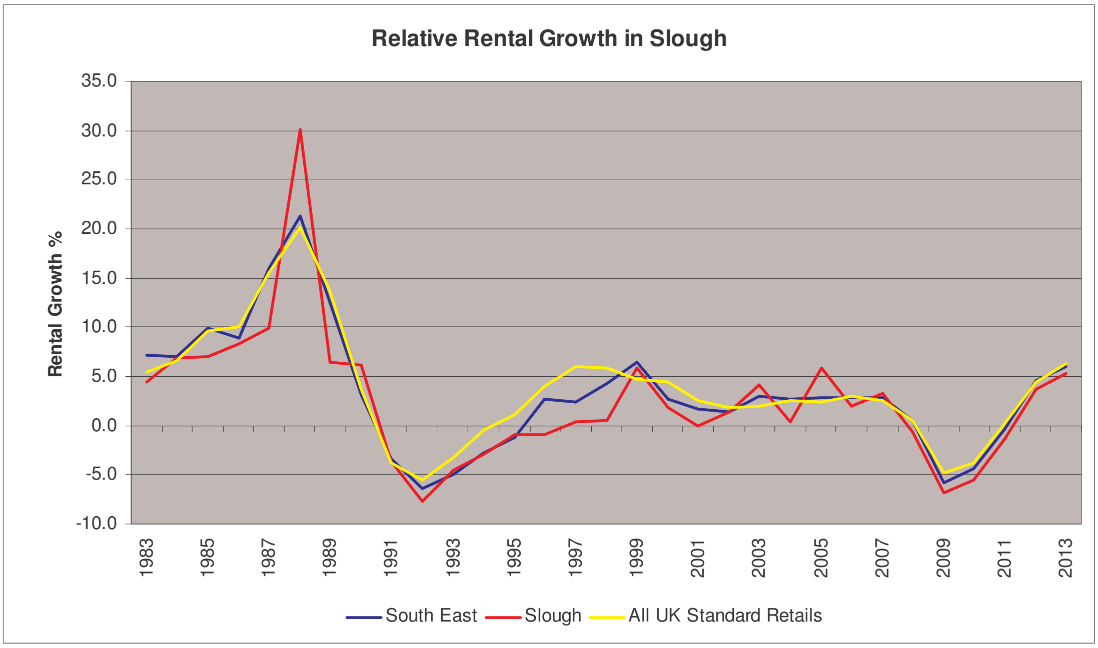
5.4 The local economy comprises 4,600 enterprises, accounting for a total of 77,000 jobs and producing annual output of £2.5 billion. Of this, £700 million stems from the manufacturing sector, which itself accounts for 9,000 jobs. Close to 50% of the Slough workforce commutes into the town on a daily basis. This large proportion may be explained by a skills deficit within the borough. In fact, whilst job-based salaries in Slough were £552 above the South East and national average, salaries of Slough residents were £402 below the UK median. Nevertheless, unemployment in Slough is below the national average and the Thames Valley region has the highest concentration of educated people in the UK.

5.5 Fifty local businesses are members of the Slough Business Community Partnership. It aims to get businesses working together with the voluntary sector to benefit all those who work, live and learn in Slough. The businesses provide their knowledge to local organisations and help support education initiatives in schools. They then benefit from improved skills of their employees by widening their experiences and developing the workforce of the future in Slough. This type of enterprise goes hand-in-hand with the council's housing strategy, which centres on a five-year plan. The ultimate aim is for sufficient, good quality, affordable housing set in thriving communities. The strategy therefore puts housing at the heart of Slough's future, contributing to wider improvements in health, educational attainment and social inclusion.

5.6 The Slough Trading Estate is the largest privately-owned trading estate in Europe and provides 20,000 jobs and 400 businesses. The Borough Council is also trying to encourage smaller enterprises, by offering three sites of industrial starter units with reduced rents in the first years of lease. Major businesses in Slough include Amazon.com, Masterfoods, O2, Citroen UK, Honda UK, GlaxoSmithKline, ICI and YELL. In fact, Slough is identified as one of the top 20 most competitive areas in the UK. Furthermore, in 2006, Slough ranked third in the UK (outside of London) for productivity. Growth sectors include telecommunications, biotechnology, consumer electronics, ICT, automotive industries, business and financial services, pharmaceuticals and healthcare. The Council has also been swift to act in helping to support local residents and organisations through the current economic turmoil, by setting up the Slough Economic Taskforce (SET).

5.7 In 2007 retail rental growth in Slough stood at 3.2% - higher than both the South East and UK averages of 2.9% and 2.6% respectively (see **figure 5.1**). This year, however, and every year to 2013, retail rental growth is forecast to underperform the regional and national average. Colliers CRE predicts that annualised rental growth from 2008 to 2013 will be -1% for Slough, in comparison to 0% for the South East and 0.4% for the UK as a whole.

Figure 5.1:



Source: IPD/Colliers CRE

5.8 The national economy is currently drifting into recession with consumer confidence and spending at a low, a result of growing levels of unemployment and falling house prices. On a local level, forecasts point to a relatively poor economic performance for the Borough of Slough over the next five years. Coupled with the growing threat of out-of-town superstores, the need to protect the vitality and viability of local shops and parades will become increasingly important in the short to medium term.

6. KEY ISSUES WITH THE CURRENT POLICY

6.1 Slough Borough Council's decision to instruct an independent advisor to review the Neighbourhood Shops Policy originated from concerns about its inflexibility in terms of mixes on larger parades. More specifically, regarding the limit on A3 use (now sub-divided into A3/A4/A5 use) which *'allows no flexibility for the larger parades and potentially conflicts with the policy aim to encourage uses that meet the needs of local people.'*

6.2 Colliers CRE has had first hand experience of the issues relating to the current policy during the course of its involvement in managing the portfolio. These difficulties include finding interested tenants that fall within the 'acceptable uses' guide compiled by the Council, whilst also keeping cross-selling to a minimum (in accordance with the policy's competition restrictions).

6.3 The current Neighbourhood Shops Policy is very restrictive and will not generally allow the change of use from A1 to A3/A4/A5. The justification behind the existing planning policy is that A3/A4/A5 uses, A5 takeaways in particular, are often only open in the evening, thereby creating 'dead frontages' during the normal daytime trading hours. A cluster of A3/A4/A5 uses would, therefore, affect the overall vitality of the parade as these units would not be adding to footfall when the majority of other shops are open. Takeaways with late opening hours also create a nuisance for the local residents by way of noise, litter and often groups of young people gathering near the shops which can be intimidating to other people.

6.4 However, Colliers CRE can report that, in its experience of managing the Council's local shops portfolio, on a number of occasions the only interest being registered in a vacant unit has been from A3/A4/A5 retailers. Even if a prospective A5 retailer is not providing the same product as existing A5 tenants (for example a fish & chip shop where there is already an Indian takeaway), the current policy is inhibitive to achieving planning permission, even in the larger parades.

6.5 The increasing absence of any suitable A1 parties who are interested in available units and the current policy regarding A3/A4/A5 uses has meant that in a number of cases units are being left vacant for a considerable length of time. This, too, creates 'dead frontages', which adversely affects the vitality of the parades and this issue was evident when we conducted site visits of the Council's neighbourhood shops portfolio on the 20^{th} November 2008. Therefore, it could be reasoned that one of the key objectives of the Neighbourhood Shops Policy is being undermined by the policy itself. This could become more of a problem in the short to medium term as a result of the difficulties facing the UK economy at present.

6.6 When considering alternative uses, the policy states that consideration should be given to the Council's guide of 'acceptable uses' for neighbourhood shopping areas. However, it is our view that this list appears to be outdated and in need of revision. Some key examples are the inclusion of a TV rental shop and music/record shop, which we consider to have become virtually obsolete uses in current local retail markets. The former is a retail format that has lost its relevance to today's consumer and demand for this service would be limited. Secondly, the increasing popularity of downloading music, coupled with the competitive prices offered by the large entertainment retailers on the high street and supermarkets, as well as the online retailers such as Amazon and Play.com, means it is likely that an independent music retailer would struggle to be commercially viable.

6.7 Currently a significant proportion of the 'acceptable uses' contained in the guide provide comparison goods. This appears to contradict the function of neighbourhood shops as being convenience and service based destinations. Furthermore, Slough Borough Council's 'Balance of Trade Report' states that 92% of all spending on comparison goods by Slough residents is in Slough town centre. Therefore, we would question the inclusion of some of the comparison goods use types on the list.

6.8 Also of note is the lack of distinction between shops selling the same product but with a fundamental differentiation in their offer e.g. a general butchers shop and a Halal butchers. In the current policy the presence of both retailers would not be deemed acceptable as they are classified as the same use – *'Uses which compete with existing trades in a parade will generally not be considered'.* However, in our opinion they should not be categorised as competing uses as they serve the needs of different parts of the community.

7. CATCHMENT AREA DEFINITIONS AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Catchment Area Definitions

7.1 In order to make informed recommendations regarding the proposed revision of the Neighbourhood Shops Policy, it is necessary to assess the demographics of the catchment areas of the neighbourhoods in the Borough of Slough. This will be invaluable in providing an insight into the needs of the local community.

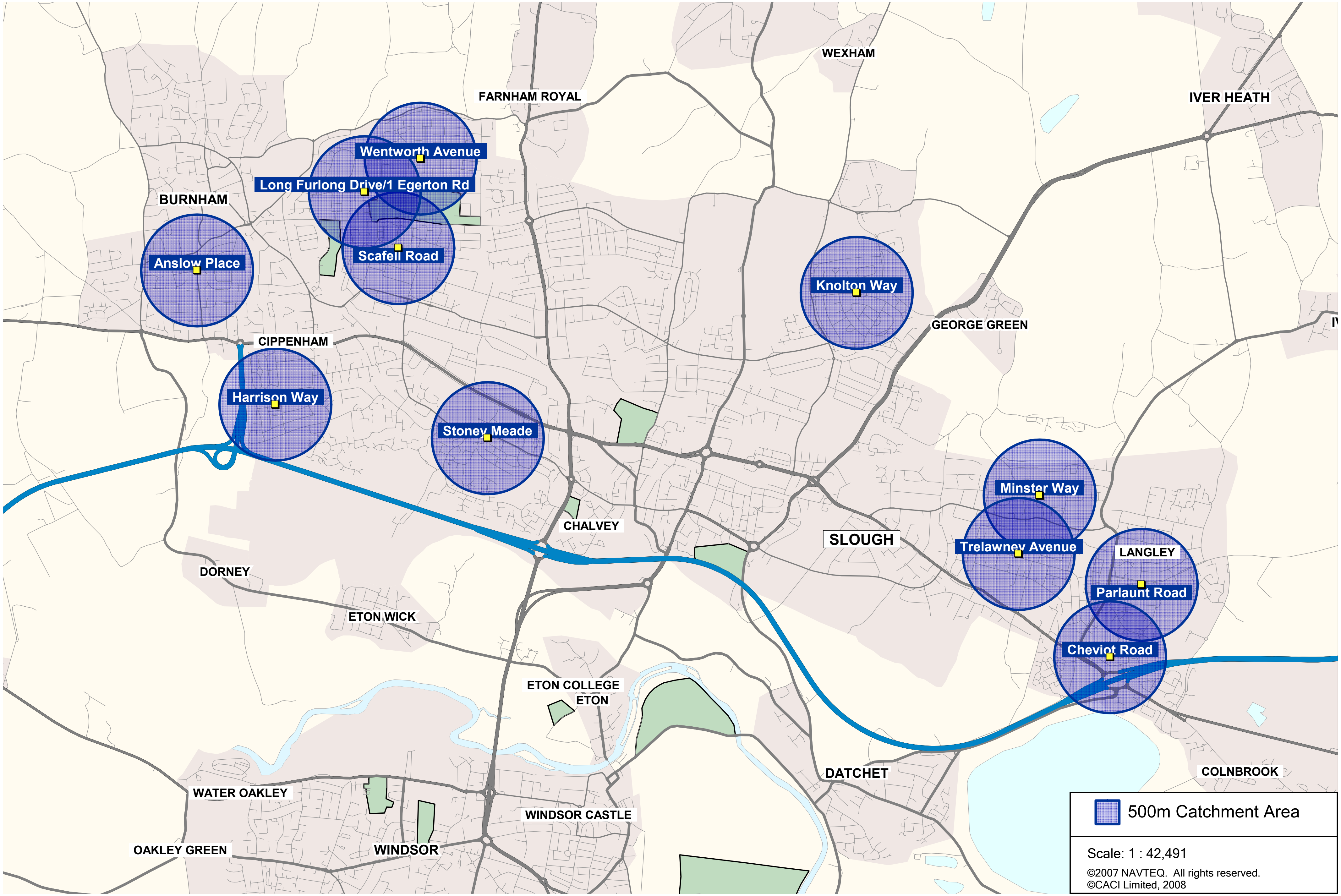
7.2 Neighbourhood shopping parades are, by their definition, intended to serve the needs of the immediate local community. As discussed in Chapter 4, an important element of their role is to provide access to essential goods and services to all members of the local community, including the elderly, disabled and disadvantaged. Furthermore, as part of the Sustainable Communities Agenda, neighbourhood shops are intended to reduce the need for car travel and the majority of shoppers should travel on foot or by bicycle.

7.3 We have examined the retail chapters of Slough Borough Council's Local Plan and the proposed Local Development Framework; however, there is no clear definition of the catchment area of a local parade/shop. Therefore, it was necessary to look at the retail planning policy of other local authorities in the UK. Our research revealed that the catchment area definitions ranged from 400 metres to 800 metres.

7.4 Taking these factors into account, we have assumed a catchment area of 500 metres for the neighbourhood shops and parades in the Borough of Slough. We feel that this is a reasonable distance for local residents to walk/cycle without feeling the need to get in a car and covers a 1 kilometre diameter which is a wide enough area to be able to analyse the catchment demographics.

7.5 **Figure 7.1** overleaf reveals that there is an overlap between the 500 metre catchment areas of a number of the Council's parades/shops and in some cases those included on the outer part of a catchment radius are actually nearer to a different neighbourhood shopping location.

Figure 7.1 - Location of Local Shopping Parades



7.6 This is most notable at Wentworth Avenue, Scafell Road and Long Furlong Drive where a small section of the local population is within 500 metres of all three parades/shops; however, the latter two locations consist of only two units and one unit respectively and, therefore, do not provide significant competition to the large 27 unit parade on Wentworth Avenue. Conversely, the Wentworth Avenue parade may provide more of an attraction to local residents due to its greater retail offering and the opportunity for a linked trip, thus potentially creating ‘leakage’ from the Scafell Road and Long Furlong Drive catchments.

7.7 Other catchment crossovers occur at Trelawney Avenue and Minster Way, and Parlaunt Road and Cheviot Road. As with Wentworth Avenue, the former location is a sizeable parade consisting of 24 units in total so the solus unit at Minster Way does not offer a great deal of competition to the location. However, the Minster Way shop may lose trade to the Trelawney Avenue parade, particularly from those who live within 500 metres of both locations.

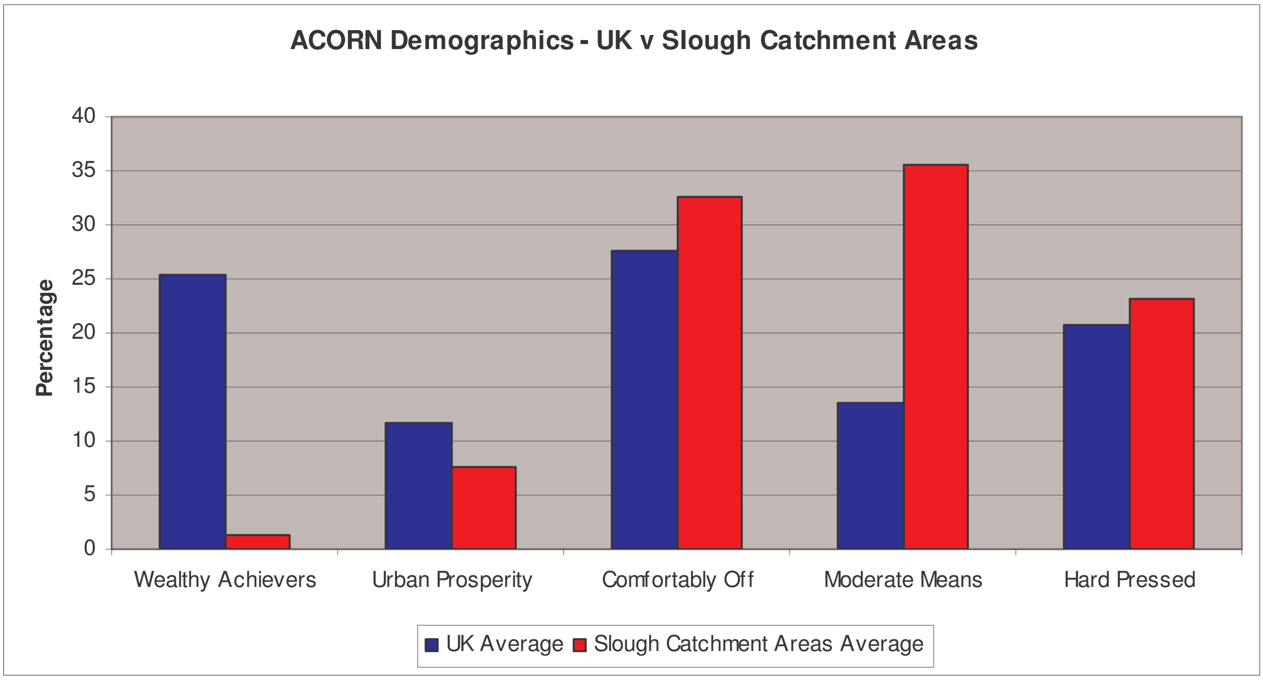
7.8 Parlaunt Road and Cheviot Road both provide a pharmacy and newsagent, but the former also has an estate agent, funeral parlour, butchers, bookmakers and public house. Cheviot Road, on the other hand, has a greengrocer so we would expect that the movement and leakage between these two catchments to be very much dependent upon the particular needs of the local residents at that time.

Catchment Area Demographics

7.9 **Figure 7.2** overleaf reveals the average wealth of the Slough catchment areas in comparison to the UK average. It is evident that these areas of Slough are not considered particularly affluent, with the proportion of residents in the ‘Wealthy Achievers’ category at only 1.3%, compared to the UK average of 25.4%. Furthermore, the percentage of those grouped as ‘Urban Prosperity’ is also lower than the UK average at 7.6%, compared to 11.7%.

7.10 Almost a third of the population residing in the Slough catchment areas are considered ‘Comfortably Off’, this being higher than the UK average of 27.6%. Conversely, however, the majority of people in the Slough catchment areas are of ‘Moderate Means’ (35.5%), which is considerably greater than the UK average of 13.6%. Furthermore, the least wealthy category 'Hard Pressed' is also overrepresented in the Slough catchments at 23.1% of the population, compared to the UK average of 23.1%.

Figure 7.2:

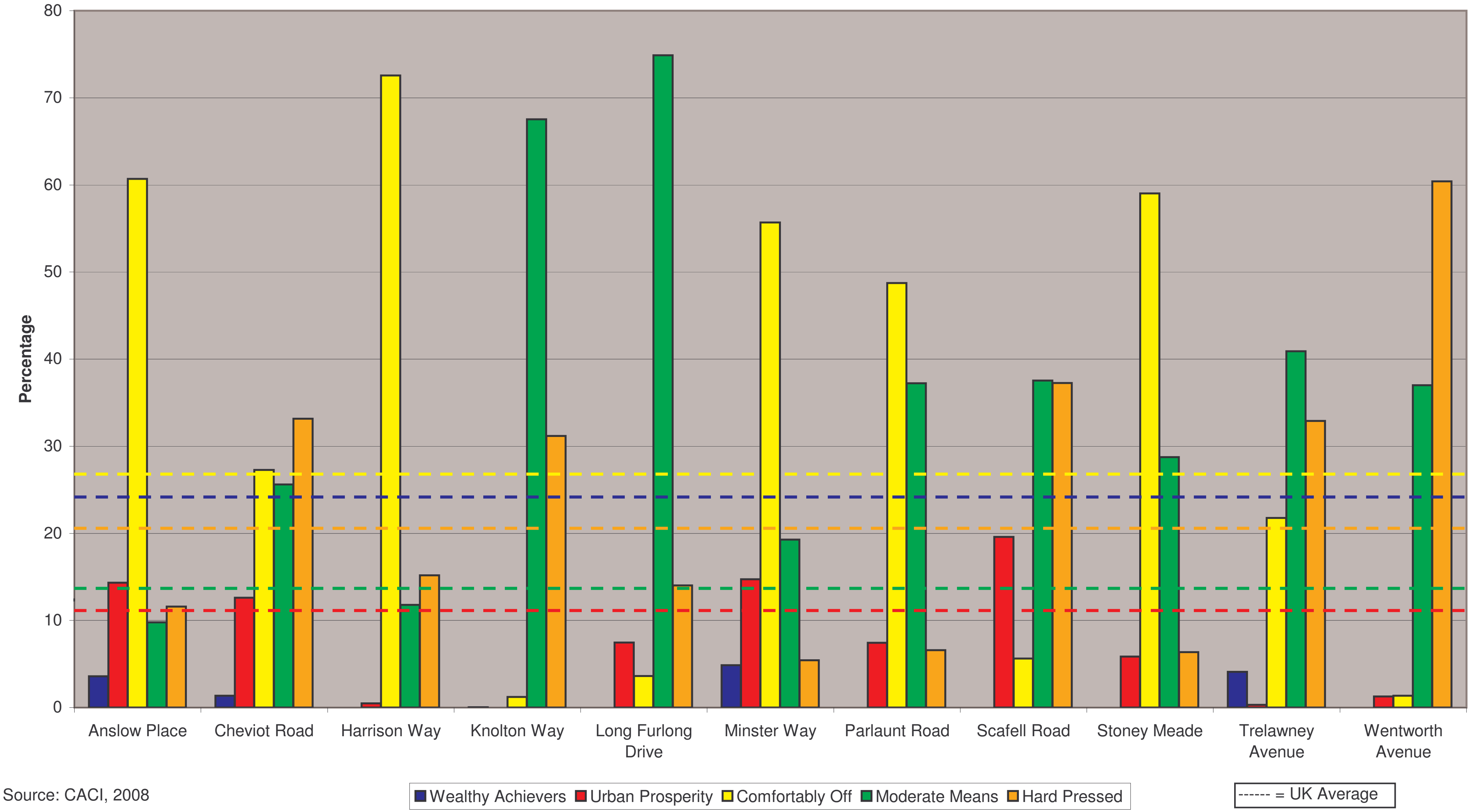


Source: CACI, 2008

7.11 Overall, it is clear that the population of the Slough catchment areas is less affluent than that for the UK. However, by analysing the catchment areas individually, it is apparent that the demographics of the population vary greatly between locations (see **Appendix 1** for an in-depth demographic analysis of each Slough catchment area).

7.12 **Figure 7.3** overleaf shows the demographic breakdown of each catchment area in Slough. Knolton Way and Wentworth Avenue have the largest proportion of their population in the 'Moderate Means' or 'Hard Pressed' groups at 98.7% and 97.4% respectively. Anslow Place, on the other hand, has only 21.4% of its population classified as either of these two groups and Minster Way is also low at 24.7%.

Figure 7.3 - ACORN Demographics by Slough Catchment Area



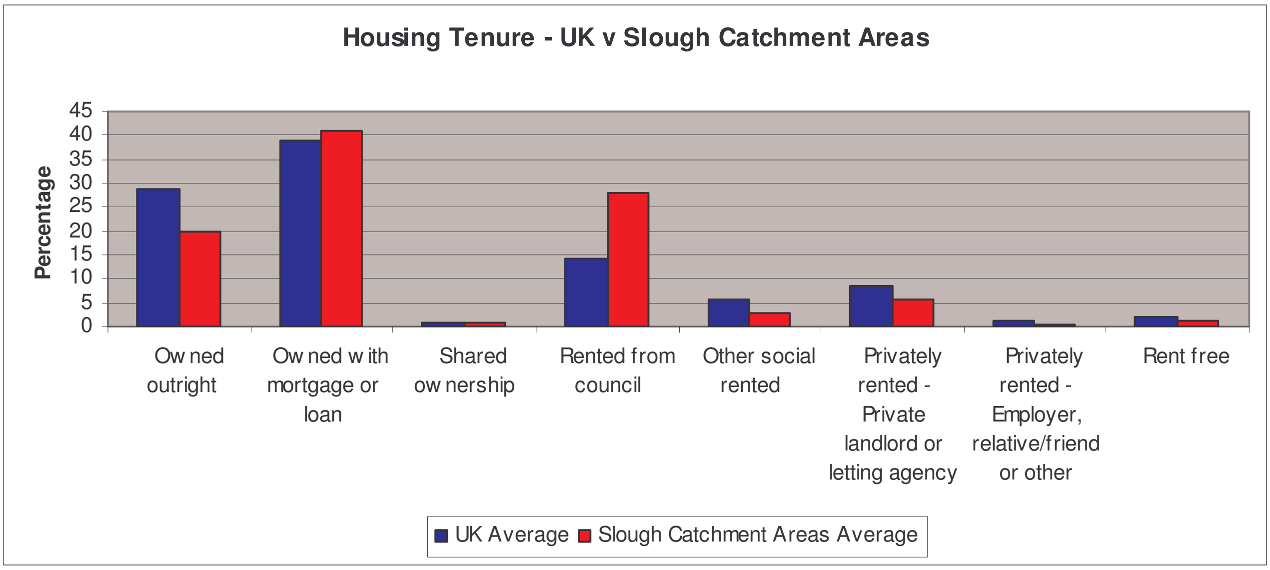
Source: CACI, 2008

7.13 Minster Way and Scafell Road are the most affluent catchments with 19.6% of their respective populations in either the 'Wealthy Achievers' or 'Urban Prosperity' categories. Knolton Way is the only location not to have any residents classified in either of these two groups.

7.14 The average level of car ownership in the Slough catchments is in line with the UK average. However, there are four catchments where the number of households with no car or van is above the UK average of 27.4%, these being Wentworth Avenue, Cheviot Road, Trelawney Avenue and Knolton Way at 37%, 32.5%, 30.3% and 28.2% respectively. It is these locations, therefore, where the presence of neighbourhood shops is essential, as otherwise a proportion of the population would have no easy access to basic goods and services.

7.15 In the UK, the majority of households own a property with a mortgage or loan (38.8%) and **Figure 7.4** reveals that this is also true in the Slough catchments. However, there is a significant variation in the proportion of households whose property is rented from the council. The UK average stands at 14.1%, yet the Slough catchment average is almost double that figure at 27.8%.

Figure 7.4:



Source: CACI, 2008

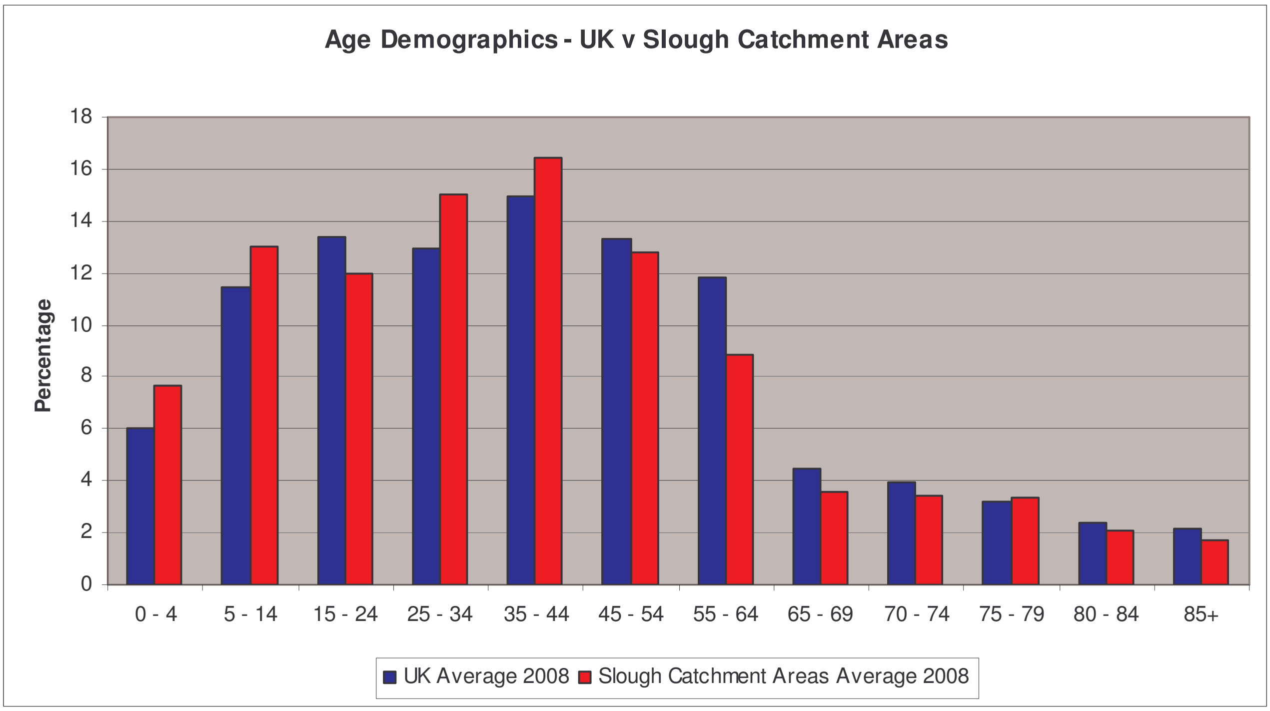
7.16 The catchment area with highest percentage of housing that is social rented (either from the council or other) is Wentworth Avenue at 46.3% - more than double the UK average of 20%. Private renting (of all types) is most common in Stoney Meade, equating to 15.2% of the catchment population, compared to the UK average of 9.6%. Harrison Way has the largest proportion of households who either own their home outright or with a mortgage or loan at 73.3% - higher than the UK average of 67.7%.

7.17 In all catchment areas in Slough the population is dominated by people of White origin (average of 79.6%). However, the proportion of White people in all of the catchments is lower than the UK average of 92.1%. Conversely, there is an overrepresentation of other ethnic groups within the Slough catchment areas, most notably those of Indian, Pakistani and Black Caribbean origin.

7.18 **Figure 7.5** overleaf highlights the average age demographics of the UK population and the Slough catchments. In line with the UK data, the greatest proportion of all the Slough catchment areas population is within the 35-44 age group and is actually higher than the average UK percentage. Other age groups that are overrepresented in the Slough catchments in comparison to the UK average are 0-4, 5-14, 25-34 and 75-79 age categories and this trend is forecast to remain over the next 10 years. This suggests that there is a high proportion of families in the catchment areas of the Slough shopping parades.

7.19 Once again there are differences between the catchment areas in Slough. For example, Anslow Place, Harrison Way, Knolton Way and Trelawney Avenue have a disproportionately high number of elderly people (75 years+), while Long Furlong Drive, Scafell Road and Stoney Meade appear to be ‘younger’ areas as the population under 44 years old is greater than the UK average and of the other Slough locations.

Figure 7.5:



Source: CACI, 2008

7.20 An overall assessment of the Slough catchments appears to show some clear divides between the levels of affluence. Anslow Place, Harrison Way and Minster Way are the locations with the highest percentage of housing that is either owned outright or with a mortgage or loan, the greatest proportion of households with two or more cars or vans and the largest number of people classified as either 'Wealthy Achievers', 'Urban Prosperity' or 'Comfortably Off'.

7.21 At the other end of the scale, Wentworth Avenue, Knolton Way and Trelawney Avenue all have comparably high percentages of households with no car or van, in social rented accommodation and are classified as either 'Moderate Means' or 'Hard Pressed'. Other locations that are considered to be in the lower end of the affluence rankings are Cheviot Road, with a high proportion of households with no car or van and a large number of people in social rented accommodation, and Scafell Road, which also has a high percentage of its catchment without a car or van and has a large proportion of people in the less wealthy ACORN categories.

7.22 Overall, the analysis of the Slough catchment areas reveals that a large proportion of the population are classified as relatively poor and immobile (low car ownership), with a high ethnic differentiation. There is, therefore, likely to be a significant reliance on the local shops, highlighting the importance of maintaining the vitality and viability of the parades and ensuring that the Neighbourhoods Shops Policy facilitates this objective.

8. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Firstly, it is apparent that the current Neighbourhood Shops Policy is out of date in respect of existing planning use type classifications. Use class A3 is now sub-divided into A3 (restaurants, snack bars & cafes), A4 (pubs & bars) and A5 (takeaways). The policy should be updated accordingly.

8.2 Our analysis has revealed that the neighbourhood shops and parades continue to play a vital role in the local community and are essential in creating a 'sustainable community' by providing all local residents and workers with access to basic goods and services and reducing the need for car travel.

8.3 This is particularly pertinent for the locations that we have identified as being 'less affluent', where a significant proportion of the population are without a car or van and do not have the disposable income to use public transport regularly and therefore rely on the local shops for essential products and services. It is this sector of the population who are most vulnerable to the effects of the credit crisis and economic recession and in the short term, at least, are expected to try to minimise the need to travel to reduce costs. Furthermore, factors such as the ageing UK population and the growing importance of 'green' issues also support the long term need for local shops.

8.4 The importance of the neighbourhood shops in the Borough of Slough is expected to remain in the coming decade. Although the growing consumer trend of internet shopping and home delivery might have an effect on the demand for local shops in some localities in the UK, the demographic analysis of the catchments suggests that this will have less of an impact in Slough than in other areas. We would anticipate that in the majority of the Slough catchments, particularly those with a high proportion of the population in the 'Moderate Means' or 'Hard Pressed' ACORN categories, the level of computer ownership and internet usage would be lower than the UK average.

8.5 Furthermore, consumers are becoming more time pressed than ever and this has led to the growing trend for convenience 'top up' shopping. This will continue in the future and supports the need for neighbourhood shops.

8.6 We believe that the fundamental role of, and need for, the neighbourhood shops has not diminished since the current policy was adopted in 2002 and recommend that Slough Borough Council's Neighbourhood Shop's Policy should, therefore, continue to recognise the importance of local shops and support the retention of the parades.

8.7 Having carried out site visits in November 2008, it was apparent that many of the parades are not operating to their maximum capacity with a number of vacant units, shops that were closed but are still leased and some shops that were clearly suffering from a lack of trade. This would suggest that the current retail offer does not entirely match with the needs of the catchment area and that some retailers are finding it difficult to sustain their businesses. In order to ensure the vitality and viability of the local shops/parades, it is essential to understand the needs of the neighbourhood residents. Retail and consumer trends have changed over the past six years since the current policy was adopted and, as a result, we would recommend that the Council carries out public consultation, such as a survey of residents/workers in the catchment areas of the shops, in order to establish their current needs and to ascertain suggestions as to how the parades can be improved.

8.8 The Council should then use this information to determine which uses have the greatest level of demand and those that are no longer commercially appropriate to a neighbourhood location. This can then form the basis of any decision-making on new lettings and change of use.

8.9 Our analysis of key demographic indicators reveals there are significant differences in affluence and ethnicity between the catchment areas of the Slough neighbourhood shops/parades. When assessing options for change of use or a new tenant, the Council should have regard to the characteristics and demographics of the local area and tailor the retail offer accordingly to specific identified need.

8.10 The current guide list of 'acceptable neighbourhood uses' is out of date and does not reflect modern consumer needs. Using the information obtained from the catchment area surveys, we recommend that this is revised and divided into two categories – 'essential good and services' and 'desirable good and services'.

8.11 The current guide on 'acceptable neighbourhood uses' includes a number of retailers offering comparison goods. Given the role and function of neighbourhood shops as a provider of everyday goods and services, we would advocate that uses offering convenience goods (inexpensive and frequent purchases) should form the crux of the 'essential' acceptable uses list.

8.12 Furthermore, the guide needs to acknowledge a distinction between uses offering similar goods and services but serve different parts of the community, as highlighted by the general butcher and Halal butcher example in Chapter 6. These should be classified as separate uses in order to avoid conflict with the competition requirements of the Neighbourhood Shops Policy.

8.13 When seeking a new tenant, we would suggest that preference is given to businesses providing 'essential goods and services'. If, however, there is no interest from essential A1 tenants, or these are already well provided, then uses on the list of 'desirable goods and services' should also be considered, as well as social/community services such as a doctors/dental surgery.

8.14 We would suggest that the acceptable neighbourhood uses guide list is split accordingly (see **figure 8.1** overleaf). However, the list of 'desirable goods and services' can be expanded following consultation with the local community.

Figure 8.1:

Essential Goods & Services	**Desirable Goods & Services**
Baker	Bookmakers
Bookshop/Stationer	Charity Shop
Butcher	Clothing Shop
Chemist/Pharmacy	Cycle Shop
Confectioner/Tobacconist/Newsagent	Gift/Card Shop
Launderette/Dry Cleaner	Health Food Shop
Fishmonger	Off-licence
Florist	Optician
Greengrocer	Specialist Hobby Shop (Toy Shop, Pet Shop, Art Shop etc)
Grocer/Supermarket	
Hairdresser/Beautician	
Hardware/DIY/Electrical Shop	
Locksmith/Shoe Repairer	
Post Office	

8.15 Vacant shops detract from the vitality of shopping parades and we recommend a greater level of flexibility on units that have been available for a considerable period (in excess of six months), providing there is evidence of attempts to let, lease or sell it for retail uses on reasonable terms.

8.16 The Council's neighbourhood shops portfolio is a valuable source of income that supports the housing services. Therefore, it is in the Council's interest that units are let as quickly as possible to maximise revenue, whilst also ensuring that any new tenant complements the 'tenant mix' and maintains the vitality of the parade. Colliers CRE's experience in managing the portfolio reveals difficulties in attracting key tenants. Consequently, we suggest introducing an incentive scheme for specific uses that have been identified as benefiting the local community. This may include a rent free or reduced rent period at the beginning of a lease term or an upfront cash payment.

8.17 Essential uses act as an 'anchor' for parades and the vitality of a location can be dependent on their existence. In the current challenging economic climate (as outlined in Chapter 5) many of these key retailers may become financially unviable. Although the existing Neighbourhood Shops Policy states that the parades 'will be managed in a commercial manner', it should be a key task for the Council/Management Company to ensure where possible shops remain open even in times of difficult trading conditions.

8.18 In a number of cases it appears that units are closed for business, yet the rent is still being paid by the lessee. This may be for a number of reasons such as the tenant is trying to get permission for change of use. Although the Council is still receiving income from the units, void properties have a corrosive effect on the trading of adjoining tenants giving a 'run-down' appearance to a parade if allowed to continue. In our view, the Council should consider a more flexible Neighbourhood Shops Policy, both with regard to new lettings and applications for change of use from existing tenants. In the case of existing tenants, greater flexibility should be given to units where the tenant has ceased trading and has been unable to assign the unit within the existing planning use.

8.19 A more flexible management approach could be considered, whereby tenants who are experiencing problems are identified at an early stage and assisted where possible. Although the Council is in opposition to rent subsidies, we believe consideration should be given to introducing greater flexibility on the timing of rental payments, for example permitting monthly payments, with the aim of ensuring the ongoing survival of these 'anchor' tenants. This would, however, be subject to clear evidence of financial hardship, demonstrated by bank statements and company accounts details.

8.20 In order to establish the views of the tenants regarding rental levels, trading issues, tenant mix, general facilities etc, we would advocate conducting a questionnaire every two years to ensure that the Council is aware of tenant needs and aspirations.

8.21 At present, the Neighbourhood Shops Policy is very restrictive with regard to changes from A1 to A3 (and presumably now A4/A5) use as it will only allow one A3/A4/A5 unit. Whilst it is necessary to safeguard the parades from 'dead frontages' during the daytime trading hours, we consider this unnecessarily restrictive as services offered by different operators can be complementary, e.g. takeaway pizza and sit down/takeaway curry house. The vitality of some of the larger parades, especially those that are located on main roads, would not be adversely affected by change of use to a restaurant/takeaway and providing the local community with increased choice should be considered as a positive initiative.

8.22 The policy should be flexible enough to permit discretion in allowing in traders but not to such a degree that it would remove all A1 uses. In order to ensure greater flexibility on change of use, we would recommend that a limit is introduced on the proportion of non-A1 use or non essential/desirable uses in parades according to the size of parade and accessibility.

8.23 For those shops and parades that have a road frontage (i.e. can benefit from passing car trade) we would suggest a maximum of 50% of non-A1 use or non essential/desirable uses for small parades (up to and including 6 units) and 60% for medium sized parades (7 to 10 units). Larger defined neighbourhood centres will have a higher shopping function so the need to protect A1 uses is greater. Therefore, we recommend a maximum of 30% non-A1 use or non essential/desirable uses on these parades. Community uses may be permitted in addition, but subject to review of the merits and impact on the function of the parade. For those shops and parades that do not have a road frontage or are located on a non-through road we would advise no restrictions on change of use to A2/A3/A4/A5.

8.24 Applications for change of use should also take into account alternative facilities that are located within a reasonable walking distance from the parade. As previously stated, we believe 500 metres is an acceptable distance to walk and the Council should have regard to the number and range of uses within the nearby local area.

8.25 The current policy is very restrictive on competition, which we feel is unnecessary. Competition is, in general, a good thing, but the Council may wish to protect essential A1 traders in order to assist viability. On the whole we agree with competition restriction for A1 uses but it must be applied sensitively so as not to deprive certain sections of the community. The policy needs to be flexible enough to allow commonsense. This is particularly relevant to the larger parades that are defined by Slough Borough Council as being ‘neighbourhood centres’. In these locations, we believe a more flexible approach can be taken on competing uses if it is judged that the tenants can both survive jointly and trade successfully.

8.26 It is in the interest of the Council to ensure that the general facilities at the parades are maintained to create an attractive and safe environment for shoppers. This includes the provision of CCTV, cycle racks, litter bins, telephone boxes etc and the cleaning of any graffiti.

DRAFT NEIGHBOURHOOD SHOPS POLICY

1. SCOPE OF POLICY

1.1 The policy is intended to cover all neighbourhood and local shops owned by Slough Borough Council. These are:

Address	No of Units	Ward
9-14 Anslow Place	6	Haymill
51-55 Cheviot Road	3	Foxborough
5-13 Harrison Way	5	Cippenham
74-104 Knolton Way	8	Wexham Lea
279 Long Furlong Drive	1	Britwell
9 Minster Way	1	Langley St. Mary's
14-24 Parlaunt Road	6	Foxborough
84 St Andrews Way	1	Cippenham
252-254 Scaffell Road	2	Haymill
2-12 Stoney Meade	4	Chalvey
228-260 Trelawney Avenue	17	Kederminster
296-308 Trelawney Avenue	7	Kederminster
45-97 Wentworth Avenue	27	Britwell
	88	

1.2 Of these units owned by the Council, five parades fall within defined centres in the Borough's 'Retail Hierarchy'. Trelawney Avenue and Wentworth Avenue are classified as 'Neighbourhood Centres' and Parlaunt Road, Harrison Way and Knolton Way are all 'Local Centres'.

1.3 The policy will also cover broader 'social' uses such as doctors and dentists who operate in the vicinity of these parades.

2. REASON FOR POLICY

2.1 The policy aims to provide the Council, shop tenants and local people with a clear indication as to what the Council, as landlord, hopes to achieve from retaining these parades and the management strategy that has been adopted.

3. POLICY

3.1 The Council supports the retention of local parades.

Reason: Neighbourhood shops are a fundamental part of a 'sustainable community'. It is important that all local residents and workers have access to essential goods and services to reduce the need for car use and provide a convenient solution to day to day shopping needs. Neighbourhood shops help the local economy and provide employment for local people.

3.2 The Council will seek to encourage uses which meet the needs of local people.

Reason: Local parades must adapt to meet local needs if they are to prosper. The Council will consult with the local community on a regular basis (a minimum of every five years) by way of a survey of local residents and workers to ascertain their current needs and assess whether they are being met sufficiently.

3.3 The Council will give preference to uses which demonstrably meet essential local needs and/or create employment opportunities.

Reason: The role of local shops/parades is to provide day to day, convenience goods and services and the Council wishes to encourage employment in the local area.

3.4 The parades produce a valuable source of income which funds the Council's housing services. They will, therefore, be managed in a commercial, yet flexible, manner, subject to other policy objectives.

Reason: The Council wishes to see strong local businesses and expects businesses to be commercially viable; however, it does not expect to directly support these through rent subsidies. It will aim to create an environment where tenants can trade successfully and, where appropriate, will take a flexible approach to management, subject to clear evidence of individual circumstances. The Council will conduct a regular tenant survey (a minimum of every two years) to highlight tenant issues and aspirations.

3.5 The Council will ensure that the general facilities at the local parades are maintained and will carry out inspections on a regular basis.

Reason: An attractive and safe environment is essential in order to attract shoppers and to maintain the vitality of the parades.

3.6 Policy regarding change of use:

Within local retail parades, the Council will normally only permit changes of use at ground floor level from shops (use class A1) where all the following conditions are met:

i) The resultant reduction in retail facilities will not seriously weaken retail provision to local residents, in particular the range and choice of essential shops.

ii) The proposed replacement use provides a service appropriate to a neighbourhood shopping area (use classes A2, A3, A4 or A5) providing the total non-A1 use or non essential/desirable uses does not exceed 50% for small parades (up to and including 6 units) with a road frontage and 60% for medium sized parades (7 to 10 units) with a road frontage. On larger defined neighbourhood centres with a road frontage a maximum of 30% non-A1 use or non essential/desirable use should be permitted. For those shops and parades that do not have a road frontage or are located on a non-through road there should be no restrictions on change of use to A2, A3, A4, or A5. Social/community services, such as a doctors or dental surgery may also be considered as an appropriate replacement use, subject to review of the merits and impact on the function of the parade.

iii) Where a parade has reached the defined limit with regard to non-A1 and non essential/desirable uses and a unit has been on the market for in excess of three months without any viable commercial interest from an alternative A1 retailer, consideration should be given to applications of change of use if potential interest has been received. In the meantime, the vacant unit should, however, continue to be marketed for a further three months and if an A1 tenant is then found during this time then preference will be given to this use, providing the rental offer reflects the true market value.

iv) Where there is a vacant unit and the level of non-A1 or non essential/desirable goods in a parade is below the defined limit, consideration should be given to alternative uses without the need to market the property for a minimum of six months. However, at all times a healthy tenant balance should be maintained and a commercial approach should be taken to ensure the future rental valuation of the parades is not compromised. In these circumstances, should interest be registered for a unit from both an A1 retailer and a non-A1 or non essential/desirable tenant, the level of rental offer will be the primary consideration. Where there is a considerable difference between the rental terms, the highest offer will be taken in order to protect the Council's interests. However, should the offers made be of a similar level, preference will always be given to the core A1 use.

Reason: Successful parades house a good 'tenant mix' (i.e. a mix of complementary uses) which provide essential goods and services to the local community. The Council also acknowledges the requirement for other goods and services for which there is a recognisable local demand, such as A2, A3, A4 and A5 uses. However, the Council will enforce restrictions on non-A1 uses or non essential/desirable uses according to the size of parade and accessibility (i.e. located on a major thoroughfare or non-through road) in order to ensure the vitality of the parade is not adversely affected. The commercial interests of the Council as landlord will, however, be a primary concern when assessing applications for change of use.

4. NEIGHBOURHOOD USES

4.1 To assist in identifying 'acceptable uses' the Council has compiled a guide listing uses which are considered to fall within a definition of an essential neighbourhood use and those which are non-essential but are desirable to the local community. Preference should be given to essential uses; however, non-essential but desirable uses will also be considered.

4.2 The list is not definitive and decisions on acceptable uses will be principally determined by the balance of existing uses in an area, the needs of local people or any particular requirement the Council may have. It is accepted that the list may change as markets develop and local demands change and the Council will ensure that the list is reviewed and, if necessary, updated on a regular basis.

4.3 Applications for uses outside the list will be considered on their merits in the context of the overall policy and circumstances in a parade. The list is attached on the following page:

Essential Goods & Services	Desirable Goods & Services
Baker	Bookmakers
Bookshop/Stationer	Charity Shop
Butcher	Clothing/Footwear Shop
Chemist/Pharmacy	Cycle Shop
Confectioner/Tobacconist/Newsagent	Electrical/Phone Shop
Launderette/Dry Cleaner	Gift/Card Shop
Fishmonger	Health Food Shop/Delicatessen
Florist	Optician
Greengrocer	Sandwich Bar/Café (open during daytime trading hours)
Grocer/Supermarket	Specialist Hobby Shop (Toy Shop, Pet Shop, Art Shop etc)
Hairdresser/Beautician	
Hardware/DIY Shop	
Locksmith/Shoe Repairer	
Off-licence	
Post Office	

5. PLANNING PERMISSION

5.1 The Council's role as landlord is entirely separate from its role as Local Planning Authority. The fact that planning permission has, or could be, obtained for a certain use does not override the policy as landlord's consent will be considered independently. Similarly, the fact that the Council as landlord may wish to see a certain use does not mean that planning permission will be granted.

6. EXCEPTIONS TO THE POLICY

6.1 This policy applies to all parades owned by Slough Borough Council. Should a parade be subject to redevelopment, however, it may be necessary to temporarily remove these units from the remit of the policy in order to maintain the vitality of the location prior to any work being undertaken.

7. RETAIL MARKET

7.1 The retail market is a dynamic environment with ever-changing issues and trends. The Neighbourhood Shops Policy has been formulated with regard to the existing economic climate, which necessitates increased flexibility in terms of management of the shops/parades. There is, however, a need to continually review the policy in relation to evolving economic and retail trends and, if it is assessed that significant changes have occurred, there may be an increased need to promote and protect A1 uses and the introduction of greater restrictions on non-A1 use or non essential/desirable uses should be considered.

8. APPENDIX

Guide to Use Classes Order

A1 Shops – Hairdressers, undertakers, travel agencies, post offices, dry cleaners, internet cafes etc.

A2 Financial & Professional Services – Banks, building societies, estate & employment agencies, professional financial services, betting offices.

A3 Restaurants & Cafes

A4 Drinking Establishments – Public houses and bars

A5 Hot Food Takeaways

D1 Non-residential Institutions – Places of worship, health centres, crèches, museums, libraries etc.

Sui Generis – Any use not falling within a specific class category e.g. launderette, taxi company.