

APPENDIX 5 National Planning Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019)

Paragraph 8 of the NPPF sets out the three objectives that contribute towards sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) which are to be delivered through local plans. Ensuring the vitality of town centres and supporting the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities contributes to the overall achievement of sustainable development.

Paragraph 85 sets out that policies should:

- a) define a network and hierarchy of town centres and promote their long-term vitality and viability – by allowing them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allows a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and reflects their distinctive characters;
- b) define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas, and make clear the range of uses permitted in such locations, as part of a positive strategy for the future of each centre;
- c) retain and enhance existing markets and, where appropriate, re-introduce or create new ones;
- d) allocate a range of suitable sites in town centres to meet the scale and type of development likely to be needed, looking at least ten years ahead. Meeting anticipated needs for retail, leisure, office and other main town centre uses over this period should not be compromised by limited site availability, so town centre boundaries should be kept under review where necessary;
- e) where suitable and viable town centre sites are not available for main town centre uses, allocate appropriate edge of centre sites that are well connected to the town centre. If sufficient edge of centre sites cannot be identified, policies should explain how identified needs can be met in other accessible locations that are well connected to the town centre; and
- f) recognise that residential development often plays an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and encourage residential development on appropriate sites.

The Sequential Test

Paragraph 86 requires local planning authorities to apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre or in accordance with an up-to-date plan. To do this, local planning authorities should require applications for main town centre uses to firstly be located in town centres and then in edge of centre locations. Only if suitable sites are not available (or expected to become available within a reasonable period) should out of centre sites be considered. When considering edge of centre and out-of-centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible locations which are well connected to the town centre. Where an application fails to satisfy the sequential test, it should be refused.

The Impact Assessment

When assessing applications for retail and leisure development outside of town centres, which are not in accordance with an up-to-date plan, local planning authorities should require an impact assessment if the development is over a locally set floorspace threshold (or 2,500m²

of gross floorspace, if there is no locally set threshold) (paragraph 89). The impact assessment should consider:

- a) the impact of the proposal on the existing, committed and planned public and private investment in a centre or centres in the catchment area of the proposal; and
- b) the impact of the proposal on town centre vitality and viability, including local consumer choice and trade in the town centre and the wider retail catchment (as applicable to the scale and nature of the scheme).

Where an application is likely to have significant adverse impact on one or more of the considerations set out above, it should be refused.

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

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 (Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 2b-001-20140306).

Paragraph 90: Where an application fails to satisfy the sequential test or is likely to have a significant adverse impact on one or more of the considerations in paragraph 89, it should be refused.