

# Elmbridge Retail Assessment

Volume One — Main Report | April 2016



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VOLUME ONE — MAIN REPORT

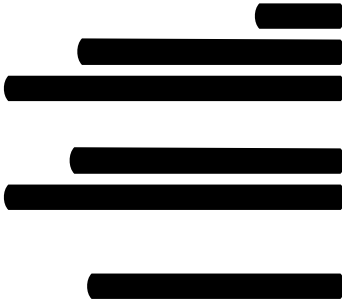
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Report date: April 2016



For and on behalf of GVA Grimley Ltd

# 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Bilfinger GVA have been instructed by Elmborough Council to undertake the **Elmborough Retail Assessment 2015**. The aim of the study is to provide the Council with an up-to-date evidence base on the existing and future roles and performance of the Borough's Town, District and Local Centres and assess future demand for retail floorspace in the Borough over the period to 2035. The study has full regard to the expected levels of growth in Elmborough and neighbouring authorities, as well as recent and emerging changes in consumer behaviour. Our report provides the Council with a strategy to ensure its network of Town, District and Local Centres remain vibrant, attractive retail destinations over the course of the Council's Local Plan period. It is fully compliant with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and will be able to be used by the Council to inform policies and land use allocations, including the preparation of the aforementioned Local Plan.
- 1.2 Our study has been informed by on-site and desk-based information-gathering, including site visits to each of the Town and District Centres in Elmborough Borough. We have also undertaken a desk-based analysis of the Council's network of Local Centres. Further evidence is provided by way of a household telephone survey of shopping and leisure patterns across Elmborough Borough, and adjacent surrounding areas in which residents may look towards facilities in Elmborough to meet their shopping and leisure needs. The extent of the survey area was agreed with the Council at the initial stage of preparation of this study, and the results of the survey can also be used to understand the extent to which surrounding centres outside the Borough (such as Kingston-upon-Thames, Woking and Guildford) compete with the network of centres within the study area, and define the amount of expenditure 'leakage' taking place to locations outside the Borough. A plan of the survey area is provided at **Plan 1 of Volume 2** (and is also set out in Figure 6.1 of this report).
- 1.3 Our health check assessments (and subsequent analysis) refer to different types of retail and commercial leisure floorspace, as follows:
- **'Convenience'** goods refers to food shopping – including supermarkets, and specialist stores such as bakers, greengrocers, off licences and so on;
  - **'Comparison'** goods refers to non-food shopping – including fashion, home furnishings, electrical items, DIY goods, books and music
  - **'Services'** uses refers to commercial leisure services such as restaurants and cafés, retail services such as hairdressers, beauty salons, banks, building societies and estate agents, as well as non-retail uses such as cinemas and arts centres.
- 1.4 Our report is split into three volumes. This report forms Volume 1 to the study; Volume 2 sets out supporting plans and appendices; and Volume 3 provides the household telephone survey data, prepared by NEMS Market Research. The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- **Section 2** sets out our review of national, strategic and local planning policies relevant to retail and leisure planning;
- **Section 3** considers national trends in the retail sector, and in particular the implications of recent economic growth and technological advances which are impacting on shopping habits;
- **Section 4** considers the wider study context, identifying the key competing centres surrounding the study area, and the extent to which they influence the shopping patterns of residents, as well as providing a summary of their current retail and commercial leisure offer, and proposals for future enhancement of this;
- **Section 5** reviews the composition, role and function of current shopping provision in the town and District Centres in Elmborough through 'health check' assessments, as well as reviewing out-of-centre shopping provision;
- **Section 6** sets out our approach to calculating retail capacity, including definition of the household telephone survey area and discussion of approach to the household telephone survey;
- **Section 7** sets out the quantitative 'need' for additional comparison retail floorspace in Elmborough Borough over the study period to 2035, with the convenience goods quantitative 'need' assessment provided in **Section 8**;
- **Section 9** sets out our review of commercial leisure provision within and outside Elmborough Borough, and draws conclusions on the quantitative and qualitative need for additional commercial leisure facilities; and
- **Section 10** draws our analysis together and set out conclusions, strategic guidance and recommendations on future change and growth in Elmborough's network of centres.

## 2 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 2.1 In this section we summarise the key features of national and local planning policy guidance which provide the context and framework for this study.

### NATIONAL POLICY FRAMEWORK

#### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2012

- 2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published on 27 March 2012 sets out the Government's planning policies for England and replaces the suite of national Planning Policy Statements, Planning Policy Guidance and Circulars with a single document.
- 2.3 The NPPF continues to recognise that the planning system is plan-led and therefore Local Plans, incorporating neighbourhood plans where relevant, are the starting point for the determination of any planning application. In line with the Government's aim to streamline the planning process, each Local Planning Authority (LPA) should produce a single Local Plan for its area with any additional documents to be used only where clearly justified.
- 2.4 The NPPF maintains the general thrust of previous policy set out in PPS4 – Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth (2009). It advocates a 'town centres first' approach, and requires planning policies to positively promote competitive town centre environments and manage the growth of centres over the plan period. In planning for town centres LPAs should:
- Recognise town centres as the heart of their communities and pursue policies to support their viability and vitality;
  - Define a network and hierarchy of centres that is resilient to anticipated future economic changes;
  - Define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas, based on a clear definition of primary and secondary shopping frontages in designated centres and set policies that make clear which uses will be permitted in such locations;
  - Promote competitive town centres that provide customer choice and a diverse retail offer which reflect the individuality of town centres;
  - Retain and enhance existing markets and, where appropriate, re-introduce or create new ones, ensuring that markets remain attractive and competitive;
  - Allocate a range of suitable sites to meet the scale and type of economic development needed in town centres. Where town centre sites are not available, LPAs should adopt a sequential approach to allocate appropriate edge of centre sites;
  - Set policies for the consideration of proposals for main town centre uses which cannot be accommodated in or adjacent to town centres;
  - Recognise that residential development can play an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres; and
  - Where town centres are in decline, plan positively for their future to encourage economic activity.
- 2.5 LPAs should 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. These assessments should be integrated and take full account of relevant market and economic signals. LPAs should use the evidence base to assess, inter alia:
- The needs for land or floorspace for economic development, taking account of both quantitative and qualitative requirements for all foreseeable types of economic activity over the plan period, including retail and commercial leisure development;
  - The existing and future supply of land available for economic development and its sufficiency and suitability to meet the identified needs;
  - The role and function of town centres and the relationship between them, including any trends in the performance of centres; and
  - The capacity of existing centres to accommodate new town centre development.
- 2.6 Consistent with transitional arrangements, the Local Plan will be examined by an independent inspector whose role it is to assess whether the plan is sound. In order to be found sound the Plan should be:
- Positively prepared i.e. based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements
  - Justified i.e. the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the alternatives;
  - Effective i.e. deliverable over its plan period and based on effective joint working; and
  - Consistent with national policy i.e. enable the delivery of sustainable development
- 2.7 Overall, the NPPF adopts a positive approach, with a presumption in favour of sustainable development and support for economic growth. In terms of decision-making, applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions.



## National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) (2014)

- 2.8 In March 2014 the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) launched the online planning practice guidance, which cancelled a number of previous planning practice guidance documents, including the Practice Guidance on Need, Impact and the Sequential Approach (2009). Although it does not constitute a statement of Government policy, it provides technical guidance on how to prepare a robust evidence base and how to assess the impact of proposals for main town centre uses. The web-based resource provides guidance on how to assess and plan to meet the needs of main town centre uses in full through production of a positive vision or strategy for town centres.

## LOCAL POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR ELMBRIDGE BOROUGH

### Elmbridge Core Strategy (March 2011)

- 2.9 The Core Strategy is the principle document in the Elmbridge Local Plan. It sets out a long-term vision, spatial strategy and core policies for shaping the Borough's development up to 2026. The Core Strategy sets the overarching strategy for the Borough which adopts a local approach to the promotion of sustainable growth, whilst protecting the environment and providing community infrastructure.
- 2.10 In accordance with Core Strategy Policy CS1, new development will be delivered in accordance with a clear spatial strategy, which provides the most sustainable way to accommodate growth supported by high quality infrastructure, whilst respecting the unique character of the Borough and the local distinctiveness of individual settlements.
- 2.11 Main 'settlement areas', including Walton-on-Thames and Weybridge, are identified as the most sustainable locations within Elmbridge. They provide a broad range of uses and services, as well as opportunities to accommodate new development. Suburban 'settlement areas' including Esher, Hersham, East and West Molesey, Hinchley Wood and Thames Ditton are primarily residential in character and provide a more limited range of uses and services. These areas are not as sustainable as Walton-on-Thames and Weybridge, but nevertheless have the capacity to accommodate new development in a sustainable manner.
- 2.12 Service Centre and rural fringe areas include Cobham, Oxshott, Stoke D'Abernon and Downside. Although the four settlements located within this area are distinctively different, they are inherently linked to Cobham with regards to service provision. The majority of new development within this area will be directed towards Cobham as this is the most sustainable location. The suburban village of Claygate functions as a large village rather than a suburban area.
- 2.13 Town and village centres will continue to be the focus for new development, providing a range of services in well-designed and accessible environments. The spatial strategy takes account of their

respective roles and character and supports their vitality and viability within the context of a clear hierarchy detailed as follows:

Centre Hierarchy	Centre	Role
<b>Town Centre</b>	Walton-on-Thames	Further Town Centre development will be encouraged where this adds to the overall vitality and viability of the centre; is of an appropriate scale; and makes a positive contribution to the significant environmental improvements that have and continue to take place in the town.
<b>District Centre</b>	Weybridge, Cobham, Esher, East Molesey and Hersham	Measures to safeguard and consolidate the role and function of the Borough's District Centres will be promoted.
<b>Local Centre</b>	Claygate, East Molesey Bridge Road, Hinchley Wood, Oxshott, Oatlands, Thames Ditton, Walton Terrace Road, Walton Halfway and Weybridge Queens Road	The existing retail role and function of these Local Centres will be safeguarded and consolidated in order to provide easily accessible shopping and meet people's day to day needs. These centres fulfill an important role and will be the focus for more accessible local services, such as small scale community facilities, but are not considered suitable for large scale developments.
<b>Small Parades and Local Shops</b>		The retention and provision of small parades and local shops will be promoted where they serve a local need. They can provide important and convenient facilities for 'top up' shopping and are of significant importance to those who have limited access to the larger centres across the Borough.

- 2.14 Settlement Policies specifically relate to the different settlement areas across the Borough which are set out in the Core Strategy. Each settlement area policy sets out how these individual areas will develop in the future. In accordance with Policy CS3 (Walton-on-Thames), within the Town Centre, new development will be promoted in a way that delivers high quality, well designed public spaces

and buildings, makes efficient use of land and adds to the centre's attractiveness and competitiveness. Sites within the Town Centre will be considered for high density mixed-use developments. A diversity of uses which contribute to the centre's overall vitality and viability will also be supported. New employment floorspace will be directed to the Town Centre and other employment areas located around Hersham and Walton-on-Thames stations.

- 2.15 Weybridge will continue to fulfil diverse range of important roles as a centre for residential, employment and leisure uses. Although there is limited development potential within the defined District Centre, in accordance with Policy CS4 (Weybridge), higher density mixed use developments could be appropriate.
- 2.16 In accordance with Policy CS5 (Hersham), the Council will continue to support Hersham's role, primarily as a residential area. Proposals which add to the vitality and viability of the District Centre will be encouraged provided that they enhance the role of the village centre and are of an appropriate scale.
- 2.17 In accordance with Policy CS7 (East and West Molesey), the variety of retail provision across East and West Molesey will be supported although there is no identified need for additional provision. Proposals which could contribute to the future vitality and viability of centres will be supported, provided that they enhance the role of the centre and are of an appropriate scale.
- 2.18 The Council will continue to support the primary role of Thames Ditton and Hinchley Wood shopping areas as attractive and individually distinctive residential neighbourhoods. In accordance with Policy CS8, at these areas, measures will be supported that improve their environments and their individual roles as valued Local Centres.
- 2.19 Esher will continue to fulfil a diverse range of important roles as a centre for residential, employment, leisure, recreational and tourism uses. Restaurants and cafés contribute to the character of Esher and its evening activity. However, in accordance with Policy CS9, these uses do need to be controlled, in order that its function as a retail centre during the day time is not threatened.
- 2.20 The Council will promote measures that strengthen and support Cobham's role as a service centre through promoting a mix of uses within the centre that adds to its vitality and viability in accordance with Policy CS10. Higher density residential / mixed use developments could be appropriate within and around Cobham District Centre, provided that it supports the centre's vitality and viability and contributes to the diversity of uses available to local people. The number of non-retail uses will be carefully controlled, in order that its function as a retail centre is not threatened.
- 2.21 In accordance with Policy CS18 (Town Centre uses), town and village centres will continue to serve a distinctive multi-functional role, in keeping with the hierarchy defined in Policy CS1 (Spatial Strategy), responding to the variety of needs of local residents and businesses. All Town Centre uses will be considered within the context of their contribution to the vitality and viability of the centre and their

impact on and ability to serve local needs, as set out in the foregoing place policies relating to individual settlements.

- 2.22 A1 retail uses will be protected in order to control an appropriate balance of uses within Town and District Centres. Higher density mixed-use schemes will be promoted in Town and District Centres where they are compatible with the local environment and function of the centre within the overall hierarchy. Local centres will retain retail uses wherever viable, in order to provide an appropriate level of services to meet the needs of the local community. Town centre uses located outside of defined town and village centres will be protected where they meet the needs of the local population in conjunction with defined centres, and expanded where local deficiencies are identified.

### Development Management Plan (April 2015)

- 2.23 The Development Management Plan contains the detailed policies that planning applications can be assessed against and forms part of the Elmbridge Local Plan. It provides the policies needed to manage the appropriate delivery of high quality development across the Borough. These policies ensure that development contributes to the wider, strategic aims of the Core Strategy, providing further detail when necessary in order to deliver the long-term spatial vision for Elmbridge.
- 2.24 **Policy DM1** sets out a clear presumption in favour of sustainable development as required by the NPPF and establishes how it will be applied when considering development proposals against other Development Management policies on specific issues and those in the Local Plan as a whole.
- 2.25 In accordance with **Policy DM3 (Mixed Uses)**, the Council will encourage a diversity of uses in Town and District Centres. This policy provides additional detail to support Core Strategy Policy CS18 (Town Centre Uses), which includes the promotion of higher density mixed-use schemes in Town and District Centres.
- 2.26 **Policy DM14 (Evening Economy)** sets out that the Council will encourage proposals for development associated with the evening economy that will demonstrate that any potentially harmful effects on local residents, the character of the area or highway safety are limited to an acceptable level.
- 2.27 The Borough enjoys a thriving evening economy, due to the extensive variety of restaurants, takeaways, bars and pubs. The types of premises referred to in this policy also make a contribution to the overall vitality of shopping areas during the day, in common with other non-retail uses, but these particular uses have been identified for specific inclusion within a Development Management policy due to the disturbance they may cause in the evening in areas where there are residential properties. These businesses have an important role in maintaining growth within the town centres and as part of mixed-use development schemes. As such, the Council will support their economic viability where appropriate.

## Summary

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was adopted in March 2012 and replaces the suite of national Planning Policy Statements, including PPS4. The NPPF maintains the general thrust of PPS4 and advocates a 'town centres first' approach. It requires planning policies to positively promote competitive town centre environments and manage the growth of centres over the plan period.
- Town and village centres will continue to be the focus for new development. New development will be delivered in accordance with a clear spatial strategy, which provides the most sustainable way to accommodate growth supported by high quality infrastructure, whilst respecting the unique character of the Borough and the local distinctiveness of individual settlements. Main settlement areas including Walton-on-Thames and Weybridge have been identified as the most sustainable locations within Elmbridge.

## 3 STUDY AREA AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 In this section we set out a summary of current national trends in respect of the retail and commercial leisure sectors, which can have implications for future growth of centres and demand for new retail floorspace. As part of our assessment, we consider the potential implications of these trends on centres in Elmbridge.

### Economic Upswing

- 3.2 Analysis published by Experian (Retail Planner 2014) concluded that following several years of subdued performance, including a period of recession; a 'strong economic upswing' took place in early 2013, driven by increases in consumer spending and business investment. Experian note that whilst there remain drags on growth in terms of fiscal constraint and a weak export market, 'low inflation, strong employment growth and high levels of consumer and business confidence point to sustained expansion, albeit at a more modest pace'. Consumer and investor confidence is tentatively returning, and centres in Elmbridge can therefore be expected to benefit directly from the upturn in the wider national economy as footfall and expenditure in town centres begins to increase again.

### Changing Retailer Space Requirements

- 3.3 During the recession retailers' margins were squeezed, whilst other costs have continued to rise and a raft of multiple and independent retailers have either collapsed or significantly shrunk their store portfolios. The growth of the internet means that retailers no longer need stores in every town to achieve national coverage, and many are therefore focusing their development programmes on the provision of large flagship stores in strategic locations, supported by smaller satellite stores and transactional websites.
- 3.4 The larger flagships accommodate full product ranges whilst smaller stores offer more select ranges, supplemented by internet kiosks allowing access to the full range. This offers many advantages to retailers including lower property costs, more efficient logistics and being able to open stores where there is a high level of demand despite there being space restrictions. This 'polarisation' of retailing is enabling larger dominant centres to continue to attract key flagship formats. This can pose a particular challenge to smaller and medium-sized centres, where there are higher order centres in close proximity. Previous retail capacity studies for Elmbridge Borough have identified that Kingston (a UK top 20 shopping destination) and Guildford (a UK top 40 shopping destination) both draw significant amounts of comparison goods spend from the Borough, and thus acts as 'pulls' on comparison goods spending. As we discuss in Section 4, both Kingston and Guildford have aspirations to further enhance their retail offer over the course of the Plan period. Smaller centres therefore need to work harder to attract retailers, and indeed the opening of The Heart development in Walton-on-

Thames Town Centre is an important development for the Borough in helping to temper further potential expenditure leakage to surrounding centres (we return to discuss this further in Section 5).

- 3.5 An often inevitable consequence is that smaller and medium-sized centres become home to more value-orientated retailers – Poundland, Wilko, Primark and so on – who are more reluctant to pay the rental costs associated with higher-order centres, and, much in the same way that Woolworths previously did, are developing a comprehensive network of coverage in smaller towns, often by being able to acquire prime retail sites at relatively competitive rates. Whilst there is some representation from these types of retailers in Elmbridge's centres (for example, Wilko and Poundland in Walton-on-Thames), our health check assessments (see section 5) have shown that Elmbridge's centres have remained largely immune from this trend. This is largely because they have an existing upmarket / specialist retail offer which was less affected by the economic downturn, and therefore fewer opportunities for value retailers to take space have materialised.

### Internet Growth & Multichannel Retailing

- 3.6 The online shopping population is reaching saturation, and any future growth in the market is likely to come from increased spend driven by new technology, a better 'browsing' experience and improved delivery options. The growth in online sales has previously raised concerns about the continued need for bricks and mortar stores; however trends indicate that online and in-store shopping channels are becoming increasingly blurred.
- 3.7 The 'Click and Collect' market is the largest on-line growth sector in the UK at the current time. It is forecast to be one of the most significant drivers of growth, with expenditure set to grow by 82% between 2014 and 2019 to £6.5bn (Verdict 2014). Verdict comment that 'the importance of click & collect should not be underestimated. Maintaining a store network that can offer locality, whilst also having highly informative websites to drive growth, is now a fundamental requirement'. It can be used as an important tool in helping town centres to continue to have an important role and function, by being a footfall generator in its own right. Many national retailers who are trading in Elmbridge now operate 'Click & Collect' facilities, a notable example being Waitrose, whose stores act as 'click & collect' hubs for John Lewis website orders. Other retailers who offer this service include Sainsbury's, Boots and Next.
- 3.8 It is apparent that, despite being a relatively new concept for the retail sector to embrace, click & collect is affirming that physical stores will continue to have a role in the multichannel shopping environment. The advantages of physical stores, in terms of the shopping experience, service and immediacy of products in a showroom setting, will ensure that a network of key stores remains a fundamental component of retailer's strategies to provide an integrated multichannel retail proposition. Importantly for the network of centres in Elmbridge, the click and collect phenomenon can be expected to drive an occupier desire to maintain a representation of physical store units across town centres.



## The role of the town centre

- 3.9 The town centre has been the main shopping channel for centuries, but in the face of new forms of e-tailing (i.e. online shopping) and m-tailing (shopping through mobile phones, tablets and so on) competition many centres will need to continue to adapt in order to remain viable shopping destinations. Emerging trends suggest that many centres will be used increasingly for leisure and social activities as well as traditional retailing, with more bars, restaurants, food outlets and community spaces. Our assessments of the centres in the study area shows that this is a key area in which many of the centres in Elmbridge – particularly Walton-on-Thames and Esher – are currently performing particularly strongly in, to the extent that, in the case of Esher, the retail function of the centre is in fact somewhat limited. This trend therefore means that many of Elmbridge's centres are well placed to withstand the impacts of people's changing shopping habits, as they already act as broader 'destinations' in their own right. That is not to say these centres should be complacent, as the commercial leisure market is competitive and could, ultimately, reach a saturation point. Nevertheless, for centres where this role and function is less developed, this represents an important opportunity in future years. Centres which offer unique / specialist retail offer which cannot be matched online are likely to continue to perform strongly.
- 3.10 Enhancing the non-retail offer so towns function as more than just retail locations will help drive footfall and increase dwell time. Towns should promote unique attractions such as heritage assets, historic buildings and cultural features which can differentiate a centre and improve its attractiveness. To ensure that town centres have a viable function moving forwards they must provide an attractive shopping and leisure experience which the internet is unable to match. A wider strategy must deliver a mix of town centre uses to enhance the attraction of a centre, and increase frequency of visit and dwell time. A vital component of this will be making town centres as accessible as possible, with improved and affordable car parking, as well as investment in public realm and place marketing initiatives.

## Convenience Goods/Foodstores

- 3.11 The main foodstores (i.e. the 'big four' - Sainsbury's, Tesco, Asda, Morrisons) have reigned in substantial expansion and the roll-out of super-sized stores. Both Tesco and Morrisons announced a closure programme of underperforming stores in 2015, with the Morrisons 'M Local' store in Walton-on-Thames one of the casualties of this. The combined spread of convenience store openings, online grocery sales, and the expansion of 'deep discount' retailers such as Aldi and Lidl has fundamentally changed consumer shopping behaviour. These trends have encouraged repetitive top-up shopping that in turn diminishes main grocery sales and renders large-format stores less profitable.
- 3.12 The 'big four' have historically had a combined market share of over 75% of the convenience goods market, although in recent years their dominant market position is being increasingly challenged by discount retailers such as Lidl and Aldi. In addition, the continued growth in convenience retailers offering a more upscale product offer such as Waitrose is also challenging the dominance of the 'big four'. The value/discount retailers are, in particular, in the midst of a period of rapid expansion, having

gained considerable market share during the recession (it is noteworthy that these 'deep discount' retailers remain relatively under-represented in Elmbridge) although year-on-year levels of growth have begun to slow.

- 3.13 Supermarket operators are continuing to invest in new stores, although new store openings are becoming a less frequent occurrence. Construction was recently completed on a new Morrisons store in Weybridge, one of the last full-line supermarkets the company has constructed, having pulled out of a number of similar developments elsewhere in the country. We expect the 'big four' retailers to be significantly more selective in committing to new sites, and to instead focus on programmes of enhancements and upgrades to their existing store network where this is considered to be needed.

## Out-of-Centre Retailing

- 3.14 Retailers are opting to develop stores in the most strategic and cost effective locations, with a notable resurgence of out-of-centre destinations, which offer the benefits of lower rents, larger retail units and in most cases, free car parking. According to Verdict, out-of-town retailing is the only form of retailing which has seen store numbers increase consistently since 2000. The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) reports that the number of out-of-centre stores has increased by up to c.1,800 (25%) since 2000; whilst the number of town centre stores fell by almost 15,000 between 2000 and 2009, the majority of which are likely to have been in 'high street' locations.
- 3.15 The recovery of market confidence is benefitting out-of-town retailing. Vacancy rates have fallen, footfall has increased, and many retailers are seeking expansion in out-of-centre locations. A number of these are traditional town centre retailers which have developed out-of-town store formats, including John Lewis, which now operates a number of 'At Home' stores in out-of-centre locations, as well as other traditionally 'high street'-focussed retailers such as Debenhams, Next, Primark and H&M. The major concentration of out-of-centre floorspace in Elmbridge is at Brooklands, on the western edge of Weybridge. We return to discuss this further in Section 4.
- 3.16 Another trend is the evolution of traditional retail 'box' warehouse developments into retail parks, subdividing units, expanding the product offer, and developing beyond just retail to introduce food and beverage, encouraging longer dwell times. Retail park owners are also refurbishing their retail parks; i.e. public realm, walkways, car parks, signage, landscaping and seating to enhance the visitor experience.

## Commercial Leisure

- 3.17 As the nature of retail and high-street shopping continues to change over time, the commercial leisure sector is becoming an increasingly important contributor to the vitality and viability of town centres. Leisure time is a precious commodity to consumers and in order to maximise free time, research suggests that town centre visitors often combine leisure activities as part of an overall going out experience. Reflecting this trend, leisure is becoming an increasingly important component in

town centre regeneration schemes, particularly in secondary towns which, reflecting the wider trends in the retail sector previously identified, are in some cases becoming less attractive as retail destinations.

- 3.18 The recession brought mixed fortunes for the restaurant sector. The main casualties were from the more exclusive end of the market, as well as smaller companies with less established brands. Many companies owning multiple brands expanded throughout the economic downturn and continue to trade well, often by offering heavy promotions and discounts. As our assessment of the centres has identified, these 'casual / family dining' restaurants – examples being Pizza Express, Carluccios, Zizzi, Strada and so on – are well-represented in many of the Borough's District Centres. Increasingly, these restaurants are also anchoring leisure-focussed (often cinema-led redevelopment schemes), and also increasing representation in other strong trading destinations such as major retail parks.



Commercial leisure offer on New Zealand Avenue, Walton-on-Thames Town Centre (picture credit: Elmbridge Borough Council)

- 3.19 The coffee shop sector remains buoyant; there are now approximately 16,500 coffee shops across the country. Recent analysis shows that the UK's coffee shop sector remains one of the most successful in the nation's economy and will continue to expand. Operators such as Costa are now a High Street staple whilst the independent coffee shop sector is also growing store numbers.

- 3.20 The pub industry suffered during the recession with a record number of pub closures across the UK as a direct consequence of a decline in both drinks sales and rental revenues. This decline continues today, at a rate of approximately 30 pub closures per week across the country. Many pubs have in recent years been converted to small-format convenience stores. Additional factors such as competition from supermarkets, changes to licensing legislation and the smoking ban have further compounded the problems faced by many operators. Similar to the foodstores, however, value led brands such as JD Wetherspoon have achieved sales growth in recent years and continue to expand.

- 3.21 The Health and Fitness sector continues to perform strongly as the social trend involving the maintenance of personal health and fitness shows no sign of abating. The health and fitness market is currently being expanded through investment by value and budget operators such as Easy Gym, Gymbox and Pure Gym, although we understand that representation from these operators within Elmbridge remains relatively limited. This new breed of venues aims to appeal to a wider market with flexible, low cost monthly or 'pay as you go' subscriptions. These facilities are usually located in high-footfall, in or edge of centre locations, often as part of a wider leisure offer.

## Summary

- The 'traditional' high street continues to face a number of challenges stemming from the impacts of the recent economic downturn, the tightening of retail spending in recent years, and continued significant changes in consumer shopping behaviour. The growth in online shopping, including multi-channel retailing, acts as tough competition for the high street, but also presents an opportunity for the high street to capitalise, by maximising the opportunities arising from services like 'click & collect', and retailers moving towards a seamless transition between store-based and virtual shopping experiences.
- Out-of-centre retailing remains an ever-present source of competition, and market evidence suggests that many retail parks have performed well during the economic downturn, and are becoming increasingly attractive to 'high street' retailers. Portfolio aspiration is generally to increase footfall through a greater product offer and mix of uses to encourage footfall and longer dwell times.
- Town centre strategies which support the continued evolution of the high street are therefore considered ever more vital. This may involve providing a high quality shopping 'experience', maximising the benefits of tourist trade, and improving the mix of retail and non-retail outlets to increase length of stay and spend.
- It will be important, therefore, for town centres to be well positioned to be able to adapt to on-going changes in the retail and leisure sector over the development plan period and to reaffirm their unique selling points which differentiate their retail offer from other centres, allowing them to differentiate themselves from – rather than directly compete with – higher order centres. Heritage, tourism assets and other 'unique selling points' should be capitalised on, and robust place marketing strategies put in place.

## 4 THE SUB-REGIONAL CONTEXT

- 4.1 In this section, we set out the sub-regional context within which the Town and District Centres in Elmbridge operate in. This is an important consideration as patterns of retail and leisure visits are not 'closed' systems, and increasingly residents are willing to travel longer distances, particularly for comparison goods shopping and leisure. Therefore, it is natural to expect a degree of expenditure 'leakage', and this is particularly applicable in the case of Elmbridge given that (i) the centres in the Borough are in some cases relatively small and (ii) the Borough is surrounded by a number of 'heavyweight' retail destinations such as Kingston-upon-Thames and Guildford, which draw trade from wide catchment areas.
- 4.2 In order to establish where residents in the Borough are currently undertaking their shopping and leisure visits, a household telephone survey of shopping patterns was undertaken in support of this study. Further details of this, including the definition of the 'study area' which has formed the basis of our assessment, is provided in Section 6. To summarise, the household survey identified that the following destinations represent the key competitors for centres in Elmbridge, in respect of comparison goods spending:
- **Kingston-upon-Thames** (claims 27.0% of comparison goods spending available to study area)
  - **Woking** (claims 10.2% of comparison goods spending available to study area);
  - **Staines** (claims 8.4% of comparison goods spending available to study area);
  - **Guildford** (claims 5.7% of comparison goods spending available to study area);
  - **Addlestone** (claims 4.1% of comparison goods spending available to study area); and
  - **Central London** (claims 2.6% of comparison goods spending available to study area)
- 4.3 The majority of the remaining comparison goods expenditure is accounted for by centres in Elmbridge Borough. We present an overview of the performance of these in Section 5; however first we review the role and function of the key competing centres identified above, and set out the planned developments which may alter the 'market share' they draw from the study area over the course of our study period to 2035.

### KINGSTON-UPON-THAMES

#### Kingston Town Centre

- 4.4 Kingston town centre provides a mix of retail, leisure, civic, cultural and academic facilities, including Kingston University and Kingston College. Venuescore<sup>1</sup> ranks Kingston in 18th position in its 2014-15 Index, its position in the index strengthened by the range of national multiple retailers in the centre. Venuescore identify the 'market position' of Kingston as being 'Upper Middle' (see footnote<sup>1</sup>). The Experian Goad category report for Kingston (June 2015) identifies a total of 173,900 sq.m of ground floor floorspace for retail and service units, comprising 546 units. In 2012 there were over 23,000 students studying at the University; this can be expected to be an important influence on the type of retailer and leisure operators attracted to the centre. The PTAL<sup>2</sup> rating of Kingston town centre is 6a (excellent), making it highly accessible. The centre is served by national rail and bus services.
- 4.5 Representation of comparison goods retailers is above the national average, and representation of convenience and service units is below the national average, as would be expected in a Metropolitan centre (as defined in the London Plan). The convenience goods offer within Kingston town centre is predominantly comprised of three foodstores; Waitrose, Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury's. These stores are relatively small with a dated store format, particularly the Sainsbury's at Eden Walk.
- 4.6 The comparison goods retail provision is predominately located within The Bentall Centre, Eden Walk, Clarence Street and the 'Historic Core'. Approximately 70% of the comparison provision is made up of multiple retailers; London Road provides the main provision of independent 'boutique' retailers. Located on Clarence Street, The Bentall Centre is home to brands such as Apple, Waterstones, H&M, New Look, Zara, Hollister, Timberland, Superdry and Mothercare as well as Bentalls Department Store. Eden Walk Shopping Centre includes specialty stores such as Eden Jewellers as well as high street names such as Boots, Marks & Spencer, H&M, BHS, Jigsaw, and Heal's. Clarence Street is the pedestrianised heart of Kingston and is anchored by John Lewis as well as high street brands such as Top Shop, Monsoon, Next, Gap and River Island. There is therefore particularly strong representation in Kingston from national comparison goods retailers which serves to act as a major draw on the shopping patterns of residents in Elmbridge Borough.

<sup>1</sup> Venuescore is an annual survey compiled by Javelin Group, which ranks the UK's top 3,500+ retail venues (town centres, stand-alone malls, retail warehouse parks and factory outlet centres), based on a number of factors including scale of offer, presence of key attractors / 'anchor' stores and market positioning (a 'lower' market position indicates a value / discount-orientated retail offer whilst an 'upper' market positioning indicates an upmarket/quality/exclusive retail offer). In reality, most centres fall within the 'upper middle', 'middle' or 'lower middle' market positions, depending on how diverse the quality of their retail mix is.

<sup>2</sup> The PTAL (Public Transport Accessibility Level) is a method used in transport planning to assess the access levels of locations to public transport facilities. Locations are graded with a PTAL grade from 1 to 6 (including sub-divisions 1a, 1b, 6a and 6b); a PTAL of 1a indicates extremely poor access to the location by public transport, and a PTAL of 6b indicates an excellent level of access by public transport.

- 4.7 Kingstonfirst manage the Business Improvement District (BID) of Kingston Town Centre. Kingstonfirst was successfully created in 2004, and began operations on January 1st 2005. Over the lifetime of the BID, the BID have achieved an increase in footfall to Kingston Town Centre of more than 2.45 million additional customers a year, and have increased standards in cleansing and security, including a reduction in violent crime of over 38%

## Out of Centre Retail in Kingston-upon-Thames

- 4.8 The main out of centre retail provision in Kingston comprises an edge of centre Sainsbury's at Sury Basin, an out of centre Asda on London Road and retail warehouse units at Kingston Road.
- 4.9 In addition, there is a concentration of out of centre retail warehouse units to the east of New Malden, which are located out of centre and which fall within the London Borough of Merton:
- Kingston Road Retail Park is located approximately 2km south east of Kingston town centre and comprises 5,445 sq.m net retail floorspace. The current operators within the retail park are Homebase, Carpetright, Furniture Village, Dreams and Matalan.
  - Shannon Corner Retail Park is located on Burlington Road between Raynes Park and New Malden in the London Borough of Merton. The retail park comprises 2,247 sq.m net retail floorspace and the current operators are DFS, Carpetright and Harveys.
  - The adjacent Burlington Road Retail Park comprises c. 12,170 sq.m net floorspace. Current operators are B&Q, Corals, Furniture, Maplin and Currys/PC World.
  - Within close proximity to Burlington Road Retail Park, at Beverley Way, there are two standalone retail warehousing units. These units are currently occupied by Halfords (664 sq.m net) and Paul Simon (215 sq.m net).
- 4.10 The majority of retail units in this area are therefore 'bulky goods' in terms of the nature of goods sold, providing a largely contrasting retail offer to that of Kingston town centre. Bulky goods retailers have different trading characteristics to those of Town Centre retailers - they typically occupy larger-floorplate retail warehouses in locations where direct adjacent surface car parking can be provided.

## Planned Developments

- 4.11 In Kingston town centre, the Eden Quarter has been identified as a major opportunity area for future development in the town centre. The area, bounded by Clarence Street to the North, Wheatfield Way to the East, Union Street to the West and the Hogsmill River, is one of Kingston's most significant opportunities for growth and change. The Eden Quarter Development Brief (SPD) has been prepared to promote a coordinated approach to development and to secure the best long-term future for Kingston. The SPD was adopted on 27 March 2015 and is a material consideration for future planning applications. In respect of retail and leisure, the principle aim of development in the Eden Quarter is the expansion of Kingston's retail offer and the delivery of a mix of shop units, convenience retailing

and restaurant uses. The expectation is that the development will deliver up to 30,000 sq.m of retail floorspace.

- 4.12 LB Kingston's Core Strategy and K+20 Town Centre Area Action Plan both support the extension of the primary shopping area further into the Eden Quarter, and up to 50,000 sq.m (gross) additional retail floorspace is required in the town centre by 2016 (although the delivery of this will evidently not come forward by this point). While not all of the additional retail floorspace will need to come forward in the Eden Quarter, the documents identify this should be delivered through development at the following locations:

- The upgrade and redevelopment of the existing Eden Walk Shopping Centre;
- The provision of a new flagship department store on Eden Street;
- The enhancement of Eden Street as a primary retail street with shops, leisure and restaurant uses spanning the length of it; and
- Redevelopment of the Cattle Market site for larger-format convenience or comparison retailing.

## WOKING

### Woking Town Centre

- 4.13 Woking is the largest town and principal employment, retail and leisure centre within Woking Borough. Venuescore ranks Woking in 163rd position in its 2014-15 Index, and identify the 'market position' of Woking as being 'Middle'. Woking offers 397 units located across 110,000 sq.m of retail floorspace. Analysis of the mix of uses in the centre identifies that, like many larger centres, Woking has a more limited convenience provision when compared to the national average. A Waitrose and Tesco supermarket anchor the convenience goods offer.
- 4.14 Woking has a relatively strong representation of national retailers with a strong comparison offer. Major retail tenants include Debenhams, Pandora, Paperchase, Jones the Bootmaker, Primark, Top Shop, River Island, Next, H&M, Cargo, JD Sports and Boots. In addition, the centre includes a strong selection of cafés and restaurants, including Bill's, Café Rouge, Carluccio's, Las Iguanas, The Restaurant at Tante Marie and Pret a Manger, many of which are recent additions to the town centre, following a period of investment in enhancing the town centre. Leisure facilities include two theatres, and a cinema operated by Ambassadors Cinemas
- 4.15 Woking Shopping is the collective name for Wolsey Place and Peacocks shopping centres in Woking, managed by Woking Town Centre Management Limited; a joint venture partnership between Woking Borough Council and Moyallen, owners and operators of The Peacocks shopping centre. The joint venture was established to promote and develop the retail offer in Woking town centre.

## Out of Centre Retail in Woking

- 4.16 There is a significant amount of retail warehousing provision in Woking. Lion Retail Park (7,200 sq.m) is anchored by Curry's, Pets at Home, Harveys, Halfords and Carpetright. Horsell Moor (3,500 sq.m) is a DIY / furniture shopping destination, anchored by Jewson and a health and fitness centre. Wey Retail Park (in Byfleet) comprises some 3,300 sq.m of floorspace and is anchored by Home Bargains, Pets at Home and Halfords.

## Planned Development

- 4.17 In Woking, Bandstand Square Developments has secured planning consent from Woking Borough Council for Victoria Square, a mixed-use retail-led development. Victoria Square comprises the former Woking Market (which is being relocated), the site of the former post office, Woking fire station and a number of existing retail units. It will be redeveloped to create approximately 11,600 sq.m of new retail floorspace anchored by Marks & Spencer; a 190-bed four-star hotel with conference facilities, spa and gym in a 21-storey tower; 392 residential apartments in two towers of 28 and 34 storeys; space for a medical centre; 380 additional car parking spaces and two new public plazas.

## STAINES

### Staines Town Centre

- 4.18 Staines is the largest town in the Borough of Spelthorne and performs an important retail and employment role in the sub-region. Venuescore ranks Staines in 127th position in its 2014-15 Index, and identifies the 'market position' of Staines as being 'Middle'. The main shopping area is relatively compact and a significant portion is pedestrianised. The indoor Elmsleigh Shopping Centre is located to the south of the High Street. Major retail anchors include Marks & Spencer, BHS and H&M. Two Rivers retail centre is an open-air development of large retail units situated to the north of the High Street.
- 4.19 The main, large format foodstore in Staines is the Waitrose at Two Rivers. There are a number of smaller convenience stores dispersed throughout the Town Centre which help to contribute to its vitality, and form an important role in supporting convenience provision within Staines. The High Street is the central point of retailing activity in the town centre, being located between Two Rivers and Elmsleigh. Key comparison retailers on the High Street include BHS, H&M, Debenhams, Marks & Spencer, Next, WHSmith, Waterstones, Gap, Superdrug, and Boots.

## Out of Centre Retail in Staines

- 4.20 There are several out-of-centre retail destinations in or around Staines. In terms of non-food, these include retail warehouses currently occupied by Halfords and Homebase on The Causeway, to the

west of the town centre (this development falls within Runnymede authority area). There are also two large out of centre foodstores.

## GUILDFORD

### Guildford Town Centre

- 4.21 The Experian Goad category report for Guildford (April 2015) identifies a total of 125,000 sq.m of ground floor floorspace for retail and service units, comprising 588 units. Venuescore ranks Guildford in 32nd position in its 2014-15 Index, its position in the index, in common with Kingston, is strengthened by a particularly wide range of national multiple retailers in the centre. Venuescore identify the 'market position' of Guildford as being 'Upper Middle', suggesting that it has an upscale-oriented retail offer. Guildford town centre benefits from high levels of accessibility by rail and by road. The centre is served by two rail stations, Guildford and London Road, both of which are within approximately ten minutes walking distance from the main shopping area.
- 4.22 In addition to shopping provision along the High Street, the centre has three covered shopping centres; The Friary Centre, White Lion Walk and Tunsgate Square. A traditional street market is held Friday to Saturday on North Street, and a Farmer's Market takes place on the first Tuesday of every month. Key retail areas include the High Street, where the highest proportion of national retailers are present; North Street, where the Friary Shopping Centre is located; and Chapel Street, which is characterised by medieval streets and upmarket boutiques and specialist shops.
- 4.23 The comparison offer (as a proportion of total floorspace in the centre) is significantly above that of the national average, with a high representation of both independent stores and national retailers, particularly along the High Street and North Street. The centre offers a selection of designer stores, including Jo Malone, LK Bennett and Jaeger; department stores include Debenhams and House of Fraser, as well as a number of high street shops such as Monsoon, Marks and Spencer and Gap. Emerging proposals for a new anchor department store to improve the anchor mix and other retail floorspace as part of a future scheme for the North Street site will further strengthen Guildford's profile as a shopping destination.
- 4.24 Comparatively, the convenience offer is relatively limited. The current offer is anchored by a Sainsbury's supermarket and Tesco; it is expected that this will improve however with the opening of the new Waitrose store in the town centre (which we discuss further below).
- 4.25 The shopping area around the High Street is well maintained and has a number of historic buildings that provide a high quality urban environment. The Friary Centre also offers a pleasant shopping environment at the western end of North Street where there is significant leisure provision. The urban environment to the north of the centre around the North Street redevelopment site however, is relatively poor. The rear of the Friary Centre is occupied by a large bus station and dilapidated buildings. The redevelopment of this area in line with current proposals for the North Street



development (discussed below) should significantly improve the quality of the environment in this section of the town centre.

## Out of Centre Retail in Guildford

- 4.26 There are two main retail parks in Guildford, Ladymead and Woodbridge Road, which are located adjacent to one another off the A25 to north of the town centre, and close to the A3 corridor to London. Ladymead is the larger of the two and contains ten units occupied by a mix of bulky goods retailers, some general comparison retail and a fast food restaurant. The retail park is occupied by Argos, Carpetright, Furniture Village, Halfords, Homebase, Next, Oak Furnitureland and Sports Direct. Woodbridge Road is smaller, containing four units, including two car showrooms, a kitchen store and a Currys / PC World. There is also a Tesco Superstore (6,056 sq. m sales area) at Ashenden Road which is located on the western periphery of Guildford town centre, as well as a Sainsbury's (7,381 sq.m) at Burpham. The out-of-centre retail floorspace in Guildford is a mixture of 'high street' retail (Next, Sports Direct) and 'bulky goods' retail (Homebase, Carpetright etc).

## Planned Developments

- 4.27 The redevelopment of the North Street site in Guildford town centre will provide a 37,000 sq.m retail-led redevelopment of a prominent 2.5 hectare site. The North Street development site represents the most significant development opportunity in Guildford, which currently acts as a back-land immediately adjacent to Guildford's prime town centre retail area. The site, as noted above, is the only land within the retail core area capable of accommodating the required amount of retail floorspace for which demand has been identified in the Council's retail evidence base. It is envisioned that the North Street development will be treated as an extension to the existing town centre; Guildford Borough Council has signed a development agreement with Land Securities, the preferred development partner for the comprehensive redevelopment of the North Street site, and we would therefore expect this scheme to progress during the early years of the study period.
- 4.28 Separately, Solum Regeneration, a partnership between Network Rail and Kier Property, has submitted a planning application (November 2014) to redevelop the east side of Guildford station, following three years of discussions and consultation with the local authority and community. The £150m scheme to redevelop Guildford railway station and adjacent land will deliver a new station, and an enhanced environment with a new square offering high quality public space, a new multi-storey car park providing secure covered parking and a new quarter with shops and restaurants. The station improvements are to be funded through the development of a new residential quarter of 445 apartments and commercial office space. The application remains underdetermined at the time of preparation of this study.
- 4.29 Planning permission was granted in February 2014 for the development of a 3,400 sq.m Waitrose foodstore and 48 residential units on the old Bellerby Theatre development site. The Waitrose store commenced trading in late 2015.

## ADDLESTONE

- 4.30 A major town centre redevelopment scheme is currently under preparation in Addlestone, to the west of Weybridge in Runnymede Borough. Whilst the household survey has identified little in the way of competition for expenditure with centres in Elmbridge (see Section 7), a strengthened retail offer could potentially influence future shopping patterns. Bouygues Development was appointed as the Runnymede Council's preferred development partner; the development will introduce new shops, leisure facilities, homes and public spaces, with a view to boosting the day time and evening economy for the town. Key features of the development include:
- 101 bedroom hotel operated by Premier Inn;
  - 213 new homes;
  - a mix of quality retail units including a Waitrose supermarket;
  - a range of high quality restaurants;
  - a six screen cinema;
  - a new gym;
  - 445 car parking spaces; and
  - public landscaped spaces
- 4.31 Phase 1 of the development commenced in March 2015. The £90 million development is due to be completed in October 2017.

## LEATHERHEAD

- 4.32 Mole Valley District Council is working with Nexus Planning and Broadway Malyan to prepare a long term masterplan for Leatherhead town centre. The work will concentrate on how economic, environmental, social and cultural aspects of the town centre can be improved. A key element of this will be to agree a vision for Leatherhead town centre with residents and businesses, from which short, medium and long term actions can be agreed. The document is at the third and final consultation stage at the time of preparation of this study and identifies a number of priorities for expansion of the retail offer in Leatherhead town centre.

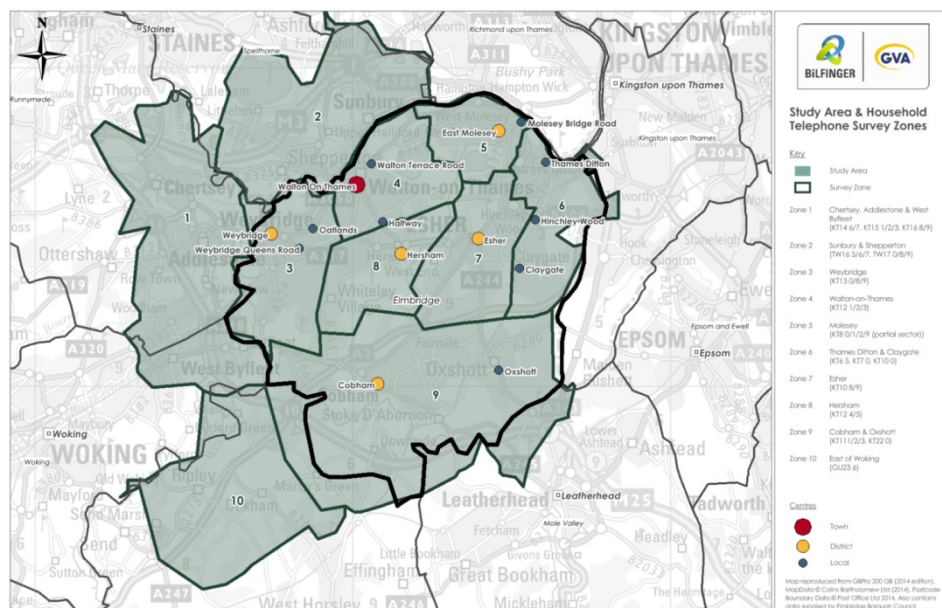
## Summary

- In this section we have established the key centres which compete for comparison goods expenditure with locations in Elmbridge. This has been confirmed through a household telephone survey of shopping patterns which has been undertaken in support of this study.
- Kingston-upon-Thames accounts for 27.0% of all comparison goods spending available to the 'study area' which we have defined for the purposes of this study. The centre is currently ranked 18th in the Venuescore UK Retail Rankings, and has a particularly strong comparison goods offer, including retailers such as Apple and John Lewis who would not be expected to locate in the smaller centres which make up Elmbridge Borough. The centre has plans for further enhancement of its comparison goods offer in the short to medium term through the Eden Walk development and we therefore expect it to remain a significant influence over shopping patterns over the Council's Plan period.
- Woking accounts for 10.2% of comparison goods spend from the study area, and whilst its comparison goods offer is more mainstream than that of Kingston, the Victoria Square redevelopment will introduce a substantial new quantum of retail floorspace into the centre, including a large Marks & Spencer store, and there may be scope for the town to increase its market share from the Elmbridge study area.
- Staines' retail offer is similarly more pitched towards the mainstream; the centre attracts 8.4% of market share from the study area (although its influence over those parts of the study area which fall within Elmbridge Borough is more limited).
- Guildford's influence over the study area is more limited than that of Kingston-upon-Thames, despite their being similarities in the retail offer of the two centres. Again, however, there is a major comparison goods-led development coming forward in the near future (North Street, which will add a further 37,000 sq.m of retail floorspace to the town centre) which may influence shopping patterns over the course of the Local Plan period, particularly towards the south of the Elmbridge study area.
- Regeneration works are currently underway in Addlestone town centre, which will introduce a new supermarket, hotel, restaurants and cinema into the town centre, which could potentially influence shopping patterns over the west of the study area. For the most part, the development in Addlestone will replicate what is offered by many of Elmbridge's centres (including nearby Weybridge); the development of a cinema may be an attractor for residents in the Weybridge area however, as there are currently no facilities of this nature in Weybridge.
- The key message to take from this section is that whilst it is not surprising that many residents in Elmbridge undertake their spending at larger / higher-order centres surrounding the Borough, many of these competing centres are advancing plans to further develop and enhance their retail offer in the short to medium term. These proposals are likely to further influence the shopping patterns of residents in the Borough and give added impetus to the need for the Borough's own Town and District centres – which we review in the following section – to remain diverse, vital and viable.

## 5 ASSESSMENT OF CENTRES IN ELMBRIDGE BOROUGH

- 5.1 In this section we define the role and function of current shopping provision in the Town and District Centres in Elmburgh. Our assessment focuses on the **Town Centre of Walton-on-Thames**, and the five **District Centres of Weybridge, Cobham, Esher, East Molesey and Hersham** (as defined by the 2011 Core Strategy). We also review the out-of-centre retail provision in the Borough, including key competing facilities such as Brooklands. Finally, we undertake separate analysis of provision of the network of Local Centres across Elmburgh, to establish the extent to which they are currently meeting the day-to-day shopping needs of their local communities. A plan showing the location of the Town, District and Local centres in Elmburgh, is shown at **Figure 5.1** (a larger version is reproduced in Volume 2).

**Figure 5.1: Town, District and Local centres in Elmburgh**



- 5.2 Firstly, we set out summaries of the performance of the Town and District Centres in the Borough against the 'health check' indicators which National Planning Practice Guidance states should be used to assess the vitality and viability of town centres. Table 5.1 provides an overview the higher-order centres in Elmburgh, in terms of retail floorspace, the total number of shop units, and positioning in the Venuescore national retail rankings<sup>3</sup>. In order to provide context, we also provide this information for the higher-order centres surrounding the Borough as identified in the previous section – principally Kingston-upon-Thames, Woking and Guildford.

- 5.3 Following Table 5.1 we undertake 'health check' assessments of Walton-on-Thames Town Centre and the five District Centres using the NPPG criteria; for each indicator we assign a 'traffic light' score to provide an overall conclusion of the performance of the centre in respect of the centre against that indicator. A red score indicates that we have concerns about the performance of a particular Town / District Centre against the relevant NPPG indicator; an amber score indicates the centre is performing satisfactorily but with scope for improvement, and a green score indicates that the centre is generally performing well against the indicator in question, with no major areas of concern.

**Table 5.1: Profile of centres in Elmburgh and competing centres**

Centre	Position in Elmburgh retail hierarchy	Total number of units <sup>(1)</sup>	Total floorspace (sq.m net, estimated) <sup>(1)</sup>	Venuescore Retail Ranking 2014-15 <sup>2)</sup>	Venuescore Market Position 2014-15 <sup>2)</sup>
<b>Centres in Elmburgh<sup>(3)</sup></b>					
Walton-on-Thames	Town	200	51,760	242	Middle
Weybridge	District	166	29,590	727	Upper Middle
Cobham	District	121	17,730	858	Upscale
Esher	District	108	16,190	1,257	Upper Middle
East Molesey	District	106	C.16,500	2,557	Middle
Hersham <sup>(4)</sup>	District	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Competing centres</b>					
Kingston	-	547	174,140	18	Upper Middle
Guildford	-	588	124,500	32	Upper Middle
Woking	-	397	109,600	137	Middle

<sup>(1)</sup> Based on Experian Goad centre boundaries, which may differ from Council policy boundaries.

<sup>3</sup> An explanation of the Venuescore Index is provided in Section 4 (see footnote 1)

<sup>(2)</sup> Source: Venuescore Index, 2014-15. The 'market position' is an indication of the quality of the retail offer in the centre, ranging from 'lower' to 'upper', based on tenant mix at the time of preparation of the Venuescore Index

<sup>(3)</sup> Excludes Local Centres

<sup>(4)</sup> No Venuescore / Experian Goad data is available for Hersham

## WALTON-ON-THAMES TOWN CENTRE







High Street, Walton-on-Thames (picture credit: Elmbridge Borough Council)

- 5.4 Walton-on-Thames is the largest of the centres in Elmbridge and is defined as a Town Centre in the Elmbridge Core Strategy (2011). Since the previous study, the centre has undergone significant change, most notably with 'The Heart' development opening in 2006. Situated to the west of the High Street and anchored by the large Sainsbury's superstore, The Heart is occupied by a range of middle and upmarket comparison stores including Next, Waterstones, Jigsaw, Crew, Rituals and L'Occitane en Provence. The Heart scheme also features a substantial restaurant and café quarter fronting New Zealand Avenue comprising Starbucks, Costa, Carluccio's, Giraffe, GBK, Nando's, Pizza Express and Wagamama.

- 5.5 Elsewhere in the Town Centre other key retailers include Aldi, Wilko, and, unusually, a Homebase DIY store. The centre also features an Everyman Cinema located at the southern end of the High Street (on Hersham Road) which can be considered an important contribution to the centre's wider commercial leisure offer.

Key indicator / observations	Score
Diversity of uses and retailer representation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Experian Goad category report for Walton-on-Thames (October 2014) identifies a total of 51,756 sq.m of ground floor floorspace for retail trade and service units (retail, leisure, and financial and business services combined), comprising 200 units.</li> <li>The centre is well served by foodstores, anchored by the large Sainsbury's superstore within The Heart development, and supported by a small Aldi store on Church Street. A Little Waitrose store on Hepworth Way has recently ceased trading, we understand due to poor trading performance. Since the date of the Experian survey, the Morrisons Local convenience store located on New Zealand Avenue has also become vacant (although we understand this store will shortly reopen as a 'My Local' convenience store following Morrisons' sale of its M Local stores in September 2015). Notwithstanding these recent closures, the current provision of foodstores can be considered sufficiently above the national average. Other convenience store types, such as butchers, grocers and bakeries are not as well represented within the centre, however, with their provision falling below the national average in many of these sub-categories.</li> <li>Walton-on-Thames has a strong offer of comparison goods units, and partly due to The Heart development, has a particularly high representation of multiple outlets (national chain stores) for comparison goods. The comparison goods offer of the centre has evidently strengthened as a consequence of the opening of The Heart; it has delivered dual benefits of broadening the comparison goods offer of the centre, and also taken the overall offer of the centre more upmarket. Walton-on-Thames is now able to provide a good mix of mainline fashion multiple retailers (H&amp;M, Next, New Look, Monsoon etc, other specialist multiple retailers such as The Body Shop and Paperchase, and a small number of higher-end retailers such as Jigsaw, Hobbs and LK Bennett.</li> <li>The comparison mix along Walton-on-Thames High Street is more mainstream, containing a mixture of typical day-to-day national operators such as Boots, WH Smith, McDonalds and a number of banks / building societies. The quality of the retail offer diminishes towards the southern end of the High Street, where representation from charity shops becomes noticeably more apparent. Independent comparison goods operators are located throughout the centre (with the exception of within The Heart) but are particularly concentrated towards the northern end of the centre, on Bridge Street.</li> <li>Despite the centre benefitting from an Everyman Cinema and a good range of restaurants, particularly due to the provision of popular restaurant chains within The Heart development, the centre's overall leisure offer still falls slightly below the national average. The Experian Goad data indicates that leisure services which are under-represented</li> </ul>	

Key indicator / observations	Score
<p>include cafés, bars and pubs as well as fast food takeaways, although we consider this current under provision of takeaway units is to be viewed positively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitatively, however, we consider that the centre generally has a good commercial leisure offer, and the introduction of a number of new operators to the centre as a consequence of The Heart (including Giraffe, GBK and Nando's) has certainly improved the overall offer of the centre. Unusually, the cinema is slightly detached from the rest of the leisure offer, with adjacent uses including banks, estate agents and offices.</li> <li>Financial and business services, and retail services are both above the national average in terms of their overall provision, with a particularly strong representation of employment and careers services, and opticians.</li> </ul>	
Vacancy rates	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The vacancy rate (6.5%) is well below the national average (11.4%) and not a cause for concern. However, following GVA's site visit in September 2015, a fairly significant cluster of three vacant units was recorded around the New Zealand Avenue, High Street and Ashley Road crossroads.</li> </ul>	
Pedestrian flows	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As is to be expected, the highest pedestrian flows were observed within The Heart shopping centre and around the entrances to it.</li> <li>Reasonably low pedestrian flows were witnessed to the south of the High Street around Ashley Road, and to the north around Bridge Street. However, not only are these peripheral areas, but they also feature a number of restaurants and the cinema which, as the on-site survey was carried out in the morning, would be unlikely to be busy at this time. We would therefore expect these parts of the centre to be busier outside retail trading hours – although as stated above, the separation between the cinema and the restaurant offer limits the potential for an 'evening quarter'.</li> <li>The centre is considered to be easily navigable as a pedestrian, with wide pavements, ample road crossings and a functional, permeable design to the shopping centre.</li> </ul>	
Accessibility	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walton-on-Thames benefits from being well connected to the local bus network, and the level of car parking (mostly provided for within the multi-storey above Sainsbury's, which has approximately 800 spaces) appears to be sufficient. Although little in the way of traffic congestion was observed at the time of the site visit, we appreciate this is time dependent and we understand the centre does suffer from congestion at peak times.</li> <li>Key bus services which serve the centre are the 400, which runs between Walton-on-Thames and Staines (approximately every 45 minutes), the 548, which runs between Staines and Kingston via Esher and Hersham (approximately every 30 minutes), and the 461 provides services between Staines and Kingston via Weybridge (approximately every</li> </ul>	

Key indicator / observations	Score
<p>hour). The 555 runs between Hersham Green and Heathrow Central Bus Station (approximately every 30 minutes) and the 564 provides services to and from Whiteley Village via Hersham (hourly). Bus services appear to be generally sufficient although we note that connectivity between Walton-on-Thames and Weybridge is somewhat limited.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whilst Walton-on-Thames as an area benefits from having a train station, the station is a considerable distance from the Town Centre, located nearly 2km to the south. Services from the station provide connections to Guildford, Basingstoke, Woking, Clapham Junction and London Waterloo. Whilst the good train services assist in the overall accessibility of Walton-on-Thames, they also mean that competing centres are within easy reach – the fastest trains to Woking take ten minutes, and to Waterloo 25 minutes</li> </ul>	
State of town centre environmental quality	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The centre's overall environmental quality is good. There has clearly been significant investment into the public realm within and around The Heart shopping centre, and the High Street benefits from wide, well maintained pavements - all contributing towards a pleasant shopping environment.</li> <li>Shop facades in general appear well maintained, although the large Carpetright store located on the central junction between Hepworth Way, Church Street and Bridge Street is a poor quality building for such a prominent location in the Town Centre, and presents a possible redevelopment opportunity. There is also scope for improvement in the appearance of the southern end of the High Street, particularly in respect of public realm and the appearance of some of the shop fronts.</li> </ul>	



## WEYBRIDGE DISTRICT CENTRE

- 5.6 Weybridge has the second highest population and is the second largest centre in the Borough. The District Centre is centred on the junction of High Street / Baker Street and Church Street, and contains a mixture of day-to-day and more upmarket shopping facilities, with a number of higher-end retailers such as Jaeger, Space:NK and Phase Eight all present in the centre. At the eastern end of the High Street, a Waitrose supermarket anchors the convenience goods offer. This offer is complemented by a large new Morrisons on Monument Hill, also on the eastern side of the District Centre, which replaces a former DIY store. There are also a number of restaurants present in the centre, including representation from national operators such as Prezzo and Pizza Express.



Church Street, Weybridge (picture credit: Elmbridge Borough Council)

Key indicator / observations	Score
Diversity of uses and retailer representation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Experian Goad category report for Weybridge (March 2013) identifies a total of 25,589 sq.m of ground floor floorspace for retail trade and service units (retail, leisure, and financial and business services combined), comprising 166 units.</li> <li>At the eastern end of the High Street, a Waitrose supermarket anchors the convenience goods offer. This offer is complemented by a large new Morrisons on Monument Hill, also on the eastern side of the District Centre, which replaces a former DIY store. This convenience offer is supplemented by bakers, two grocers, a health foods store and an off-licence. Although convenience goods provision is below the national average</li> </ul>	

Key indicator / observations	Score
<p>(variance of -4.6%), relative to its size and role as District Centre, we consider the convenience goods offer to be sufficient.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The comparison goods retail offer of the centre is a more evenly split between independent and multiple retailers when compared to Walton-on-Thames. There are small number of 'typical' high street retailers such as Boots and WH Smith; more upmarket, fashion-orientated multiple retailers such as Jaeger, White Stuff and Fat Face; and a substantial number of independent operators, particularly along Church Street and Baker Street. The majority of independent retailers are of a fairly high-quality with many selling ladies wear and accessories. The average comparison goods provision is higher than the national average (variance of +5.0%), confirming the comparison goods function of the centre is strong.</li> <li>The total proportion of service units in Weybridge is broadly in line with the national average. Of particular note is the high proportion of cafés, pubs and restaurants, indicating that the centre has an important role and function as an evening destination. The High Street also has a noticeably high number of service operators, in particular banks, building societies, hairdressers and estate agents.</li> </ul>	
Vacancy rates	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Experian Goad category report for Weybridge (February 2015) identifies a total of 10 vacant units, equating to a vacancy rate of 6.0%. This is well below the current national average of 11.4%. The 2014 Experian Goad category report shows that 10.2% of floorspace in Weybridge is vacant compared to a national average of 9.2%. The majority of vacant units were located along Baker Street and Church Street, at the edge of the District Centre boundary.</li> <li>GVA undertook a site survey in September 2015 which enabled the Experian Goad data to be updated. The survey highlighted that of the identified vacancies, three had since been reoccupied, and an additional eight units were identified as being vacant. Therefore the number of vacant units had increased by five from 10 to 15. The number of vacant units in the centre has therefore increased, although remains below the national average levels.</li> </ul>	
Pedestrian flows	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our observations indicated higher pedestrian activity along the High Street between Ship Yard and Baker Street. The lowest pedestrian flows were observed along Heath Road and to the southern end of Church Street. This area largely comprises secondary shopping frontage and is near the periphery of the District Centre boundary. This area mostly comprises financial and professional businesses, in addition to office spaces, which understandably do not generate significant pedestrian flows. Overall, the western end of the centre is noticeably quieter than the east, owing to the presence of fewer 'anchor' stores / facilities in this part of the centre. Pedestrian crossings are, however, provided throughout the centre, making it easily navigable as a pedestrian.</li> </ul>	

Key indicator / observations	Score
Accessibility	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weybridge is reasonably well served by buses, however, the railway station is poorly related to the District Centre as it is approximately a mile away from its boundaries.</li> <li>In terms of buses, route 461 provides services between Staines and Kingston, via Walton-on-Thames, West Molesey and Hampton Court (approximately every hour); route 514 (also hourly) provides a further link with Walton-on-Thames via Hersham, and runs westwards to connect the town with the Brooklands development. The C1 Chatterbus provides services between Weybridge and Fetcham. Given their close proximity, services between Weybridge and Walton-on-Thames are considered to be relatively low frequency.</li> <li>Weybridge is accessible by private transport, however the centre is noticeably quite congested by vehicle traffic. Off-street parking facilities are well provided along the High Street. Waitrose has its own multi-storey car park to the rear of the store (approximately 120 spaces). Public car parks to serve the District Centre are also located off Churchfield Road (approximately 223 spaces), off of Minorca Road (approximately 150 spaces) and off of Monument Hill (approximately 70 spaces).</li> </ul>	
State of town centre environmental quality	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weybridge benefits from a strong environmental quality. Trees and hanging flower baskets contribute to the overall aesthetic of the centre. Shopfronts are attractive and well maintained. It is important to note that there are two Conservation Areas covering parts of the centre. These include the Weybridge Conservation Area at the south western end and Weybridge (Monument Green) Conservation Area to the north east, which frame the overall attractiveness of the centre.</li> </ul>	

## COBHAM DISTRICT CENTRE

- 5.7 Elbridge's Core Strategy defines Cobham as a 'District Centre' within its hierarchy of centres. The centre, as currently defined in the Local Plan, comprises the High Street and the southern sections of both Between Streets and Anyards Road. Cobham is located towards the south-west of the Borough and has a traditional High Street which, in common with the other principal centres in the Borough, is a mixture of day-to-day shopping facilities alongside a Waitrose supermarket and a number of family dining restaurants / coffee shops including Carluccios, Pizza Express and Starbucks.



High Street, Cobham (picture credit: Elbridge Borough Council)

Key indicator / observations	Score
Diversity of uses and retailer representation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Experian Goad category report for Cobham (April 2014) identifies a total of 17,725 sq.m of ground floor floorspace for retail trade and service units (retail, leisure, and financial and business services combined), comprising 121 units.</li> <li>The convenience goods offer in Cobham is anchored by a Waitrose and Sainsbury's Local. The Waitrose, located off of Between Streets, offers a good range of convenience</li> </ul>	

Key indicator / observations	Score
<p>goods items as well as a small range of non-food goods. A Sainsbury's Local is located at the southern end of the High Street, and can largely be expected to cater for top-up shopping. This main convenience goods offer is supplemented by a range of other retailers including a bakers, health food store, and a delicatessen. This amounts to a slightly below national level of provision for convenience goods, however these 'anchor' stores contribute to the wider vitality and viability of the centre, and in qualitative terms we consider the mix of convenience goods uses in the centre to be strong</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cobham's proportion of comparison goods units sits above the national average and provides a relatively broad offer. The centre contains relatively few national comparison goods retail operators, but includes representation from national retailers including Boots, Robert Dyas and Majestic Wine Warehouse. These national retailers are supported by what can be considered to be a strong independent retail sector, including an independent book shop, a number of ladies clothing boutiques, two jewellers and several gift shops. Anyards Road contains a small concentration of more upmarket fashion / cosmetics retailers including Space NK, Jojo Maman Bebe and Sweaty Betty, which contribute to the 'upscale' market score assigned to Cobham by Venuescore.</li> <li>Cobham therefore strikes a good balance of being able to meet a mixture of day-to-day shopping needs and more specialist comparison goods shopping needs. We understand that a bus service has been introduced between the District Centre and the Tesco Extra store at Brooklands, suggesting there is demand for residents for a broader range of convenience goods facilities than is offered by the in-centre Waitrose store (although we would have expected the large Sainsbury's store on the outskirts of Cobham to largely satisfy this need).</li> <li>The centre contains a considerable number of cafés, restaurants and service provision sites, and whilst in percentage terms representation sits slightly below the national average, we consider the offer of the centre to be strong. There are a number of established national operators represented in the centre, including Starbucks, Carluccios, Pizza Express, Strada and so on. A number of independent restaurants occupy premises in peripheral parts of the centre. The centre also contains representation from a number of banks, hair and beauty salons, and other retail services. There are no obvious shortfalls in the offer of the centre in this respect.</li> </ul>	
Vacancy rates	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Experian Goad category report for Cobham (April 2014) identifies a total of three vacant units, equating to a vacancy rate of 2.5%. This is well below the national average of 11.4%. The 2014 Experian Goad category report shows that 1.1% of floorspace in Cobham is vacant, compared to a national average of 9.2%.</li> <li>GVA undertook a site survey in September 2015 which enabled the Experian Goad data to be updated. The survey highlighted that the number of vacant retail units has increased by one from three to four. Vacancy rates therefore remains very low, which can be considered a positive reflection on the wider vitality and viability of the centre.</li> </ul>	

Key indicator / observations	Score
Pedestrian flows	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our observations indicate that pedestrian flows are quite consistent throughout, with the highest flows at Holly Hedge Road. Strong levels of footfall were also observed around the Waitrose store. The pavements in Cobham are relatively wide, however, there is a noticeable lack of pedestrian crossings in the centre.</li> </ul>	
Accessibility	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three principal bus routes serve Cobham: the 513 runs between Cobham Kingston Bus Station via Esher (approximately every hour); the 515 runs between Guildford Friary Bus Station and Kingston via Esher and Thames Ditton (approximately every hour), and the C1/C2 Chatterbus provides services between Weybridge and Fetcham.</li> <li>As with the other centres in the Borough the railway station is located over a mile from the centre and it is therefore unlikely that a significant number of visitors would use rail to visit the centre. Cobham is reasonably accessible by private transport. The A245 passes through Cobham, which leads directly to the A3. Our observations indicated that there is a good supply of both on-street and off-street car parking spaces. The centre's main public car park at Holly Hedge Road provides approximately 150 spaces, and the car park to the rear of Waitrose has approximately 200 spaces. On-street parking spaces are located outside the shops on parts of the High Street and on Oakdene Parade.</li> </ul>	
State of town centre environmental quality	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cobham is an attractive centre. The shopfronts are well-maintained, and there are no noticeable problems with cleanliness in the centre. Trees and hanging baskets help to add character, and the wide pavements ensure that the centre does not feel overly-dominated by vehicular movements. Cobham is the only centre in the Borough which contains a pedestrianised area at Holly Hedge Road, which reinforces this point further.</li> </ul>	



## ESHER DISTRICT CENTRE

- 5.8 Esher District Centre is centrally located within the Borough. The centre extends the length of the High Street, but feels relatively compact. As with the majority of other centres in the Borough, the retail offer is anchored by a Waitrose supermarket and also has a strong commercial leisure offer, including a number of restaurants and pubs. A recent office/retail development in the centre, Unique Place (also known as the Aissela building), has introduced modern new floorspace into the centre which has been let to operators such as Zizzi and Caffé Nero.



High Street, Esher (picture credit: Elmbridge Borough Council)

Key indicator / observations	Score
Diversity of uses and retailer representation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Experian Goad category report for Esher (October 2014) identifies a total of 16,193 sq.m of ground floor floorspace for retail trade and service units (retail, leisure, and financial and business services combined), comprising 108 units. The District Centre contains a Waitrose, in addition to an off-licence and newsagents. These units comprise the total convenience offer for the centre, which is below the national average for provision (variance of -5.7%).</li> <li>There are very few national comparison retailers, with the centre being dominated by small independent retailers which offer a fairly limited range and variety of comparison goods when compared to some of the other centres in the Borough. The lack of diversity in retailer representation would suggest that the centre mostly serves its local catchment</li> </ul>	

Key indicator / observations	Score
<p>area. It would be reasonable to assume that the majority of residents would have to travel to other larger centres for their comparison goods shopping as the comparison average for the centre is below the national average (a variance of -3.6%).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The centre has a particularly high proportion of food and drink uses, particularly in the restaurant and café sector. Like other centres in the Borough, this would indicate that the centre has an important role and function as an evening destination. Esher is one of only two centres in the Borough to also have a cinema: whilst the Odeon located on the High Street had recently closed down, the building has re-opened as an Everyman. Under planning application numbers 2015/2502 and 2015/2503 have completed alterations to the Grade II-listed building, including a full revamp of the 4 auditoria.</li> </ul>	
Vacancy rates	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Experian Goad category report for Esher (April 2014) identifies a total of 11 vacant units, equating to a vacancy rate of 10.19%, with the majority of vacant units are located at the periphery of the centre. This is below the national average of 11.4%. The 2014 Experian Goad category report shows that 7.9% of floorspace in Esher is vacant compared to a national average of 9.2%.</li> <li>GVA undertook a site survey in September 2015 which enabled the Experian Goad data to be updated. The survey highlighted that of the identified vacancies, 6 had since been reoccupied however, an additional five units were identified as being vacant. Therefore the number of vacant units had decreased by one from 11 to 10.</li> </ul>	
Pedestrian flows	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In general, the pavements in the centre are quite wide, making pedestrian movement throughout the centre relatively easy. The width of the High Street however is quite extensive, with four lanes of traffic. This, coupled with a lack of pedestrian crossing points in parts of the centre, compromises pedestrian flows, and inhibits access to shops on opposite sides of the street. The centre clearly suffers from traffic congestion during peak periods due to the fact that it lies at the junction of several main roads and suffers from a high volume of through traffic. Such factors which inhibit navigability as a pedestrian may act as a deterrent for pedestrians within the centre.</li> </ul>	
Accessibility	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The District Centre is located at the junction of the A307 and A244, which provides access to the A3. Through traffic therefore causes a significant amount of congestion, and there is scope for pedestrian crossing points in the centre to be improved at this junction. Esher is well served by car parks, with approximately 100 spaces available at the Civic Centre and 210 spaces to the rear of Waitrose. On-street parking bays are</li> </ul>	

<sup>4</sup> EBC planning application ref 2015/2502 and 2015/2503

Key indicator / observations	Score
<p>located outside of the shops along the High Street.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Esher is well served by buses: service 548 runs between Elmsleigh Bus Station and Kingston (approximately every 30 minutes); service 513 runs between Cobham and Kingston (approximately every hour) and service K3 links Esher with Roehampton Vale (approximately 10-15 minutes)</li> <li>Esher railway station is approximately 15 minutes' walk from the District Centre, which is likely to limit the numbers of visitors accessing the centre by rail.</li> </ul>	
State of town centre environmental quality	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Esher is an attractive centre, the majority of which is located within the Esher Conservation Area. A combination of tree planting, hanging baskets and green space, adds to the centre's overall aesthetic. The shopfronts are attractive and well maintained. The presence of restaurants and cafés provide an active street frontage and contributes to a lively evening trade. The traffic flows through the centre do however negatively impact on the overall environmental quality of the centre at times.</li> </ul>	

## EAST MOLESEY DISTRICT CENTRE





Walton Road, East Molesey (picture credit: Elmbridge Borough Council)

- 5.9 Located along Walton Road, the centre is relatively small in comparison with the Borough's other main centres and linear in form. The centre is anchored by a Tesco Metro supermarket and supplemented by a number of small convenience stores. Since the last study, the unit that was previously occupied by Carpetright has now been occupied by Poundland, with no other significant changes noted regarding the centre's retail composition. The District Centre is bookended by a car / bike repairs garage to the east and an Indian restaurant and Electric appliances store to the west, with a Majestic Wine warehouse and Topps Tiles store located outside of the District Centre boundary to the west.


Key indicator / observations	Score
Diversity of uses and retailer representation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Experian Goad category report for East Molesey (March 2013) identifies a total of 106 retail units within the District Centre boundary.</li> <li>The centre's overall convenience offer falls below the national average, with the Tesco Metro supermarket being the centre's main anchor foodstore, supplemented only by the Molesey convenience store and Smaksz Deli.</li> <li>The centre's comparison goods offer is relatively low key, with a large proportion of units occupied by retail services such as dry cleaners, laundrettes and hairdressers. It appears as though the overall retail offer is aimed towards the mid-low market, which differs somewhat to the other centres in the Borough, which generally have a more upscale and / or specialist retail offer. The majority of units are occupied by independent retailers, which contributes somewhat to the centre having a smaller-scale, more 'local' feel.</li> <li>The centre has a strong services offer, which appears to contribute to a significant extent to the wider vitality and viability of the centre. Unlike many of the Borough's other centres, the service offer is more orientated towards daytime retail services (banks, building societies, estate agents etc.) and less towards a café / evening economy, with a relatively limited number of restaurants, for example.</li> </ul>	
Vacancy rates	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The overall proportion of vacant units throughout the centre (4%) falls below the national average (11%). There is also no significant cluster of vacant units anywhere within the centre.</li> </ul>	
Pedestrian flows	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At the time of our visit to the centre pedestrian footfall was observed to be fairly moderate throughout much of the centre, although noticeably higher levels of pedestrian activity were observed in the vicinity of the Tesco Metro store, affirming the role this store plays in the vitality and viability of the centre.</li> </ul>	







Key indicator / observations	Score
Accessibility	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>East Molesey's main car park is located behind the old fire station and social club at 92-94 Walton Road, and provides spaces for approximately 110 cars. This level of provision is adequate considering the size of the centre, and at the time of the on-site survey appeared well used.</li> <li>The centre benefits from a local bus service and two stops within the District Centre boundary. To the east of the centre, approximately 10 minutes' walk away is Hampton Court railway station which provides connections to Richmond, Clapham Junction and Central London.</li> <li>Bus route 514 runs between Kingston and Addlestone every hour; the route provides direct connections to Walton-on-Thames Town Centre and Weybridge District Centre.</li> </ul>	
State of town centre environmental quality	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>East Molesey's environmental quality is best described as functional. The centre does benefit from some public seating and reasonably well maintained planting, however, a number of shop facades are in need of some improvement.</li> <li>Notwithstanding this, the Kents Chemist unit at 104 Walton Road is a great feature building and an asset to the centre with its original tiling and façade features retained. Furthermore, the fire station and social club also give the centre some distinctive architectural interest. These two units have the potential to be used in such a manner that further enhances the centre's offer, perhaps for a leisure or cultural purpose.</li> </ul>	

## HERSHAM DISTRICT CENTRE

- 5.10 Hersham is a relatively small District Centre located around Hersham Green. The centre's primary shopping frontage is principally situated within the Hersham Green Shopping Centre and along Molesey Road fronting the green. The centre is anchored by a reasonably large Waitrose supermarket located within the shopping centre, which is also occupied by an opticians, bath store, newsagents, dry cleaners and pharmacy. In recent years Hersham District Centre has been subject to a new, high-quality residential flatted development at 1-7 Parkview on Queens Road, and construction is also currently underway for a new development of 14 luxury apartments on Queens Road in-between the community centre and church. The completion of these developments can be expected to assist in adding footfall to the District Centre.

Key indicator / observations	Score
Diversity of uses and retailer representation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hersham District Centre is not surveyed by Experian Goad, however, the overall retail provision was recorded during GVA's on-site survey of the District Centre in September</li> </ul>	

Key indicator / observations	Score
2015. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As one of the Borough's smaller District Centres, Hersham benefits from a reasonably large Waitrose supermarket located within the Hersham Green Shopping Centre which appears to serve the centre's local catchment more than adequately. The supermarket features a fishmonger, butcher, deli and bakery, and also features a gardening outlet.</li> <li>The shopping centre also includes a range of comparison and service units, including an opticians, pharmacy, bathroom furniture store and dry cleaners.</li> <li>Elsewhere throughout the centre, the retail offer includes a dentist, chemist, betting shop, florist, café, pub and an Indian restaurant. Considering how small the centre is, the retail offer appears to meet local residents' day to day needs.</li> </ul>	
Vacancy rates	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The on-site survey carried out in September 2015 revealed that very few units within the centre were vacant, including one vacant unit within Hersham Green Shopping Centre.</li> </ul>	
Pedestrian flows	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At the time of the on-site survey, it was noted that the centre was reasonably quiet. Despite being classed as a District Centre, Hersham arguably has more of a local village feel, especially due to its location adjacent to the green and local school. Nevertheless, although the centre did not appear to be 'busy', it was noted that customers appeared to be using all of the services available, with the cafés and supermarket feeling particularly well used.</li> </ul>	
Accessibility	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public transport access is generally limited but of a scale which is reflective of the size of the centre. Route 564 links the Hersham with Whiteley Village and Walton-on-Thames and runs hourly. Route 555 runs between Hersham and Walton-on-Thames station and town centre, and onwards to Shepperton, Sunbury and Heathrow Airport; the service runs every 30 minutes during the daytime peak.</li> <li>The District Centre is not served by a railway station. While two bus routes run through the centre, they are infrequent. The centre is moderately busy with traffic, though there was no noticeable congestion at the time of the visit.</li> <li>There is a considerable amount of on-street parking, in addition to a car park located to the rear of Waitrose, although this primarily accommodates customers shopping in that store.</li> </ul>	
State of town centre environmental quality	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Due to its central green, Hersham has a pleasant 'village' like environment and atmosphere. Since the last study, the centre has seen a new block of high-quality apartments developed along Queens Road adjacent to the pub, and construction is</li> </ul>	

Key indicator / observations	Score
<p>currently underway for 14 new apartments also on Queens Road fronting the green, which will, once finished, also make an aesthetic improvement to the centre.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The units which the retailers occupy all appear relatively dated, although the shop fronts are well-kept and mirror the centre's location and atmosphere well. The Hersham Green Shopping Centre is pedestrianised, tidy and reasonably well maintained, although the structure itself is very dated in its appearance. Refurbishing and modernising the shopping centre may help to revitalise the centre somewhat.</li> </ul>	

## Local centres assessment

5.11 In addition to our appraisal of the Town and District Centres in the Borough, as set out above, at Appendix I we set out the findings of a desk-based assessment of the network of Local Centres in the Borough. As set out in Section 2, there are a total of nine defined Local Centres in the Borough – Claygate, Walton Halfway, Hinchley Wood, Molesey – Bridge Road, Oatlands, Oxshott, Thames Ditton, Walton – Terrace Road and Weybridge – Queens Road. Our assessment identified the availability of facilities in each Local Centre, and graded them according to the number of facilities present, as well as having regard to other factors including the environmental quality and access to larger centres. The facilities we assessed were:

- Convenience goods provision: supermarket; small convenience store; newsagent / off licence; other convenience store;
- Comparison goods provision: post office; pharmacy
- Services: ATM, laundrette / dry cleaners; café; pub; takeaway; hairdressers / beauty salon; doctors surgery; library

5.12 Our assessment identified that Claygate has the greatest range of facilities of the Local Centres in the Borough, with a Co-operative foodstore (which our household survey identifies as being a popular convenience goods shopping destination) supported by a range of independent convenience goods retailers including a butchers, bakery and delicatessen, and a wide range of retail services including cafés, hairdressers and a pharmacy. The centre also benefits from a strong environmental quality with well maintained shopfronts. There is no pub, library or doctor's surgery in the centre, however aside from these the centre is well provided for.

5.13 A number of other centres score reasonably well in terms of the range of services which they provide, achieving an 'amber' score in our assessment. This means that whilst there is a range of facilities within each centre which enable many day-to-day needs to be met, there are gaps in the offer which may be resulting in less sustainable patterns of shopping. The centres which fall within this category are Walton - Halfway, Hinchley Wood, Molesey – Bridge Road, Thames Ditton and Walton – Terrace Road. In some instances, a shortfall in provision in the Local Centre is not a particular cause for concern, because the centres are well-connected to other higher-order centres nearby. For example, although our assessment identifies a number of gaps in provision in Molesey – Bridge Road, the centre is located

only half a mile from East Molesey District Centre, which our health check has identified as offering a generally comprehensive range of day-to-day shopping provision. A similar relationship exists between Walton – Terrace Road and Walton-on-Thames Town Centre.

5.14 The Local Centres which are less well-provided for in terms of the range of services are Oatlands, Oxshott and Weybridge – Queens Road. Neither Oatlands nor Oxshott offer a convenience store or a supermarket, and both are some distance from their nearest higher order centre. Oatlands also lacks a post office, ATM and laundrette / dry cleaners, whilst Oxshott has no ATM, café or hot food takeaway. There are also a number of gaps in provision in Weybridge – Queens Road Local Centre, although the presence of a Tesco Express store does help in meeting many day-to-day shopping needs, and Weybridge District Centre is only half a mile away.



Molesey Bridge Road Local Centre (picture credit: Elmbridge Borough Council)

## Out-of-centre retail provision in Elmbridge

5.15 On the western edge of Weybridge is Brooklands, a purpose-built out-of-town shopping centre which includes a flagship branch of Marks & Spencer as well as a Tesco Extra store. Additional retailers in the nearby area include Mothercare, Argos Extra and Currys. The findings of the household survey confirms that Brooklands is a significant attractor of comparison goods spending for residents of

Elmbridge – and its position towards the edge of the Borough means that it can be expected to draw significant trade from the wider surrounding area. Brooklands is approximately three miles from the nearest defined centre in the Borough (Weybridge District Centre), meaning there is limited scope for any of the Borough's centres to benefit from the inflow of expenditure which Brooklands is likely to bring.

- 5.16 There are also out of town supermarkets located in Cobham (Sainsbury's, Bridgeway) and Molesey (Tesco, Hurst Road, West Molesey). With the exception of these however, out-of-centre floorspace provision is limited.

## Summary

- In this section we have undertaken an assessment of the performance of the Town, District and Local Centres in the Borough, against 'health check' indicators set out in the Planning Practice Guidance. This is an important exercise as it assists with framing our recommendations of where the greatest qualitative 'need' for new retail and other town centre uses exists.
- The centres in the Borough are, for the most part, performing well, and there are no major areas of concern in respect of any centre's 'vitality and viability'. None of the Borough's Town and District centres have vacancy rates above the current UK average (11.4%), and in many cases the vacancy rate is markedly lower.
- Walton-on-Thames Town Centre unquestionably acts as the Borough's highest-order centre, and the opening of The Heart shopping centre has delivered a clear enhancement of its retail offer, through the development of a large Sainsbury's store, small Debenhams department store, and a mixture of mainstream fashion retailers (e.g. Next, H&M) alongside more upmarket operators (Hobbs, Jigsaw). The commercial leisure offer of the centre has also been enhanced through the opening of The Heart, although unfortunately much of this offer is disjointed from the other key leisure anchor, the Everyman cinema.
- Weybridge District Centre is also performing well and has recently benefited from substantial new investment in the form of a new Morrisons supermarket, providing competition for the Waitrose store which was previously the only foodstore serving the centre. The centre has a limited comparison goods function, mostly restricted to specialist (often upmarket) retailers, and also offers a number of restaurants / cafés. Public transport connections between Weybridge and the higher-order Walton-on-Thames Town Centre require improvement.
- Cobham District Centre is in many ways similar to Weybridge: a Waitrose-anchored District Centre with a generally upscale retail offer, mixed with a number of café and restaurant operators. The centre is attractive and, whilst arguably not as picturesque a centre as Weybridge, is nevertheless performing well.
- Esher District Centre is again anchored by a Waitrose foodstore (at the very northern end of the centre) but for the most part the offer of the centre is focussed on commercial leisure, with a large number of restaurants (the majority being national operators) and coffee shops. A cinema in the

centre (one of only two in the Borough) further enhances the leisure offer, and the recent acquisition of the cinema by Everyman (who took over the site from Odeon in 2015) is a positive example of operator confidence in the centre. However, care needs to be taken that the centre is also able to meet day-to-day shopping needs, particularly in respect of comparison (non-food) goods.

- East Molesey is more 'functional' a District Centre than many of the others in the Borough, in terms of both appearance and diversity of uses. Nevertheless there is a reasonable range of day-to-day comparison goods shopping facilities, and a particularly strong level of representation from retail services such as hairdressers, banks, laundrettes and so on. The overall offer of the centre is less upmarket than the other District Centres (although this is more a reflection of the upscale provision of the other District Centres in the Borough than a particular concern with the quality of the offer here). The Tesco Metro store is an important 'anchor' which appears to be trading well.
- Hersham is the smallest of the District Centres by some margin and its size means there are a number of gaps in the retail offer compared to other District Centres; but nevertheless we consider the centre is able to meet a range of day-to-day comparison goods shopping needs. The Waitrose store which anchors the centre plays an important role in meeting residents' convenience goods shopping needs, although the adjoining Hersham Green Shopping Centre is beginning to look dated. We understand that the Shopping Centre has recently been acquired by Aviva Investors, which provides an opportunity for investment over the course of the Plan period.
- The Borough's network of Local Centres are generally performing a role and function equivalent to what would be expected of them. The major gap in provision is in the centres of Oatlands and Oxshott, which both lack any form of convenience store, and both are some distance from their nearest higher-order centre.

## 6 SURVEY AREA, SHOPPING PATTERNS AND POPULATION & EXPENDITURE GROWTH

- 6.1 In this section we introduce the key inputs which form the basis of our assessment of the 'need' for new comparison and convenience goods retail floorspace in Elmborough. The calculation of 'need' is a technical exercise which is derived from considering three key factors: where residents of the survey area are currently undertaking their shopping; how much population growth is expected to come forward in the survey area; and how much spending on convenience and comparison goods will increase, having regard to economic forecasts and other factors such as online shopping. We introduce these inputs below, and the findings are subsequently set out in Sections 7 and 8 (for comparison goods and convenience goods capacity forecasts respectively). The findings of this section should be read in association with the capacity tabulations at Appendix II (for comparison goods) and Appendix III (for convenience goods) in Volume 2.

### Calculation of quantitative 'need'

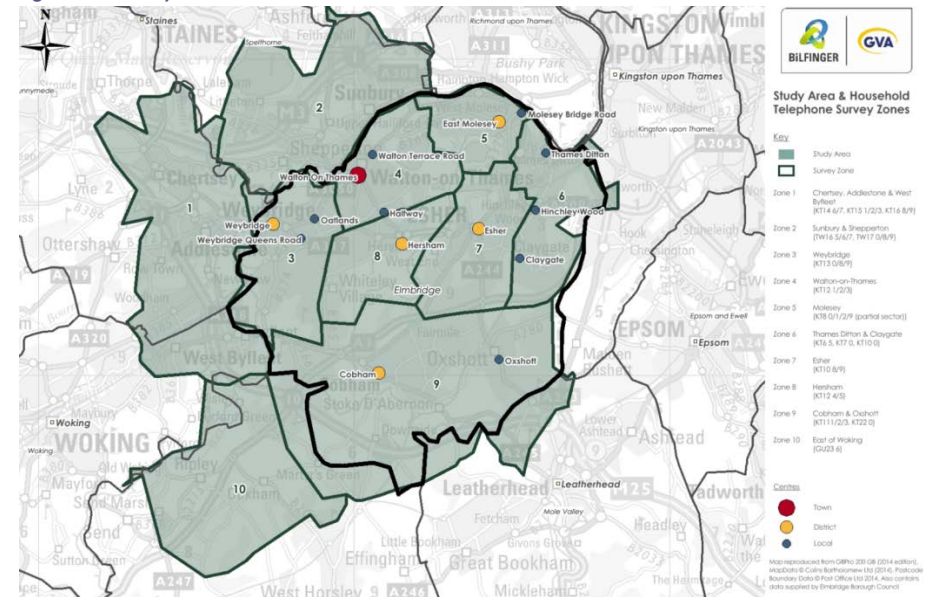
- 6.2 The 'need' for new floorspace is calculated through a conventional and widely-accepted step-by-step methodology, consistent with best practice, which draws upon the findings of the household telephone survey of shopping patterns (as previously discussed) to model the current flows of expenditure (i.e. spending in £m) to each retail destination within the survey area, and those competing centres in the surrounding area.
- 6.3 The first stage in this exercise is establishing the 'baseline' position, which is developed as follows:
- Step 1: Calculate the total population (Step 1a) and amount of convenience and comparison goods expenditure (Step 1b) which is available within the postcode sectors comprising the main centres' catchment areas;
  - Step 2: Allocate the available expenditure to the convenience and comparison goods shopping destinations visited by residents within these postcode sectors, as defined by the household telephone survey of shopping patterns;
  - Step 3: Compare the total expenditure attracted to each shopping destination with the current retail floorspace to assess 'sales densities' (i.e. turnover per sq.m) in each shopping destination.

### Survey Area and Household Survey

- 6.4 As noted above, in order to determine the 'need' for new floorspace, a household telephone survey is required to establish the current shopping patterns of residents. In order to determine this, we have established a 'survey area', which covers Elmborough in its entirety, as well as parts of

adjacent authorities in instances where these authorities' own evidence base studies have identified that some residents look towards centres in Elmborough for some of their shopping needs. A plan of the survey area is shown in **Figure 6.1** (a larger version is reproduced in Volume 2). A total of 1,000 household telephone surveys were undertaken by NEMS Market Research during August 2015.

Figure 6.1: Survey area



- 6.5 As shown in Figure 6.1, the survey area was split into ten zones, to enable differences in patterns of shopping across the survey area to be accurately captured. The Elmborough Borough boundary is also shown on Figure 6.1, and it can be seen that zones 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 fall wholly or mostly within Elmborough. Survey zone boundaries have been defined by postcode sectors, and each of the Town and District Centres in Elmborough is sited within a different zone, as follows:

Zone	Town / District Centre
Zone 3	Weybridge
Zone 4	Walton-on-Thames
Zone 5	East Molesey
Zone 7	Esher



Zone 8	Hersham
Zone 9	Cobham

- 6.6 In addition, as far as is possible, we have defined the boundaries of the zones to reflect the settlement areas set out in the Council's adopted Core Strategy.

### Estimates of Population in the Survey Area (Step 1a)

- 6.7 For the purposes of our 'baseline' needs assessment, we have utilised population forecasts provided by Experian. These are past trends-based population forecasts. Table 1 in Appendix II shows the current and projected population for each of the zones which together comprise the survey area shown in Figure 6.1. The total current population (at 2015) in the survey area is 233,142 persons. Based on population projections provided by Experian, this will increase to 265,149 persons by 2035 (the end of the study period). This represents a growth in population of 32,007 persons. As a 'scenario test', we have also modelled a lower level of population growth, which reflects the levels of planned house building as set out in the Elmbridge Core Strategy 2011. We return to discuss this in the following section.

### Available Expenditure in the Survey Area (Step 1b)

- 6.8 Experian identify a 'per capita' spend on comparison and convenience goods on a zone by zone basis, and these are shown in Table 2 of Appendix II for comparison goods, and Table 2 of Appendix III for convenience goods.
- comparison goods per head spend ranges from £3,935 in zone 1 (Chertsey, Addlestone & West Byfleet) to £5,026 in zone 7 (Esher). The average spend per head across the survey area is £4,534. These are high levels of spend per head (the UK average spend per head on comparison goods is £3,353) and confirm the catchment area is, taken as a whole, an affluent area (all figures 2015 in 2013 prices)
  - convenience goods per head spend ranges from £2,099 in zone 1 to £2,466 in zone 10 (east of Woking), compared to a UK average convenience goods spend per head of £1,981 (all figures 2015 in 2013 prices).
- 6.9 It is expected that spend per head on comparison and convenience goods will increase over the course of the study period. Therefore, we apply an annual growth rate to the 2015 baseline figures (as summarised above), which reflects expenditure growth rate projections set out in Experian's Retail Briefing Note 13 (October 2015).
- 6.10 The figures set out in Table 2 of Appendix II and III have been discounted to include allowance for 'special forms of trading' (SFT), such as online shopping. Experian forecast that this currently (2015)

accounts for 11.7% of comparison goods spending, and 2.8% of convenience goods spending, and expect this to increase over the course of the study period to 14.3% for comparison goods by 2035, and 6.4% for convenience goods by 2035. Experian forecast that comparison goods SFT will peak at 15.2% of comparison goods spending in 2022, before decreasing over the period to 2035 as the market reaches saturation. Experian forecast that convenience goods SFT will increase incrementally over the period to 2035. Table 2 of Appendix II and Appendix III summarise the 'with' and 'without' expenditure figures, and also shows the deductions we have made for SFT over the duration of the study period.

- 6.11 By applying the population forecasts to the per capita expenditure forecasts, we can gain an understanding of the total amount of spending on comparison and convenience goods which is currently available to residents of the survey area, and how much this is expected to increase over the course of the study period:
- There is currently £901.8m of comparison goods expenditure available to residents of the survey area, which is expected to increase to £1,880.5m by the end of the study period (i.e. 2035), equivalent to a growth in comparison goods spending of £978.7m; and
  - There is currently £510.9m of convenience goods expenditure available to residents of the survey area, which is expected to increase to £569.8m by the end of the study period, equivalent to a growth in convenience goods spending of £58.9m.
- 6.12 Kingston-upon-Thames draws the highest comparison goods turnover from residents in the study area, accounting for £243.8m, or 27% of total comparison goods spending. From centres within the survey area, Walton-on-Thames draws the highest comparison turnover (£93.0m), Weybridge (£38.6m) and Cobham (£36.6m). Stores at Brooklands draw a further £48.5m of comparison goods spending.

### Shopping patterns in the Survey Area (Step 2)

- 6.13 The household telephone survey results identify shopping habits of households for both convenience and comparison goods, as well as commercial leisure spending (which we discuss separately in Section 9 of this report). For convenience goods, the household telephone survey included questions on 'main food' and 'top-up food' shopping. The results of the two types of food expenditure were then merged through the application of a weight which reflects the estimated proportion of expenditure accounted for by each goods type (70% 'main' food / 30% 'top-up' food<sup>6</sup>). This forms a 'composite' pattern of convenience spending, expressed as a market share for each destination centre or foodstore for each survey zone.
- 6.14 For comparison goods, the household telephone survey included questions on where respondents normally undertake shopping for the following types of comparison goods shopping:

<sup>5</sup> Experian Retail Planner 13, October 2015, Figure 5

<sup>6</sup> Based on our experience elsewhere, this represents a suitable split between 'main' and 'top up' food shopping.



Source: Table 5a, Appendix II

- Clothing and footwear;
- Furniture, floor coverings and household textiles;
- DIY and decorating goods;
- Domestic appliances;
- Audio-visual equipment;
- Personal and medical goods; and
- Recreational and luxury goods.

6.15 Shopping patterns for each of these types of comparison goods are then combined to produce a 'composite' set of comparison goods shopping patterns, using weighted averages of the household survey responses for each goods type base on the proportion of personal spending ('expenditure per capita') available to residents in the survey area.

## Comparison goods shopping patterns

6.16 Shopping patterns derived from the household telephone survey allow us to calculate the amount of comparison goods expenditure which each centre within and surrounding the study area which forms the basis of our assessment. This indicator is a good reflection of both the strength of the retail offer in a centre, as well as its accessibility, and overall quality of experience. The total amount of expenditure which is retained within a study area is known as its 'retention rate'; the remaining expenditure which flows to destinations outside the study area is known as 'leakage'. Table 6.1 shows the amount of comparison goods expenditure retained within Elmbridge, and the amount of expenditure 'leakage'.

**Table 6.1: Comparison goods expenditure retention in Elmbridge**

	£m	% of total
Total amount of comparison goods spend available to study area (2015), of which:	901.8	100.0%
— Comparison goods trade draw to centres in Elmbridge (Town Centres, District Centres, out-of-centre and non-food floorspace in foodstores)	263.4	29.2%
— Comparison goods trade draw to other survey area centres (e.g. Addlestone, Chertsey)	61.2	6.8%
— Comparison goods trade draw to locations outside survey area (e.g. Kingston, Woking, Staines, Guildford)	570.1	63.2%
— Comparison goods spending in local shops in survey area	7.1	0.8%

6.17 Our assessment has identified that there is a total of £901.8m of comparison goods expenditure which is available to residents of the study area. Of this, £263.4m is retained by centres and stores in Elmbridge Borough, equivalent to a 'retention rate' of 29.2%. Table 6.2 sets out the most popular destinations for comparison goods spending in the survey area, identifying the extent to which facilities outside the Borough compete for expenditure with the network of centres in Elmbridge (building on the analysis previously set out at paragraph 4.2).

**Table 6.2: Study area comparison goods trade draw by centre**

Centre	Borough	Comparison goods trade draw (£m)	% of total comparison goods expenditure available to survey area
Kingston-upon-Thames Town Centre	LB Kingston	243.8	27.0%
<b>Walton-on-Thames Town Centre</b>	<b>Elmbridge</b>	<b>93.0</b>	<b>10.3%</b>
Woking (Town Centre & retail parks)	Woking	91.8	10.2%
Staines	Spelthorne	75.7	8.4%
Guildford (Town Centre & retail parks)	Guildford	51.0	5.7%
<b>Brooklands Centre, Weybridge</b>	<b>Elmbridge</b>	<b>48.5</b>	<b>5.4%</b>
<b>Weybridge District Centre</b>	<b>Elmbridge</b>	<b>38.6</b>	<b>4.3%</b>
<b>Cobham District Centre</b>	<b>Elmbridge</b>	<b>36.5</b>	<b>4.0%</b>
Central London / West End	-	23.5	2.6%
Addlestone	Runnymede	20.5	2.3%
<b>East Molesey District Centre</b>	<b>Elmbridge</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>1.5%</b>
Retail parks, New Malden	LB Merton	13.3	1.5%
Wey Retail Park, Byfleet	Woking	12.2	1.4%

Source: Table 5a, Appendix II. All comparison goods destinations with turnovers in excess of £10.0m shown.

6.18 Table 6.2 shows that the principle competition for comparison goods spending which Town and District Centres in Elmbridge face is from Kingston-upon-Thames, which accounts for over a quarter of all comparison goods spending available to residents in the study area as a whole. Analysis of the

shopping patterns of residents at the zonal level shows that Kingston accounts for over 50% of all comparison goods shopping spend for residents living in the Molesey, Claygate / Thames Ditton and Esher parts of the survey area, and almost one-third of all comparison goods shopping spend for residents in the Hersham area. Kingston's influence over the shopping patterns in the western part of the Borough (Walton-on-Thames / Weybridge), whilst less pronounced, is nevertheless noticeable; Kingston draws £16.1m of comparison goods spend from Weybridge and £21.1m from Walton-on-Thames.

- 6.19 Table 6.2 shows that the centre within Elmbridge which attracts the highest amount of comparison goods spending (and the second-highest amount overall) is Walton-on-Thames Town Centre, which draws £93.0m of spending from the study area, or 10% of total available comparison goods expenditure. Walton-on-Thames's attractiveness as a comparison goods shopping destination has been enhanced in recent years through the opening of The Heart development (which commenced trading in 2006), which has introduced a number of high-profile comparison goods retailers (such as Debenhams, H&M, Baby Gap, New Look and Next) to the town, as discussed in Section 5.
- 6.20 After Walton-on-Thames, the location in Elmbridge which draws the second-highest amount of comparison goods spend is Brooklands, a purpose-built out-of-centre shopping destination on the western edge of Weybridge, which includes large branches of Marks & Spencer and Tesco Extra, as well as number of smaller retail warehouse units on Brooklands Retail Park. In total, these facilities draw £48.5m of spend from the study area – more than any of the District Centres in Elmbridge.
- 6.21 Weybridge District Centre draws £38.6m of comparison goods spending from the survey area, and Cobham a further £36.5m, which we consider to represent strong performances in the context of both centres' role and function as District Centres. The comparison goods turnover of the Borough's remaining District Centres is lower, with East Molesey drawing £14.0m of spend, and Esher and Hersham drawing £8.0m and £5.8m of comparison goods expenditure respectively.
- 6.22 Woking, Staines and Guildford each draw between £51.0m and £91.8m of comparison goods spending from the study area, although the influence of both Woking and Staines on shopping patterns is, for the most part, restricted to those parts of the study area which fall outside the boundaries of Elmbridge Borough. Guildford has a greater influence on comparison goods shopping patterns for parts of Elmbridge compared to Woking and Staines, particularly residents in the Weybridge, Esher and Cobham areas.

## Convenience goods shopping patterns

- 6.23 Convenience goods shopping is a more localised activity and the household survey results indicate that the Borough is generally self-sufficient in terms of convenience goods shopping. Our assessment has identified that there is £510.9m of convenience goods expenditure available to residents of the survey area; as set out previously, of this, £293.3m is spent at stores and centres in Elmbridge Borough, which are located both in foodstores in Town / District Centres (e.g. Morrisons, Weybridge and

Waitrose, Esher), and standalone foodstores in out-of-centre locations (e.g. Sainsbury's, Cobham or Tesco, Brooklands).

- 6.24 From our qualitative assessment, we consider that the Borough can generally be considered well-provided for in terms of foodstores. Each of the Town / District Centres contains at least one foodstore which, in many cases, acts as an important 'anchor' store to the wider offer of the centre – this is particularly the case in respect of the smaller District Centres such as Hersham and East Molesey. The Borough's smaller Local Centres also in many cases have a convenience goods anchor – for example the Co-operative store in Claygate and the Tesco Express in Walton Halfway. Walton-on-Thames and Weybridge have benefited from investment by national foodstore operators in recent years, and the Sainsbury's and Morrisons stores in these respective centres are amongst the largest in the Borough.
- 6.25 Elmbridge also has a number of large out-of-centre supermarkets, most of which were constructed in the 1990s. The Tesco Extra at Brooklands is one of the company's 50 largest stores in the country (net sales area c. 6,800 sq.m), whilst the foodhall within the adjacent Marks & Spencer store further enhances the convenience goods offer in this part of the Borough. The large Sainsbury's store at Cobham has been extended in recent years in order to offer a greater range of non-food products and is now the second largest foodstore in the Borough at c. 5,800 sq.m net sales area. Foodstores within defined centres are generally smaller, but the aforementioned Sainsbury's in Walton-on-Thames and Morrisons in Weybridge are both sizeable stores (each c. 3,800 sq.m net sales area) which would enable them to cater for 'bulk' food shopping trips.
- 6.26 Table 6.3 summarises the most popular foodstores in the Borough, based on turnover derived from the survey area. It should be noted that in some cases the catchment of the foodstore may potentially extend beyond the boundaries of the survey area in instances where the foodstore is located close to the edge of the survey area, and therefore the household survey does not capture the full turnover of these stores. We consider this is likely to be particularly applicable to the Tesco store at Brooklands and Sainsbury's at Cobham (supporting documentation submitted in respect of the planning application for the extension of Sainsbury's Cobham store identified that it had an untypically large catchment area).

**Table 6.3: Turnover of main foodstores in Elmbridge Borough**

Foodstore	Turnover from survey area (£m)	Sequential location (in/ edge/ out-of-centre)
Sainsbury's, Walton-on-Thames	28.1	In-centre
Tesco Extra, Brooklands	27.9	Out-of-centre
Tesco, West Molesey	25.9	Out-of-centre

Waitrose, Esher	25.1	In-centre
Sainsbury's, Cobham	24.1	Out-of-centre

Source: Table 5a, Appendix III.

## Other inputs into the quantitative need assessment

### Sales Efficiency

6.27 It is also necessary to factor in changes in respect of 'sales efficiencies'. These represent the ability of retailers to increase their productivity and absorb higher than inflation increases in their costs (such as rents, rates and service charges) by increasing their average sales densities. The application of a turnover 'efficiency' growth rate is a standard approach used in retail capacity studies. Although Experian (who are the data providers for the other technical inputs into this study) do not provide clear guidance on sales densities, it is fair to assume that as Experian anticipate that personal spending on both comparison and convenience goods will increase over the study period, so will sales efficiency. Informed by Experian's expenditure growth forecasts<sup>7</sup>, we have therefore adopted the following sales efficiency growth rates:

- **Comparison goods:** 1.75%, per annum (50% of average per capita expenditure growth on comparison goods between 2015 and 2035 of 3.5%);
- **Convenience goods:** 0.04%, per annum (50% of per capita expenditure growth on convenience goods between 2015 and 2035 rate of 0.08% per annum)

### Floorspace Data

6.28 The comparison and convenience goods floorspace data which we incorporate into our model has been drawn from a range of data sources, including the Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD), Experian Goad, the Trevor Wood Retail Warehouse Database, and the Council's own planning application records. Our floorspace assumptions for foodstores make allowance for a proportion of the sales area of the foodstore to be used for the sale of comparison goods (in supermarkets, this may include books, stationery, home entertainment, small electrical items, and so on).

## Summary

- In this section we have set out the methodology behind the calculation of quantitative 'need' for new comparison (non-food) and convenience (food) goods, which we undertake in the following section.
- The need assessment is informed by an assessment of shopping patterns over the study area shown in Figure 6.1, which covers Elmbridge Borough in its entirety, as well as parts of neighbouring authorities where Elmbridge's catchment may extend into (however the figures set out in the following section solely relate to Elmbridge Borough).
- The total current population (at 2015) in the survey area is 233,142 persons. Based on population projections provided by data provider Experian, this will increase to 265,149 persons by 2035 (the end of the study period). This represents a growth in population of 32,007 persons. As a 'scenario test', we have also modelled a lower level of population growth, which reflects the levels of planned house building as set out in the Elmbridge Core Strategy 2011; this is discussed in Section 7.
- There is currently £901.8m of comparison goods expenditure available to residents of the survey area, which is expected to increase to £1,880.5m by the end of the study period (i.e. 2035), equivalent to a growth in comparison goods spending of £978.7m.
- Of the £901.8m comparison goods expenditure currently available to the study area, £263.4m (29.2%) is retained by centres and stores in Elmbridge Borough. In light of the strength of the retail offer in surrounding centres (as discussed in the previous section), we consider this to represent a reasonably good performance. Of the £263.4m retained in the Borough, £93.0m is spent in Walton-on-Thames Town Centre, £38.6m is spent in Weybridge District Centre and £36.5m is spent in Cobham District Centre. A further £48.5m is spent at the out-of-centre retail facilities at Brooklands.
- There is currently £510.9m of convenience goods expenditure available to residents of the study area, which is expected to increase to £569.8m by the end of the study period, equivalent to a growth in convenience goods spending of £58.9m.
- Of the £510.9m convenience goods expenditure currently available to the study area, £293.3m is retained by centres and stores in Elmbridge Borough. It is apparent that the Borough is generally well-provided for in terms of foodstores, with each Town / District centre containing at least one store, which in many cases acts as the 'anchor' to the retail offer. There are also large out-of-centre foodstores at Brooklands (Tesco Extra) and Cobham (Sainsbury's). The most popular foodstore (in terms of turnover) is the Sainsbury's store in Walton-on-Thames town centre, which has a turnover of £28.0m.
- 'Special forms of trading' – which is mostly accounted for by online shopping – is expected to account for a maximum of 15.2% of total comparison goods spending and 6.4% of convenience goods spending over the course of the study period to 2035. The expenditure growth figures set out above take the most recent SFT forecasts (also provided by Experian) into account.

<sup>7</sup> Experian Retail Planner 13, October 2015, Figure 1a

## 7 COMPARISON GOODS CAPACITY FORECASTS

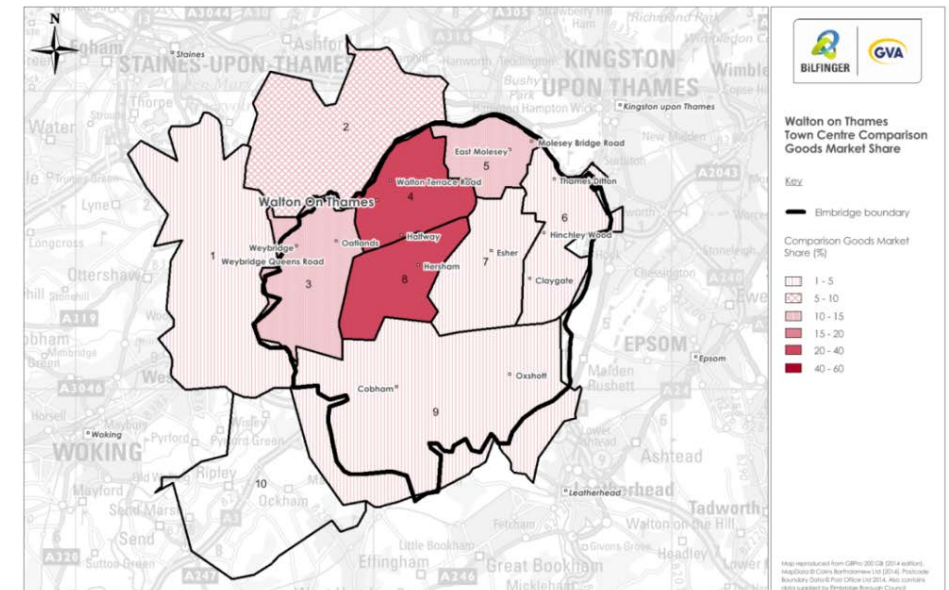
- 7.1 Having introduced the key inputs into our quantitative 'need' assessment in the previous section, here we progress to identify the quantitative comparison (non-food) capacity forecasts for Elmbridge – that is, the 'need' for new floorspace which we recommend the Council should plan for in its emerging Local Plan, based on the methodology which we have set out in Section 6. The convenience goods capacity forecasts follow in Section 8. For both the comparison and convenience goods capacity forecasts, we present a range of 'need' scenarios which have regard to Experian baseline projections of population growth, as well as EBC's own estimates of likely levels of new development which are expected to come forward. The discussion in this section should be read in conjunction with the data tables in Appendix II of Volume 2 to the study.

### Shopping patterns by centre

#### Walton-on-Thames Town Centre

- 7.2 As identified in the previous section, Walton-on-Thames Town Centre has, by some margin, the highest comparison goods turnover of any of the centres in the Borough, drawing £93.0m of spend from the survey area, equivalent to 10.3% of the total comparison goods expenditure available to the survey area. Analysis of Table 5a (Appendix II) shows that Walton-on-Thames draws a comparison goods market share from nine of the ten survey zones (**Figure 7.1**).
- 7.3 Of Walton-on-Thames's £93.0m comparison goods turnover, just under one-third (£33.3m) comes from its 'local' zone (zone 4), with a further £15.4m from zone 8 and £10.9m from zone 3. We would expect that the opening of The Heart has resulted in increased trade draw to Walton-on-Thames from many parts of the survey area.
- 7.4 Analysis of the household survey results shows that, reflecting the Borough-wide trend, Kingston is the main competition for residents in Walton-on-Thames for comparison goods spending. Kingston draws £21.1m of comparison goods spend from residents in zone 4. A further £4.5m is spent in Woking, and £4.5m in Staines.

Figure 7.1: Walton-on-Thames comparison goods market share by zone



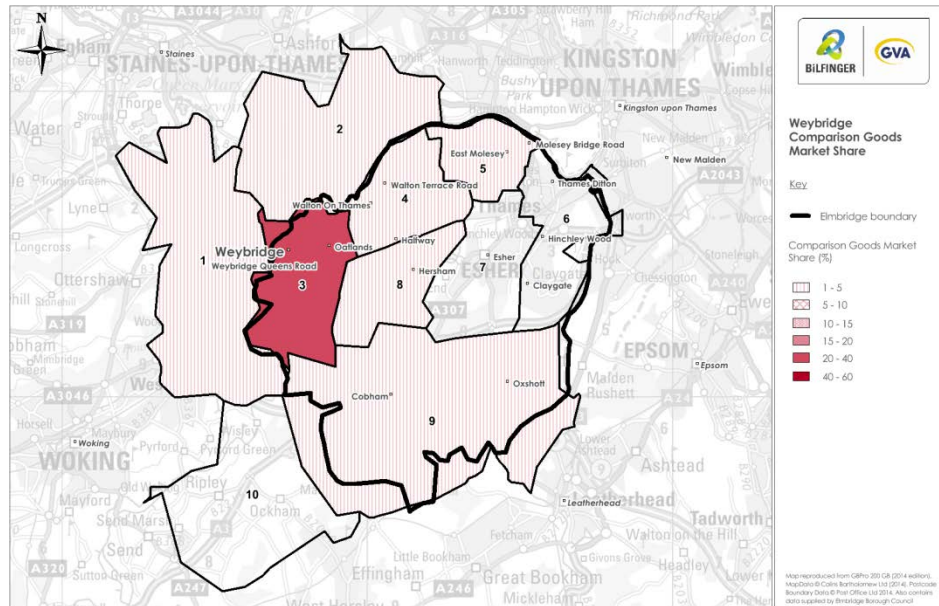
Source: household survey results

#### Weybridge District Centre

- 7.5 Weybridge District Centre draws £38.6m of comparison goods spend from the survey area, 4.3% of total available comparison goods spend. Its catchment area is much more localised than Walton-on-Thames (Figure 7.2), reflecting its more limited retail offer, and £27.5m of the £38.6m comparison goods turnover is drawn from its 'local' zone (zone 3), plus £2.5m from zone 4 and £2.2m from zone 1. Residents in zone 3 also undertake their comparison goods shopping in Kingston (which draws £16.7m of spending from zone 3), Walton-on-Thames (which, as noted above, draws £10.9m from zone 3), and central London (£6.7m from zone 3).



Figure 7.2: Weybridge comparison goods market share by zone

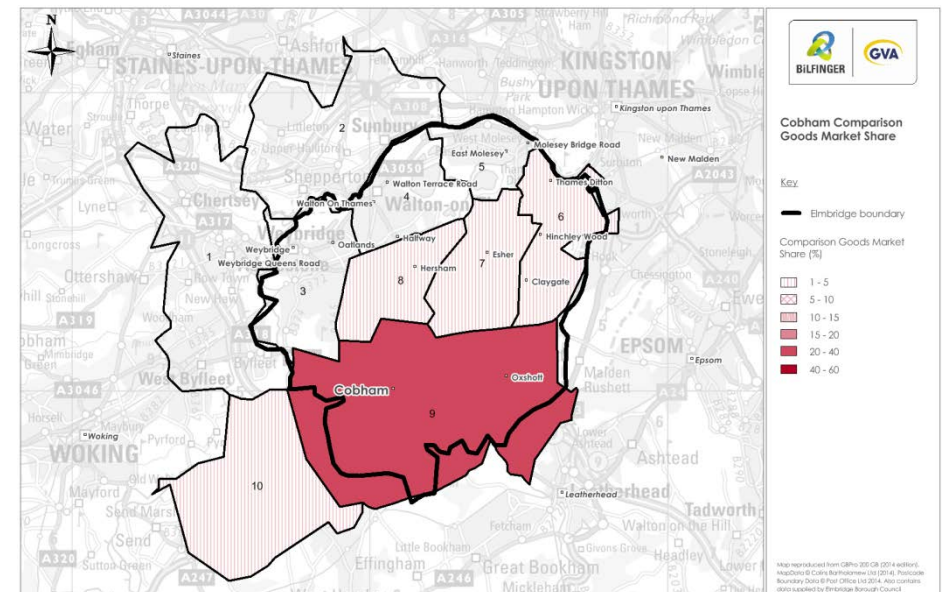


Source: household survey results

### Cobham District Centre

- 7.6 Cobham District Centre draws £36.5m of comparison goods spend from the survey area, marginally lower than Weybridge. Again, its catchment area is localised rather than being a destination to which people travel a significant distance to: £29.9m of its £36.5m is drawn from its local zone (zone 9), with £2.8m of spend also drawn from zone 6. Cobham competes with both Kingston and Guildford for comparison goods spending, which draw £16.7m and £12.6m of spend from residents in zone 9 respectively. Residents of the Cobham area do not look towards Walton-on-Thames for their comparison goods shopping to any significant degree. Cobham's catchment area is shown in Figure 7.3.

Figure 7.3: Cobham comparison goods market share by zone



Source: household survey results

### Other District Centres

- 7.7 The remaining District Centres have a more limited role and function in respect of comparison goods shopping, and accordingly do not attract significant comparison goods turnovers from residents of the survey area; we summarise the performance of these below:
- East Molesey** draws £14.0m of comparison goods spend from the survey area, of which £10.6m comes from its local zone (zone 5). Most residents in zone 5 undertake their comparison goods shopping in Kingston, which draws £40.4m of spend from zone 5, and a further £9.9m is spent in Walton-on-Thames;
  - Esher** has a comparison goods turnover of £8.0m, reflecting the fact that the offer in this centre is more pitched towards convenience and retail services, in particular the restaurant/café sector. Of its £8.0m comparison goods turnover, £4.3m comes from zone 7 (its local zone) and a further £3.5m comes from zone 6. Most residents in zone 7 undertake their comparison goods shopping in Kingston, which claims £26.5m of the comparison goods spending from the zone;

- **Hersham** has the lowest comparison goods turnover of all the District Centres, at £5.8m; it has a very limited range of comparison goods facilities which are mostly orientated towards day-to-day shopping needs. Residents in zone 8, which covers Hersham, chiefly split their comparison goods spending between Kingston (£15.8m of comparison goods spend from zone 8) and Walton-on-Thames (£15.4m comparison goods spend).

### Out-of-centre floorspace

- 7.8 As we have identified previously in the report, there is relatively little out-of-centre comparison goods retail floorspace in the Borough which directly competes with the network of centres for spending. However, Brooklands is the exception to this, and the household survey results confirm that Brooklands is a significant comparison goods shopping location for residents in the Borough, drawing £48.5m of comparison goods spend from the survey area – the second highest amount of any location in Elmbridge (behind the £93.0m turnover of Walton-on-Thames Town Centre but in excess of the turnover of any of the District Centres). Analysis of the household survey data shows that stores at Brooklands draws comparison goods spend from each of the ten survey zones, and draws particularly noteworthy amounts of spend from zone 1 (£16.7m), zone 3 (£8.7m) and zone 4 (£7.9m).
- 7.9 Other out-of-centre floorspace generally has a more limited influence over shopping patterns, although the Homebase store on the edge of Walton-on-Thames Town Centre draws £11.4m of comparison goods spending, mostly from residents in zones 1 to 5 inclusive.

### Comparison goods trading performance

- 7.10 We have assessed the performance of Walton-on-Thames Town Centre and the five District Centres in Elmbridge by considering the shopping patterns (as identified by the household telephone survey) as the performance of existing comparison goods floorspace within each Town / District Centre. Using the market shares attributed to each centre from the household telephone survey, and the baseline estimates of expenditure available to the survey area (as summarised at paragraph 6.8), we have been able to calculate the comparison goods turnover of each of the Town / District Centre. This exercise is useful in showing whether a centre is trading in line with expectations (taking account its role and function in the retail hierarchy), or whether it is 'under-trading' or 'over-trading'.
- 7.11 Table 8 of Appendix II shows that, on aggregate, comparison goods floorspace in Elmbridge is trading at £4,946 per sq.m. This is an aggregate trading performance, based on the turnover of the Town and District Centres and also the out-of-centre floorspace, such as Brooklands, and comparison goods sales within large foodstores. Table 7.1 sets out the trading performance of each of the Town and District Centres in Elmbridge, in order to gain a better understanding of how each centre is performing.

**Table 7.1: Trading performance of town & District Centres in Elmbridge**

	Comparison goods turnover from survey area (£m) <sup>1</sup>	Estimated comparison goods floorspace (sq.m) <sup>2</sup>	Turnover per sq.m (£)
Town centres			
Walton-on-Thames	93.0	16,753	5,552
District centres			
Weybridge	38.6	7,390	5,221
Cobham	36.5	5,413	6,735
East Molesey	14.0	3,601	3,881
Esher	8.0	3,667	2,178
Hersham	5.8	1,877	3,099

<sup>1</sup>Source: Table 5a, Appendix II

<sup>2</sup>Source: Experian Goad category reports / EBC data

- 7.12 Table 7.1 shows that there are differences in the trading performance between Elmbridge's centres. Walton-on-Thames Town Centre achieves a sales density in the region of £5,500 per sq.m, which, in the context of the significant competition for comparison goods expenditure which the centre faces from Kingston (which attracts a 23% market share from Walton-on-Thames's 'local' zone), we consider to reflect a reasonable performance, albeit one with some scope for improvement. To put this performance into context, in our capacity projections for future comparison goods floorspace for the Borough, we have adopted a 'baseline' sales density of £6,000 per sq.m, which, informed by our work in preparation of comparable retail and Town Centre evidence base studies, we consider to represent a potential sales density of new floorspace in a robustly-trading centre. Walton-on-Thames's sales density currently falls below this – although as stated previously we do not consider its current performance to represent a pressing cause for concern.
- 7.13 Table 7.1 shows that in respect of the District Centres:
- The strongest-performing District Centre in terms of sales density is Cobham, the only centre in the Borough to achieve a comparison goods sales density in excess of our 'benchmark' of £6,000 per sq.m. Comparison goods floorspace in Cobham District Centre is currently trading at £6,735 per sq.m, which represents a particularly strong trading performance for a District Centre.
  - Weybridge District Centre achieves a lower sales density of £5,221 per sq.m which, whilst lower than Cobham, is nevertheless considered to represent a good performance; our health check of Weybridge District Centre confirms that the comparison goods offer in Weybridge is strong for a District Centre, including a number of higher-end/upmarket retailers, and its trading performance reflects this.

- East Molesey is a more 'day-to-day' District Centre, largely typified by smaller-format units, in some cases historic units, which cater towards meeting localised shopping needs, but are likely to trade less efficiently. In this context, the sales density is considered to be in line with expectations.
- Esher District Centre appears to be underperforming as a comparison goods destination, achieving a sales density of £2,178 per sq.m, which is low for a centre in its position in the retail hierarchy. Our health check of Esher has confirmed that the centre has a stronger convenience and commercial leisure role than that of a comparison goods shopping destination, but notwithstanding this, its comparison goods turnover and resultant low sales density suggests that some day-to-day shopping needs may not be being met.
- It should be noted that the figures shown in Table 7.1 do not take account of expenditure 'inflow' from beyond the study area, and if these figures were to be included, the performance of some of the centres would be higher (we consider this is likely to be particularly applicable to Walton-on-Thames and Cobham).

## Identification of comparison goods capacity

- 7.14 Having undertaken the above assessment of trading performance, we are in a position to establish the quantum of new comparison goods floorspace which the Council should seek to plan for over the period to 2035. In assessing capacity for future comparison goods floorspace, we have assumed that existing comparison goods floorspace stock across the Borough will improve its sales efficiency (i.e. its turnover per sq.m) over the course of the study period. We have assumed that new comparison goods floorspace would achieve a sales density in the region of £6,000 per sq.m, which is considered to be a reasonable proxy for the trading performance of modern comparison goods floorspace in a robustly-trading location.
- 7.15 In identifying capacity it is important to note that forecasts become increasingly open to margins of error over time, and accordingly should be refreshed throughout the Council's Plan period. We also advise that findings should be considered alongside the qualitative discussion of the performance of individual centres which this report has previously set out, as identification of low/negligible capacity does not, in itself, mean that there is no 'need' for additional floorspace.
- 7.16 The 'baseline' comparison goods capacity for Elmbridge Borough over the period to 2035 is shown in Table 7.2. These capacity forecasts are based on 'constant market shares', i.e. assuming that current patterns of comparison goods shopping (as identified in the household telephone survey) will remain unchanged. The capacity forecasts make allowance for one planning commitment, the redevelopment of the former Dairy Crest site in Walton-on-Thames Town Centre, which is expected to include 277 sq.m of floorspace which we have forecast could achieve a turnover of £1.8m by 2020.

**Table 7.2: Comparison goods floorspace capacity, Elmbridge Borough**

	2020 (sq.m net, rounded)	2025 (sq.m net, rounded)	2030 (sq.m net, rounded)*	2035 (sq.m net, rounded)*
Comparison goods floorspace capacity	3,300	8,100	13,600	19,700

Source: Table 8, Appendix II

\*Indicative only. Figures are cumulative.

- 7.17 Table 7.2 shows that, assuming current patterns of comparison goods shopping remain unchanged (i.e. a 'constant market share' approach), there is a need for the Council to plan for an additional 3,300 sq.m net additional comparison goods floorspace in the short-term period to 2020. This requirement then increases to 8,100 sq.m net additional comparison goods floorspace by 2025, 13,600 sq.m net by 2030 and 19,700 sq.m net by 2035. As stated above, figures at the end of the Plan period should be considered indicative.

## Scenario testing

- 7.18 The above capacity forecasts are based on Experian population projections, produced at the zonal level. The Council have requested that, as part of this study, two alternative scenarios are tested, as follows:

**Scenario Test 1**, which tests an alternative population growth scenario is tested, based on extant permissions and the level of housing growth which the Council expects to come forward under the current Plan (derived from the Core Strategy (2011) and Land Availability Assessment (2014)); and

**Scenario Test 2**, which tests the needs arising from a lower level of comparison goods expenditure retention by the centres in Elmbridge Borough, in light of the planned enhancements to the comparison goods offer in the surrounding centres such as Kingston-upon-Thames, as reviewed in Section 4.

### Scenario 1 — Alternative population scenario

- 7.19 The population forecasts which underpin the alternative scenario have been calculated as follows:
- **Step 1:** use EBC forecasts of housing growth by settlement for the period 2015-2030.
  - **Step 2:** convert EBC housing growth forecasts to population growth, using a persons per dwelling ratio of 2.47 (source: 2011 Census).

- **Step 3:** adjust population figures to five-year intervals (to reflect the interval periods used for this study)
- **Step 4:** apply figures to the Experian baseline (2015) population figure for the appropriate survey zone (so EBC forecasts of population growth for Walton-on-Thames are applied to zone 4, Weybridge to zone 3, and so on). Reflecting the assumption inherent in the Council's own modelling, our assessment assumes that no population growth will come forward elsewhere in the each zone (i.e. outside the defined urban areas).
- **Step 5:** re-run capacity modelling based on revised population forecasts for each of the Elmburidge zones (zones 3-9 inclusive). Population forecasts for those zones which are within the study area but outside Elmburidge Borough (i.e. zones 1, 2 and 10) are unchanged from our baseline assessment above (i.e. continue to use Experian projections).

7.20 Based on the housing trajectory provided to us by EBC, we have modelled the following levels of housing growth for the period 2015-35. In the absence of any available housing trajectories beyond 2030, we have assumed that the levels of growth forecast for the period 2015-30 will continue at the same rate for 2030-35:

- **Weybridge / zone 3:** 86 persons per annum (428 persons per five-year interval);
- **Walton-on-Thames / zone 4:** 92 persons per annum (461 persons per five-year interval);
- **East and West Molesey / zone 5:** 66 persons per annum (329 persons per five-year interval);
- **Long Ditton, Thames Ditton, Hinchley Wood, Weston Green and Claygate / zone 6:** 63 persons per annum (313 persons per five-year interval);
- **Esher / zone 7:** 36 persons per annum (181 persons per five-year interval);
- **Hersham / zone 8:** 49 persons per annum (247 persons per five-year interval);
- **Cobham / zone 9:** 79 persons per annum (395 persons per five-year interval).

7.21 By applying the population growth levels set out above to our comparison goods capacity modelling, the following key changes arise. Full tabulations are set out at Tables A1 to A8 of Appendix II:

- Total population growth in the study area over the period 2015-35 reduces from 32,007 persons to 25,476 persons (Table A1, Appendix II)
- Total growth in comparison goods spending in the study area over the period 2015-35 reduces from £978.7m to £929.2m (Table A3, Appendix II).
- The requirement for additional comparison goods floorspace over the period to 2035 reduces from 19,700 sq.m net to 17,800 sq.m net (Table A8, Appendix II), and accordingly this represents the range of comparison goods floorspace 'need' which the Council should plan for.

7.22 A summary of the quantitative comparison goods need arising at each interval period is shown in Table 7.3.

**Table 7.3: Comparison goods floorspace capacity, Elmburidge Borough (including EBC population scenario)**

	2020 (sq.m net, rounded)	2025 (sq.m net, rounded)	2030 (sq.m net, rounded)*	2035 (sq.m net, rounded)*
Lower requirement (EBC population scenario) <sup>1</sup>	2,900	7,100	12,200	17,800
Upper requirement (Experian population scenario) <sup>2</sup>	3,300	8,100	13,600	19,700

Source: <sup>1</sup>Table A8 / <sup>2</sup>Table 8, Appendix II

\*Indicative only. Figures are cumulative.

7.23 Table 7.3 therefore shows that the Council should plan for between 7,100 and 8,100 sq.m net comparison goods floorspace in the Borough over the period 2015-25, rising to between 17,800 and 19,700 sq.m net by 2035 (figures are cumulative). We repeat our advice that figures at the end of the Plan period should be considered indicative and subject to regular review.

#### Scenario 2 — Reduced comparison goods expenditure retention

7.24 The Council have also asked us to test the implications of a reduction in the comparison goods expenditure retention rate in the Borough, in light of the planned enhancements to the comparison goods retail offer in surrounding centres such as Kingston-upon-Thames, Woking and Guildford. As we have set out above (see Table 6.1), the Borough currently retains 29.2% of available comparison goods expenditure, and the comparison goods capacity forecasts set out in Table 7.2 and Table 7.3 are based on a 'constant market share', i.e. assuming that current shopping patterns will remain unchanged throughout the study period.

7.25 As we have set out in Section 4, a number of the larger centres surrounding the Borough have planned enhancements to their comparison goods offer coming forward in the short to medium term, and there is evidently scope for these developments to influence the shopping patterns of residents in the Borough. In the absence of any firm indication of the format / composition of these developments (such as potential tenants, quantum of comparison goods offer, and so on) it is difficult to forecast the exact extent to which these developments will influence shopping patterns, however for the purposes of this scenario test we have assumed a 2.2 percentage point reduction in the comparison goods retention rate of the Borough from 2020 onwards (i.e. from 29.2% to 27.0%).



7.26 The effect of reducing the amount of comparison goods which is retained in the survey area is that the 'need' for new comparison goods floorspace which the Borough should plan for is also reduced. This is set out in Table 7.4, which shows the quantitative need arising with a reduced comparison goods expenditure retention rate of 27.0% (post 2020), for both the Experian population scenario and the EBC population scenario. Under the EBC population scenario, the overall quantitative 'need' reduces to 3,700 sq.m net by 2025, increasing to 14,100 sq.m net by 2035 (compared to 17,800 sq.m net by 2035 under a 'constant market share'), whilst under the Experian population scenario the overall quantitative 'need' reduces to 15,600 sq.m net by 2035 (compared to 19,700 sq.m net under a 'constant market share').

7.27 Accordingly Table 7.4 represents a 'matrix' of potential comparison goods floorspace requirements which the Council should plan for. The minimum comparison goods floorspace requirement which the Council should plan for is 14,100 sq.m net by 2035, whilst the maximum is 19,700 sq.m net by 2035.

**Table 7.4: Comparison goods floorspace capacity, Elmbridge Borough (including EBC population scenario) (reduced expenditure retention rate)**

	2020 (sq.m net, rounded)	2025 (sq.m net, rounded)	2030 (sq.m net, rounded)*	2035 (sq.m net, rounded)*
Lower requirement A (EBC population scenario) <sup>1</sup>	2,900	7,100	12,200	17,800
Lower requirement B (EBC population scenario, reduced expenditure retention)	-400	3,700	8,600	14,100
Upper requirement C (Experian population scenario) <sup>2</sup>	3,300	8,100	13,600	19,700
Upper requirement D (Experian population scenario, reduced expenditure retention)	-100	4,500	9,800	15,600

Source: <sup>1</sup>Table A8 / <sup>2</sup>Table 8, Appendix II

\*Indicative only. Figures are cumulative.

## Summary

- In this section we have discussed the comparison goods shopping patterns highlighted in the previous section in further detail, defining the catchment area for each of the Town and District centres in the Borough. We also identify the amount of comparison goods floorspace which the Council should plan for over the course of the period to 2035.
- We have also analysed the comparison goods trading performance of each of the Town and District Centres in the Borough. This has identified that comparison goods floorspace in Walton-on-Thames Town Centre is in the region of £5,500 per sq.m, which we consider to be a reasonable performance in light of the competition from Kingston-upon-Thames.
- Some of the District Centres – most particularly Cobham and Weybridge – are performing strongly, particularly Cobham which is achieving a comparison goods sales density of £6,735 per sq.m.
- The comparison goods sales density of Esher District Centre – at £2,178 per sq.m – does represent some cause for concern, and whilst this performance is reflective of the fact that much of the offer in the centre is orientated towards convenience and leisure, it does indicate that there is insufficient comparison goods provision in the centre at present.
- Based on a constant market share approach (i.e. assuming that current patterns of comparison goods shopping remain unchanged), the Council should plan for between 7,100 and 8,100 sq.m net additional comparison goods floorspace by 2025, rising to between 17,800 sq.m net and 19,700 sq.m net comparison goods floorspace over the period to 2035. The lower capacity figure is based on growth rates derived from the levels of housing growth which the Council expects to come forward, whilst the higher capacity figure is based Experian population projections, which are informed by past-trends levels of population growth. Longer term capacity forecasts should be considered indicative only and subject to regular review.
- We have also tested a scenario whereby the amount of comparison goods expenditure which is retained in the Borough decreases from the current rate of 29.2% to 27.0% on account of new comparison goods-led development which is expected to come forward in key competing centres such as Kingston-upon-Thames, Woking and Guildford. Under this scenario, the requirement for new comparison goods floorspace decreases to between 3,700 sq.m net and 4,500 sq.m net by 2025, increasing to between 14,100 sq.m net and 15,600 sq.m net at 2035, based on the two population growth scenarios we have tested.
- Therefore, it is considered that the minimum amount of comparison goods floorspace which the Council should plan for is 14,100 sq.m net by 2035, and the maximum amount is 19,700 sq.m net. As noted above, these forecasts should be subject to regular review.

## 8 CONVENIENCE GOODS CAPACITY FORECASTS

8.1 In this section we set out the capacity for additional convenience goods in Elmburgh Borough over the period to 2035. Our discussion follows the same format as set out for the comparison goods capacity forecasts in the previous section. The discussion set out below should be read in conjunction with the tabulations at Appendix III.

### Shopping patterns by centre

8.2 Table 8.1 shows the most popular convenience goods shopping destinations for those parts of the survey area that fall within Elmburgh Borough. It also shows each zone's 'local retention rate', i.e. the proportion of available convenience goods expenditure to residents of that zone which is retained within the zone itself, thus giving an indication of the sustainability of localised convenience goods shopping patterns. The blue-shaded entries denote stores within the respective 'local' zones; the pink-shaded zones denote stores within an adjacent survey zone.

**Table 8.1: Local retention rate and most popular convenience goods shopping locations by zone**

	Local retention rate (for zone) (%)	Most popular convenience goods shopping location (%)	Second-most popular convenience shopping location (%)	Third-most popular convenience shopping location (%)
Weybridge (zone 3)	77.8%	Waitrose, Weybridge (31.8%)	Tesco Extra, Brooklands (14.9%)	Morrisons, Weybridge (12.1%)
Walton-on-Thames (zone 4)	55.1%	Sainsbury's, Walton-on-Thames (29.7%)	Aldi, Walton-on-Thames (11.7%)	Morrisons, Weybridge (9.0%)
Molesey (zone 5)	67.5%	Tesco, West Molesey (37.8%)	Tesco Metro, East Molesey (18.6%)	Sainsbury's Local, West Molesey (10.2%)

	Local retention rate (for zone) (%)	Most popular convenience goods shopping location (%)	Second-most popular convenience shopping location (%)	Third-most popular convenience shopping location (%)
Thames Ditton & Claygate (zone 6)	19.0%	Waitrose, Esher (17.4%)	Co-operative, Claygate (16.4%)	Sainsbury's, Cobham (8.2%)
Esher (zone 7)	43.2%	Waitrose, Esher (43.2%)	Tesco, West Molesey (9.7%)	Sainsbury's, Cobham (7.8%)
Hersham (zone 8)	47.5%	Waitrose, Hersham (47.5%)	Tesco Extra, Brooklands (9.6%)	Sainsbury's, Walton-on-Thames (8.2%)
Cobham (zone 9)	81.0%	Waitrose, Cobham (40.0%)	Sainsbury's, Cobham (30.9%)	Sainsbury's Local, Cobham (10.1%)

Source: Table 4, Appendix III

8.3 Table 8.1 shows that, for the most part, centres in Elmburgh are relatively self-sustaining, with no evidence of significant proportions of residents in any zone travelling long distances to undertake their convenience goods shopping. Weybridge and Cobham are the most sustainable centres in the Borough in terms of convenience goods shopping patterns, retaining 78% and 81% of convenience goods expenditure respectively, and with each of the three most popular convenience goods shopping destinations located within their respective local zones.

8.4 There is evidence that some residents in Esher and Hersham are travelling longer distances for their convenience goods shopping, suggesting a potential shortfall in provision at the local level, and this trend is also apparent for residents in zone 6 (Thames Ditton & Claygate) – although the lack of higher-order centres in this zones means that this trend is, to a degree, to be expected. The recent planning permission for a new Lidl store in Molesey Road, Hersham (which we have included as a 'commitment' in this study) will be expected to reduce some of the convenience goods expenditure 'leakage' from Hersham which is currently taking place.

8.5 Table 8.1 also shows that the most popular foodstore for residents in zones 5, 7, 8 and 9 attracts over one-third of all available market share, suggesting a potential lack of consumer choice in these areas. This is particularly noticeable in the case of zones 7 and 8, where the Waitrose foodstores in Esher and Hersham attract market shares of 43% and 48% from their respective local zones, which clearly indicates these stores have a dominant influence over shopping patterns in their respective zones.

## Performance assessment

- 8.6 In Tables 6 and 8 of Appendix III, we have undertaken a review of the trading performance of the convenience goods floorspace in the Borough, to establish whether the floorspace is trading in line with 'benchmark' levels (i.e. company averages for national operators, or typical sales densities for independent retailers). Table 8 of Appendix III shows that, on average, convenience goods floorspace in Elmburidge is trading at £10,851 per sq.m, which is a high sales density and suggests that most convenience goods floorspace in the Borough is trading particularly well. It also suggests that the vast majority of convenience goods sales in the Borough are accounted for by larger-format supermarkets, as smaller independent/convenience goods retailers operate with much lower sales densities.
- 8.7 Analysis of the performance of individual stores in the Borough is set out at Table 6 of Appendix III. This shows that a number of foodstores in the Borough are trading particularly strongly, with turnovers significantly in excess of 'benchmark' levels. Many of the strongest-performing foodstores are operated by Waitrose: Table 6 of Appendix III identifies that their store in Esher is trading at +£14.1m above company average levels; the Weybridge store is trading at +£8.4m above company average levels; and the Hersham store is trading at +£4.8m above company average levels. The survey results indicated that the Little Waitrose store in Walton-on-Thames Town Centre was performing less strongly, trading at -£5.8m below company average levels, and we note that this store has subsequently ceased trading. Other strongly performing stores in the Borough include the Tesco store in West Molesey (+£16.1m above company average levels), Tesco Metro in East Molesey (+£7.8m above company average levels) and Aldi in Walton-on-Thames (+£4.5m above company average levels).
- 8.8 A number of foodstores are trading at below company average levels, most notably the new Morrisons store in Weybridge, which is shown to be trading at -£15.9m below company average levels. We would be surprised if this was a true reflection of the trading performance of this store, and it is likely to be the case that the trading patterns of this store are still to be fully established following its relatively recent opening. The Sainsbury's store at Cobham is also shown as trading below company average levels, although we understand that this store has an untypically large catchment area (extending across a large rural area to the south) which will not have been fully accounted for by the household telephone survey.
- 8.9 The trading performance of specialist/independent retailers is generally fractionally below expected trading levels, although this is often because patterns of visits to these type of shops are under-reported in household survey responses. Nevertheless the trading performance of independent retailers should be carefully monitored and initiatives which support the promotion of retailers of this nature should be supported.
- 8.10 Overall, it is considered that – with the exception of the Morrisons store in Weybridge – convenience goods floorspace in the Borough is generally trading strongly, i.e. at or above company average 'benchmark' levels.

## Identification of convenience goods capacity

- 8.11 Table 8.2 shows the capacity for additional convenience goods floorspace in Elmburidge over the period to 2035. As with the comparison goods capacity forecasts which we have set in Section 7, it is important to note that forecasts become increasingly open to margins of error over time, and accordingly should be refreshed throughout the Council's Plan period. Findings should be considered alongside our qualitative assessments set out earlier in this report, as identification of low/negligible capacity does not, in itself, mean that there is no 'need' for additional floorspace.
- 8.12 Based on a 'constant market share' approach (i.e. assuming that current patterns of shopping remain unchanged), Table 8.2 shows that there is a quantitative 'need' for 1,900 sq.m net additional convenience goods floorspace in the Borough over the period to 2035. There is limited 'need' in the short-term (only 200 sq.m net by 2020), with the majority of the requirement arising post-2025. The forecasts take into account the 'commitment' for a new Lidl foodstore at Molesey Road, Hersham (which benefits from planning permission but is yet to commence trading). The applicants have estimated that this store will achieve a turnover of £2.4m per annum (see Table 7, Appendix III).

**Table 8.2: Convenience goods floorspace capacity, Elmburidge Borough**

	2020 (sq.m net, rounded)	2025 (sq.m net, rounded)	2030 (sq.m net, rounded)*	2035 (sq.m net, rounded)*
Convenience goods floorspace capacity	200	800	1,400	1,900

Source: Table 8, Appendix III

\*Indicative only. Figures are cumulative and rounded.

## Scenario testing

- 8.13 The above capacity forecasts are based on Experian population projections, produced at the zonal level. As set out above, the Council have requested that, as part of this study, an alternative population growth scenario is tested, which is based on extant permissions and the level of housing growth which the Council expects to come forward under the current Plan (derived from the Core Strategy (2011) and Land Availability Assessment (2014)). We have set out our approach to calculating population growth under this scenario at paragraph 7.19.
- 8.14 By applying the population growth levels set out above to our comparison goods capacity modelling, the following key changes arise. Full tabulations are set out at Tables B1 to B8 of Appendix III:

- Total population growth in the study area over the period 2015-35 reduces from 32,007 persons to 25,476 persons (Table B1, Appendix III)
- Total growth in convenience goods spending in the study area over the period 2015-35 reduces from £58.9m to £44.2m (Table B3, Appendix III).
- The requirement for additional convenience goods floorspace over the period to 2035 reduces from 1,900 sq.m net to 1,000 sq.m net (Table B8, Appendix III), and accordingly this represents the range of convenience goods floorspace 'need' which the Council should plan for. Should this population growth scenario come forward, there will be no need to plan for any additional convenience goods floorspace in the Borough until post-2025.

8.15 A summary of the quantitative convenience goods need arising at each interval period is shown in Table 8.3<sup>8</sup>

**Table 8.3: Convenience goods floorspace capacity, Elmbridge Borough (including EBC population scenario)**

	2020 (sq.m net, rounded)	2025 (sq.m net, rounded)	2030 (sq.m net, rounded)*	2035 (sq.m net, rounded)*
Lower requirement (EBC population scenario) <sup>1</sup>	0	300	600	1,000
Upper requirement (Experian population scenario) <sup>2</sup>	200	800	1,400	1,900

Source: <sup>1</sup>Table B8 / <sup>2</sup>Table 8, Appendix III

\*Indicative only. Figures are cumulative.

## Summary

- In this section we review the convenience goods shopping patterns of residents in the study area in greater detail, showing the most popular convenience goods facilities in each of the study zones which fall within Elmbridge Borough, reviewing the trading performance of convenience goods floorspace, and identifying the amount of convenience goods floorspace which the Council should plan for over the period to 2035.
- There are no gaps in convenience goods provision in the Town and District Centres. Each of the Borough's Town and District centres has at least one foodstore which anchors the wider retail and leisure offer.
- In some cases, a foodstore exerts a particularly strong influence over local market shares. This is particularly the case in the south of the Borough, where the household telephone survey has identified that the Waitrose stores in Esher, Hersham and Cobham each attract a market share of over 40% from their respective 'local' survey zones. Whilst there is alternative provision in Cobham (a large Sainsbury's and a Sainsbury's Local store), both Esher and Hersham have a lack of consumer choice, although the forthcoming opening of a Lidl store will address this issue in Hersham.
- The majority of foodstores in the Borough are trading strongly, and a number have turnovers significantly in excess of operator 'benchmark' levels. Stores trading particularly strongly include Tesco in West Molesey, Tesco Metro in East Molesey, Waitrose in Esher, Waitrose in Weybridge, Waitrose in Hersham and Aldi in Walton-on-Thames. Conversely, a number of foodstores are trading at below expected levels, most notably the Morrisons store in Weybridge, although it is possible that the trading patterns in this store are yet to be fully established following its relatively recent opening.
- Assuming a 'constant market share' approach (i.e. that current patterns of convenience goods shopping will remain unchanged), the Council does not need to plan for a significant amount of convenience goods floorspace over the period to 2035, with an identified requirement of between 300 sq.m and 800 sq.m net convenience goods floorspace by 2025, rising to between 1,000 and 1,900 sq.m net convenience goods floorspace by 2035. The lower capacity figure is based on growth rates derived from the levels of housing growth which the Council expects to come forward, whilst the higher capacity figure is based Experian population projections, which are informed by past-trends levels of population growth. Longer term capacity forecasts should be considered indicative only and subject to regular review.
- These figures make allowance for the extant planning permission for a new Lidl store in Hersham.

<sup>8</sup> In our comparison goods capacity forecasts, we undertook a second scenario test which assumed a reduction in the amount of comparison goods expenditure which would be retained in the Borough. Because Elmbridge Borough is well provided for in terms of foodstores, meaning that fewer residents are travelling to surrounding centres to undertake their food shopping, we do not repeat this scenario test for our convenience goods assessment.



## 9 COMMERCIAL LEISURE ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 Emerging trends suggest that commercial leisure uses are playing an increasingly important role in the vitality and viability of centres by providing complementary uses that strengthen both the daytime and evening economies. Due to the changing nature of high-street shopping, leisure uses can often represent a significant proportion of a Town Centre's overall turnover, and our health check assessments in section 5 have highlighted the importance commercial leisure plays to the vitality and viability of a number of the centres in the Borough.
- 9.2 This section of the report considers the current provision of leisure uses through the study area, including patterns of visits to restaurant, café, cinema, entertainment venues and cultural facilities, and identifies any qualitative 'gaps' in the provision of these facilities. The results are informed by our qualitative assessments of centres carried out by GVA and the findings of the household telephone survey undertaken in support of this study in August 2015. We also consider the amount of expenditure growth which is expected to come forward on leisure goods over the course of the study period, although we do not translate this to a floorspace requirement.
- 9.3 The findings of the household survey identified that:
- Visiting restaurants is the most popular leisure activity undertaken by 75% of participants to the household survey. The second most popular leisure activity is going to cafés (64%) followed going to the cinema (60%), going to pubs / clubs (54%) and going to theatres / museums / arts centres / art galleries (53%).
  - 44% of participants stated they visit health and fitness clubs (i.e. gyms, leisure centres and swimming pools). 28% of participants stated that they visit various entertainments venues such as ten-pin bowling, ice skating and bingo halls, whilst 12% go to children's soft play venues.
  - 7% of survey participants stated they did not partake in any of the leisure activities listed above.

### Cafés

- 9.4 The results of the household telephone survey identified that:
- Going to daytime cafés / restaurants was a popular leisure activity for 64% of residents in the survey area. There was some disparity across the zones, with figures ranging from 39% in zone 8 to 75% in zone 7.
  - Across all zones, Walton-on-Thames was the most popular location to go for visiting cafés, accounting for 14.5% of all visits. From its local zone, Walton-on-Thames draws a market share of 61%, which suggests that the current provision can be considered adequate. The centre also

draws a reasonably high proportion of trade from several other zones, most notably zone 8 (44%) and zone 2 (19%).

- Weybridge District Centre and Kingston-upon-Thames were the joint second most popular location for visits to cafés (each attracting a market share of 10%). The household survey results indicate Weybridge District Centre draws principally from its local zone (74% market share from zone 3), alongside minor draws from zone 2 (7%) and zone 8 (3%); Kingston-upon-Thames draws principally from zone 6 (22%), zone 5 (20%) and zone 2 (14%).
- Cobham, Esher and East Molesey also draw market share for visits to cafés, and Cobham in particular has high levels of patronage from its local zone, drawing a market share of 80%. Esher District Centre draws 61% of trade from its local zone, and East Molesey draws 29% of trade from its local zone reflecting the more limited provision of A3 uses in this centre.

### Restaurants

- 9.5 Visiting restaurants was the most popular leisure activity for participants of the household survey, with 75% of all respondents taking part in this type of leisure activity. Analysis of the survey results highlighted that:
- Walton-on-Thames was identified as the most popular location that people go to for visiting evening restaurants (16% of visits) and in many cases we expect this would be combined with either other leisure trips (e.g. visiting the cinema) or comparison goods shopping. Walton-on-Thames attracts a market share of over 68% from its local zone – as well as noteworthy market shares from zone 2 (30%), zone 8 (25%), zone 5 (9%) and zone 1 (8%), plus smaller market shares from across much of the rest of the survey area. This confirms Walton-on-Thames as the principal 'evening economy' destination of the centres in Elmbridge as well as showing the centre attracts trade from surrounding zones which have an under provision of this type of leisure service. The 'family dining' offer of Walton-on-Thames has been significantly enhanced with the opening of The Heart, which introduced retailers such as Pizza Express, Wagamama, Carluccio's and Nando's and this is likely to be a fundamental reason behind the market shares that have been identified.
  - Esher District Centre was the second most visited location from across the survey area (12% of visits). Esher District Centre attracts a market share of over 67% from its local zone – as well as noteworthy market shares from zone 6 (26%) and zone 8 (16%), with smaller market shares from across much of the rest of the survey area. Esher has a strong independent dining offer, as well as includes a handful of multiple retailers such as Cote Brasserie and Pizza Express. This unique dining offer is likely to contribute to the strong market shares that have been identified as from within its local zone.
  - Weybridge District Centre was the third most visited location for going to restaurants (10% of visits), and attracts a market share of over 73% from its local zone (zone 3) – as well as a noteworthy market share from zone 8 (15%), with smaller market shares from across much of the rest of the survey area. Similarly to the other centres, Weybridge has a strong dining offer, which comprises a mixture of independent restaurants as well as multiple operators such as Giraffe and Prezzo.

- Cobham District Centre was the fourth most visited location for going to restaurants (7% of visits). Cobham District Centre principally draws restaurant visitors from its local zone (zone 9)(63%) – as well as smaller market shares from zone 1 (4%) and zone 10 (4%), with very minor market shares from across much of the rest of the survey area.
- Kingston-upon-Thames (5%), Central London/West End (5%) and Staines (4%) were less popular locations for visiting restaurants. This suggests that the provision of restaurants within the study area is generally strong and is meeting the needs of residents in the study area which is represented by the strong market shares attracted to Walton-on-Thames, Weybridge and Esher in particular.

## Cinemas

- 9.6 Going to the cinema was the third most popular leisure activity amongst survey respondents, with 60% stating that it was a leisure activity that they partake in. This was a particularly popular leisure activity for residents across the entire survey area, with results ranging from 75% in zone 7 to 44% in zone 8, which correlates to where there is cinema provision. Esher and Walton-on-Thames are the only two centres in Elmbridge which have a cinema. The household survey results indicate that much of the market share is being kept within the study area, with 'leakage' of market share for the most part relatively limited.
- 9.7 The three most popular locations for going to the cinema in the survey area were Everyman Cinema in Walton-on-Thames, the Everyman in Esher and the Vue at Two Rivers Retail Park in Staines, each accounting for 22% of cinema visits across the study area. This was followed by the Odeon IMAX cinema in Kingston upon Thames (15%). The household survey results indicate that Everyman Cinema in Walton-on-Thames principally draws visits from zone 8 (70%), zone 4 (62%), zone 3 (56%), zone 2 (23%) and zone 1 (7%). The cinema has much lower draw from zones 5-7 and 9-10.
- 9.8 The Everyman in Esher has a strong trade draw from its local zone 7 (87%), in addition to its adjacent zones, particularly zone 6 (54%), zone 9 (53%), zone 3 (22%), zone 8 (21%), zone 5 (19%) and zone 4 (10%). The cinema has a comparatively low trade draw elsewhere. These results highlight that there is clear, well-defined catchment for both of the two cinemas in the Borough, and with the exception of residents in zone 8, there is relatively little overlap in the catchment area of each cinema.

## Theatres, Museums and Art Galleries

- 9.9 Visiting theatres, museums or art galleries was cited as the fifth most popular leisure activity for participants of the household telephone survey, with 53% of respondents stated that they took part in at least one of these cultural activities.
- 9.10 The location most visited for going to the theatre, museum or art gallery was London's West End (59%), a reflection both the extensive, world-class offer which central London can boast in respect of this type of facility, and also the ease of access to central London which much of the survey area benefits

from. Central London was a particularly popular destination for residents across the entire survey area, with results ranging from 76% in zone 9 to 36% in zone 10. Following the West End, the second most cited location was Woking (23%) followed by Richmond-upon-Thames (4%). There are relatively few facilities of this nature within the Borough, and therefore the trends observed here are largely to be expected.

## Entertainment Venues

- 9.11 For the purposes of this study, the term 'entertainment venues' has been used to encompass a range of leisure activities including tenpin bowling, bingo and ice skating. The results of the household telephone survey identified that:
- This type of leisure activity is far less popular amongst residents in the survey area: only 28% of all survey participants stated that they took part in at least one of the 'entertainment venue' activities. Visiting entertainment venues was most popular in zones 6 (41%) and 1 (36%) and least popular in zone 8 (6%) with varying degrees of popularity likely to be reflective of residents' differing levels of access to facilities of this nature across the survey area. The most popular entertainment destination for survey respondents was Tenpin Kingston (25%), followed by Tenpin Feltham (15%) and Guildford Spectrum (12%) – all of which locations are outside of the study area. Guildford Spectrum is a leisure complex which offers facilities for ice skating, bowling and swimming, among other activities
  - The household survey results indicate that Tenpin Kingston draws a high number of visits from most of Elmbridge, and in particular zones 4-9, but very little from zones 1, 2, 3 and 10. Of particular note is Tenpin Kingston's trade draw from zones 7 (60%), 6 (58%) and 8 (50%). Tenpin Feltham principally draws trade from zones 2 (65%), 5 (26%) and 1 (8%), with comparatively low trade draw elsewhere. Guildford Spectrum principally draws trade from zones 10 (86%), 3 (37%) and 9 (34%), with comparatively low trade draw elsewhere.
- 9.12 Whilst the trends which the household survey has identified are not especially surprising as many facilities of this nature typically locate in higher-order centres where there is a large catchment (including, for many, a large student community), the almost-total absence of entertainment facilities mean that it is plausible to conclude that there is a qualitative gap in the provision of 'entertainment venues' within the study area. While there is a good range of facilities available in the centres surrounding the study area, the distance involved in travelling to these facilities from some parts of the Borough means that residents are simply choosing not to use them.

## Health and Fitness Facilities

- 9.13 The household survey results highlighted that 44% of participants use health and fitness clubs (i.e. gyms, leisure centres, swimming pools, tennis courts etc.), with very little discrepancy across the zones in terms of popularity of using such facilities. It is possible that many survey respondents use specialist

classes, small independent classes and personal trainers which would not be accounted for in the household survey. Table 9.1 highlights the most visited locations by participants in the study area.

**Table 9.1: Health and Fitness Facilities**

Venue / Location	Council / Private	Usage by Household Survey Respondents (%)
Elmbridge Xcel Leisure Complex, Walton-on-Thames	Council	15%
Weybridge Health Club and Spa, Weybridge	Private	5%
David Lloyd, Weybridge	Private	4%
Hurst Pool, West Molesey	Council	4%
Virgin Active, Sunbury on Thames	Private	3%

Source: household survey results

- 9.14 The most popular facility for residents in the study area is Elmbridge Xcel Leisure Complex, Walton-on-Thames, which attracts a market share of 15%. This facilities draws the majority of trade from its local zone (zone 4), with noteworthy trade from zone 5 (31%), zone 8 (25%), zone 3 (16%) and zone 2 (15%). Weybridge Health Club and Spa, Weybridge accounts for 5% and David Lloyd, Weybridge and Hurst Pool, West Molesey account for 4% of the market share respectively. Virgin Active, Sunbury-on-Thames accounts for 3% of the market share.

## Expenditure growth in the commercial leisure sector

- 9.15 By applying the Experian population projections we have adopted for our retail capacity forecasts to the latest per capita expenditure data on leisure spending, we can obtain an indication of the likely growth in leisure spending available to residents of the survey area. Whilst not all of this available expenditure can, by default, be used to support the development of new commercial leisure facilities in the survey area – particularly because leisure spending is often undertaken with holidays, day trips, special occasions and so on and therefore may in part be spent outside the survey area – it does provide an indication of the scope for additional development to be supported, thus supporting our qualitative observations in respect of the performance of the centres set out above.

- 9.16 Experian provide per capita leisure expenditure data on the following categories of commercial leisure spending:

- **'Cultural services'** – this includes spending on cinema, theatre, museums, live music / entertainment, nightclubs, bingo, and TV subscriptions such as Netflix. Spending on this type of leisure service ranges from £360 per person, per annum (zone 1) to £440 per person, per annum (zone 10)
- **'Recreation and sporting services'** – this includes spending on admission to spectator sports (e.g. watching football matches) and subscriptions to sports / social clubs. Spending on this type of leisure service ranges from £155 per person, per annum (zone 1) to £224 per person, per annum (zone 10).
- **'Restaurants and cafés'** – this includes spending in both restaurants and cafés, and also includes spending on 'alcoholic drinks consumed outside the home' (i.e. in pubs and bars) and on take-aways. Spending on this type of leisure service accounts for the majority of residents' commercial leisure spend, ranging from £1,118 per annum (zone 1) to £1,580 per annum (zone 6).

- 9.17 Experian advise that spending on commercial leisure services will increase by 1.3% per annum over the period 2015-35. By applying the average zonal per capita spend on the different types of commercial leisure activity to Experian's population projections for the survey area (see Table 1, Appendix II), the total 'pot' of commercial leisure expenditure available to residents of the survey area can be calculated. The results of this exercise are summarised in Table 9.2.

**Table 9.2: Growth in commercial leisure spending in survey area, 2015-35**

	2015 (£m)	2020 (£m)	2025 (£m)	2030 (£m)	2035 (£m)	Change, 2015-35 (£m)
Cultural services	89.1	98.6	108.9	119.7	131.2	+42.0
Recreation & sporting services	42.1	46.6	51.4	56.5	61.9	+19.8
Restaurants & cafés	315.0	348.2	384.6	422.7	463.0	+148.1
<b>Total commercial leisure spend</b>	<b>446.2</b>	<b>493.3</b>	<b>544.9</b>	<b>598.9</b>	<b>656.1</b>	<b>+209.9</b>

Source: Experian Micromarketer

- 9.18 Table 9.2 shows that total spending on commercial leisure is expected to increase by £209.98m in the survey area between 2015 and 2035. Over 70% of this expenditure growth will be in the 'restaurants and cafés' sector and therefore there is considerable scope for the existing network of centres in the survey area to further capitalise on this growth in spending, notwithstanding the fact that many of the centres in Elmbridge Borough are already well-provided for in this respect. Growth in cultural services

is more limited, and whilst much of this is likely to be captured by destinations outside the survey area (particularly central London and Kingston), there may be sufficient expenditure growth to support enhancement of facilities within the Borough, although we would expect any additional provision of this nature within the Borough to be of relatively limited scale.

## Summary

- In this section we have set out the patterns of visits of residents in the study area for different types of commercial leisure spending, such as cafés, restaurants, cinemas, and cultural facilities such as museums and art galleries.
- Visiting restaurants is the most popular leisure activity undertaken by 75% of participants to the household survey. The second most popular leisure activity is going to cafés (64%) followed going to the cinema (60%), going to pubs/clubs (54%) and going to Theatres / museums / arts centres / art galleries (53%).
- 44% of participants stated they visit health and fitness clubs (i.e. gyms, leisure centres and swimming pools). 28% of participants stated that they visit various entertainments venues such as tenpin bowling, ice skating and bingo halls, whilst 12% go to children's soft play venues.
- Levels of patronage by residents of the study area to cafés and restaurants is therefore high, which can largely be considered a reflection of the fact that many of the Borough's centres are well provided for in this respect. As our centre health checks (Section 5) have identified, the café/dining offer in Walton-on-Thames Town Centre has been significantly enhanced following the opening of The Heart; this development introduced a number of new national operators (Starbucks, GBK, Pizza Express etc) to the town centre for the first time. Our health checks identified that Weybridge, Cobham and particularly Esher also have strong café / dining offers which adds to (and in the case of Esher largely defines) the vitality and viability of the District Centres.
- The Borough has two Everyman cinemas – in Walton-on-Thames and Esher (recently acquired). This recent acquisition represents a positive investment in the centre. The household telephone survey identifies that each centre has a clear, well-defined catchment area; there is (with the exception of zone 8) relatively little overlap in the catchment of the two sites. There is potentially a qualitative gap in cinema provision in the west of the Borough (Weybridge area) but market appetite for enhancing provision in this area may be limited by the development currently under construction in Addlestone town centre.
- Significant spending growth on restaurants & cafés (£148.1m by 2035) is expected to come forward in the study area, indicating that further provision of this nature will be able to be supported, although this should not come at the expense of undermining the retail function of the Borough's network of centres. More limited growth is expected to come forward in 'recreation & sporting services' (growth of £19.8m) and cultural services (growth of £42.0m).



## 10 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 The principal objective of this study is to provide Elmbridge Borough Council with an up-to-date assessment of the performance of its town centres and the 'need' for new retail and commercial leisure floorspace. The findings will form part of the Council's evidence which will support preparation of their new Local Plan, in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The information contained within this report will also be used by the Council to assist in determination of future applications for retail and commercial leisure floorspace in the Borough.
- 10.2 This section brings together the analysis undertaken in the previous sections of the report, and sets out our conclusions and key recommendations. Firstly though, we summarise the objectives of the NPPF, and highlight the key national trends which we expect to influence and impact upon retail and town centre development in the Borough over the next twenty years. We also summarise the sub-regional shopping provision which this study has identified has a clear and marked influence over residents in Borough, particularly in respect of comparison (non-food) goods shopping.

### National and local policy framework

- 10.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was adopted in March 2012 and replaces the suite of national planning policy statements, including PPS4. The NPPF maintains the general thrust of PPS4 and advocates a 'town centres first' approach. It requires planning policies to positively promote competitive town centre environments and manage the growth of centres over the plan period. It also requires local planning authorities to define the extent of the town centres and primary shopping areas, based on a clear definition of primary and secondary frontages.
- 10.4 Elmbridge's Core Strategy was adopted in 2011 and is the principle document in the Elmbridge Local Plan. It sets out a long-term vision, spatial strategy and core policies for shaping the Borough's development up to 2026. The Core Strategy sets the overarching strategy for the Borough which adopts a local approach to the promotion of sustainable growth, whilst protecting the environment and providing community infrastructure. This study will form part of the evidence base of any replacement Local Plan which the Council may seek to progress.
- 10.5 Main 'settlement areas', including Walton-on-Thames and Weybridge, are identified as the most sustainable locations within Elmbridge. They provide a broad range of uses and services, as well as opportunities to accommodate new development. Suburban 'settlement areas' including Esher, Hersham, East and West Molesey, Hinchley Wood and Thames Ditton are primarily residential in character and provide a more limited range of uses and services. These areas are not as sustainable as Walton-on-Thames and Weybridge, but nevertheless have the capacity to accommodate new

development in a sustainable manner. The Core Strategy also identifies service centre and rural fringe areas including Cobham, Oxshott, Stoke D'Abernon and Downside, within which Cobham is expected to be the focus for new growth.

- 10.6 The Core Strategy sets out a hierarchy of centres in the Borough, headed by Walton-on-Thames (a 'Town Centre'), with Weybridge, Cobham, Esher, East Molesey and Hersham all identified as 'District Centres'. Claygate, East Molesey Bridge Road, Hinchley Wood, Oxshott, Oatlands, Thames Ditton, Walton - Terrace Road, Walton - Halfway and Weybridge - Queens Road are all identified as 'Local Centres'. The Core Strategy states that for Walton-on-Thames, 'Further Town Centre development will be encouraged where this adds to the overall vitality and viability of the centre; is of an appropriate scale; and makes a positive contribution to the significant environmental improvements that have and continue to take place in the town', whilst for the District and Local Centres the approach is one of safeguarding and consolidating their existing role and function. We return to discuss the suitability of this hierarchy below.

### National market trends

- 10.7 The 'traditional' high street continues to face a number of challenges stemming from the impacts of the recent economic downturn, the tightening of retail spending in recent years, and continued significant changes in consumer shopping behaviour. The growth in online shopping, including multi-channel retailing, acts as tough competition for the high street, but also presents an opportunity for the high street to capitalise, by maximising the opportunities arising from services like 'click & collect', and retailers moving towards a seamless transition between store-based and virtual shopping experiences.
- 10.8 Out-of-centre retailing remains an ever-present source of competition, and market evidence suggests that many retail parks have performed well during the economic downturn, and are becoming increasingly attractive to 'high street' retailers. Many out-of-centre developments are seeking to increase footfall through a greater product offer and mix of uses (including introduction of coffee shops and casual dining) to encourage footfall and longer dwell times. Whilst Elmbridge has relatively little in the way of out-of-centre floorspace, Brooklands appears to be performing strongly and we understand has a substantial catchment area.
- 10.9 Town centre strategies which support the continued evolution of the high street are therefore considered ever more vital. This may involve providing a high quality shopping 'experience', maximising the benefits of tourist trade, and improving the mix of retail and non-retail outlets to increase length of stay and spend. Many of Elmbridge's centres have a strong and well-developed commercial leisure offer supporting their core retail function which has helped them remain, for the most part, healthy and well-performing locations in recent years.
- 10.10 It will be important, therefore, for town centres to be well positioned to be able to adapt to on-going changes in the retail and leisure sector over the development plan period and to reaffirm their unique selling points which differentiate their retail offer from other centres, allowing them to differentiate

themselves from – rather than directly compete with – higher order centres. This is particularly important for Elmbridge, which does not have any centres with the scale of retail and leisure offer to compete with nearby higher order centres. Heritage, tourism assets and other 'unique selling points' should be capitalised on, and robust place-marketing strategies put in place.

## The sub-regional network

- 10.11 To help understand where residents living in Elmbridge are currently shopping, a household telephone survey was undertaken in support of this study. This survey was used to ascertain where residents in Elmbridge and surrounding areas which may look towards Elmbridge for their shopping needs ('the survey area') are currently undertaking their comparison, convenience (food) shopping, and commercial leisure trips (e.g. visits to cinemas, restaurants, cafés, cultural facilities and so on). The survey also asked what residents liked and disliked about the centres in Elmbridge which they visit.
- 10.12 The survey results show that the principle competition for comparison goods spending which Town and District Centres in Elmbridge face is from Kingston-upon-Thames, which accounts for over a quarter of all comparison goods spending available to residents in the study area as a whole, drawing £242.7m of comparison goods spend from the survey area. Kingston accounts for over 50% of all comparison goods shopping spend for residents living in the Molesey, Claygate/Thames Ditton and Esher parts of the survey area, and almost one-third of all comparison goods shopping spend for residents in the Hersham area. Kingston's influence over the shopping patterns in the western part of the Borough (Walton-on-Thames / Weybridge), whilst less pronounced, is also noticeable.
- 10.13 Kingston is a major shopping destination, and its influence over shopping patterns in the Borough should not be a surprise, nor a cause for concern. It is a UK top-20 shopping destination, with a retail offer pitched towards the upper-middle end of the market and particularly good representation from national retailers (70% of the total comparison goods retail offer), comprising a mixture of department stores, high street brands, and upmarket retailers such as Jigsaw and Hobbs. This strong retail mix is a key reason behind the attractiveness of the centre as a shopping destination, and also its strong performance in the national rankings.
- 10.14 We see no reason for Kingston's influence over the shopping patterns of residents in Elmbridge to diminish over the course of Elmbridge's Local Plan period. Indeed, there are plans for further enhancement of the retail and leisure offer in Kingston Town Centre, including up to 30,000 sq.m of new retail floorspace as part of the Eden Quarter development. Whilst there is duplication between the retail offer in Kingston and that in some of Elmbridge's centres - particularly Walton-on-Thames, the strength of the overall 'offer' of Kingston is something which the Borough's centres will need to work hard to provide an attractive alternative to.
- 10.15 Kingston is not the only higher-order centre which competes for expenditure with the centres in Elmbridge. Woking, Staines and Guildford each draw between £50.7m and £91.4m of comparison goods spending from the survey area, although the influence of both Woking and Staines on shopping patterns is, for the most part, restricted to those parts of the survey area which fall outside

the boundaries of Elmbridge Borough. Woking has seen significant investment in its Town Centre in recent years, which has resulted in the attraction of a number of high-profile new operators to the town. Planning consent has been secured for the Victoria Square development, which will add a further 11,600 sq.m of new floorspace to the Town Centre, anchored by a new Marks & Spencer store, a four-star hotel and almost 400 new residential apartments.

- 10.16 Guildford has a greater influence on comparison goods shopping patterns for parts of Elmbridge compared to Woking and Staines, particularly residents in the Weybridge, Esher and Cobham areas. In total, Guildford draws £50.7m of comparison goods spend from the survey area. As with Kingston, Guildford benefits from having a particularly strong comparison goods shopping offer, with strong representation of both independent stores and national retailers, including a selection of designer stores such as Jo Malone, LK Bennett and Jaeger; department stores including Debenhams and House of Fraser, as well as a number of high street shops such as Monsoon, Marks and Spencer and Gap. Emerging proposals for a new anchor department store to improve the anchor mix, and other retail floorspace as part of the proposed redevelopment of the North Street area will further strengthen Guildford's profile as a shopping destination, and, as with Kingston, we would expect Guildford to continue to influence shopping patterns of residents in parts of the survey area over the Council's Local Plan period.
- 10.17 Overall, each of the three principle competing centres which surround Elmbridge have aspirations to develop / enhance their retail / commercial leisure offer in the short to medium term. This does not mean that the Borough's own centres need to substantially expand their retail offer to try and directly compete - such an approach would require a fundamental alteration in the shopping patterns which this study has identified - but it does mean that these developments will inevitably act as a 'check' on future demand for town centre floorspace in the Borough. However, the Borough's centres cannot be complacent; a 'do nothing' scenario will result in competing centres increasing their market share at the expense of centres in Elmbridge.

## BOROUGH-WIDE CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.18 Notwithstanding the significant shifts which are taking place in the sector, there is no doubt that retail is – and will continue to be – an important contributor to the vitality and viability of town centres, and a driver for growth over the study period to 2035. It is therefore important that the vitality and viability of the Borough's network of Town and District centres is protected and supported through policy. The Council should ensure that the core retail functions of Town and District centres is protected, and examine the introduction of appropriate measures, including Article 4 Directions, to support this. Whilst a more flexible approach to 'town centre' uses is appropriate in secondary locations, active uses on ground floors should be encouraged throughout the Town and District Centres.

10.19 Our study has identified that considerable expenditure growth will take place in the Borough over the study period (driven in part by particularly high levels of per capita expenditure growth in the Borough), resulting in a 'need' for additional comparison and convenience goods floorspace, as follows:

- Comparison goods — between 14,100 and 19,700 sq.m net additional comparison goods floorspace by 2035;
- Convenience goods — between 1,000 and 1,900 sq.m net additional convenience goods floorspace by 2035.

10.20 The capacity forecasts shown above have regard to planning 'commitments' for new retail floorspace in the Borough and are based on a range of scenarios in terms of population growth and, in respect of comparison goods, the amount of comparison goods spending which will be retained in the Borough in light of the planned developments for new comparison goods retail floorspace in competing centres such as Kingston-upon-Thames, Woking and Guildford. The extent to which the proposed new developments in these centres influence shopping patterns of residents in the Borough will ultimately depend on the retail mix, scale of floorspace, anchor tenants and so on.

10.21 Loss of comparison goods expenditure to centres such as Kingston-upon-Thames, Woking and Guildford is not a concern – they are higher-order comparison goods centres relative to those in Elmbridge with a much more established retail offer and a larger catchment area. The centres in Elmbridge should therefore seek to play a complementary, supporting role to these higher order centres, which enable day-to-day and some higher-order shopping needs to be met.

10.22 The location of any new retail development should be subject to the sequential test and impact test where appropriate. We also advise that figures towards the end of the Plan period should be treated as indicative, and subject to further review and updated during the Plan period.

10.23 Having identified the overall quantitative retail capacity for the Borough, below we set out our recommendations for each of the Town and District Centres in the Borough.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS BY CENTRE

10.24 In this section we set out a summary of the performance of the Town and District Centres in the Borough, and also consider opportunity sites within the centres which could potentially support new retail or other town centre uses.

## WALTON-ON-THAMES TOWN CENTRE

10.25 There is no doubt that Walton-on-Thames acts as the highest-order comparison goods shopping destination serving Elmbridge; it attracts a comparison goods turnover of £93.0m from the survey area, over double that of Weybridge and Cobham (the two District Centres with the highest comparison goods turnover), and, following the opening of The Heart, has a good national retailer mix. Importantly - reflecting an issue which is apparent in centres elsewhere in the Borough - the comparison goods retail mix is balanced; at the discount/value end, the Heart includes a Poundland store, and there is a large Wilko store on Bridge Street; there is a good range of mid-market clothing stores such as New Look, River Island, Next and H&M; and at the upper-end of the market there is representation from retailers such as Jigsaw and Hobbs. The High Street has representation from 'typical' retailers such as Boots and WH Smith. As a comparison goods shopping destination therefore, Walton-on-Thames can be considered to be performing well.

10.26 The household survey results have shown that the opening of The Heart has not stopped some residents in the Walton-on-Thames area continuing to travel to locations such as Kingston for their comparison goods, and this is not surprising: Kingston has a particularly strong comparison goods offer and, whilst the range of outlets in Walton-on-Thames has clearly been strengthened in recent years, it is not at a level which can compete with Kingston, Guildford and so on. Although there is some overlap in the retail offer (e.g. Debenhams, H&M and Next) the range of products sold in Walton branches is far more limited.

10.27 Overall, whilst the comparison goods offer in Walton-on-Thames is now at a level which reflects its status as the highest-order centre in the Borough, it will only ever be able to capture a limited proportion of the spending available to local residents in light of the exceptionally strong surrounding competition. We consider the current comparison goods market shares attracted to Walton-on-Thames to be a strong performance, but one which the centre will need to work hard to maintain in light of the competition from surrounding centres. Consequently, the Council will need to plan positively for further development to consolidate (and potentially grow) Walton-on-Thames' market share over the course of its Local Plan period. We consider that there are two key opportunity sites in the Town Centre which could accommodate additional comparison goods floorspace, and we return to discuss these further below.

10.28 In terms of convenience goods, the opening of the new Sainsbury's store as part of the redevelopment of The Heart has provided the Town Centre with a foodstore which is capable of meeting residents' main and top-up shopping needs. A small Aldi store on Church Street provides a further convenience goods opportunity. Interestingly, it would appear that smaller top-up shopping facilities in the centre have struggled in recent years; the Morrisons 'M Local' store on New Zealand Avenue was earmarked for closure by the firm prior to Morrisons' disposal of all of its 'M Local' convenience goods (although we understand that the new owners of the chain intend to re-open the store), and the Little Waitrose store on Hepworth Way ceased trading in October 2015 owing to poor commercial performance. We do not consider there is a pressing quantitative need for any additional convenience goods provision in Walton-on-Thames Town Centre, but further provision

would serve to enhance consumer choice. As noted above, the Aldi store is trading particularly strongly but is a relatively dated, cramped store which could potentially qualitatively benefit from a larger-floorplate unit.

- 10.29 The commercial leisure offer of the Town Centre has been significantly enhanced through the opening of The Heart, introducing a range of 'casual dining' restaurants into the centre such as Wagamama, Carluccio's, Giraffe, GBK and Pizza Express. There are also branches of Starbucks (within Sainsbury's) and Costa in The Heart, and a number of other cafés, chiefly located on High Street and Hepworth Way. Facilities of this nature are important in extending dwell-time for shoppers in the centre during the daytime, and ensuring that centres remain busy outside of retail trading hours. The addition of these facilities therefore can be considered to have had a positive impact on the wider vitality and viability of the centre.
- 10.30 The centre is also fortunate to benefit from having a small independent cinema, operated by Everyman. It is unfortunate that the cinema is, however, largely detached from the rest of the commercial leisure offer in the centre and its location on High Street is for the most part surrounded by estate agents, banks and other service activities. Whilst there is no easy solution to this, the Council should explore ways to develop a critical mass of commercial leisure activity along the length of New Zealand Avenue, to better connect the two areas, encourage footfall and assist in the creation of a leisure 'quarter' in the Town Centre. The re-use / redevelopment of the vacant buildings at the junction of New Zealand Avenue / High Street and Winchester Road / Hershams Road is important in this respect. We note that the latter site has planning permission (under reference number 2015/1796) for redevelopment for class C3 (residential), A1 (retail) and B8 (distribution) use, although this has only just commenced. Class A5 uses should be resisted along the length of New Zealand Avenue, as well as in the entirety of the primary shopping frontage.

## Opportunity sites in Walton-on-Thames

- 10.31 The Council's previous evidence base study (Roger Tym & Partners, 2006) identified a number of opportunity sites in Walton-on-Thames Town Centre which have potential for redevelopment for 'Town Centre' uses. In Table 10.1 we update this schedule of opportunity sites, and also indicate further sites which could potentially be developed for 'Town Centre' uses over the course of the Local Plan period. It should be noted that our assessment of opportunity sites is based on site visits and desktop research, and we have not undertaken any detailed analysis of land ownership or the commercial viability of development of the sites identified.

**Table 10.1: Opportunity sites in Walton-on-Thames Town Centre**

GVA ref	Site	Source	Comments
A1	Former Dukes Head PH / Public Car Park, Hepworth Way	2006 Retail Study	The Dukes Head PH has been redeveloped to provide a retail unit (which was until recently occupied by a Little Waitrose store) and residential uses above. The car park to the rear could potentially represent a redevelopment opportunity, but as there is no frontage to either Hepworth Way or Bridge Street it is unlikely to be suitable for retail uses (unless redeveloped as part of the adjacent Carpetright site, see below).
A2	Dairy Crest site, Church Walk	2006 Retail Study	The Council has recently granted planning permission for the redevelopment of this site (application ref 2015/1796) for a mixed use redevelopment comprising a class A1 retail showroom (346 sq.m) with 18 residential units above, as well as a 782 sq.m B8 storage / distribution unit to the rear of the site. The site boundary includes the prominent vacant building at the junction of High Street / New Zealand Avenue. Redevelopment of this site has recently commenced and at the time of this report was in the process of clearing the site.
A3	Auckland House, New Zealand Avenue	2006 Retail Study	Auckland House was a vacant office building at the time of the 2006 Retail Study but has subsequently been redeveloped to provide retail units (operated by Topps Tiles Boutique and Bathstore) on the ground floor and residential uses on upper floors. The redevelopment has resulted in a functional building whilst, although it makes a fairly neutral contribution to the wider Town Centre offer, is unlikely to be a priority for further redevelopment.
A4	Land adjacent 29 Church Street	2006 Retail Study	This is a small infill site which sits between a commercial premises (29 Church Street, currently vacant) and a residential development. It remains vacant and undeveloped, and currently appears to be used for informal car parking. The site is well-connected to the existing Town Centre, although is clearly in a secondary location. The amount of retail or other Town Centre uses which could be accommodated on the site is relatively limited. Should any applications for development of this site come forward, the Council should encourage class A1 / A3 / A4 uses at the ground floor (i.e. a use with an active frontage onto Church Street), potentially as part



GVA ref	Site	Source	Comments
			of a higher-density mixed use development with residential uses on upper floors (reflecting the scale of development on the adjacent site to the north).
A5	Land adjacent to 14 Bridge Street	2006 Retail Study	This site was vacant at the time of the 2006 Retail Study, but has now been redeveloped to provide a retail unit on the ground floor (occupied by a Costcutter store) and residential uses on upper floors. The site is therefore no longer a development opportunity.
A6	Carpetright & Wilko stores, Bridge Street	GVA site visit	<p>The Carpetright and Wilko development occupies a prominent position in the Town Centre, at the junction of Bridge Street and Hepworth Way, immediately opposite The Heart. The roof of the building is used for car parking, accessed via Hepworth Way Car Park (site A1). In comparison to surrounding uses, the building appears dated and makes a poor contribution to the urban form in the Town Centre. The upper floors of the building appear under-used.</p> <p>Whilst the ground floor is in active retail use, one of the operators (Carpetright) is a bulky goods operator and the store generates very little footfall. However, the unit is large and could potentially be well suited to a better-quality 'high street' comparison goods operator, provided it could be modernised. The adjacent Wilko store is of a comparable size to Carpetright but plays a more important role in the wider vitality and viability of the Town Centre, and can be considered one of the 'anchor' stores outside The Heart.</p> <p>It is considered that there is scope for redevelopment of the Carpetright / Wilko site, potentially allied to the redevelopment of the Hepworth Way car park immediately to the rear (site A1). Redevelopment should continue to provide non-food class A1 floorspace, including introduction of double-height shopfronts, and potentially upper / mezzanine floors into the units. Redevelopment should be of suitable quality to reflect its position in the heart of the Town Centre, immediately opposite The Heart. It is also considered there is scope for a higher density of the development on the site than currently exists.</p>

GVA ref	Site	Source	Comments
			Should the comprehensive redevelopment of the site not be possible, the Council should encourage the modernisation of the existing retail floorspace and shopfronts in order for the site to make a more positive contribution to the wider vitality and viability of the Town Centre.
A7	Homebase site, New Zealand Avenue	EBC	<p>The Homebase site occupies a large parcel of land south of New Zealand Avenue, west of Ashley Park Avenue. There is an area of public car parking to the front of the store which appears to be used by store visitors and Town Centre shoppers. The site is immediately opposite the southern entrance of The Heart (Sainsbury's / Carluccio's) and there is a parade of restaurants fronting onto New Zealand Avenue running eastwards along New Zealand Avenue opposite the site.</p> <p>The Homebase store appears to be a relatively popular shopping destination, although the car park appears more well used than the store itself. In the context of its role and function as a DIY store it is architecturally of relatively good quality, although internally the store feels dated.</p> <p>In common with the Carpetright store, the key question is whether there is a need for a 'bulky goods' store to be located so prominently within the Town Centre. The site affords the opportunity for a southern extension to The Heart to be developed, potentially assisting in encouraging greater levels of footfall along New Zealand Avenue. Whilst we have not tested the potential capacity of the site, it is considered that a large proportion of the identified quantitative comparison goods need for the Borough could be accommodated on this site.</p> <p>Should the opportunity for redevelopment of this site come forward, it is recommended that it takes the form of a mixed-use, class A1 comparison goods-led development, with the potential for residential uses on upper floors (reflecting the successful approach of the existing development at The Heart). There will be a need to provide a larger 'anchor' store unit to assist in driving footfall across New Zealand Avenue. Enhanced</p>

GVA ref	Site	Source	Comments
			<i>pedestrian crossing facilities would also need to be provided on New Zealand Avenue.</i>

## Recommendations for Walton-on-Thames

- Walton-on-Thames should continue to be the highest-order centre in Elmbridge, and the primary focus for accommodating the comparison goods capacity requirement which this study has identified (i.e. between 17,800 sq.m net and 19,700 sq.m net by 2035). Whilst the majority of this requirement does not arise until post-2025, this should not prevent appropriately-scaled development coming forward prior to this, if there is commercial interest and suitable development opportunities.
- As the highest-order retailing centre in the Borough, the core function of Walton-on-Thames as a comparison goods shopping destination needs to be protected, as this clearly underpins its wider vitality and viability. Such an approach is necessary in order to ensure the centre is able to withstand the increased attractiveness of competing retail destinations such as Kingston-upon-Thames and Woking, which this study has identified. The Council should seek to ensure the majority of its frontage in primary shopping areas remains in A1 retail use, and changes of use away from this should be resisted. Consideration should be given to the use of a frontage policy in order to protect these units, as well the use of Article 4 directions.
- The Council should undertake further investigations to examine the potential of two key opportunity sites in enhancing the retail and leisure offer and improving the vitality and viability of the town centre. The Carpetright store at the junction of Bridge Street and Hepworth Way is a prominent position for a 'bulky goods' store, and suffers from a dated internal and external appearance. There is an opportunity to redevelop the unit, ideally in conjunction with the adjacent Wilko unit and the Hepworth Way car park to the rear, to introduce additional modern retail floorspace into the town centre, benefiting from the site's close proximity to The Heart. Should redevelopment of this site come forward, it is recommended that it is marketed to non-'bulky' comparison goods operators.
- The second opportunity site is the Homebase unit on New Zealand Avenue. Whilst it is not known when Homebase's lease on this unit expires, nor whether the company are seeking to retain a long-term trading presence in the town, the proximity of the site to The Heart offers the potential for a natural extension to the comparison goods retail offer in the Town Centre, which would likely accommodate much of the capacity for new comparison goods floorspace which this study has identified. Should the opportunity for redevelopment of this site come forward, it is recommended that it takes the form of a mixed-use, class A1 comparison goods-led development, with the potential for residential uses on upper floors (reflecting the successful

approach of the existing development at The Heart). There will be a need to provide a larger 'anchor' store unit to assist in driving footfall across New Zealand Avenue. Enhanced pedestrian crossing facilities would also need to be provided on New Zealand Avenue.

- Applications for development of new retail and other town centre uses in Walton-on-Thames Town Centre should be considered on individual merits but supported where they will make a positive contribution to the vitality and viability of the Town Centre, supporting and enhancing its role and function as the highest order centre in the Borough.
- The Council should investigate opportunities to enhance pedestrian activity along New Zealand Avenue, to encourage the development of a stronger pedestrian 'circuit' along New Zealand Avenue, High Street and through The Heart. This would have two clear benefits: it would help to drive footfall further south along High Street, and it would improve integration between the new restaurants in The Heart, and the Everyman cinema, an important leisure asset in the Town Centre but one which is slightly disconnected from the rest of the leisure offer at present. New Zealand Avenue therefore has the potential to be the focus of a leisure 'quarter' in the Town Centre. The Council should also consider the introduction of other footfall-generating activities such as a street market in this area.
- Whilst not a pressing need, there may be scope for the development of further convenience goods provision in the Town Centre. The recent closure of the Waitrose store has reduced consumer choice, and the Aldi store is over-trading and appears to be a relatively cramped, dated store. Applications for improvement/enlargement of this store should be considered favourably in principle. There is a further opportunity site – the former P&Q Stores unit on Church Street – which has potential to be used for convenience goods retail. The site forms part of the secondary shopping frontage.
- Elmbridge Borough is relatively poorly provided for in terms of DIY goods floorspace – the Homebase store is the only retail warehouse-format DIY store trading in the Borough at present. In order to ensure that residents' shopping patterns remain sustainable, there may be a need to provide an alternative site for Homebase should the Council consider the redevelopment of this site to be a suitable option for meeting the identified comparison goods retail need.
- Walton-on-Thames benefits from being a generally attractive Town Centre, although there remain areas where the quality of the centre could be improved, particularly along High Street, which has a rather functional-looking appearance, with some dated shopfronts and slightly tired public realm.
- Class A5 uses should be resisted throughout the primary shopping area, as well as along New Zealand Avenue. It is appropriate for the Council to continue to adopt a more flexible approach to town centre uses in other secondary frontage areas of Walton-on-Thames Town Centre.

## WEYBRIDGE DISTRICT CENTRE

- 10.32 It would appear that Weybridge generally – along with Cobham – performs a role of a second-tier centre in the Borough. Both centres' retail functions are considerably more limited than that of Walton-on-Thames, but nevertheless there are sufficient facilities for residents' day to day needs to be met, as well as an element of higher-end comparison goods shopping. Weybridge draws £38.6m of comparison goods spending from the survey area, the second highest of any centre in Elmbridge.
- 10.33 The District Centre is performing well, with no obvious areas of concern. Vacancy rates are low and there is a good retail, services and commercial leisure mix. The convenience goods offer, whilst skewed towards the eastern end of the centre, is good, with a new Morrisons store providing improved consumer choice and competition with the Waitrose store, previously the only supermarket in the Town Centre. The household survey results show that the Waitrose store is performing particularly strongly, trading at £8.4m above company average levels. The Morrisons store appears to be trading some way below company average levels, although this may partly be explained by the fact that the store is a relatively recent addition to the retail offer and its trading patterns may not have yet fully matured.
- 10.34 The comparison goods offer in the District Centre is split between independent and multiple retailers, generally of upmarket quality, with particularly strong representation in ladieswear / accessories, as well as 'typical' high street retailers such as Boots and WH Smith. Reflecting a trend seen in the majority of Elmbridge's higher-order centres, there is a well-developed café / restaurant culture in the centre, particularly towards the western end of the centre, again split between a mixture of national operators (Starbucks, Prezzo) and independent operators. The overall offer is generally stronger towards the eastern end of the centre, and the western end – particularly towards the south of Church Street – was observed to be quiet during our visits to the centre. This is likely to reflect the absence of any key 'anchor' stores / attractors towards this end of the centre.
- 10.35 It is noteworthy that the Brooklands Centre, on the western edge of the town, has a higher comparison goods turnover (£48.5m), largely on account of the presence of a large Marks & Spencer store. The two locations appear to co-exist satisfactorily at present because they have quite different retail offers (i.e. Brooklands is two single large retail stores which has a sub-regional trade draw) but future expansion of Brooklands which would diversify the retail offer or broaden the range of uses, should be resisted in order to protect the vitality and viability of Weybridge District Centre, as well as other nearby centres which fall outside of Elmbridge.
- 10.36 There is no cinema facility in Weybridge, and whilst the presence of facilities in Walton-on-Thames and Esher means there is no clear qualitative gap in the offer, there may be potential for a small-scale / boutique cinema to be accommodated in the centre (comparable in size to the Everyman in Walton-on-Thames), supporting the existing strong evening economy in the centre. However, market appetite for such a scheme may be constrained by the presence of existing facilities in Walton-on-Thames, and a new six-screen development under construction in Addlestone.

- 10.37 As we have set out above, it is recommended that Walton-on-Thames should remain the focus for higher-order comparison goods shopping in the Borough over the Council's Local Plan period. Weybridge benefits from close proximity to Walton-on-Thames – the two centres are just 2.5 miles apart – but accessibility by public transport between the two, with both towns' railway stations detached from their respective commercial centres, and the principal bus route only running at half-hourly intervals. The Council should assess whether there is scope for an improvement in current levels of public transport provision between the two Centres in light of the increased role which Walton-on-Thames is playing in respect of influencing comparison goods shopping patterns over residents in the Weybridge area.

## Opportunity sites in Weybridge District Centre

- 10.38 As a District Centre it is not expected that Weybridge will accommodate a significant quantum of additional retail floorspace over the course of the Local Plan period. However, there may be a case for providing a limited quantum of additional comparison goods floorspace in order to reinforce the vitality and viability of the centre. There is also scope for the centre to accommodate an appropriate scale of commercial leisure floorspace, which could include a small (1 or 2 screen) cinema and / or cafés / restaurants, although as noted above this has not been tested with the market.
- 10.39 There is a small opportunity site in the District Centre which could potentially offer scope for redevelopment in the medium term, which is the Weybridge Library and Elmbridge Museum & Art Gallery site on Church Street. The site is of relatively dated appearance, and it is considered it could potentially be redeveloped to a higher density. It is considered that the site has scope for a mixed-use, comparison goods retail or commercial leisure-led development, which could potentially include a small cinema (at upper floor) and complementary café / restaurant uses. There is a public car park immediately to the rear of the site, however we understand that opportunities for development of this car park are limited because the adjacent church, which is a Grade I listed building.

## Recommendations for Weybridge

- 10.40 Our recommendations for Weybridge District Centre are as follows:
- The strategy for Weybridge District Centre over the course of the period to 2035 should principally be one of consolidation, and we do not envisage a significant proportion of the identified comparison goods capacity requirements coming forward in the centre. Such an approach would also be contrary to the role and function of Weybridge as a District Centre.
  - There are no obvious development opportunities in the District Centre which could accommodate a significant quantum of comparison goods floorspace. Development of a substantial amount of comparison goods floorspace would also be contrary to the role and function of Weybridge as a District Centre. Applications which seek to improve/enhance existing comparison goods floorspace within the District Centre should, however, be supported in principle.

- The retail function of the primary shopping frontage in the District Centre should be protected and where possible enhanced (for example, by supporting applications for modernisation of units, enhancement of signage and so on). Applications for changes of use away from class A1 use should be resisted in the primary shopping frontage (because of the changes to permitted development, the Council may need to consider the use of Article 4 directions), but supported in principle in secondary shopping frontage (although class A5 uses should be resisted).
- The opening of the Morrisons foodstore on Monument Hill has satisfied the qualitative need for an additional foodstore to improve consumer choice. Although it would appear that the store is not trading particularly strongly at present, it provides a good alternative to the nearby over-trading Waitrose store and the two stores combined form strong 'anchor' stores to the eastern end of the centre. We do not consider there to be a qualitative need for further convenience goods provision in the centre, although any applications should be considered on their own merits.
- The western end of the District Centre is noticeably quieter than the eastern end, and there may be a need for a stronger 'anchor' to help draw footfall along the length of the High Street past the junction with Baker Street. To this end, the Council may wish to investigate the scope for redevelopment of the Weybridge Library and Elmbury Museum & Art Gallery site, and the public car park to the rear, as a medium-term development opportunity. It is considered that the site has scope for a mixed-use, comparison goods retail or commercial leisure-led development, which could potentially include a small cinema (at upper floor) and complementary café / restaurant uses.
- Should redevelopment of the site come forward, it is strongly recommended that active frontage fronting onto Church Street is retained at ground floor level, and that existing uses on the site (the library and museum) are retained within the development, unless suitable alternative premises can be found in the District Centre.
- Elsewhere, applications for the development of new 'town centre' uses should be supported in principle where they will make a positive contribution to the vitality and viability of the District Centre, providing they are of a scale which is appropriate to the role and function of Weybridge (having regard to our recommendations on the hierarchy of centres, discussed below).

## COBHAM DISTRICT CENTRE

- 10.41 Cobham performs a similar role and function to Weybridge, although it is a smaller centre overall. There is overlap in the nature and function of both centres as being convenience goods-led but with a strong supporting café / restaurant scene, and a comparison goods offer which can be considered to reasonably meet residents' day-to-day shopping needs. The comparison goods turnover of the centre is also similar to that of Weybridge, at £36.5m, which we consider to represent a strong trading performance. As with Weybridge, the convenience goods offer in the centre is anchored by a Waitrose store which appears to be trading well. The District Centre shows generally positive signs of vitality and viability, although we understand from the Council that there are concerns that the centre is not currently meeting the shopping needs of the less affluent sections of the local community.

- 10.42 The Waitrose store in the District Centre is supported by a large out-of-centre Sainsbury's store, which we understand to have a wide catchment area. In light of local residents' concerns regarding the affordability of the Waitrose store, we understand that a new 'Chatterbus' service, which links District Centre, railway station and Sainsbury's store, has recently been launched to improve accessibility between the town centre and Sainsbury's. The improved links to this store have come about as a result of a Transition Cobham survey that identified many residents in Cobham have difficulty in accessing larger-format foodstores in the area.

- 10.43 We are not aware of any opportunity sites within or on the edge of Cobham District Centre.

## Recommendations for Cobham

- 10.44 Our recommendations for Cobham District Centre are as follows:

- Consolidate and support the vitality and viability of the District Centre. We do not envisage a significant proportion of the identified comparison goods capacity requirement coming forward in the centre, and are not aware of any opportunity sites which could accommodate a substantial quantum of comparison goods floorspace. Such an approach would also be contrary to the role and function of Cobham as a District Centre.
- There are no obvious development opportunities in the District Centre which could accommodate a significant quantum of comparison goods floorspace. Development of a substantial amount of comparison goods floorspace would also be contrary to the role and function of Cobham as a District Centre. Applications which seek to improve/enhance existing comparison goods floorspace within the centre should, however, be supported in principle.
- The retail function of the primary shopping frontage in the District Centre should be protected and where possible enhanced (for example, by supporting applications for modernisation of units, enhancement of signage and so on). Applications for changes of use away from class A1 use should be resisted in the primary shopping frontage (because of the changes to permitted development, the Council may need to consider the use of Article 4 directions), but supported in principle in secondary shopping frontage (although class A5 uses should be resisted).
- The quality of the centre's environment is generally good, although the northern end of the centre (north of the Anyards Road / Hogshill Lane junction) could benefit from some improvements to the public realm.
- There is no qualitative need to plan for additional convenience goods provision in Cobham, with the Waitrose store (in-centre) and Sainsbury's store (out-of-centre) providing sufficient consumer choice. The Council should investigate opportunities for enhancing public transport linkages between the Sainsbury's store and Cobham District Centre.
- Elsewhere, applications for the development of new town centre' uses should be supported in principle where they will make a positive contribution to the vitality and viability of the District Centre.

Centre, providing they are of a scale which is appropriate to the role and function of Cobham (having regard to our recommendations on the hierarchy of centres, discussed below).

## ESHER DISTRICT CENTRE

10.45 Esher is a smaller District Centre than Weybridge and Cobham, and in retailing terms clearly plays a more limited role and function than either of these. For example, its comparison goods turnover is just £8.0m, compared to £38.6m for Weybridge. Esher's principle positive attribute is the strength of its commercial leisure offer. There is a good range of family dining restaurants, cafés, and the Everyman cinema. A Waitrose foodstore acts as the 'anchor' to the centre, located at the very northern end. We understand that there are proposals for this store to be extended, and the findings of the household telephone survey confirm this store to be trading well. This, along with the new mixed-use development on High Street, are examples of investment in the centre. The Waitrose store is the only foodstore in the centre is 'over-trading' and plays a dominant role over convenience shopping patterns, and in order to benefit consumer choice and promote competition we consider there is a qualitative case for further foodstore provision to serve the Esher area.

10.46 The vitality and viability of the centre, when taken in the context of its leisure-led function, is generally good, and the presence of the Waitrose store and the Council Offices ensures that the centre is able to attract footfall during the daytime as well as the evening. However, there is also a need for the centre to ensure that it is able to meet residents' day-to-day shopping needs, in order to encourage sustainable patterns of shopping; the centre is at risk of losing further market share to surrounding destinations otherwise. Our health check assessments also identified some issues of pedestrian navigability in the centre.

### Opportunity sites in Esher District Centre

10.47 We are not aware of any development opportunity sites within the District Centre which could accommodate a substantial quantum of new retail floorspace, with the only possible opportunity site – the Waitrose store car park – expected to be the subject of a planning application to extend the Waitrose store.

### Recommendations for Esher

10.48 Our recommendations for Esher District Centre are as follows:

- The strategy for Esher District Centre over the period to 2035 should principally be one of consolidation, and we do not envisage a significant proportion of the identified comparison goods capacity requirements coming forward in the centre. Such an approach would be contrary to the role and function of Esher as a District Centre.

- There is a need to ensure that the comparison goods shopping function of the District Centre is not further eroded. Esher has a low comparison goods turnover compared to other District Centres in the Borough, suggesting that many residents are having to travel to other centres for their comparison goods shopping. Applications for changes of use away from class A1 use should be resisted in the primary shopping frontage (because of the changes to permitted development, the Council may need to consider the use of Article 4 directions), but supported in principle in secondary shopping frontage (although class A5 uses should be resisted).
- There are no obvious development opportunities in the District Centre, with the exception of land to the rear of the Waitrose store. There is no frontage to the High Street from this location, and therefore it would be unlikely to be suitable for anything other than a store extension; we understand that Waitrose have submitted a planning application<sup>9</sup> for the extension of their store at this location, which also includes the adjacent former police station premises.
- Applications for the development of new 'town centre' uses should be supported in principle where they will make a positive contribution to the vitality and viability of the District Centre, providing they are of a scale which is appropriate to the role and function of Esher (having regard to our recommendations on the hierarchy of centres, discussed below).

## EAST MOLESEY DISTRICT CENTRE

10.49 East Molesey is a linear centre stretching along Walton Road in the east of the Borough, and is relatively small in comparison to many of the Borough's other centres. The centre is anchored by a Tesco Metro supermarket, which is trading at above company average levels, alongside a number of small convenience stores. A Poundland store is the anchor non-food retailer in the centre; for the most part the comparison goods offer comprises independent retailers. Our assessment has identified no major areas of concern for the centre: the retail mix is generally reasonable; the vacancy rate (4%) is low; the centre is quite well connected and benefits from reasonable – if rather functional – environmental quality. It is clear the centre focuses as one which meets day-to-day top-up shopping needs of a fairly localised catchment area, and in this respect it is performing generally well. The centre is relatively constrained, and we are not aware of any opportunities for expansion.

### Recommendations for East Molesey

10.50 Our recommendations for East Molesey are as follows:

- Consolidate and support the vitality and viability of the District Centre. We do not envisage a significant proportion of the identified comparison goods capacity requirement coming forward in the centre, and are not aware of any opportunity sites which could accommodate a

<sup>9</sup> EBC planning application reference 2014/4699



substantial quantum of comparison goods floorspace. We do not recommend any extension of the boundary of the District Centre.

- There are no obvious development opportunities in the District Centre which could accommodate a significant quantum of comparison goods floorspace. Development of a substantial amount of comparison goods floorspace would also be contrary to the role and function of East Molesey as a District Centre. Applications which seek to improve/enhance existing comparison goods floorspace within the centre should, however, be supported in principle.
- The retail function of the primary shopping frontage in the District Centre should be protected and where possible enhanced (for example, by supporting applications for modernisation of units, enhancement of signage and so on). Applications for changes of use away from class A1 use should be resisted in the primary shopping frontage (because of the changes to permitted development, the Council may need to consider the use of Article 4 directions), but supported in principle in secondary shopping frontage (although class A5 uses should be resisted).
- Applications for the development of new 'town centre' uses should be supported in principle where they will make a positive contribution to the vitality and viability of the District Centre, providing they are of a scale which is appropriate to the role and function of East Molesey (having regard to our recommendations on the hierarchy of centres, discussed below).
- The Council should seek to deliver improvements to the environmental quality of the centre, to improve its physical appearance and the provision of public realm. This could include enhancements to paving, financing improvements to shopfronts, and provision of public realm to help 'define' the centre and create a better sense of place.

## HERSHAM DISTRICT CENTRE

- 10.51 Hersham is a relatively small District Centre centred around Hersham Green. A Waitrose store within Hersham Green Shopping Centre forms the anchor store, and there are a further 15 units within the Centre. It has recently been acquired by Aviva Investors with 'opportunities for redevelopment', although we are not aware of any current proposals for this. The centre has seen new residential development in recent years which can be expected to have increased footfall. The Waitrose store is one of the strongest-performing foodstores in the Borough, and is currently over-trading. It is currently the only foodstore serving Hersham, and therefore has a dominant market position. However, planning permission has been granted for a new out-of-centre Lidl store, which will improve consumer choice and introduce competition.
- 10.52 The Hersham Green Shopping Centre can be considered an opportunity site, although we would expect development at this location to focus on upgrading and modernising the existing Shopping Centre, rather than adding a substantial quantum of new retail floorspace.

## Recommendations for Hersham

10.53 Our recommendations for Hersham District Centre are as follows:

- Consolidate and support the vitality and viability of the District Centre. We do not envisage a significant proportion of the identified comparison goods capacity requirement for the Borough coming forward in the centre.
- The Council should support in principle proposals which seek the redevelopment and upgrading of Hersham Green Shopping Centre, as this currently suffers from a dated appearance. However, it is not considered that the centre would be a suitable location for the development of a significant amount of additional comparison goods floorspace, in light of our recommendations regarding the role and function of Hersham in the Borough's hierarchy of centres (discussed below).
- Applications which seek to improve/enhance existing floorspace elsewhere within the centre should be supported in principle, and applications for the development of new 'town centre' uses should be supported in principle where they will make a positive contribution to the vitality and viability of the District Centre, providing they are of a scale which is appropriate to the role and function of Hersham District Centre.
- Should the permitted out-of-centre Lidl development come forward, there is no qualitative need to plan for any additional convenience goods provision in Hersham.

## STRATEGY FOR LOCAL CENTRES

- 10.54 As this report has identified, there is a good network of Local Centres across the Borough. The matrix in Appendix I shows that, for the most part, these centres are performing their role and function adequately. However, there are instances of gaps in provision, most specifically in terms of the lack of foodstores in the centres in Oatlands or Oxshott. The Council may wish to allocate a proportion of the identified convenience goods capacity requirement towards the development of small-scale facilities in these centres, although it is important that such facilities are of a scale appropriate to the location of the centre in the retail hierarchy. We would therefore recommend that, indicatively, any new foodstores in these locations should not be more than 300-400 sq.m net, although any applications should be assessed on their individual merits.
- 10.55 Aside from this, the Council does not need to plan for the provision of any additional floorspace in its network of Local Centres, although upgrades to existing units, shopfronts and so on should generally be supported. It is also recommended that the Council uses the matrix at Appendix I to monitor diversity of uses in its Local Centres at regular intervals (we would suggest every two years for each centre) to ensure that local shopping needs are continuing to be met.

## STRATEGY FOR OUT-OF-CENTRE DEVELOPMENTS

10.56 The Borough is in the fortunate position of not having a significant quantum of out-of-centre floorspace which competes for expenditure with the Town and District Centres. However the key principle out-of-centre comparison goods floorspace which does exist, at Brooklands, on the western edge of Weybridge, appears to trade well, drawing £48.5m of comparison goods spend from the study area, and we would expect the development to also draw a significant level of 'inflow'.

10.57 In order to protect the vitality and viability of the network of centres in the Borough, further development at Brooklands should be tested against the requirements of the NPPF and local planning policies. The network of centres in Elmburgh will need to work hard to retain their current market shares in light of strengthened competition from surrounding centres such as Kingston, and therefore developments which have the potential to undermine this objective should be resisted. Should any application for development at Brooklands (or elsewhere in the Borough not within a defined centre), it will need to demonstrate compliance with the 'sequential test' (paragraph 24 of the NPPF) and the 'impact test' (paragraph 26 of the NPPF). Impact assessments will need to consider the potential impacts against the network of centres in the Borough but may also need to consider impacts arising against centres in neighbouring authorities.

## HIERARCHY OF CENTRES

10.58 As we have set out above, the existing hierarchy of centres (as set out in the adopted Core Strategy) places Walton-on-Thames as the highest-order centre in the Borough (a 'Town Centre'), with Cobham, East Molesey, Esher, Hersham and Weybridge classed as 'district' centres, and a network of Local Centres beneath this.

10.59 Based on the current performance of Walton-on-Thames Town Centre, its retail and commercial leisure mix, and the fact that there are clear opportunity sites which would allow the centre to strengthen its role and function over the course of the Local Plan period, it is recommended that Walton-on-Thames remains the focus for growth and the highest-order centre in the Borough.

10.60 Below this, our assessments have identified that there is a clear difference between the role and function of the District Centres in the Borough:

- Weybridge and Cobham have a good retail and leisure mix, and are suitable for further development of Town Centre floorspace should suitable opportunities arise.
- Esher has a more limited shopping function, but a particularly strong commercial leisure offer, including a cinema. It is also the administrative centre of the Borough and therefore has a range of facilities which supports this.

- East Molesey and Hersham are smaller centres, which cater for a much more localised shopping catchment. Neither centre has a broad a range of other 'town centre' uses as the other District Centres.

10.61 Based on this, we consider that there is merit in splitting the District Centres between 'Major District Centres' and 'District Centres': Weybridge and Cobham function as 'Major District Centres'; East Molesey and Hersham as 'District Centres'. Esher arguably falls somewhere between the two – but on balance its limited comparison goods function means we recommend classifying it as a 'District Centre'.

10.62 We do not recommend that any changes to the retail hierarchy are needed in respect of the Local Centres. The suggested revised retail hierarchy for the Borough is shown in Table 10.2.

**Table 10.2: Recommended hierarchy of centres, Elmburgh**

Position in hierarchy	Centre(s)
Town centre	• Walton-on-Thames
Major District Centre	• Cobham • Weybridge
District Centre	• East Molesey • Esher • Hersham
Local centre	• Claygate • East Molesey (Bridge Road) • Hinchley Wood • Oxshott • Oatlands • Thames Ditton • Walton-on-Thames (Halfway) • Walton-on-Thames (Terrace Road) • Weybridge (Queens Road)

## Monitoring and next steps

10.63 The study has identified that the centres in the Borough are generally performing well, and there are no fundamental areas of concern in respect of any individual centre's vitality and viability. Nevertheless, it is recommended that the Council continues to monitor the vitality and viability of its centres over future years, using the NPPG indicators as set out in Section 5 of this report.

10.64 It is also recommended that the retail capacity figures identified in this report are subject to regular review, and should any large-scale comparison goods shopping developments come forward (as is anticipated) in the key surrounding centres, an updated household telephone survey of shopping patterns should be updated to assess the extent to which these developments have influenced shopping patterns of residents in the Borough.