

COUNCIL ASSEMBLY
(ORDINARY MEETING)
WEDNESDAY 10 JULY 2013
QUESTION ON REPORT

ITEM 8.1: GAMBLING ACT 2005 – SOUTHWARK STATEMENT OF GAMBLING LICENSING POLICY 2013-2016

1. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR CATHERINE BOWMAN

Does the council agree that local residents should have more say over the types of shops on their local high streets?

RESPONSE

Yes. However, the recent changes to legislation by the coalition government are weakening the opportunity to address any issues on our high streets.

For instance the changes to the general permitted development order in May 2013 now allow a range of buildings to convert temporarily to a set of alternative uses including betting shops, payday loan shops and takeaways without needing planning permission.

The government is also currently considering allowing shops to be turned into flats without requiring planning permission. This would undermine borough policies to regenerate town centres and high streets. It could also potentially raise retail rents (and therefore costs) as well as creating high streets and shopping parades that have fewer shops and therefore lower footfall, undermining the viability of those shop units that remain. This could sound the death knell on many of our smaller shopping parades because residential development is generally far more profitable for landlords than the yields from commercial floorspace.

We will do everything we can to oppose this policy to ensure that appropriate and effective safeguards are in kept in place to protect local economic activity and the scope of local decision making. I hope that members of all parties will join us in opposing the government in this forthcoming consultation.

There is also the issue of clustering of betting shops on our high streets, and to some extent, pay day loan shops and pawn brokers. These types of businesses are in the same use class as banks, building societies, bureau de change, professional services, estate agents and employment agencies i.e. A2 (financial services). Changes between uses in the A2 use class do not require planning permission. Legislation allows a change of use from restaurants and cafes (use class A3), drinking establishments (Use Class A4) and hot food takeaways (use class A5) to a use in the A2 use class without requiring planning permission. In September 2012, the government consulted on changes to the use classes order. In response to the consultation the council requested that betting shops, pay day loan shops and pawn brokers are re-classified as 'sui-generis' use which would require a separate planning

application to be made for the use. We understand that the government is not proposing to make any changes to the legislation in this respect.

Given these recent actions by the government I can announce today that I am asking the planning committee to introduce an Article 4 Direction with immediate effect to remove permitted development rights for the change of use from hot food takeaways (A5), drinking establishments (A4) and restaurants and cafes (A3) to a use in the A2 use class.

The immediate Article 4 Direction should be applied to all of the borough's protected shopping frontages. These are set out in the schedule of shopping frontages which accompany the adopted policies map (2012).