Retail Position Statement

Autumn 2023

South Ribble Borough Council

Contents

Introduction

Despite the migration to out-of-town shopping, growth of online retailing and the challenging conditions faced by many high streets town, district and local centres continue to have an important role to play in any district. They form a focal point for the community and provide a wide range of services that are accessible to the whole population including retail, employment, leisure, residential, education and transport. It is important, where possible, to maintain and protect the vitality and viability of the retail centres.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development which includes an economic role.

The NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. Planning policies should:

- define a network and hierarchy of town centres and promote their long-term vitality and viability – by allowing them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allows a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and reflects their distinctive characters;
- define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas, and make clear the range of uses permitted in such locations, as part of a positive strategy for the future of each centre;
- retain and enhance existing markets and, where appropriate, re-introduce or create new ones;
- allocate a range of suitable sites in town centres to meet the scale and type of development likely to be needed, looking at least ten years ahead. Meeting anticipated needs for retail, leisure, office and other main town centre uses over this period should not be compromised by limited site availability, so town centre boundaries should be kept under review where necessary;
- where suitable and viable town centre sites are not available for main town centre uses, allocate appropriate edge of centre sites that are well connected to the town centre. If sufficient edge of centre sites cannot be identified, policies should explain how identified needs can be met in other accessible locations that are well connected to the town centre; and
- recognise that residential development often plays an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and encourage residential development on appropriate sites.

It further requires Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to ensure that the Local Plan is based on adequate, up-to-date and relevant evidence about the economic, social and environmental characteristics and prospects of the area. LPAs should ensure that their assessment of and strategies for housing, employment and other uses are integrated, and that they take full account of relevant market and economic signals. They are required to work with partners to prepare and maintain a robust evidence base to understand both existing business needs and likely changes in the market.

Core Strategy Policy 11 sets out South Ribble's shopping hierarchy of centres, showing Leyland town centre as the principal shopping area in the Borough, followed by the district centres of Bamber Bridge, Longton, Tardy Gate and Penwortham. In addition, there is a network of supporting Local Centres within the Borough. The boundaries for the Town, District and Local centres can be viewed in the Local Plan (2015), as well as the relevant policies for how development in the retail centres will be managed. The policies that cover the retail centres are E3 – Leyland Town Centre, E4 – District Centres, and E5 – Local Centres.

The introduction of significant numbers of non-retail uses into town centres, particularly primary retail frontages, and the smaller district and local centres, can result in 'dead frontages' which can be visually harmful and may be discouraging to shoppers.

They can also reduce the choice of units available to retailers, fragmenting and weakening the established shopping centres and making them less vibrant places. The Local Plan document seeks to maintain a minimum of 60% of A1 retail uses in the Leyland Primary Retail Frontage, and in all the identified town, district and local centres.

This document provides a 'snapshot' in time of the situation in the retail centres in the Borough and builds on previous survey work to enable comparative analysis to be undertaken and trends to be identified. This report is feeding into the evidence base of the evolving Local Development Framework and will identify early signs of change and the type of action that should be taken. The statistics contained within the report will also assist during the planning application process, as the document should be used to inform as to whether the targets set are being met.

Since the Council's Local Plan was adopted in 2015 there has been a change to the Use Classes Order which now classifies retail units as Class E and a wide range of changes of use are permitted within Class E which will potentially impact on level of retail provision within existing centres. It should be noted that the use class order has now be revised from 1 September 2020, referring to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended). The table below displays the changes and the most closely associated current use classes.

Revoked Use Classes	Description	Current Use Classes
A1	Shops	E(a)
A2	Financial and Professional Services	E(c)
A3	Restaurants and Cafés	E(b)
A4	Drinking Establishments	Sui Generis
A5	Hot Food Takeaways	Sui Generis
B1	Business	E(g)
D1	Non-residential Institutions	E(e), E(f), F1
D2	Assembly and Leisure	E(d), F2, Sui Generis

(Adapted from: Planning Portal, https://www.planningportal.co.uk/permission/common-projects/change-of-use/use-classes)

Leyland Town Centre

Leyland is regarded as the main shopping centre in South Ribble. Leyland Town Centre comprises the shopping core of Hough Lane and the southern Towngate area, which features a Tesco Extra superstore, and the Churchill Retail Park. Leyland offers an extensive range of both convenience and comparison goods and services.

The Central Lancashire Core Strategy (adopted July 2012) identifies Leyland Town Centre in the retail hierarchy as a second tier centre, also known as a principal town centre.

It is important that Leyland retains its status within the retail hierarchy, remains competitive with its neighbours, and continues to attract shoppers, visitors and businesses to the town. Whilst it is accepted that people will go to other centres for certain products, it is important that the town builds on its strengths, recognises and alleviates its weaknesses and improves the facilities that it provides to the community.

Policy E3 of the Local Plan applies to Leyland Town Centre.

Uses in the Town Centre

The Local Plan identifies a primary retail frontage for Leyland Town Centre, and a secondary retail area. Within the primary retail frontage, Policy E4 requires that a minimum of 60% of the units are of A1 use. The policy also encourages A3 and A4 uses, and permits other uses, such as A2 and B1 uses, subject to a six month marketing assessment.

The secondary retail frontage covers the remainder of the town centre. Within the secondary retail area, the policy encourages A1, A3 and A4 uses. Changes of use for other uses, such as A2 or B1, should be accompanied by a six month marketing assessment to provide evidence for this change of use.

The uses of all of the ground floor units in the town centre boundary are recorded. The latest survey, undertaken in October 2023, identified 302 units in the town centre, with 70 in the primary retail frontage.

The table below shows the number of each use class in both the primary retail frontage and the town centre as well as the percentage of units this represents.

	Leyland Town Centre		Leyland Primary Retail Frontage	
Use	**Number**	**%**	**Number**	**%**
Vacant	16	5	3	4
E(a)	72	24	22	31
E(b)	20	7	8	11
E(c)	66	22	17	24
E(e)	12	4	3	4
E(g)	12	4	2	3
C3	54	18	1	1
F1	6	2	1	1
F2	2	1	0	0
Sui Generis	43	14	13	19

Town Centre

The table above shows that there is a wide range of uses in the town centre, with the predominant use in the town centre being E(a), with 24% of units being in this use class.

22% of units are in E(c) uses, and 18% of units in the town centre are residential.

The vacancy rate is higher than that in the primary retail frontage at 5%. Sui Generis and E(b) units make up 21% of units in the town centre combined.

Primary Retail Frontage

The table above shows that the predominant use in the primary retail frontage is E(a), at 31%. The number of E(c) uses is also significant, at 24%. The vacancy rate in the primary retail frontage has decreased from 9% (October 2022) to 4%.

Analysis of Vacancies in the Town Centre and Primary Retail Frontage

It is important to monitor the vacancy rates in town and district centres. A key part of this monitoring is to look at what uses are leaving the centres, resulting in vacant units.

The table below shows the previous uses of the units in the town centre and the primary retail frontage that were vacant during the October 2023 survey.

	Leyland Town Centre		Leyland Primary Retail Frontage	
Use	**Number**	**%**	**Number**	**%**
E(a)	6	38	0	0
E(c)	6	38	3	100
E(e)	1	6	0	0
C3	1	6	0	0
F2	1	6	0	0
Sui Generis	1	6	0	0

The previous use of vacant units was primarily E(a) and E(c) in Leyland Town Centre, with several other previous uses. Additionally, 100% of the units within the primary retail frontage that are now vacant were previously in E(c) use. The previous use of the unit would be a consideration if the Council received an application for change of use.

Comparison of Uses Over Time

Primary Retail Frontage

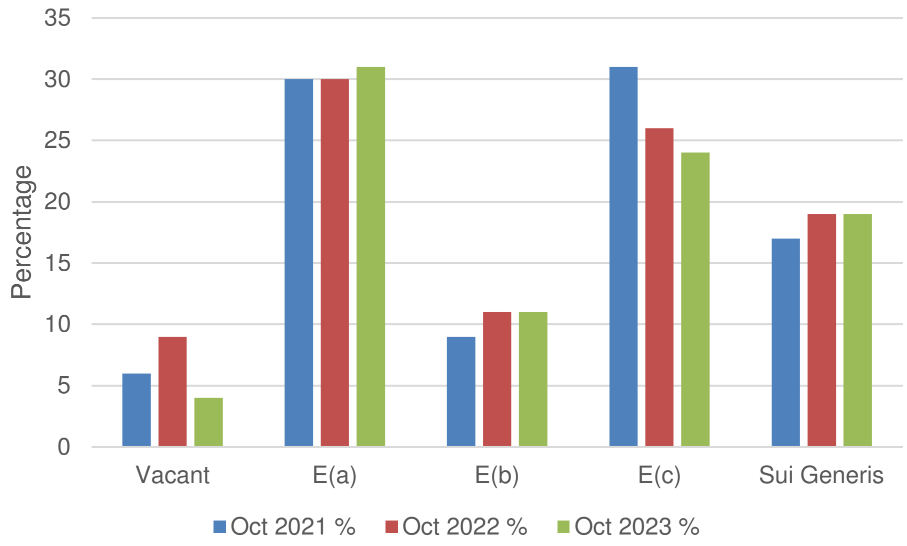
The table below shows how the uses in the primary retail frontage have changed since October 2016 to October 2023.

Revoked Use Classes	Oct 2016 %	Oct 2017 %	Oct 2018 %	Oct 2019 %	Current Use Classes	Oct 2020 %	Oct 2021 %	Oct 2022 %	Oct 2023 %
Vacant	1	3	6	6	Vacant	6	6	9	4
A1	51	51	48	43	E(a)	31	30	30	31
A2	28	25	25	27	E(c)	31	31	26	24
A3	4	4	4	7	E(b)	9	9	11	11
D1	3	3	0	3	E(e)	4	6	4	4
					F1	1	1	1	1
B1	0	0	0	0	E(g)	0	0	0	3
D2	1	1	1	1	F2	0	0	0	0
Sui Generis	1	1	1	1	Sui Generis	17	17	19	19
A4	4	6	6	7					
A5	6	6	6	4					
C3	0	0	0	0	C3	0	0	0	1

*use classes changed September 2020, but rows have been correlated as closely as possible

Vacant units have seen a decrease since a peak in 2022, in October 2023 these had more than halved from the previous year. This figure is now decreased more closely to those recorded in October 2017. E(a) units have been steady since 2020 after a decrease from 2017-2019. E(b) units have increased steadily from 2016 to present. E(c) units have decreased from last year and are the lowest recorded across the years. Sui generis appears to have a large increase from 2020, although this class now contains a wider range of uses.

The changes in the main uses in the primary retail frontage from 2021 to 2023 are displayed in the chart below.



The table and chart show that there has not been a great deal of fluctuation in the uses in the primary retail frontage since October 2021 for some classes. The vacancy rate increased to 9% in October 2022 but has now dropped to 4% which is lower than seen previously.

The number of E(a) uses has increased slightly from 30% to 31%. There has been a decrease in the number of E(c) units in the primary retail frontage from 31% in October 2021 to 24% in October 2023.

The number of E(b) units has remained the same as October 2022. The number of Sui Generis uses in the primary retail frontage has remained the same as October 2022 also.

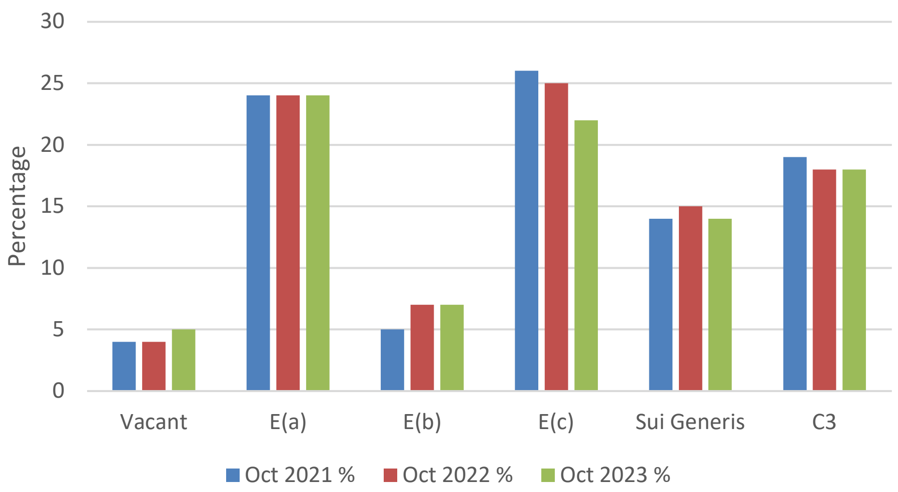
Leyland Town Centre

The table below demonstrates how the uses in Leyland Town Centre have changed since October 2016 through to October 2023.

Revoked Use Classes	Oct 2016 %	Oct 2017 %	Oct 2018 %	Oct 2019 %	Current Use Classes	Oct 2020 %	Oct 2021 %	Oct 202 2 %	Oct 2023 %
Vacant	6	6	8	4	Vacant	4	4	4	5
A1	40	41	39	39	E(a)	25	24	24	24
A2	13	12	13	11	E(c)	25	26	25	22
A3	4	4	4	4	E(b)	5	5	7	7
D1	4	4	4	5	E(e)	4	5	5	4
					F1	2	2	2	2
B1	1	1	1	2	E(g)	1	1	0	4
D2	2	2	2	3	F2	0	0	1	1
Sui Generis	3	2	2	2	Sui Generis	15	14	15	14
A4	4	3	2	4					
A5	8	7	8	8					
C3	17	17	17	18	C3	19	19	18	18

The number of vacant units has increased but is not has high as those in 2016-2018. E(a) units have remained constant to those recorded through October 2021 to present. E(e) units have remained relatively constant since October 2016; likewise residential units remain unchanged from October 2022.

The changes in the main uses in the town centre from 2021 to 2023 are displayed in the chart below.



The chart above shows that there has not been a great change in unit numbers since 2022 in some categories. The number of vacant units in the centre has increased to 5%, compared to 4% in October 2021 and October 2022. E(a) units have remained completely constant over the past three years, with no change from 24%. Whereas E(b) uses increased in 2022, and in October 2023 there was no change from the previous year. Both E(c) and Sui Generis units have decreased from the previous year.

District Centres

There are four district centres in the Borough, as identified in the Local Plan (2015). The district centres are spread across the Borough and offer a range of facilities for the wider community. Policy E4 of the Local Plan Document applies to the district centres.

Uses in the District Centres

Policy E4 of the Local Plan seeks to ensure that 60% or more of the units in the district centres are of A1 use. A3 uses are also encouraged. Applications for other uses would need to include a six month marketing assessment to provide evidence for a change of use from A1.

The district centres were surveyed in October 2023. The results are displayed in the table below.

	Penwortham		Bamber Bridge		Longton		Tardy Gate	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Vacant	1	1	3	4	6	15	3	5
E(a)	21	22	13	19	11	28	12	22
E(b)	12	13	3	4	4	10	3	5
E(c)	20	21	19	28	7	18	15	27
E(d)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
E(e)	5	5	3	4	4	10	8	15
E(g)	8	9	3	4	6	15	0	0
C3	6	6	16	23	0	0	3	5
F1	1	1	2	3	1	3	0	0
F2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sui Generis	19	20	7	10	1	3	10	18

Penwortham

Penwortham is the largest district centre in the Borough with 93 units. Of these, 22% are E(a), and 21% are E(c). The vacancy rate is 1%, the lowest across the district centres.

Penwortham has a relatively low proportion of residential units in the centre, at 6% although this is the second highest across the district centres. It has the highest proportion of Sui Generis uses at 20% against the other district centres.

Bamber Bridge

There are 72 units within Bamber Bridge district centre. Of these, 19% are of E(a) use, and vacancy rates are currently 4%. E(c) uses make up the majority of units with 28%. The centre has the highest proportion of residential units in the district centres at 23%.

Longton

Longton is the smallest district centre in the Borough, with 40 units. Of these, 28% are in E(a) use (the highest proportion of the four) and 18% of units are E(c) use. This district centre has the highest proportion of E(g) units compared to all others. Longton is the only district centre to have no residential units. The vacancy rate is currently 15%, the highest amongst the district centres.

Tardy Gate

There are 55 units within Tardy Gate district centre. The centre has the same proportion of E(a) units as Penwortham, at 22%. It has the highest percentage of E(e) uses at 15%. Vacancy rates and residential uses are each 5% of units in the centre. Sui generis uses make up 18% of the district centre.

Summary

Across the district centres the dominant uses at E(a) and E(c), and for Bamber Bridge this includes C3. All centres have several E(b) uses, with Penwortham holding the greatest proportion. Tardy Gate is the only centre not to include either F1 or F2 uses. Sui Generis uses are particularly dominant in Penwortham and Tardy Gate as a proportion.

Analysis of Vacancies in District Centres

The table below sets out the previous uses of the units which were identified as vacant in the October 2023 surveys.

	Penwortham		Bamber Bridge		Longton		Tardy Gate	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
E(a)	0	-	2	66.66	1	16.66	1	33.33
E(b)	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
E(c)	1	100	1	33.33	3	50	1	33.33
E(d)	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
E(e)	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
E(g)	0	-	0	-	2	33.33	1	33.33
C3	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
F1	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
F2	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Sui Generis	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-

The only vacant unit in Penwortham was previously in E(c) use. Two of the vacant units in Bamber Bridge were previously occupied by E(a) and one was previously a E(c) unit. The six vacant units in Longton were previously occupied by E(a), E(g), and E(c) uses. In Tardy Gate, one of the vacant units was E(a), another E(g) and one was formerly E(c). Therefore, the most common previous use of the vacant units was E(c), closely followed by E(a).

Local Centres

The Local Plan identifies nine Local Centres in the Borough. These centres are spread across the Borough, and, although small, provide a vital service to the communities they serve. Policy E5 of the Local Plan Document applies to local centres.

Uses in the Local Centres

It is important that the vitality and viability of these centres is retained, through maintaining the retail strength that they offer. The composition (recorded October 2023) of each of the local centres is split over the 3 tables below.

	Kingsfold		**Earnshaw Bridge**		**Farington**	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Vacant	1	2	1	5	1	5
E(a)	5	12	2	10	3	14
E(b)	3	7	3	14	0	0
E(c)	8	20	5	24	6	27
E(d)	0	0	0	0	0	0
E(e)	4	12	0	0	0	0
E(g)	1	2	0	0	0	0
F1	1	2	0	0	0	0
F2	0	0	0	0	0	0
C3	12	29	4	19	4	18
Sui Generis	5	12	6	29	8	36

Kingsfold

Kingsfold is the largest local centre in the Borough, with 39 units. The centre is residential dominant with 29% of units being C3, although these are mainly at the first floor. It has a high proportion of E(e), the highest figure along with Walton-Le-Dale and Gregson Lane for this use. Moreover, 12% of units are E(a), and 20% are E(c). The centre has one vacant unit and 12% are Sui Generis uses. Only Kingsfold and Higher Walton have F1 uses within their centres.

Earnshaw Bridge

There are 21 units in Earnshaw Bridge local centre. Of these, one is vacant. The highest proportion of units are Sui Generis at 29%. 24% of these are E(c) uses, and there is 10% E(a) uses. 19% of the units are residential and 14% of the units are of E(b) use, the largest proportion across the local centres. This local centre has seen very little change from the previous year.

Farington

There are 22 units in Farington local centre.14% of these are in E(a) use. The centre also has the highest number of units (36%) in Sui Generis use across the local centres. 5% of units in the centre are vacant, a decrease from the previous year. Other units in the centre are comprised of E(c) (27%) and C3 (18%).

	Higher Walton		Seven Stars		Walton-Le-Dale	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Vacant	1	5	5	14	0	0
E(a)	2	10	13	36	0	0
E(b)	0	0	1	3	0	0
E(c)	5	25	9	25	5	22
E(d)	0	0	0	0	0	0
E(e)	0	0	0	0	3	13
E(g)	0	0	0	0	1	4
F1	1	5	0	0	0	0
F2	0	0	0	0	0	0
C3	7	35	2	6	11	48
Sui Generis	4	20	6	17	3	13

Higher Walton

Higher Walton local centre comprises of 20 units, of which 10% of units are in E(a) use. There are a high number of residential properties in the centre, at 35%. There is one vacant unit in the centre. Only Kingsfold and Higher Walton have F1 uses within their centres. 25% of units are E(c) and 20% are Sui Generis.

Seven Stars

There are 36 units in this centre. 36% of these are in E(a) use and E(c) uses make up 25%. Vacant units make up 14% of the centre and there are few residential units, at 6%.

Walton Le Dale

There are 23 units in Walton Le Dale centre. The predominant use in this centre is residential, with almost half of the units (48%) being in this use. This is the only centre which has no E(a) units. E(c) units make up 22% of the centre, whilst E(e) and Sui Generis units each make up 13% of the centre. There are no vacant units.

	Gregson Lane		New Longton		Walmer Bridge	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Vacant	3	21	1	9	0	0
E(a)	1	7	4	36	4	24
E(b)	1	7	1	9	1	6
E(c)	3	21	4	36	3	18
E(d)	0	0	0	0	0	0
E(e)	2	14	1	9	0	0
E(g)	0	0	0	0	1	6
F1	0	0	0	0	0	0
F2	0	0	0	0	0	0
C3	2	14	0	0	5	29
Sui Generis	2	14	0	0	3	18

Gregson Lane

There are 14 units in Gregson Lane local centre. Of these 21% are in E(c) use. A further 14% of units are in Sui Generis, the same as C3 uses. E(e) uses make up 14% and 21% of units are vacant, this is the highest vacancy rate across all economic retail centres.

New Longton

New Longton is the smallest local centre in the Borough, with 11 units. It is also the centre with the highest proportion of E(a) units (36%), the same as Seven Stars and E(c) units (36%). E(b) and E(e) uses make up 9% each of the centre. There is one vacant unit in this centre.

Walmer Bridge

There are 17 units in Walmer Bridge local centre. E(a) units make up 24% and E(c) and Sui Generis each make up 18% of units. A further 29% of units are in C3 use, and 6% are E(b). There are no vacant units.

Analysis of Vacancies in Local Centres

The table below sets out the previous uses of the units which were identified as vacant in the October 2023 surveys. Those centres without vacant units are not displayed.

	Gregson Lane		Higher Walton		Seven Stars	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
E(a)	0	-	0	-	1	20
E(b)	0	-	0	-	0	-
E(c)	2	66	1	100	1	20
E(d)	0	-	0	-	0	-
E(e)	0	-	0	-	2	40
Sui Generis	1	33	0	-	1	20

	Kingsfold		Earnshaw Bridge		Farington		New Longton	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
E(a)	1	100	1	100	1	100	1	100

Overall, there are 13 vacant units across South Ribble's local centres. Seven Stars has the highest number of vacant units followed by Gregson Lane all other centres follow with one vacant unit. The table shows that current vacant units were previously either E(a), E(c), E(e) or Sui Generis. E(a) is the most common previous use across all units, with five units, closely followed by E(c) with four.

Conclusion

Whilst it is challenging to evaluate the survey results against the amended use classes, conclusions can be still drawn regarding the vitality of the centres. The majority of the centres are thriving and retain a mix of retail and other uses. The amendments to the Use Classes Order will make it more challenging to ensure that 60% retail occupancy is maintained in the primary retail frontage in Leyland Town Centre and the district centres.

In some centres in the Borough, particularly Bamber Bridge, Higher Walton and Walton-Le-Dale, there are a high number of residential properties. A high number of residential uses in the centres could make it extremely difficult to meet the target retail policies of Local Plan.

Vacancy rates in the centres are generally relatively low, although vacancy rates in Longton and Seven Stars are the highest. This will need to be kept under review.

Appendix 1: Current Use Classes

Class B

- B2 General Industrial
- B8 Storage or distribution

Class C

- C1 Hotels
- C2 Residential Institutions
- C2A Secure Residential Institution
- C3 Dwelling Houses
- C4 Houses in Multiple Occupation

Class E- Commercial, Business and Service

- E(a) Display or retail sale of goods, other than hot food
- E(b) Sale of food and drink for consumption (mostly) on the premises
- E(c) Provision of:
    - E(c)(i) Financial services
    - E(c)(ii) Professional services
    - E(c)(iii) Other appropriate services in a commercial, business or service locality
- E(d) Indoor sport, recreation or fitness
- E(e) Provision of medical or health services
- E(f) Creche, day nursery or day centre
- E(g) Uses which can be carried out in a residential area without detriment to its amenity
    - E(g)(i) Offices to carry out any operational or administrative functions
    - E(g)(ii) Research and development of products or processes
    - E(g)(iii) Industrial processes

Class F- Local Community and Learning

- F1 Learning and non-residential institutions
    - F1(a) Provision of education
    - F1(b) Display of works of art
    - F1(c) Museums
    - F1 (d) Public libraries or public reading rooms
    - F1(e) Public halls or exhibition halls
    - F1(f) Public worship or religious instruction
    - F1(g) Law courts
- F2 Local Community
    - F2(a) Shops selling essential goods, including food, where the shop's premises do not exceed 280 square metres and there is not other such facility within 1000 metres
    - F2(b) Halls or meeting places for the principle use of the local community
    - F2(c) Areas or places for outdoor sport or recreation
    - F2(d) Indoor or outdoor swimming pools or skating rinks

Sui Generis

- Theatres
- Amusement arcades/centres or funfairs
- Launderettes
- Fuel stations
- Firing, selling and/or displaying motor vehicles
- Taxi business
- Scrap yards or a yard for the storage/distribution of minerals and/or the breaking of motor vehicles
- 'Alkali work'
- Hostels
- Waste disposals installations for the incineration, chemical treatment or landfill of hazardous waste
- Retail warehouse clubs
- Nightclubs
- Casinos
- Betting offices/shops
- Pay day loan shops
- Public houses, wine bars, or drinking establishments
- Drinking establishments with expanded food provision
- Hot food takeaways
- Venues for live music performances
- Cinemas
- Concert halls
- Bingo halls
- Dance halls

Further information can be found here https://www.planningportal.co.uk/permission/common-projects/change-of-use/use-classes