

Authority Monitoring Report





Retail & Town Centres



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Retail and Town Centres

This chapter reports on the monitoring indicators for the following Local Plan retail and town centre policies:

- **SP7 – Retail and Town Centres**
- **SP8 – Dover Town Centre**
- **SP9 – Deal Town Centre**
- **SP10 – Sandwich Town Centre**
- **R1 – Primary Shopping Areas**
- **R2 – Sequential Test and Impact Assessment**
- **R3 – Local Shops**

The policies have been applied to planning applications from the adoption of the Local Plan on 19th October 2024 up to 31st March 2025 only and not the full monitoring period year.

Retail Needs

An assessment of the district's future retail and other town centre needs was completed in 2021. No capacity for new convenience shopping (e.g. food and drink) was identified for Dover or local and village centres, with very limited need in Deal and Sandwich. No need for new comparison floorspace (e.g. clothes and furniture) was forecast but there is capacity for around 22 food and beverage outlets across the district to 2040.

Primary Shopping Areas

The town centre boundaries and primary shopping areas for Dover, Deal and Sandwich were reviewed and amended in the Local Plan and can be viewed on the [policies map](#).

The Plan includes policies to focus new retail and main town centre use developments into these areas (Policy R1 – Primary Shopping Areas) and require applications for out-of-town locations to demonstrate that no suitable sites are available in the primary shopping areas, then town centre and edge-of-centre locations. Proposals may also be required to demonstrate that they would not have a significant impact on the relevant town centre (Policy R2 - Sequential Test and Impact Assessment).

Permitted and completed floorspace within the Primary Shopping Areas and Town Centre Boundaries of Dover, Deal and Sandwich

All buildings and land in the UK are categorised and assigned a Use Class to determine how you can plan and develop them. Use Class E includes retail units such as shops, cafés, restaurants, and financial services. For a full breakdown of use classes, please see the [Use Class Order](#).

Total floorspace gains and losses in town centres and primary shopping areas can be viewed in [Table 4](#) at the end of this report, which shows completed, permitted and extant applications in town centres within the district, as at 31st March 2025.

The data in this table shows that completed applications in 2024/25 generated a net loss of 224sqm of floorspace. However, applications permitted this year will generate a net gain of 2809sqm of floorspace.

Residential development within the Town Centre Boundaries of Dover, Deal and Sandwich

New homes within town centres can bring underused upper floors of buildings back into productive use. Changes in the use of upper floors to residential and new build residential schemes increase levels of footfall and 'natural surveillance' in town centres, including levels of evening activity in combination with pubs, restaurants, hotels and cinemas.

Whilst seeking to increase the number of dwellings in town centres it is important to ensure that ground floor units in Primary Shopping Areas are not lost to residential use to avoid fragmenting main retail areas.

The data in Table 4 shows that no changes of use from commercial to residential were completed in 2024/25. Of the 9 residential units permitted in town centres or primary shopping areas in this time, only one (24/00068) would result in the loss of ground floor retail use.

This was considered acceptable in principle for bringing a long-vacant unit into use and being at the very edge of the primary shopping area, thereby not causing significant harm to the vitality and viability of the town centre, in accordance with the aims of Policy R1.

Retail and other main town centre uses permitted outside Town Centre Boundaries

Two schemes were permitted in the monitoring year. The first comprised a replacement farm shop on the edge of Sandwich and the second was the conversion of a pub in Dover to a local shop in accordance with Local Plan Policy R3 – Local Shops.

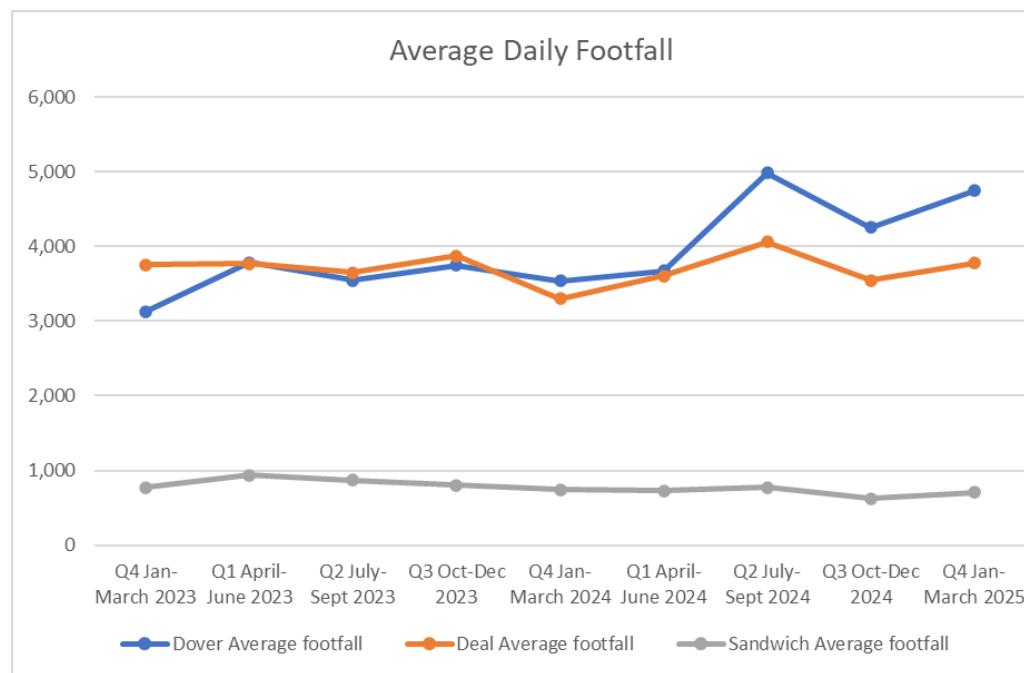
Table 1 – Schemes outside of town centre boundaries, losses and gains in 2024/2025

Town	Address	Planning App/ Description	Loss	Gain
Sandwich	Deal Road	24/00759 Replacement farm shop and new café.	163 sqm shop E(a)	72 sqm shop E(a)
			0	63 sqm café E(b)
Dover	The Diamond PH, Heathfield Avenue	Change of ground floor from public house Sui generis to 'local shop'.	80 sqm pub Sui Generis	80 sqm local shop E

Vacancy rates and footfall within Town Centres

Vacancy rates within each town centre are monitored by the Council on a quarterly basis. The data shows the total number of vacant units, although different units will have been vacated and occupied during the year. Results for April 2023 to March 2024 are set out in Table 1 as a baseline for monitoring the town centre policies. Minor corrections have been made to the figures for Deal and Sandwich since the last AMR, although the difference between the number of empty shops from Q1 to Q4 remained the same.

The results for April 2024 to March 2025 have been added Figure 1 below and show that vacancies in all 3 town centres had increased by the end of the year.



The Council is using a footfall monitoring system that counts phone 'pings' anonymously, enabling the average daily footfall in town centres to be recorded as a second measure of activity levels.

Table 2 – Vacant Town Centre Units April 2023 to March 2025

Empty Shops April 2023 to March 2024					
Town	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Difference Q1 to Q4
Dover	26	32	27	26	0
Deal	8	10	10	8	0
Sandwich	5	6	6	6	+1

Empty Shops April 2024 to March 2025					
Town	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Difference Q1 to Q4
Dover	30	33	31	34	+4
Deal	8	11	10	10	+2
Sandwich	1	2	2	3	+3

Dover Town Centre Strategy

Progress in the delivery of the Dover Town Centre strategy plan, regeneration projects and opportunity areas

The Dover Town Centre strategy identifies opportunity sites for mixed-use development in and adjoining the town centre which will contribute to its overall level of vibrancy.

The Dover Beacon project will be a new building, to be known as 'The Bench' with space for education, offices, a studio, gallery and a café, together with improvements to adjoining streets and the pedestrian underpass. The scheme aims to deliver £90m in economic benefits to the town centre and surrounding area. Planning permission for the £21m scheme was granted in August 2024 (24/00181).

Image 1 – Dover Beacon Illustrative CGI



Image Credit: Lee Evans Partnership

The scheme is currently under construction with completion expected in spring 2026.

A video of the internal and external layouts can be found on [YouTube](#).

The £11m project to restore the **Maison Dieu** Grade 1 listed building, at the corner of High Street and Ladywell within the town centre, continued through 2024/2025. The scheme, which includes the creation of a holiday let within the former Mayor's Parlour, rooms to hire for events and a cafe in the former gaol, was opened to the public in May 2025.

Image 2 – Maison Dieu, Connaught Hall



Image credit: Maison Dieu

Local Shops

Policy R3 aims to protect individual convenience shops outside designated centres, given the vital role they play in meeting day-to-day needs of residents.

The policy also supports proposals for new local shops under 280 sqm (gross).

One scheme for a new shop was completed in 2024/2025:

- Application 24/00161 at The Diamond PH, Heathfield Avenue, Dover - Change of ground floor from public house to shop.

Image 3 – Dover Town



Image credit: Dover District Council

Shop Fronts

Policy R4 requires a high standard of design for new and altered shop fronts so that they make a positive contribution to the street scene and local area.

In future AMRs the annual number of planning applications and appeals (permitted and refused) which reference Policy R4 will be used to monitor its effectiveness.

Image 4 - Aerial image of Dover town from Dover Castle



Image credit: Dover District Council

Table 4 – Applications completed, permitted and extant in Town Centres within the district, as at 31st March 2025

Application Reference	Address	Description	Town Centre	Use class	Gain (sqm)	Loss (sqm)
COMPLETED IN 2024/2025						
24/01264*	9 Church Street	Change of use to taxi booking office (Sui Generis)	Dover	E(a)	0	79
				Sui Generis	79	0
23/00207	18 Castle Street, Dover	Conversion to 5 self contained flats (Class C3)	Dover	E(c)	0	224
				TOTAL	79	303
				NET		224
PERMITTED IN 2024/2025						
23/01319	21 Market Street	Change of use and conversion of part ground floor into residential flats with associated works	Sandwich	E(c)	0	270
24/00493	17-23 Queen Street	Prior approval for the change of use from offices to 4 flats	Deal	E(g)(i)	0	250
24/00068	6 St Peter's Street	Change of use of existing flat and shop to a single dwelling (Use Class C3) with the erection for a single storey rear extension, replacement windows and door, and insertion of flue	Sandwich	E(a)	0	31
24/00586	142A High Street	Change of use of first floor to residential accommodation	Dover	E(a)	0	60
24/00181	The Beacon Project, Bench Street	Full application for the erection of an up to four storeys in height buildings for uses including education, offices, studio, gallery and café (Use Classes E(g)(i),E(b) and F1)	Dover	E(g)(i)	787	0
				E(b)	137	0
				F1	2081	0
				F2	272	0
				Sui Generis	597	0
24/01043	71 High Street	Prior Approval for Change of use to residential (C3) to form 3 flats	Deal	E(c)	0	150
24/01264*	9 Church Street	Change of use to taxi booking office (Sui Generis)	Dover	E(a)	0	79
				Sui Generis	79	0
24/00818	Electric House 43 Castle Street	Change of use of lower and upper floors to residential (C3), erection of first floor decking with external staircase and balustrade and alteration to windows and doors	Dover	E(a)	0	69

Application Reference	Address	Description	Town Centre	Use class	Gain (sqm)	Loss (sqm)
24/00327	20 Castle Street	Change of use from commercial to HMO, with 9 person occupancy	Dover	E(g)	0	235
				TOTAL	3953	1144
				NET	2809	
OTHER EXTANT	(extant permissions granted on or before 31st March 2024)					
23/00037	Rush House Queen Street Deal	Erection of an outbuilding for use as an office, 1800mm fence/gate to create a garden/amenity space, insertion of French doors to side elevation	Deal	E(g)(i)	38	0
21/01601	Garage The Old Coach House, Sondres Road, Deal	Erection of a three storey dwelling (single storey storage building to be partially demolished)	Deal	B8	0	40
20/00750	11 Park Street, Deal	Change of use and conversion to a single dwellinghouse (C3 Use)	Deal	E(c)	0	143
20/01230	4-6 Park Street, Deal	Part change of use from Professional Services (Use Class A2) to Residential (Use Class C3) and erection of two-storey rear extension. Insertion of 2no. rear windows into second floor of non-domestic building	Deal	E(c)	0	110
20/00536	Dover Town Hall, High Street	Change of use of Mayor's Parlour to holiday let and Old Gaol to commercial let Mixed Use A3 (restaurant/cafe) and A4 (Drinking Established), reinstatement of Weathervane to clock tower turret and vent hood to Council chamber roof, formation of opening to roof for lift overrun, new entrance to Connaught Hall, relocation of chimney stack, replace 2no. windows with doorways, reinstatement of Burges's link and erection external stairway in Courtyard, re-modern of Ante room roof to Sessions House and other roof alterations, erection of new chimney stack for kitchen extraction, new door to blocked-up opening to Stone hall turret, new vents, grilles and louvre's to Ladywell facade, new and replacement rainwater and drainage goods, new roof lantern, erection of fixed access ladder and relocation of external electric box (demolition of 20th century	Dover	F2	208	
				E(b)		208

Application Reference	Address	Description	Town Centre	Use class	Gain (sqm)	Loss (sqm)
		extension of Mayor's Parlour and removal of external access ladders and gantries)				
21/01453	Electric House, 43 Castle Street, Dover	"Change of use of lower and upper ground floors to residential, replacement front basement window, replacement rear door window, drain pipe and 2 no. extract fan vents, all windows to refurbished and re-painted"	Dover	E(a)		110
22/00386	19 Castle Street, Dover	Change of use from offices (E(c)(ii)) to a single residential dwelling (C3)	Dover	E(c)(iii)	0	209
22/01368	Third & Fourth Floors, 1 Cannon Street, Dover	Prior approval for the change of use and conversion of third and fourth floors into two studio flats	Dover	E(g)(i)	0	78
18/00014	28 Castle Street, Dover	COU & conversion to 4 self-contained flats	Dover	E(g)(i)	0	200
18/01322	The former Magistrates Court, Penchester Road, Dover	COU and conversion to 46 self contained flats, to include the erection of a roof extension to incorporate a 3rd and 4th floor and 4 storey side extension	Dover	F1	0	2334
18/00221	62 Castle Street	Erection of a six storey building, comprising flexible Class A1, A2, A3 & A4 uses (ground floor) and flexible Class A1, A2, A3 & A4 uses and B1 (1st Floor) and the formation of 28no flats (2nd - 5th floor); Separate Commercial and residential access; Associated commercial bin storage; Secure residential bin and cycle storage; Gated rear service yard; 4no parking spaces; Communal roof garden at third floor level and associated works.	Dover	E(a)	910	0
21/00303	15 Bench Street, Dover	Change of use and conversion of shop and HMO into 8no. self contained flats, cycle store, insertion of 2no. additional rooflights, insertion of window to side elevation, 3no. balconies with balustrades to rear elevation and alterations to doors and windows	Dover	E(a)	0	80
22/00488	30-32 Castle Street, Dover	Change of use from dental practice E(e) to 2no. dwellings (C3)	Dover	E(e)	0	344
21/00821	10 Priory Street, Dover	Prior approval for change of Use from Shop (Class A1) to a Dwellinghouse (use class C3)	Dover	E(a)	0	66

Application Reference	Address	Description	Town Centre	Use class	Gain (sqm)	Loss (sqm)
22/00847	42 King Street, Sandwich	Change of use to dwellinghouse, erection of a single storey rear extension, replacement from window, door, and rainwater goods (existing rear extension to be demolished)	Sandwich	E(e)	0	67
18/01184	1 Harnet House, Harnet Street	COU to 2 self-contained flats	Sandwich	E(g)(i)	0	149
21/01201	10 Cattle Market, Sandwich	Change of use and conversion 2no. dwellings, retail shop or office. Erection of a first floor rear extension, alterations to windows, rear parapet wall to be lowered, and restoration/painting to elevations (part rear elevations, roof lanterns, window bars and first floor rear windows to be removed)	Sandwich	E(a)	180	0
21/01199	12 Market Street, Sandwich	Part change of use to residential (Class C3) formation of associated parking, insertion of rear steps, alterations to windows and doors (rear stairs to be demolished)	Sandwich	E(c)	0	66
22/01611	47-49 Queen Street, Deal	Change of use and conversion to ground floor flat, alterations to doors and windows, floor level, steps, to basement flat, insertion of a glass screen, formation of 2no. new entrances. change of use of no.49 to office and garage space	Deal	Sui Generis	0	86
				E(c)	0	38
23/00356	15 Worthington Street, Dover	Change of use of ground floor to residential, 1st floor balcony to rear elevation and replacement windows/doors and associated external works (extensions demolished)	Dover	E(a)	0	75
22/01584	1 Potter Street, Sandwich	Change of use and conversion into 2 no. dwelling houses	Sandwich	E(c)	0	267
23/00879	20 Biggin Street	Conversion of upper floors to one dwelling and alterations to shopfront	Dover	E(a)	0	120
23/01009	35 High Street	Conversion of first floor and attic space to residential (Use Class C3) with erection of second floor rear extension, alterations to roof, alterations to shop front, alterations to roof and replacement windows	Deal	E(a)	0	51
23/00147	Hughenden House, Maison Dieu Veterinary	Change of use of ground floor of Hughenden House and courtyard building to form 2 x 2 bedroom self contained flats including extensions and parking	Deal	Sui Generis	0	130

Application Reference	Address	Description	Town Centre	Use class	Gain (sqm)	Loss (sqm)
	Centre, 7 Sondres Road					
24/00001	21 Castle Street	Change of use from office to dwelling	Dover	E(g)(i)	0	209
22/01345	12 King Street	Erection of a four storey building incorporating 3no. Retail units (Use Class E) and 16no. Self-contained flats (existing building to be demolished)	Deal	E	267	0
				F2	0	700
24/00047	4 Broad Street	Change of use from Class E(c)(i) to E(e) dental practice and insertion of window	Deal	E(c)	417	0
				E(e)	0	417
				TOTAL	2020	6297
				NET		4277

*NB: This application appears in both the completed and permitted list as it was completed in the same year it was granted permission