

Introduction

Why I am doing this project

For my GCSE geography coursework project, I have chosen to compare the shopping hierarchies of two different shops, both providing a contrasting shopping experience. The two shops in question are the local corner shop, on Northfields Avenue, at the corner of Julien Road, and the nearest Waitrose in West Ealing. I am doing this project because I am interested in how area, transport and economies of scale affect the way people shop; the different types of people that shop and the price of the goods they purchase. Once we have identified what these differences are, we can then move on to explain what this means on a national scale, and how shops can each be put into different levels on the shopping hierarchy.

The Area

Ealing is a leafy west London borough that encompasses Ealing Broadway, North Ealing, South Ealing, Acton, Hanwell, Greenford and Northolt. The borough has a population of 300,984 according to the 2001 national census.

London Borough of Ealing



The borough of Ealing has borders with Hammersmith and Fulham, Brent, Hounslow, Harrow and Hillingdon.

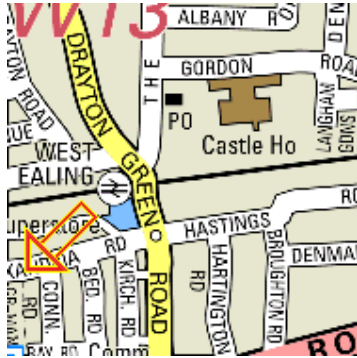
London Boroughs Map



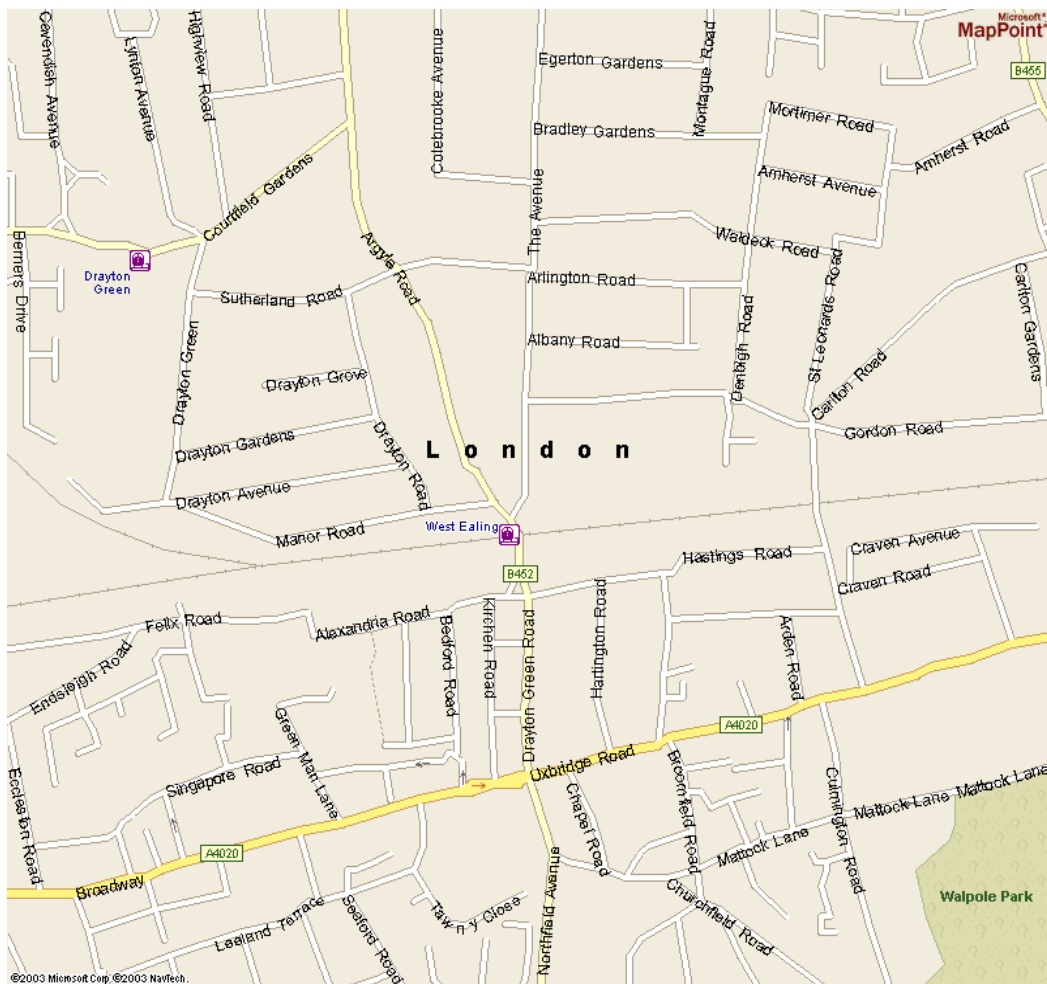
The two shops I have chosen for my GCSE Geography project are both situated in the borough of Ealing. The first, Waitrose, a major supermarket is located in West Ealing near the West Ealing mainline train station. This line goes to Ealing Broadway and on to central London (Paddington). Apart from the railway, there are bus stops nearby at the end of Northfields avenue. The E3 and E2 go from here. The E3 goes from Greenford to Chiswick and the E2 route goes from Greenford to Brentford. Along the Uxbridge road the 207 and 607 go from the start of the Uxbridge road at Uxbridge to the end at Shepherds Bush. Waitrose is also very convenient for customers using cars, as it is easily accessible by the Uxbridge road, and the parking capacity of 300 caters for their needs.

Waitrose has relatively small competition from similar supermarkets, although there are many grocers in West Ealing along the Uxbridge Road. Cudi supermarket is a grocery store on the Uxbridge Road. While it is not nearly as large as Waitrose it does sell a wide variety of goods, many of which are medium order and exotic (from the Middle-East).

Map of Waitrose

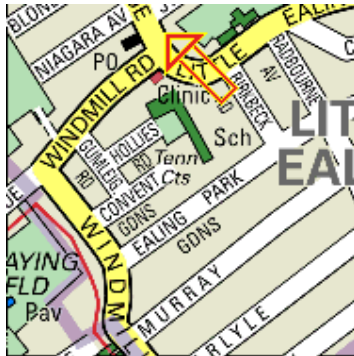


Map of Waitrose and surrounding area

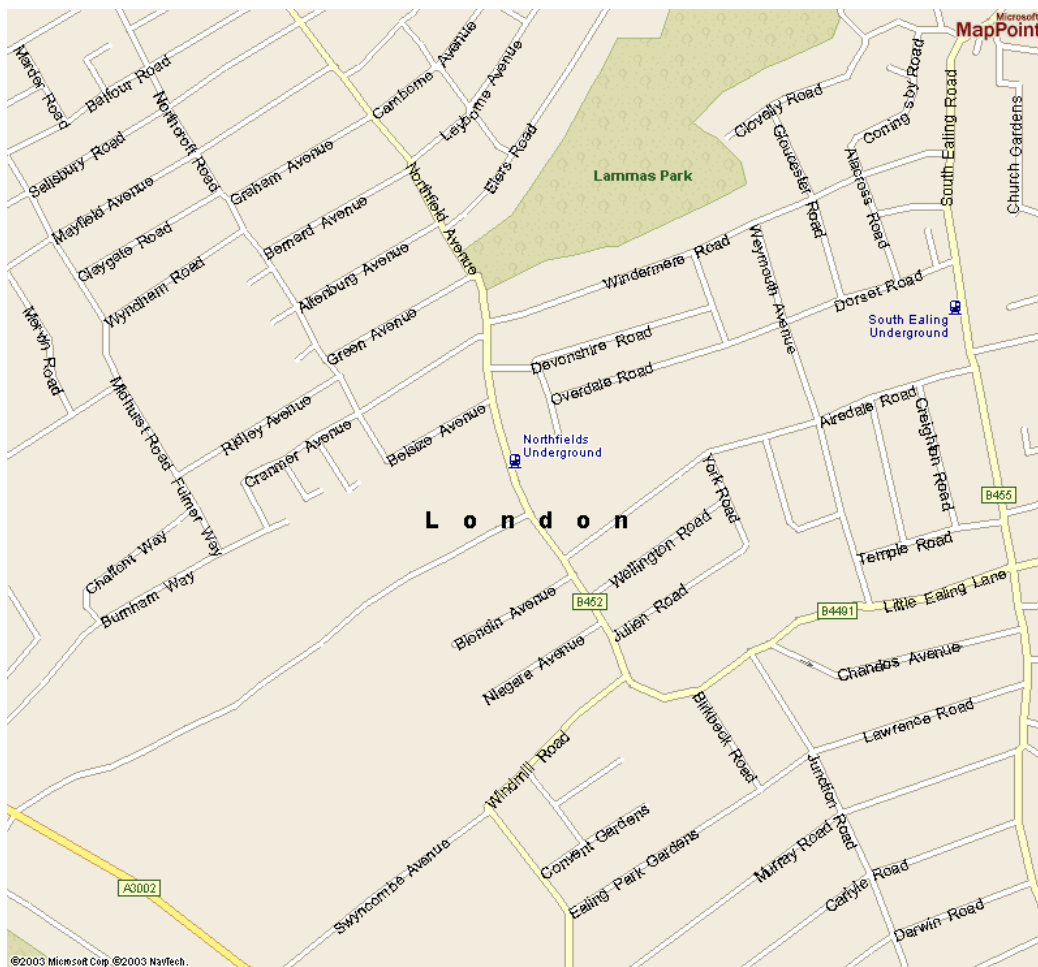


The other shop, which we are comparing to Waitrose, is a small corner shop selling low order goods. It is located on Northfields Avenue on the corner of Julien Road.

Map of local corner shop



Map of local corner shop and surrounding area



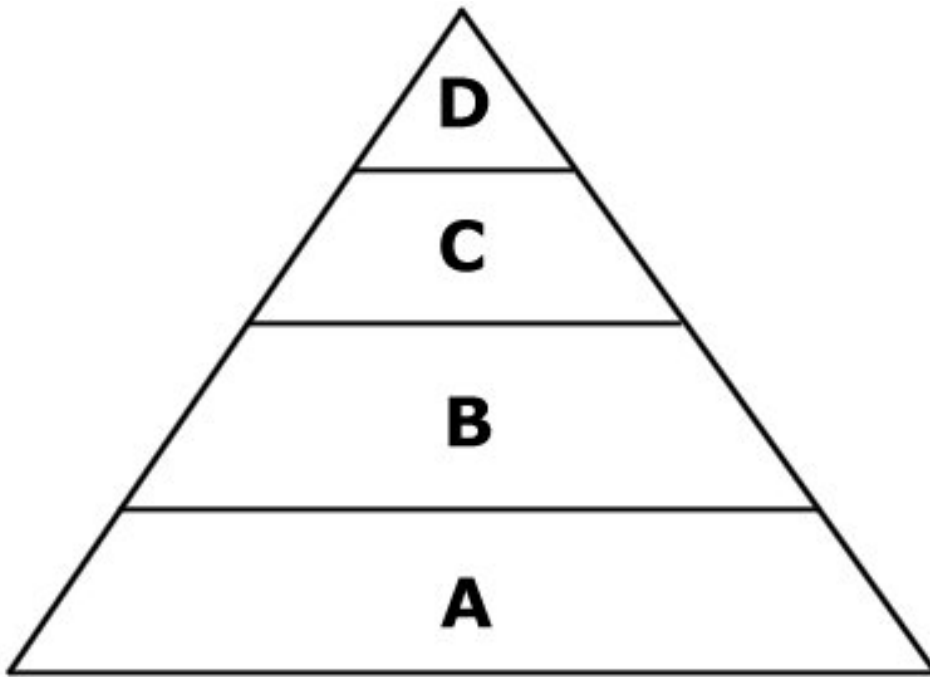
Unlike Waitrose, the corner shop does not have any parking facilities although it is easily reached by public transport. There are bus stops on both sides of the road right near to the shop. The bus routes by which the shop can be accessed are the E2 and E3. Northfields underground station is a 2-minute walk away. Northfields is on the Piccadilly line, westbound towards the centre of London and eastbound towards Heathrow Airport. Limitations to the corner shop's accessibility are that there is no parking provided by the shop, and because it is a relatively busy residential area, there are few parking spaces around the shop. The local competition is very high, with three similar shops only across the road.

Sphere of influence

Both these shops have very different spheres of influence- or 'catchment areas'. The sphere of influence is the area from which a customer will travel to purchase goods. The distance the customer will travel is the range. The type of goods sold in these shops affect the sphere of influence. People will not travel a long distance just to purchase milk and bread (these are low order goods), these can be purchased in the local corner shop. However customers are more likely to travel longer to purchase high order goods or medium order goods. Examples of high order goods are electrical goods and devices, furniture or any other items that are not easily found in normal shops. The spheres of influence for shops dealing with these types of goods are large because people will travel to get a cheaper price on goods that they spend more money on. Medium order goods are products such as exotic fruit and food, and fresh foods such as meat and fish. The local Waitrose stocks many products that are a mixture of medium order and low order goods. The local corner shop sells less of a variety of goods, and the goods are nearly all-low order.

Customers are likely to come from further away to visit Waitrose, and visit less often because they can purchase a wider range of products, which are cheaper than at the corner shop. This means they will buy in bulk. The local corner shop has a smaller sphere of influence but customers buy goods from there more often. This is due to the fact that customers will not travel as far for low order goods found in many places, but customers will be regular because low order goods are necessary.

Diagram of a shopping hierarchy



This diagram is the shopping hierarchy. Where a shop is on the shopping hierarchy affects the sphere of influence. The local corner shop would come under A in the pyramid. It is at the bottom because there are many of them. They have a small sphere of influence because of this also and the items sold in these shops (low order goods) may be bought everyday, so customers frequent them more often than they would a supermarket like Waitrose.

The B band on the pyramid represents the shopping streets. These are located either near the residential district in low class residential areas or in the suburbs of the city. They sell anything for low order to high order (specialist) goods. People frequent them a few times a week, but they have a larger sphere of influence than corner shop, because they cover a larger area and are not as common.

In this diagram C represents the out of town shopping centres. These are usually located in the suburbs of towns and cities. The land on the outskirts is cheaper than the inner city, so they cover much larger areas than the two previous types of shops. This means they can afford to allocate car-parking facilities, which makes them easily accessible by car. People will therefore travel further distances and do not have to come as often because they can buy goods in bulk and pack them in the car. Customers frequent shops such as C less often than both the other shops before them on the shopping hierarchy. There are less of these types of shops than corner shops and shopping streets.

At the top of the shopping hierarchy are shopping malls. These are usually large complexes situated on the edge of cities. The sphere of influence of these types of shops is immense because of many factors. They stock a range of goods, many being specialist and hard to find. There are not as many shopping malls as there are out of town shopping centres, shopping streets or corner shops. The large site of these shops means that a huge amount of goods are stocked here, catering for many customers. As with out of town shopping centres, they have vast parking facilities, larger because of the land available to them.

We have already identified under which category the corner shop comes under. We could say that Waitrose comes under B or C. It is located in West Ealing, a suburb of London. However the location of the supermarket is in close proximity to the high street shops along the Uxbridge Road. This would suggest it falls under B as a shopping street, but it is not made of many shops, it is one supermarket. Waitrose also has car-parking facilities and is a large shop. Its sphere of influence should be larger than a shopping street because of the wide range of goods, which means that people come for their weekly shop and buy in bulk.

Therefore in the shopping hierarchy, Waitrose is higher than the local corner shop. It has a larger sphere of influence and stocks medium order goods, whereas the local corner shop sells mainly convenience goods. There are fewer shops like Waitrose, therefore the competition that Waitrose has is not as much as the local corner shop. There are many convenience stores on the same road as the one I have chosen, and around the area. Meaning the sphere of influence will be less, and competition much greater than at Waitrose.

Another reason that the sphere of influence is larger than in a corner shop is because it is a national retail chain. This means that Waitrose has many stores worldwide. National retail chains can demand cheaper prices for goods from suppliers than a corner shop. They can do this because the suppliers need their business more than that of a small shop that sells very few of their items compared to a chain of stores.