

16. Town Centres and Retail

The nature of town centres, their function and the role they play in the community is changing. As changes to town centre uses as defined in national policy, use classes and the ongoing response to Covid-19 progresses, this policy (and the complementary Town Centres Area of Focus Policy AF6) will be monitored and reviewed if necessary.

TC1 – Development within designated centres

TC1.1 The following network of centres within Trafford as identified on the policies map will be protected and enhanced:

- **Principal Town Centre: Altrincham**
- **Other Town Centres: Sale, Stretford and Urmston**
- **District Centres: Hale, Sale Moor and Timperley**
- **Local Centres (including Partington)**

Principal and other town centres

TC1.2 Within Altrincham, Sale, Stretford and Urmston Town Centre boundaries, as defined on the policies map, the Council will promote new development for Main Town Centre Uses as defined by National Planning Guidance, including residential development which will enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre. The Council will grant planning permission for development that is in accordance with Area of Focus Policy AF6, other policies within the Local Plan and national guidance as appropriate.

District centres

TC1.3 Within the District Centres there will continue to be a focus on convenience retailing of an appropriate scale, plus opportunities for service uses and small scale independent retailing of a function and character to meet the needs of the local community.

TC1.4 Within Sale Moor there is a particular need to plan for a small to medium sized supermarket to meet the needs of the local community. In Sale Moor the Council will support the redevelopment of the following site:

- a) **Warrener Street Car Park – The Council will support the redevelopment of this site to provide a mixed use development comprising of mainly convenience retail of a scale to meet the needs of the local community.**

Local centres

TC1.5 The Council will seek to maintain and enhance the retail function, complemented by a range of other service uses, of all Local Centres in Trafford as identified on the policies map and listed in Appendix 2. The Council will support proposals for new retail development which is of an appropriate scale, and where it is in line with relevant policies in the Trafford Local Plan and national guidance.

TC1.6 New Local Centres will be designated at New Carrington and Timperley Wedge (Policies AF7 and AF8) of an appropriate scale to serve new communities as required.

Neighbourhood centres

TC1.7 The Council will seek to maintain and enhance the important function and role in the community that Neighbourhood Centres play in Trafford. Neighbourhood Centres, as identified on the policies map and listed in Appendix 2.

Development within all Centres

TC1.8 Within all of the centres identified on the policies map development proposals will be required to:

- **Provide inclusive and accessible development and public realm for all users;**
- **Make a positive contribution to the vitality, viability and diversity of the centre;**
- **Not result in the introduction of excessive concentrations of other non-retail uses;**
- **Make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the frontage and in particular maintain active and attractive frontages;**
- **Be of a scale and type of use appropriate to the size and function of the centre;**
- **Not result in an unacceptable impact on the amenity of neighbouring uses;**
- **Ensure a high standard of design in accordance with Policy IPF5 and any adopted Council Design Guidance.**

Changes of Use

TC1.9 Proposals for changes of use and redevelopments within all centres, outside of changes allowed within permitted development rights, will be carefully considered in order to ensure that they do not detract from the successful functioning of the centres and their ability to meet consumer needs.

Justification

Trafford's town centres are supported by a network of district, local and neighbourhood centres which are dispersed across the borough and provide an important role in meeting the day to day needs of the communities that they serve. Whilst Trafford's district, local and neighbourhood centres vary in size and retail offer, they all serve an important purpose in providing local shops, services and community facilities for the neighbourhoods they serve.

District Centres

The Council recognises the importance of the three district centres in terms of providing valuable shopping and other services and their role as a focus for activity and identity in the wider community as such it will be important to protect and enhance the existing offer of the district centres.

How proposals within district centres align with any approved masterplans or Place Plans will be considered through the planning application process.

Hale District Centre: Hale is the largest district centre in Trafford and is a popular centre with a number of high end independent leisure services and comparison goods operators. The centre provides a range of services considered suitable to serve the needs of the surrounding residential areas. It is considered that opportunities should be taken in order to diversify the convenience and comparison goods offer; however Hale is considered to be a vital and viable district centre.

Sale Moor District Centre: Sale Moor District Centre is well-used with a considerable range of service and comparison goods operators. The centre however lacks a convenience goods retailer

and the Retail and Leisure study (2019) considers that there is scope to provide additional convenience goods floorspace within the centre of an appropriate scale to serve the local community.

Timperley District Centre: Timperley District Centre is a moderately sized district centre located within a primarily residential area. It is an attractive centre which accommodates a good range of retail operators which are able to meet many of the day to day needs of the local community. The centre is considered to be vital and viable.

Local Centres

Local Centres perform a vital role in providing services for the local community. They can vary in size and range of services on offer, but the Council considers that all those centres identified on the Policies map should be maintained and protected.

Neighbourhood Centres

Although they are not specifically defined in the hierarchy of centres, Neighbourhood Centres are considered to perform an important function in serving the day to day shopping and service needs of the local communities in which they are located. It will therefore be important that all those Neighbourhood Centres as identified on the Policies map are maintained and protected.

New Carrington and Timperley Wedge Local Centres

The Retail and Leisure study considers that there may be the ability to accommodate additional convenience shopping facilities, of an appropriate scale to serve the needs of the proposed communities, at the New Carrington and Timperley Wedge GMSF 2020 allocations. Detailed information on the scale and type of development that will be acceptable in these locations is contained within masterplanning work completed for the GMSF 2020.

TC2 – Primary Shopping Areas

TC2.1 Altrincham Town Centre is the only defined centre with an identified primary shopping area in Trafford.

TC2.2 The Primary Shopping Area for Altrincham as defined on the Policies Map will be the preferred location for Class E (a) Retail uses complemented by a range of other service uses including E (b-c) and other similar uses. The Council will grant planning permission for retail development and other service uses within the Primary Shopping Area in line with other policies in the Local Plan and national guidance as appropriate.

TC2.3 Within the Primary Shopping Area, proposals which seek to maintain and enhance the continuous ground floor active frontages will be encouraged and supported.

TC2.4 Proposals for residential development within the Primary Shopping Area will be considered in line with Policy TC1 and other policies in the Local Plan and national guidance as appropriate.

Justification

The primary shopping area (PSA) is the defined area where retail development is concentrated within a town centre. Town Centre boundaries are informed by the locations of the PSA as well as areas that are predominantly occupied by main town centres uses which are within or adjacent to this area.

The Retail and Leisure Study (2019) considers that the offer in Trafford's centres is generally varied and the retail uses are not typically located in a manner which lends itself to the identification of a PSA. The Retail and Leisure Study concludes that other than for Altrincham that there is no requirement to differentiate between a PSA and wider town centre boundary within the town centres of Sale, Urmston and Stretford. This is because retail uses within each of the three centres are spread out across the extent of the town centre boundaries, and there are no specific areas within which retail uses are more concentrated than others within the town centres.

The recommended PSA for Altrincham has been drawn to encompass the areas within Altrincham town centre within which retail uses are concentrated, as defined by national policy. The PSA is bounded by Stamford Street to the north, Market Street to the west, Regent Road to the South and Stamford New Road to the east. The area encompasses the retail uses accessed off the pedestrianised areas off George Street, along with Altrincham Market and Stamford Quarter and properties on both sides of Stamford New Road.

Whilst there is no formally designated PSA within the Sale, Stretford or Urmston Town Centres this can be considered to be that of the entire town centre boundary

TC3 – Out of centre development

Sequential Test

TC3.1 Outside of the centres identified on the policies map there will be a presumption against the development of retail, leisure and other town centre uses, as defined by national policy, except where it can be demonstrated by the applicant that they satisfy the sequential test as outlined in national planning guidance.

TC3.2 Main town centre uses as defined by national policy will be located in accordance with the following sequential approach:

- **Within designated centres ('in centre')**
- **In locations on the edge of designated centres ('edge of centre')**
- **Accessible sites which are well connected to a designated centre.**

TC3.3 For Altrincham Town Centre only, an 'in centre' location for retail purposes (Use Class E(a)) is within the Primary Shopping Area as defined on the policies map. For all other main town centre uses 'in centre' is defined as outside of the Primary Shopping Area but within the town centre boundary.

TC3.4 'Edge of centre' and 'out of centre' are as defined in national planning guidance.

Impact Assessment

TC3.5 An Impact Assessment will be required for any development proposal for retail and leisure uses which are not located within a defined centre where:

- **the proposal provides a gross floorspace in excess of 500 sqm gross; or**
- **the proposal is in excess of 200 sqm gross and is located within 800 metres of the boundary of a district or local centre.**

TC3.6 The above thresholds apply to new floorspace (including mezzanine floorspace), extensions to existing floorspace, changes of use and applications seeking the variation of restrictive conditions)

Existing out of centre locations

Trafford Centre

TC3.7 Any proposals for the future expansion of the Trafford Centre will be carefully considered against the tests outlined in national planning guidance.

TC3.8 The Trafford Centre falls within the Trafford Centre Area of Focus and any planning applications submitted within this area will be considered against the relevant Trafford Centre Area of Focus policies in this Local Plan (policy AF4).

Retail Warehouse Parks

TC3.9 The three Retail Warehouse Parks in Trafford as defined on the Policies Map are:

- a) White City Retail Park, Chester Road, Old Trafford**
- b) Trafford Retail Park, Neary Way, Davyhulme**
- c) Altrincham Retail Park, George Richards Way/Atlantic Street, Broadheath**

TC3.10 Within the defined retail parks the Council will consider proposals for comparison and convenience retail and other main town centre uses in line with the tests outlined in national planning guidance.

Justification

The policy approach set out below will direct new retail and leisure development to Trafford's defined centres. Such development should be of a size and scale to support the centre.

Sequential Test

Where retail or leisure uses are proposed outside of a defined centre, the applicant will be required to demonstrate that no suitable sites are available within the centre or in edge of centre locations through applying a sequential approach as set out within this policy.

Impact Assessment Thresholds

National policy states that it is appropriate to identify thresholds for the scale of edge of centre and out of centre retail and leisure development that should be the subject of an impact assessment.

The purpose of the policy in applying an impact threshold which deviates from the national threshold of 2,500 sqm is to allow the Council to retain appropriate control in respect of the potential for development to impact on the future health of defined centres within Trafford. By applying a lower threshold, applications for developments which could potentially have a harmful effect on the overall vitality and viability of a defined centre, will need to be supported by a proportionate impact assessment which will set out the potential trade diversion impact assumptions.

The Retail and Leisure Study (2019) considers that town centre anchor units will typically provide a minimum of 500 sqm of gross floorspace. A unit of this size could potentially accommodate an operator which is capable of attracting shoppers to a centre thus increasing the potential for linked trips. There are relatively limited numbers of units greater than 500 sqm in the four town centres and the vacancy rates vary throughout the town centres.

In this context it is considered that the impact threshold for the four town centres should be set at 500 sqm for both retail and leisure proposals. This threshold is the default to be applied borough wide (other than for proposals in proximity to district and local centres as set out below).

District and Local Centre Impact Assessment Thresholds

Due to the smaller scale of Trafford's district and local centres, and the relatively modest size of most of their commercial units, it is considered appropriate that a lower impact threshold of 200 sqm should be applied to potential development proximate to these centres. This is in keeping with their more localised role and function but demonstrates the potential implications out of centre developments could have on these centres. There are relatively few units substantially larger than 200 sqm in any of Trafford's district and local centres; as such to lose an occupier of this magnitude could have a significant adverse impact on the centre as a whole.

Trafford Centre

The Retail and Leisure Study (2019) recommends that careful consideration is given before granting planning permission for proposals that would further improve the offer at the Trafford Centre to the detriment of the four town centres.

Retail Warehouse Parks

The Retail and Leisure Study (2019) concludes that overall Trafford is well served by out of centre retail parks through the provision of a range of operators who otherwise could not always occupy a unit within one of the four town centres. However it will be important for the Council to continue to monitor applications for the potential expansion of the retail parks or relaxation of use due to the potential implications such applications could have on the health of defined centres across Trafford.

Q15. Do you agree with the draft Town Centres and Retail policies TC1 – TC3? If not, please explain why (providing supporting evidence where appropriate).