

Stockbridge Town Centre Guidance



SAUNDERS
STREET

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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 Stockbridge Town Centre and assists the implementation of development plan policy.

Stockbridge is one of Edinburgh's nine town centres (including the City Centre) defined and protected in the City Plan 2030 as a hub for a wide range of activities including shopping, providing local services and as a leisure destination.

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 This guidance was originally prepared, as statutory supplementary guidance, in accordance with the superseded 2016 Local Development Plan, prior to the National Planning Framework forming part of the statutory development plan.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 National Planning Framework 4 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. This will also be a material consideration in the determination of applications.

This 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 benefiting public life and a health check which has considered the centre's strengths, vitality and viability, weaknesses and resiliencies.



STOCKBRIDGE TOWN CENTRE

Stockbridge Town Centre (shown in Map 1) is located north of the city centre. Originally a small outlying village, it was incorporated into the City of Edinburgh in the 19th century. The historical expansion of the New Town from around 1813 increased the demand for property, leading to the incremental replacement and development of Stockbridge village. Despite such historical changes, Stockbridge has retained much of its village character and atmosphere, comprising of small shop units and a variety of house types including low rise colonies and terraces. For this reason, it is not quite as densely populated as some of the other town centres (approximately 5,000 people within a walking distance of approximately 400m).

There are a number of listed buildings. The Town Centre lies within the New Town Conservation Area and the New Towns Garden and Dean Historic Garden/Designed Landscape Inventory Site. The southern part of the Town Centre along St Stephen Street, is located within the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site. Within these designations, specific LDP policies apply to protect and enhance the appearance and setting of the city. It is within close proximity to the Water of Leith.

Jubilee Gardens, located within the Town Centre, is home to the popular Stockbridge Market; a central meeting place for public life every Sunday. It is a diverse and lively Town Centre with a strong identity, supported by a community council.

Shops and other town centre uses

Stockbridge Town Centre consists of mostly smaller shops and eating places. There are also three small supermarket sized units. Similar to Edinburgh's other town centres, the

shops and other uses are predominantly located in ground floor units under traditional tenements. The exceptions to this are Raeburn Place where single storey projections from terraces are common, and the northern side of Deanhaugh Street, where the majority of units are single storey in height with no residential above.

National retailers are common place and there are also a number of high-end independent specialist operators. These are particularly concentrated towards the southern end of the Town Centre, along streets such as St Stephen Street. Cafes and restaurants are well represented and spread out fairly evenly, resulting in a well distributed level of active evening uses. The area is also well served by services such as hairdressers, pharmacies and an optician. There are no dentists or doctors within the town centre boundary itself, but practices are located within the surrounding area.

The mix of uses has been monitored in city-wide shop surveys periodically undertaken since 1986. The survey shows a steady decline in class 1 (retail) use and subsequent increase in other uses since 1986.

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.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Friendly village atmosphere and strong sense of community
- Nearby parks, walking routes and green space
- Jubilee Gardens and Stockbridge Market act as a central meeting place for public life
- Low vacancy rate and diverse mix of shops and services
- Positive architectural and historic character and features of interest

Weaknesses

- Narrow pavements and prevalence of bollards hinder pedestrian movement
- Priority of vehicles over pedestrians, cyclists and place function
- Parking has been prioritised throughout the town centre
- Lack of cycle facilities including dedicated cycle lanes and enough cycle parking

Opportunities

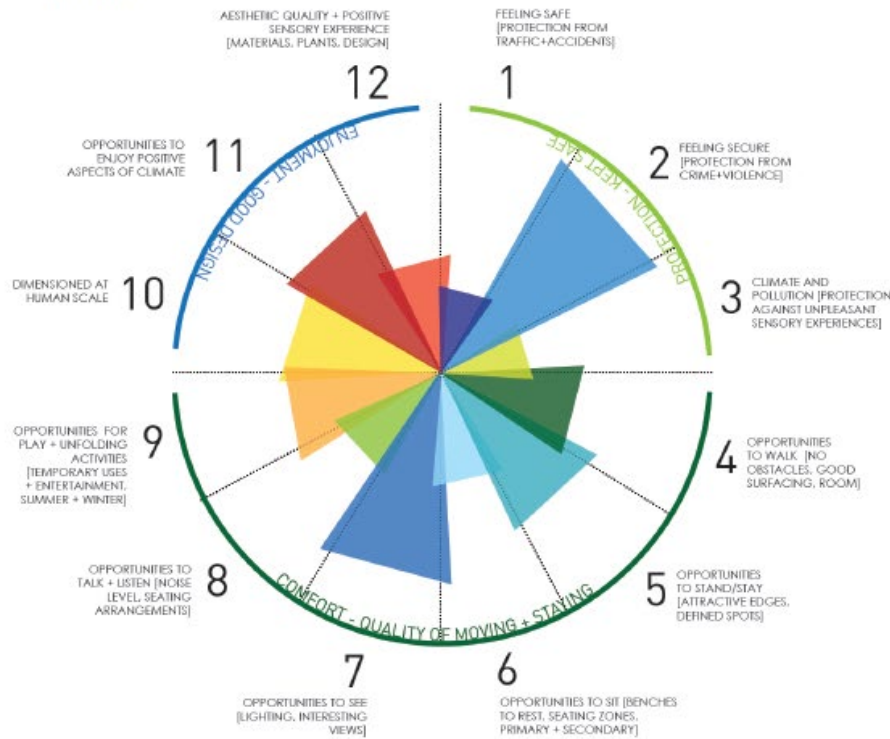
- Make the connection clearer to the Water of Leith to enhance wayfinding
- Remove bollards
- Extend the public realm at key points along the Town Centre, for example at the entrance to St Bernard's Row

Threats

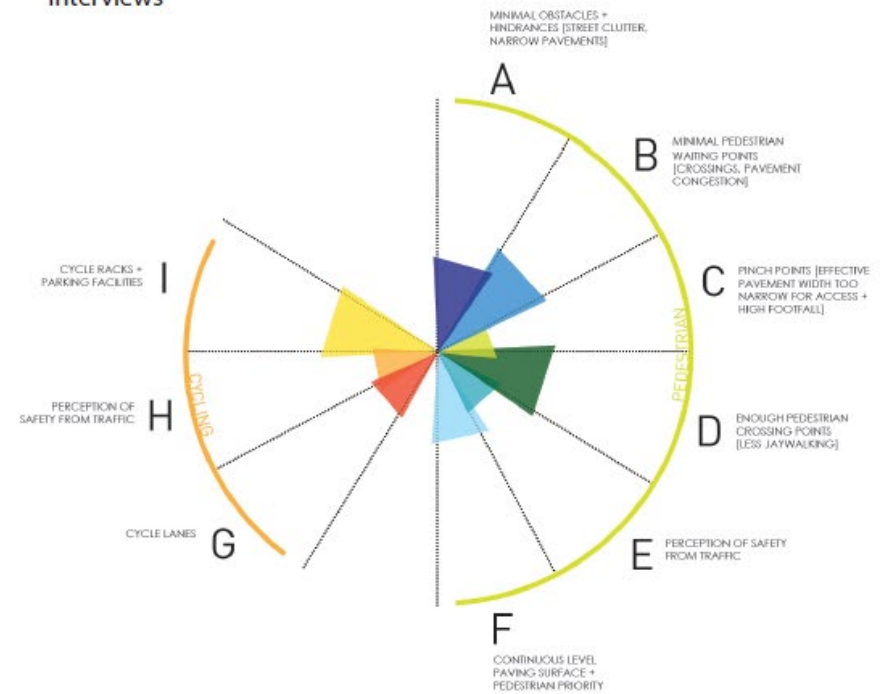
- Heavy traffic at weekday rush hour
- Perception of drivers that it is an arterial route rather than a place for people
- Resistance from business/residents to reduce parking

FINDINGS FROM PUBLIC LIFE STREET ASSESSMENTS

Assessed against
Gehl's 12 quality
criteria



Based on direct
observation
techniques & user
interviews



VISION AND PRINCIPLES

The Public Life Street Assessment and health check highlight areas for potential improvement in the Town Centre, particularly relating to the movement and place function. The vision for Stockbridge is to:

- increase the relative importance of pedestrian and cycle movement, whilst recognising the importance of Raeburn Place and Deanhaugh Street as important through traffic routes;
- promote and facilitate staying times by enhancing the character, identity, visual interest and comfort; and
- ensure a mix of uses to meet the needs and demands of the population.

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

1. Supporting high quality shopfront design (see the Council's Guidance for Businesses and Listed Buildings and Conservation Area Guidance for details).
2. Ensuring active frontages to the street by permitting glazing which will allow for natural surveillance, visual interest on the street and encourage street users to stay.
3. Supporting outdoor seating where pavements are wider and micro-climate is favourable, for example the junction of Raeburn Place and St Bernard's Row.

4. Supporting class 3 food and drink uses on corner units where there is an opportunity to activate the public street life.
5. Maximising opportunities for formal and informal outdoor seating incorporating shelter in the form of trees, planters or shop front awnings at key points along the town centre.
6. Ensuring development makes a positive contribution to the public realm by meeting the Street Design Guidance and Edinburgh Design Guidance.
7. Incorporating and enhancing natural and built features where they can contribute positively to the Town Centre, for example the Water of Leith.
8. Supporting additional cycle parking facilities at key points along the Town Centre.
9. Taking opportunities to remove street clutter and other redundant items identified in any relevant street audits prepared by the Council or Living Streets.
10. 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 highlighted in the Public Street Life Assessment:

- A bus shelter replacement programme has recently taken place. Future replacement programmes will present an opportunity to improve placement of shelters.

- The World Heritage Site Management Plan is currently under review. It sets out how the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the site will be protected.

The management plan informs a separate action plan:

- Road and footway investment – Capital Programme.
- The Council's Wayfinding Project has improved navigation, wayfinding and appreciation of assets such as Water of Leith.
- A locality based approach to service delivery operates in Edinburgh. The Town Centre is within the North West Locality. Locality Improvement Plans set out future priorities for the area.
- QuietRoutes – Edinburgh's local walking and cycling routes.
- A 20mph speed limit has applied to much of the Town Centre since February 2017. Reduced traffic speed will improve the sense of security for pedestrians and cyclists.
- A trade waste policy applies in the town centre that only allows trade waste to be presented on the street/outside premises for one-hour within set collection windows.

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? Shop use is 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.

Other uses falling outwith the definition of class 1A include:

Food and drink (class 3) – Use for the sale of food or drink for consumption on the premises e.g. restaurants, café.

Business use (class 4) – general office, light industry or research and development, which can be carried out without detriment to the amenity of any residential area.

Assembly and leisure use (class 11) – e.g. cinema, and gymnasium.

Sui generis uses – e.g. betting shops, pay day loan shops, pubs and hot food takeaways.

Permitted Development Rights

Class 11A of the amended General Permitted Development (Scotland) Order 1992 does allow the change of a use of a building/shop unit 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. In the case of Stockbridge Town Centre, Class 1A does not apply to the majority of shop units.

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 if the building or unit is 300sqm or less.

Purpose of the Guidance

The purpose of this town 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 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.

Separate policies are set out for defined Primary Retail Frontages and elsewhere within the Town Centre boundary. A Primary Retail Frontage is a group of shop units that has been identified as providing a focus for retail within the town centre. The identification and protection of Primary Retail Frontages will seek to ensure that a minimum percentage of units are retained in shop use. This is important to ensure the continued health of the town centre.

Outwith the areas defined in Policy STC1, there are a wide range of uses. Policy STC2 provides a flexible approach which will allow appropriate uses, whilst accepting that retailing and the role of town centres are changing, to ensure vitality and viability of the Stockbridge Town Centre overall. This should allow for units to capitalise on the outdoor street spaces, improving public realm and providing for an active public life.

Guidance Policies

STC1

In the Primary Retail Frontages defined in the table below and Map 2, the change of use of a shop unit to a non-shop unit 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 Primary Retail 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.

Primary Retail Frontages

4 – 102 Raeburn Place

1 – 47 Deanhaugh Street

1 – 77 Raeburn Place

STC2

For those locations not identified as Primary Retail Frontage, but elsewhere within the Town Centre boundary, a change of use from a shop to a non-shop use will be permitted provided a proposal is:

- a. Class 3 – food and drink uses
- b. An appropriate commercial, community or leisure use which would complement the character of the centre, support the main shopping function, 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. Stockbridge already has a large population living within walking distance of the main shopping streets and within the town centre itself, therefore, changes of shop use to residential is not supported.

Other Relevant Information

National Planning Framework 4

City Plan 2030

Other relevant policies in Local Development Plan include:

Re 1 Town Centres First Policy

Re 3 Town Centres

Re 9 Entertainment, Leisure and café/restaurant developments – Preferred locations

Re 11 Food and Drink Establishments

Env 13 Shopfronts

Env 9 World Heritage Sites

Env 11 Listed Buildings – Setting

Env 12 Listed Buildings – Alterations and Extensions

Env 13 Conservation Areas – Demolition of Buildings

Env 14 Conservation Areas – Development

Env 15 Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes

Policy Re 3 generally supports shop uses in town centres. Policy Re 9 supports leisure and entertainment facilities in town centres. Policies Re 11 considers the impact on nearby residents for proposals such as public houses and hot food takeaways. Env 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.

Licensing – 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 web site on [licenses and permits](#).

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.

New Town Conservation Area Character Appraisal – describes what is special about the conservation area and helps in making decisions on proposals that affect the areas special character.

World Heritage Management Plan – sets out how the Outstanding Universal Value of the site will be protected. The management plan informs a separate action plan.

Definitions

Shop unit – As defined in the City Plan 2030, a shop unit is a premises accessed directly onto the street and designed primarily for shop use.

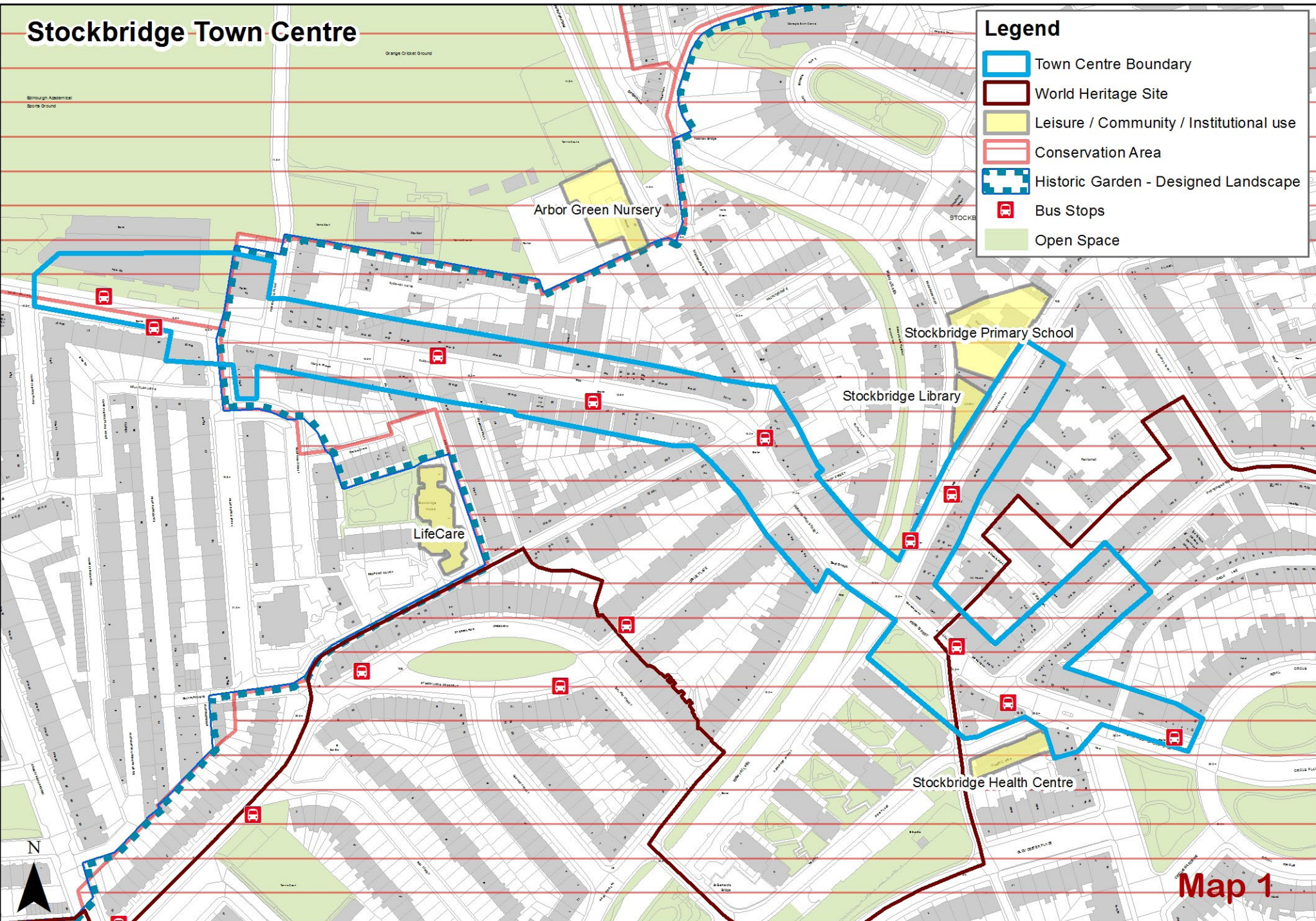
Primary Retail Frontage – a group of shop units that has been identified as providing a focus for retail within the town centre.

Class 1A – are shops and financial, professional and other services. Uses under Subsection 1 are; retail sale of goods other than hot food, a post office, sale of tickets, a travel agency, sale of cold food for consumption off the premises, hairdressing, direction of funerals, display of goods for sale, hiring of domestic or personal goods or articles, a launderette or dry cleaners, for reception of goods to be washed, cleaned or repaired. These uses are where the sale, display or service is principally to visiting members of the public. Uses under Subsection 2 are; provision of financial, professional or any other service, which is appropriate to provide in a shopping area and where the sale, display or service is principally to visiting members of the public.

Stockbridge Town Centre

Legend

-  Town Centre Boundary
-  World Heritage Site
-  Leisure / Community / Institutional use
-  Conservation Area
-  Historic Garden - Designed Landscape
-  Bus Stops
-  Open Space

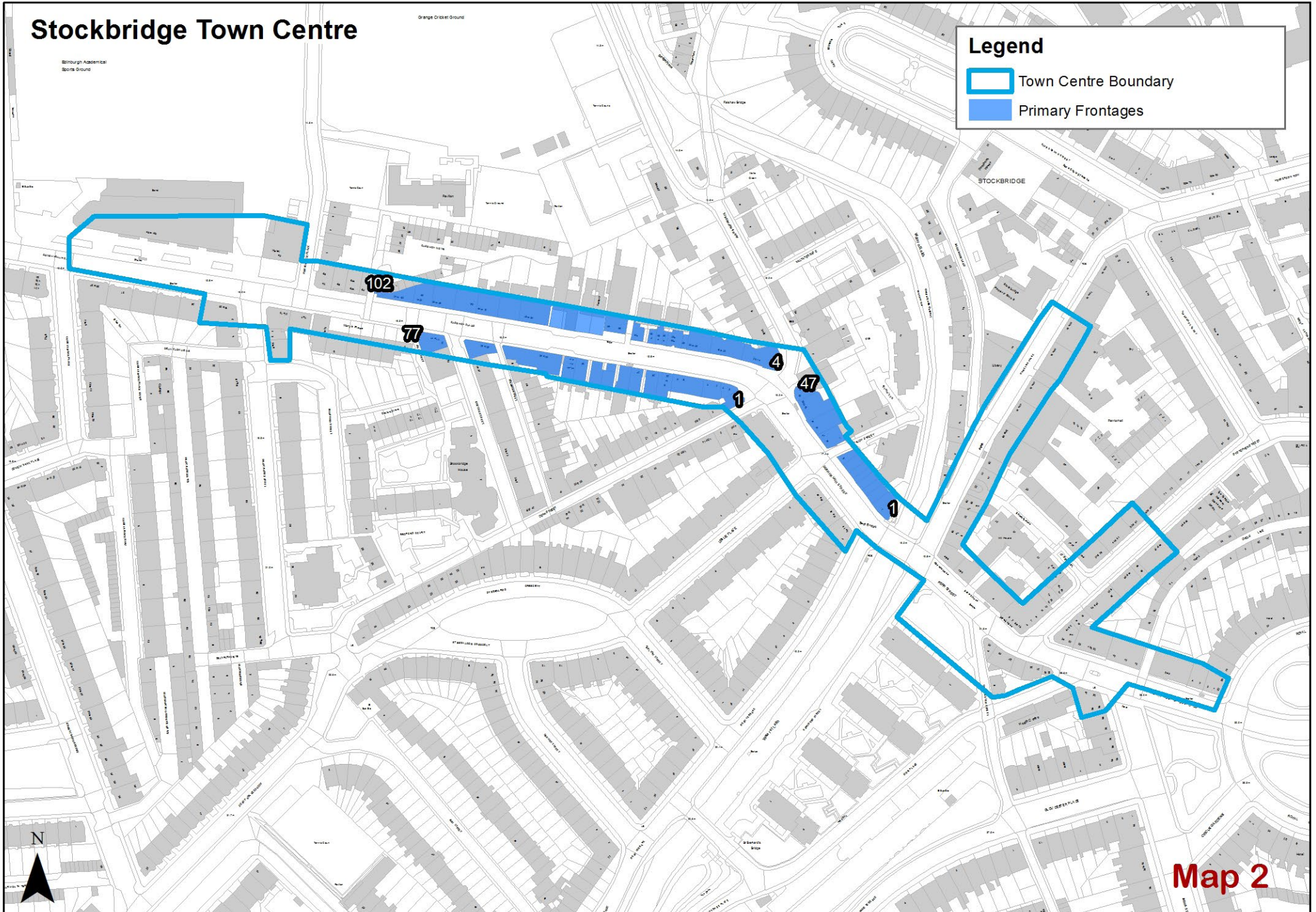


Map 1

Stockbridge Town Centre

Legend

-  Town Centre Boundary
-  Primary Frontages



Contact us:

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