

7 Prosperous Town Centres

TOWN CENTRE AND DISTRICT CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

- 7.1 The NPPF indicates that planning policies should promote competitive town centre environments and set out policies for their management and growth; and recognise the important role of centres as the heart of their communities for which policies to support their viability and vitality should be pursued. Town centres provide a range of functions, infrastructure and services that attract users and investors. While town centres continue to play a vital role in providing a focus for economic activity, transport and civic functions, it is important to recognise that their traditional role is changing, particularly in relation to retailing. If Scunthorpe Town Centre is to remain vibrant, it is important to establish a clear direction for its future prosperity.
- 7.2 The NPPF states that planning policies should require applications for main town centre uses to be located in town centres, then in edge of centre locations and only if suitable sites are not available should out of centre sites be considered. When considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites that are well connected to the town centre. Applicants and local planning authorities should demonstrate flexibility on issues such as format and scale. The NPPF also states that this sequential approach should not be applied to small scale rural offices or other small scale rural development.
- 7.3 Having access to a range of shops, cultural and leisure facilities that meet local needs is essential to creating sustainable communities and a successful and vibrant economy. This Plan's approach is to identify, protect and enhance North Lincolnshire's town, district and local centres with the current retail hierarchy being:
- Scunthorpe town centre;
 - Market town centres of Barton upon Humber, Brigg, Crowle and Epworth;
 - District centres of Kirton in Lindsey and Winterton;
 - District centres of Ashby High Street and Frodingham Road; and
 - Local centres/corner shops.
- 7.4 Town centre boundaries provide a useful planning tool and help to provide increased certainty concerning where town centre policies will apply. The identification of a 'town centre' can help ensure that retail and other commercial development ('town centre uses') are located in the most appropriate areas which should also help to increase the vitality and viability of the centre.
- 7.5 Town centre boundaries can also be important in the process of planning for any new retail development with the NPPF requiring that, wherever possible, such development should be provided in town centre locations. Where suitable sites for such development are not available, it is then necessary to use a sequential test in order to identify the most suitable alternative site which should be as close to the defined town centre as possible.

- 7.6 Scunthorpe is the main retail and service destination in the area with the market town centres and district centres providing a range of services and facilities to meet the needs of their own and surrounding communities. The NPPF seeks to ensure town centres remain vibrant, diverse and healthy performing as the heart of communities. This existing hierarchy has been assessed to ensure its continuing appropriateness in the light of changing retail trends, particularly the growth of internet shopping. It is likely that there will be continuing pressure for out-of-centre retail proposals, which could undermine the retail function of the town centres, particularly Scunthorpe. This, by itself, will be a key consideration in the preparation of the Local Plan.
- 7.7 Balanced against the growing convenience of accessing services and shopping through the internet, the Local Plan must ensure a flexible approach to planning for the development of Scunthorpe Town Centre. Such an approach must ensure advantage can be taken of key assets that will make the Town Centre remain a destination where people continue to want to visit, enjoy and spend their time and money in.
- 7.8 The council has recently revealed ambitious plans for Scunthorpe Town Centre via a £60m+ investment to transform the town that should be completed by 2022 and will create more than 200 jobs, around 1,500 student places, plus inject £1.5m into the local economy. The transformation project aims to increase the number of people and businesses and create a family friendly evening environment in the town (in particular the Church Square area) and includes:
- £5.8m headquarters building for Ongo Homes (completed);
 - £5.7m Church Square House extension providing space for 600 council workers and creating 45 construction jobs (completed);
 - Around £15m for a new University Centre;
 - £3.9m private sector investment to provide up to 60 one-bed and two-bed homes on Lindum Street;
 - £14.7m new 200-unit facility for NHS employees (including five commercial units below);
 - £1m library refurbishment (completed); and
 - £4m improvements to make the town look more attractive and road and pedestrian improvements to create better access.
- 7.9 A town centre board made up of representatives from leading local institutions and developers has been established to oversee the projects and ensure they are delivered on time and within budget.
- 7.10 To bring forward an evolving Town Centre a Scunthorpe Town Centre Masterplan has been produced which provides a framework for the redevelopment of Scunthorpe Town Centre. It delivers a vision on how the town centre could evolve over the next ten years whilst providing a co-ordinated approach that will ensure the town centre can compete effectively with other destinations and delivers the council's wider objectives for the improvement of the environment and local economy.
- 7.11 The projects put forward within the Scunthorpe Town Centre Masterplan will deliver transformational change by supporting sustainable growth, attracting inward investment and informing development management decisions, and creating new and improved public realm to benefit all. By encompassing a comprehensive implementation plan that is achievable it is anticipated that the Town Centre's economic growth can be sustained and expanded. The Masterplan sets five key objectives on the type of town we want to create by fulfilling the council's ambition 'to be the best place for our residents'.

- 7.12 The Scunthorpe Town Centre Masterplan has been used to help form the evidence base for policies within the new North Lincolnshire Local Plan and is capable of being used as a material consideration when making decisions on planning applications. In particular it will assist with the implementation of Local Plan policy TC1p.
- 7.13 Primary shopping frontages have been identified in Scunthorpe Town Centre and are the most important retail frontages with the greatest pedestrian flows and greatest concentration of shops for comparison goods. Policies for primary shopping frontages restrict the amount of non-shopping uses permitted and seek to retain and enhance the shopping function of the frontage. Primary Shopping Frontages contain the greatest concentration of shops (A1 retail use), attract the greatest number of customers and underpin the vitality and viability of the town centre. Retail should remain the principal and dominant land use within these areas. The Council will not support uses that do not complement or support their predominantly retail character and will seek to retain retail uses (Use Class A1) and maintain a continuous ground floor retail frontage with a limited range of associated and complimentary uses such as cafes, banks, and pubs (A2 A3 and A4 use classes).
- 7.14 Some local authorities also identify secondary shopping frontages in close proximity to the primary frontage, which are generally occupied by a lower proportion of retail uses and provide greater opportunities for a diversity of uses. The use of primary shopping frontages has been supported by this council both within the 2003 Local Plan and in the more recent Housing and Employment Land Allocations DPD.
- 7.15 The retention of local centres and village shops provides a valuable role in meeting local community needs. Providing facilities close to homes reduces the need to travel by private car and creates more desirable and socially inclusive neighbourhoods. Local centres include a range of small shops of a local nature, serving a small catchment. Typically, local centres might include, for example, shops, a small supermarket, a newsagent, a sub-post office and a pharmacy.
- 7.16 Scunthorpe Town Centre suffers from weaknesses in the range of leisure and social facilities and a limited evening economy offer, which are below what would be expected for a centre of its status. It is therefore important that development which widens the town centre offer is encouraged to ensure the town remains strong and vibrant. The Plan seeks to support the continued role of Scunthorpe as a sub-regional centre, and as such the Plan will seek to support the widening of the town's offer and protection from inappropriate out-of-centre development.
- 7.17 A key aspect of maintaining a healthy and vibrant town centre is ensuring that provision is made to accommodate anticipated growth. The NPPF (paragraph 23) requires that local plans should identify the scale of development which needs to be accommodated, advising that: "Local planning authorities should therefore undertake an assessment of the need to expand town centres to ensure a sufficient supply of suitable sites".
- 7.18 The Local Plan looks at North Lincolnshire's requirements for future retail development and the town centre boundaries of Scunthorpe, Brigg, Barton upon Humber, Crowle, Epworth and district shopping at Ashby High Street and Frodingham Road in Scunthorpe as well as at Kirton in Lindsey and Winterton. Town and District boundaries are shown on the relevant Inset Plan for that Town and in the case of Scunthorpe Town Centre, Primary Shopping Frontages are also indicated.

- 7.19 National planning policy, as set out in the NPPF advocates town centres as the principal locations for new retail, leisure, tourism and cultural facilities. The key objective is to promote their vitality and viability. Key to this is developing a hierarchy of centres with each performing an appropriate role to meet the needs of the residents and businesses in its catchment area. It also sets out how the need for retail and leisure development can be provided and establishes the sequential approach for new development.
- 7.20 Scunthorpe is North Lincolnshire's main retail and service centre and as such provides the bulk of the area's housing, employment, education and leisure facilities. Recent years have seen significant investment in Scunthorpe town centre with the opening of the multi-million pound Parishes retail complex, which has improved the range and type of shops on offer and provided a new multi-screen cinema. However, much still needs to be done to improve the retail offer and improve the town centre's environment. The improvement of Scunthorpe town centre is a priority for the Local Plan.

Policy TC1p: Retail Hierarchy and Town Centre and District Centre Development

Retail Hierarchy

The Council will protect and enhance the following hierarchy of Sub Regional, Town and District Centres:

- Sub Regional Centre - Scunthorpe
- Town Centres - Brigg, Barton Upon Humber, Crowle and Epworth
- District Centres - Kirton in Lindsey, Winterton, Frodingham Road and Ashby High Street

Within the defined town centre boundaries of the sub-regional town of Scunthorpe, as shown on the Scunthorpe Town Centre Inset Plan, Shops (A1) uses will be permitted. The following non-shopping uses will also be permitted:

1. Business (B1a) at upper levels
2. Residential (C3) at upper levels
3. Financial and Professional Services (A2)
4. Restaurants and Cafes (A3)
5. Drinking Establishments (A4)
6. Hot Food Takeaways (A5)
7. Hotels (C1)
8. Non Residential Institutions - Community Facilities (D1) open daily
9. Assembly and Leisure Facilities (D2)
10. Taxi Businesses

Within the defined Primary Shopping Frontages for Scunthorpe Town Centre, as shown on the Scunthorpe Town Centre Inset Plan proposals for non-shopping uses (uses i) to x) of this policy) will be permitted provided that:

1. non-shopping uses would not exceed 20% of the total metreage of the defined frontage;
2. any continuous frontage of non-shopping uses would not exceed 18m;

3. the use maintains the retail appearance of the street and the design of the frontage takes into account the character of adjoining buildings and the town centre as a whole.

Proposals for shops (A1) uses will be permitted within the defined town centre boundaries of the Market Towns of Brigg, Barton Upon Humber, Crowle and Epworth. Proposals for non-shopping uses (uses i) to x) of this policy) will be permitted provided they do not detract from the centre's shopping function. Proposals will be considered having regard to the existing character and function of the shopping street, the contribution which the proposal would make to the vitality and viability of the shopping street and the resulting proportion of non-shopping uses.

Proposals for the development of additional shopping facilities within the District Centres of Kirton in Lindsey, Winterton, Frodingham Road and Ashby High Street, will be permitted provided they are of a size and scale compatible with the retail needs and character of the settlement/area. Development will only be permitted if it is required to meet the needs of the area served by the centre in a sustainable way. It must also be of a scale appropriate to the centre, and that will not adversely impact upon the vitality or viability of other nearby town and district centres. Proposals will be considered having regard to the existing character and function of the shopping street and the resulting proportion of non-shopping uses.

Proposals for hot food takeaways (Use Class A5) need to demonstrate that account has been taken of:

1. the impact on the amenity of nearby residents; and,
2. the impact on highway safety; and,
3. the relationship with any school located within 400m of the proposed A5 use; and,
4. whether the proposal would result in an unacceptable concentration of A5 uses in the centre.

Evening Economy

Proposals that would positively contribute to the evening economy will be supported provided they contribute to the vitality and viability of town centres and accord with this and other relevant policies in the Plan.

- 7.21 The council accepts that some A5 uses offer healthier alternative foods; however, the importance of promoting healthier lifestyles is a key local objective. Whilst the Plan cannot influence the existing location of A5 uses, or ultimately the choices made by individuals, it is considered important not to compound existing unsatisfactory relationships by allowing further hot food takeaways close to schools.

Alternatives Considered

Support was expressed for the existing retail centre network and hierarchy, in particular the continued identification of Scunthorpe town centre as the area's main location for shopping, leisure and commercial. It was highlighted that any future policy approach should be compliant with national policy which seeks to support town centres as an essential part of the communities they serve and their vitality and viability. There was support for the proposed investment and regeneration for Scunthorpe town centre, although it was suggested there is still a need to allocate a range sites to meet future retail, leisure, commercial and tourism needs over the lifetime of the emerging Local Plan. In addition, a flexible approach to development in existing centres was supported.

Support was expressed for retaining the current Town Centre and District Centre boundaries subject to a reflecting up to date evidence as well as the current situation, including taking account of developments. This includes NPPF, PPG, and national objectives for the economy and environment. The existing LDF's policy has been well supported and over the preceding years.

Monitoring

Indicator	Target
Number of vacant units within town and district centres.	Annual decrease in the number of vacant units within the identified town and district centre
Appeals upheld contrary to this policy.	None upheld at appeal.