

Planning for Sustainability: lessons from studying neighbourhood shopping areas

Abstract

Neighbourhood shops are ubiquitous. They are also considered to contribute to sustainability. Yet they do not feature high on the planning agenda. This paper takes an empirical look at how planning engages with this feature of urban life, using London as a case study. It considers local policy frameworks for neighbourhood shopping areas and demonstrates the scope of the ambitions revealed. It considers the limitations of planning regulation for achieving these ambitions and assesses the potential offered by neighbourhood planning to protect and enhance such areas, recognising their mixed-use character. This supports consideration of how planning systems can engage with the everyday and of the issues that this gives rise to, including the relation of project to strategy, the different types of knowledge required, and the differential needs for community support.

Introduction

It is difficult to imagine a city or town without neighbourhood shopping areas. They serve local residential communities, lying below the level of district, town or city centres as set out within the retail hierarchy (as detailed, for example, in Planning Policy Statement 4, 2010: 25; here they are specified as containing sub-post offices, pharmacies and launderettes but not supermarkets, banks and libraries). In a recent analysis of shopping and consumption spaces, Dolega et al. (2019) describe them as 'local retail and service centres', a distinctive category contrasted with retail parks, comparison shopping destinations, and traditional high streets and market towns. Within London alone, it has been estimated that there are 1,200 neighbourhood and local centres (London Assembly, 2010), but such areas are a feature of almost all cities, worldwide.

Often they seem to have emerged organically amongst houses or by conversion from pre-existing housing. Sometimes they take the form of purpose-built parades or lengths of non-residential units constructed during the urbanisation of the last two centuries. In England, these are typically found within Edwardian terraces, at railway and underground stations or as clusters of shops within post-war mass council housing estates; elsewhere in Europe, they often form the ground floor of residential apartment blocks. Post-war private-sector housing estates have often been roundly criticised for their failure to incorporate such facilities; by contrast, New Urbanism has made the inclusion of mixed-uses, including local shops, a mantra for its new developments. This is because, as will be set out in the next section, neighbourhood shopping is considered to make a significant contribution to the sustainability of towns and cities.

This raises the question of how such neighbourhood shopping areas are treated within planning policy and practice. Since 2010, there has been a vigorous policy debate about the future of retail in the context of changing demographics, the shift to online purchases and competition from off-centre retail locations. In the UK, this has focussed on the fate of the 'traditional high street' with high-profile reviews by key figures in the retail sector, Mary Portas (2011, 2014) and Bill Grimsey (2013, 2018), leading to a Future High Streets Forum and a small but dedicated funding stream from central government. Such high streets are typically characterised by the presence of multiples (national or international chains of outlets) alongside smaller and independent shops. As such, this debate has only considered the town or city centre; the smaller neighbourhood scale is not included. In this context, the paper asks the question: is local planning recognising the importance of neighbourhood shopping areas? What policies at different scales consider these areas? How is the implementation of these policies envisaged? And does planning regulation have a significant role to play?

These questions are explored empirically within London, looking across strategic plans, neighbourhood planning and development control/management (i.e. the granting of development

consent). Following a section on sustainability and the neighbourhood centre, the methodology for the empirical work is set out. Three sections then report on this research before the conclusion returns to the implications of a focus on such neighbourhood areas for planning practice.

Neighbourhood shopping areas and sustainability

It is widely argued that neighbourhood shopping areas can contribute to the functioning of urban areas and, in particular, to their sustainability. The environmental dimension largely relates to the idea that people could walk to these shops to buy goods and access services and that this accessibility could reduce carbon-based emissions. But, perhaps more significantly, such shopping areas can also contribute to social sustainability. This concept tends to be underemphasised compared to the economic and environmental dimensions of the so-called 'triple bottom line' and has proved more difficult to define. Bebbington and Dillard (2009) distinguish social from environmental and economic sustainability by seeing it as subjectively defined, with reference to a substantive rationality with an ethical and value base. This leads to a wide range of definitions although, in an urban context, the words 'sustainable' and 'communities' are generally paired to provide wording such as: "healthy and liveable communities for current and future generations" or "socially sustainable communities are equitable, diverse, connected and democratic and provide a good quality of life" (both from McBeath et al., 2013: 136).

Neighbourhood shopping areas can contribute to social sustainability in a number of ways. Reducing car use also has a social aspect; for example, 40% of Londoners do not own a car (London Assembly, 2010). In addition, local shopping serves the needs of older and disabled people who, due to constrained physical mobility, are not able to travel far. But there are other ways in which neighbourhood shopping areas can support social sustainability. They can act as hubs of social connectivity as people meet each other when using the local shops and services. Given that these

areas are oriented towards everyday needs, these contacts are likely to be relatively frequent and this can help build local social capital; this may generally consist of weak tie (arising from recognition and acknowledgement) but it has the potential to become stronger through repeated interaction (leading to acquaintance, personal knowledge or even friendship). Such social capital can support a kind of local early warning system for when individuals are in difficulty; when people are 'missed', this can prompt inquiries and assistance. There is also the suggestion that neighbourhood shops provide for lower income households although there is a question mark over whether the goods provided cost more and/or are of lower quality than in larger stores (supermarkets and superstores) where economies of scale and rapid supply chains may operate. On the other hand, local independent shops may occasionally be willing to operate a kind of ad hoc credit system that could help households in temporary difficulties.

In addition to the benefits of greater social capital, such areas may help embed a sense of local identity. Mace in his study of city suburbs emphasises the importance of everyday experience for identity; he initially focussed almost entirely on the residential dimension, however, "it soon became evident that they [shops] were an important consideration for local people" (2013: 136). He sees this importance in cultural as well as functional terms, supporting a sense of place, the 'textures of place' (to reference Adams et al., 2001). Hall (2012) has shown in her study of 'ordinary streets' how a rich world of social encounter occurs in these streets and how this shapes local culture. Zukin et al. also argue for the importance of local streets: "local shopping streets should thrive ... They are built to a human scale ..., producing both a socially sustainable *habitus* and an environmentally sustainable *habitat*" (2016: 6). As well as a current sense of place, local areas inscribe history, potentially providing a sense of continuity (McManus and Ethington, 2007), although Zukin warns of sanctifying a particular historical version of locality and demonising social change as a result (2010: 26).

There is also an economic dimension to how neighbourhood shopping areas can contribute to sustainability. It is important to recognise here that these areas comprise a mix of different land uses

beyond retail, including services, small offices and even light industry, sometimes above or behind the shop units; this is emphasised in Vaughan's work on suburbs (2015; see also McManus and Ethington, 2007). Thus, areas with local shops offer a variety of local employment options, although admittedly often at low wages. They also offer lower-cost entry opportunities for SMEs in lower-rent locations; it has been noted that such businesses can provide opportunities for ethnic minority groups (Wells and Watson, 2005; London Assembly, 2010: 22). Furthermore, there is evidence that the profits generated within such neighbourhood areas are more likely to stay within the locality; the London Assembly found that 50% of the turnover of local shops goes back into the local community, compared with only 5% for the multiple supermarkets (2010: 11).

The value of such shopping areas is recognised in UK national planning policy. The National Planning Policy Framework mentions the value of safe and accessible neighbourhood centres in promoting social interaction and healthy lifestyles (2018: 27). It calls for positive planning for local shops as an example of a community facility. Established shops should be able to develop and modernise so that they are retained for the benefit of that community. This builds on the previous Planning Policy Statement No. 4, which also recognised the role of local shopping centres, seeing them as important to local communities and economies and also providing a location for non-retail small-scale economic activities (2009: 19). This stated that planning policy should refuse planning permission that does not protect existing facilities for day-to-day needs and, conversely, respond positively to plans for conversion and extension of shops to improve their viability.

This policy approach has been established in a context that sees neighbourhood shopping areas as under threat as retail units close and/or are replaced by other uses. The reasons for this are multiple, widespread and long-standing (Jones and Oliphant, 1976; London Assembly, 2010). On the one hand, there is competition from larger units of multiples that have newer premises and a better quality and range of goods, often at cheaper prices. In addition, problems of rising rents, planning regulation and parking restrictions are often reported. In England, small shops have been particularly

hard-hit by the 2017 revaluation for business rates (the commercial property tax), which generally increased their tax burden. Meanwhile demographic, social and cultural changes – including more women working, the reliance on convenience meals, the use of the car for shopping at weekends, access to the internet – mean that shopping occurs less frequently, favouring larger stores (often in out- or edge-of-town locations) and online shopping.

Mace (2013) pinpoints the moral dimension of this discourse on shopping, where the persistence of local, independent shops is seen as a positive marker of stability. Retailing areas are often referred to in terms of ‘health’, which Hubbard (2017) links to concerns about class and respectability. He sees this nostalgic, middle-class narrative favouring a form of gentrification: farmers’ markets, cafes and boutiques rather than nail bars and betting offices. Another example of the moralised discourse of local shopping is provided by Jones and Oliphant who categorise local traders as: traditional and innovative (both positive categories); auto-oriented (neutral); and twilight (clearly a negative category that covers junk shops, tattoo parlours, saunas, bookstores, antiques, clubs and charity shops); ‘unacceptable’ businesses are listed as pet food shops, betting shops, junkyard and sex shops (1976: 26). The recent debates in the UK about fried chicken shops and the attempt to regulate them in the vicinity of schools continues this moral debate.

Thus, the context for examining planning for neighbourhood shopping areas is one structured by policy debates on their role within a retail hierarchy, their contribution to environmental, social and economic sustainability, and moral judgements about the acceptability of change. The next section sets out the methodology for exploring the case of London before turning to the analysis.

Methodology

The empirical study was based in London and comprised three tranches of work related to the different research questions. To consider the policies for neighbourhood shopping areas that existed

at different scales, work was undertaken at metropolitan, local municipality and neighbourhood levels. In 2017, a review was undertaken of all development plans in London; the London Plan prepared by the Greater London Authority as well as Local Plans prepared by the London Boroughs (LBs). These were examined for policies relating to neighbourhood shops and extracts were assembled into a spreadsheet for analysis. The emphasis in such analysis was on identifying: whether the importance of neighbourhood centres was recognised; the rationale for any such recognition; the detail of the relevant policies; and any discussion of how policies would be implemented.

In addition, recognising that the take-up of the Localism Act 2011 has been quite high in London, neighbourhood planning activity in London was researched in 2019 through data held on www.neighbourhoodplanners.london. All the neighbourhood plans that were listed here as going to consultation or being submitted to the local authority were examined: this produced 27 Neighbourhood Forum websites to consult. In four cases, it was not possible to find or download a relevant document; one related to the former Olympic Games site and was considered a special case; one entirely concerned green infrastructure; and three were located in central London areas dominated by international shopping or tourism. This left 18 Neighbourhood Plans to study, again putting summary details into a spreadsheet for analysis. Again, the analysis focussed on recognition, rationale, policy detail and implementation approach.

The research in these two stages provided some answers to the question: how is the implementation of these policies envisaged? Given the importance of planning regulation as a means of implementation, this was considered in more detail, answering the third research question: does planning regulation have a significant role to play? This required a more fine-grained approach and, therefore, a case study was selected in North London of about 100 non-residential premises: Hornsey High Street. Although this area carries the name 'high street', this is not a street with multiples (other than one convenience store branch) nor does it function as a district or town

centre; it is a substantial neighbourhood centre. [Since the fieldwork, a Sainsbury's supermarket has been built as part of a new residential development to the north of the High Street.]

Data from various sources was collected. A foot survey was undertaken in December 2013-January 2014 to record all non-residential premises and the nature of occupancy; 104 such premises were identified on the street frontage and immediately behind. The online register of the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) was used to identify the area and rental value in 2010 (then the last valuation date for business rates) for all hereditaments in the area. Hereditaments are the unit used for collecting business rates but they are not identical to observable property units, so these were mapped onto the premises identified in the foot survey. The history of the area was also researched through visiting the urban studies archive at Bruce Castle, Tottenham (Denford, 2008; Gay and Whetstone, 1989; Sherrington, 1904) and consulting postal directories for past years (providing historical information on 89 premises). Most importantly, the London Borough of Haringey kindly provided an Excel file with every planning application for Hornsey High Street for 1947-2014. As well as providing aggregate data on planning regulation over time for 104 premises, this was cross-mapped onto information from the postal directories, the foot survey and the VOA register to provide unique planning histories for 89 units. This enabled the regulation of a neighbourhood shopping area to be studied in detail.

The ambitions of strategic plans

Retailing is a key issue in London planning. In line with national trends, there was a specific focus on the high street during the Mayoralty of Boris Johnson (2008-16), which fitted with his political base in the outer London suburban areas (GLA, 2014). However, there has also been attention paid to local shops. The 2016 London Plan – the key planning document at the metropolitan scale – pointed out that, in parts of London, “small shops are in short supply and affordability is a key concern” (S.

4.51); it included Policy 4.9, which provided for planning gain from larger retail development to support affordable shopping units for smaller and independent retailers (although this largely affected town centres); a study by Roger Tym and Partners (2010) provided the evidence base.

More pertinent to neighbourhood shopping was the report *Cornered Shops* by the London Assembly Planning and Housing Committee (2010). This focused on local centres and neighbourhood parades, detailing their decline: 7,000 individual or family-owned shops closed in London over 2001-7; small shops in neighbourhood centres fell by 20% (period not given). The proposed replacement London Plan (2018) suggests a policy framework to support such shops. It includes Policy E9 on retail, markets and hot food takeaways which seeks to “support convenience retail in all town centres, and particularly in District, Local and Neighbourhood centres, to secure inclusive neighbourhoods and a sustainable pattern of provision where there is less need to travel”. It calls for “a policy framework to enhance local and neighbourhood shopping facilities and prevent the loss of retail and related facilities that provide essential convenience and specialist shopping”.

These London-wide policies are echoed at the borough level. Here one finds a very positive view taken on local shops. LB Harrow’s plan particularly emphasises the role of such areas, partly because it covers a large number of Metroland parades built in the interwar period alongside stations on the Metropolitan line of the London Underground (S.8.19-S.8.24). They recognise that such shops contribute to sustainability in a variety of ways such as reducing the need for car-based trips and promoting social cohesion. LB Barnet’s plan also argues that neighbourhood centres and shopping parades “make a major contribution to the sustainability and cohesion of neighbourhoods” (S.11.8). They particularly recognise the importance of such facilities for older people, those who are less mobile and those who are less well-off, including those without access to a car. LB Camden’s plan states: “It is important for the community that existing shops outside the Town Centre are retained because these shops, which are usually convenience stores, provide a vital service meeting the day-to-day needs of local communities, especially those who are less mobile. This includes the elderly,

the infirm and those without access to a car” (p. 35). They also see the importance of availability and affordability of shop premises to the businesses in this sector. LB Kensington and Chelsea reference the motto of ‘Keeping Life Local’ when discussing local shopping. Thus, neighbourhood shopping is supported and seen as meeting important social needs.

In developing specific policies for retailing within these plans, there is a lot of emphasis on designation within the context of the retail hierarchy. There is a general desire to bound the area that shops are within, tidying up ‘straggling’ lengths of shopping. LB Newham’s plan argues for consolidating ribbon development into defined areas and “tackling concerns about sprawling untidy frontages of mainly secondary retail, hot food take-aways and so on” (s.6.69). However, LB Newham’s plan also recognises the importance of improving the urban amenities of retail areas. LB Waltham Forest similarly wishes to see “careful management of local retail parades ... to encourage the development of an appropriate grouping of local shops and facilities” (S.17.14), again favouring clusters over long stretches of secondary shopping. LBs Kensington and Chelsea, Westminster and Richmond-upon-Thames all emphasise how local shopping enhances the urban village character of their boroughs; it is notable that these are all higher income boroughs but LB Lambeth also discusses how neighbourhood shopping can reinforce local identities for ethnic and gay communities (S2.108). These policies clearly seek to create ‘centres’ with social functioning and cultural meaning.

There is a general desire to protect, support and enhance local shops but the means envisaged for achieving this are quite limited. The plans seek to enable walking and cycling by enhancing the quality of the access by these modes and they emphasise the need for shop front improvements; however, questions remain as to funding. This is in the context of fiscal austerity limiting municipal spending on many small centres. There is often a policy seeking to prevent changes of use away from core retail use (known as Class A1 in the Use Classes Order or UCO – see Figure 1). Planning permission is not required for changes of uses within a class in the UCO but is for changes between classes of use. Thus, plans seek to specify the proportion of space that should be in A1 uses. In

Croydon and Greenwich, for example, the aim is at least 50% of units or the frontage; in Lambeth this drops to 40%. Such figures are lower for local and neighbourhood shopping than in district or town centres where at least 70-80% is the norm. In addition, some plans, such as LB Havering's, seek to prevent multiple adjoining non-A1 uses 'breaking up' the shopping frontage. These policies on change of use may typically be relaxed where there is evidence of persistent vacancy of a unit over a long period of time (say, a year) despite active marketing.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

More rarely, the plans note the significance of other measures. LB Hounslow, in their policy for neighbourhood centres and isolated shops, specifically mention the need to "work with stakeholders, including local residents and business" (S.3.13) and LB Kensington and Chelsea say that "The Council will continue to work with landlords to promote the diverse retail mix" (with reference to Portobello Road; S.7.3.11). LB Hackney see such engagement with landlords as key to the implementation of their retail policies, although they concentrate this point on town centres (S.6.16). The detail of how this will work is not explored. Some mention their own landownership of retail units; LB Kensington and Chelsea points out their ownership of 35 shops on Golborne Road (S.6.3.6) and talks of increasing its portfolio in Portobello Road (S.7.3.15). In a few plans, the limits of planning regulation for fulfilling policies on local shops are pinpointed. LB Kensington and Chelsea see planning powers as essentially negative, about resisting shops changing to non-shop uses (S.7.3.12) and LB Lambeth state: "The planning powers available to local authorities to ensure that local centres fulfil this [retail and service] function are restricted" (S.6.49). This will be discussed further in the section on regulation below.

The potential of neighbourhood planning

Neighbourhood planning was introduced in England under the Localism Act 2011. This form of planning is neither compulsory nor spatially comprehensive. Local communities can come together to form Neighbourhood Forums and then develop a Neighbourhood Plan which, if approved through a local referendum, becomes binding. It has to conform to the Local Plan for the area and, through a Neighbourhood Development Order, planning permission in principle is granted for proposed new development. Under the New Homes Bonus, the Forum receives funding for new residential development; it can also share in the Community Infrastructure Levy on new development. The format of Neighbourhood Plans is rather more flexible than for Local Plans; the whole process begins from community engagement and involves consideration of local projects for the area as well as allocation of land for development.

Within the 18 Neighbourhood Plans reviewed, 6 concentrate on district centres (Harlesden, Central Ealing, West Ealing, West Hampstead, Hampstead and Kentish Town), with plans for new development to enhance and expand these centres. These all recognise existing sub-district retail, whether in distinct neighbourhood areas or as almost-contiguous areas of secondary frontage. They all support the idea of a 'healthy' retail mix, seeing neighbourhood shopping as complimentary. However, there is little in the way of distinctive measures for such neighbourhood shopping given the main focus of the plans elsewhere. Shop front improvements (provided funding can be found) are recommended and it is accepted that changes of use in these areas might remove unattractive vacant frontage and, therefore, sometimes be appropriate.

More interesting were the four plans focussed on neighbourhood shopping areas (Sudbury Town; Highgate; Kennington, Oval and Vauxhall; and Chatsworth Road in Hackney). Typically, these areas comprise less than 100 units and the policies are more detailed than in the previous group. There are proposals and, indeed, dedicated projects for shop front improvements but also plans for extending control over changes of use in the locality (through an Article 4 Direction that removes the application of parts of the UCO). The Chatworth Road plan provides a good exemplar of this

category. This includes considerable descriptive detail including maps showing shifts in Use Classes for 78 units between 2008 and 2014. The plan seeks “to retain and enhance the role of Chatsworth Road as a mixed-use centre that serves all sectors of the local community” (S.5.3.1). Planning (“undoubtedly a blunt tool”) will be used “to maximise the available number of units and floor space, as well as preserving the mix of use classes as far as possible, to provide a counter to market forces that drive up rents and make the diversity of business ... unviable”. It seeks to apply LB Hackney policies but “on a finer grain”. To this end the policy is that “Ground floor commercial space within the Neighbourhood Plan area should be protected for A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, B1, D1 and D2 uses. No change of use away from these should be permitted” (see Figure 1).

In addition, in six further Neighbourhood Plans, neighbourhood parades of shops were specifically mentioned as a unique urban form. These plans are notable for the depth of detail that they provided about their locality and the range of approaches suggested for protecting and enhancing the parades. The policies on regulating change of use are much more detailed and nuanced than in Local Plans. In Dartmouth Park, the Neighbourhood Plan policies seek to limit change of use from A1 and adjoining non-A1 uses, as in many local plans, but further seeks to ensure that at least 80% of units and businesses fall within A1, A3, A4, D1 and D2, recognising the specific mix of uses that makes this neighbourhood area function. It also seeks to limit the size of new individual units that are not public houses or restaurants to 100 sqm or below and looks to ways for new development to encourage existing and new independent businesses as planning gain; they propose a retail forum to advise the developer on this. Looking beyond the ground floor level, the Plan supports intensification of these centres by allowing the use of upper floors for residential or B1 (Business) use or for community facilities (D1). They generally seek to resist changes of use from existing office and business uses to non-business uses. In the Hopcroft Neighbourhood Plan, the forum states that changes of uses away from A1-3 should “provide co-working space for small start-up businesses” (p. 49), and in the Ham and Petersham Neighbourhood Plan, loss of shops, pubs, restaurants, cafes and related commercial services will be resisted but provision of shared workspace and serviced offices

are supported if they are directed at small businesses. These are detailed policies based on an understanding of what makes the local area 'tick'.

The importance of the urban realm in the vicinity of these parades is often emphasised. The Ham and Petersham Neighbourhood Plan identifies certain areas as offering an 'opportunity for change' and makes specific illustrated proposals for improving access and connectivity for cyclists and pedestrians and improving the appearance and attractiveness through measures for shopfronts, signage, lighting, seating, public art, soft landscaping and space for community events, as well as encouraging better maintenance through working with owners and occupiers. In Dartmouth Park, there are proposals for conserving the historic architecture of the area and improving the public realm through cycle parking, well-signed pedestrian routes, attractive seating, convenient but unobtrusive recycling and rubbish facilities, soft landscaping and improved/increased paved areas. These are proposals worked out in detail.

The St. Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Forum provides an historical account of its three shopping parades and adopts a fine-grained distinction between them; in one case they envisage road closures and the creation of a piazza. Another example of a distinctively local solution is provided by the Hackbridge and Beddington's Neighbourhood Plan, which has a distinctive ecological character with proposals for an Edible Bus Stop, ecology park and naturalisation of a water course. It also suggests establishing community shops and encouraging local supply chains: it "would like to see proposals for a farmer's market, and for all the local shops to buy their stock from local producers" (p. 65).

Neighbourhood plans often emphasise joint working by local actors. The St. Quintin and Woodlands plan suggests working with owners and managing agents to improve the vacant units and encourage re-letting. The importance of bringing together stakeholders to make the vision for the neighbourhood happen is emphasised. The Hopcroft Plan also recognises the need for: Action Plans for particular localities prepared by local stakeholders; seeking funding from various sources

including crowd-funding; working with Transport for London; setting up local business groups; and establishing a community group aimed at attracting and facilitating pop-up and meanwhile uses. This is much more of an action plan for achieving change than is found in Local Plans.

Finally, it should be noted that there were two plans for areas next to or between major urban regeneration projects: Camley Street, near to King's Cross and Somers Town between King's Cross and Euston. These plans identify local shopping facilities but are more focussed on protecting residential quality in the context of major urban change. In both cases, there is the hope of harnessing some of the growth due to urban regeneration towards improving neighbourhood services including the local retail offer, but the plans are rather provisional.

This review shows the potential of neighbourhood planning to offer much more fine-grained planning policies to support local shops, including the application of the Use Classes Order and detailed development proposals. The dedicated focus on these small areas enables the local forum to integrate considerable local knowledge, consider a variety of local projects and bring in stronger stakeholder engagement. Of course, these are proposed visions for the localities and not all had been finally adopted let alone implemented, but planning is based on such visioning and here there seems to be some scope for a vision rooted in a distinctive local understanding of the area and its functioning.

The limits of regulation

The analysis of London planning documents has shown that there is a policy framework for neighbourhood shopping areas, recognising the value of these areas, often explicitly referencing sustainability, and seeking to protect and enhance them. This raises the question of how these policies are implemented through planning regulation. Attention here turns to the case study of Hornsey High Street.

The road that became Hornsey High Street was, in the 18th century, just a track across a rural estate. By the end of the 19th century, the High Street had been completely built up along the north and south sides and the majority of the buildings still date from this period. The foot survey of 2014 recorded a mix of uses within the 104 premises on and behind the High Street frontage as illustrated in Figure 2; retail was in the minority (24%), with many different service functions (restaurants and take-away food, public houses and bars, hair and beauty services, garages, estate agents, dentist, vet), as well as four educational establishments, three religious buildings and six commercial facilities including a furniture workshop and a button wholesaler. This is a mixed-use area.

[INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Data for 1898, 1938 and 1978 taken from the postal directories show that there has always been a variety of land uses in the street, although retail uses have played a more major role than now (24%), with a peak of 54% in 1938. This echoes much research on such 'ordinary streets' emphasising how diversity is part of the ecosystem of such areas and accounts for their vitality and functioning as social hubs (Scott, 2016: 222). This diversity is facilitated by another key feature of premises: their small scale. Data from the VOA shows that the vast majority of these premises are small; on average the area of unit with a High Street frontage was 73 sq.m. This means they are also low value spaces; the rental value (as proxied by the 2010 rateable value) for High Street frontage units is £12,253 p.a. on average.

What has been the role of planning regulation in this street of retail and other uses? The first point to note is the relatively small number of applications; in total there were 371 applications recorded for 1947-2014, which is just over 5 p.a. Many changes will have been covered by the UCO or otherwise not require planning consent, although the more recent trends towards planning deregulation post-date this dataset; some may also have occurred without consent as informal development. This indicates the limited engagement with planning regulation in shaping these neighbourhood shopping areas. From Figure 3 it can be seen that applications for shops fronts, small

scale offices, car-related activities and other works have been a persistent but low-volume demand on planning regulation. The notable peaks have been for adverts in the 1950s and 1960s, following by new industrial development in the 1980s and change of use to services in the early 1970s. From the 1990s onwards, the major individual category has been for residential development, mainly on upper floors and to the rear of the High Street, indicating the London housing market pressures prompting redevelopment.

[INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE]

The planning histories for individual units provide a further insight into the role of planning regulation. First, there are examples of where planning regulation has facilitated changes of use through consents. At Nos 32-34, the premises were used by David Greig, Butcher until 1940 at least, but by 1978 the unit had been split into two, housing a florist and a clothes shop. In the interim it appears that part of the premises at the rear were used for the manufacture of children's clothing, with relevant planning consents in 1971, 1973 and 1975. By 2014, the split unit remained but with a hair and beauty salon in one and a restaurant in the other, permission having been given for the change for use for catering in 1982.

There are relatively limited examples of planning regulation preventing changes of use or development. At No. 100, the premises to the rear were constrained by permission being refused for: building motor engines and gear boxes (1970); a dental laboratory (1974); take-away restaurant (1979); and taxi service (1981). Records for Nos 42-60 show that a number of applications during 1970s-90s were refused planning permission: a garage and service station; dress-making factory; extension of car showroom; restaurant and wine/bar; and continuation of a motor vehicle testing station. No. 3 has housed a baker since Thomas Keighley was baking products in 1898; by 2014 the baker was focussing more on sandwiches but any further change in use was constrained by refusal of planning permission in 2012 for a hot-food take-away.

Many changes in use take place without the need for planning consent but regulation still plays a role in permitting physical works that support the new use. One example shows planning regulation supporting a community function. In 1898 Nos 31-3 housed the Hornsey Constitutional Club, the Hornsey Habitation of the Primrose League, Hornsey National Hall and Hornsey District Conservative Association. By 1938 it was functioning as the Parish Hall for St. Mary's Church, a use that persisted to 1978 but by 2014 the building was the local mosque. A number of planning applications were permitted for works to maintain the then-current function.

The point here is that the planning system plays a role in enabling these local areas to adapt to changing circumstances; as Griffiths argues in relation to suburban London high streets that "both the building stock and land uses have continually adapted to each other" (2015: 39). Vaughan has similarly pointed to the "minimal but essential balance between stability of uses, on the one hand, and adaptability in building, as well as use class, on the other" (2015: 168). However, the role of planning regulation is relatively limited as the data here shows. Regulation on its own is not able to fulfil the ambitions of the strategic plans at London or borough level and, indeed, there is some mismatch between the focus on retaining retail in the local plans and the more complex pattern of uses in these areas. This puts the emphasis back onto other planning mechanisms to support neighbourhood shopping areas. The next section discusses the implications of this.

Conclusions: the implications for planning practice

The empirical research has shown that local authorities in London have ambitions for protecting and enhancing neighbourhood shopping areas as a way of promoting urban sustainability, confirmed within planning policies although they tend to focus on the retail offer and the use of the UCO. Planning regulation provides a rather limited engagement with change in such localities and thus cannot implement these policies effectively, particularly given their mixed-use nature (echoing

Zukin, 2010: 25). Neighbourhood planning suggests a different way of achieving these ambitions. In forums where the local shopping centre or neighbourhood parade was the focal point, then local knowledge, local networks of stakeholders and very specific local projects are married with much more fine-grained policies for regulation, using the UCO innovatively and proposing detailed ideas for improvements to the area. This shows greater potential for achieving the protection and enhancement of these areas. There are, however, a number of caveats to this conclusion.

First, the benefits of such neighbourhood planning depend on detailed local knowledge to guide very fine-grained planning policy and specific projects devised by local communities addressing management and use as well as physical change in the local built environment. Such local knowledge involves in-depth appreciation of specific features of the locality. It is, therefore, important not only to recognise the value of this knowledge (which is fundamentally different in kind to much of the evidence-base driving strategic planning) but also to provide the resources to tap into the sources of the knowledge and present it in appropriate formats.

Funding is also pertinent when considering the prerequisites for successful implementation of the projects and initiatives highlighted in neighbourhood plans. While stakeholder engagement associated with neighbourhood planning can support the generation of new partnerships and, thereby, facilitate the release of funds for projects, this is likely to work better if the local authority also supports projects financially. This is then another implication of neighbourhood planning for the municipality, in terms of the direction of funds and the allocation of budgets, and a challenge to contemporary austerity.

Third, there may be a need to take account of the aggregate impact of such projects and initiatives – if successfully implemented – in the strategic plans of the municipality. Local authority-wide strategies may create opportunities that local communities will seek to harness to support these projects but projects are by nature experimental (Munck af Rosenschöld, 2017) and the generation

of many small projects across a local authority area may generate a different canvas for strategic planning, one that local planners need to be alert to and acknowledge.

Finally, it should be recognised that funding will need to be unequally distributed to remedy the way that current social inequalities interface with neighbourhood planning. Other research on neighbourhood planning has emphasised the importance of developing connections between local stakeholders in order to generate ideas as well as support for those ideas and to release resources to deliver on plans. The problem that has already become apparent is that different communities have different resources to bring to neighbourhood planning (Gallent and Robinson, 2012). Certainly, the plans reviewed here that had the benefit of a local retired planner or the financial ability to buy-in a planning consultancy were notable for their professionalism and detailed content. This suggests that planning that begins with and relies on local communities may be disproportionately beneficial for higher-income communities.

Yet Hall (2012) has shown that significant educational resources exist within local communities, such as shopkeepers and businesses, along the streets she studies (see also Tate and Shannon, 2018); such entrepreneurial communities are also likely to have abilities related to finding finance, working out business plans and assessing risk. That said, time is often a resource that is less available to lower-income communities. Currently support for neighbourhood planning in England is a small standard amount for each forum; funding that counteracts social inequalities between forums will be needed instead.

If local planning systems can adapt to incorporate local knowledge and local projects, and sufficient and tailored support can be provided to prevent disparities in its practice, then neighbourhood planning seems to offer the potential for a new mode of planning, beyond the more detailed allocation of housing sites within a local plan framework. This could begin to challenge the idea that planning should focus on areas of economic concentration and be mainly concerned to attract capital to underpin economic activity (Rydin, 2013). Rather it shows how planning can work with the

local, the neighbourhood, and the everyday lives of people and open up the opportunity for a new kind of engagement with a diversity of citizens. With a mode that goes beyond a reliance on strategic policies and regulation and, further, avoids growth-dependence, planning can thereby help develop the narrative of each locality. As Manzi et al. say: “Each place has its own specific meta-narrative, drawing together the not-yet-finished stories of those whose paths cross it and cross within it. The multiplicity of paths generates a not-yet-finished narrative of the place” (2010: 79). Neighbourhood planning could have an important role to play in helping to build that narrative.

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Figure 1 Summary of the Use Classes Order (2018)

A1	Shops	B1	Offices	C1	Hotels	D1	Clinics, schools, museums, libraries, etc.
A2	Banks, estate agents, solicitors etc.	B2	General industry	C2	Residential institutions	D2	Cinemas, theatres, concert halls, etc.
A3	Restaurants and cafes	B8	Storage and distribution	C2a	Secure forms of C2	Sui Generis	Uses not falling in other classes
A4	Pubs and bars			C3	Houses	Other	Agricultural
A5	Hot food shops			C4	Houses in multiple occupation		

Figure 2 **Uses of units in Hornsey High Street 2014**

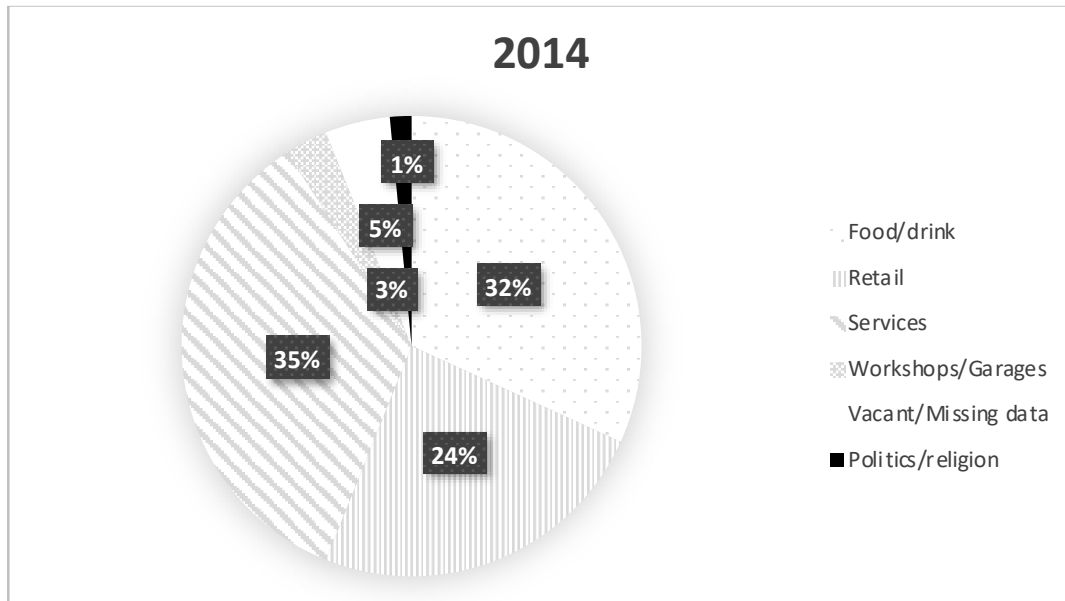


Figure 3 Planning applications in Hornsey High Street 1947-2014

