

Joint Local Plan Review for West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland

RETAIL BACKGROUND PAPER
ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION VERSION

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1. Introduction

PURPOSE OF BACKGROUND PAPER

- 1.1 This document is one of a number of background papers produced to support the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan Review.

LOCAL PLAN AND THE REVIEW

- 1.2 In October 2015, West Dorset District Council and Weymouth & Portland Borough Council adopted their Joint Local Plan¹. The Local Plan sets out a long term planning strategy for the area and includes detailed policies and site proposals for housing, employment, leisure and infrastructure. The adopted Local Plan is the main basis for making decisions on planning applications.
- 1.3 In his report on the examination of the Joint Local Plan², the Inspector indicated that he considered it to be "imperative that an early review is undertaken". The objective of the review is to identify additional housing land capable of meeting housing need to 2036, identify a long-term strategy for development in the Dorchester area by 2021; and reappraise housing provision in Sherborne.
- 1.4 If a review is absent, or the Local Plan becomes silent or out of date because of a lack of progress, the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies and the councils would have less control in determining where development goes. Failure to undertake a review or even start it promptly would be likely to increase the risk of developers submitting planning applications at an early stage.
- 1.5 At the same time as the Review is underway there are opportunities to clarify the interpretation of existing policies.
- 1.6 This background paper provides a general overview of issues relevant to Retail and Town Centres, discussing the definition of local centres and their extent in ECON4.
- 1.7 It is a working document which will be updated as evidence is acquired and the consultation process proceeds.

¹ <https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/jointlocalplan/west/weymouth>

² <https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/article/421782/West-Dorset-Weymouth--Portland-Adopted-Local-Plan-Inspectors-Report>

2. National Policy and Guidance

- 2.1 NPPF (CD/OKP₁), paragraph 23 states that "*Planning policies should be positive, promote competitive town centre environments and set out policies for the management and growth of centres over the plan period.*" In drawing up their Local Plans, local planning authorities should "*define a network and hierarchy of centres that is resilient to anticipated future economic changes;*"
- 2.2 The NPPF, Glossary of terms clarifies that "References to town centres or centres apply to city centres, town centres, district centres and local centres but exclude small parades of shops of purely neighbourhood significance." Although the Glossary of terms list the hierarchy of town and local centres a definition is not provided with the intention that this is locally defined.
- 2.3 Local planning authorities should plan positively, to support town centres to generate local employment, promote beneficial competition within and between town centres, and create attractive, diverse places where people want to live, visit and work.
- 2.4 Local planning authorities should assess and plan to meet the needs of main town centre uses in full, in broadly the same way as for their housing and economic needs, adopting a 'town centre first' approach and taking account of specific town centre policy. In doing so, local planning authorities need to be mindful of the different rates of development in town centres compared with out of centre.
- 2.5 Further information:
<http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/ensuring-the-vitality-of-town-centres/ensuring-the-vitality-of-town-centres-guidance/>

SEQUENTIAL TEST AND THE IMPACT TEST

- 2.6 Main town centre uses include retail development; leisure & entertainment facilities, the more intensive sport and recreation uses (such as a cinemas); offices; and arts, culture and tourism developments.
- 2.7 The NPPF sets out two tests that should be applied when considering town centre uses, the sequential test and the impact test.
- The sequential test requires applications for main town centre uses to be located in town centres as first preference, then in edge of centre locations and only if suitable sites are not available should out of centre sites then be considered. The sequential approach does not apply to applications for small scale rural development, community facilities or employment trade related uses on employment sites.
 - The impact test determines whether there would be any likely significant adverse impacts of locating main town centre development outside existing

town centres. In the local plan, an impact test is required for all proposals above a 1000m² floorspace threshold.

RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE

JOINT TOWN CENTRE RETAIL AND LEISURE STUDY - WEYMOUTH AND DORCHESTER

2.8 The current 'health' of the town centres in West Dorset and Weymouth & Portland, their capacity for future retail development, and potential sites for future development, were assessed through a Joint Town Centre Retail and Leisure Study (CD/ECON₃) undertaken by consultants CB Richard Ellis (CBRE). The final report was published in December 2008, in two parts: Weymouth and Dorchester; and a Supplementary Assessment of other West Dorset Market Towns. In 2010 an addendum (CD/ECON₄) was published to the town centre retail study, updating figures for Dorchester and Weymouth having regard for the changes in population, expenditure and the economic climate.

PPS₄: PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH

2.9 A review the former definition of town and local centres outlined in PPS₄: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth (2009) is considered a helpful starting point in defining the definition of centres.

Figure 2.1: PPS₄ Annex B Definitions

CATEGORY	DEFINITION
City Centres	City centres are the highest level of centre identified in development plans. In terms of hierarchies, they will often be a regional centre and will serve a wide catchment. The centre may be very large, embracing a wide range of activities and may be distinguished by areas which may perform different main functions.
Town centres	Town centres will usually be the second level of centres after city centres and, in many cases, they will be the principal centre or centres in a local authority's area. In rural areas they are likely to be market towns and other centres of similar size and role which function as important service centres, providing a range of facilities and services for extensive rural catchment areas.
District Centres	District centres will usually comprise groups of shops often containing at least one supermarket or superstore, and a range of non-retail services, such as banks, building societies and restaurants, as well as local public facilities such as a library.
Local Centres	Local centres include a range of small shops of a local nature, serving a small catchment. Typically, local centres might include, amongst other shops, a small supermarket, a newsagent, a sub-post office and a

CATEGORY	DEFINITION
	pharmacy. Other facilities could include a hot-food takeaway and launderette. In rural areas, large villages may perform the role of a local centre.
Small parades of shops	Small parades of shops of purely neighbourhood significance are not regarded as centres for the purposes of this policy statement.

PARADES OF SHOPS

2.10 The DCLG document **Parades to be Proud of: Strategies to support local shops (June 2012)** provides a definition of a parade of shops. Local shops are found in all sorts of different locations, and can vary quite a lot. The broad definition is as follows.

2.11 Parades of shops:

- are largely defined by how people use them and their relation to other centres: this means that the number of shops in a parade can vary from 5 up to as many as 70 shops;
- have a mainly local customer base, with strong local links and local visibility, rather than being somewhere people would travel significant distance to shop at;
- have a high number of independent small or micro-businesses with some multiples (such as Tesco Metro, Sainsbury's Local, Boots) and symbol affiliates (including Spar, Londis, Budgens etc.); and
- have a mixture of retail based shops (convenience stores, newsagents, greengrocers, bakers etc.) and some local service businesses (hairdressers, café etc.).

2.12 This definition covers a wide range of areas, from urban to rural and small to reasonably large parades. Research **Parades of Shops - Towards an understanding of performance & prospects (June 2012)** has identified four different types of neighbourhood parades.

Figure 2.2: Types of Neighbourhood Parades

TYPES OF NEIGHBOURHOOD PARADES	
Local neighbourhood parade	Typically located in the heart of a residential community, urban and rural, often with around 5-10 units, providing walk-in convenience shopping and limited local services.
Local neighbourhood hub	Larger in scale than the neighbourhood parade, with a wider range of retail and service outlets but with other public services clustered in the vicinity, typically including health, education and leisure services with a catchment beyond the immediate neighbourhood.
Radial parade	Cluster of small retail and service outlets in linear form along radial routes into urban centres, with high visibility to passing traffic. Typically serving as a secondary shopping area to a main town centre and attracting trade from a residential hinterland as well as passing trade.
Radial destination	As per Radial Parade but with a wider catchment based on distinctive market factors or visitor appeal creating a recognised destination (but not a town centre) for specialised goods/services or shopping experience.

2.13 Further information:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategies-to-support-local-shops>
and;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parades-of-shops-research>

3. Current Approach

- 3.1 National policy states that in drawing up their Local Plans, local planning authorities should "*define a network and hierarchy of centres that is resilient to anticipated future economic changes*".
- 3.2 The glossary to the NPPF clarifies that "*References to town centres or centres apply to city centres, town centres, district centres and local centres but exclude small parades of shops of purely neighbourhood significance.*" Although the Glossary of terms list the hierarchy of town and local centres a definition is not provided with the intention that this is locally defined.
- 3.3 Weymouth, Dorchester, Bridport, Sherborne and Lyme Regis town centres are defined through Policy ECON4. These centres are defined on the local plan policies map. The Local Plan also recognises that more local centres exist in the smaller towns and neighbourhood areas, relative to the size of the area they serve. The Local Plan list examples such as Easton, Fortuneswell and Beaminster that have an important role in meeting local need.

4. Reason for Change

- 4.1 The glossary to the NPPF states that "*Town centres are areas identified on the proposals map*" suggesting that centres that are not identified on the proposals map can not therefore be considered as "centres".
- 4.2 The role, function and hierarchy of the town and local centres have not however been comprehensively defined, and local centres are not shown on the policies map. Applications that may affect local centres are considered on a case by case basis.
- 4.3 To provide a standard basis on which to determine planning applications for retail uses, it is proposed that the Local Plan Review outlines a definition of centres within a hierarchy which can be applied locally before defining the extent of the centres.

5. Proposed Approach

- 5.1 Figure 5.1 includes a definition of town and local centre and suggests which centres fit within each category. The intention will be to apply the final definitions across the plan area to identify which centres fit within each category and therefore enable the extents of the centres to be defined on the local plan policies map.

Figure 5.1: Hierarchy of the town and local centres

CATEGORY	DEFINITION	LOCAL HIERARCHY
City Centres	City centres are the highest level of centre identified in development plans. In terms of hierarchies, they will often be a regional centre and will serve a wide catchment.	There are no city centres in the plan area.
Town centres	Town centres are the principle centres within an area. In rural areas they can often be found within market or coastal towns. They function as important service centres, providing a range of facilities and services for extensive rural catchment areas.	Town centres have been defined at Weymouth, Dorchester, Bridport, Sherborne and Lyme Regis.
District Centres	District centres will usually comprise groups of shops often containing at least one supermarket or superstore, and a range of non-retail services, such as banks and restaurants, as well as local public facilities such as a library.	A District Centre is under construction at Queen Mothers Square, Poundbury.
Local Centres	Local centres include a range of small shops of a local nature, serving a small catchment. Typically, local centres might include, amongst other shops, a small supermarket, a newsagent, and a pharmacy. Other facilities could include a hot-food takeaway, hairdressers and launderette. In rural areas, large villages may perform the role of a local centre.	Larger local centres in the plan area include: Weymouth & Portland Easton Square Portland Road, Wyke Regis Littlemoor Centre Fortuneswell Abbotsbury Road, Westham Lodmoor Hill Southill Centre West Dorset Beaminster

CATEGORY	DEFINITION	LOCAL HIERARCHY
		Chickerell West Bay
Small parades of shops	<p>Small parades of shops are largely defined by how people use them and their relation to other centres.</p> <p>They have a mainly local customer base, with strong local links and local visibility, have a high number of independent small or micro-businesses with some multiples and symbol affiliates; and have a mixture of retail based shops (convenience stores, newsagents, greengrocers etc.) and some local service businesses (hairdressers, café etc.)</p>	<p>Small parades of shops of purely neighbourhood significance are not regarded as centres.</p> <p>There is no intention to identify “small parades of shops” within the local plan.</p>

- 5.2 The councils are commissioning a retail study to examine the need for additional retail floorspace and the potential to accommodate future retail growth in and around the town centres. Town centre boundaries already identified on the local plan policies map would be reviewed as a result of the retail study with a view to meeting the need for town centre uses in the most appropriate location.
- 5.3 In order to draw-out the community’s views on this subject, the issues and options document asked:

21-i. Are there any other factors in defining a retail hierarchy that the councils should consider?

21-ii. Using the draft definition of local and town centres, do you agree with the centres named under each category?