

Union Street Frontages

Introduction

Union Street is Aberdeen's principle street that runs East to West through the City Centre Business Zone (CCBZ) in the heart of the City Centre. The street plays a prominent and wide-ranging role in the life of the City and has a major role in the City's retail function. The Union Street Frontages Policy Guidelines have helped to protect this function since 1977.

WHAT ARE THE UNION STREET FRONTAGES GUIDELINES?

The Union Street Frontages Guidelines (USFG) aim to maintain an appropriate mix and location of shopping, service and commercial leisure functions on Union Street. It does this by applying minimum percentages of ground floor retail frontage that are required in individual sectors of Union Street. The 8 individual sectors along the length of Union Street are shown at the end of this document. Proposals for a change of use from retail (Class 1)* to non-retail uses such as cafés, restaurants, hotels, leisure and financial and professional services are measured against these minimum percentages as well as other relevant criteria set out in this document.

*As defined in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Scotland) Order 1997

BACKGROUND: POLICY CONTEXT

Policy C2 in the Aberdeen Local Development Plan provides the context for determining planning applications for a change of use from retail to a non-retail use at ground floor level to premises that have a frontage to Union Street.

Policy C2: City Centre Business Zone and Union Street

The City Centre Business Zone is the preferred location for major retail developments as defined in Policy RT1. Where sites are not available in the City Centre Business Zone, then sites elsewhere in the City Centre may be appropriate. Proposals for a change of use from retail (Class 1 of the Use Classes Order) to other uses within the City Centre Business Zone will only be acceptable if :

- 1) the proposal is in Union Street it must accord with the Union Street Frontages Supplementary Guideline.
- 2) in other parts of the City Centre Business Zone it can be demonstrated that there is a lack of demand for continued retail use of the premises (applicants may be required to demonstrate what efforts have been made to secure a new retail use since the property became vacant) and how the new use contributes to the wider aims for city centre enhancement; and the proposed new use must enhance or adequately maintain daytime vitality, and an active street frontage; and the alternative use does not conflict with the amenity of the neighbouring area.

Proposals to use basement and upper floor levels for retail purposes will be encouraged

THE UNION STREET FRONTAGES

Policy Guidelines

Proposals for a change of use to ground floor premises that have a frontage to Union Street will be determined in accordance with Policy C2 of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan.

Proposals to enhance the vitality and viability of Union Street as a key retail location within the City Centre will be supported.

In the west end of Union Street (i.e. west of Union Terrace/Bridge Street), proposals for a change of use from retail to uses such as cafes, restaurants, hotels, leisure and financial and professional services (Class 2 of the Use Class Order) will be approved provided:

daytime vitality is enhanced or adequately maintained; and
an active street frontage is maintained.

In addition, proposals for change of use from Class 1 (retail) to other uses will be assessed within the context of the Union Street Frontages Guidelines. The Guidelines seek to keep a specified level of retail frontage within different parts of Union Street.

The minimum percentage of ground floor retail frontage that is required for the individual sectors of Union Street varies, illustrating the relative desirability of fostering continued retail use in and adjacent to particular parts of Union Street. For example, the minimum percentage of ground floor frontage that is required for the area between Bridge Street/Union Terrace and Market Street/St. Nicholas Street is higher than the minimum required percentage at the west-end of Union Street. This reflects the greater demand for retail uses in the prime shopping area as well as the desirability of encouraging diversity of city centre uses and activities at the west-end.

There is also a need to avoid excessive concentrations of non-retail uses, including licensed premises, where this would be likely to have a significantly adverse effect on continued retail use of existing groups of retail units or on amenity.

Table 1
Percentage of ground floor retail frontage in individual sectors:

Sector	Minimum Required Retail %	Actual Retail %	Spare Capacity %
A	40%	61.8%	+21.8%
B	75%	73.8%	-1.2%
C	35%	39.9%	+1.9%
D	30%	33.6%	+3.6%
E	30%	36%	+6%
F	70%	75.9%	+5.9%
G	90%	90%	0%
H	65%	68.3%	+3.3%

As of **25/11/2011** (The location of the individual sectors is shown at the end of this document. The actual retail and spare capacity percentages frequently change. We will periodically update these figures on our website aberdeencity.gov.uk)

Where a unit is vacant, its last known use is used to calculate the actual ground floor retail frontage of a particular sector, except in cases where a vacant unit has an extant planning permission that has not yet been implemented. In the latter instance, the most recently authorised use class is used for calculation purposes.

The Union Street Frontages policy guidelines allow for an unlimited amount of flexibility above the minimum required level of Class 1 retail frontage at ground floor level on Union Street. There is limited flexibility of up to 1% below the minimum required level where the proposed new use meets the other relevant criteria as set out in this supplementary planning guidance.

Regard should be had to other policies in the Aberdeen Local Development Plan that may be relevant.

SECTOR DESCRIPTIONS

Sector A: Broad Street to St. Nicholas Street (26- 62 Union Street)

This sector currently sits above its minimum required percentage of retail frontage at ground floor level and has done for a number of years. It is bounded by the former E&M department store to the east and the Clydesdale Bank to the west. This particular sector of Union Street is just outside the most popular retail location and is dominated by two units with large floor areas but also has less intensive uses such as opticians and betting offices.

Sector B: St Nicholas Street to Union Terrace Gardens (78-142 Union Street)

This sector of Union Street is just one section of the most popular retail location along Union Street, which is reflected in its high minimum retail frontage of 75%. The retail function of this sector is strong and has been strengthened since the retail development on Guild Street.

Sector C: Union Terrace to Union Row (146-228 Union Street)

The Monkey House Bar and Restaurant building bounds this sector to the east and there are a number of smaller retail units to the west of the Music Hall. The minimum required level of retail frontage of 35% reflects the progressively diverse nature of the ground floor units heading towards the west-end although there is still a reasonably strong retail character in this sector.

Sector D: Union Row to Holburn Junction and part of Albyn Place (232-520 Union Street and 2-4a Albyn Place)

This is a relatively long section of Union Street encompassing a total of 38 units, which includes uses such as retail, financial and professional services, restaurants, bars and two churches. The minimum required percentage of retail frontage at ground floor level in this sector is relatively low at 30% and this reflects the strong demand to provide a greater mix of uses at the west-end of Union Street.

Sector E: Part of Holburn Street and Holburn Junction to Bon Accord Street (1-39 Holburn Street and 333-501 Union Street)

Sector E is another long stretch of the city centre with 32 units along its length, which includes a mix of uses such as retail, financial and professional services, restaurants, bars and one church. Similar to sector D, this sector has a relatively low minimum required percentage of ground floor retail at 30%.

Sector F: Bon Accord Street to Bridge Street (167- 269 Union Street)

Of the 30 units along this sector of Union Street, 23 are currently in use as Class 1 retail. The actual percentage of retail frontage at ground floor level for this sector has been above the minimum level for a number of years. The relatively strong demand for retail in this sector and its close proximity to the most popular retail location is reflected in the minimum required percentage of ground floor retail frontage of 70% for this sector.

Sector G: Bridge Street to Market Street (1 – 13 Union Bridge and 73 - 163 Union Street)

Bridge Street to Market Street is one of the main sections of the most popular retail location on Union Street (the other being sector B). This sector has a minimum retail percentage of 90%, the highest in the whole of Union Street. The actual percentage of retail frontage has been on or around 90% since 1997 with very few vacant units or proposals for a change of use away from retail. This particular sector still functions as a prime location for retail and should be maintained accordingly.

Sector H: Market Street to Exchequer Row (3 – 67 Union Street)

This sector has only 17 units along its length. It is bounded by the H&M store to the west and includes the Vue Cinema towards the eastern-end. The current minimum level of retail frontage required at ground floor level in this sector is 65% and the current actual ground floor retail frontage is slightly above this. This has been reasonably constant for some time.

GLOSSARY**Active Street Frontages**

Building frontages designed to extend the influence and animation of interior uses outwards into the surrounding public space or street by visual contact between inside and out.

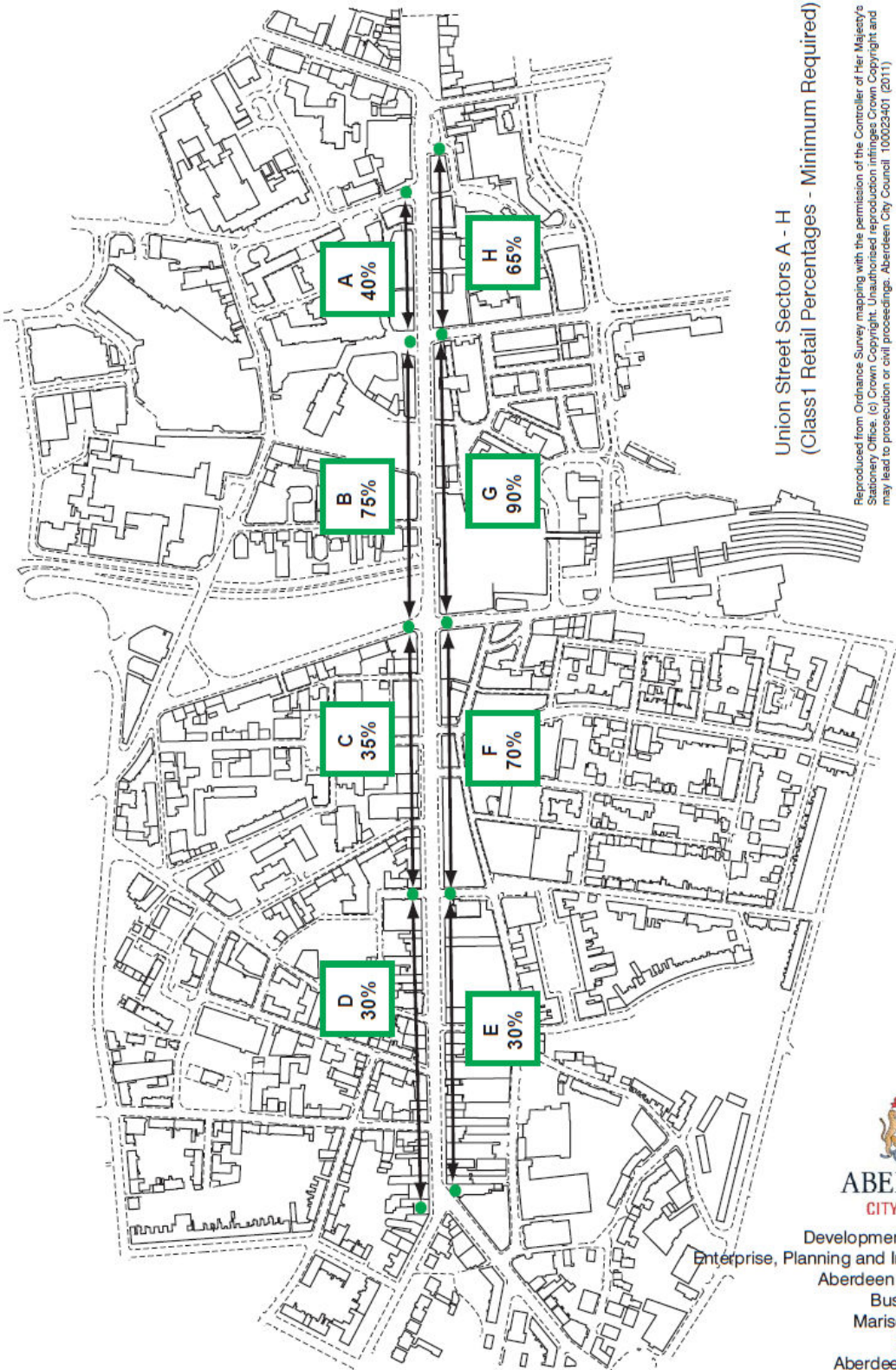
Vitality

The vitality of a centre is reflected by the number of people present using the centre at different times of the day. It can measure the liveliness of a centre.

Viability

The viability refers to the centre's ability to attract investment and adapt to changing needs.

Plan 1: Minimum required level of Class 1 retail frontage at ground floor level in the Union Street Frontages policy guidelines area.



Union Street Sectors A - H
(Class 1 Retail Percentages - Minimum Required)

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