

LEITH TOWN CENTRE

APRIL 2017



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Further information

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This version has been subject to a minor technical update to ensure consistency with the adopted Local Development Plan.

1. Introduction

The Supplementary Guidance has been prepared in accordance with Policy Ret 9: Alternative Use of Shop Units in Defined Centres, in the Local Development Plan (LDP) and applies to all shop units within the town centre. It aims to deliver two LDP objectives set out in Chapter 6 (Shopping and Leisure) of the Plan:

- To maintain the existing and proposed broad distribution of centres throughout the city and sustain their vitality and viability; and
- To improve the appearance, quality and attractiveness of all centres.

The Supplementary Guidance has been informed by the 'Public Life Street Assessment' carried out by design consultants, HERE+NOW, which explored how the town centre should evolve to maximise the potential for benefitting public life.

2. Leith Town Centre-Key Findings

Leith Town Centre is one of Edinburgh's nine town centres (including the City Centre Retail Core) defined, protected and promoted as the heart of the community and a hub for a wide range of activities from shopping and providing local services and as a leisure destination. Leith Town Centre (defined in Map 1 and 2) starts just to the north of the city centre and follows Leith Walk north to take in parts of Great Junction Street, Duke Street and the Kirkgate. Leith Walk has evolved from a historic route that led from the Port of Leith to the city to a main arterial route into the city centre, most of the town centre is with either the Leith Conservation Area or the New Town Conservation Area.

Leith Ward has the highest population density in the city and is one of the most densely populated areas in the UK. There are over 16,000 residents that are within an easy walking distance of the town centre boundary (see Map 1 and 2). The resident population and visitors to Leith are set to increase with the following developments:

- Four new dedicated student accommodation blocks (two of which include new shop units);
- New housing at Tennant Street and Brunswick Road;
- Proximity to the Edinburgh St. James development and new hotel at Baxter's Place;
- Commitment to extending the Tram line to Newhaven.

Leith Town Centre is the subject of an extensive road and public realm renewal programme, referred to as the 'Leith Programme'. Funded by the Council and Sustrans, it is focussed on delivering high quality public realm, focussing on walking, cycling, public transport and street life along Leith's principal street. The first three phases are complete, with further phases subject to consultation. From March 2017 the 20mph programme will be introduced in the Leith area. Reduced traffic speed will improve the sense of security for pedestrians and cyclists.

The average quoting retail rent (2 years ending Sep 2015) (£/sq ft) is £12 which, along with Portobello, is the lowest rent in the city and equates to half the rent of Bruntsfield/ Morningside and Stockbridge Town Centres.

Leith has benefitted from the **trade waste policy** that only allows trade waste to be presented on the street/outside premises for one-hour within set collection windows. This has significantly reduced pavement clutter and improved pedestrian movement, especially at peak times of the day.

Public Life Street Assessment

A systematic methodology using direct observation techniques (pedestrian counts, behavioural mapping and tracing studies) was used to assess both the place and movement function of the Leith Town Centre. The results are summarised below and in the accompanying graphics.

Place Function Analysis

The place function was assessed against 12 Quality Criteria advocated by Gehl Architects. Generally the place function score is split between those areas already improved under the Leith Programme, and those yet to be transformed by the programme. The sections south of Pilrig Street, as well as Great Junction Street, have a poorer score. As identified in the 'wheel' diagram below, Leith scored moderately on its aesthetic quality and detail design. The assessment highlighted a need to address lack of vegetation and planting throughout the centre.



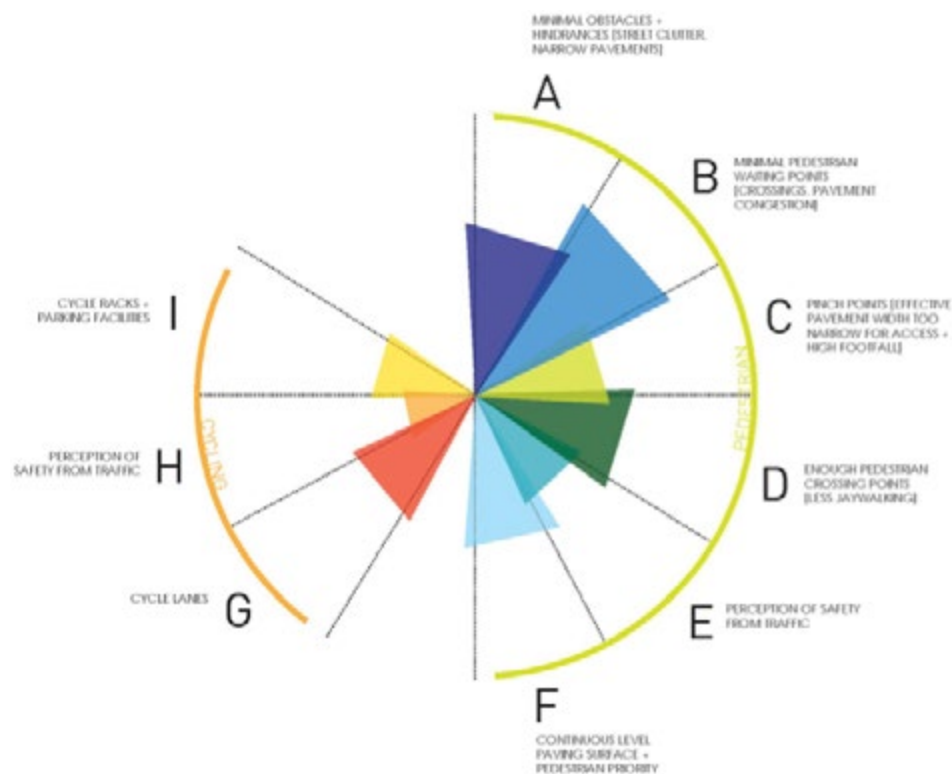
As a movement route the centre scores highly especially in the improved sections. Generally there is good lighting and opportunities to enjoy views up the Walk. Wider footpaths, particularly in the newer sections, allows shopfronts to be appreciated and creates space that feels at a human scale and less dominated by cars.

The place function scored less well on opportunities to enjoy positive climate as there is currently little shelter from inclement weather; there are few opportunities for play and unfolding activities; traffic noise and lack of sheltered seating from traffic make few opportunities to talk and listen. Overall there is a lack of places to sit or stay in a comfortable setting due to lack of shelter and seating. Feeling safe and protected from traffic and accidents scored poorly. The assessment drew attention to a perception of crime and anti-social behaviour.



Pedestrian Movement Function

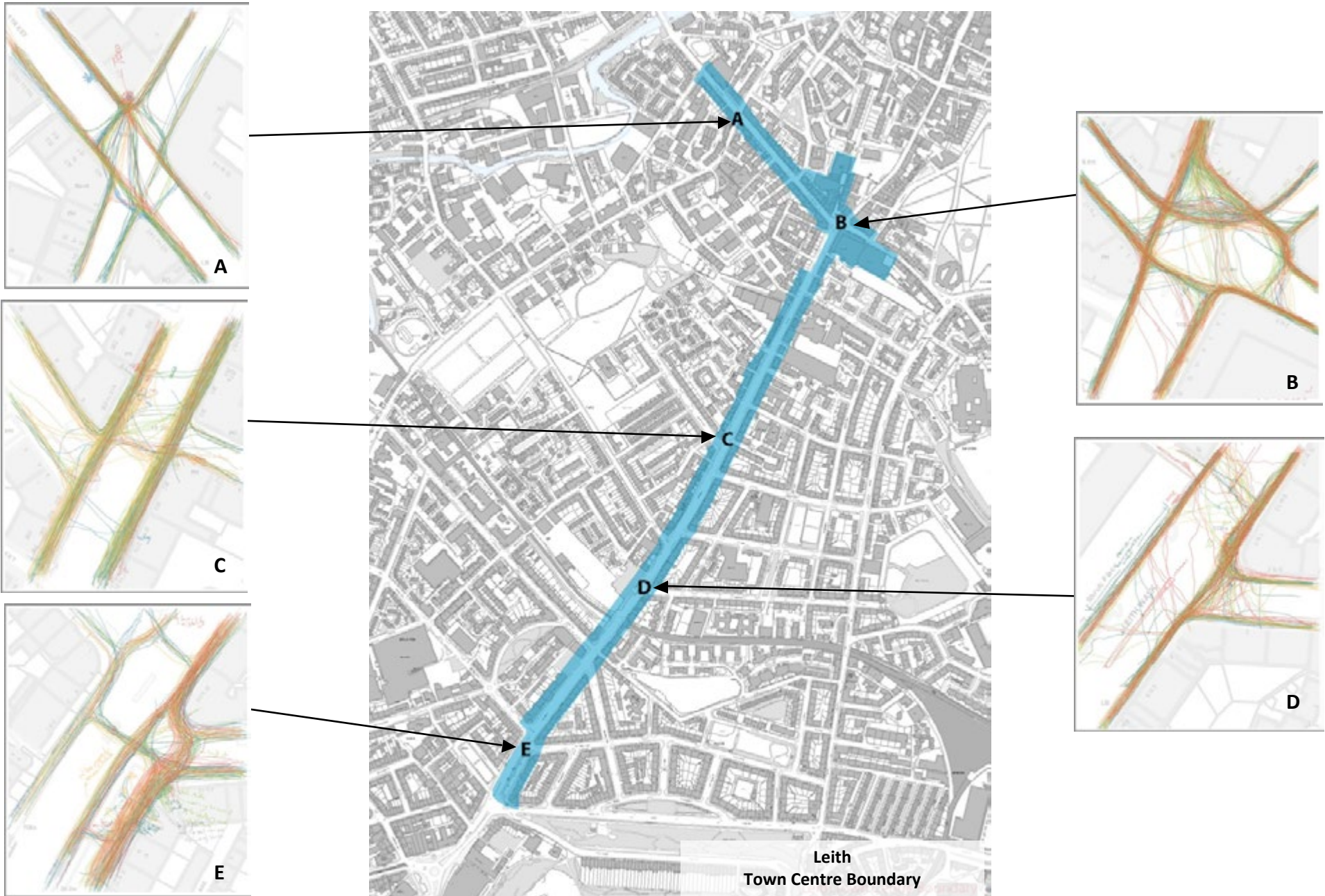
As described in the 'wheel' diagram below, Leith enjoys minimal pedestrian congestion (with the exception of Great Junction Street). Along the length of the Walk there are few waiting points for pedestrians when crossing minor roads. The completed section of the Leith Programme has particularly helped minimise pedestrian waiting points with the raised entry treatment of side streets; wide and clear pedestrian routes; and the addition of new crossings. Elsewhere such as Great Junction Street movement is impeded by narrow pavements, higher number of obstacles and A-frames are prevalent in the south of Leith Walk.



There are some sections that pedestrian movement tracing (see images below) highlighted as problematic, such as the south of the Pilrig Road junction and the complex junction at Montgomery Street/Elm Row. Where new crossings have been added, these have been welcomed.

Paving surface and width is a problem in the sections yet to be improved and in Great Junction Street where there is a lack in pedestrian priority in terms of carriageway space and junction layouts. User interviews expressed concern regarding traffic in terms of accidents, volume and noise.

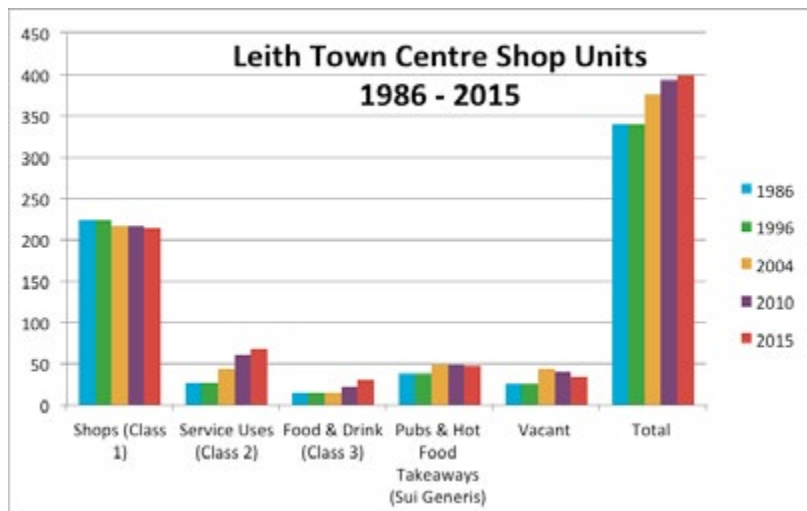
The map and images below show the observational tracing studies carried out at the five locations (A-E) within the town centre boundary. The tracing studies mark pedestrian movement lines. As these build up, pedestrian desire lines and highly trafficked routes become more obvious, giving a graphical representation of the volume and direction of pedestrian movement.



Shop and other town centre uses

Similar to Edinburgh's other town centres, the shop units are predominantly ground floor units under traditional tenemental housing. Where a unit is used as a shop it is necessary to get planning permission from the Council to change to another use. However, the planning system cannot control what goods shops are selling, nor can it control which company occupies a shop. Leith has a dedicated pedestrian shopping precinct at the Newkirkgate with national retailers like Lidl and Farmfoods present with dedicated parking to the rear. There is a recently extended stand-alone supermarket at the bottom of the Walk. Some units have been merged to accommodate larger units, often for the 'local' format national supermarkets (Tesco Metro, Scotmid, the Cooperative and other independent supermarkets). There is a good mix of other convenience shops to serve the large local population as well as specialist independent shops to draw in trade, making Leith a shopping destination. The shopfront design is of varying quality across the centre.

The mix of uses has been monitored in *city-wide shop surveys* periodically undertaken since 1986. As the graph below shows, the mix of uses follows trends seen in other town centres like a small loss in shops contrasting with an increase in service uses and food and drink uses. Pubs and hot food takeaways have remained more stable over the years, and there has been an improvement in the vacancy rate. The last survey shows a 10% rate which is below the national average and which is between 9% and 13%, but higher than Edinburgh's average of 7%.



3. THE VISION FOR LEITH

There is great potential to improve the movement and place function of Leith Town Centre. Three key overarching aims have been identified for the town centre as a whole. Both the Planning and Transport Service and Localities teams should endeavour to apply these, where appropriate. External parties should consider these when submitting planning applications.

AIM 1 - Promote PLACE by maximising Leith Town Centre's contribution to an active public street life, encouraging people to spend longer in the town centre by enhancing the comfort, interest and quality of the public realm.

- a) Bringing visual interest to the streetscape that can be appreciated by pedestrians, such as supporting:
 - outdoor seating;
 - appropriate pavement displays of traders' goods; and
 - high quality shopfront design that complies with the Council's Guidance for Businesses, and the Listed Building and Conservation Area Guidance.
- b) Adding opportunities to shelter from the elements, rest and enjoy positive climate, for example by supporting the addition/use of:
 - Planters, trees, awnings, overhangs; and
 - formal or informal seating.
- c) Creating flexible public spaces that allow options to test outdoor markets/temporary stalls/seating spaces, for example at Elm Row or the Kirkgate.
- d) Improving the environmental quality of all amenity space, regardless of tenure, to create informal open spaces, for example at Croall Place.
- e) Any development opportunity should make a positive contribution to the public realm by meeting the Street Design Guidance and future public realm strategy.

AIM 2 - Facilitate MOVEMENT and increase footfall by prioritising pedestrians and cyclists over cars.

Leith Town Centre scores well for movement, but there are some areas that still need to be redesigned to reduce pinch points (congestion) and increase pavement space.

- a) Improve connections with the wider walking and cycling networks and QuietRoutes network, for example creating more direct routes to Pilrig Park through the redevelopment of the Stead's Place/100 – 152 Leith Walk block and from Great Junction Street potentially from Pirrie Street; and in the long-term to connect to the Powderhall train line, the route of which is safeguarded as a long-term active travel off-road route;
- b) Upgrade junctions by moving kerbs to create wider pavements and narrower carriageways to help reduce congestion at the narrow sections of pavement, for example at the junction with Bonnington Road;
- c) Reduce street clutter that impedes pedestrian movement, particularly at Great Junction Street;
- d) Simplify complex road junctions for example the Elm Row/Annandale Street/Montgomery Street junction through the next phase of the Leith Programme.

AIM 3 - Create a DESTINATION that provides a vibrant mix of shopping and other town centre services for residents and visitors.

- a) Maximise Leith's large resident population and ensure that the town centre meets their shopping needs and demands, balanced against the benefits of extending economic activity and footfall into the evening.
- b) Recognise the retail focus at the foot of the Walk, supported by busy bus stops and available parking, and nurture it by applying an appropriate planning policy that protects shop use (see **Policy LTC 1** below).

c) Capitalise on the wide pavements and clustering of food and drink with outdoor seating permits located between Stead's Place and Iona Street by applying an appropriate policy that allows greater flexibility in changes to food and drink uses (see **Policy LTC 2** below).

d) Town centres are highly accessible and desirable locations for a variety of uses, including residential and small business use. These uses would be supported as part of the redevelopment of larger sites such as the land behind Stead's Place/100 – 152 Leith Walk block and the site that includes the former depot at 165 Leith Walk, which could also accommodate the space needs of the Community Planning Partners. The Housing Land Study (June 2014) identified the depot site as a 'high' probability for development with an indicative capacity of 100 units; while the northern section is identified as Leith Walk/Manderston St and given a 'low' probability for development, with an indicative capacity of 44 units. Development opportunities within the town centre boundary and directly adjacent to the street frontage should also deliver:

- active frontages with ground floor commercial units;
- clear pedestrian links through the site; and
- opportunities to create or enhance public spaces, where possible.

e) Consequently, the conversion of any shop unit to residential use within the town centre boundary will not be permitted.

f) Ensure Leith capitalises on the opportunities that the three tram stops safeguarded along Leith Walk will bring to the immediate vicinity.

4. RETAIL POLICIES

The three policies below (Policy LTC1, Policy LTC2 and Policy LTC3) set out when a shop unit can change from a shop use to a non-shop use.

Policy LTC 1 – Alternative Use of Shop Units in Defined Frontages (foot of the Walk area)

In the Frontages at the foot of the Walk area, defined in [Table 1](#) (see Map 1), the change of use of a shop unit to a non-shop use will be permitted provided:

- a) as a result of permitting the change of use, no more than one third of the total number of units in the frontage will be in non-shop use; and
- b) the proposal is for an appropriate commercial or community use which would complement the character of the centre and would not be detrimental to its vitality and viability.



Table 1: Frontages (foot of the Walk area)

2-52 Great Junction Street and 1-3 Duke Street
1-67 Great Junction Street and 2-4 Leith Walk
Kirkgate – all units

Policy LTC 2 – Alternative Use of Shop Units in Defined Frontages (Elm Row and Leith Walk)

In the Frontages at Elm Row and Leith Walk, defined in [Table 2](#) (see Map 2), the change of use of a shop unit to a non-shop use will be permitted provided:

- a) as a result of permitting the change of use, no more than one half of the total number of units in the frontage will be in non-shop use; and
- b) the proposal is for an appropriate commercial or community use which would complement the character of the centre and would not be detrimental to its vitality and viability.

Table 2: Frontages (Elm Row and Leith Walk)

25-75 Elm Row and 94-96 Brunswick Street
1-23 Elm Row
265-295 Leith Walk

Policy LTC 3 – Alternative Use of Shop Units Elsewhere in Leith Town Centre

For those locations not within a ‘frontage’, but elsewhere within the Leith Town Centre boundary, a change of use from a shop to a non-shop use will be permitted provided a proposal is:

- Class 2 – financial, professional or other services
- Class 3 – food and drink uses
- An appropriate commercial or community use which would complement the character of the centre and would not be detrimental to its vitality and viability.

5. LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

Other relevant policies in the [Local Development Plan](#) include:

- Ret 3 Town Centres;
- Ret 11 Food and Drink Establishments; and
- Hou 7 Inappropriate Uses in Residential Areas

Policy Ret 3 generally supports shop uses in town centres. Policies Ret 10 and Hou 7 consider the impact of proposals on nearby residents, such as public houses and hot-food takeaways.

One-Door Approach

The One Door Approach to Development Consents aims to give the customer all the information they need at the start of the development process. Food and drink, public house and hot-food takeaway uses will often require other consents and are subject to separate controls by licensing for:

- Alcohol
- Hours of operation
- Outdoor pavement seating

For more information on these, see the Council's website on the [One Door Approach](#) to development consents, the Council's [Guidance for Businesses](#) or contact the [Business Gateway](#).

Edinburgh Street Design Guidance

[Edinburgh's new Street Design Guidance](#) brings together previously separate CEC guidance on street design to achieve coherence and co-ordination across the city, with the ultimate goal of providing the people of Edinburgh with a world-class network of vibrant, safe, attractive, effective and enjoyable streets. The guidance will apply to a range of Council services who manage streets for various purposes.

Edinburgh Design Guidance

The [Edinburgh Design Guidance](#) sets out the Council's expectations for the design of new development in Edinburgh. The guidance is intended for all new buildings and should be used as a point of reference, a basis for the planning, design and communication of new development proposals and a material consideration in assessing planning applications. It aims to provide guidance on how to comply with the policies in the local plans, explain the key ideas which need to be considered during the design process, give examples of good quality design, and set out the requirements for design and access statements.

6. DEFINITIONS

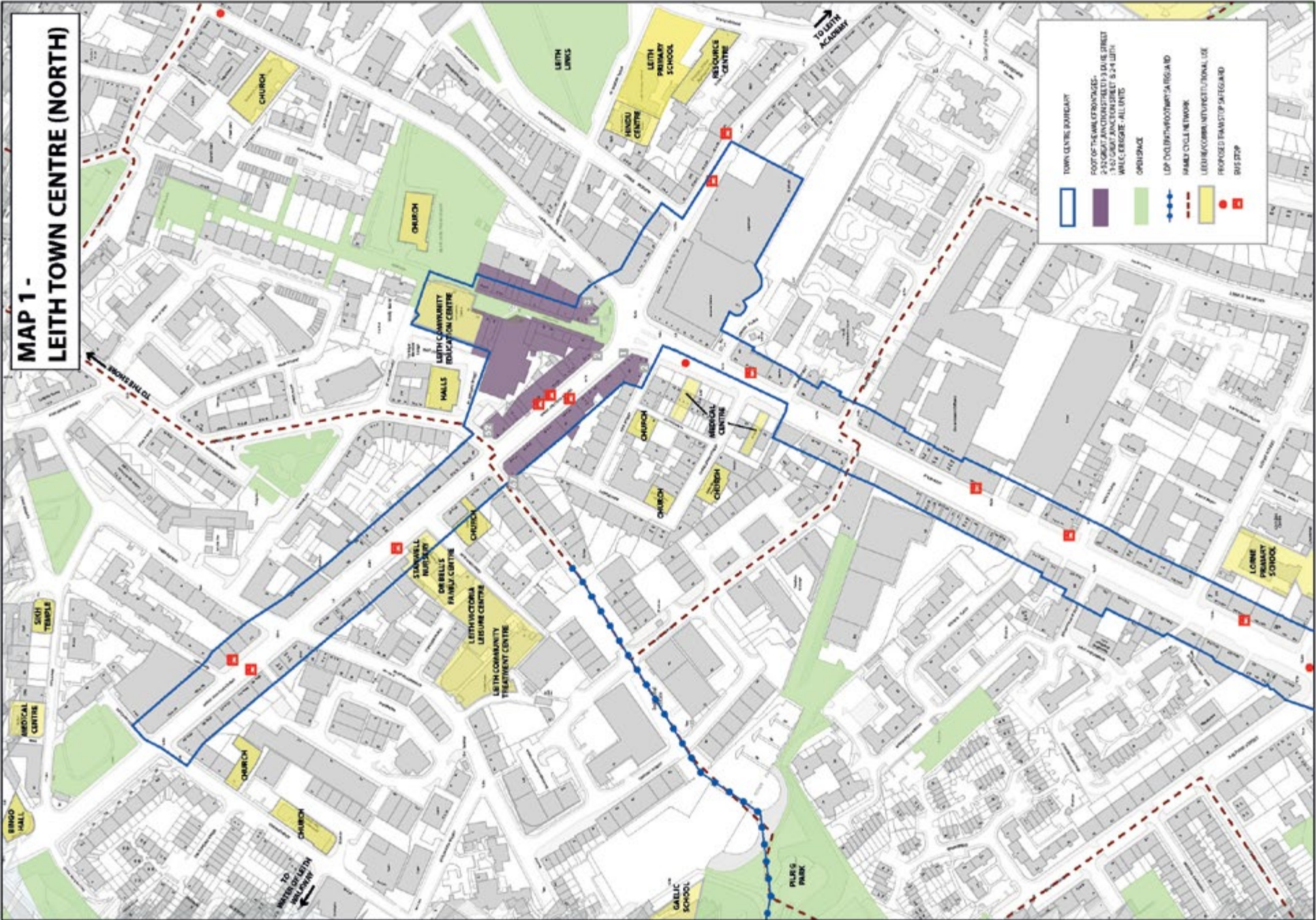
Class 1 shop use - A unit used for the sale of goods to visiting members of the public, for example, post office, sale of tickets, cold food for consumption off the premises, and hairdressing.

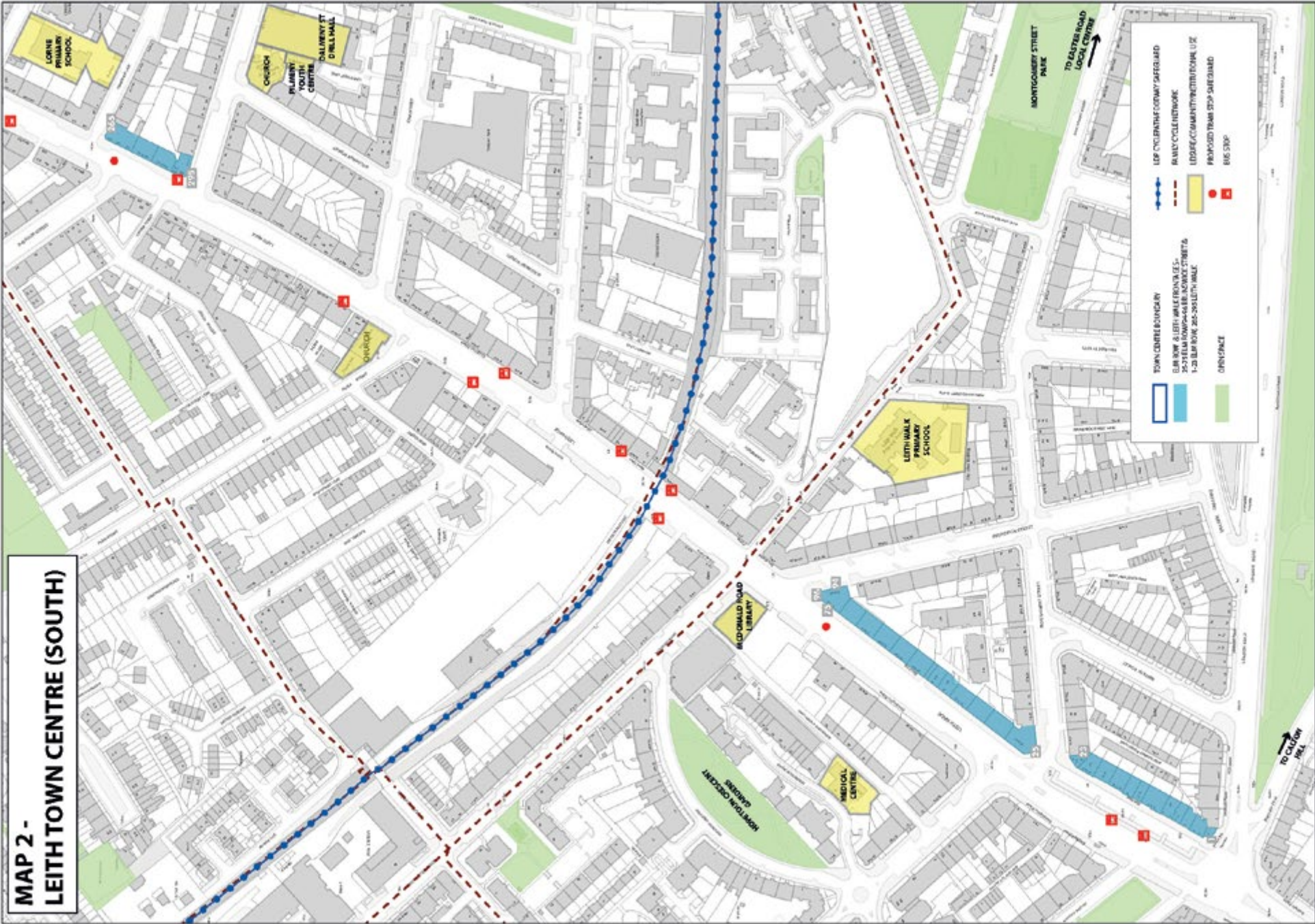
Shop unit - Premises opening directly onto the street and designed primarily for shop use.

Non-shop uses - Changing a shop to a non-shop use is known as a 'change of use' and will always require planning permission. Examples of non-shop uses are:

- **Class 2 Service Uses** – lawyers, accountants, estate agents, health centres, tanning salons, betting shops and pawn brokers.
- **Class 3 Food and Drink** (consumed on premises) – restaurant, cafe, snack bar (not a public house or hot food take-away).
- Pubs and hot food takeaways are classified as [Sui Generis](#).

Some changes of use are permitted development, for example, a cafe (Class 3) being turned into a shop unit (Class 1). The Scottish Government Circular 1/1998 contains guidance on use classes.





SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE

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