LOCAL SERVICES

Indicator 25 (Core)	Amount of eligible open spaces managed to Green Flag Award standard.

Objective

To achieve Green Flag Award standards for publicly accessible open space in Oxford.

Target

For all publicly accessible open spaces in Oxford to provide a high quality recreational experience.

National policy on this topic is set out in the ODPM's Public Service Agreement target 8 which is for local authorities to lead the delivery of cleaner, safer and greener public spaces and improvements of the quality of the built environment in deprived areas and across the country, with measurable improvement by 2008.

Data analysis

The Green Flag Award is the national standard for parks and green spaces in England and Wales. The award is managed by the Civic Trust, on behalf of the ODPM and the Green Flag Advisory Board. Awards are given on an annual basis and those that are successful must apply each year to renew their Green Flag status. The core indicator does not actually require that sites should have been awarded Green Flag status but the percentage of publicly accessible open space that is 'managed to Green Flag Award standard.' The key criteria for the award of Green Flag status are outlined in Appendix 2.

Open spaces that are eligible for Green Flag Award status include town parks, country parks, formal gardens, nature reserves, local nature reserves, cemeteries and crematoria, water parks, open spaces, millennium greens, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and woodlands.

To be managed to Green Flag Award standard a site must have a management plan or strategy in place, which reflects the aspirations of Local Agenda 21 and clearly and adequately addresses all the criteria outlined in Appendix 2 and any other relevant aspects of the park or green space's management. The plan must be actively implemented and regularly reviewed.

Currently none of Oxford's sites meet the Green Flag Award criteria as there are currently no management plans or strategies in place for any of its open spaces, which reflect the aspirations of Local Agenda 21 and the key Green Flag Award criteria. Scott Wilson, however, have recently completed an assessment of Oxford's Green spaces on behalf of the City Council. As part of this exercise they carried out a quality audit of 184 open spaces in Oxford. They assessed each site's quality in relation to the following topics: physical quality; social quality; aesthetic quality and biodiversity. Although not carried out on quite the same basis as the Green Flag Award the survey did cover some of the same topics such as access, signage and security, though others such as sustainability were not covered. Scott Wilson's assessment of the quality of Oxford's open spaces is given in the table below:

Condition	Number of open spaces	% of Open Spaces by number	Hectares of Open Space	% of Open Space by hectares
Good	41	22	460	61
Average	97	53	263	35
Poor	46	25	34	4

The high quality sites include many of the Oxford's important parks/open spaces such as Bury Knowle Park; Cutteslowe Park; Court Place Farm; Headington Hill Park; Florence Park; Hinksey Park and the University Parks. However, some smaller sites such as Barns Road Pocket Park and Hundred Acres Close also obtained high scores. Those sites, which obtained low quality scores, mostly consisted of local parks and playgrounds in the east of the Oxford. Examples include Ridley Road and Normandy Crescent Recreation Grounds and Arnold Road; Pauling Road; Dynham Place; Titup Hall Drive and Quarry Hollow Play areas. On these sites features, which scored particularly poorly, included disabled access, quality of play provision, signage and footpaths.

Commentary

Currently, no Oxford green spaces are managed to Green Flag Award standards. A significant number of Oxford open spaces are, however, of high quality and are probably not very far off achieving Green Flag Award standard. Indeed Scott Wilson in their Green Space study, commissioned by the City Council, recommend that in order to highlight the quality of Oxford's formal green spaces, the City Council should seek to achieve Green Flag Awards for all of Oxford's major parks. This requires the preparation of a full management plan for each site.

Some City sites are, however, of much lower quality and action needs to be taken to improve the quality of these sites. Recommendations on this topic will form part of the forthcoming Oxford Green Space Strategy.

On target? ✗

Indicator 26 (Core)	Amount of completed retail, office and leisure development.

Objective

To monitor the amount of new retail, office and leisure development.

Target

National policy[1] promotes sustainable development and aims to focus new development for retail, office and leisure uses in existing town centres. Growth and investment should therefore seek to promote vital and viable town centres.

South East policy[2] identifies Oxford as an important sub-regional centre. New development and redevelopment for retail, office and leisure uses should be focussed within the town centre. It should also make a positive contribution towards the regeneration of the City centre.

Local Plan[3] policy aims to maintain and strengthen the City centre hierarchy by directing major new developments to the centre.

Data analysis

These figures refer to gross internal floorspace.

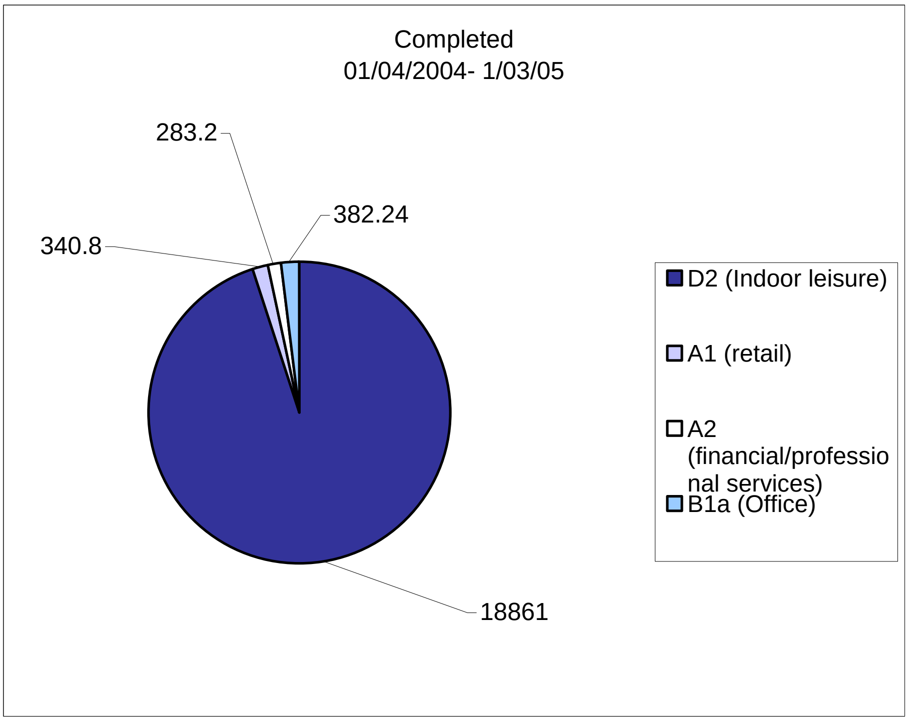

Figure 32: Office and leisure development completed (floorspace sqm)

[1] Planning Policy Statement 6, ODPM, 2005
[2] The Draft South East Plan, South East Regional Assembly, Jan 2005
[3] Policy RC1, The Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016, Oxford City Council, Dec 2005

As the graph shows, there was a total of 340.8sq.m gross additional internal floorspace of new A1 development. The indicator also requires the amount of A1 in net internal floorspace; this figure includes only sales space, so excludes areas such as store rooms. The net internal floorspace of A1 was 180sq.m.

Commentary

There has been little A1 (retail) or A2 (financial and professional) development completed during the monitoring period, although of course this does not take account of other permissions in the pipeline both under-construction and as yet unimplemented. The main B1a (office) uses have also seen a relatively small amount of completed development.

The D2 leisure sector has seen the most significant amount of floorspace completed. This includes the recently completed Ozone Leisure Centre at Grenoble Road, an out-of-town development, which was permitted a number of years ago, and only just implemented.

This information provides an important evidence base from which to regularly monitor the amount of floorspace completed. It will then serve to highlight which local services have experienced growth and those that have not. Then in the context of need in the public interest being clearly established, sites suitable for accommodating additional facilities/services can be considered and allocated through the new Local Development Framework.

On target? ✗

Indicator 27 (Core)	Amount of completed retail, office and leisure development in town centres.

Objective

To monitor the amount of new retail, office and leisure development in town centres.

Target

National policy[1] promotes sustainable development and aims to focus new development for retail, office and leisure uses in existing town centres. Growth and investment should therefore seek to promote vital and viable town centres.

South East policy[2] identifies Oxford as an important sub-regional centre. New development and redevelopment for retail, office and leisure uses should be focussed within the town centre. It should also make a positive contribution towards the regeneration of the City centre.

Local Plan policy[3] aims to maintain and strengthen the City centre by directing major new developments to the centre.

Data analysis

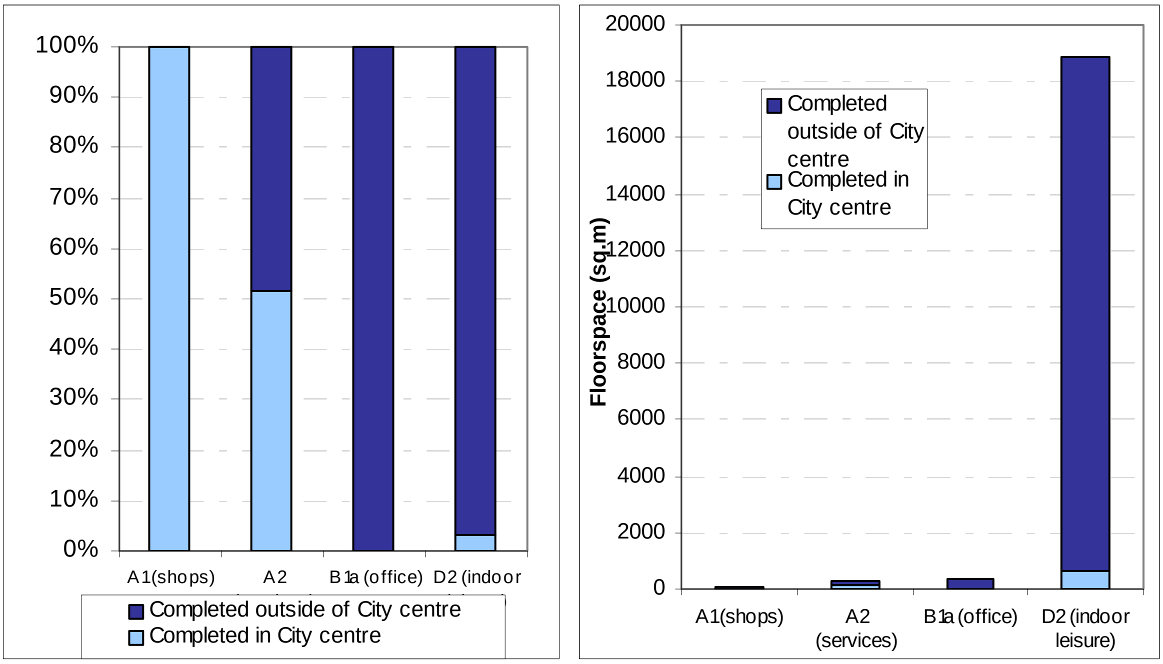

Figure 33: Percentage and amount (floorspace sq.m) of completed retail, office and leisure developments in City centre

[1] Planning Policy Statement 1, & Planning Policy Statement 6, ODPM, 2005
[2] The Draft South East Plan, South East Regional Assembly, Jan 2005
[3] The Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016, Oxford City Council, Dec 2005

Commentary

Although the amount of floorspace completed for A1[4] (shops) has been small it has nevertheless all been carried out within the City centre.

A2 (services) have also seen little growth but some 50% has taken place within the City centre.

The B1a (office) development completed during the monitoring period has also seen relatively little growth, which has taken place out of the City centre. These developments have included the regeneration of existing established employment generating sites, which in Oxford are historically located outside the City centre. In the City centre suitable land is in short supply, sites constrained and existing uses often well established. Those sites that have come forward are also subject to demand from competing uses, such as residential.

D2 (Indoor leisure) has experienced the most significant growth, which has taken place in an out-of-town location. The most significant recent development includes the Ozone Leisure Centre at Grenoble Road, which was allocated for commercial leisure use in the Oxford Local Plan 1991-2001 and for which planning permission had been granted in principle a number of years ago, and is only just being implemented.

Whilst development has taken place in out-of-centre locations during the monitoring period and therefore strictly speaking the target indicator has not been met, it is clear that these have resulted from both long standing commitments and the historical location of Oxford's principal employment sites.

On target? ✗

[4] Use Classes Order – See Glossary

Indicator 28 (Local)	Planning permissions resulting in loss of retail floorspace

Objective

To monitor and manage the loss of A1[1] (retail) uses.

Target

National policy[2] promotes sustainable development and aims to focus new development for retail, office and leisure uses in existing town centres. Growth and investment should therefore seek to promote vitality and viability in town centres.

South East policy[3] identifies Oxford as an important sub-regional centre. New development and redevelopment for retail uses should be focussed within the town centre. It should also make a positive contribution towards the regeneration of the City centre.

Local Plan policy[4] aims to maintain and strengthen the role of the City and District centres.

Data analysis

The following three bar charts refer to the loss of A1 (retail) floorspace over the last four years and the types of new uses that have replaced it. The last chart relates solely to the loss of A1 (retail) floorspace in relation to the new uses within the monitoring year. The floorspace figures are calculated in square metres.

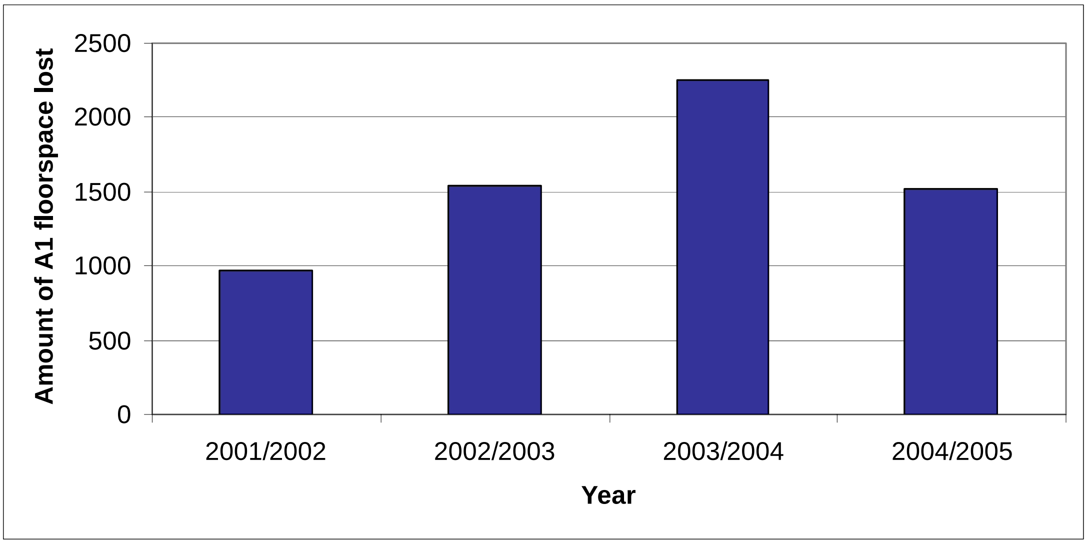

Figure 34: Amount of A1 (retail) floorspace lost over the last 4 years

[1] Use Classes Order – See Glossary
[2] Planning Policy Statement 1, & Planning Policy Statement 6, ODPM, 2005
[3] The Draft South East Plan, South East Regional Assembly, Jan 2005
[4] The Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016, Oxford City Council, Dec 2005

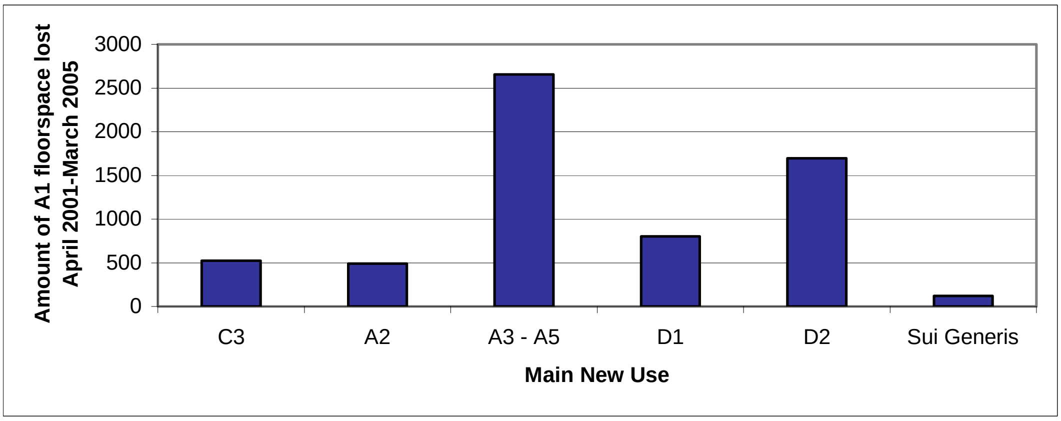

Figure 35: Loss of floorspace from A1 (retail) to other uses

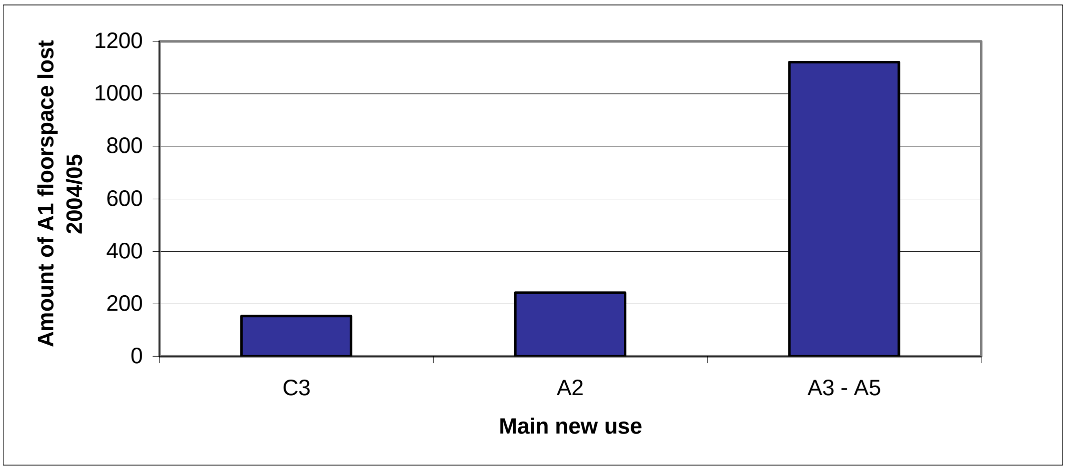

Figure 36: Amount of A1 (retail) floorspace lost in the monitoring year to new uses

Commentary

Over the last four years Oxford has consistently lost floorspace from A1 (retail) use. Cumulatively this has an impact on the total, although on an annual basis the rate is relatively low and largely reflects the dynamic change in the market. A1 (retail) uses have been replaced by new uses such as A3-A5 (food and drink) and D2 (assembly and leisure) uses.

During the annual monitoring period however the principal changes that have taken place have largely been from A1 (retail) to principally A3-A5 (food and drink) uses. Other uses include A2 (office) and C3 (residential). Policies in the Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016 however ensure that the overall balance of uses is appropriate and the level of A1 (retail) uses does not fall below established thresholds for respective street frontages within City, District and Neighbourhood centres.

Overall the amount of floorspace lost from A1 (retail) to other uses within the monitoring period has not been significant. This data will however provide an important evidence base from which to monitor future changes to the amount of floorspace lost from A1 (retail). It also highlights where the new uses are taking place, which would be helpful in reviewing policies in the Local Development Framework.

On target? ✓

Indicator 29 (Contextual)	**Healthcheck assessments to include:** i) Market indicators (vacancy rates); ii) Vitality indicators (diversity of uses);

Objective

To assess the vitality and viability of existing centres.

Target

National policy[1] encourages healthcheck assessments to be carried out for town centres to measure their vitality and viability.

The Draft South East Plan[2] recognises the importance of town centres and their role in promoting sustainable development. Their significance as transport hubs provide the most suitable location for focussing developments. Oxford City centre is identified as a sub-regional centre.

The Oxford Local Plan[3] seeks to maintain, enhance and strengthen the role of the established retail hierarchies, which include the City and District centres.

Data analysis

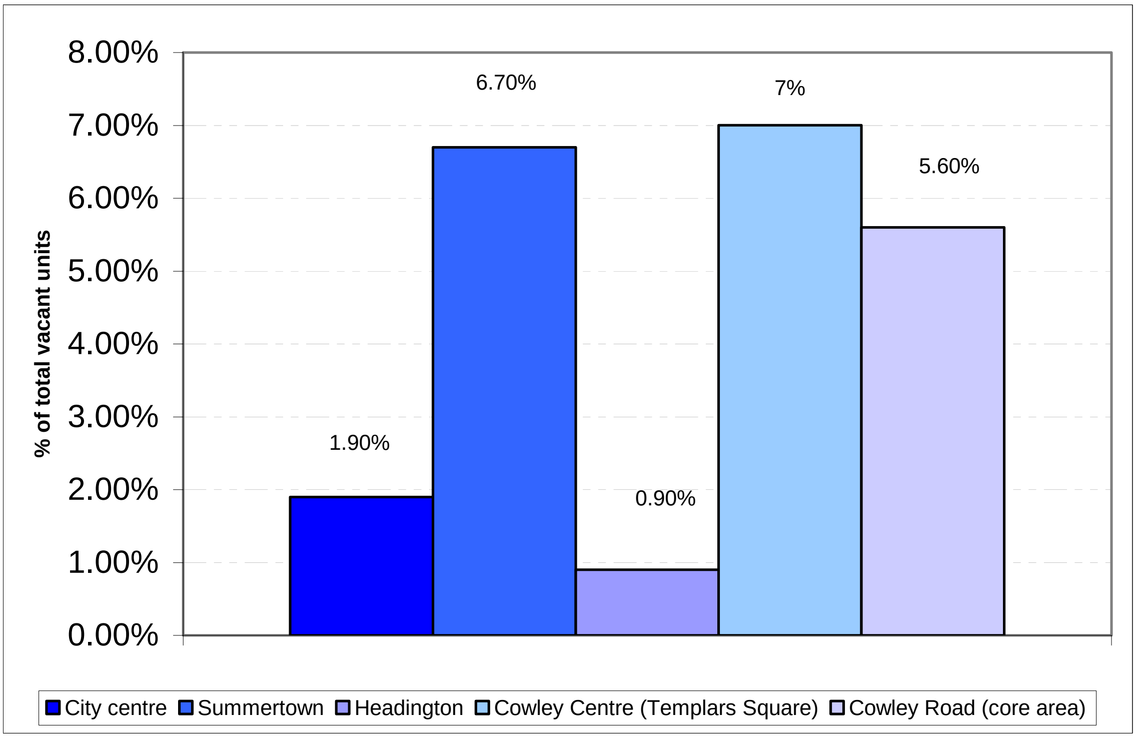

Figure 37: Vacancy levels in City and District centres.

[1] Planning Policy Statement 1, & Planning Policy Statement 6, ODPM, 2005
[2] The Draft South East Plan, South East Regional Assembly, Jan 2005
[3] The Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016, Oxford City Council, Dec 2005

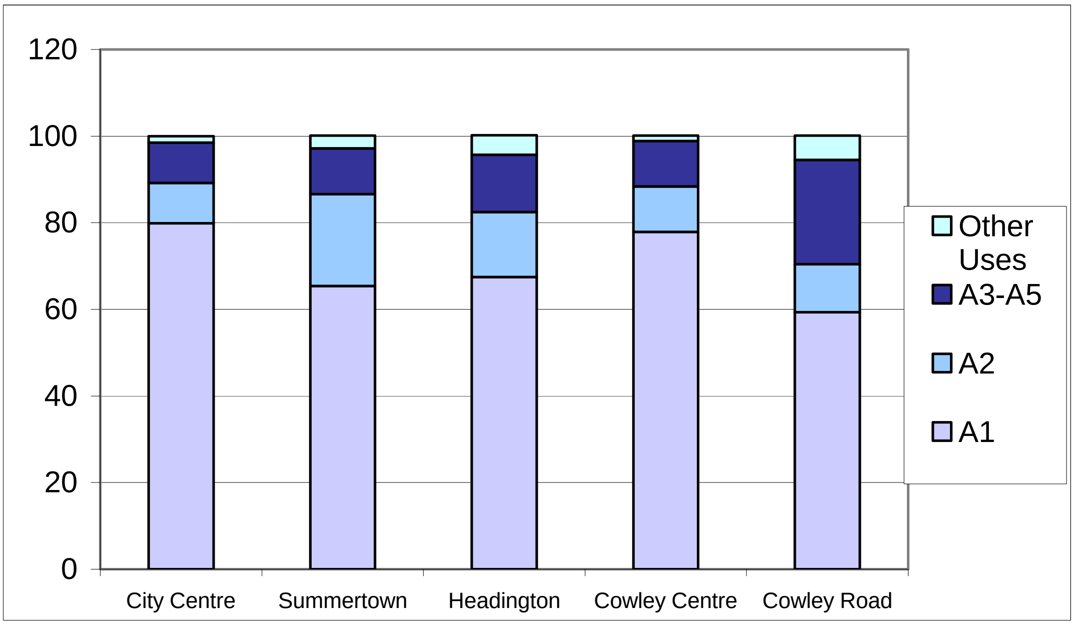

Figure 38: Percentage of A1 (retail) uses and other Class A uses in the City centre and District centres

Commentary

Vacancy levels:

One of the key market indicators that measure the vitality and viability of existing centres is vacancy levels. The latest survey undertaken by the City Council within the monitoring period was carried out in February 2005. In the City centre the Primary Shopping Frontage (Policy RC.3) had only 1.9% of all the units vacant, which shows that that the City centre is healthy and performing well.

There are four District centres which each have a defined District Shopping Frontage (Policy RC.4). The Cowley centre (Templars Square) had the highest level of vacancy at 7.0%. This to a degree reflects the large number of A1[4] (retail) uses within the centre, and the relative lack of other Class A uses.) The Summertown District Shopping Centre had a vacancy level of some 6.7% which is relatively high for this active and popular centre. In some cases this includes A1 (retail) premises that have recently experienced competition from Marks and Spencer (Food Hall). In the longer term however the addition of this new magnet store should strengthen the vitality and viability of the centre.

The two District centres with the lowest level of vacancies include Cowley Road (Core Area) and Headington. In the case of the Cowley Road (Core Area) the level of vacancies is 5.6%. However it is important to bear in mind that this frontage relates to a relatively small number of units in the heart of the Cowley Road. The Headington District centre had a low vacancy level of some 0.9%; however it does have a comparatively high number of charity shops.

The City centre and the District centres are all performing well, appear healthy with a good level of vitality and viability. The level of vacancies within each District centre does vary but often is a reflection of the individual characteristics of the centre.

[4] Use Classes Order 2005 – See Glossary

Vitality:

The second indicator is diversity, which is an important measure of the vitality of a centre. It also provides an indication of the role of the centre and its attractiveness to shoppers. This indicator recognises the important role that retailing plays in the centre but assesses the range of other uses available, which contribute to its vitality and viability. The mix of uses is significantly influenced by the policies in the Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016 relating to the defined shopping frontages within each centre. In the case of the City centre, the present high proportion of A1 (retail) uses within the primary shopping frontage reflects its important role as a sub-regional shopping centre. Any additional Class A uses are directed towards the secondary shopping locations, to ensure that a diverse range of uses is satisfied.

In the case of the District centres, and in particular the defined District shopping frontages, there still appears to be a reasonable mix of uses, which are underpinned by their key role as retail centres. The highest proportion of A1 (retail) uses is within the Cowley centre (Templars square), although other uses have increased in recent years, it still plays an important role as a retail centre. Both Summertown and Headington have maintained a predominance of A1 (retail) uses, but with an appropriate mix of additional service related uses, which reflects the thresholds set out in the Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016. Whilst the level of A1 (retail) uses in the Cowley Road is lower, this reflects the relatively small number of units within the Core Area. The remainder of the commercial properties along the Cowley Road frontage are defined as secondary shopping frontage and as such include a higher proportion of other Class A uses.

It is clear however from these contextual indicators that the City centre and District centres appear to be in a healthy position, and whilst underpinned by their important retailing function do contain an appropriate mix of other Class A uses. The position does need to be carefully monitored to assess the performance of each centre in the context of both their role and respective individual characteristics.

On target? N/A

No target appropriate, as this is contextual information.