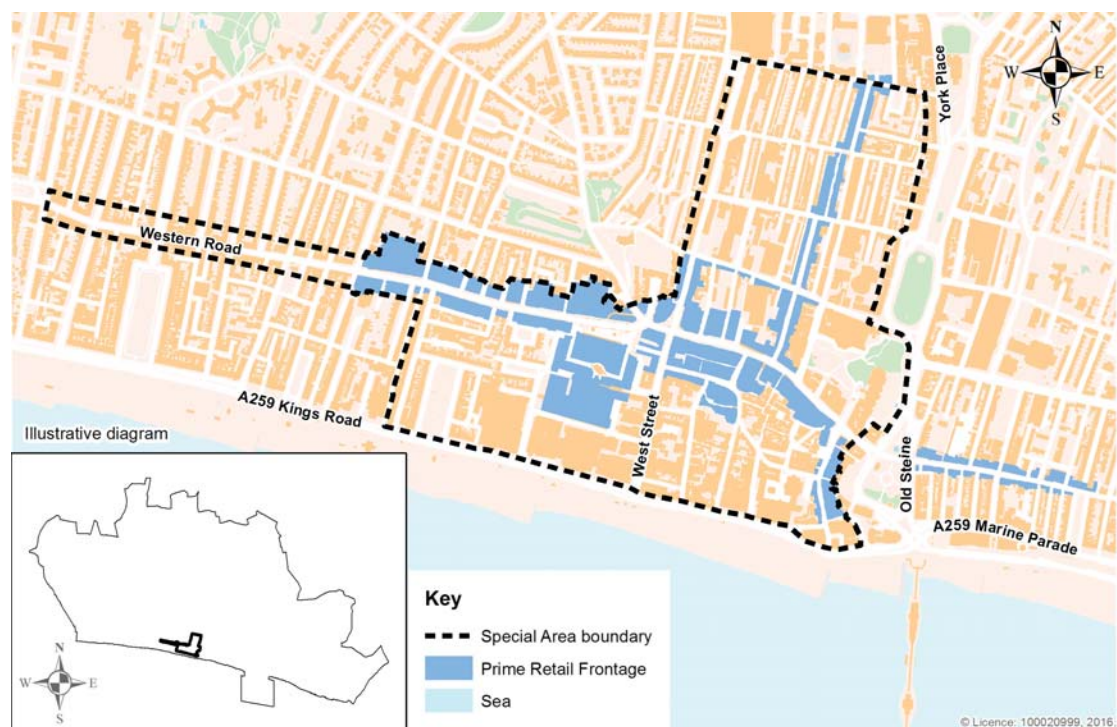


SA2 Central Brighton



Context

3.130 Central Brighton is a dense and complex area of urban quality townscape. It extends from Brighton Station in the north to the seafront in the south; with North Laine, The Lanes, The Royal Pavilion Estate and Old Steine to the east and the major seafront hotels, conference centres, Churchill Square shopping centre and major high street retailers along Western Road to the west. The area's historic form is a fundamental part of its distinctive character and resulting sense of place. The area contains a unique independent retail sector, restaurants and cafes, a diverse evening economy (clubs, theatres, cinema and mixed arts entertainment venues), a commercial core and hub for media and creative industries as well as some of the city's key cultural and heritage assets and significant residential areas.

SA2 Central Brighton

To reinforce central Brighton's role as the city's vibrant, thriving regional centre for shopping, leisure, tourism, cultural, office and commercial uses:

1. The Council will strengthen the distinctiveness and legibility of the 'cultural quarter'¹⁰⁰ and ensure its long term success and viability

¹⁰⁰ 'Cultural Quarter': - the area centred on Church Street, Jubilee Square, the Royal Pavilion Estate and the Theatres

through ongoing improvements to the attractiveness of the physical environment and public realm; ensuring that historic buildings are maintained and enhanced and by requiring new development to support and maintain the vibrant mix of cultural activities, business, retail, leisure and tourism uses.

2. The focus for significant new retail development will be Brighton Regional Centre. New retail development should respect the different but interconnecting shopping identities of the following areas:

- Churchill Square/ Western Road (see DA1)
- Western Road (the secondary retail frontage that runs from Montpelier Road to the east and Holland Road to the west including Brunswick Town).
- Queens Road/West Street
- Old Town including the Lanes/ Duke Street/ East Street
- The North Laine
- North Street

The council will support proposals to improve and refurbish existing retail units and shop frontages and recognise the role of small independent/local traders in maintaining the Regional Centre's viability and attractiveness.

3. Within Central Brighton existing office accommodation will be protected and their refurbishment and upgrade encouraged. Proposals that result in the loss of B1a office floorspace will be permitted where owners/developers are able to demonstrate:

- a) The site has been marketed for B1a office use at a reasonable price and for a reasonable time period and no viable occupiers have expressed an interest in taking up the accommodation either as single/ multiple occupier so it has been concluded that the site is inherently unsuitable for continued B1a office use; and
- b) That the redevelopment or reuse would make a positive contribution to the vitality and vibrancy of Central Brighton and create employment opportunities; or
- c) That change of use was the only practicable means of preserving a listed building.

Partial loss of office floorspace will be permitted where the change of use enables the refurbishment and upgrade of the remaining office floorspace.

4. The Council will promote a balanced range of complementary evening and night-time economy uses which appeal to a wide range of age and social groups, avoid a spread of large bars/pubs and night clubs and address public safety concerns.

5. Mixed use developments will be promoted which retain active ground floor uses and accord with a range of appropriate city centre uses,

including residential.¹⁰¹ Where other key policy issues are addressed, the Council will welcome proposals to create flats over shops and commercial premises.

6. Maintaining and strengthening the significant digital media and creative industries business cluster in the area through the delivery of ultrafast broadband and ensuring that workshops, office space, studios, storage and other premises remain affordable, appropriate and available for use; particularly in the North Laine area;

7. Ensure new development proposals take into account impact on local air quality and that improvements and/ or mitigation are sought wherever possible. The council will work with public transport providers, freight transport operators and secure road junction and urban realm improvements to reduce congestion and emissions, to improve air quality and encourage improved pedestrian and cycling movements within the city centre (See CP13).

8. Development within this area will be expected to incorporate infrastructure to support low and zero carbon decentralised energy in particular heat networks subject to viability.

Supporting Text

3.131 Within central Brighton, there is a concentration of nationally and internationally significant cultural businesses and buildings including the Royal Pavilion, the Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, the Brighton Dome, the Theatre Royal, the new Jubilee Library and the Komedia. At the heart of the area is the iconic and internationally famous Royal Pavilion without which little of the cultural and historic development of the city centre would have occurred. The wider area is described as the city's cultural quarter. Cultural and creative industries and the retail, tourism and hospitality sectors continue to innovate, strengthen and grow within this area and it is important to ensure that the cultural role of the area is promoted and supported¹⁰². Table 1 on page 26 sets out how this policy will help to deliver against the principles and local targets under the One Planet approach, which is a strategic approach to enabling the city to live within environmental limits.

3.132 As an integral part of the attraction of Brighton as a tourist destination, and in order to provide residents with the highest quality shopping provision, Brighton Regional Centre should continue to be the focus for significant new retail development. The Retail Study Update 2011 identifies that demand exists for new comparison retail floorspace in order for Brighton to secure its position as a Regional Centre.

¹⁰¹ The National Planning Policy Framework March 2012 defines main town centres uses to include culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities).

¹⁰² Creative Industries Workspace Study 2008

3.133 Whilst there are limited opportunities to find new sites within or on the edge of the Regional Centre, the opportunity to provide new comparison floorspace, possibly incorporating a new department store to attract new retailers to the city, as part of the Brighton Centre and Churchill Square development area should be investigated (see DA1). Further opportunities will be considered as part of the preparation of the City Plan Part 2.

3.134 The different but interconnecting shopping areas within the Regional Centre are identified and described in the Retail Study Update 2011¹⁰³ and there is active support for the protection of existing and provision of new small unit retail space, largely catering for local independent traders, located within The Lanes and North Laine. The balance and mix of uses in these areas will be carefully monitored and maintained (see CP4).

3.135 Environmental improvements and proposals to improve and refurbish existing retail units and shop frontages to help maintain the Regional Centre's attraction to new retailers and shoppers will be supported. Improved connectivity and integration, including clear and improved pedestrian linkages, improved pedestrian circulation and 'signposting' between the different shopping 'quarters' within the Regional Centre is a key priority over the plan period.

3.136 The City's prime office market is principally focussed within Central Brighton, located on the east and southern side of Brighton Station, within the New England Quarter and interspersed within the city centre. Much of the existing office stock is within older purpose built buildings or converted period buildings and offices above shops. Opportunities for significant new office floorspace within Central Brighton are limited and therefore DA3, DA4, DA5 and DA6 indicate the opportunities for new office floorspace on the edge or outside Central Brighton. Nevertheless over the timeframe of the City Plan, Central Brighton will continue to remain a location where high quality offices will be demanded for a variety of occupiers such as media, creative, financial, business and professional services and information communication industries. A good supply of high quality, modern and sustainable office accommodation is required to meet the needs of the city's commercial occupiers. Policy SA2 therefore safeguards office accommodation within Central Brighton and encourages improvements in quality to meet future business needs. Examples such as 1 Gloucester Place, Brighton demonstrate the trend of owners to refurbish and upgrade existing office accommodation to Grade A status with a BREEAM rating of Very Good to secure occupation and improved rental levels. Given the current economic climate which mitigates against speculative office development, the willingness of property owners to invest in their existing properties to bring them up to modern standards is supported by the council.

3.137 In considering proposals for the loss of office floorspace, the Council will require clear demonstration that the site is no longer suitable for office

¹⁰³ Retail Study Update 2011.

use. The type and scale of marketing should be commensurate with the scale of the office floorspace proposed to be lost. Therefore the council will require evidence that a marketing exercise has been carried out for at least 18 months for purpose built, large scale Grade 'A' accommodation and at least 12 months for other sites. Evidence is required that the marketing price is realistic and that the marketing has been appropriate and genuine. A record of all the required marketing will need to be presented with the application proposal. In all cases the marketing process requires as a minimum:

- Confirmation by the marketing agent on headed company paper that the premises were appropriately and extensively marketed for the required length of time as set out by the council.
- Dated photographs of marketing board/s of an appropriate quality, size, scale, location and number, during this time, on the premises.
- An enquiry log, how it was followed up and why it was unsuccessful
- A copy of all advertisements in the local press and trade journals (should be at least four weeks' worth of advertisements spread across a six month period).
- Evidence of marketing via the internet.

3.138 The period of marketing must have ended on a date within the six months prior to the date the planning application was submitted. In some instances, where the proposal includes the loss of significant office floorspace, the marketing process may need to be extended. The advice of the council should be sought prior to the commencement of any marketing campaign to ascertain the period and extent of marketing required. Partial loss of office floorspace will only be considered where it is clearly demonstrated to enable the refurbishment of the remaining office floorspace; that the non office use is the minimum necessary to bring the employment floorspace up to modern standards required and the proposed use is a main town centre use.

3.139 As well as new retail opportunities, mixed use developments within the North Laine area and the Air Street/ North Street Quadrant have included important employment floorspace from new high quality office accommodation to new creative industries workspace. The Creative Industries Workspace Study 2008 identified the attractiveness of central Brighton to creative businesses including evidence of a vibrant cluster in the North Laine and Old Steine area. However creative industries clusters are vulnerable to redevelopment pressure and the importance of their role requires reinforcement and protection. New development should strengthen the mix of uses in central Brighton and retain active ground floor uses. The valuable contribution of small premises and workshops in supporting creative arts, IT and media related businesses within the North Laine area will be safeguarded, as they support small scale industry and encourage new enterprises to set up and add vitality to the cultural quarter¹⁰⁴. The council will work with providers to ensure the provision of appropriate information and

¹⁰⁴ Creative Industries Workspace Study 2008.

communication technology (ICT) infrastructure; in particular ultra-fast broadband infrastructure within this area to support the creative industries and digital media sector (CP2 Sustainable Economic Development).

3.140 New development has also contributed towards residential accommodation, including affordable housing, in the central Brighton area. Residential uses, as part of mixed use developments or above shops, subject to other planning considerations can also contribute to enhancing the vitality of central Brighton and improving safety during the daytime and evening. Brighton & Hove's Empty Property Strategy encourages bringing flats above shops back into use.

3.141 Central Brighton and particularly the West Street area has been identified as a violent crime hotspot¹⁰⁵. Through effective coordination of relevant strategies and policy areas (e.g. licensing, policing and public safety) and working with the police, health agencies and other partners, the council will seek to improve safety by encouraging a more balanced range of complementary evening and night-time economy uses which appeal to a wide range of age and social groups and managing existing late night uses within identified parts of central Brighton. Local work to reduce violent crime is coordinated through the Local Public Service Agreement/Violent Crime Action Plan. In addition, a 'Cumulative Impact Zone' and a 'Special Stress Area' have been adopted by the Council's Licensing Committee. These grant greater powers to control the number and operation of licensed premises in the city centre.

3.142 Central Brighton is designated within an Air Quality Management Area with North Street, Queen's Road and Western Road exceeding the annual nitrogen dioxide air quality objectives¹⁰⁶. New development proposals within the AQMA should take account of their impact on local air quality, be consistent with the council Air Quality Action Plan and minimise increased exposure to existing poor quality. Where appropriate improvements and/or mitigation measures will be sought. The council's Air Quality Action Plan sets out the priorities to improve local air quality and the Local Transport Plan and subsequent updates will address junction improvements and traffic management in the area. The council is investigating the development of a Low Emission Zone in the central city area. Supporting this, there will be a continuing programme of urban realm improvements¹⁰⁷ which will be informed, undertaken and developed as part of a consistent vision based on the findings of the Public Space, Public Life Study (2007).

3.143 The Brighton & Hove Energy Study has identified viability for District Heating networks in and around this area within a short list of priority areas. Development within the short list of priority areas will be expected to incorporate infrastructure to support low and zero carbon decentralised energy and in particular heat networks subject to viability.

¹⁰⁵ Community Safety, Crime Reduction and Drugs Strategy 2011-2014

¹⁰⁶ Air Quality Management Area 2013

¹⁰⁷ Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3 2011-2014)