



A policy on the control of changes of use to offices in Linlithgow High Street.

Background

Changes in the pattern of food shopping away from small shops to supermarkets and superstores, combined with recent pressure for Building Societies, Estate Agents and similar office uses, has led to a marked decrease in the number of small retail outlets in the Country's High, Streets.. In West Lothian, the trend has been most noticeable in Linlithgow, where there has been a significant number of changes of use from shops to offices.

In consequence, the variety of shops and goods is reduced, and this undermines the town's competitiveness as a shopping centre. Also, much of the character of the Conservation Area which was provided by colourful and unique shop frontages has been lost, to be replaced by the offices of national institutions whose unvarying window advertising is found in every High Street.

A halt to office expansion?

If further growth was to be entirely resisted in the High Street, firms would be unfairly restricted in their choice of location, because, with the exception of the Regent Centre, there are no suitable alternative sites in side streets. Pressure for office growth has been uneven. In the east High Street, 43% of units are offices, compared with only 16% west of The Cross, where there has also been less demand for space for craft shops for the tourist market.

The west side, having undergone relatively little change to date, is considered to be capable of absorbing some new uses without serious threat to its character. It is, therefore, District Council policy that:

1. Within the area indicated on Figure 1, The District Council will resist changes of use to offices, as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Scotland) Order, 1973.

A flexible approach

The District Council recognises that the retail sector is subject to continuing change and that it can not artificially create a demand for shop units. The council does not wish to see a damaging increase in the vacancy rate of High Street properties. It is therefore, District Council policy that:

2. The District Council will only allow changes of use of retail properties to uses other than shops within the defined area if they have lain vacant for at least one year, during which time reasonable efforts have been made to market them for on retail purposes.

Improving the frontages

As the policy allows for a controlled increase in the number offices in the High Street, the District Council wishes to encourage proprietors to make better use of their window space in order that some variety and local character is reflected in displays. Historical artefacts, sports society news and displays of crafts are some of the many possibilities. It is, therefore, District Council policy that:

3. Throughout the High Street, the District Council will actively encourage the use of ground floor office window space for displays which will be of general information and interest and not necessarily related to the commercial concerns themselves.

This policy shall be reviewed as circumstances demand.

(April, 1984)

POLICY ON OFFICE LOCATION IN LINLITHGOW HIGH STREET

