

Matter 29 – the recent changes to the Use Classes Order

Inspector Statement: Do any of the Local Plan policies – particularly, but not limited to, those relating to the economy and town centres – need to be modified to reflect the changes to the Use Classes Order that will come into effect on 1 September 2020?

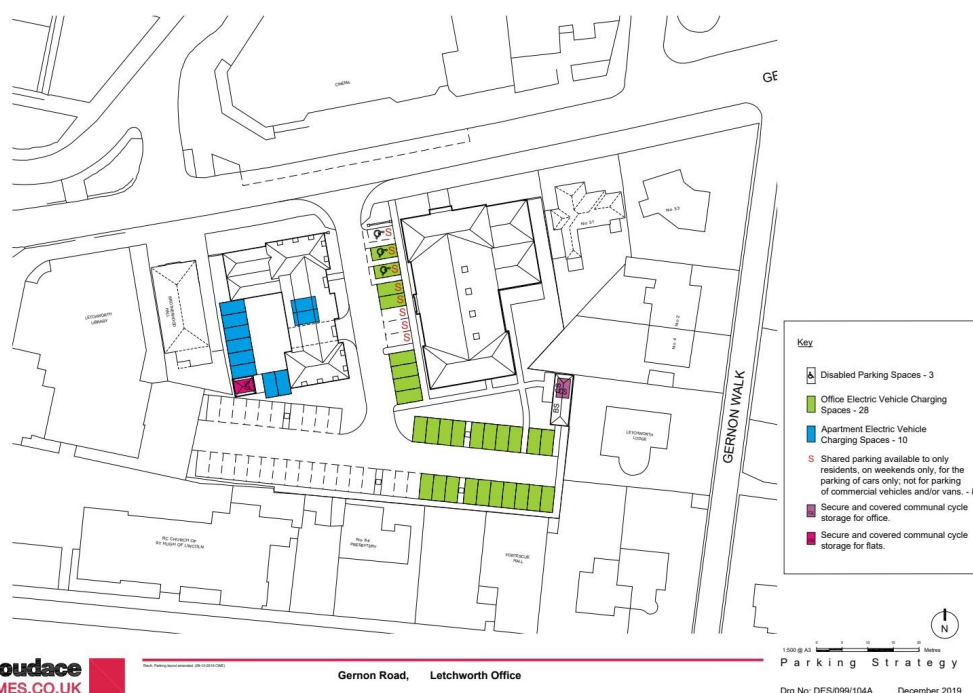
TTL Response:

The text and diagrams relating to Town Centres Use Classes in the draft Local Plan need to be updated to reflect the latest Use Class Order.

The local plan allocations of land for economy and town centres purposes are related to predicted population growth. They therefore need to be reduced in line with the lower population predictions. Even prior to the Covid-19 outbreak, TTL has expressed concern that the councils' plans for economy and town centre developments did not reflect the changes in the way we work and shop. These changes are likely to have been intensified by the recent lockdown. TTL consider there are opportunities for a reimagining of Town Centre areas which will deliver additional housing in these highly sustainable locations. This housing should also help bring footfall to struggling local businesses. The changes to the Use Class Order are an enabler for additional dwellings in Town Centre locations.

In Letchworth Town Centre developments planned for the Wynd and Gernon Road, which are on the periphery of the Town Centre, would seem to be most appropriate areas for reviewing.

NHDC and Letchworth Heritage Foundation may want to also reconsider the development they are planning to replace the Town Lodge at the top of Gernon Road¹ (Planning diagram shown below). Currently this is for a 60 person office building and ten two-bedroom dwellings (with land allocated for 69 car parking spaces at ground level, which we consider a waste of space.) It would seem more appropriate for this highly sustainable location, adjacent to other residential properties, to be used by the Council as an exemplar of either a car free housing development, a development with a car club, or one with electric vehicle storage in an undercroft.



¹ NHDC Planning application 19/02999/FP