

8. TOWN CENTRES, SHOPPING & FACILITIES

Introduction

- 8.1 Any modern community needs a wide range of facilities and services so as to function properly. The District has a range of facilities that meet the immediate needs of local residents and visitors. In order to continue to serve the community, it is important to retain, and wherever possible, improve existing main and local shopping, commercial and tourism centres. These centres are accessible by a choice of means of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport, helping to reduce dependence on the private car.
- 8.2 This Chapter sets out the Local Planning Authority's proposals relating to town, local and district centres, and facilities and services, including shopping, within the Plan area. The following strategy is proposed:
- recognition of the continuing need to support Winchester town centre's role as an important historic and market town and visitor destination serving central Hampshire, particularly in respect of comparison and specialist goods;
 - adoption of a sequential approach to new development, where the main town and village centres are the favoured locations for the development of new facilities and services that attract large numbers of visitors;
 - as conservation and other constraints severely limit the scope for major new development both within the town centre and around the edge of Winchester, it is not generally proposed that land is specifically allocated for new development;
 - controls over development which would reduce vitality and viability within the areas of Primary Shopping in Winchester and the main rural settlements;
 - encouragement for the development and improvement of local and district centre facilities serving the residential suburbs of Winchester and rural settlements, and opposing the loss of facilities and services where they serve a local function;
 - encouragement for the use of upper floors, especially for residential, so as to make better use of under used property and maintain "lived in" centres.

Overall Approach

- 8.3 Guidance is contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 6: (Town Centres and Retail Developments, 1996) and the Hampshire County Structure Plan 1996-2011 (Review), adopted in 2000. These documents seek to promote town and local centres, ensuring that further development follows a 'sequential approach', where central locations are favoured and 'out-of-centre' locations are only considered as a last resort. Development proposals should be assessed against their impact on the vitality and viability of town and local centres and their accessibility by a choice of means of transport.
- 8.4 In 1997 the Council commissioned consultants to advise on future retail needs, resulting in the publication of the 'Assessment of Retail Floorspace in Winchester' (Winchester City Council/Llewelyn-Davies 1998). This concluded that there was likely to be no further need for further convenience shopping floorspace in Winchester, although there could be a need for limited development if the 'reserve' Major Development Area at Winchester City (North) is to be developed.
- 8.5 The Assessment of Retail Floorspace in Winchester concluded that additional comparison floorspace may be needed, although there is limited scope to accommodate it within Winchester. Winchester has a slightly lower than average amount of retail warehousing, but the report concluded that there was no need for any additional warehousing development, and that any future retail requirements would need to satisfy the 'sequential approach' to development.
- 8.6 The conclusions of the assessment are being updated to take account of more recent population, expenditure and trading projections, and to reflect the greater clarity concerning housing requirements following approval of the Structure Plan Review. If, as a result, a need for additional comparison shopping floorspace is shown, application of the sequential approach in Winchester indicates that the only significant scope for additional retail development is in the Broadway/Friarsgate area. Any proposals for significant retail development should demonstrate that a need exists for the development and should apply the sequential approach. It is not expected that further out-



8. TOWN CENTRES, SHOPPING & FACILITIES

of-centre development will be justified during the Plan period.

Town, Local and District Centres

8.7 Winchester District has the following retail centres:

Main Town Centre:	Winchester
Other Town/ Village Centres:	Bishop's Waltham Denmead New Alresford Whiteley Wickham

These centres have been identified on the Proposals and Inset Maps due to their importance for a range of retail and other uses. Proposals SF.1 and SF.4 seek to retain retail uses within the Primary Shopping Areas of the town and village centres, whilst encouraging a diverse mix of town centre uses.

8.8 In addition to these there are many other settlements where there is smaller scale retail provision, which also provides important local facilities. These are not identified individually as they do not have such an extensive range of shops or facilities and services. Nonetheless, they provide a very important local function and the facilities and services they provide are highly valued. Proposals SF.5 and SF.6 seek generally to maintain and enhance facilities and services in the settlements and will be used to help retain the facilities provided in local centres.

8.9 Although there are distinctly different centres identified in the District, the overall approach aims to achieve:

- protection of the vitality and viability of town and village centres;
- encouragement of a mix of town/village centre uses;
- encouragement of new or improved facilities and services within the built-up areas of settlements to meet the needs of local communities.

Commercial development in town and village centres

8.10 Winchester's compact town centre provides a concentration of shops, leisure, cultural, tourism and entertainment facilities, a regular market, public services, and employment

opportunities reducing the need for people to travel elsewhere to meet their needs. These facilities and services are accessible by various means of transport other than the private car, including walking, cycling, bus and rail.

8.11 There are also a number of smaller towns and village centres performing a valuable local function. They offer a range of facilities and services close to local communities, providing for local convenience needs. In accordance with the Plan's transportation strategy and sustainable development aims, additional commercial development should be directed to the main town and village centres of the District.

Proposal SF.1

Commercial and leisure development (Use Classes A1, A2, A3, B1, C1, D1 and D2) will be permitted within the town and village centres of Winchester, Bishop's Waltham, Denmead, New Alresford, Whiteley and Wickham, as defined on the Proposals and Inset Maps, provided:

- (i) *where development is within a Primary Shopping Area, it satisfies Proposal SF.4;*
- (ii) *in Winchester, any office development (Use Class B1[a]) accords with Proposal E.3;*
- (iii) *it accords with Proposal DP.3 and other relevant proposals of this Plan.*

Commercial and leisure development will not be permitted outside the defined town and village centres unless it is needed to provide a service or facility locally, in accordance with Proposal SF.5, or will not attract large numbers of visitors.

Proposals which would result in a net loss of commercial or leisure floorspace (Use Classes A1, A2, A3, B1, C1, D1 and D2) at ground floor level will not be permitted within the defined town and village centres of Winchester, Bishop's Waltham, Denmead, New Alresford, Whiteley and Wickham, as defined on the Proposals and Inset Maps, unless:

- (a) *it is no longer practical or desirable to re-use the site or premises for its existing or another commercial/leisure use; or*

8. TOWN CENTRES, SHOPPING & FACILITIES

(b) the proposal is for relocation of an existing use within the town/village centre and there will be no net loss of ground floor commercial units.

- 8.12 Proposal SF.1 applies to new retail, tourism, cultural, commercial, leisure, entertainment and facilities and services. It seeks to promote new commercial development within town and village centres and to resist the loss of such uses at ground floor level. Where proposals are put forward outside the defined town/village centres, developers must demonstrate a need for the proposed development, and that they have thoroughly assessed all possible sites within the relevant town/village centre (as defined on the Proposals and Inset maps). 'Out-of-centre' proposals, especially for retail development (Use Class A1), will also need to demonstrate that they will not affect the vitality and viability of the existing centre and how the transport and other objectives of the Plan can be met. The Local Planning Authority will refuse applications for development which, by itself, or cumulatively with other recently completed or proposed schemes, will undermine the vitality and viability of existing town and village centres or which would seriously harm local centres.
- 8.13 Proposal SF.1 is not intended to prevent the provision of facilities and services outside the town and village centres listed if they are required to meet local needs. Where facilities for tourists and visitors relate to a particular attraction it may not be appropriate to direct them to a town or village centre but, wherever possible, development attracting large numbers of visitors should be located in the centres listed in Proposal SF.1.
- 8.14 Proposals involving the loss of commercial or leisure buildings and land to uses other than those listed in Proposal SF.1 will not be permitted unless it is no longer practical or desirable to retain such a use (see also Proposal S.6 and paragraph 8.43), or the proposed use is relocating from elsewhere within the centre. In this case, the applicant will need to ensure that the premises being vacated are available for a commercial or leisure use.
- 8.15 Proposal SF.1 applies to all commercial developments of a significant scale. An assessment of the likely economic, environmental and accessibility/traffic

impacts will be required with major applications, to enable full consideration of the proposal and its likely implications for the town or village centre concerned.

- 8.16 New development should be carefully designed and sited to be in scale and character with the existing centre. Particular care shall be taken to minimise the impact of new development within Conservation Areas. Development proposals that fall within the defined Primary Shopping Areas will also need to satisfy the requirements of Proposal SF.4, which seeks to retain a predominance of retail uses within the centres.
- 8.17 There has been concern, especially in Winchester, about the impact of large new public house developments, especially on residential amenity. Guidance dealing specifically with Use Class A3 uses, especially pubs, is necessary to ensure the potential harmful effects of such development are controlled.

Proposal SF.2

Development falling within Use Class A3 will be permitted within the defined town and village centres of Winchester, Bishop's Waltham, Denmead, New Alresford, Whiteley and Wickham, as defined on the Proposals and Inset Maps, provided:

- (i) the proposal would not cause undue disturbance to nearby residential properties or lead to disturbance away from the premises;*
 - (ii) the development would not harm the character of the area, especially within a Conservation Area;*
 - (iii) adequate provision is made for the disposal of litter, including recycling facilities, where appropriate;*
 - (iv) the proposal accords with Proposal DP.3 and other relevant proposals of this Plan, particularly T.1 and SF.4.*
- 8.18 Proposal SF.2 seeks to ensure that housing near to a proposed A3 use does not suffer undue disturbance, whether by noise from inside the building or disturbance generated outside. Although introduced primarily to control public house development, Proposal SF.2 will be applied to all development within Use Class A3, including hot food takeaways. It will be used to ensure that, as well as

8. TOWN CENTRES, SHOPPING & FACILITIES

disturbance, other sources of harm, such as from litter, fumes or cooking smells, are avoided or properly controlled. There is potential for noise and disturbance to be created away from the application site, by people going to or from the premises, and the Local Planning Authority will take this into account where there is likely to be a direct relationship with a proposed development.

- 8.19 The Local Planning Authority will seek advice, as necessary, from the Environmental Health Department of the City Council, the Police and other relevant specialists. It may be necessary to impose conditions to control certain aspects of the development, but matters such as licensing hours do not fall within planning control.
- 8.20 Where A3 uses are open late at night, and especially if premises are licensed, it is best if they are located in parts of the town and village centres where few people live. In Winchester, the Jewry Street area has developed as an evening leisure area, generally very successfully. There is also likely to be scope for A3 and other leisure development in the Broadway/Friarsgate area, if this is redeveloped. Other areas of the town are more strongly residential in character and many are of great historic importance. Areas such as this, and "quiet" areas, for example around the Cathedral, are not likely to be suitable for further A3 development, unless its character can be tightly controlled.

Residential development in town and village centres

- 8.21 Proposal H.2 provides for the development of suitable sites within the built-up areas of the District for residential purposes. Notwithstanding Winchester town centre's role as an important shopping and commercial centre, there is scope for residential development which can help to bring into use disused or underused premises, maintain a "lived-in" centre and provide a local market for shops and services.
- 8.22 In the smaller historic towns in the District, (including New Alresford, Bishop's Waltham and Wickham) one of the attractive features is the proximity of residential properties to the main shopping area. These towns retain a substantial amount of residential properties above, and sometimes between, shops and

offices, giving a domestic scale. The loss of residential property to other uses within Winchester and other historic town and village centres could have a significant effect and Proposal SF.3 presumes against such changes in order to protect the character of these areas.

Proposal SF.3

In town and village centres, residential development that brings into use upper floors will be encouraged. Changes of use to residential will be permitted in town and village centres, provided it accords with Proposal DP.3 and other relevant proposals of this Plan. The loss of residential uses will not be permitted within the conservation areas of the towns and villages listed in Proposal SF.1.

The Primary Shopping Areas

- 8.23 The Primary Shopping Areas comprise the ground floors of properties in the retail cores of the main town and village centres (as listed in paragraph 8.7). The extent of these areas is shown on Proposals and Inset Maps. The continued economic health of these centres is heavily dependent upon the vitality and viability of their core shopping areas. It is desirable to encourage proposals which would assist in developing and enhancing the role of these centres, although this objective has to be carefully reconciled with other needs, such as conservation, tourism and transportation.
- 8.24 It is important to ensure Winchester and other centres remain attractive as shopping destinations. These are also mostly attractive historic centres, attracting large numbers of visitors. Account has been taken of the changes that are likely to occur in retailing over the Plan period, which may include an increase in home/internet shopping and contraction of the service sector (Use Class A2). Nevertheless, the primarily retail function of the main centres needs to be maintained, for environmental as well as economic reasons. Their attractiveness to visitors means that the District's main town and village centres are generally well placed to take advantage of the trends towards greater integration of shopping and leisure visits.
- 8.25 In order to assist this, Proposal SF.4 seeks to prevent a net reduction in the amount of

8. TOWN CENTRES, SHOPPING & FACILITIES



"The primary retail function of the main centres needs to be maintained."

retail floorspace within the defined Primary Shopping Areas of Winchester, Bishop's Waltham, Denmead, New Alresford, Whiteley and Wickham. The continued predominance of retail uses within town centres is also crucial to the successful maintenance of the historic character of many of them.

Proposal SF.4

Proposals which, either cumulatively or individually, would result in a net loss of retail floorspace within the Primary Shopping Areas (as defined on the Proposals and Inset Maps) will not be permitted. Within the Primary Shopping Areas permission will not be granted for the change of use of the ground floor of a building from Use Class A1 (Retail) to uses falling within Use Class A2 (Financial and Professional Services) or A3 (Food and Drink) except:

- (i) where the Local Planning Authority is satisfied that the proposal will benefit, or at least maintain, the vitality, viability and retail attractiveness of the Primary Shopping Area concerned, or;*
- (ii) where a similar use is already located within the Primary Shopping Area*

and a grant of permission for relocation to alternative premises would not result in a net loss of retail units.

Provided that:

- (a) following the implementation of the proposal, retail (A1) use would remain the predominant use within the immediate retail frontages;*
- (b) the design of any resulting replacement frontage, including fascias, signs and any ancillary features (for example, cash dispensers) satisfies the requirements of Proposals HE.5, HE.9 - HE.12 and other relevant proposals of this Plan.*

- 8.26 In assessing the impact of a proposed change of use, in accordance with Proposal SF.4(i), the Local Planning Authority will take account of factors such as pedestrian flows, customer draw and the opening hours of the proposed use. It will also take into account the generally exceptional need for such a location, given the flexibility to locate elsewhere under the terms of Proposal SF.1. The Local Planning Authority will need to be satisfied that the attractiveness of the centre will at least be maintained, and preferably

8. TOWN CENTRES, SHOPPING & FACILITIES

improved, for example, by the attraction of more potential shoppers and/or by providing services outside normal shopping hours. In assessing the effect of the proposed development in terms of Proposal SF.4(a), the proportion of retail frontages within 25 metres either side of the unit will be taken into account. Proposals which would result in more than 20% of such a frontage being in non-retail use will not be permitted.

- 8.27 Government advice suggests that where services are provided principally to visiting members of the public, that use may contribute to the overall vitality of town centres. There are a number of non-retail uses already established within the defined Primary Shopping Areas. Proposal SF.4 provides scope for their relocation, subject to the objective of retaining retail uses as the predominant ground floor use within that area. In such cases, applicants will be expected to enter into a planning obligation restricting the use of the ground floor of the vacated premises to retail use (Use Class A1), so as not to lead to an overall loss of retail units in the Primary Shopping Area.
- 8.28 There is an interdependence between primary and secondary shopping areas. "Service" uses, such as banks, building societies and restaurants, have a legitimate role within the overall balance of land uses within the town centre. Many major banks and building societies are already an established part of the street scene. However, it is important to control the presence of such uses, in order to ensure that they do not proliferate to such an extent that they damage the town centre's primary retailing role or character.
- 8.29 In order to provide further flexibility in the range of land uses which may be permitted within the town centre, but without compromising other objectives, Proposals SF.1 and SF.4 provide scope for the establishment of A2 and A3 uses in upper floors and basements within the Primary Shopping Area and elsewhere within the town centres. A mix of uses is encouraged outside the Primary Shopping Areas, where they will help maintain or improve the vitality and viability of the centre.

Retail warehousing

- 8.30 The Local Planning Authority intends to concentrate comparison goods shopping in the town and village centres. However, there

may be certain types of retailing that would not be suitable in the town centres, because of the levels of traffic generated and the types of goods sold. Such retail operations are collectively known as "retail warehouses" which deal typically in bulky goods collected by or delivered to the customer and need extensive parking on-site. Examples are furniture, carpets, do-it-yourself and household electrical goods. The Assessment of Retail Floorspace in Winchester 1998 concluded that, although Winchester has a slightly lower than average amount of retail warehousing floorspace, no need for further retail warehousing is identified for the Plan period. Any proposals for retail warehousing development would have to follow the sequential approach and meet the requirements of Proposal SF.1.

Shops in the Countryside

- 8.31 New shops in rural areas should be located within the settlements, in accordance with the 'sequential approach' (see also Proposal SF.5 below). However, it may be desirable to allow farm shops, provided their function is principally to sell goods produced on the holding. They can also contribute to the diversity of economic activity in rural areas (see Proposal C.15).
- 8.32 A farm shop using an existing building as an outlet for goods produced on that establishment is "permitted development" under the Town and Country Planning General Permitted Development Order, 1995. However, planning permission is required for a farm shop requiring a new building or selling goods imported onto the farm.
- 8.33 In assessing proposals for shops and other retail uses in rural areas, the Local Planning Authority will apply the 'sequential approach', taking account of whether the proposal is required to meet a rural need or could more appropriately be located in a town or village centre (see also Proposal SF.1). It will also consider the potential impact on nearby village shops, the volume of traffic likely to be generated, and access and parking arrangements.
- 8.34 Shops ancillary to rural petrol stations can also fulfil a useful role but, as with other rural shops, should provide local facilities and not adversely affect more accessible convenience shopping within settlements, which serve the local community.

8. TOWN CENTRES, SHOPPING & FACILITIES

Facilities and Services

New facilities and services

- 8.35 The development of new or improved facilities and services within the built-up areas of settlements (as defined by Proposals H.2 and H.3) to meet the needs of local communities is encouraged.

Proposal SF.5

The development of new, extended or improved facilities and services within the settlements will be permitted where they satisfy the requirements of Proposals DP.3, SF.1 and other relevant proposals of this Plan.

- 8.36 For the purposes of Proposal SF.5, "facilities and services" include libraries, cultural and arts facilities, community centres, village halls, indoor sports and recreation facilities, churches and places of worship, dedicated premises for community organisations, burial grounds, educational establishments, health care facilities, residential care and/or nursing homes, accommodation for social services, premises for the emergency services, development undertaken for the operational purposes of public utility companies and the Environment Agency, allotment gardens, pubs and shops primarily serving or intended to serve a local function. This list is not exhaustive and Proposal SF.5 encourages a range of facilities and services that serve a local community. Facilities that are aimed at providing for a wider need or market should be located in the main town and village centres, as required by Proposal SF.1.
- 8.37 Development of many of the facilities and services listed above will involve the construction of buildings, which are likely to be of a high architectural profile, by virtue of their function and location. A high standard of design (including landscaping) is sought for all new development, but this is especially true of public buildings.
- 8.38 In exceptional cases, development to provide essential local facilities and services may need to be accommodated outside the settlements, in the countryside. This may be, for instance, where such a facility or service cannot be provided in a built-up area. Proposal C.5 deals with these situations, but applies to a narrower range of facilities and services than would be appropriate in the settlements.



"The importance to local communities of a range of facilities and services is recognised".

Existing facilities and services

- 8.39 The importance to local communities of a range of facilities and services, including shops, is recognised. Proposal SF.5 favours proposals for new or improved village shops and other facilities and services. Proposal SF.6 seeks to resist the loss of shops and other facilities and services to other uses.

Proposal SF.6

The Local Planning Authority will not permit proposals which would result in the loss to other uses of premises or sites currently or last used for the provision of facilities or services. Such proposals may exceptionally be permitted where the Local Planning Authority is satisfied that it is no longer practical or desirable to re-use the site or premises for its existing or another use likely to benefit the local community.

- 8.40 Proposal SF.6 relates to facilities and services (as listed in paragraph 8.36) both in the countryside and the settlements, including recreational facilities (see also Proposal RT.2).
- 8.41 Apart from the provision of services by the utility companies, improvements in the provision of facilities and services are likely to be constrained by the availability of public finance and planned investment programmes. It is, therefore, important that



8. TOWN CENTRES, SHOPPING & FACILITIES

full use is made of existing provision and programmed improvements before additional facilities are considered.

- 8.42 It is important that existing facilities and services benefiting local communities are not unnecessarily lost. Accordingly, there will be a presumption against the re-use or redevelopment of sites or premises for other purposes. However, the policies of this Plan can only relate to land use matters. The Local Planning Authority is not a provider of facilities and services, and planning powers cannot ensure that a particular facility (for example a school or shop) continues to operate, no matter how desirable that may be in itself.
- 8.43 The Local Planning Authority will seek to retain existing local facilities or services that have an important function for local communities. Where a property or site currently provides a facility or service, the Local Planning Authority will seek its retention. This applies even if a property or site is currently unused, but the last use was as a facility or service. Applicants seeking to promote an exception to Proposal SF.6 will need to demonstrate that the site or premises concerned are no longer viable and/or suitable for such use. This may involve providing details of accounts, attempts to sell the business/property for a use which would be permitted within the terms of Proposal SF.5, and an investigation of the potential to use the building/site for other facility and service uses.