

SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE

# PORTOBELLO TOWN CENTRE

December 2017



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### Further information

**online:** [www.edinburgh.gov.uk/supplementaryguidance](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/supplementaryguidance)

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# 1. Introduction

This Supplementary Guidance sets out the approach to the change of use of shop units within Portobello Town Centre.

Portobello Town Centre is one of Edinburgh's nine town centres (including the City Centre Retail Core) defined, protected and promoted as a hub for a wide range of activities from shopping and providing local services and as a leisure destination in the Edinburgh Local Development Plan (LDP).

The LDP provides a framework for a tailored approach to assessing proposals for change of use applications for individual town centres. The Supplementary Guidance has been prepared in accordance with **Policy Ret 9: Alternative Use of Shop Units in Defined Centres**, in the LDP and applies to all shop units within the town centre. It aims to deliver two LDP objectives set out in Part 2, Section 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.

This Supplementary Guidance forms part of the statutory development plan. Applications for change of use must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. To assist in interpreting the LDP the Council issues non-statutory guidance. Guidance for Businesses provides guidance on change of use. This is a material consideration in the determination of applications and should be considered alongside this Supplementary Guidance.

The Supplementary Guidance has been informed by a 'public life street assessment' carried out by design consultants for the Council, which explored how the town centre should evolve to maximise the potential for benefitting public life and a health check which has considered the centre's strengths, vitality and viability, weaknesses and resiliencies.

## 2. Portobello Town Centre

Portobello Town Centre (defined in Map 1) lies to the north east of the city centre and takes in Portobello High Street from Pipe Street to the west and ends at Pittville Street at Abercorn Park in the east. Portobello High Street is an arterial route into Edinburgh from the east and serves as the main shopping and commercial street for Portobello. The entire town centre falls within the Portobello Conservation Area. The promenade and beach play a key role in giving Portobello its unique setting and identity, and make Portobello a popular 'destination' for daytrips, especially in the summer months. It retains its village feel with an engaged community that promotes local initiatives such as the community buyout of the former Portobello Old Parish Church, in Bellfield Street, and Brighton Park hosts a monthly market.

### Shops and other town centre uses

Similar to Edinburgh's other town centres, the shop units are predominantly ground floor units under traditional tenemental housing or purpose built shop units with terraced housing to the rear. The shopfront design is of varying quality across the centre. The main anchor supermarket is located off Bath Street and is not visually connected to the main high street. The second main food retailer to enter is the new purpose built medium sized supermarket with car park located a short distance outwith the town centre boundary to the west.

The town centre boundary excludes the southern side of the High Street east of Regent Street. This results in a number of shop units that are adjacent to the town centre, but outwith the scope of the retail policies that follow in this guidance. Changes of use would be assessed with LDP policy Ret 10: Alternative uses of shop units in other locations.

### Strengths and weaknesses

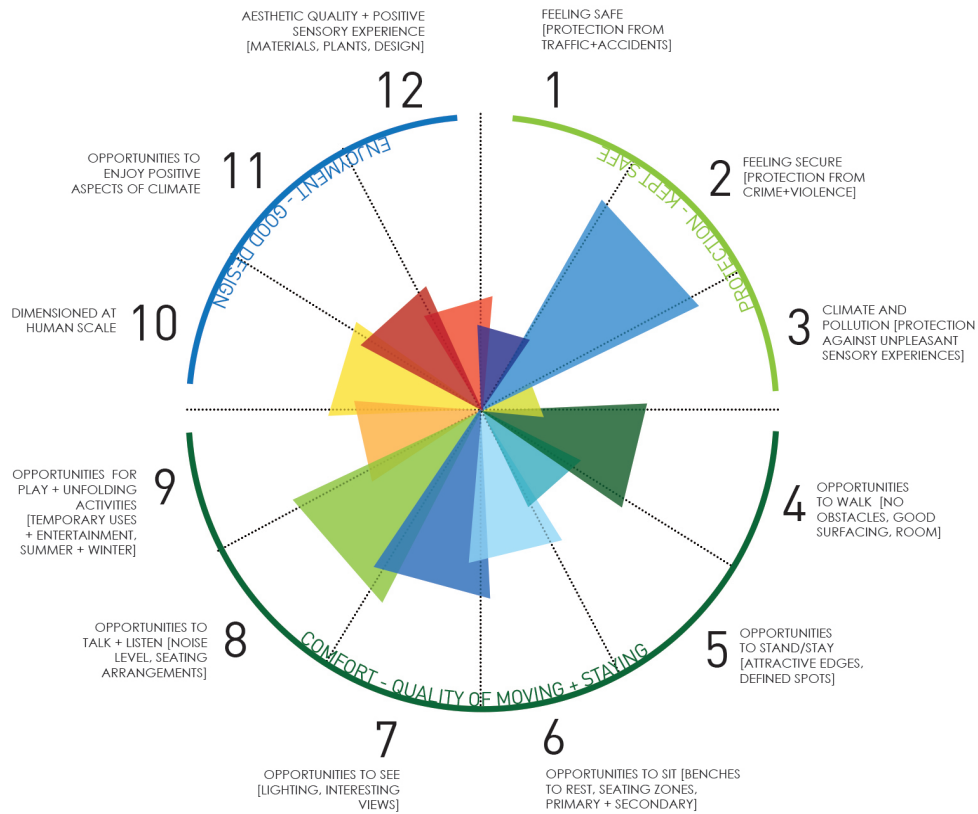
To assess how the Town Centre functions in terms of pedestrian and cyclist movement and as a place to visit, a study called a public life street assessment was carried out by design consultants for the Council, and explored how the town centre should evolve to maximise the potential for benefitting public life. This study used a mixture of

techniques, including direct observation (pedestrian counts, behavioural mapping and tracing studies), user interviews and land use surveys.

A health check has also been carried out to assess the Town Centre's strengths, vitality and viability, weaknesses and resilience.

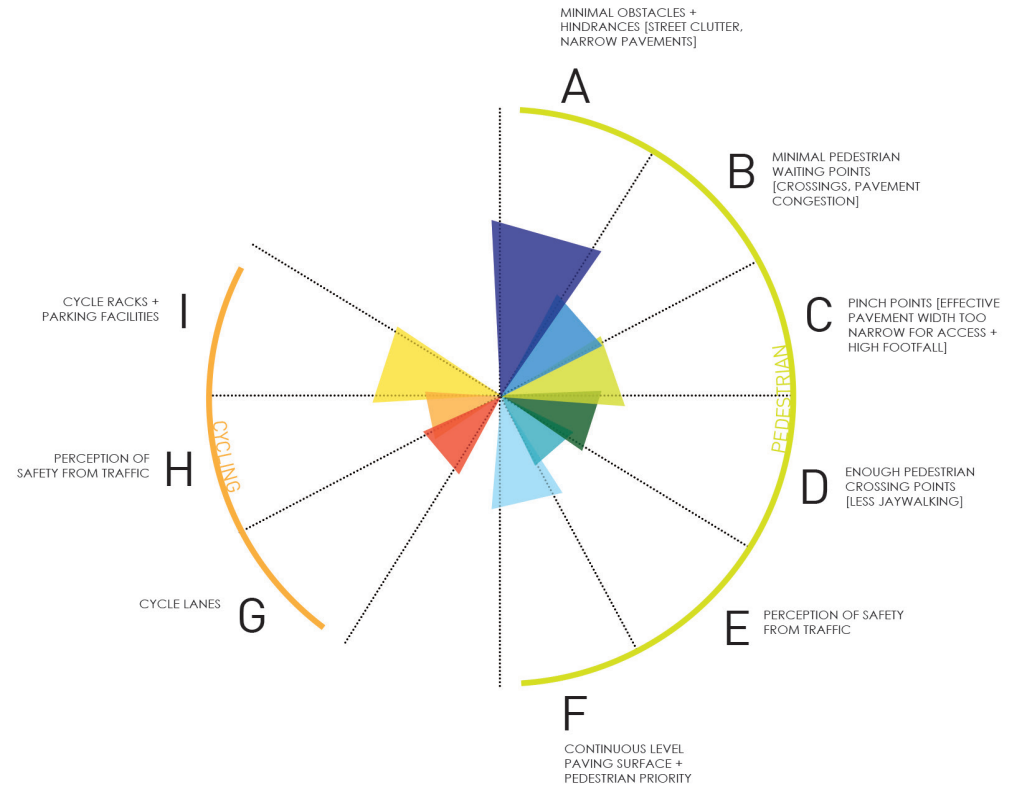
# FINDINGS FROM PUBLIC LIFE STREET ASSESSMENTS

Assessed against  
Gehl's 12 quality  
criteria



**Place Function**

Based on direct  
observation  
techniques & user  
interviews



**Movement Function**

## SWOT Analysis

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### STRENGTHS

- Village feel with presence of civic buildings acting as architectural landmarks eg police station and town hall
- Community capital – community run assets and monthly market
- High proportion of independent shops. Stable shop to non-shop ratio
- The Promenade and beach make Portobello a destination, and is an active travel route and alternative to the high street
- Relatively minimal pedestrian congestion

### WEAKNESSES

- Poor wayfinding from the Promenade to the High Street
- Slightly high vacancy rate
- Limited crossing points, parts of the street feels one-sided
- Narrowest section of the street between Brighton Place/Bath Street and Windsor Place, is perceived as a pinch point and an area of conflict between cyclists, buses and on-street parking

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Better links and connections between the High Street and Promenade, including improved wayfinding
- Better use of space outside Town Hall
- Protection from climate and traffic
- Build on social capital and chance encounters by redressing the lack of spaces for unfolding activities and play, opportunities to stand and stay, and rest

### THREATS

- Traffic noise, volume and pollution
- Lack of cycle lanes and parking

### 3. Vision and Principles

The Public Life Street Assessment and health check highlight areas for improvement in the town centre, particularly relating to the movement and place function. The vision for Portobello is to create and promote:

- place with an active public street life with a quality public realm that is comfortable for all users and thereby would encourage people to stay longer;
- streets and public realm that prioritises pedestrians and cyclists and thereby increases the ease of movement and increases footfall; and
- a mix of shopping and other town centre services that supports the resident community and creates a destination for visitors.

The Supplementary Guidance goes some way to achieve the wider vision through the following principles, which should be considered when submitting and assessing a planning application for a change of use within the Town Centre:

1. Supporting high quality shopfront design (see the Council's Guidance for Businesses and Listed Buildings and Conservation Area Guidance).
2. Ensuring active frontages to the street by permitting glazing which will allow for natural surveillance, create a visual interest on the street and encourage street users to linger, whilst prohibiting the change of use from shop use to residential in ground floor units. Supporting outdoor seating where pavements are wider and micro-climate is favourable.
3. Supporting Class 3 food and drink uses on corner units where there is an opportunity to activate the public street life.
4. Maximising opportunities for formal and informal outdoor seating incorporating shelter or shop front awnings at key points along the town centre.
5. Ensuring development makes a positive contribution to the public realm by meeting the Street Design Guidance and Edinburgh Design Guidance.

6. Incorporating and enhancing natural and built features where they can contribute positively to the Town Centre, for example the connections to the Promenade/beach.
7. Supporting additional cycle parking facilities at key points along the Town Centre.
8. Taking opportunities to remove street clutter and other redundant items identified in any relevant street audits prepared by the Council or Living Streets.
9. Ensuring appropriate arrangements are in place for storage of waste, internally and externally.

A number of other programmes and plans have the potential to address some of the other issues raised in the Public Life Street Assessment:

- A bus shelter replacement programme has recently taken place, including replacement bus shelters with advertising panels in the town centre. Future replacement programmes will present an opportunity to improve placement of shelters.
- The recently reviewed Portobello Conservation Area Character Appraisal provides the context to manage change that affects the conservation area's unique characteristics and set out opportunities for enhancement.
- Road and footway investment – Capital Programme
- The Council's Wayfinding Project. This could improve navigation, wayfinding and appreciation of assets such as the Promenade/beach.
- Quiet Routes – Edinburgh's local walking and cycling routes.
- A locality based approach to service delivery operates in Edinburgh. The town centre is within the North East Locality and the Draft Locality Improvement Plan sets out the future priorities for the area and consider opportunities to enhance the local sense of identity and belonging.

- The Portobello area now benefits from a 20mph speed limit that aims to improve the sense of security for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Portobello 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.



## 4. Change of Use Policies

Where a unit is used as a shop it is necessary to get planning permission from the Council to change to another use. In addition to the retail sale of goods, 'shop use' covers a variety of other similar uses where a service is provided principally to visiting members of the public e.g. post offices, travel agents, hairdressers, laundrettes, dry cleaners, etc. However, the planning system has limited control of what goods shops are selling, nor can it control which company occupies a shop.

The policies below (**Policy PTC1 and Policy PTC2**) set out when a shop unit can change from a shop use to a non-shop use. The policies apply to ground floor shop units only or basement/first floor units that are directly accessed from the pavement.

Frontages are used to ensure that a minimum percentage of shop units are retained in shop use to meet the basic shopping needs and provision of the walk-in population. Keeping this level of protection is balanced against the benefits of extending economic activity and footfall into the evening. Elsewhere in the town centre a flexible approach to appropriate changes of use applies. Corner units for example towards the eastern end of the centre with streets leading perpendicular to the Promenade, could capitalise on the outdoor street spaces, improving the public realm and providing for an active public life.

### Policy PTC 1 – Alternative Use of Shop Units in Defined Frontages

In the frontages as defined in the table below (and in 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 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.

Frontages
100 – 162 Portobello High Street
111 – 153 Portobello High Street
164 – 208 Portobello High Street
210 – 240 Portobello High Street

### Policy PTC 2 – Alternative Use of Shop Units Elsewhere in Portobello Town Centre

For those locations not within a 'frontage', but elsewhere within the Portobello 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.

### Residential use

For placemaking purposes it is important that ground floor uses help bring activity onto the street. Residential units at ground floor level tend to add little vitality to the town centre. Portobello already has a significant - and growing - population living within walking distance of the main shopping streets and within the town centre itself, changing shop units to residential is not supported. However, opportunities should be considered for promoting residential use above shop units in any new development or redevelopment schemes within and on the edge of the town centre boundary.

## 5. Links to other Policies and Guidance

Other relevant policies in the Edinburgh Local Development Plan include:

- Ret 1 Town Centres First
- Ret 3 Town Centres
- Ret 7 Entertainment and Leisure Developments
- Ret 11 Food and Drink Establishments
- Des 13 Shopfront
- Env 3 Listed Buildings - Setting
- Env 4 Listed Buildings – Alterations and Extensions
- Env 5 Conservation Areas – Demolition of Buildings
- Env 6 Conservation Areas – Development

**Policy Ret 3** generally supports shop uses in town centres. Policy Ret 7 supports leisure and entertainment facilities in town centres. Policies Ret 11 considers the impact on nearby residents for proposals such as public houses and hot-food takeaways. Des 13 supports improvements to shop fronts.

**Guidance For Businesses** – non-statutory guidance to assist businesses in preparing applications to change the use of a property as well as providing guidance on shopfront design.

**One-Door Approach** - 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 and outdoor pavement seating. For more information on these, see the Council's website on the One Door Approach.

**Edinburgh Street Design Guidance** - guidance on street design to achieve coherence and co-ordination across the city.

**Edinburgh Design Guidance** - sets out the Council's expectations for the design of new development in Edinburgh.

**Portobello Conservation Area Character Appraisal** - describes what is special about the conservation area and helps in making decisions on proposals that affect the area's special character.

## 6. Definitions

**Shop unit** - As defined in the Edinburgh Local Development Plan (2016), a shop unit is a premises accessed directly onto the street and designed primarily for shop use.

**Primary Retail Frontage** - a group of shop units that has been identified as providing a focus for retail within the town centre.

**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. This is further defined in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Scotland) Order 1997.

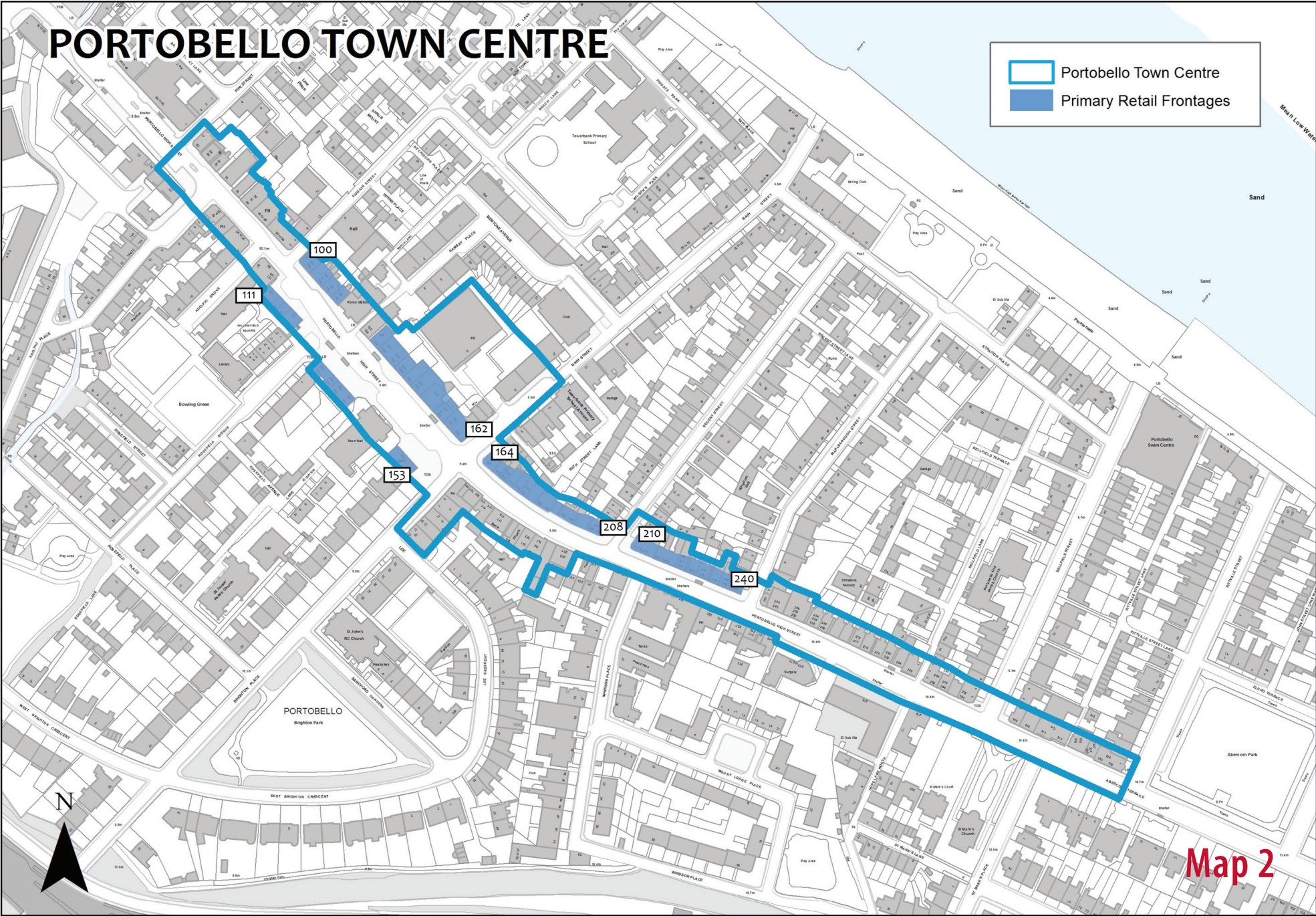
**Non-shop uses** - Any use falling outwith the definition of Class 1 shop use. Examples of non-shop uses are:

- **Service uses** – e.g. lawyers, accountants, estate agents, health centres, tanning salons and pawn brokers.
- **Food and drink** – e.g. restaurant, cafe, snack bar.
- **Commercial/business use** – general office, light industry or research and development, which can be carried out without detriment to the amenity of any residential area.
- **Community use** – e.g. social and cultural activities.
- **Leisure use** – e.g. cinema and gymnasium.
- **Other uses** – e.g. betting shops, pay day loan shops, pubs and hot food takeaways.

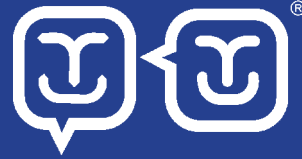
Some changes of use are permitted development, for example, a cafe (Class 3) being turned into a shop unit (Class 1). The Scottish Government Circular 1/1998 contains guidance on use classes.











HAPPY TO TRANSLATE

ترجمے کے لئے حاضر آماندہر سہجے انوباد کررر

بسعنا اوفیر الئرجمة MOŻEMY PRZETŁUMACZYĆ 很樂意翻譯

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