

# Harlow Retail Parks Study

2024



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# **1 Introduction**

## **1.1 Monitoring of Retail Parks**

- 1.1.1 In order to inform the preparation of planning policies, and reflecting the duty placed on the Council as Local Planning Authority to review the socio-economic and environmental conditions of the district, the Council assesses the uses of the Retail Park units in Harlow. This provides analysis of changes that have occurred in the uses of the units.
- 1.1.2 The Retail Parks are designated in the Harlow Local Development Plan, which was adopted December 2020. The monitoring of Retail Parks is important to provide a barometer on the vitality, viability and success of Harlow's retail areas. Such monitoring also allows the identification of trends and the measurement of success of the local planning policies which seek to manage the proportion of uses within the Retail Parks.

## **1.2 Harlow's Retail Parks**

- 1.2.1 There are five designated Retail Parks in Harlow located to the north of the district.
- Harlow Retail Park
  - Princes Gate
  - Queensgate Centre
  - St James Centre
  - The Oaks

# **2 National Legislation and Policies**

## **2.1 Use Classes Order**

- 2.1.1 Uses of land and buildings are categorized into various uses known as 'use classes' which are defined by The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended).
- 2.1.2 With effect from 1 September 2020, the UCO was significantly amended and classes were changed. The uses most commonly found in retail areas are listed below. The former Use Class is given in brackets.

### **Class E – Commercial, Business and Service**

- E(a): display or retail sale of goods, other than hot food [formerly A1]
  - Examples include shops, hairdressers, pet shops, sandwich bars and retail warehouses
- E(b): sale of food and drink for consumption (mostly) on the premises [formerly A3]
  - Examples include restaurants and cafes
- E(c): provision of financial services and professional services (other than health or medical services) [formerly A2]
  - Examples include banks, building societies, estate agents and employment agencies
- E(d): indoor sport, recreation or fitness

- Examples include gyms [formerly part of D2]

Sui Generis – certain uses which do not fall within any use class – includes units for:

- Theatres
- Amusement arcades/centres or funfairs
- Launderettes
- Fuel stations
- Hiring, selling and/or displaying motor vehicles
- Taxi businesses
- Retail warehouse clubs
- Nightclubs
- Casinos
- Betting offices/shops
- Pay day local shops
- Hot food takeaways (sale of food and drink for consumption (mostly) off the premises) [formerly A5]
- Public houses, wine bars and drinking establishments [formerly A4]
- Cinemas [formerly part of D2]

2.1.3 The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) states that a change of use does not require planning permission if the new use and former use are in the same use class. If they are not in the same use class then the change would require planning permission

2.1.4 Under permitted development rights enacted by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended), changes of use between certain classes do not require planning permission.

2.1.5 Changing uses between those classified as Sui Generis, however, would require planning permission, because each use classified as Sui Generis technically occupies a use class of its own.

## **2.2 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

2.2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally-prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced.

2.2.2 Chapter 7 Ensuring the Vitality of Town Centres states 'local planning authorities should apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses which are neither in an existing centre nor in accordance with an up-to-date plan' (paragraph 91) and also states 'when considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites which are well connected to the town centre. Applicants and local planning authorities should demonstrate flexibility on issues such as format and scale, so that opportunities to utilise suitable town centre or edge of centre sites are fully explored' (paragraph 92).

- 2.2.3 The NPPF goes on to state that for retail and leisure development outside town centres which is not in accordance with an up-to-date plan, an impact assessment should be undertaken where the development is over a proportionate, locally-set floorspace threshold (2,500sqm gross by default) (paragraph 94). However, paragraph 15.28 of the Harlow Local Development Plan (HLDP) states that proposals for retail and leisure uses outside of the Town Centre which exceed 500sqm in size will be required to be supported by an impact assessment.

## 3 Local Policies

### 3.1 Harlow Local Development Plan (HLDP)

- 3.1.1 The Harlow Local Development Plan (HLDP), which was adopted in December 2020, sets out the long-term planning vision for the district and guides future development across Harlow to 2033. It includes a number of policies relating to Retail Parks in Harlow.
- 3.1.2 The Retail Hierarchy, which reflects the role and function of the district's retail centres, is set out in Policy RS1 with Harlow Town Centre being where retail development should be directed in the first instance and where Retail Parks are at the bottom of the hierarchy.
- 3.1.3 Retail Parks are protected as a provider of bulky retail goods in Policy RS3 which ensures they do not provide direct competition with the town centre. Policy PR10 sets out the criteria that development in Retail Parks must meet, which is as follows:
- a) The sequential approach is satisfied;
  - b) The development is in Use Class A1 and is for the sale of bulky goods, or provides leisure activities;
  - c) Any sub-division does not result in any separate retail unit being less than 1,000sqm in size

## 4 Findings

### 4.1 Harlow Retail Park

<b>Use Class</b> [former Use Class is listed in square brackets]	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
E(a) [A1]	50% (2 units)	75% (3 units)	75% (3 units)	75% (3 units)	75% (3 units)
E(b) [A3]					
E(c) [A2]					
Sg	25% (1 unit)	25% (1 unit)	25% (1 unit)	25% (1 unit)	25% (1 unit)
B2					
Vacant	25% (1 unit)				

- 4.1.1 The Harlow Retail Park has consistently performed well since 2015 and has continued to perform well despite the Covid-19 restrictions. There was one vacant unit during the 2015 survey, however, this was filled the following year and has since stayed occupied.

## 4.2 Princes Gate

<b>Use Class</b> [former Use Class is listed in square brackets]	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
E(a) [A1]	100% (5 units)	100% (5 units)	100% (5 units)	80% (4 units)	80% (4 units)
E(b) [A3]					
E(c) [A2]					
Sg					
B2					
B8					
Vacant				20% (1 unit)	20% (1 unit)

- 4.2.1 Princes Gate has consistently performed well since 2015 and has continued to perform well despite the Covid-19 restrictions. However, there was one unit that was vacant during the 2023 survey which was due to B&M moving to the Queensgate Centre and has not been filled during the 2024 survey.

## 4.3 Queensgate Centre

<b>Use Class</b> [former Use Class is listed in square brackets]	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
E(a) [A1]	63% (12 units)	68% (13 units)	68% (13 units)	65% (13 units)	65% (13 units)
E(b) [A3]	11% (2 units)	11% (2 units)	16% (3 units)	10% (2 units)	10% (2 units)
E(c) [A2]					
Sg	11% (2 units)	11% (2 units)	11% (2 units)	20% (4 units)	20% (4 units)
B2					
B8					
Vacant	16% (3 units)	11% (2 units)	5% (1 unit)	5% (1 unit)	5% (1 unit)

- 4.3.1 Queensgate Centre has varied in performance since 2015. There were 3 units that were vacant in 2015 where 2 units continued to be vacant in the 2016 survey. The vacant unit surveyed in 2019 was sub-divided into 3 units which resulted in Unit 1A which provides 1,952sqm (Use Class E(a)), Unit 1B which provides 1,100sqm (Use Class Sg) and Unit 1C which provides 679sqm (Use Class E(a)). Units 3A and 3B also merged and provided B&M a larger space to move to from Princes Gate. The vacant unit during the 2023 survey remains vacant during the 2024 survey.

#### 4.4 St James Centre

<b>Use Class</b> [former Use Class is listed in square brackets]	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
E(a) [A1]	74% (14 units)	68% (13 units)	53% (10 units)	63% (12 units)	63% (12 units)
E(b) [A3]					
E(c) [A2]					
Sg					
B2	16% (3 units)	16% (3 units)	16% (3 units)	16% (3 units)	16% (3 units)
B8	5% (1 unit)	5% (1 unit)	11% (2 unit)	5% (1 unit)	5% (1 unit)
Vacant	5% (1 unit)	11% (2 unit)	21% (4 units)	16% (3 unit)	16% (3 unit)

4.4.1 St James Centre has varied in performance since 2015. Despite the impact of the Covid-19 restrictions on retail, during the 2023 and 2024 survey the retail park performed better compared to the previous survey in 2019 when there were 4 units vacant.

4.4.2 Unlike Harlow's other retail parks, St James Centre retail park occupies units under the B2 and B8 Use Class which have also been performing well.

#### 4.5 The Oaks

<b>Use Class</b> [former Use Class is listed in square brackets]	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
E(a) [A1]	80% (8 units)	90% (9 units)	90% (9 units)	89% (8 units)	89% (8 units)
E(b) [A3]					
E(c) [A2]					
Sg	10% (1 unit)	10% (1 unit)	10% (1 unit)	11% (1 unit)	11% (1 unit)
B2					
B8					
Vacant	10% (1 unit)				

4.5.1 The Oaks has consistently performed well since 2015 and has continued to perform well despite the Covid-19 restrictions. There was one vacant unit during the 2015 survey, however, this was filled the following year and has since stayed occupied.

- 4.5.2 There was one change to the retail park between the 2019 and 2023 surveys which was the expansion of the McDonald's into The Carphone Warehouse unit with the move of The Carphone Warehouse within Curry's.

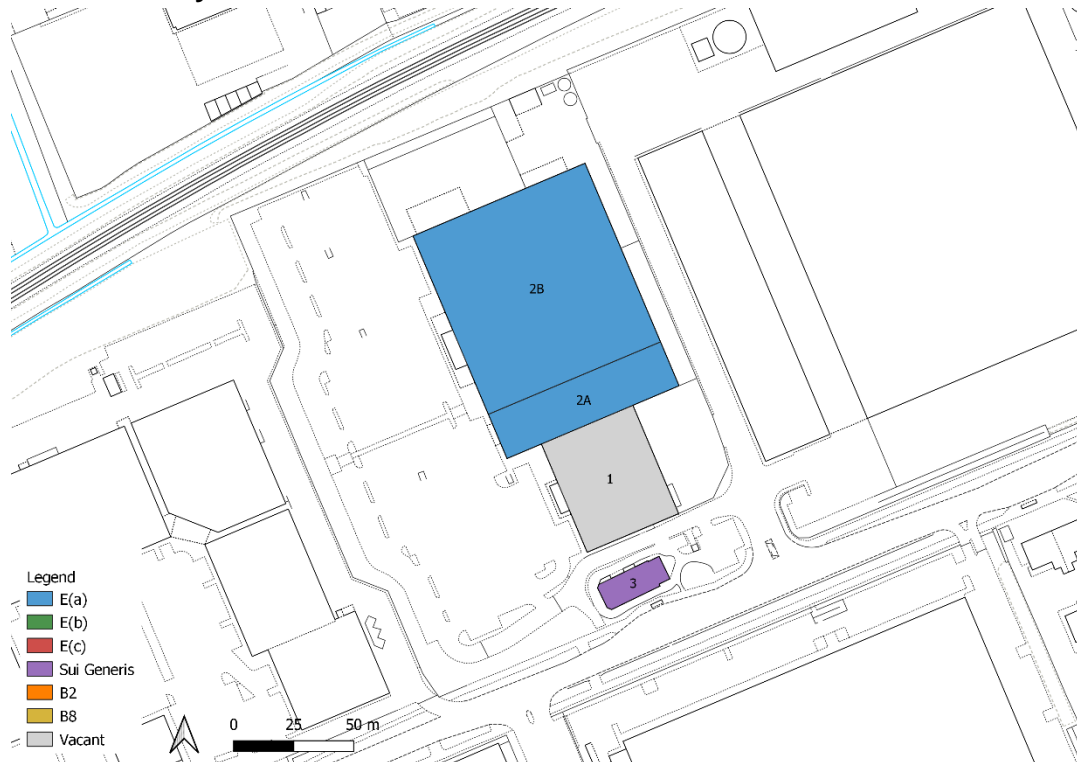
## **5 Conclusion**

- 5.1.1 Harlow's retail parks have been performing well with hardly any vacancies and have continued to perform well despite the Covid-19 restrictions. There have been no changes since last years survey. The predominate uses remain E(a) Use Class and then Sg, B2 and B8. The next retail park survey will be carried out next Spring.

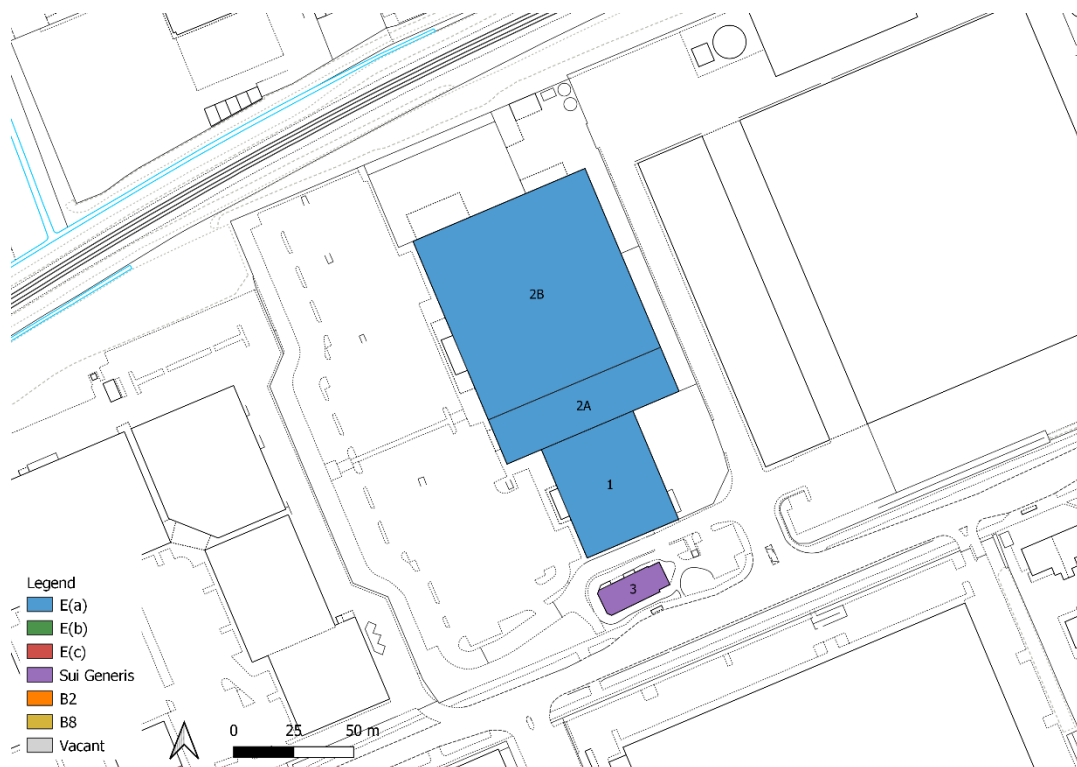
## 6 Appendix 1 – Retail Park Maps

### 6.1 Harlow Retail Park

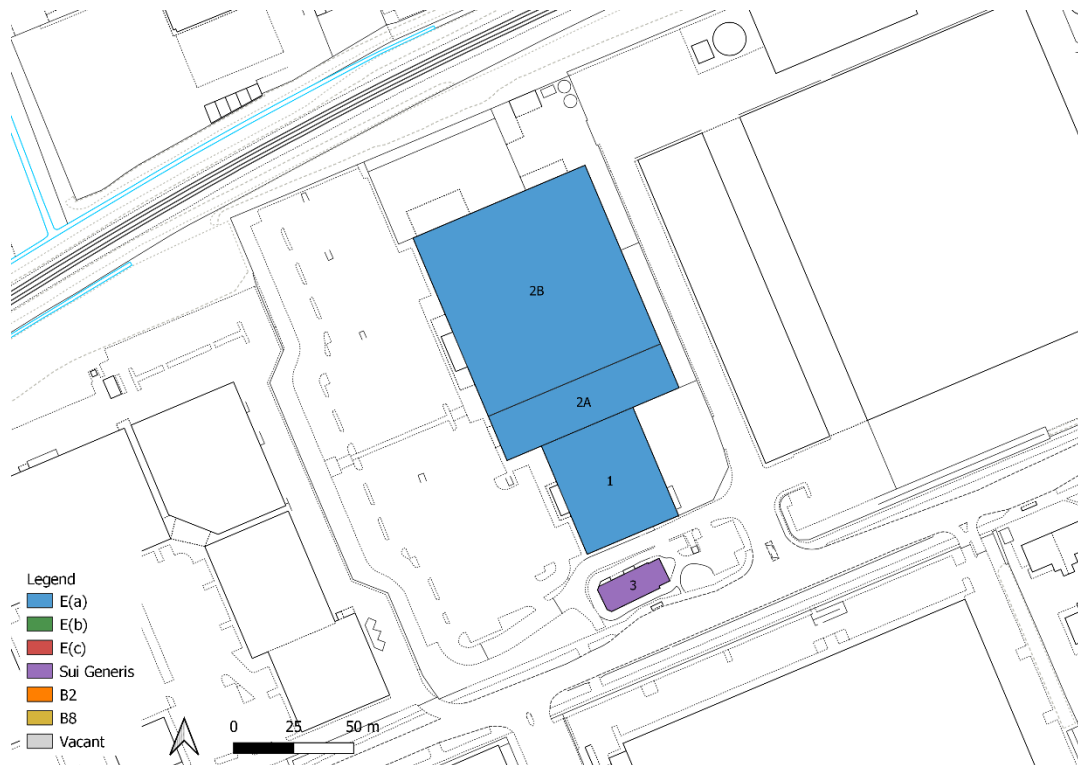
#### 2015 Survey



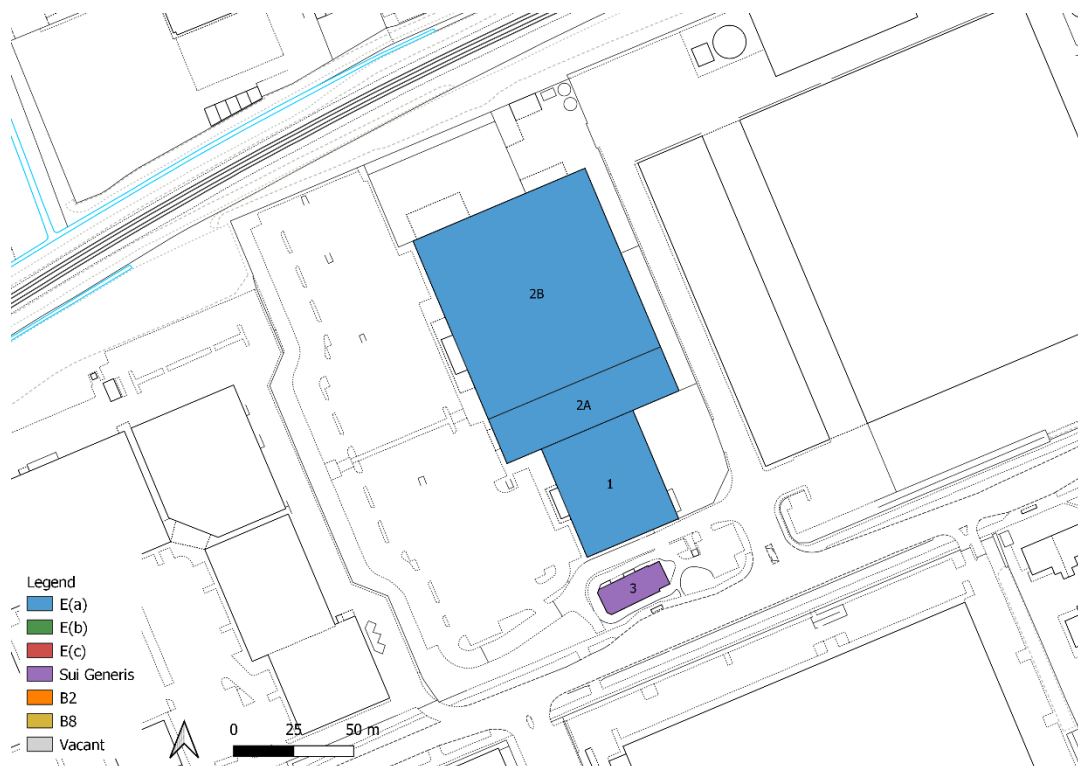
#### 2016 Survey



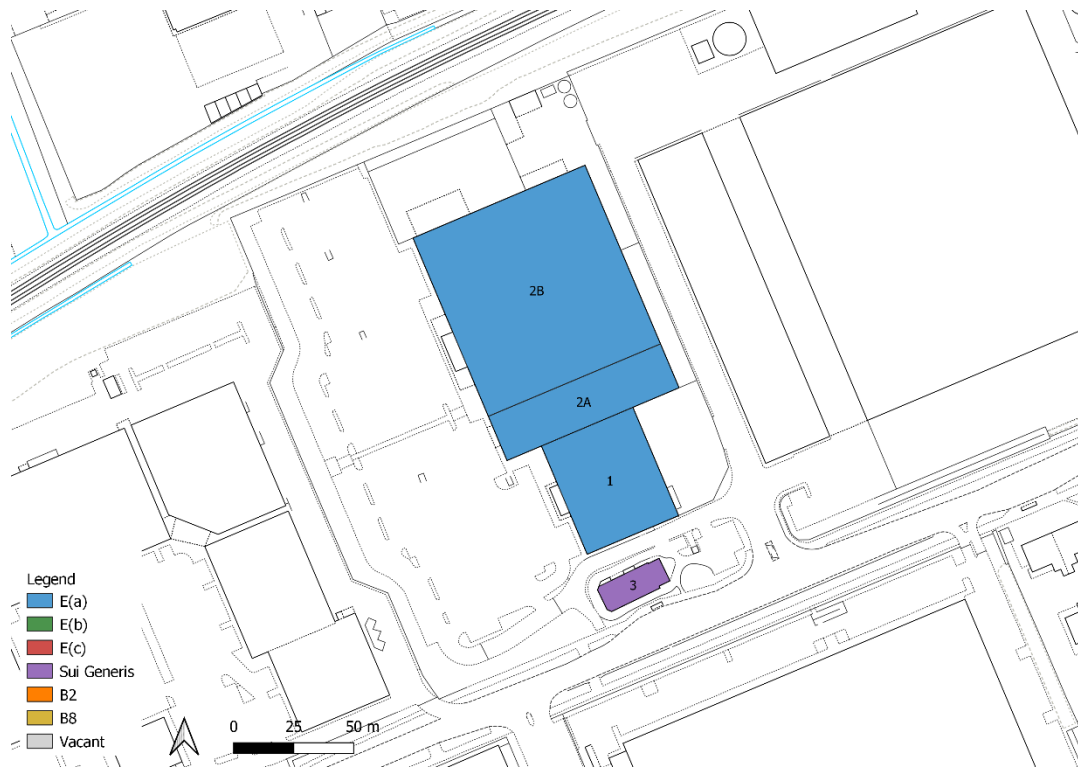
## 2019 Survey



## 2023 Survey



## 2024 Survey



## 6.2 Princes Gate 2015 Survey



## 2016 Survey



## 2019 Survey



## 2023 Survey



## 2024 Survey



### 6.3 Queensgate Centre 2015 Survey



### 2016 Survey



## 2019 Survey



## 2023 Survey



## 2024 Survey



## 6.4 St James Centre 2015 Survey



## 2016 Survey



## 2019 Survey



## 2023 Survey



**Legend**

- E(a)
- E(b)
- E(c)
- Sui Generis
- B2
- B8
- Vacant

0 25 50 m

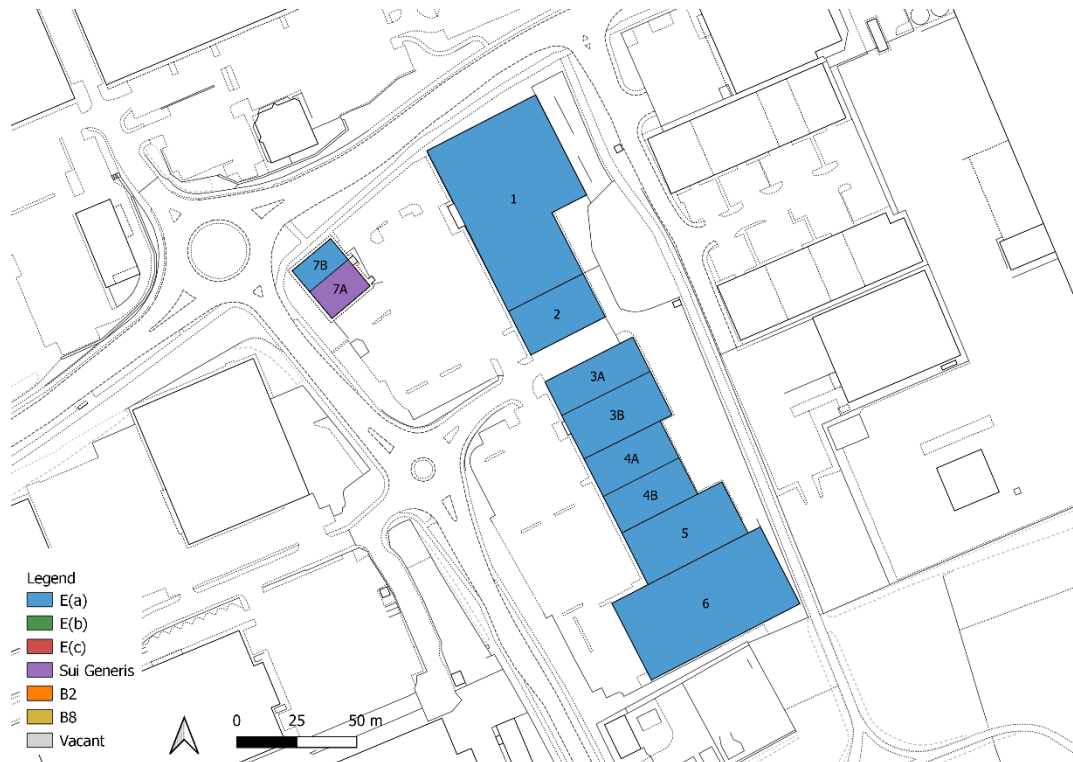
The map shows a cluster of buildings. The largest building is labeled 10.4 and is colored blue. To its left are two smaller blue buildings labeled 10.1 and 10.2. Below these are several smaller buildings, some colored orange (B2), some yellow (B8), and some grey (Vacant). The buildings are labeled with numbers and letters: 10.1, 10.2, 10.3, 10.4, 12, 13-16, 17-18, 3A, 3B, 2C, 2B, 2A, 1D, 1C, 1B, 1A, 7, 6, 4-5, and 1.



## 6.5 The Oaks 2015 Survey



## 2016 Survey



## 2019 Survey



## 2023 Survey



## 2024 Survey

