London Borough of Lewisham

Lewisham Retail Capacity Study 2017

Executive Summary

October 2017

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 GVA has been instructed by the London Borough of Lewisham to undertake the Lewisham Retail Capacity Study 2017. The study provides the Council with an up-to-date assessment of the 'need' for additional retail floorspace in the Borough over the period of the Council's new Local Plan, to 2033. It also provides an assessment of the performance of its two 'major town centres' of Lewisham and Catford, and network of seven 'district centres'.

1.2 The outputs of the study provide the Council with a clear strategy for the network of centres to ensure that they remain attractive and vibrant over the course of the Plan period, and fully able to meet the needs of local residents for shopping, leisure and services. Our study provides a robust evidence base which is fully compliant with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which the Council will be able to use to inform policy development and land use allocations, and to assist in the determination of planning applications for new retail development in the Borough.

1.3 Our study has been informed by on-site and desk-based information-gathering, including site visits to each of the 'major town' and 'district town' centres in the Borough. Further evidence is provided by way of a household telephone survey of shopping and leisure patterns across the Borough, and adjacent surrounding areas in which residents may look towards facilities in the Borough to meet their shopping and leisure needs ('the study area'). The results of the survey can also be used to understand the extent to which centres surrounding the Borough – such as Bromley, Croydon and Bluewater – are competing for spending with the network of centres within the Borough.

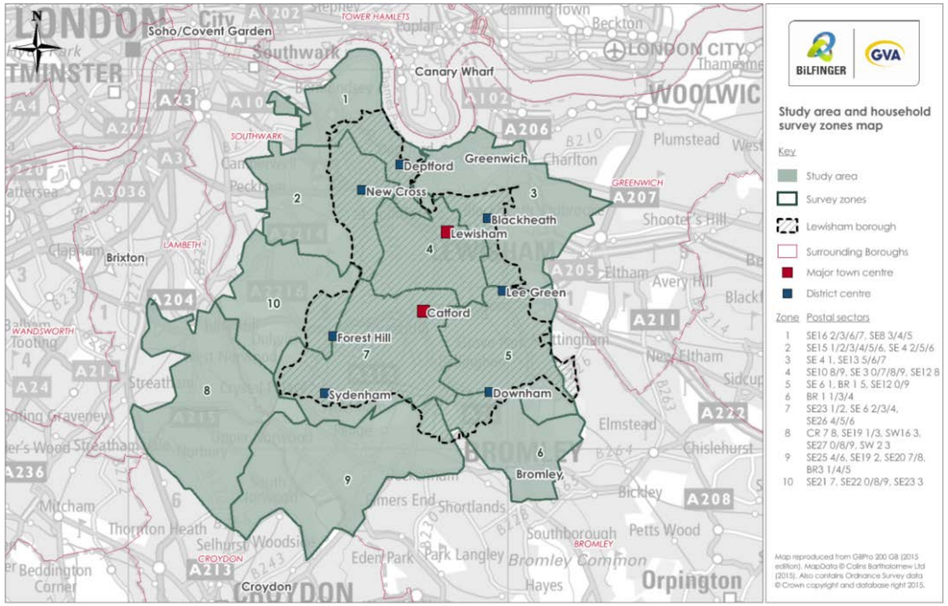
1.4 The extent of the household telephone survey area was agreed with the Council at the initial stage of preparation of this study, and reflects that which was used in the Council's previous retail capacity evidence base study (Lewisham Retail Capacity Study, Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners, 2009, and Addendum Report, 2010). A plan of the survey area is shown below.

1.5 Our 'health check' assessments of the Borough's network of centres, and our subsequent analysis of retail need and strategic recommendations refer to different types of retail and commercial leisure floorspace, as follows:

'Convenience' goods refers to food shopping – including supermarkets, and specialist stores such as bakers, greengrocers, off licences and so on;

'Comparison' goods refers to non-food shopping – including fashion, home furnishings, 1electrical items, DIY goods, books and music;

'Services' uses refers to commercial leisure services such as restaurants and cafes, as well as retail services such as hairdressers, beauty salons, banks, building societies and estate agents. Non-retail uses such as cinemas and arts centres are not included in Experian Goad's analysis, but are accounted for qualitatively through our own analysis.



NATIONAL AND LOCAL POLICY FRAMEWORK

1.6 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was adopted in March 2012 and replaces the suite of national planning policy statements, including PPS4. The NPPF advocates a 'town centres first' approach. It requires planning policies to positively promote competitive town centre environments and manage the growth of centres over the plan period. It also requires local planning authorities to define the extent of the town centres and primary shopping areas, based on a clear definition of primary and secondary frontages, and to ensure that the 'need' for new floorspace can be met in full.

1.7 The London Plan (Consolidated with alterations since 2011, published March 2016) identifies Lewisham and Catford as 'major town centres', and Blackheath, Deptford, Downham, Forest Hill, Lee Green, New Cross/New Cross Gate and Sydenham as 'district' centres. These allocations reflect those in the Council's own hierarchy of centres (discussed below).

1.8 Lewisham, Catford and New Cross, along with Deptford Creekside, are all identified as 'opportunity areas', i.e. concentrations of brownfield land which have capacity to accommodate new housing, commercial and other development. These 'opportunity areas' are expected to accommodate upwards of 2,500 new dwellings or 5,000 new jobs, or a combination of the two. Lewisham town centre is identified as a location with scope for further intensification, which is now underway.

1.9 Lewisham Council adopted their Core Strategy in June 2011. The document seeks to guide development in the Borough to 2026 and reflects the London Plan's identification of 'opportunity areas'. Reflecting the findings of the Council's previous retail evidence base study, the Core Strategy identifies a requirement for the Council to plan for at least 62,000 sq.m of new retail floorspace by 2026. The Core Strategy seeks to accommodate all of the identified capacity in Lewisham (40,000 sq.m) and Catford (22,000 sq.m) town centres. It is the purpose of this new study to update the previously identified need requirements.

1.10 As noted above, the Core Strategy identifies a hierarchy of centres consistent with the London Plan, and in addition, at the local level, neighbourhood centres are identified at Brockley Cross, Crofton Park, Downham Way, Grove Park and Lewisham Way. These centres were not considered as part of this instruction, but it might be appropriate in the future for the Council to address this level of the town centre hierarchy in order to understand accessibility to key services and sustainability across all communities in the borough.

1.11 The Core Strategy had aspirations for Lewisham town centre to achieve 'Metropolitan Town Centre' status through the development of the identified need (40,000 sq.m), public realm and environment improvements, and the provision of new housing. The London Plan defines a Metropolitan Centre has those with '*wide catchments, which can extend over several boroughs and into parts of the wider South East region. Typically they contain at least 100,000 sq m of retail, leisure and service floorspace with a significant proportion of higher-order comparison goods relative to convenience goods. These centres generally have very good accessibility and significant employment, service and leisure facilities'.*

1.12 The Core Strategy also confirms the Council's aspirations to see significant improvements delivered in Catford town centre. The Core Strategy seeks the 'comprehensive redevelopment' of the area, to include improvements to the physical environment of the area, and the development of up to 22,000 sq m of new retail floorspace. The Core Strategy also confirms support for regeneration aspirations for Lee Green district centre, physical improvements to Sydenham High Street, the development of underused sites in Forest Hill district centre, and the potential for long-term socio-economic change in the Deptford/New Cross areas. The Core Strategy makes it clear that 'major retail development, leisure and related town centre uses, including arts, cultural and entertainment facilities', should be directed towards the major town centres and district centres.

1.13 The Council adopted the Lewisham Town Centre Local Plan (LTCLP) in 2014, which aims to deliver and implement the objectives set out for Lewisham town centre in the Core Strategy. This includes a strategy for accommodating the identified capacity requirements of 40,000 sq.m of retail floorspace and 2,500 additional dwellings. A series of six 'Policy Areas' are identified, and the LTCLP sets out a development strategy for each Policy Area, identifying a desired mix of appropriate uses within specific development opportunities.

NATIONAL MARKET TRENDS

1.14 The 'traditional' high street is continuing to face challenges stemming from the impact of the economic downturn, the tightening of retail spending in recent years, and continued, significant changes in consumer shopping behaviour. The growth in online shopping, including multi-channel retailing, acts as tough competition for the high street, but also presents opportunities for high streets to capitalise, through maximising opportunities arising from services such as 'click & collect', and offering engagement with digital technologies through services like free town centre Wi-Fi, ensuring a seamless transition between store-based and virtual shopping experiences.

1.15 Out-of-centre retailing remains a source of competition for spending, as the results of the household telephone survey undertaken in support of this study have confirmed. Many retail parks performed well during the economic downturn, and are increasingly moving towards a more 'mainstream' rather than 'bulky goods' retail offer, with discount stores and fashion retailers increasingly keen to establish representation in out-of-centre locations. Many out-of-centre developments are seeking to increase footfall through a combination of this wider product offer and the introduction of a greater mix of uses, such as coffee shops and casual dining, to encourage footfall and increase dwell times - although the retail parks currently trading in the Borough have not yet seen this diversification.

1.16 More than ever, there is a need for local planning authorities to develop a coherent strategy for their town centres which supports the evolution of the high street away from being solely a focus for retail activity to providing a wider shopping, leisure and cultural 'experience', maximising the benefits of tourist trade (where applicable), and improving the mix of retail and non-retail outlets to increase the length of stay and spend. A number of centres in the Borough have a good commercial leisure mix supporting their core retail function which evidently contributes to their vitality and viability - although both of the Borough's highest order centres - Lewisham and Catford - have a relatively poor mix of commercial leisure uses at present.

1.17 It will be important for town and district centres to be well positioned to be able to adapt to on-going changes in the retail and leisure sector over the Plan period, and to promote and reaffirm their unique selling points. This will help to differentiate their offer from other centres. Heritage, tourism and other 'unique selling points' should be capitalised on, and robust place marketing strategies put in place.

THE SUB-REGIONAL NETWORK

1.18 Lewisham town centre draws £336.5m of comparison goods expenditure from the defined survey area (as shown above), equating to a market share of 14.9%. This is the highest trade draw figure of those centres located in the borough, and those more comparable and competing centres further afield. Lewisham town centre retains 47.1% of the market share from its 'local' zone, a figure which the Council should seek to improve over the course of its Local

Plan period. In terms of Borough-wide retention of comparison goods expenditure, 27.4% of all comparison goods expenditure which is available to residents in the survey area we have used as the basis of our assessment is spent at centres and stores within the Borough.

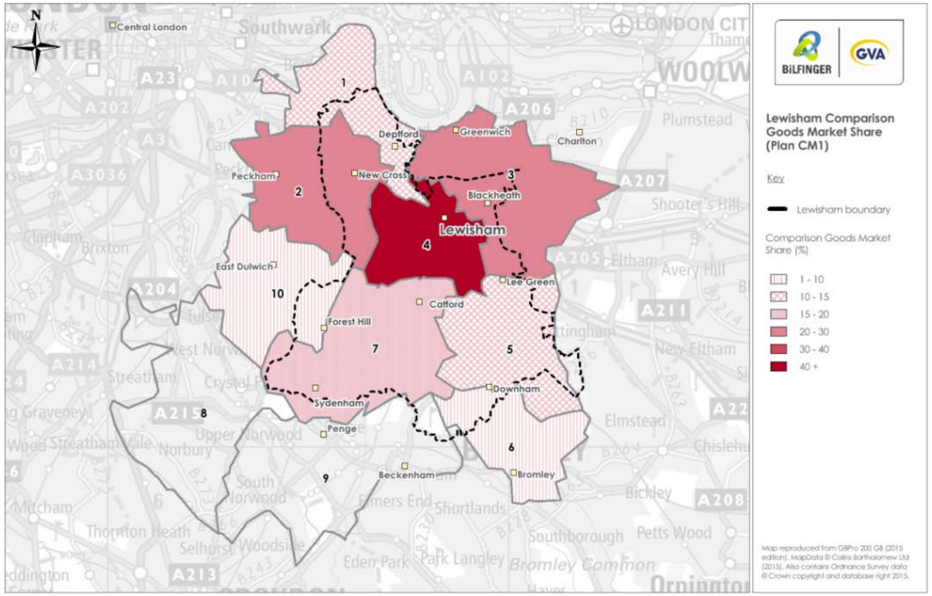
1.19 The main competition for comparison goods expenditure comes from Central London (£290.5m of comparison goods spend from the survey area), and the Metropolitan Centres of Bromley (£281.1m of comparison goods spend from the survey area) and Croydon (£151.2m of comparison goods spend from the survey area). The out-of-centre Regional Shopping Centre, Bluewater has a considerable influence given the distance (15 miles / c.40 minute drive time), (£102.0m of comparison goods spend from the survey area). Central London's retail offer is a global attractor, and therefore loss of expenditure to this location is entirely to be expected; it is unlikely that Lewisham would be in a position to realistically compete with the scale and breadth of the offer available here.

1.20 Croydon is planning a significant comparison goods-led redevelopment of its town centre offer, which is expected to come forward over the course of Lewisham's new Local Plan period. Depending on the scale/quality of the retail offer which comes forward, the development/s could potentially pose a challenge to Lewisham's market share and must be monitored moving forwards.

1.21 Bromley town centre is also in the process of improving its offer, with significant leisure-led developments currently underway. Again, there is some overlap in the catchment of the two centres, and the current proposals for Bromley can be expected to make the centre more of a 'destination' by broadening its non-retail offer. The quality of the retail offer in Bromley is stronger than both Lewisham and Croydon, and its catchment area accordingly stretches over a substantial swathe of south-east London, including the borough of Lewisham.

1.22 Some parts of Lewisham Borough are not well connected to either of these centres and will, by default, continue to look towards Lewisham town centre for their comparison goods shopping needs (particularly those zones in the north of the Borough, e.g. zones 2, 3 and 4). However, for those parts of the study where the catchment areas overlap (such as zone 7), Lewisham risks losing market share if it cannot provide a similarly compelling offer to those coming forward in the surrounding network of centres.

Figure 11.1: Lewisham town centre comparison goods market share by zone



Source: household survey results

1.23 The Council will also need to monitor developments in locations such as Bluewater and Canada Water District Centre, which also both influence shopping patterns over residents in parts of the Borough. Canada Water in particular is a draw from residents in the north of the Borough, and we understand that Southwark Council and British Land are working to deliver a new town centre, to replace the current dated shopping centre and Leisure Park, supporting the aspirations of the Canada Water Masterplan.

PERFORMANCE OF LEWISHAM MAJOR TOWN CENTRE

1.24 Lewisham town centre is the highest-order comparison goods shopping destination in Lewisham Borough. As noted above, the centre draws £336.5m of comparison goods spending from the survey area, equivalent to around 15% of total available comparison goods spend available to the survey area. The town centre also draws a modest amount of 'inflow' from beyond the survey area.

1.25 Our health check assessment of Lewisham town centre has identified that it is performing well both qualitatively and quantitatively. The focus of the retail offer is the covered Lewisham Centre, which is functional, albeit somewhat dated. Non-food shopping is the principal reason to visit for 77% of visitors to the town centre and therefore the presence of a strong comparison goods offer is important to the overall vitality and viability of the centre. This point is reinforced by the non-food trading performance of retail floorspace, achieving a sales density of £12,960 per sq.m net – an above expected trading performance for a centre of this scale in the retail hierarchy.

1.26 Vacancy rates are low, with the exception of a few small concentrations in secondary areas of the centre, and the large former BHS unit in the primary shopping area. Market shares from all core and secondary catchment areas across the wider study area have increased since the Council's previous evidence based study. The retail offer is largely lower-to-middle market and does benefit from a number of strong 'footfall driver' anchor stores, including M&S, TK Maxx and Primark. The Sainsbury's supermarket in the Lewisham Centre is an important key attractor which is performing particularly strongly, well above expected company average levels; and the market is identified as an important key attractor contributing to footfall and the breadth and mix of goods in the town centre.

1.27 The redevelopment works at Lewisham Gateway / Loampit Vale are inevitably leading to short-term disruption in the centre. Perceptions identified through the in-centre survey work undertaken in support of this study have confirmed that the construction works have not changed the frequency or patterns of usage of most users of the centre — although 21% of respondents stated that they visit the centre less frequently as a result of the current works. We would expect that the improvements to the centre which will come about as a consequence of the redevelopment works would enable this 'lost' market share to be 'clawed back'.

1.28 The principal qualitative gap in Lewisham town centre is the relative lack of a commercial leisure offer, in particular the absence of a cinema, but also other uses which enhance dwell time in a centre such as cafes, bars and restaurants. The absence of a cinema is particularly noticeable with the household survey identifying that residents are having to travel to Surrey Quays, Greenwich and Beckenham. The opening of the Glass Mill Leisure Centre is an important addition to the wider health & fitness leisure offer, and we understand that some of the floorspace which is expected to come forward at Lewisham Gateway could be given over to the use of class A3/A4 uses, which should assist in addressing some of this shortfall. This representation should be monitored moving forward.

PERFORMANCE OF CATFORD MAJOR TOWN CENTRE

1.29 Catford shares a policy designation with Lewisham as a 'major town centre' but it is clear that the role and function of the two centres is quite different. Catford is, like Lewisham, an important shopping destination, but has an offer which is much more focussed on meeting day-to-day rather than higher-order shopping needs.

1.30 Dwell times in the centre are typically lower than those in Lewisham, with the majority of visitors to the centre staying for under an hour (in Lewisham most visitors spend between an hour and two hours in the centre). Consistent with its more localised role and function as a shopping location, frequency of visits are generally higher, with two-thirds of visitors to the centre visiting daily or 2-3 times a week (compared to the most popular frequency of visits to Lewisham town centre, which are monthly, fortnightly and weekly).

1.31 Key retail anchors in the centre include Tesco, Aldi, Lidl, Argos, Boots, Iceland and Poundland, and the quality of the overall retail offer is predominantly orientated towards the lower/value end of the market. The vacancy rate in the centre currently stands at 8.5%, below the UK average of 11.2%. The centre also has an important leisure function (owing to the presence of the Broadway Theatre) and civic function (in the form of the London Borough of Lewisham offices), but there is little in the way of complementary facilities such as cafes and restaurants to support these uses. In both the household and visitor surveys improvements in facilities of this nature scored highly when asking what users of the centre would like to see improved.

1.32 The role of Catford as a more localised shopping destination is not problematic in respect of the retail hierarchy. The town centres of Lewisham and Catford are close together, and it would be unlikely for both to operate at the same scale. The London Plan defines a 'major centre' as one which has a 'borough-wide' catchment, and currently Catford does not meet this criteria. There is a need to improve the quality and range of retailing in Catford to ensure that it is fully able to meet the localised/day-to-day shopping needs of the existing and new residential communities in the area.

1.33 The household survey results identify that the principle reason the majority of residents visit Catford is for food shopping, but the large Tesco store which anchors the Catford centre is under-trading and in need of investment. The Tesco store is too large for the centre, particularly in the context of more modern foodstores on the periphery of the centre (Aldi and Lidl), which have strong turnovers and performance levels.

1.34 Previous evidence base studies undertaken on behalf of the Council have indicated that the centre is underperforming, and this evidence base confirms that this continues to be the case. The centre has a comparison goods sales density of just £3,243 per sq m, which is considerably lower than we would expect for a 'major town centre', and whilst not aiming to achieve the same level, compares poorly to Lewisham's sales density of £11,900 per sq m net.

1.35 The household survey results also indicate that the centre has experienced a declining market share from all survey zones relative to the position at the time of the Council's previous evidence base study (for example, a reduction in market share from 10% to 6% in zone 5, and a reduction from 9% to 8% from zone 7).

1.36 The Catford Centre is the focal point of the retail offer. It is a dated, high density concrete shopping precinct which is in need of investment, or at very least extensive modernisation. The acquisition of the Catford Centre by the Council provides the opportunity for it to play an important component in the wider regeneration of the town centre. The environmental quality of the centre is functional, and there are opportunities to qualitatively improve the appearance of this part of the centre and the town centre mix provided, as well as general connectivity and linkages with adjoining frontages.

PERFORMANCE OF DISTRICT CENTRES

1.37 Lewisham has an established network of district centres — Blackheath, Deptford, Downham, Forest Hill, Lee Green, New Cross and Sydenham. The district centres in the Borough are, for the most part, performing well, although most have areas where the Council should seek for improvements to be delivered over the course of the Local Plan period. The district centres vary considerably in their role and function, ranging from Blackheath, which has a particular focus on restaurants and boutique/specialist comparison goods shopping, to New Cross / New Cross Gate, which has a stronger role as a services, entertainment and evening economy centre, partly on account of the presence of Goldsmith's University. The opening of a small Curzon cinema at the Goldsmith's campus is the only cinema provision currently available within the Borough. Centres such as Sydenham and, on a smaller scale Downham, are more 'traditional' in composition, and are both anchored by small supermarkets with a range of supporting day to day shopping and services.

1.38 **Blackheath** district centre is a strong-performing district centre, with a particularly strong focus on food and drink, and upmarket 'boutique' comparison goods retailing. The centre is attractive and well-maintained, benefiting from a pleasant setting on the edge of Greenwich Park. However, there little scope for outward expansion of the centre, and the absence of any convenience goods shopping provision is a key qualitative gap.

1.39 **Deptford** has a close geographical relationship with New Cross, and has a more varied retail offer which is better orientated towards meeting local day to day shopping needs. The market in Deptford plays an important part of the overall vitality and viability. Our health check assessments have identified that Deptford is an important hub for the creative industries in south-east London, with a number of art galleries and studio spaces present in the Creekside area, plus important facilities such as the Albany Centre, and community-run assets such as the Deptford Cinema. These all make positive contributions to the vitality and viability of the centre, increasing its user base and providing additional footfall and support for local businesses.

1.40 **Downham** is a very small district centre and our assessment and the household survey results demonstrate that it has a much more limited role and function than the other district centres in the Borough, both in terms of its diversity of uses and the extent of its catchment area. It has a strong convenience goods offer and meets some limited day-to-day shopping needs.

1.41 **Forest Hill** is a strong-performing district centre which benefits from good levels of vitality and viability. The centre has a strong convenience goods function as a consequence of the modern Sainsbury's foodstore and supporting range of specialist independent convenience goods retailers, as well as a developing independent comparison goods quarter along Dartmouth Road, and a good supporting range of cafes, pubs and restaurants. To the north of the centre, the Horniman Museum and Gardens are an important cultural draw for the area.

1.42 The environmental quality of the centre is arguably the area where the centre falls short at present. Paving is of poor quality in parts and the centre lacks a coherent feel. The location of the centre on the South Circular limits the extent to which other environmental improvements can be delivered, but there is scope for investment in wayfinding and navigability around the centre to help create a better sense of place — for example to improve linkages between the district centre and the nearby Horniman Museum, one of the Borough's most significant tourist attractions.

1.43 **Lee Green** is arguably the district centre which is struggling for vitality and viability to the greatest extent at present, although the planned investment in the redevelopment of the Leegate Centre will, if delivered, improve the centre, and ideally act as a catalyst for the regeneration of the wider district centre. The redeveloped Leegate Centre will also help diversity uses in the centre by introducing smaller-format retail units, a gym, and community facilities and so on. Aside from the Leegate Centre, we are not aware of any other opportunities for a significant quantum of new retail floorspace to be accommodated within the centre.

1.44 **New Cross** is a bustling, diverse centre with generally positive levels of vitality and viability. The Council should continue to support this whilst protecting, and where possible enhancing, the range of retail facilities available in the centre, as our assessment has identified a number of qualitative gaps in the retail offer, particularly in terms of the centre's comparison goods retail offer. There is a need for the centre to be 'smartened up' in parts, and a need for improvements to be made to allow better movement of pedestrians through the centre, particularly in the vicinity of New Cross Gate station. The diversity of uses in the centre is heavily orientated towards services units, and is often of poor quality - over 10% of the units in the centre are occupied by fast food takeaways, double the target identified in the Council's Local Plan.

1.45 The under-used New Cross Gate Retail Park site offers a major opportunity for redevelopment/intensification over the course of the Local Plan period. It is recommended the Council investigate this potential opportunity further through discussions with relevant landowners. It is recommended that the site is reconfigured to provide retail uses at the front of the site (fronting onto the A2), potentially with higher density residential development above. The site is the main car parking facility for users of the district centre and therefore an element of car parking would need to be retained as part of any redevelopment. Any redevelopment should continue to incorporate a supermarket of comparable size to the existing Sainsbury's store, as this makes an important contribution in meeting local residents' convenience goods shopping needs – as the only large supermarket serving the local area – and to the overall vitality and viability of the centre (in our household telephone survey, almost two thirds of respondents stated that food shopping was the main reason they visited the centre).

1.46 **Sydenham** is a strong performing district centre with a good retail and leisure mix. The foodstores which anchor the centre are performing well, and are the main reason for visiting for approximately 50% of respondents in our household survey. The comparison goods retail mix is also generally strong, and there are no major gaps in the comparison goods offer when considering its role and function as a district centre.

BOROUGH-WIDE STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- **LB1:** The Council should ensure that the core retail functions of the town and district centres are protected and in some cases enhanced. Active uses on ground floor frontages should be encouraged throughout primary and secondary locations, ensuring contiguous frontages and avoiding changes of use which break up the run of facades.

- **LB2:** We have identified the following borough-wide quantitative 'need' for new comparison and convenience goods floorspace, as follows:

  Comparison goods: between 10,200 sq.m net and 17,100 sq.m net additional floorspace by 2026, increasing to (indicatively) between 28,800 sq.m net and 35,600 sq.m net additional floorspace by 2033.

  Convenience goods: between 9,300 sq.m net and 11,900 sq.m net additional floorspace by 2026, increasing to (indicatively) between 10,100 sq.m net and 12,700 sq.m net additional floorspace by 2033.

  The range of floorspace figures provided above relates to the currently undetermined planning applications for a proposed new development at Lewisham Gateway in Lewisham town centre and for the redevelopment of the Leegate Centre in Lee Green. If planning permission for these developments is granted, the lower range of figures shown above represents the minimum level of net additional retail floorspace required; if permission is not granted, the higher range of figures shown above represents the minimum level of additional net retail floorspace required.

- **LB3:** Ensure a sufficient supply of suitable sites to meet the full extent of need outlined in recommendation LB2. It is important that the need for floorspace is not compromised by limited site availability.

- **LB4:** The identification of sites to meet retail and leisure floorspace need should be subject to the sequential test and, in accordance with the approach set out in the NPPF, London Plan and Council's adopted Core Strategy, directed towards existing town and district centre locations in the first instance, followed by appropriate and well-connected edge of centre sites.

- **LB5:** The impact assessment threshold for new proposals, as set out in the Council's Development Management Local Plan (2014), should be reduced from 1,000 sq.m to 500 sq.m. This will help protect the network of town centres from inappropriate edge and out-of-centre retail and leisure development, ensuring the local authority retains the greatest level of control during the decision making process.

- **LB6:** It is advised that figures towards the end of the Plan period (i.e. beyond 2026) are considered as indicative, and subject to review and update throughout the Plan period. Key inputs into the 'need' assessment, including population, expenditure growth rates and levels of 'special forms of trading' will invariably change according to economic fluctuations. In parallel, shopping and leisure patterns continue to evolve as new development is brought forward across the wider sub-region in competing centres.

1.47 In addition, the main report makes a series of recommendations for amendments to the primary and secondary shopping frontages in the major town and district centres which the Council should consider as part of preparation of its new Local Plan.

Lewisham town centre — recommendations

- **LTC1:** Continue to support and facilitate appropriate growth and development on central town centre sites in order to retain 'Major Town Centre' status and to improve on the attraction of the retail and commercial leisure offer. This will in turn lead to an improved market share, a wider more extensive catchment area and an improved frequency of visit;

- **LTC2:** Monitor and benchmark the role of Lewisham Town Centre in respect of catchment, scale and the GLA 'retail hierarchy classification criteria', at regular intervals. Aspire to grow and exceed Major Town Centre thresholds whilst recognising and aspiring to exceed all or some of those thresholds at Metropolitan Centre level;

- **LTC3:** The core function of Lewisham town centre as a comparison goods shopping destination should be protected through robust frontage policies. It underpins the wider vitality and viability of the centre and creates the 'critical mass' key to driving footfall and visitor numbers. Such an approach will ensure it is able to withstand the potential increased attractiveness of nearby destinations which compete for market share, most notably Croydon, Bromley and potentially Canada Water.

- **LTC4:** Consistent with London Plan expectations and the Core Strategy policy framework, Lewisham town centre should be the primary focus for accommodating the identified comparison goods capacity requirements for the Borough. This study has identified a total borough-wide comparison goods requirement of up to 35,600 sq.m net at 2033, including a requirement of between 13,300 sq.m net and 18,000 sq.m net at 2033 for Lewisham town centre based on current shopping patterns/market share (the range of figures depending on whether the Lewisham Gateway application is granted planning permission).

1.48 The Lewisham Town Centre Local Plan (LTCLP) has identified that the Policy Areas in Lewisham town centre can collectively accommodate 44,600 sq.m net of class A1-A5 floorspace, as follows:

- Lewisham Gateway Policy Area: 17,000 sq.m[1]
- Loampit Vale Policy Area: 11,200 sq.m net;
- Conington Road Policy Area: 3,000 sq.m net;
- Lee High Road Policy Area: 2,000 sq.m net;
- Ladywell Policy Area: 1,400 sq.m net;
- Central Policy Area: 10,000 sq.m net.

1.49 Once the Lewisham Gateway Policy Area (17,000 sq.m) is removed from this equation on the basis that it has planning permission and is under construction, the physical capacity of the remaining Policy Areas is reduced to 27,600 sq.m net.

- **LTC5:** The identified comparison goods capacity requirements for Lewisham town centre (13,300 sq.m net to 18,000 sq.m net at 2033) can be accommodated within the identified policy priority areas. If a sufficient supply of suitable sites are not available in the rest of the borough's town centres to meet the remaining borough-wide need which this study has identified, there is also capacity for some of this to be accommodated instead within the Lewisham Policy Areas.

- **LTC6:** The Council should continue to work with developers and operators to introduce a cinema facility into the Lewisham town centre in the short-to-medium term, to stem the loss of market share to facilities outside the Borough, primarily at Canada Water, Greenwich and Beckenham.

- **LTC7:** Development of other complementary commercial leisure uses (such as bars, restaurants and so on) allied to a new cinema should be encouraged in order to increase the length of time which visitors spend in the centre, and allow the centre to have a greater role and function outside of retail trading hours.

- **LTC8:** A need has been identified for an improved bowling facility, to replace the dated and poor quality MFA facility. This could potentially take the form of 'boutique bowling' destination in order to differentiate from the offer at Surrey Quays. These are particularly popular, offering a retro style, high end environment with associated karaoke rooms, bars and restaurants. It should be noted that in planning terms the Council can only control the use, but it would be possible to actively market the site and facilitate the introduction of a 'boutique bowling' facility.

- **LTC9:** There is scope for additional smaller format convenience goods floorspace in Lewisham town centre (indicatively in the region of 1,000-1,500 sq m net), over and above the Asda store being brought forward at Loampit Vale. We recommend that this additional floorspace be directed towards the southern side of the town centre (i.e. on Lewisham High Street) in order to assist in encouraging footfall in this part of the centre. If, however, it is brought forward earlier within the Lewisham Gateway development, we do not consider there would be further need elsewhere including in the southern side of the town centre.

- **LTC10:** Applications for new development outside the defined frontages in the centre (the Primary Shopping Area) would need to have regard to the sequential and impact tests set out at paragraph 24 and 26 of the NPPF.

- **LTC11:** The Council should continue to invest in improving the public realm and visual appearance of the town centre. The recent Glass Mill Leisure Centre and new residential developments along Loampit Vale have introduced high-quality public realm into the town centre, and we would expect the Lewisham Gateway development will, once completed, introduce a similar high quality street environment. There is a need for this to be extended throughout the rest of the town centre in order to provide the centre with a coherent feel, rather than 'old versus new', and to assist in navigability and wayfinding.

- **LTC12:** Investment is also needed in improving the visual appearance of shop fronts along Lee High Road, many of which are poor quality and in need of replacement.

- **LTC13:** The Council should seek to secure improvements to the Lewisham Centre in the short-to-medium term. The centre appears to have benefited from relatively limited investment in recent years and, although the centre is well laid out and contains a number of reasonable sized units, its visual appearance is somewhat functional, particularly when compared to the investment which is currently being made in competing centres such as Bromley.

- **LTC14:** Formulate policy to resist the loss of larger units through sub-division within the Primary Shopping Frontage; and facilitate the creation of larger units - through amalgamation, for example (in instances where an application is required) – in order to encourage the representation of key anchor retailers and footfall drivers.

- **LTC15:** There is potential for the area around the Lee High Road / Marischal Road junction to be developed and promoted as a small 'independent quarter'. Where funds are available this initiative should be supported by investment in the upgrading of shop fronts and paving, the introduction of planting, support for temporary/meanwhile uses, and so on. This will help to differentiate the area from the national multiple-focussed Lewisham High Street / Lewisham Centre.

[1] The LTCLP does not specify whether this figure is gross or net, however for the purpose of our analysis we have assumed the figure to be net sales area.

- **LTC16:** Continued support to innovative uses of space elsewhere in the town centre, such as the Model Market, in order to help generate additional footfall outside of retail hours and attract new visitors into the area.
- **LTC17:** The Council should review the defined primary and secondary shopping frontages in Lewisham town centre, in line with the recommendations set out at Table 11.1 of this study (main report).

CATFORD TOWN CENTRE — RECOMMENDATIONS

- **CTC1:** The Council should continue to promote Catford as a higher-order centre in the Borough. It is recommended that the Council retain Catford as a 'Major Centre'.

1.50 As we set out above, we consider that Catford should retain a Major Centre classification in order to support investment. Applications for development of new retail and other main town centre uses in Catford town centre should be considered on individual merits but supported in instances where they will make a positive contribution to the vitality and viability of the town centre, diversifying the overall range of uses, and supporting and enhancing its function as a Major Centre.

- **CTC2:** The Council should plan for the development of up to 2,600 sq.m net additional comparison goods floorspace in Catford. The retail 'need' does not arise until post-2026, but in order to help facilitate the regeneration of the town centre, this requirement should be delivered within the early stages of the Council's new Local Plan period. We would expect that the development of this floorspace would form part of the redevelopment of the Catford Centre, which is the major opportunity site in the centre (see below).
- **CTC3:** Two main development opportunities are identified; these provide a sufficient supply of suitable sites to meet the full extent of comparison goods need identified (2,600 sq.m net by 2033), and could also absorb residual borough-wide need, should this not be accommodated within the Lewisham Town Centre Policy Areas. The opportunity sites are:
  - The Catford Centre;
  - The Plassy Road Island Site.
- **CTC4:** The level of need identified should not deter a higher level of growth in order to support the regeneration of Catford town centre. Improved comparison goods shopping provision can be used to increased market share, which would in turn support additional comparison goods floorspace over and above the 'baseline' need identified.
- **CTC5:** Facilitate the redevelopment or, at minimum, extensive refurbishment and reconfiguration of the Catford Centre. The inclusion of a foodstore should be retained as part of any redevelopment, albeit at a smaller scale to balance the identified supply/demand. The remaining space should provide for a mix of local comparison and service retailing. A sufficient range of unit sizes should be provided, and a comprehensive upgrade to the environmental quality of the centre be delivered.
- **CTC6:** In the medium to longer term, the redevelopment of the Plassy Road Island site represents a significant opportunity for the Council to remodel existing floorspace and accommodate additional comparison goods floorspace, should it seek to plan for an uplift in Catford town centre's comparison goods market share.

1.51 Of the opportunity sites we have identified, the priority for the Council should be the redevelopment/regeneration of the Catford Centre. The other site (Plassy Road Island) presents longer term opportunities which may allow the centre to accommodate additional comparison goods floorspace and increase its market share. We do not consider that planning for such an eventuality should be a priority in the short term, as there is a pressing need to improve the quality of existing retail floorspace rather than deliver significant new comparison goods floorspace, but nevertheless in the longer term there may be scope for further comparison goods provision in the centre at these sites.

1.52 The Plassy Island site currently comprises of retail warehouse-format units set around a surface car park, which are accessible – albeit via relatively poor linkages – from Bromley Road. It is considered that, if the 'opening up' of linkages between the site and Bromley Road could be secured, there is potential for this site to form a stronger eastern anchor to the town centre, introducing modern, large-format comparison goods retail floorspace, potentially as part of a mixed use, higher-density development than currently exists. It is recommended that the Council engage with relevant parties and investigate opportunities for a comprehensive redevelopment of this site as a medium to longer-term objective.

- **CTC7:** Support the introduction of complementary commercial leisure facilities such as cafes, bars and restaurants, in order to increase dwell time, encourage footfall and contribute to an evening economy where possible. There is scope for the recently-pedestrianised Catford Broadway to act as a hub for this type of use, given its close proximity to the Theatre and public transport interchanges.
- **CTC8:** Across the town centre, and subject to funding, the Council should invest in the public realm to improve the overall environmental quality of the centre, and continue to work alongside Transport for London to improve pedestrian movement around the centre, including enhanced crossing facilities. The extent to which this is deliverable will ultimately depend on TfL's long term aspirations for the routing of the South Circular through the centre.
- **CTC9:** The Council should review the defined primary and secondary shopping frontages in Catford town centre, in line with the recommendations set out at Table 11.1 of this study.

BLACKHEATH DISTRICT CENTRE — RECOMMENDATIONS

- **BDC1:** Continue to support the vitality and viability of the district centre consistent with its role and function, and having regard to the highly constrained nature of the centre. Applications which seek to improve/enhance existing retail/leisure floorspace within the centre should be supported in principle, providing they are of a scale appropriate to the role and function of the centre.

- **BDC2:** Continue to support the cafes, bars and restaurants sector which makes an important contribution to the vitality and viability of the centre. Further provision of this nature should only be supported in secondary areas of the centre thereby protecting the Primary Shopping Frontage from any further loss of class A1 floorspace.

- **BDC3:** Future opportunities to introduce new convenience goods floorspace in and on the edge of the centre (strongly connected/integrated), either through change of use or new development, should be supported in principle.

- **BDC4:** The quality of the centre's environment is good and indeed its 'village' character is an important contributor to its overall vitality and viability. The Council should seek to maintain and support this.

- **BDC5:** The Council should review the defined primary and secondary shopping frontages in Blackheath district centre, in line with the recommendations set out at Table 11.1 of this study (main report).

DEPTFORD DISTRICT CENTRE — RECOMMENDATIONS

- **DFDC1:** Do not plan for the development of significant additional commercial floorspace within the centre. Applications which seek to improve/enhance existing floorspace within the centre should be supported in principle.

- **DFDC2:** The Council should continue to support Deptford's role as a creative and artistic hub, building on the recent investment the Council has made in the centre in this respect. Applications for further development / enhancement of these uses should be supported in principle.

- **DFDC3:** Applications for the development of other 'main town centre uses' should be supported in principle providing they will make a positive contribution to the vitality and viability of the centre, and be of a scale appropriate to the role and function of the centre.

- **DFDC4:** Deptford market plays an important role in supporting the vitality and viability of the centre and the Council should continue to support and where possible improve this.

- **DFDC5:** The environmental quality of the centre has improved following investment from the Council but there is a need for further 'smartening up' of the centre, particularly in relation to the appearance of shop fronts in the centre.

- **DFDC6:** The Council should review the defined primary and secondary shopping frontages in Deptford district centre, in line with the recommendations set out at Table 11.1 of this study. We do not consider there to be a need for the Council to allocate primary shopping frontage in the centre.

DOWNHAM DISTRICT CENTRE — RECOMMENDATIONS

- **DMDC1:** Downham has a more limited role and function than the other district centres in the Borough, but meets day-to-day convenience goods, services and some comparison goods shopping needs, and the Council should continue to support the vitality and viability of the centre.

- **DMDC2:** We do not consider there to be a need to plan for the development of additional comparison or convenience goods retail floorspace within the centre.

- **DMDC3:** Applications which seek to improve/enhance existing floorspace within the centre should be supported in principle where they will make a positive contribution to the vitality and viability of the centre, providing they are of a scale appropriate to the role and function of the centre.

- **DMDC4:** Downham is the smallest of all the Council's district centres and the loss of units to non-town centre uses (such as residential) should be resisted.

- **DMDC5:** The Council should seek to deliver improvements to the environmental quality of the centre, to improve its physical appearance and upgrade the public realm from its current relatively functional level. Improvements to the quality of shopfronts and appearance of units throughout the centre should be encouraged and supported.

- **DMDC6:** The Council should review the defined primary and secondary shopping frontages in Downham district centre, in line with the recommendations set out at Table 11.1 of this study (main report).

FOREST HILL DISTRICT CENTRE — RECOMMENDATIONS

- **FHDC1:** Continue to support the vitality and viability of the district centre consistent with its role and function. Applications which seek to improve/enhance existing retail/leisure floorspace within the centre should be supported in principle, providing they are of a scale appropriate to the role and function of the centre.

- **FHDC2:** The Council should seek to protect the retail function in the primary shopping frontage, so as to ensure the centre maintains a diverse range of retail units. The loss of class A1 units to other use classes within the primary shopping area should be resisted. Because of changes to permitted development, the Council may need to consider the use of Article 4 directions to protect the class A1 units in the primary shopping frontage.

- **FHDC3:** There are opportunity sites outside the primary shopping frontage which should, if redeveloped, incorporate retail or other A-class uses (except class A5) on the ground floor. In particular, it is considered that the Portakabin site (Waldram Crescent) and the site at the junction of Waldram Place/Perry Vale (adjacent to the rear of Forest Hill rail station) both offer opportunities for mixed use, higher density development.

- **FHDC4:** There is a need for the Council to invest in improving the public realm and navigability of the centre, particularly in respect of the quality of paving and wayfinding.

- **FHDC5:** The Council should work with Transport for London to investigate options for improving pedestrian crossing facilities at the London Road / Dartmouth Road / Devonshire Road junction, in order to enhance pedestrian movements around the centre.

- **FHDC6:** The Council should work with J D Wetherspoon to secure the positive reuse of the Capitol site which is currently being offered for disposal by the company. A need for a small independent/boutique cinema has been identified for Forest Hill, and this site offers a potential opportunity. It's reuse as a small independent/boutique cinema, community theatre, or similar commercial leisure activity, which would diversify uses in the centre and offer improved accessibility to facilities of this nature for residents living in the south of the Borough. If this site does not come forward, the Council should seek a small scale boutique cinema operator elsewhere in the town centre.

- **FHDC7:** The Council should continue to support the initiatives and ambitions of the SEE3 Portas Pilot team. Events, such as Forest Hill Fashion Week and open studios events in the artists' workshops along Havelock Walk help to drive footfall and broaden the appeal of the centre, and should continue to be supported.

- **FHDC8:** The Council should review the defined primary and secondary shopping frontages in Forest Hill district centre, in line with the recommendations set out at Table 11.1 of this study (main report).

LEE GREEN DISTRICT CENTRE — RECOMMENDATIONS

- **LGDC1:** Continue to support the vitality and viability of the district centre consistent with its role and function. Applications which seek to improve/enhance existing retail/leisure floorspace within the centre should be supported in principle, providing they are of a scale appropriate to the role and function of the centre.

- **LGDC2:** The Council should support aspirations to deliver an improved Leegate Centre, including the provision of a new foodstore.

- **LGDC3:** The Council should seek to protect the retail function in the primary shopping frontage, so as to ensure the centre maintains a diverse range of retail units. The loss of class A1 units to other use classes within the primary shopping area should be resisted. Because of changes to permitted development, the Council may need to consider the use of Article 4 directions to protect the class A1 units in the primary shopping frontage.

- **LGDC4:** There is a need to improve the environmental quality of the centre, in addition to the improvements proposed by the Leegate Centre. The quality of public realm and outdoors space is generally weak, and shopfronts are of poor quality.

- **LGDC5:** The Council should review the defined primary and secondary shopping frontages in Lee Green district centre, in line with the recommendations set out at Table 11.1 of this study (main report).

NEW CROSS DISTRICT CENTRE — RECOMMENDATIONS

- **NCDC1:** Continue to support the vitality and viability of the district centre consistent with its role and function. Applications which seek to improve/enhance existing retail/leisure floorspace within the centre should be supported in principle, providing they are of a scale appropriate to the role and function of the centre. We do not consider there to be qualitative need to plan for any additional large-format foodstore provision within the centre.

- **NCDC2:** Commercial leisure uses make an important contribution to the vitality and viability of the centre and should be continued to be supported to appropriate levels, whilst ensuring the retail function of the centre is not undermined.

- **NCDC3:** In the medium to longer term, we consider there is an opportunity to redevelop and reconfigure the New Cross Gate Retail Park site in order for it to make a greater contribution to the vitality and viability of the district centre. The potential extension and introduction of the Bakerloo line should be monitored and might alter recommendations for New Cross as set out in this study.

- **NCDC4:** There is currently no primary shopping frontage identified for New Cross / New Cross Gate and we consider this remains a robust approach given the wide variety of uses in the centre. The Council should give consideration to allocating New Cross Gate as secondary shopping frontage in line with the recommendations set out at Table 11.1 of this study (main report).

- **NCDC5:** The Council should consider a strategy to enhancing the physical appearance of the district centre, which should explore options for improving pedestrian movement through the centre, introducing enhancements to public realm where possible, and improvements to the physical appearance of the centre, particularly in respect of enhancements to shopfronts.

SYDENHAM DISTRICT CENTRE — RECOMMENDATIONS

- **SDC1:** Continue to support the vitality and viability of the district centre consistent with its role and function. Applications which seek to improve/enhance existing retail/leisure floorspace within the centre should be supported in principle, providing they are of a scale appropriate to the role and function of the centre.

- **SDC2:** There is scope for additional commercial floorspace to be provided on the ground floor as part of the mixed-use redevelopment of the Marshall Audi site (allocated site). This is centrally-located within the centre, and is therefore a sequentially preferable location (adjacent to the eastern edge of the primary shopping frontage). We would recommend that the site is used to provide class A1 comparison or convenience goods floorspace at ground floor level. to enhance the provision of cafes and restaurants in the centre should be supported, as there is a qualitative gap in provision of this nature at present. However, such uses should be restricted to secondary frontages in the centre, in order to protect the core retail function of the primary shopping frontage.

- **SDC5:** The Council should seek to protect the retail function in the primary shopping frontage, so as to ensure the centre maintains a diverse range of retail units. The loss of class A1 units to other use classes within the primary shopping area should therefore be resisted. Because of changes to permitted development, the Council may need to consider the use of Article 4 directions to protect the class A1 units in the primary shopping frontage.

- **SDC6:** Sydenham has benefited from Portas Pilot funding (and additional funding from Lewisham Council) to support the development of pop-up/temporary shops in the centre and the introduction of markets, and the work of SEE3 and similar initiatives which assist in encouraging new footfall and broadening the diversity of uses in the centre should continue to be encouraged.

- **SDC7:** The environmental quality of the district centre is generally good at the present time but this should be monitored and continued investment should be made in the centre throughout the Plan period, should funding be available.

- **SDC8:** We do not recommend any changes to the defined primary and secondary frontages in Sydenham district centre.

OPPORTUNITY SITES

1.53 The analysis identified that Lee Green is the district centre with weaker vitality and viability indicators at present. The conclusions in respect of this centre should, however, be considered in the context of the anticipated redevelopment of the Leegate Centre, and if redevelopment of this site comes forward, would likely bring about a clear uplift in the vitality and viability of the centre to arise. However, notwithstanding this, there is a clear need for investment in the environmental quality and public realm in order to raise perceptions and the visitor experience.

1.54 Opportunity sites in the district centres are relatively limited, and in any case development of significant amounts of new retail floorspace in these locations would be contrary to their role and function. Some district centres such as Blackheath are particularly constrained, with no obvious scope for outward expansion. **Table ES1.1** provides a summary of the opportunity sites we have identified in the district centres; these are discussed further in our recommendations for each centre which follow subsequently.

Table ES1.1 - Opportunity sites in District Centres

Centre	Opportunity sites
Blackheath	No identified opportunity sites
Deptford	No identified opportunity sites (except opportunity areas which have planning consent, e.g. Deptford Creekside)
Downham	No identified opportunity sites
Forest Hill	Portakabin site, Waldram Crescent Land at Waldram Place / Perry Vale
Lee Green	Leegate Centre (planning application for redevelopment submitted)
New Cross / New Cross Gate	New Cross Gate Retail Park Land east of New Cross Gate station / Goodwood Road (planning application granted)
Sydenham	Marshall Audi site

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CENTRE HIERARCHY

1.55 As we have set out in this report, the existing hierarchy of centres (as set out in the Council's adopted Core Strategy) places Lewisham and Catford as the highest-order centres in the Borough, classifying both as 'major town centres'. Below this, Blackheath, Deptford, Downham, Forest Hill, Lee Green, New Cross and Sydenham are all classified as district centres. We do not recommend any change to this hierarchy.

1.56 Based on the current performance of Lewisham town centre, we agree that there is merit in the Council seeking to promote the centre as a metropolitan centre in future iterations of the London Plan, particularly following completion of the Lewisham Gateway development. The current comparison goods retail offer in the centre is not, however, of sufficient strength to merit a change in policy designation in the immediate future, when assessed against the definition of a metropolitan centre in the London Plan (see paragraph 11.7, above). Nevertheless, with the completion of Lewisham Gateway and the implementation of additional comparison goods floorspace in line with the recommendations of this study, over the course of the Council's Plan period we consider that upgrading to metropolitan centre status could be achievable.

1.57 Given the potential opportunity for development and regeneration we recommend that Catford remains a Major Centre despite the different scale and role of the centre compared to Lewisham. We do not consider that any changes should be made to the position of the district centres in the Borough's retail hierarchy, and **Table ES1.2** reaffirms our recommendation to retain the existing retail hierarchy.

Table ES1.2 - Recommended hierarchy of centres, Lewisham Borough

Position in hierarchy	Centres
Major town centre	Lewisham* and Catford
District centre	Blackheath, Deptford, Forest Hill, Lee Green, New Cross, Sydenham, Downham
Neighbourhood/local centre	Existing local centres

**Lewisham to be reviewed during Plan period with view to upgrade to Metropolitan centre*

MONITORING AND NEXT STEPS

1.58 Our study has identified that, for the most part, the Council's network of higher order centres are performing well, and with the exception of the identified concerns in respect of the performance of Catford town centre and Lee Green district centre (although it is anticipated that redevelopment will come forward in the latter in the short to medium term) there are no fundamental issues of vitality and viability which require addressing. There is scope for environmental improvements across most of the Borough's town centres and the Council should continue to invest in this in order to support the centres' wider vitality and viability.

1.59 It is recommended that the Council should update its retail evidence base at frequent intervals throughout the Local Plan period to 2033, as new information on population growth, expenditure growth and 'special forms of trading' becomes available. Updates to retail capacity forecasts will also be required once new floorspace comes forward in Lewisham town centre, as well as following any redevelopment of the Catford Centre, in order to assess the implications these developments have had on the centres' respective market shares. If large-scale comparison goods floorspace comes forward in competing centres, this will also necessitate an update to capacity forecasts to examine the impact of the development(s) on shopping patterns.