

Chichester District Council

Local Plan Review

Background Paper

Retail



1. Introduction

- 1.1 This paper provides the context for the evidence and the approach to town centres and retail provision in the Chichester Local Plan Review, with a particular focus on Chichester city. It sets out the justification for the changes to the primary and secondary shopping frontages, and guidance for retail monitoring to support Policies S9 Retail Hierarchy and Sequential Approach, S10 Local Centres, Local and Village Parades, and DM11 Town Centre Development in the Chichester Local Plan Review.
- 1.2 The Chichester Vision¹ sets the aspiration for Chichester city to offer the best retail experience in the south, through improving choice, delivering value and quality, and creating an enjoyable experience, in order to continue to attract shoppers. The retail policies in the Local Plan Review aim to reflect this aspiration and help to deliver this Vision.

2. National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.1 National planning policy for retail and town centres is set out in Chapter 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF sets out a list of requirements that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) must address in their Local Plans in order to support the role of town centres, to promote a diverse retail offer, and be flexible to changes.
- 2.2 Paragraph 85 of the NPPF requires the Local Plan to:
- 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;
 - 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; and
 - f) recognise that residential development often plays an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and encourage residential development on appropriate sites.

¹ <https://www.chichester.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=29358&p=0>

2.3 The NPPF also sets the requirement for LPAs to 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 (NPPF para 86).

2.4 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) offers advice on how to implement the policies in the NPPF.

3. Chichester Retail and Main Town Centre Uses Study 2018

3.1 The Council commissioned Lichfields to prepare a Retail and Main Town Centre Uses Study (2018) to form part of the evidence base for the Local Plan Review and to inform the preparation of planning policy on retail and town centre matters, together with a wider strategy for the future of the centres within the Plan Area. The Study was prepared in accordance with the NPPF and PPG, and has informed this background paper.

4. Retail Need

4.1 The NPPF states that LPAs should assess the quantitative and qualitative need for floorspace over the plan period.

4.2 The Retail Study identifies the need to provide 9,500 sq.m gross comparison retail floorspace for the period up to 2026. The Retail Study acknowledges that long term floorspace capacity forecasts are susceptible to unforeseen circumstances, and that growth forecasts for expenditure and turnover are particularly uncertain and should be monitored, including the continued growth of home/internet shopping. For this reason, the Council is not proposing to allocate sites to meet this need in the Local Plan Review. The need is expected to be met through provision of retail floorspace at Southern Gateway and other opportunity sites, taking account of the sequential test.

5. Town Centre Boundary and Primary Shopping Area

5.1 The designation of a town centre boundary and the primary shopping area is important when applying the sequential approach, to direct retail and town centre uses to sustainable locations and determine whether a retail impact assessment is required.

5.2 As the main shopping destination in the Plan area, and in line with the NPPF and the Retail Study, the Council has proposed a town centre boundary, and the primary shopping area for Chichester city. The primary shopping area is located within the defined town centre. The first preference for retail uses is within the primary shopping area, within the defined shopping frontages. The first preference for other main town centre uses is within the wider defined town centre.

5.3 The defined town centre is shown in Appendix 1, and is predominantly defined by the city ring road, but also includes the Chichester Festival Theatre and Minerva Theatre, the Westgate leisure centre, Chichester railway station,

Waitrose food store, and the areas of secondary shopping frontage along The Hornet that lie outside the ring road.

- 5.4 The primary shopping area contains the defined primary and secondary retail frontages. The proposed primary shopping area and the retail frontages are shown in Appendix 1.
- 5.5 Further recommendations information regarding the appropriate mix of uses are set out in the Retail Study.

6. Primary and Secondary Retail Frontages

- 6.1 The revised NPPF removes the requirement for LPAs to define primary and secondary shopping frontages, unless there is justification to do so. The Retail Study sets out that there is no evidence to suggest that a less restrictive approach is necessary for Chichester, as the existing primary and secondary retail frontages have been successful in promoting and retaining a diverse mix of retail offering. The Study sets out that a more laissez faire approach, whereby the market determines the uses in the primary shopping area, could result in the deterioration in the amount of A1 retail uses in the shopping frontages. The Study recommends that a balanced approach should continue to be applied albeit carefully monitored.
- 6.2 The Council undertakes monitoring of the primary and secondary retail frontages quarterly. As of September 2018, the percentage of non-A1 uses in the **primary retail frontage** is 25.59%, and the percentage of non-A1 uses in the **secondary retail frontage** is 54.01%.
- 6.3 The percentage of non-A1 uses in the primary retail frontage is currently in breach of the existing 25% threshold (as specified in Policy 27 of the adopted Chichester Local Plan: Key Policies 2014 – 2029), meaning that further changes of use from retail to non-retail in the primary retail frontage would be contrary to policy. A ban on further changes of use would not promote a range of attractions to the town centre and could stifle investment, which may be potentially damaging to the vitality and viability of the centre. It is therefore appropriate to consider how the frontages could be amended to allow for flexibility.
- 6.4 The Retail Study has provided a number of recommendations for amending the frontages. The Council will continue to retain the primary and secondary retail frontages, with the following amendments:
- 1-4 Eastgate Square has been redefined as secondary frontage because it predominantly comprises service uses;
 - The area in The Square, off St Pancras, has been included as secondary retail frontage to link Eastgate Square with the secondary frontage along St Pancras;

- The secondary retail frontage has been extended at the top of North Street to include the corner of North Street and Oaklands Way, and the corner of North Street and Northgate (3 – 5 Northgate);
- The secondary retail frontage along Market Road has been extended to include the currency exchange and the Coral betting unit;
- Crane Street has been redefined as secondary retail frontage given the historic vacancy rates;
- 13 – 41 and 44 – 63 South Street have been redefined as secondary retail frontage, in order to allow more flexibility for non-A1 uses along South Street, to create a ‘hub’ area for food and beverage uses in this area.

6.5 These amendments have resulted in a contraction of the primary retail frontage area to create and maintain a core retail area and allowing for the area to be more tightly controlled in terms of maintaining a high level of Class A1 uses.

6.6 The extent of the secondary retail frontage area has been expanded to allow greater flexibility to encourage non-Class A1 uses outside of the primary retail frontage area. This ambition accords with Theme 3 of the Chichester Vision which seeks to promote Chichester city as a leading visitor destination, through its retail offering. It is important that the Council seeks to promote and improve retail choice and create an enjoyable experience which will persuade visitors towards the city centre.

7. Retail Monitoring Update

7.1 The retail monitoring spreadsheet has been updated to reflect the amendments to the primary and secondary retail frontages, including the changes of some primary retail frontage to secondary frontage. Measurements for individual shop widths have also been checked for consistency.

7.2 Beauticians, nail bars and brow bars are considered to be sui generis. The spreadsheet has been updated to reflect this.

7.3 This has resulted in changes to the percentage of units in non-A1 uses within both primary and secondary frontages:

- As of December 2018, the percentage of non-A1 uses in the **primary retail** frontage is 22.56%.
- As of December 2018, the percentage of non-A1 uses in the **secondary retail** frontage is: 50.96%.

7.4 It should be noted that seasonal or ‘pop-up’ shops are more prevalent around November/December time, and usually occupy vacant units, in order to serve

Christmas shoppers. This will increase the variation in the percentage of A1 uses in the frontages.

7.5 The updated Retail Monitoring spreadsheet is in Appendix 2.

8. Local Centres

8.1 In accordance with NPPF paragraph 85, and the recommendations in the Retail Study, the Council has sought to define a retail hierarchy across the Plan area, with a number of local centres, local parades and village parades, in Policy S9: Retail Hierarchy and Sequential Approach, with further policy principles established in Policy S10: Local Centres, Local and Village Parades. Development within each retail centre should be of a scale that is proportionate with the settlement role and function, and should not unbalance the town centre hierarchy.

8.2 The following local centres are defined:

- Selsey; and
- East Wittering

8.3 The following village centres are to be defined in neighbourhood plans or a subsequent Development Plan Document:

- Bosham;
- Bracklesham;
- Southbourne;
- Tangmere; and
- Westbourne.

9. Sequential Approach

9.1 The sequential approach set out in NPPF paragraph 86 indicates that main town centre uses should be accommodated in town centres, then edge of centre locations, and only if suitable sites are not available should out of centre sites be considered.

9.2 The Council requires impact assessments to be provided for applications for retail, leisure and office development outside of town centres, which are not in accordance with an up-to-date development plan and are over a proportionate, locally set threshold.

9.3 Based on information and evidence set out in the Retail Study, the Council requires impact assessments to be provided for the following thresholds, which have been locally-derived:

- Chichester city centre: over 2,500 sq.m gross floorspace;
- Local centres: over 500 sq.m gross floorspace; and

- Village centres: over 250 sq.m gross floorspace.