Chapter 6: CITY CENTRE ACTION AREA

6.1 INTRODUCTION

6.1.1 Swansea City Centre dominates the local retail hierarchy and provides a regional focus for shopping, leisure, business, civic and cultural life. The Wales Spatial Plan (WSP) highlights the importance of strengthening the role of Swansea and the City Centre as an economic driver for the regeneration of South West Wales. It emphasises that a focus on revitalising the City, capitalising on its unique waterfront setting, will be a crucial element in securing future economic prosperity for both Swansea and the wider area. Accordingly the City Centre meets the criteria to be identified as an Action Area in the UDP.

6.2 JUSTIFICATION OF PART 1 STRATEGIC POLICIES

6.2.1 Improving the character and performance of the City Centre is vital to raise the profile of the area and secure the future of Swansea as a successful and distinctive City. Enhancing the City Centre environment, improving connections to the waterfront and shaping the delivery of high quality mixed use developments within the centre will significantly boost the attractiveness of the City for future investment, and act as a catalyst for regeneration further west.

6.2.2 A Strategic Framework for the City Centre has been prepared, which sets out proposals that will guide new development and investment over the plan period. The Swansea City Centre Strategic Framework (SCCSF) benefits from a robust analysis of economic prospects and retail capacity and will help deliver the City Centre Partnership’s vision for the City Centre by:

(i) Reconnecting the City Centre: improving links between the City Centre and surrounding areas, including the Seafront, and making movement around the City Centre more effective and comfortable,
(ii) Encouraging mixed and sustainable development: strengthening retail, attracting business, delivering new leisure and cultural facilities, providing residential development and improving access,
(iii) Developing a high quality and distinctive City Centre based on its location as a Waterfront City: improving the physical environment, cleanliness, buildings and spaces, reducing pollution, encouraging public transport, reducing crime and fear of crime, and active promotion, and
(iv) Developing partnership working: building on well-established and effective partnerships.

6.2.3 The City Centre has become Wales’ first Business Improvement District (BID). Swansea is thereby joining the ranks of other successful cities across the UK in pioneering the BID initiative, which will enable traders to have a direct role in securing the revivalisation of the City. In partnership with Swansea Council and other agencies, the BID will provide a powerful mechanism for the business community to get actively involved in identifying, funding and managing projects that will deliver continued improvements to the City Centre.

6.2.4 In recent years there has been a significant upturn in investment and development activity within the City Centre. Public sector investment in the fabric of the City Centre has resulted in improvements to Castle Square, Wind Street, High Street and Princess Way. Funding has also been secured for the implementation of a comprehensive public realm improvement programme and for the refurbishment of Swansea Market. These initiatives have been complemented by assistance provided to property owners in upgrading their property.

Swansea City Centre Strategic Framework Logo

The SCCSF has been adopted as SPG in support of the policies set out in this chapter. Securing the aspirations and vision of the Framework will deliver a truly distinctive, attractive and successful Waterfront City.
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6.2.5 Improvement works to the High Street Train Station forecourt have delivered significant public realm enhancements and improved interchange facilities, particularly for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users. The comprehensive redevelopment of the Quadrant Bus Station will transform the facility into a truly modern and attractive gateway to the City. High quality transport interchanges are seen as crucial to maximising accessibility and creating an attractive, competitive City Centre.

6.2.6 Within the City Centre, uses associated with food and drink activities, residential development, leisure and entertainment have prospered and are expected to continue to do so. There have been difficulties extending the retail offer, linked to competition from other centres and out of centre retail developments, such as Swansea Enterprise Park, Parc Fforestfach and Morfa. The redevelopment of the former House of Fraser department store adjacent to Castle Square is nearing completion. This prestigious new scheme provides around 6,500sq.m of high quality retail space and will help to address the negative perceptions regarding the retail offer of the City Centre. Other opportunities exist to help revitalise the retail core area of the City. In particular, the SCCSF calls for the creation of a vibrant new retail core, with the St Davids/Quadrant area being identified as the key priority area.

6.2.7 This chapter focuses on the promotion of proposals for development of a high quality, sustainable, mixed use City Centre, underpinned by a successful retail core. Policies for retail development outside of the City Centre are set out in Chapter 2 (Developing the Economy).

6.3 CITY CENTRE REGENERATION

Objective
- To reinforce and improve the City Centre as a vibrant regional focus for business and administration, shopping, culture and leisure (2.d)

6.3.1 The key objective for the City Centre as indicated in Part 1 is set out above. In turn this gives rise to a number of sub-objectives:

(i) To improve the image of the City Centre and its contribution to making Swansea a vibrant and distinctive Waterfront City.
(ii) To strengthen the attractions of the City Centre, by promoting a diversity of uses and developments that will sustain its economic viability.
(iii) To reverse the declining market share of the City Centre for expenditure within its catchment area.
(iv) To establish a high quality City Centre environment closely integrated with the Seafront and River Tawe, creating a unique Waterfront City.
(v) To deliver major enhancements to the public realm, leading to the creation of a network of attractive streets, spaces, gateways and corridors.
(vi) To improve accessibility to and within the City Centre by reducing congestion, delivering a fast and efficient public transport network with improved facilities and enhancing pedestrian linkages both internally and to the Waterfront.

6.3.2 The City Centre is broadly delimited by the Seafront and River Tawe to the south and east, and by Mansel Street and West Way to the north and west respectively. With the exception of the Maritime Quarter, it is contained by a “highway box” that carries through traffic around the City Centre, as identified on the Proposals Map (Plan 6). Different areas of the City Centre are characterised by combinations of different land uses and activities – primarily retailing, offices, leisure and entertainment. They also differ in terms of their built environments, some consisting of traditional streets and buildings, and others dominated by large-scale post-war redevelopment.

6.3.3 In July 2005 the City Centre supported 89,650sq.m of comparison goods floorspace (56.6% of overall floorspace) and 22,950sq.m. of convenience goods floorspace (14.8% of the overall figure). Service Sector uses (restaurants, cafes and fast food outlets, hairdressers, travel agents, dry cleaners, banks, building societies and estate agents) accounted for an additional 23,900 sq.m. (15.1% of floorspace) [Source: Experian Goad].
CITY CENTRE MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT

Policy CC1
Within the City Centre, development of the following uses will be supported:

(i) Retailing and associated uses (Classes A1, A2, A3),
(ii) Offices (B1),
(iii) Hotels, residential institutions and housing (C1, C2, C3),
(iv) Community and appropriate leisure uses (D1, D2, A3),
(v) Marine related industry (B1, B2).

The re-use of historic buildings and the redevelopment/enhancement of post war buildings will be encouraged and proposals will be considered against the following criteria:

(a) Impact on existing uses or residential amenity,
(b) The potential for noise, disturbance and pollution,
(c) Traffic generation, access and parking, and,
(d) In the case of retail development, the criteria specified in Policy EC4.

Main Cross References: SP1, SP3, SP6, EV1-10, EV13-14, EV32-36, EV38-41, EC4, ECNR, EC15, HC1, HC8, HC11, HC17-18, R9, AS1-2, AS5-6, CC2-5.

National Planning Guidance: PPW; TANs 4 and 12.

SPG: City Centre Non Retail Uses Policy; Castle St/Worcester Place Development Brief (DB); Castle Lane DB; High St/Wind St Action Plan; Land adj. Marriott Hotel Maritime Quarter DB; Mansel St Planning Brief; Maritime Quarter Site 3 DB; Oxford St School Site DB; Paxton Street DB; Powell Dyffryn House and Unifloc, Adelaide Street; Rutland Street / Princess Way DB; Spontex and Adjacent Land DB; Upper High Street Action Plan; Wind Street/ York Street DB; Tall Building Design Guide; Swansea City Centre Strategic Framework; Development Brief for St Davids/Quadrant Area and Paxton Street/County Hall Area (forthcoming); Development Brief for Parc Tawe (forthcoming).

Amplification
6.3.4 A mixed-use approach to development within the City Centre is endorsed and elaborated within the SCCSF, which provides SPG. A key component of this is an ambitious but deliverable regeneration strategy and development framework. The Framework will guide investment and development proposals in a co-ordinated fashion and facilitate a major improvement in the quality and competitiveness of Swansea City Centre.

6.3.5 The SCCSF sets out development principles and conceptual proposals for a number of key sites and development areas across the City Centre. As such, it provides a robust planning and development framework against which the suitability of potential new development proposals will be considered. The use of the Council’s Compulsory Purchase (CPO) powers to deliver the objectives of the City Centre will be considered where appropriate.
CITY CENTRE RETAIL CORE

Policy CC2
New retail development that maintains and enhances the vitality, attractiveness and viability of the City Centre as a regional shopping destination will be encouraged.

Highest priority is placed on enhancing shopping facilities by means of the refurbishment and redevelopment of the City Centre retail core. Retail development proposals that would be detrimental to objectives for the enhancement of the retail core will not be permitted.

Retailing is regarded as the most appropriate ground floor use within the primary shopping streets of the City Centre. Proposals for the introduction of non-retail uses at ground floor level will be determined having regard to:

(i) The proposal’s relationship to other existing and proposed non-retail uses in the area,
(ii) The impact on the vitality, attractiveness and viability of the street,
(iii) The demand for retail premises in the area, and
(iv) The scale, design and impact of the proposal on the street scene.

Other beneficial mixed uses will be positively supported on all upper floors.

Main Cross References: SP6, EV6, EC4, ECNR, CC1, CC3, CC6, CC7.

National Planning Guidance: PPW; MIPPS 02/2005; TANs 4 and 12.

SPG: City Centre Non Retail Use Policy; Shopfront Guidance, Design, Signage and Security Measures; Swansea City Centre Strategic Framework, Development Brief for St Davids/Quadrant Area and Paxton Street/County Hall Area (forthcoming).

Amplification
6.3.6 The above policy aims to encourage the necessary redevelopment and/or refurbishment of retailing floorspace in the City Centre. New developments within the City Centre should not necessarily seek to replicate the size and configuration of units that already exist, which are often unable to meet modern retailer’s requirements. Any new scheme should have larger units with significantly more depth than is currently available to improve the overall quality and range of the retail stock, enhance the range of anchor retailers, and strengthen the City Centre’s regional shopping offer. The SCCSF applies the term “Vibrant Mixed Use Heart” to cover the retail core, with this overall area being subdivided as follows:

- St David’s/Quadrant Area
- Oxford Street/Castle Square
- Oxford Street/West Way
- Wind Street/Princess Way

The St David’s/Quadrant area is defined as the highest priority for retail led redevelopment in the City Centre to achieve the necessary revitalisation of the retail core. The potential for bringing forward such a scheme must not be compromised (Policy CC3 refers).
6.3.7 A focus on the revitalisation of the retail core is important for the creation of a strong retail circuit for shoppers. As such, development proposals that would adversely affect the potential to enhance and redevelop shopping facilities within the retail core will not be supported. The primary shopping streets that comprise the retail core extend southwards from The Kingsway to Oystermouth Road and are bounded by West Way and Princess Way/Castle Street. The prime retail areas are the Quadrant and the pedestrianised section of Oxford St. The precise boundaries are defined on the Proposals Map (Plan 6).

6.3.8 Planning applications for non-retail uses within primary shopping streets will need to be accompanied by an assessment of the impact on the established retail frontage. Proposed non-retail uses should not lead to the isolation of any section of the retail core or remove from retail use any important shop unit. In respect of the demand for non-retail premises, applicants will be expected to confirm the length of time that the premises have remained vacant and identify what measures have been taken to market the property for retail use. The physical and design dimensions of proposals will be assessed in terms of the design principles set out in Chapter 1.

6.3.9 In 2003 there were found to be 22,100 sq.m. of vacant floorspace available on upper floors within the City Centre. The Council will support the introduction of complimentary land uses that bring back into beneficial use vacant units on upper floors and thereby increase the vitality and viability of the City Centre.

Policy CC3
The St David’s/Quadrant area is defined as the area of highest priority for redevelopment in the City Centre. A comprehensive retail led mixed use regeneration scheme should be brought forward for this area in the short to medium term in order to deliver the necessary revitalisation of the retail core and to enhance the attraction of the City Centre as a regional shopping destination. Any other retail based development, either within or outside the City Centre, will be evaluated against this aim.

Development proposals that would put at risk the comprehensive retail led regeneration of St David’s/Quadrant area, or would adversely affect the potential to enhance and redevelop shopping facilities elsewhere within the retail core, will not be supported.

Main Cross References: CC1, CC2, CC4, CC6-7, EC4, ECNR, SP1, EV1-4, AS1-2, AS6-7.

National Planning Guidance: MIPPS 02/2005; PPW; TAN 4 and 12.

SPG: Swansea City Centre Strategic Framework. Development Brief for St David’s/Quadrant Area and Paxton Street/County Hall Area (forthcoming).

Amplification
6.3.10 The St David’s/Quadrant area has been identified as the key development opportunity to deliver the proposed refurbishment and enhancement of the retail core as a regional shopping destination. The regeneration of the St David’s/Quadrant area is crucial to reinforce the prime retail floorspace area within the City Centre and generate the critical mass necessary to achieve the aim of retail led regeneration at this location. The St David’s/Quadrant area is a prominent, high profile and highly accessible location, being immediately adjacent to the bus station and integral to the retail core. The area encompasses an extensive quarter of the City Centre between West Way and Princess Way, which includes the St David’s shopping centre and land currently occupied by a range of uses including multi storey car parking, retailing (convenience and comparison goods), offices and residential. The existing St David’s Centre is characterised by a high level of vacant floorspace and is a significantly underused asset. Redevelopment of the area as part of a comprehensive retail led mixed use scheme provides an opportunity to provide new modern retail space and a high quality shopping area at the heart of the City Centre.
6.3.11 A detailed Development Brief for the St David’s/Quadrant area and the Paxton Street/County Hall area is being prepared. The Brief is currently in draft form and will be adopted as SPG in due course to reinforce UDP policies and provide more detailed guidance in relation to planning, urban design and development principles for the site. A comprehensive retail led mixed use redevelopment scheme in the St David’s/Quadrant area will be required to incorporate the following key objectives:

- Integration with the existing prime retail floorspace, including strong connections to Oxford Street and The Quadrant
- Vibrant new shopping streets and the provision of new anchor stores that will enhance the quality of retail provision within the core area and attract further retail investment
- An effective retail circuit that encourages the flow of pedestrians around the retail area
- A viable and vibrant mixture of other appropriate complementary uses
- Excellence and distinctiveness in urban design, landscape design and architecture
- A high quality built edge along the Oystermouth Road frontage that promotes vibrancy and activity
- Extending and improving the quality of pedestrian routes through the City Centre, the St David’s/Quadrant area and its connections with the Waterfront, including the Paxton Street area
- Landmark buildings and features located at key points

6.3.12 Proposals for the redevelopment of the St David’s/Quadrant area are rapidly progressing towards implementation. The Council and its partners, including WAG, selected a developer to deliver the preferred scheme at the end of 2007. A masterplan will be prepared for the St David’s/Quadrant area, as well as the Paxton Street/County Hall area, which will set out a pattern of development and range of uses in accordance with the forthcoming Development Brief.

6.3.13 It is vital that proposals for this location are not compromised by other development schemes, either within the City Centre or elsewhere within the County. Development proposals at other sites that are considered likely to threaten the redevelopment and enhancement of the St David’s/Quadrant area will be resisted, in the interests of maintaining the viability of the scheme and to secure the necessary revitalisation of the City Centre retail core. Conversely, proposals elsewhere which support this policy by securing the necessary redevelopment will be supported, subject to other policies of this Plan.
Policy CC4
The following uses will be appropriate in Parc Tawe (Phase 1):

(i) Retailing (Classes A1, A3),
(ii) Leisure Uses (Class D2),
(iii) Hotel (Class C1),
(iv) Residential (Class C3),
(v) Education (Class D1),
(vi) Office Uses (Classes A2, B1), and
(vii) Car Parking.

The amount of floorspace occupied by the uses in criteria (i) and (ii) shall not exceed 19,000 sq. m combined (gross internal).

Development on the frontage to The Strand/Quay Parade that provides increased activity at street level will be supported.

Opportunities to improve the quality of the area and its wider integration with the City Centre will be sought.

Main Cross References: CC1, CC2, CC6-7, EC4, ECNR, SP1, EV1-4, AS1-2, AS7.

National Planning Guidance: MIPPS 02/2005; PPW; TAN 4 and 12.

SPG: Swansea City Centre Strategic Framework; Development Brief for Parc Tawe (forthcoming).

Amplification
6.3.14 Parc Tawe Phase 1 comprises the area south of the Parc Tawe Link road, fronted by The Strand and Quay Parade. It is a prominent site at a very important gateway to the City Centre. The area is expected to be redeveloped as a mixed use scheme, which could include some or all of the uses listed in Policy CC4. Accordingly, improvement and redevelopment initiatives will be pursued as opportunities arise. Redevelopment should firmly establish the gateway function of the site through appropriate architectural treatment, improved elevations and frontages, landmark buildings and a quality public realm.

6.3.15 Development and physical improvements will specifically be sought on the Strand/Quay Parade frontages whilst respecting the regeneration initiatives arising from the rest of the City Centre. This will help generate the activity and viability between Parc Tawe (Phase 1) and the rest of the City Centre.

6.3.16 Policy CC4 relates to Parc Tawe Phase 1 only, where a comprehensive redevelopment scheme is likely to come forward in the short to medium term. The Council would welcome the delivery of such a scheme at the earliest opportunity, particularly in view of the existing poor environment and building quality at Phase 1 that currently presents a poor gateway to Swansea and contrasts badly with the adjacent urban form of the City Centre.

6.3.17 It is possible that redevelopment proposals could also come forward for Parc Tawe Phase 2 in the longer term. Any such proposals will be considered on their planning merits in accordance with UDP policies and the principles set out in the Swansea City Centre Strategic Framework. It is important that any such scheme is compatible with the proposed comprehensive redevelopment of Phase 1 in the short to medium term.
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City Centre Action Area
Part 2

CREATING AN ATTRACTIVE CITY CENTRE ENVIRONMENT

Policy CC5
The design of all new development schemes will be required to make a positive contribution to enhancing the City Centre’s environment. A programme of improvements will be implemented and, where appropriate, developer contributions will be sought towards this process.

Main Cross References: SP1, EV5-6, HC17, AS2, AS10, CC1-2.

National Planning Guidance: PPW; TAN 12.

SPG: Percent for Art – Procedure and Guidance; Tall Building Design Guide; Swansea City Centre Strategic Framework.

Amplification
6.3.18 Improved areas of public realm have been delivered, but there is considerable scope for further enhancement and the potential to introduce new public spaces. Coupled with improvements to buildings and new developments there is scope to radically change the face of the City Centre, creating routes and making places which people will find attractive and convenient. An examination of the potential to introduce tall buildings has been undertaken and SPG prepared.

6.3.19 The City Centre is a high profile area that demands a high quality public realm comprising buildings and the spaces between them. The Built Environment policies in Chapter 1 identify the key principles that development should take into account. Where appropriate these will be supplemented by Development Briefs and Design Guidance.

DELIVERING IMPROVEMENTS IN CITY CENTRE ACCESSIBILITY

Policy CC6
Improvements to the City Centre’s accessibility will be achieved by:

(i) Completing the strategic road network around the City Centre,
(ii) Introducing further park and ride facilities on strategic approaches to the City Centre,
(iii) Improving public transport, including rail and bus interchange facilities, and facilities for taxis,
(iv) Comprehensive redevelopment of the Quadrant Bus Station, introducing further bus priority measures and a City Centre circular bus route,
(v) Broadly maintaining the existing level of car parking to serve the City Centre, whilst promoting better management of both on-street and off-street parking,
(vi) Extending and improving the quality of pedestrian routes through the City Centre and its connections with the Waterfront,
(vii) Providing facilities to encourage cycling, and
(viii) Encouraging development that facilitates sustainable travel choices and complies with accessibility for all principles.

Main Cross References: SP13, SP14, EV3-4, EV6, EC4, HC17, AS1-AS11, CC1, CC5.

National Planning Guidance: PPW; TAN 18.

SPG: South Wales Counties Parking Guidelines; Swansea City Centre Strategic Framework.

Amplification
6.3.20 Crucial to revitalising central and waterfront areas of the City Centre is an efficient and fully accessible transport system that reduces vehicle congestion and encourages greater use of public transport, walking and cycling. Proposals that improve accessibility to and movement within the City Centre will be encouraged, particularly where they minimise harm to the environment, reduce dependency on the private car and increase use of sustainable means of travel.

6.3.21 This policy complements the strategy for improving accessibility across the City and County as set out within Chapter 5 and supports the objectives of the Council’s LTP.
6.3.22 An adequate supply of effectively managed and accessible parking is essential to the continuing vitality, viability and attractiveness of the City Centre. The existing scale of car parking provision that serves the City Centre will be broadly maintained whilst current revitalisation initiatives become established. In this context the flexible parking standards indicated in Chapter 5 (pending the adoption of revised parking guidelines) will be particularly important for City Centre development. The total amount of parking will include those spaces provided within park and ride sites that serve the central area. A central objective of the parking strategy for the City Centre is to maximise the turnover of spaces to serve shoppers and other visitors. The long stay requirements of City Centre workers will largely be met by the ‘park and ride’ facilities.

6.3.23 Existing car parking that is removed by new developments that serve the City Centre will broadly be replaced to ensure the vitality, attractiveness and viability of the City Centre is maintained and to provide an appropriate mix of long and short stay spaces. All new car parks should be designed to maximise levels of vehicle and personal security and have due regard to lighting, landscaping and layout. The adoption of “Secured by Design” and “Park Mark” standards will be encouraged.

6.3.24 Wherever possible, the use of a Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) will be encouraged as the preferred solution for dealing with potential surface water runoff arising from the development of new car parking areas within the City Centre.

Policy CC7
Improvements to the car parking provision serving the City Centre will be undertaken through the following measures:

(i) Provision of public car parks at appropriate City Centre development sites,
(ii) Management of existing and future public parking space to minimise impact on peak period road usage and encourage greater turnover in the use of spaces, and
(iii) On street parking controls to maximise turnover.

A minimum of 5% of the stock should be provided for the use of disabled people.

Main Cross References: SP14, EV6, EV35, AS1-2, AS5-6, AS8, CC4.

National Planning Guidance: PPW TAN4; TAN18.

SPG: South Wales Counties Parking Guidelines; Swansea City Centre Strategic Framework.