

Shopping Frontage Background Document

This document reviews the existing shopping frontage policies for the Town Centre, contained within the Ashford Borough Local Plan, and recommends relevant alterations to them, to input into the Town Centre Area Action Plan.

Introduction

Historically, Town Centres have been the focus for trading and markets, providing the local population with opportunities to purchase different types of goods in an accessible, often central, location. Over time, this role has been enhanced, ensuring town centres continue to be the focal point for large concentrations of retail use.

Government guidance 'PPS 6 Town Centres' encourages retail uses within existing town centres, to build on its existing role and utilise their highly sustainable location. Retail uses help to provide for the needs of the local population; preserve the character of traditional town centres, create an attractive shopping destination; and attract greater footfall movement, sustaining the vitality and viability of the overall Town Centre.

Government Guidance allows a planning authority to identify primary shopping areas, which can be a useful tool when seeking to concentrate retail presence in specific areas within a Town Centre.

The Local Plan took this approach forward and identified various shopping frontage policies which promoted a concentration of A1 retail uses in key locations, within the traditional town centre area. A1 retail uses are desirable in a town centre, as they are often made up of major multiple retailers, include prominent high street chains, contain large retail facades and draw high pedestrian movements to an area.

Ashford Town Centre currently contains a strong retail presence, including a high proportion of A1 retail uses, in its traditional shopping area. This suggests the shopping frontage policy, as an approach, has been relatively successful.

The importance of continuing to focus A1 use in the traditional Town Centre is reinforced in Ashford, due to the role the town centre will play in supporting the growth agenda. The Town Centre will need to play a key role in meeting the needs of Ashford rapidly growing population, largely through the provision of substantial retail uses.

This increased retail quantum is likely to result in a greater dispersal of retail uses within the town centre. The shopping frontage policy is seen as a useful tool in counterbalancing this dispersal and thus ensuring the traditional Town Centre shopping areas, and movement patterns across the whole Town Centre, are maintained. In this way the shopping frontage policy will help to preserve the historic nature and character of the town by maintaining a strong A1 retail presence at its centre.

Methodology

The survey work was undertaken in September 2008 and was conducted by walking around the Town Centre and noting the use classes, name of business and location of property, on the survey day.

The main shopping areas of the Town Centre were surveyed, see below. This approach sought to determine how effective the existing policy has been on those frontages identified in the Local Plan. As well as looking at frontages subject to existing policy, frontages in the main shopping areas were also surveyed to ascertain if a policy was needed to support or enhance other areas in the Town Centre.

The areas of the town centre surveyed are as follows:

- **Frontage 1** High Street from Wellesley Road to North Street
- **Frontage 2** High Street from North Street to New Rents
- **Frontage 3** High Street from Drum Lane to Bank Street
- **Frontage 4** Bank Street from High Street to Middle Street
- **Frontage 5** Bank Street from Middle Street to County Square Service yard
- **Frontage 6** Bank Street from High Street to Tufton Street
- **Frontage 7** Bank Street from Tufton Street to Queen Street
- **Frontage 8** Bank Street from Middle Street to Godinton Road
- **Frontage 9** High Street from Wellesley Road to Middle Row
- **Frontage 10** High Street from Bank Street to Middle Row
- **Frontage 11** Middle Row
- **Frontage 12** New Rents

For the purposes of this report the findings have been split into A1 use and all other uses. Maps have been prepared below to spatially represent the findings. The units which were vacant at the time of survey, have been categorised by the most recent use.

Each frontage has the total A1 and non A1 frontage measured using GIS software. This measurement is given in metres and as a percentage of the total frontage.

The findings from this assessment are detailed in appendix 1.

Findings

Current primacy shopping frontage policy- SH3

The current shop frontage policy outlined in the Local Plan 2000, applies to three frontages of the High Street. Policy SH3 states that no more than 20% of the length of the primary frontage within the defined sections should be non-A1 use.

Two frontages, **Frontage 2** and **Frontage 3**, which are currently subject to policy SH3 have retained over 80% A1 uses since 1999. In the third frontage, **Frontage 1**, the percentage of A1 has grown from 58% in 1999 to 64.5% in 2008, while subject to policy SH3. As two thirds of the frontage that fall under Policy SH3 have retained 80% of A1 uses and a third of the frontage is increasing its A1 percentage, it is felt that this policy has been a success.

Bank St shopping frontage policy- SH4

The frontages covered by policy SH4, applicable to Bank Street, are permitted to transfer uses to A2 in the area as long as there is no concentration of A2 uses for more than 3 continuous frontage properties and there is provision for window displays appropriate to shopping frontage.

Of the 4 frontages in Bank Street currently in the Local Plan, three are compliant with Policy SH4. However despite being compliant with the policy, the three frontages have relatively low percentages of A1 uses. **Frontage 4** contains 59.5% A1 uses, **Frontage 5** contains 52% A1 uses and **Frontage 7** contains 22.8% A1 uses. The fourth Bank Street frontage, **Frontage 6**, is in breach of the policy as it contains 7 continuous A2 frontages. This frontage also has a very low A1 presence at only 10%.

Including a policy in the AAP that seeks to control A2 uses in this way is not appropriate as the existing policy is unenforceable. A3, A4 and A5 retail uses have the ability to move to A2 use, as a permitted change, without the need for an application for change of use. This renders the policies ability to control A2 uses in this way as redundant.

Retention of this policy would allow losses of A1 to all other use classes and only restricts the presence of A2 where the units are continuous; this policy does not prevent a majority non A1 use in this area and could still result in a majority A2 use in the frontages. This policy is redundant and ineffective in preserving A1 uses in the area.

Additional Policy Coverage

When reviewing the town frontages that have not previously been subject to policy it is clear that some are in need of greater support in terms of policy as they are deemed to be areas that are struggling to be viable shopping areas. Frontages 10 and 11 are located in a key central position in the town's traditional shopping areas and have high pedestrian movement however they suffer from high vacancy rates and low percentages of A1 uses. These frontages are some of the oldest areas of the town and the units in these areas are of a size and character that is suited to A1 uses. A shop frontage policy in this area would seek to retain and increase the A1 uses in these areas and preserve the historic character of the frontage. It would be desirable that these frontages would be supported in becoming a shopping area characterised by independent A1 retailers to add to Ashford's retail offer and supporting Ashford as a shopping destination with a unique character.

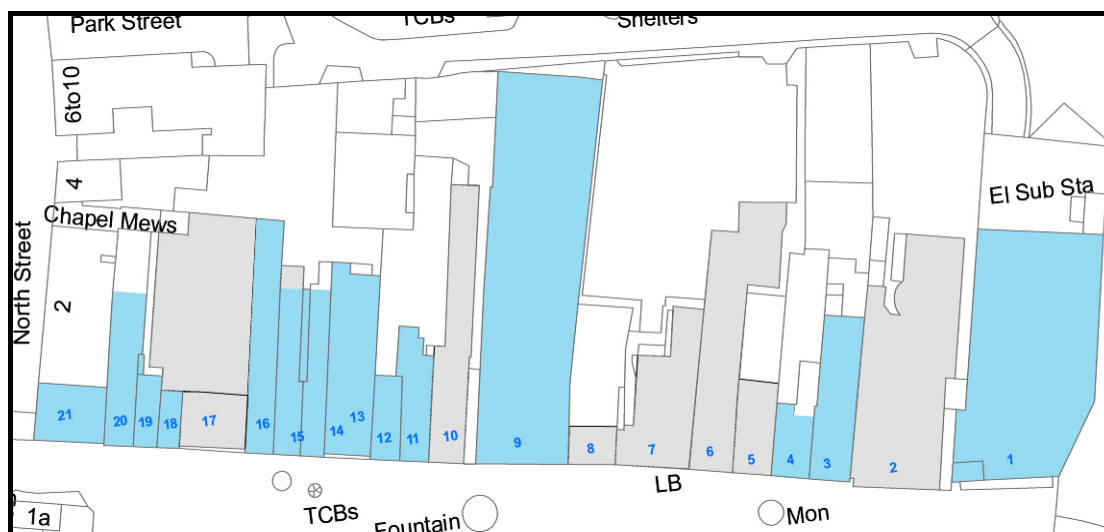
Recommendations

- 1) It is recommended that the existing policy remain in place for Frontages 1, 2 and 3 in line with current policy due to its success since 1999.**
- 2) It is recommended that the policy for Frontages 5, 6, and 7 be removed.**
- 3) It is recommended that a policy be implemented on Frontage 4 to attempt to retain and increase A1 in this area of Bank Street.**
- 4) It is recommended that a new policy be implemented in Frontages 10 and 11 to retain and increase A1 uses in the area.**

Appendix

Frontage 1

High Street from Wellesley Road to North Street



1	Blockbusters	A1
2	County Hotel	A4
3	Sharon Music	A1
4	Cancer Research	A1
5	Yins Chinese Restaurant	A3
6	Natwest	A2
7	Natwest	A2
8	Next Step Learning Advice Centre	A2
9	Sports Direct.com	A1
10	Atlantis Gaming Centre	A2
11	Vacant	A1
12	Service Centre	A1
13	Sound craft Hifi	A1
14	Barnardos	A1
15	Vacant Unit	A1
16	British Heart Foundation	A1
17	Mc Donalds	A3
18	The Chocolate Box	A1
19	Lindas Florist	A1
20	Evans	A1
21	Wards	A1

Shop Frontage Figures

	% of Length	Length m	% of Number	Number
A1	64.5	119.1	66.6	14
Other	35.5	65.6	33.3	7

Frontage 2

High Street from North Street to New Rents



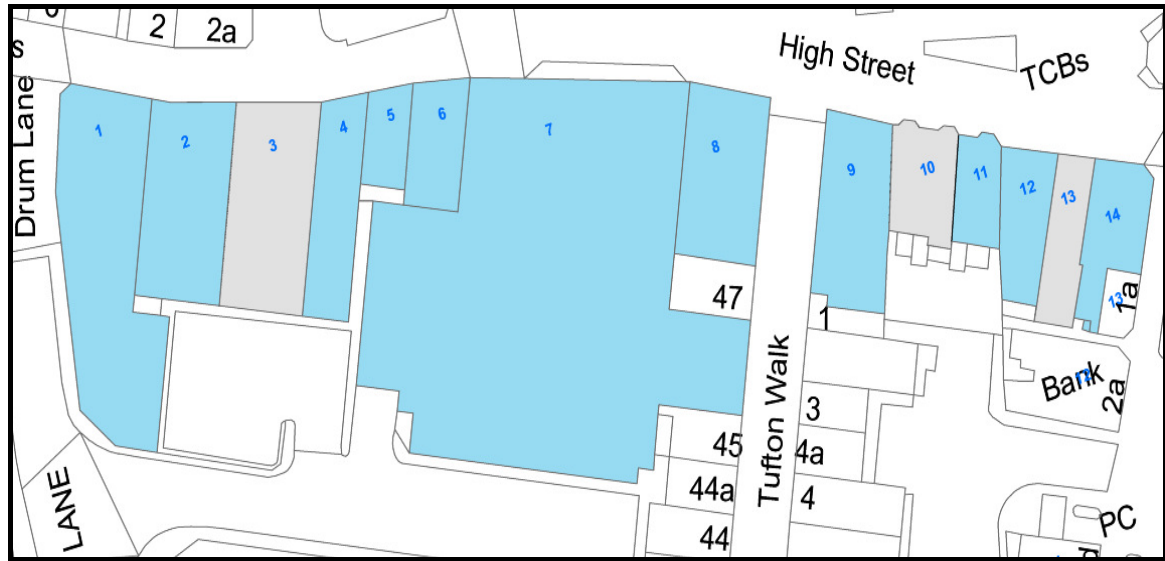
1	Boots	A1
2	Vision Express	D1
3	Abbey National	A2
4	QS	A1
5	Iceland	A1
6	Barclays	A2
7	The George Inn	A4
8	WH Smith	A1
9	Burton	A1
10	Shoe Zone	A1
11	Sussex Stationers	A1
12	Woolworths	A1
13	KidsStuff	A1
14	Accessorize	A1
15	Barratts	A1
16	OZ Shop	A1
17	Photo Digital Specialists	A1
18	Vacant	A1
19	T Mobile	A1
20	Tony and Guy	A1
21	Phones for U	A1

Shop Frontage Figures

	% of Length	Length m	% of Number	Number
A1	82.7	140.7	80.9	17
Other	17.3	29.5	19.1	4

Frontage 3

High Street from Drum Lane to Bank Street



1	Argos	A1
2	Argos	A1
3	Tote Sport Betting Shop	A2
4	Pet Essentials	A1
5	PDSA Pets	A1
6	Game Station	A1
7	Marks and Spencer	A1
8	Clinton Cards	A1
9	Clarks	A1
10	Starbucks	A3
11	Vacant	A1
12	Holland & Barratt	A1
13	Batemans Opticians	D1
14	Thompson Travel Agents	A1

Shop Frontage Figures

	% of Length	Length m	% of Number	Number
A1	80.5	106.1	78.6	11
Other	19.5	25.7	21.4	3

Frontage 4

Bank Street from High Street to County Square Entrance



1	Post Office	A1
2	Waves and Aquarius Beauty Salon	A1
3	Greens Shoe Repair	A1
4	Nursing & Care Agency	A2
5	The Trade Exchange	A1
6	Loaf Lounge	A3
7	The Flower Shop	A1
8	Barclays	A2
9	Barrys Kitchen	A3
10	Demelza House Charity Shop	A1
11	Buzz Hair Design	A1
12	Girlings Solicitors	A2
13	KLAN	A1

Shop Frontage Figures

	% of Length	Length m	% of Number	Number
A1	59.5	51.5	61.5	8
Other	40.5	35.1	38.5	5

Frontage 5

Bank Street from Middle Street to County Square Entrance



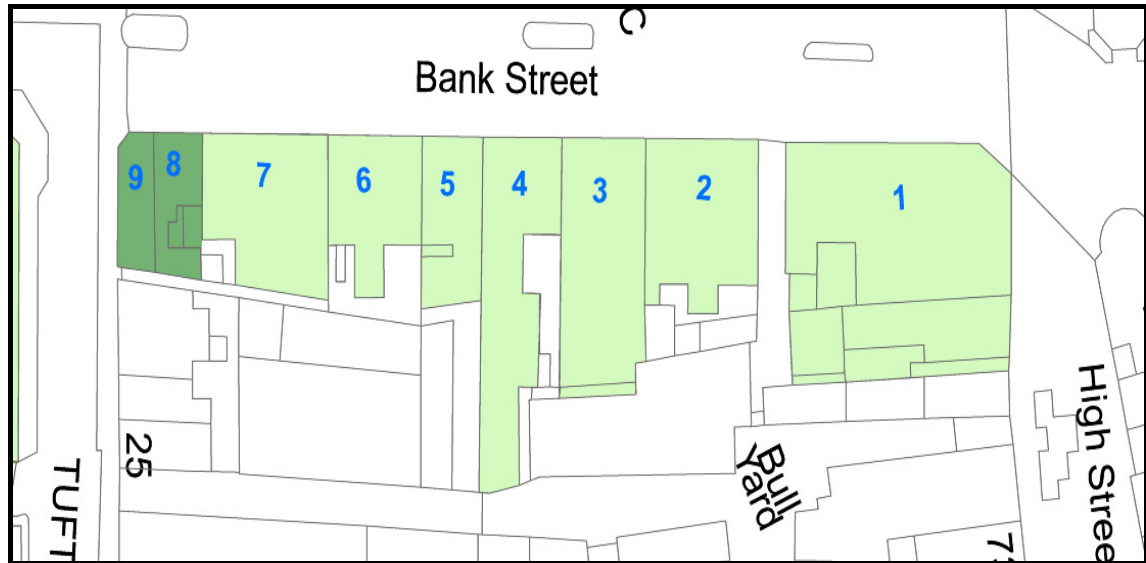
1	Wimpy	A3
2	Lesleys Florist	A1
3	Nationwide	A2
4	Ashford Cafe	A3
5	Cross's	A1
6	Lloyds Pharmacy	A1
7	Brockmans Travel	A1
8	Link Up Property	A2

Shop Frontage Figures

	% of Length	Length m	% of Number	Number
A1	52.2	30.3	50	4
Other	47.8	27.8	50	4

Frontage 6

Bank Street from High Street to Tufton Street



1	Lloyds TSB	A2
2	Geering & Colyer	A2
3	Bet Fred Betting Shop	A2
4	Kingsford Solicitors	A2
5	Kingsford Solicitors	A2
6	Hallett & Co	A2
7	Hallett & Co	A2
8	Divine	A1
9	Weatherman	A1

Shop Frontage Figures

	% of Length	Length m	% of Number	Number
A1	10.1	9.4	22.2	2
Other	89.9	84	77.7	7

Frontage 7

Bank Street from Tufton Street to Queen Street



1	Cheltenham & Gloucester	A2
2	Subway	A3
3	Britannia Building Society	A2
4	William Hill	A2
5	Craniums Head	A1
6	Craniums Head	A1
7	Dr Sun Herbs	D1
8	Brooks Hairdressing	A1
9	Ashford News	A1
10	Vacant Unit	A2
11	Zarin	A3
12	Lindas Florist	A1
13	Brownhills Opticians	D1
14	HR GO	A2
15	Kemp Carr Brown & Co Accountants	A2
16	Vacant	A3

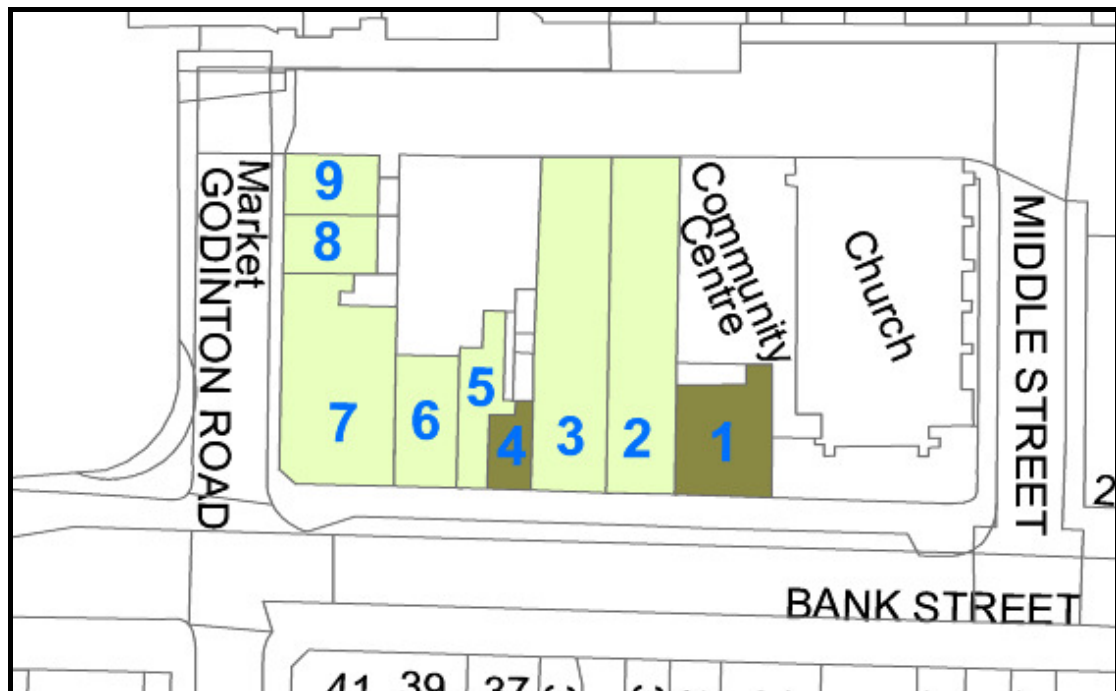
Shop Frontage Figures

	% of Length	Length m	% of Number	Number
A1	22.8	25.3 m	31.2	5
Other	77.2	85.7 m	68.8	11

Sites not previously subject to Shop Frontage Policy

Frontage 8

Bank Street from Middle Street to Godinton Road



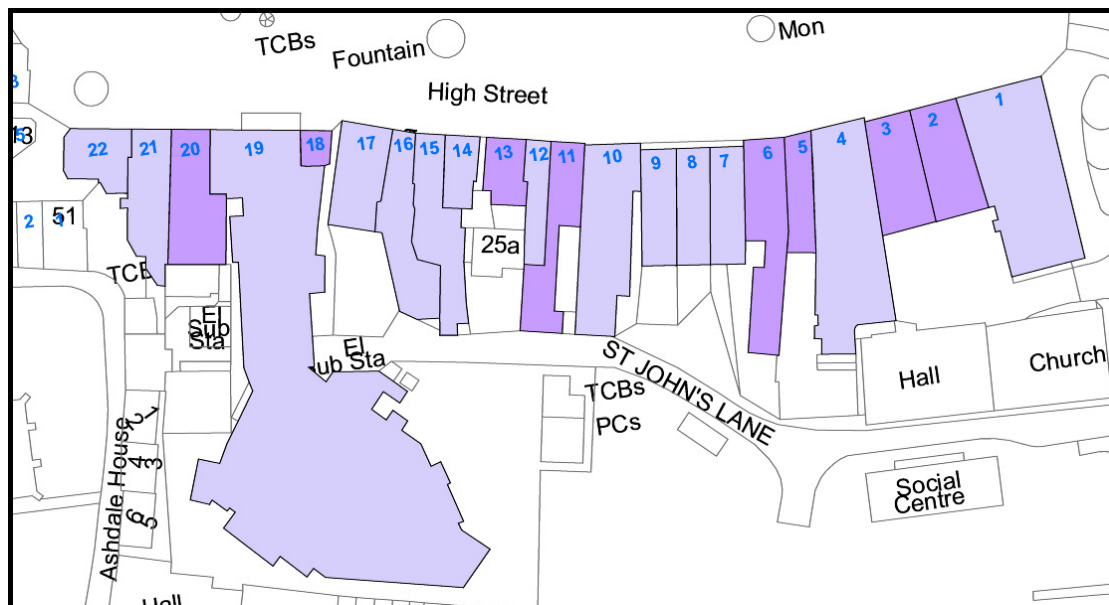
1	Shelter	A1
2	Bar 3 Zero	A3
3	Trattoria Romana	A3
4	Beautiful Nails	A1
5	Nasrin	A5
6	Perfect Pizza	A5
7	Olympian Leisure	SG
8	Kent Take Away	A5
9	Canteen	A3

Shop Frontage Figures

	% of Length	Length m	% of Number	Number
A1	17.5	12.5	22	2
Other	82.5	58.9	78	7

Frontage 9

High Street from Wellesley Road to Middle Row



1	Pizza Hut	A3
2	Variety Cash and Carry	A1
3	Vacant	A1
4	KFC	A5
5	Wrekless	A1
6	Straws	A1
7	The Cod Father	A5
8	Beneficial Finance	A2
9	Reed	A2
10	The Gorge	A3
11	Antoniou Hair and Beauty	A1
12	Fountain Kebab	A5
13	CMDL Dance and School Wear	A1
14	Vacant	A3
15	Café Express	A3
16	Vacant	A2
17	Halifax	A2
18	Swagger with Style	A1
19	Mecca Bingo	D2
20	Gold Rush	A1
21	HSBC	A2
22	Mann Countrywide	A2

Shop Frontage Figures

	% of Length	Length m	% of Number	Number
A1	30.6	47.8	36	8
Other	69.4	108.5	64	14

Frontage 10

High Street from Bank Street to Middle Row



1	Brockmans Travel	A1
2	Savia	A1
3	Your Move	A2
4	SJM Property Management	A2
5	SJM Property Management	A2
6	Celestial Star	A1
7	Esack Hair	A1
8	The Chilli Bite	A3
9	Nursing Care Agency	A2
10	First Class Mortgage Solutions	A2
11	Martins	A2
12	Vacant	A2
13	Vacant	A1
14	Independent Mortgage Centre	A2
15	Nationwide	A2
16	Connells	A2
17	Lloyds	A2

Shop Frontage Figures

	% of Length	Length m	% of Number	Number
A1	27.6	25.3	31	5
Other	72.4	66.3	69	11

Frontage 11
Middle Row



1	Ernest Jones	A1
2	Timpsons	A1
3	Ashford Grill and Kebab Shop	A5
4	Vacant	A2
5	Vacant	A2
6	Bairstow Eves	A2
7	Man of Kent	A4
8	Chockers	A1
9	Vacant	A2
10	Vacant	A2
11	Gould & Harrison	A2
12	Leavers	A1
13	Ward & Partners	A2
14	Vacant	A2
15	The Carvery	A1

Shop Frontage Figures

	% of Length	Length m	% of Number	Number
A1	31.8	78.2	33	5
Other	68.2	167.7	67	10

Frontage 12
New Rents



1	Halifax	A2
2	Café Nero	A3
3	Cartridge World	A1
4	Hospice of Hope	A1
5	Ashford Sewing Centre	A1
6	Dental Care Centre	D1
7	The Music Shop	A1
8	Marfells of Kent	A1
9	Leaf Lounge	A3
10	Peter Roberts Insurance Service	A2
11	Bathroom and Fireplace Showroom	A1
12	Bathroom and Fireplace Showroom	A1
13	Bakudi	A1
14	Pronuptia	A1
15	Dental Care Centre	D1
16	Seekers	A2
17	Vacant	A1
18	Wells Medical Centre	D1
19	Soul Bar	A4
20	Super Pizza	A5
21	Safe Hands & Core Mobility Centre	A1
22	Safe Hands & Core Mobility Centre	A1
23	Hair Design Studio	A1
24	Pillow Talk	A1
25	Coral	A2
26	Topps Jewellery	A1
27	The Hospice Shop	A1
28	KOKO 4 Men Barbers Shop	A1

29	Royal Bank of Scotland	A2
30	RBLI Employment Solutions	A2
31	Zenith Windows	A1
32	Nail Forever	A1
33	Angels Hair and Beauty	A1

Shop Frontage Figures

	% of Length	Length m	% of Number	Number
A1	54	132.8	61	20
Other	46	113.1	39	13