

City Centre Shopping & Leisure

January 2025

INTRODUCTION

Development plans guide decisions on applications for planning permission. The statutory development plan comprises the National Planning Framework (adopted February 2023) and the local development plan, namely City Plan 2030 (adopted November 2024).

This guidance sets out the approach to the change of use of shop units within the city centre retail core and assists the implementation of development plan policy.

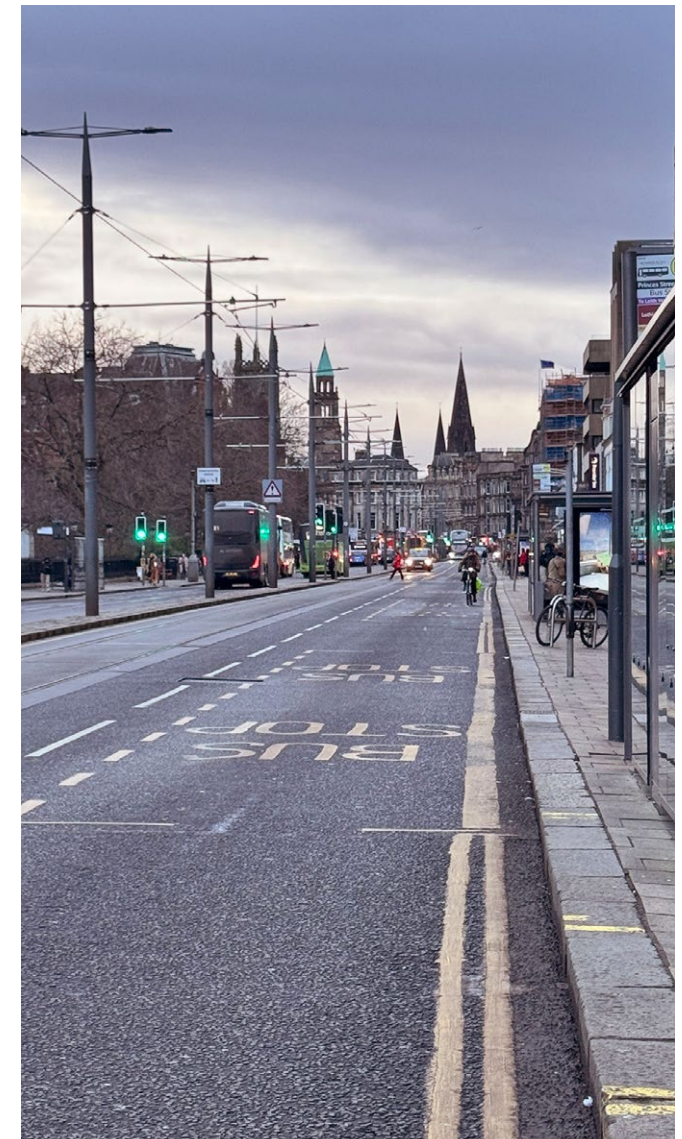
The city centre is the regional centre of the city region providing a broad range of functions including shopping, office, leisure, culture, tourism and government.

The Local Development Plan provides a framework for a tailored approach to assessing proposals for change of use applications in individual town centres. This guidance was originally prepared, as statutory supplementary guidance, in accordance with the superseded 2016 Local Development Plan, prior to the National Planning Framework forming part of the statutory development plan. However, the substance of the planning guidance remains valid in the context of the current statutory development plan, and is unchanged by the update.

The guidance has been updated only to reflect:

- Statutory changes to Permitted Development Rights
- The overarching Policy framework of the current statutory development plan, both in terms of:
 - National Planning Framework 4; and
 - City Plan 2030, including Policy Re 4: Alternative Use of Shop Units in the City Centre and Town Centres,
- Revisions to town centre boundaries to accord with the boundaries defined by City Plan 2030.

The updated guidance is no longer statutory supplementary guidance, but will remain as planning guidance and a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.



AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This Guidance assists the delivery of NPF objectives and policies, in particular to ensure town centres are vibrant, healthy and resilient places for people to work, enjoy and visit.

This Guidance assists the City Plan 2030 aim to support the existing network of city, town and local centres which are an important focal point for people who live and work in Edinburgh, providing shopping, leisure and community facilities in locations which are easily accessible by walking, wheeling and cycling or public transport. They also contribute to local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods.

This Guidance is a material consideration for planning applications seeking consent for a change of use of a retail unit where permitted development rights do not apply. The Council's *Guidance for Businesses* is also of relevance to proposals of change of use. These will also be a material consideration in the determination of applications.



Vision for the City Centre

This Guidance aligns with the Edinburgh City Centre Transformation (ECCT) programme, which outlines a programme for a vibrant and people-focused capital centre, which improves community, economic and cultural life. This will play a key role in helping to deliver successful placemaking within Edinburgh.

Within the city centre retail core, the ECCT programme seeks to improve the experience of George Street, Princes Street, Rose Street and the first New Town Cross Streets of Castle Street, Frederick Street and Hanover Street as places to spend time and shop. The proposals include:

- Wider pavements, quality surfacing and public seating;
- Pedestrian priority at crossings;
- Inclusive design and disabled parking provision;
- New cycling infrastructure
- Stronger lines to Princes Street Gardens, St Andrews Square and Charlotte Square, and
- Improved public transport stops and journey times.

The retail core also forms part of a wider zone where people walking, wheeling, and cycling and public transport will have true priority over vehicles. Whilst access for residents and servicing will be maintained, reductions in on-street parking and carriageway space will see motor vehicles given access as 'guests'.

The City Centre Retail Core

The city centre retail core extends from Shandwick Place in the West to the Edinburgh St James in the East, Princes Street in the South to George Street in the North. The city centre lies within the New Town Conservation Area and the Old and New Towns of the Edinburgh World Heritage Site. There is a need to ensure a healthy balance of uses within the city centre in line with development plan policy to ensure its vitality, viability and maintain footfall, with a sufficient proportion of retail units to ensure that shopping continues to be a predominant use. However, there are also benefits in allowing shops to change to other uses to achieve a diverse, thriving and welcoming city, allowing complementary uses that support the main shopping function and encourage use into the evening.

Changing circumstances since the original guidance was published including the trend towards online retailing, the publication of a Retail and Leisure Commercial Needs Study, and the ECCT programme provided justification for revising the guidance in 2019 to make it more flexible to support alternative uses of shop units particularly on Princes Street and the three cross streets (Castle Street, Frederick Street and Hanover Street).



CHANGE OF USE POLICIES

The policies in this guidance apply to shop units.

What is a shop unit? Premises accessed directly from the street and designed primarily for shop use. In some locations the shop unit can be above street level or at basement level but still have direct access and be visible from the street.

What is a shop use? Shops are now included within the Class 1A (shops, financial, professional and other services) as set out in the amended General Permitted Development (Scotland) Order 1992, e.g. charity shops, tattoo parlours, beautician, estate agents etc.

Non-shop uses – Any use falling outwith the definition of class 1A.

Examples are;

Food and drink – e.g. restaurants, café, 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.

Class 11A of the amended General Permitted Development (Scotland) Order 1992 does allow the change of a use of a building within Class 1A to Class 3 (food and drink) without planning permission. However, change of use is not permitted by this class if it involves a unit directly below a residential dwelling or within 1 metre of a residential dwelling.

Class 11B of the amended General Permitted Development (Scotland) Order 1992 allows the change of use of a building unit from Class 1A to Class 4 (business) without planning permission.



Purpose of the Guidance

The purpose of City Centre guidance is to assist planning officers and applicants in determining whether a change of use of a shop unit would undermine the retail function of the centre. It has been prepared to support the delivery of Policy Re 4 of the City Plan 2030.

Policy Re 4: Alternative Use of Shop Units in the City Centre and Town Centres

In the City Centre Retail Core and town centres, changes of use of a shop unit to a non-shop use will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that:

- a. *The change would not undermine the retailing function of the centre, and*
- b. *The proposal is for an appropriate commercial, community or business use, which would complement the character of the centre and would not be detrimental to its vitality and viability.*

The Council's city centre and town centre planning guidance will be used to assess whether the change of use would undermine the retail function of the centre. These guidelines have been prepared following detailed analysis of each centre and set out detailed advice tailored to identify the appropriate balance of uses within each centre to maintain their vitality, viability and deliver good placemaking.

Planning applications should be assessed against the policies in this guidance. Where a proposal meets the requirements of the policies a change of use is not expected to undermine the retail function of the centre. Where a proposal is contrary to the policies, there is a risk that a proposal would undermine the retail function of the centre, unless there are other material considerations that outweigh the loss of the retail unit, for example, a significant number of vacant units exist in the same retail frontage.



Guidance Policies

CC1 Princes Street frontages

Proposals for a change of use of shop units on defined frontages, as shown in Plan 1, in Princes Street to non-shop uses will be permitted provided:

- a. The proposal is for a change of use to Class 3 (food and drink) or Class 11 (assembly and leisure); and
- b. As a result of permitting the change of use, no more than one third of the total number of units in the frontage of that block will be in non-shop use.

In the case of shop units that have multiple levels, the above criterion will apply to the ground floor level of the unit only.

CC2 Castle Street, Frederick Street and Hanover Street frontages

Proposals for a change of use of shop units on defined frontages, as shown on Plan 1, in Castle Street, Frederick Street and Hanover Street to a non-shop use will be permitted provided:

- a. As a result of permitting the change of use, no more than half the total number of units in the frontage of that block 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 City Centre Retail Core and would not be detrimental to its vitality or viability.

CC3 City Centre Primary Frontages

Proposals for a change of use of shop units, as shown in Plan 1, in the defined City Centre Primary frontages 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 of that block 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 City Centre Retail Core and would not be detrimental to its vitality or viability.

CC4 Elsewhere in the City Centre Retail Core

Proposals for a change of use of shop units, as shown in Plan 1, elsewhere in the City Centre Retail Core to a non-shop use will be permitted provided;

- a. As a result of permitting the change of use no more than half of the total number of units on the same side of the named street as the proposal would be in non-shop use; and
- b. The proposal is for an appropriate commercial or community use which would complement the character of the City Centre Retail Core and would not be detrimental to its vitality or viability.

Defined Frontages

Princes Street Frontages

10-25 Princes Street, 30-46 Princes Street, 47-77 Princes Street, 78-98 Princes Street, 99-117 Princes Street, 118-134 Princes Street, 135-146 Princes Street

Castle Street, Frederick Street and Hanover Street frontages

4-20 Castle Street, 22-32a Castle Street, 5-19 Castle Street, 21-31 Castle Street

6a-18 Frederick Street, 20-36 Frederick Street, 3a-19 Frederick Street, 21-31 Frederick Street

2-24 Hanover Street, 28-56 Hanover Street, 3-31 Hanover Street, 35-51 Hanover Street

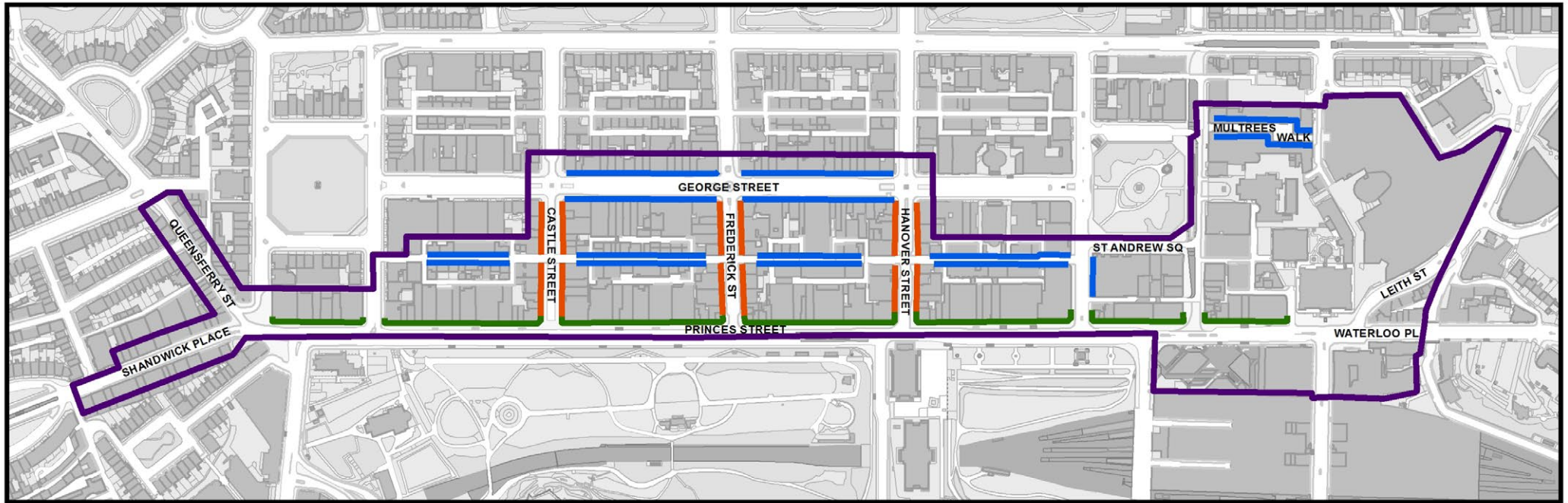
City Centre Primary Frontages

2-40 Rose Street, 3-25 Rose Street, 37-73 Rose Street, 50-104 Rose Street, 77-131 Rose Street, 106a-160 Rose Street, 133a-167 Rose Street, 168-202 Rose Street,

6-19a South St.David's Street

1-15 Multrees Walk, 16-27 Multrees Walk

30-70 George Street, 72-104 George Street, 33a-69 George Street, 71-109 George Street



Contact us:

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