

**REPORT ON THE PROPOSED
HIERARCHY OF RETAIL CENTRES
IN BASSETLAW**

prepared for

Bassetlaw District Council

April 2010

1.0 Hierarchy of Centres

Background

- 1.1 PPS4 Policy EC3.1 advises Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) should as part of their economic vision for their area set out a strategy for the management and growth of centres over the plan period. As part of their strategy LPAs should (EC3.1b) define a network and hierarchy of centres to meet the needs of their catchments. Identified deficiencies in the network of centres should be addressed by promoting centres to function at a higher level in the hierarchy or designating new centres where necessary, giving priority to deprived areas which are experiencing significant levels of 'multiple deprivation'.
- 1.2 At the local level PPS4 (EC3.1c) advises LPAs should define the extent of the centre and the primary shopping area and set policies that make clear which uses will be permitted in such locations. PPS4 (EC3.1d) also advises LPAs to consider setting floorspace thresholds for the scale of edge-of-centre and out-of-centre development which should be subject to an impact assessment under (EC16.1) and specify the geographic areas these thresholds will apply to. The purpose of these thresholds as explained in PPS4 (EC5.4a) is to ensure that any proposed edge or out of centre developments would not have an unacceptable impact on any centres within their catchment.
- 1.3 The PPS4 Practice Guide (7.4) advises important considerations in setting such thresholds are likely to include the scale of known proposals relative to town centres; the existing vitality and viability of town centres; the cumulative effects of recent developments; the likely effects on a town centre strategy and the impact on any other planned investment.
- 1.4 Within the Regional Network of Centres Worksop is designated as sub-regional centre. In the draft Bassetlaw Core Strategy Worksop is identified as a major town centre and Retford a town centre. No district centres are proposed in the draft Bassetlaw Core Strategy but a number of local centres are.
- 1.5 PPS4 (Annex B) advises:

“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 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 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 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 of purely neighbourhood significance are not regarded as centres for the purposes of this policy statement.”

- 1.6 It can be seen from these definitions in PPS4 that Worksop and Retford fulfil the role of town centres as designated in the emerging LDF Core Strategy. They are the principal centres in Bassetlaw and both are market towns. They are important service centres, providing a range of facilities and services for fairly extensive rural catchment areas. Worksop's designation. Whilst Retford is designated as a town centre it is clearly subsidiary to the subregional centre of Worksop in the regional / local retail hierarchy in terms of retailer representation and diversity for example so lower thresholds will apply.
- 1.7 There are no district centres in Bassetlaw based upon the PPS4 definition of “*groups of shops often containing at least one supermarket or superstore.*” Whilst Harworth and Celtic Point both contain small supermarkets they are more akin to the PPS4 local centre definition than the district centre e.g. Celtic Point doesn't even contain a post office and the Netto discount supermarket is a small supermarket as referred to in the PPS4 (Annex B) definition.
- 1.8 Although the town centres and large out-of-centre destinations attract the majority of retail spending in the Borough, the lower-order centres and local shops and services remain important in providing for residents' everyday needs close to their homes. Their easy accessibility by non-car modes can also have wider benefits including fostering healthier lifestyles by encouraging walking and cycling, supporting local businesses, and helping reduce traffic congestion and the use of fossil fuels.

- 1.9 Obviously there will be historic reasons for shops above the suggested threshold limits that are already to be found in town and local centres and this is what gives the centres their individual character and appeal. The limits are aimed at future development and should not be exceeded without good reason (fully explained in an impact assessment), for example local businesses expanding to larger premises¹, to ensure the retail hierarchy and distribution of current shops is maintained and protected.

Development Thresholds

Worksop Town Centre

- 1.10 The 2009 Bassetlaw Retail Study (BRS) identified (para 12.6) a quantitative need for a medium sized supermarket with a net convenience goods sales area of around 1,700sq m by 2016. By 2021 the study recommended there may be a need for 2,100 sq m (net) of supermarket floorspace. (Alternatively the study concluded this capacity might be taken up by smaller retail developments.)
- 1.11 Known proposals in Worksop include the Tesco relocation / expansion and retail warehouse proposals at Sandy Lane and High Ground. There is also the appealed Vesuvius superstore proposal. Recent developments include the Priory Centre extension, the Celtic Point development and also the extension to the out-of-centre Sainsburys superstore. The cumulative impact of the commitments and proposals in addition to these recent developments is likely to be unacceptable due to the limited capacity in the short term. Whilst the only planned town centre development is the proposed cinema development and this is at a fairly embryonic stage, the cumulative impact is likely to deter investment in other ways as set out in the PPS4 Practice Guide (7.19).
- 1.12 The BRS health check for Worksop concluded that overall the centre had a mixed performance on the PPS6 indicators of vitality and viability. Probably the main weakness was the lack of diversity and the fairly limited shopping offer with no anchor supermarket or department store. Clearly the development of an out-of-centre

¹ Often specialist retail businesses that can draw trade from a wide area locate in smaller centres to take advantage of lower overheads, better frontages and perhaps easier parking. The expansion of such businesses might be an exception to the recommended thresholds particularly where they contribute to the local economy and employment. However, a point may be reached when expansion within the smaller centre is no longer appropriate and relocation to business premises in or on the edge of a larger centre should be encouraged.

supermarket or department store is not going to address this weakness and even an edge-of-centre development could have an unacceptable impact. The strategy recommended in the BRS is to identify sites in and around the town centre to direct development towards to address identified weaknesses such as the deficiency in retail provision. The thresholds in Worksop therefore have to be considerably lower than the 2,500 sq m (gross) set out in PPS4 EC14.4.

- 1.13 Based on the BRS recommendations it is recommended that the threshold for edge and out-of-centre development with a catchment area that includes Worksop town centre should be 929 sq m (gross)². This means that small supermarkets below this threshold that are unlikely to draw significantly upon the identified capacity or have a significant adverse impact upon the centre would not have to be supported by a full PPS4 (EC16.1) impact assessment³. However, proposals greater than this which would include most discount supermarket formats and big 4 operators (other than their smallest town centre formats) would have to satisfy this PPS4 impact test.
- 1.14 In terms of comparison goods, the BRS (para 12.12) identified a quantitative need for c. 3,500 sq m (net) of additional town centre comparison goods floorspace by 2016 and 6,500 sq m (net) by 2021 based on a 2% increase in market share. PPS4 EC14.3 advises a sequential assessment (under EC15) is required for planning applications for extensions to retail or leisure uses only where the gross floor space of the proposed extension exceeds 200 square metres. Given the quantitative need in Worksop applying this threshold to the impact assessment might be viewed as too cautious, however, as indicated earlier there is still a need for a lower threshold to direct new development to the centre to address identified weaknesses and current deficiencies. It is therefore recommended that for comparison goods proposals within the catchment of the town centre a threshold of 460 sq m (gross)⁴ is applied. For bulky goods which the PPS4 Practice Guide (6.31) recognises are harder to retail from primary frontages the threshold might be doubled to 929 sq m (gross) which is the size of a standard single size retail warehouse unit.

² 10,000 sq ft

³ Proposals would still have to satisfy other PPS4 policy tests such as EC10 and EC15 (sequential assessment).

⁴ 5,000 sq ft

Retford Town Centre

- 1.15 Retford is well served by existing convenience shopping facilities and the BRS concluded that overall the centre performs well on most of the PPS6 indicators of vitality and viability and the main weakness is the lack of diversity which might be expected for a small town centre. The most notable recent development in Retford has been the new development on Spa Lane in a parade adjoining the new bus station and the new Aldi at the southern end of Carolgate. There are no major commitments or known proposals in addition to this.
- 1.16 The BRS (8.19) identified very limited capacity for 1,500 sq m of supermarket floorspace by 2021. It is therefore recommended that for convenience goods proposals within the catchment of the town centre a threshold of 750 sq m (gross)⁵ is applied that would mean all but the smallest of supermarkets would have to be supported by an impact assessment.
- 1.17 The BRS identified (para 10.29) a quantitative need for c. 900 sq m (net) of additional town centre comparison goods floorspace in 2016 and 1,900 sq m by 2021. It is therefore recommended that for comparison goods proposals within the catchment of Retford town centre a threshold of 400 sq m (gross) is applied. For bulky goods for which there is a qualitative need in Reford due to the current limited offer the threshold might be increased to 929 sq m (gross).

Large Local Centres

- 1.18 The BRS focussed on Worksop and Retford and did not undertake health checks in the local centres. The local centres that have been identified vary in size but none are sufficiently large enough to warrant a district centre designation with reference to the PPS4 (Annex B) definition. The larger local centres in Bassetlaw include Celtic Point and Prospect Precinct in the north of Worksop. Harworth / Bircotes and Langold to the north of Worksop are also large local centres.
- 1.19 The role of these larger local centres in providing food shopping and a range of other services to meet people's day-to-day needs in accessible locations should be safeguarded and enhanced. Development should be consistent with a centre's scale, function, environmental capacity and ability to be served by transport modes other

⁵ Circa 8,000 sq ft

than the car. Any proposed new shops within these centres should therefore be limited to maximum individual sizes of approximately 400 sq m (gross) floorspace for convenience shops⁶ and 100 sq m (gross)⁷ for comparison shops. Stores below these thresholds in these centres should not have an unacceptable impact on existing retailers in the centres

Small Local Centres

1.20 The smaller local centres in Bassetlaw include the suburban centres of Manton in the south west of Worksop and Welbeck Road in the west of Retford. There are also the smaller local village centres of Carlton, Misterton and Tuxford as well as the small suburban centre at Long Lane in Carlton. These smaller centres have fewer / smaller shops than the larger local centres and serve smaller catchments / populations. However, they provide important shopping facilities and services that meet the day-to-day needs of nearby residents, particularly for food shopping, without the need to use a car. Proposed new shops in such circumstances will be limited to a maximum 100 sq m (gross) for both broad goods categories.

Recommended Thresholds above which Impact Assessments will be Required

Centre	PPS4 Hierarchy	----- Threshold (sq m) -----		
		Convenience	Non-bulky comparison	Bulky comparison ⁸
Worksop	(Large) Town Centre	929	460	929
Retford	Town Centre	750	400	929
Large local centre ⁹	Local Centre	400	100	100
Small local centre ¹⁰	Local Centre	100	100	100

⁶ For the purposes of the Sunday Trading Laws convenience stores are differentiated from small supermarkets by a threshold of 280 sq m (net). Above this stores have restricted Sunday trading hours. A store of 280 sq m (net) sales area would equate approximately to a 400 sq m (gross) floorplate assuming a typical 70/30 split between sales and non-sales area.

⁷ Units of 100 sq m (gross) (1,075 sq ft) are typically found in modern parades in local centres. Above this threshold comparison operators are likely to draw upon a wider catchment than that served by the local centre and are more appropriately located in the town centres.

⁸ As defined in PPS4 Practice Guide (6.31)

⁹ Large local centres – Celtic Point, Prospect Precinct, Harworth / Bircotes and Langolds

Petrol Filling Station Shops

- 1.21 Convenience store developments in petrol filling stations (PFSs) can be a threat to local centres and parades as they are often operated by the large supermarket operators, open for 24 hours and usually have the benefit of ATMs. PFSs are often promoted on the assumption that they provide for ancillary purchases for motorists but research indicates that petrol sales are almost incidental and they actually provide top-up shopping for residents in the immediate area thereby undermining the retail hierarchy and in particular the smaller centres that rely upon this trade. Unless PFSs are actually located within a designated shopping centre boundary they should therefore be resisted as out-of-centre developments. Even if they are located within centre boundaries there are issues of appropriateness of scale as often PFS shops can be quite extensive and the thresholds set out in this report should be applied to them.

Conclusions

- 1.22 This report has identified a network of centres and a retail hierarchy for Bassetlaw with the subregional centre of Worksop as a large town centre at the top of the hierarchy followed by the smaller town centre of Retford and below that a network of large and small local centres. Using criteria set out in PPS4 and the PPS4 Practice Guide a series of thresholds are recommended for the broad goods categories of convenience and comparison with reference to capacity identified in the BRS, commitments and known proposals. Development proposals above these thresholds will, in addition to sequential assessments and other policy tests in PPS4 (e.g. EC10), have to demonstrate through an impact assessment that impacts on any centres within their catchment are within acceptable levels. PPS4 (EC14.4) recommends the level of detail within these impact assessments should be proportionate to the scale of the development in relation to the recommended thresholds.

¹⁰ Small local centres – Manton, Welbeck Road, Carlton, Misterton, Tuxford and Long Lane (Carlton)