



Oadby & Wigston

Town Centres Area Action Plan

Matter Four Oadby Town Centre





4.1 Although there is recognition from some groups that Oadby town centre needs to move forward, several representations argue for keeping Oadby as it is and that the plan will lose rather than gain jobs. What is the economic justification for the scale of the proposed retail provision in policy 17, in view of factors such as the proximity of rival centres, eg Highcross and Fosse Park, the growth in internet shopping and the number of existing empty retail units in the town centre?

- 4.1.1** By keeping Oadby as it is and not moving forwards with the adoption of the Town Centres Area Action Plan, it is likely that it would result in the loss of jobs over the plan period (up to 2026). This would be likely because as Oadby remains as it is, other town centres it competes with are likely to grow and benefit from investment. This is one of the key reasons for bringing forward the Area Action Plan and the masterplans for both town centres. It is also worth noting that the bulk of the retail and commercial development proposed at Baxter's Place / Brooksby Square will be new build development. This new development will be aimed at either attracting new businesses (and hence new jobs) into Oadby or allowing existing businesses to expand.
- 4.1.2** The economic justification for the scale of the proposed retail provision in policy 17 is provided by the Council's Retail Capacity Study, undertaken in 2008 and which took into account local circumstances and changing retail patterns such as the proximity of rival centres and the growth in internet shopping.
- 4.1.3** The study identified the retail capacity of the whole Borough and then provided a split between the 3 settlements. This study provided part of the evidence base for the Core Strategy and during its Examination the Inspector recommended that the figures be incorporated into Core Strategy Policy 2.
- 4.1.4** In addition to the 2008 Retail Study, more recent evidence of retail demand can be seen in the development of a Waitrose foodstore on the former Invicta site which demonstrates a desire from key national retailers to invest in the town.

In addition, there is likely to be a significant improvement in the economic climate during the plan period. By not maximising the potential growth for Oadby in the Town Centres Area Action Plan, the town centre would not be in a strong position to capitalise upon planned population growth and this potential for increased spend could be lost to rival centres, such as Highcross and Fosse Park.



4.2 A situation update from the Council is required on the plans for Oadby town centre, including justification of the proposed schemes, how, where and when they would be implemented and public and private sector resource implications. Would proposals for and to the north of Brooksby Square, and for Baxter’s Place, distract from the core of Oadby, which several representors consider to be The Parade?

4.2.1 Refer to Situation Update Matter Four Issue 4.2.

4.3 What type of retail provision? What evidence is there that the lack of modern sized units is preventing investment, especially in view of the statement (in para 5.22): “the town’s strength will lie in its interesting mix of shops, cafes, bars and restaurants, focused on the independent offer”? Are anchor stores the answer? How does the plan relate to the Core Strategy spatial objective 3, which is to establish Oadby as a small town centre catering for smaller independent and specialist shops?

4.3.1 Core Strategy Policy 2 requires the provision of 5,000 square metres (gross) of retail floor space to be provided in Oadby town centre. This contributes to a total of 20,000 square metres (gross) of retail floor space to be provided in the Borough as a whole up to 2026, split between the three centres of Oadby, Wigston and South Wigston. This is in line with the Retail Capacity Study (2008) that was prepared to evidence the preparation of the Core Strategy. All figures include both comparison and convenience floor space.

4.3.2 The Baxter’s Place policy allows for the largest amount of new retail floor space in Oadby (1,900 square metres). This would provide additional opportunities for small independent retailers and the occasional anchor store, but would not look to interfere with the current mix that exists in the town, for example, on The Parade. The attraction of anchor stores are deemed to be essential to deliver the overall masterplan for Oadby because they increase overall footfall in the town centre and therefore this lends support to the smaller, independent businesses. South Wigston, also in the Borough of Oadby and Wigston, struggles because of the high concentration of independent retailers and a distinct lack of anchor stores. For example, the presence of Marks and Spencer Simply Food and Costa coffee shop on The Parade in Oadby has brought about a really positive impact upon footfall levels in the town centre as a whole.

4.3.3 In addition, this policy allows for the establishment of a circular route for shoppers to follow when moving around the town which currently does not exist in Oadby. Allied to this would be a high quality of public realm with a central plaza linking all elements of Baxter’s Place; The Parade; and, the decked car park. It would also allow servicing access to Baxter’s Place and the rear of units on The Parade.



4.3.4 The plan for Oadby Town Centre will assist in meeting the Core Strategy's Spatial Objective 3 by adding to the retail offer in the town to reflect its location close to Oadby Grange ward and the University of Leicester's halls of residence. In addition to that, the Area Action Plan policies for Oadby town centre assist in the delivery of Spatial Objective 1: Regeneration of Town and District Centres; Spatial Objective 5: Improved Employment Opportunities; and, Spatial Objective 7: A Balanced Housing Market.

4.4 How does the plan address the night time economy?

4.4.1 As stipulated in paragraph 5.22, *'The town's strength will lie in its interesting mix of shops, cafes, bars and restaurants, focused on the independent offer, but with a number of key national retailers as anchors to the town, as well as residential accommodation in the centre that will help activate the town throughout the day and into the evening'*.

4.4.2 Further to this, as explained in paragraph 5.24, *'the implementation of the policies following the guidance set out in this Area Action Plan and the Core Strategy will create an attractive and desirable destination, not just for shopping but also for living. Getting the balance right to cater for the different demands placed upon the town – i.e. shoppers, workers and residents – will be key to its future success'*.

4.4.3 Paragraph 2.12 also explains that *'development will be fully accessible and designed to reduce car use, as well as promoting social cohesion and interaction and reducing crime and the fear of crime'*.

4.4.4 Currently there is very little in the way of a night time economy in Wigston or Oadby town centre. This results in mainly empty town centres in the evening which increases the likelihood of anti social behaviour taking place and indeed, both towns currently, on occasion, suffer from this.

4.4.5 Existing residential development tends to turn its back onto both town centres. The Town Centres Area Action Plan aims to rectify this by introducing residential development onto key sites in both towns. Having people living in the town centres will greatly encourage activity, therefore reducing the likelihood of anti social behaviour.

4.4.6 The Town Centres Area Action Plan also creates opportunities for other activities that generally create an evening footfall, such as cafes and restaurants, for example Brooksby Square in Oadby and Chapel Mill in Wigston. The nearby student population may also be attracted to the centre through the increased number of cafes, bars and restaurants, further enhancing the night-time spend in the town centre.

4.4.7 Question 6.9 under Matter 6 provides information on monitoring changing crime rates, which may be able to allow monitoring of the impact that the Town Centres Area Action Plan has upon reducing anti social behaviour during the evenings and at night.



4.5 Para 5.67, in relation to Baxter’s Place (policy 19), refers to a range of retail floorspace size to accommodate modern retailer requirements, based presumably on the master plan. Is the desired range of retail unit size important to the vitality and viability of other parts of Oadby town centre as well, and if so, does policy 17 need to provide more direction, eg on a desired range of shop sizes/development plates to help the town centre maintain or enhance its distinctive retail offer?

4.5.1 Baxters Place will comprise the most significant amount of new retail development in Oadby. As mentioned in paragraph 4.3.2 it is important to provide for a range of floor space sizes, to accommodate both independent and the occasional national retail occupiers.

4.5.2 It is considered that being more specific in Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 19 would reduce the opportunity for flexibility and would run the risk of units which met the requirements of the policy in terms of their size standing empty if a retailer requiring that particular size of unit were not available. This could be quite a problem if the unit was a larger one, for example. In terms of meeting the objectives for attracting the appropriate mix of retailers to the town, this is considered to be more of a role for the Town Centre Partnership and the Council in how Oadby is marketed, rather than for the policy to specify unit sizes beyond the indication that is provided in the supporting text.

4.6 Planning to meet ethnic and religious demands: Why does the AAP single out Oadby for provision to meet the ethnic/religious demands of the Borough?

4.6.1 The Town Centres Area Action Plan expands on the policies in relation to Town Centres as contained in the adopted Core Strategy so much of the evidence and data held is still relevant. Whilst preparing the Core Strategy (the first document in the Borough’s new Local Plan) the Borough Council looked at what evidence was required to give an insight into all the different communities that made up the Borough’s resident population. Through this process a knowledge gap was identified in relation to local faith communities and their place of worship and community facility needs. Although the Borough Council had a breadth of anecdotal evidence in relation to the lack of appropriate facilities for some worshipers (such as regular enquiries about potential locations for places of worship from different faith groups and/or applications submitted) it was considered that a more robust analysis was required. Such a study could then also be used to underpin policies in further policy documents such as the Town Centres Area Action Plan and Allocations Development Plan Document.



4.6.2 The Borough Council contracted CAG Consultants (in association with Land Use Consultants and Diverse Ethics) to prepare a Faith Community Profile and Places of Worship Needs Assessment. The aim of the study was to help clarify the needs of the different faiths for places for worship and to help address deficiencies in provision. The key objectives of the study were to:

- identify and understand the status quo with regard to the Borough's different faith communities, including their make up and where, if any, some groups are concentrated;
- identify the individual needs of different groups for places of worship and other facilities; and
- enable a sound evidence base to help formulate and support at Examination the preparation of the Core Strategy, Town Centres Area Action Plan and Allocations Development Plan Document.

4.6.3 The consultants used the 2001 Census as their baseline in order to assess the general ethnic makeup of the Borough. Recent ethnicity trends were then examined. Ethnicity trends rather than faith trends were used for two reasons. Firstly, the 2001 Census only asked respondents for voluntary information in regard to religious beliefs and secondly, ethnicity is broadly related to religion, particularly for non-Christian denominations. The 2001 Census showed that the Borough was dominated (in strictly numerical terms) by people of white ethnic origin (84 per cent). Asian people were the second largest group at 13 per cent. Where information about religion was provided people living in the Borough identified themselves as follows: Christian (64.8 per cent), Hindu (6.0 per cent), Sikh (4.2 per cent), Muslim (2.8 per cent) and No religion (Over 21 per cent). Table 2.1 of the Faith Community Profile and Places of Worship Needs Assessment provides a breakdown of religion by ward.

4.6.4 The Borough's ethnicity figures were further broken down by ward by the Office for National Statistics (see Table 2.2 of Faith Community Profile and Places of Worship Needs Assessment). This demonstrated that the diversity of the Borough's population also has a geographical dimension. Oadby Uplands and Oadby Grange wards have the highest proportions of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population with 39% and 33% respectively. This correlates closely with the 2001 Census results on religion. The consultants preparing the Faith Community Profile and Places of Worship Needs Assessment identified and undertook a significant level of consultation with the different faith groups located in the Borough to establish their particular requirements. From this they were able to conclude that based on population ethnicity and distribution it makes good planning sense to provide places of worship close to the communities where worshippers live. In particular, daily worship needs are often greater for non-Christian faiths which are well represented in the Borough. This would therefore equate to the need for good local provision.

4.6.5 Core Strategy Policy 16 Community Facilities and Places of Worship forms part of the adopted Core Strategy and was based on the findings of the Faith Community Profile and Places of Worship Needs Assessment. The provision for a D1 Use within the Oadby Masterplan reflects this policy.



- 4.6.6** The National Planning Policy Framework makes reference at paragraph 70 to the need to “*plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments*”
- 4.6.7** During preparation of the Town Centres Area Action Plan, the Oadby and Wigston Muslim Association purchased the land and buildings comprising the former library at Sandhurst Street in Oadby from Leicestershire County Council and are now using the premises as a place of worship and a community facility. Therefore, the community facility/place of worship option within the proposals for Baxter’s Place has already come to fruition and the Borough Council would not be seeking an additional community facility in this location, rather the redevelopment of the Sandhurst Street car park would include replacement of the current facility albeit an improved more spacious facility that the Oadby and Wigston Muslim society require. This is supported by their Further Statement to Matter 4.
- 4.7 Is the proposal for a community use building (policy 17) justified and effective?**
- 4.7.1** As stated in paragraph 5.69 of the Town Centres Area Action Plan, the masterplan allows for a standalone community use building that could include a place of worship. As detailed above, the need for a place of worship in Oadby was identified in the Borough Council’s Faith Community Profile and Places of Worship Needs Assessment (December 2008). The study also looked at the need for additional facilities to support new places of worship. Many of the existing faith groups provided additional services outside of their worship needs, often open to all members of the community. These covered a wide range of themes such as religious, social, educational/training, guidance, recreational and other community services. Some of these others services are provided by other faith groups and secular groups but at the same premises.
- 4.7.2** The Oadby Town Centre Baseline Report (April 2007) noted at paragraph 4.32 that public and community facilities within the town centre are limited within Oadby centre. Coupled with the evidence in the Faith Community Profile and Places of Worship Needs Assessment that there was a pressing need for additional worship space and the fact that the adopted Core Strategy contained a policy for the promotion of community facilities and places of worship this gave impetus for the inclusion of a multi use space for worship and other community uses that would be the same D1 use class. For information, Leicestershire County Council supported the proposal for a community use building in its Further Statement to Matter 4.
- 4.7.3** Outside of the needs for community and worship space for non-Christian faiths as demonstrated by the Faith Community Profile and Places of Worship Needs Assessment there had previously been a need identified in the Local Infrastructure Plan for a new Sure Start Children’s Centre in Oadby. However, due to recent funding cuts at Leicestershire County Council this need is no longer required and will be reflected in the updated Local Infrastructure Plan.



- 4.7.4** As stated at 4.6.7 above, the proposal for a community use building/place of worship has now been established in Sandhurst Street by the re-use of the previous Oadby Library by the Oadby and Wigston Muslim Association. The redevelopment of the Sandhurst Street car park could usefully replace the existing facility contained in the former library building. The Borough Council views this as an opportunity to replace old with new which would be beneficial to Oadby because it would result in a comprehensive redevelopment of Baxter's Place.
- 4.7.5** For the reasons set out above it is believed that the proposals relating to a community use building are both justified and effective.
- 4.7.6** In paragraph 6 on page 8 of the Oadby Town Centre Association's further statement they state that the adopted Core Strategy does not specifically require a community facility in Oadby centre. Core Strategy Policy 16 Community Facilities and Places of Worship allows for the development of such uses where a need is demonstrated and the supporting text quite clearly advocates the circumstances where specific needs are anticipated. As a strategic document the Core Strategy was not intended to provide the level of detail that would indicate specifically where community facilities and places of worship should be delivered. Rather it provides the policy framework for allocating these uses in subsequent local plan documents (for example the Area Action Plan and Site Allocations Development Plan Document) and for determining planning applications in the interim. In addition, Core Strategy Policy 2 Development in the centres of Oadby, Wigston and South Wigston supports mixed used development that includes amongst other uses community and cultural facilities.
- 4.7.7** The Oadby Town Centre Association further state that that other locations within the Area Action Plan boundary could equally be developed for community uses. Other sites were considered through each stage of the preparation of the Area Action Plan and discounted. The current inclusion of the community use at the Baxter's Place site now takes account of the existing community space and Place of Worship that is on this site.

4.8 Has the potential for increased pedestrian priority been maximised?

- 4.8.1** The Council is of the opinion that wherever possible, the Area Action Plan policies for Oadby have considered the requirements and needs of pedestrians. As part of the process to reaching this approach in Oadby, the Council did consider full pedestrianisation on The Parade but due to a combination of strong public objection and Leicestershire County Council's reservations to the proposal, it was deemed that the current approach of increasing pedestrian priority at key junctions through redesigning the public realm is the most appropriate way forward.



- 4.8.2** Currently, in partnership, Oadby and Wigston Borough Council and Leicestershire County Council are preparing to submit detailed round two full applications for the European Regional Development Fund relating to public realm schemes within the centres of both Wigston and Oadby (see illustrative map Situation Update 3.8 for areas contained within the proposed bid), having already had Expressions of Interest successfully approved.
- 4.8.3** As stated in the Council's Draft Public Realm Supplementary Planning Document, the design of all public realm and landscaping schemes in the town centres will very much focus upon consistency and good practice. Within this, the Council envisages, wherever possible, a priority to be given to the pedestrian's needs. For example, as explained in paragraph 5.79, the implementation of raised tables along The Parade at junctions with South Street and Chestnut Avenue will lessen the speed of vehicles passing through the town and therefore increase the safety of the pedestrian's movements in Oadby. Paragraph 5.80 also goes on to explain how an open, pedestrian-friendly area with carefully designed shared space will be created in front of the precinct on The Parade at the junction with Chestnut Avenue.
- 4.8.4** The shoppers experience is also being considered in other areas of the town centre with the integration of a new public square on the Brooksby Square site and a central square / plaza with a clear pedestrian link to The Parade in the Baxter's Place development.
- 4.9 Is the severance effect of the A6 main road on Oadby a perception, or is there robust evidence? If so, how can the AAP address this issue?**
- 4.9.1** Paragraph 5.14 states, "the A6 has a severance effect on Oadby and there is limited signage off the A6 to indicate its proximity". Although there is not a specific study that evidences this statement, it is widely accepted by the population of Oadby that unless one knows that the centre is located where it is, the attention of motorists travelling along the A6 towards or away from Leicester is predominately drawn to the north side of the carriageway that has the dominance of the Asda food store and the smaller shops and businesses fronting onto Leicester Road. The design characteristics of the A6 carriageway are typical of an 'A' road, with carriageway providing 5 or 6 lanes of traffic. This is compared to the standard two lane carriageways elsewhere in the town. The speed of traffic travelling on the A6 is higher than other surrounding roads, adding to the sense of the A6 being a barrier to Oadby Town Centre, particularly for pedestrians.



4.9.2 In terms of pedestrians who use the Asda store or the shops on Leicester Road, as stated in 5.14, the signage to The Parade and the centre of Oadby is poor and there are not many obvious retail frontages on the entrance to The Parade from the junction on Leicester Road. In previous stages of consultation on the Oadby Town Centre Masterplan, the Council investigated options to address this issue and even considered a significant amendment to the layout of The Parade / A6 junction which included removing the sweeping 'S-bend' and having a straighter approach onto The Parade. However, through the consultation process, Leicestershire County Council recommended that such a radical junction alteration would be unlikely to be economically viable and local retailers in this part of the town likely to be effected by the junction alteration proposals were concerned by the impact that such a change would have upon their businesses.

4.9.3 Therefore, through the delivery of improved public realm and signage schemes throughout Oadby over the Plan period, the Town Centres Area Action Plan now encourages improved signposting to The Parade and Oadby town centre.

4.10 New parking provision: Is the provision of at least 370 new parking spaces (policy 17) justified in relation to national/Leicester CC sustainable transport policy? Would the impact of a new two-storey car park at Baxter's Place on the living conditions of neighbouring residential occupiers be acceptable? Would traffic congestion be a likely result of the proposal? Should policies 18 and 19 be more specific on the design and environmental mitigation aspects of the proposed car parks in order to address some of the concerns raised by representations?

4.10.1 Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 17 states that regeneration of Oadby district centre will include at least 370 car parking spaces. The number 370 refers to the number of existing car parking spaces that serve Oadby centre (actual total is 373). The policy seeks to maintain the current public car parking provision as there is a Borough Council commitment that there is no net loss of public car parking spaces available for shoppers through regeneration of each centre. The policy does not advocate the development of 370 new spaces in addition to what is currently available. Therefore, it is believed that Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 17 is not contrary to national policy or Leicestershire County Council's 6 Cs Design Guide as it relates to parking provision.



- 4.10.2** In response to a number of representation made by local residents in relation to the appropriateness of including proposals for a half-sunk decked car park at Baxter's Place, it is felt that establishing the principle that the proposals here are of the type of development appropriate in this location is the level of detail fitting for an Area Action Plan. It is argued that this is the level of detail that would be expected in order to establish allocations of land uses with the subsequent detailed design, siting and scale confirmed through specific masterplanning / development briefs and/or a detailed planning application. Local residents have also highlighted Sandhurst Street as being a residential street and therefore not an appropriate location for this form of development. However, the east side of Sandhurst Street and the existing car park area is within the proposed Town Centre Boundary. As explained, detail regarding design and layout would be sympathetic to the surrounding residential properties in this location when establishing a detailed site development brief.
- 4.10.3** The Oadby Town Centre Association state in paragraph 5 of page 8 of their further statement that Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 17 is inflexible as it sets a target of at least 370 spaces. To aim for a minimum provision (which mirrors existing provision) would not preclude or prevent additional spaces being created. This may occur during detailed design and planning of each regeneration area. Providing guidance as to the expected minimum level of car parking allows detailed masterplans/development briefs to respond better to future town centre developments or changes to Leicestershire County Council's recommended maximum levels.
- 4.10.4** Throughout the process there has always been a consciousness about the potential impacts on the Primrose Hill, Churchill Close and Sandhurst Street dwellings through redevelopment on this site. The Borough Council and its consultants have in the past carefully considered the layout of the site, and made changes after consultation, including lowering the deck height of the car park.
- 4.10.5** To accommodate the level of car parking required there is a need for some of it to be decked. To minimise the impact it is proposed to provide car parking as 2 storeys, but with the lowest level half sunk so will not be as tall as a 2 storey development. The design and materials used would need to be appropriate so that there was no over looking of bungalow residences. The Borough Council negotiated something similar with the decked car park at the new Waitrose store which is also in a predominantly residential area.



- 4.10.6** The Borough Council has adopted development management tools to ensure there is no detriment to the amenity of existing residential properties from proposed new development. Standard separation distances can be used where there is a danger that the new development would unacceptably overlook or reduce the space between facing windows or because a flank elevation is proposed which is too close to the main habitable room windows of a neighbouring dwelling. The current standard separation distance used by the Borough Council is not less than 22 metres between facing windows of 2 storey structures on level ground and, between facing windows and flank or secondary elevations, development should not rise above a line drawn at 25 degrees from the ground floor of the neighbouring dwelling fronting onto the new development (source: Residential Development Supplementary Planning Document, November 2005).
- 4.10.7** The Borough Council is confident that there is a design solution to lessen any adverse impacts to redevelopment within the site. Moving the proposals forward to a more detailed design stage (which will be expected as part of any comprehensive masterplan/development brief and application for the site) would provide the opportunity to properly evaluate the constraints of the site and agree a layout and scale that mitigates such issues. For example, use of appropriate materials like obscure glazing and cladding.
- 4.10.8** The proposals for Baxter's Place would see the existing public car parking provision of 191 spaces increased to at least 200. Thus this equates to a very minor increase in available parking in this area. As a consequence, it is not envisaged that traffic congestion in relation to car parking would occur, at least above that which might already be experienced in this area.
- 4.10.9** However, it is acknowledged that there will be new servicing requirements related to any additional development in this area but it is believed that this could be adequately controlled in terms of instigating an appropriate Traffic Regulation Order.
- 4.10.10** The current masterplan is only one interpretation of how the development needs as set out Town Centre Area Action Plan can be delivered on the sites proposed to be allocated for redevelopment. There is a concern that to increase the level of detail in the Town Centres Area Action Plan at this stage may affect the flexibility of the plan to adapt to changes over the plan period and/or may deter partners and investors in the plan if design parameters are too ridged at this stage. It is argued that the design and environmental mitigation aspects of Policies 18 and 19 would be better deferred until the individual site masterplans / development briefs stage where the actual developer who intends to deliver the project can help inform the final scheme in consultation with appropriate stakeholders.
- 4.10.11** It is accepted that there are concerns about how the final schemes will evolve. However, the Town Centres Area Action Plan policies should concentrate on the principle of development in identified areas rather than provide exact and final plans.



4.10.12 In their Statement, the Oadby Town Centre Association suggest that paragraph 5.75 proposes no solution to 'difficulties' associated with 'the proposed layout' and 'safety issues'. For clarity, the paragraph does not refer to 'difficulties', rather issues that need to be taken into account in drawing up detailed design proposals. Solutions relating to servicing arrangements and management are referenced, however to go into further detail would not be appropriate in a document such as a Town Centres Area Action Plan.

4.10.13 The Trinity Methodist Church suggests in their Statement that the lower level of the decked car park might lead to an environment where some uses would feel unsafe. However, there are two other examples of decked car parking nearby (at Asda and Waitrose) where this assertion would appear not to be the case.

4.11 Existing parking provision: What would be the economic and social impact of the reduction of parking spaces in the East Street/Brooksby Drive car park, which several representations point out are used by significant numbers of the disabled and elderly? Representations in particular point out impact on the well used Methodist Church and the increased likelihood of people changing to out of centre retailing, such as the nearby Asda superstore and further afield. Would the loss of easy access (referred to positively in the Core Strategy para 3.14) to and from the A6 significantly add to vehicle congestion in the town centre? How would the loss of these spaces link to the creation of additional parking spaces elsewhere in the town centre? A situation update from the Council, as outline in para 3.6 above, is required for Oadby as well as Wigston.

4.11.1 The Situation Update 4 Issue 4.11 deals with the social impact and the effect on local residents, elderly and disabled people of the reduction of the number of parking spaces in East Street / Brooksby Drive car park. It also hopefully assuages the concerns of the Oadby Trinity Methodist Church.

4.11.2 It is not expected that there will be a significant economic impact because the policy requires the retention of a considerable level of public car parking in this location. In addition, any spaces lost from East Street car park will be replaced within the car parking provision at the alternative location (this being Sandhurst Street). The Sandhurst Street car park is situated to the rear of the businesses on the west side of the retail high street and is a broadly similar distance to key retail points as East Street car park. Appendix 1 illustrates this. It is acknowledged that for those with impaired mobility the East Street car park may be the preferred location to park as it does allow direct access to several of the shops on the east of the shopping street (for example Marks and Spencers has a back entrance to their shop floor).



4.11.3 However, the small number of spaces lost from East Street car park will be compensated for by the provision of the same number in a consolidated part sunken multi storey car park at Sandhurst Street. The redevelopment of East Street car park is programmed for Phase 1 (completion by 2016) with Sandhurst Street redevelopment occurring in Phase 2 (2016 – 2021). Although it is accepted that this will result in there being a loss of 21 spaces being available between the development phases it is hoped that an appropriate solution to compensate for this interim loss can be managed through the detailed plans for bringing forward development on both sites.

4.11.4 In terms of the likelihood of people changing to out of centre retailing, it is worth emphasising that one of the key principles behind the production of the Town Centres Area Action Plan is to prevent this occurring in the long term. Hence, although this is accepted as a risk, Oadby district centre still offers such a wide variety of uses and facilities that are not necessarily available in out of centre locations for example the Asda superstore. People want to be able to meet their shopping and other town centre facility needs in the location closest to where they live and/or work. It is to be expected that changes to the current town centre are likely to have an effect on shopping patterns and patronage in the transition from old to new. However, the Borough has a dedicated Economic Development Team in place as part of a shared service with Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council and this includes a Town Centre Manager. As part and parcel of the comprehensive redevelopment and regeneration of the Borough's three centres (including South Wigston) their remit will include managing and responding to these changes in order to ensure success.

4.11.5 Although access to East Street car park will generally be from Brooksby Drive, the access to and from the A6 will remain open. Furthermore, the Oadby Transport Strategy as illustrated by Figure 5.3 in the Area Action Plan seeks to pursue junction improvements onto the A6 and improved signage to indicate its proximity.

4.11.6 In their Statement, the Oadby Town Centre Association suggest a proposal for a remodelling of the A6 end of East Street car park (annotated as Doc B). This remodelling appears to include the shared use public square that has previously been put forward as a suggested change by the Borough Council. In reality, without some form of development on East Street car park, any proposal for remodelling would not be deliverable because there would be no means of achieving the necessary funding to allow its implementation, which the Oadby Town Centre Association advocate in their Statement should be achieved 'as soon as possible' (paragraph 2, page 12). The Oadby Town Centre Association also refer to the need for any proposals to improve traffic flow and safety. The proposals referred to in paragraph 5.64-5.66 of the Area Action Plan indicate how the Council consider that such issues will be addressed.



4.11.7 The Trinity Methodist Church suggest in their Statement that the proposals for East Street car park will result in Church users being unable to park nearby. Given that the suggested change put forward by the Borough Council would result in the provision of 161 car parking spaces (including adjacent to the Church as part of a shared use public square) this is unlikely to be the case. With regard to the public square, the Trinity Methodist Church also suggests that it may create additional problems for the Church. At Shard End in Birmingham, the local Council has worked very successfully to deliver a new public square adjacent to a Church and reports indicate that it has been well very received by all parties and the local community. The Council remains keen to establish a public square such as this in Oadby as a location where community organisation/groups and the Council itself can hold occasional events since no such space exists in the town at present.

4.11.8 Trinity Methodist Church refer in their Statement to the situation update for Matter 3/4 Issues 3.6 and 4.11 not providing any evidence as to the size and collection of skills of the Council's Economic Development Team. It can be confirmed that it is of an appropriate size and does contain a broad collection of necessary skills to support the implementation of the policies within the Town Centres Area Action Plan.

4.12 Has the potential for enhancing the public realm been maximised?

4.12.1 Town Centres Area Action Plan Policies 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21 all prescribe (significant) improvements to the public realm of Oadby's town centre. Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 18 – Brooksby Square specifically mentions the creation of a newly formed public square to the end of South Street and improved links to The Parade, whilst Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 20 – The Parade states that '*The Borough Council will pursue opportunities for improvements to public realm along The Parade*'.

4.12.2 The Borough Council, in partnership with Leicestershire County Council, are currently preparing to submit a detailed round two full application (having already had Expressions of Interest successfully approved) for European Regional Development Fund. The application is based on significant redevelopment of the public realm of Oadby town centre's key retail destination (The Parade). The presence of the masterplan and the Town Centres Area Action Plan has assisted in the successful preparation of the Expression of Interest, and the 'round two' detailed application in order to demonstrate the strong relationship between the improvement of the public realm and economic investment in Oadby.

4.12.3 Although the Public Realm Strategy Supplementary Planning Document is mentioned within Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 11 – Public Realm paragraph 3.47, the Borough Council proposes to further strengthen Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 17 – Implementation of the Oadby Town Centre Masterplan, by adding the following sentence to paragraph 5.55.

'All public realm redevelopment or enhancement occurring within Oadby's town centre will need to be in conformity with principles and policy set out in the Borough Council's Public Realm Strategy Supplementary Planning Document'.



4.12.4 It is also thought appropriate to add an additional bullet point in Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 18 – Brooksby Square paragraph 5.59, and Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 19 – Baxter’s Place paragraph 5.70;

‘all public realm improvements being consistent with principles and policies contained within the Public Realm Strategy Supplementary Planning Document’.

4.12.5 As well as the above, it is also proposed to reword paragraph 5.81 to read;

‘Any public realm redevelopment of The Parade will need to be consistent with policies and principles set out in the Public Realm Strategy Supplementary Planning Document’.

4.13 In what ways will the plan be making provision for civic functions? (para 5.26). In view of the Primary Care Trust’s representation, should there be a proposal for a health centre in Oadby town centre?

4.13.1 Wigston is the focus for civic functions to help strengthen its role as the Borough’s main town centre. This is inline with the retail hierarchy set out in the Borough’s adopted Core Strategy and is also a requirement of paragraph 23 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The National Planning Policy Framework also requires the allocation of suitable sites to meet a range of needs in town centres which includes community facilities. The provision of a new health centre would be classed as a community facility.

4.13.2 Through the Council’s contact with the Primary Care Trust in terms of the Infrastructure Plan or through previous consultations on the preparation of the Town Centres Area Action Plan, the Primary Care Trust did not indicate that there was a requirement for a new surgery in Oadby. However, a health facility is considered a main town centre use and could easily be accommodated in policy terms within the Town Centres Area Action Plan as a development requirement that needs to be achieved. The particular needs of the Primary Care Trust and where this could be sited would need to be subject to further negotiation and potentially a specific development brief or incorporated into one of the other proposed schemes. This need has now been picked up in the reviewed Local Infrastructure Plan (2009/10) but a site has been difficult to identify as it is understood the current Primary Care Trust financial commitment would be insufficient to meet development costs alone.

4.14 Why does the reduction of office development due to changing economic times not equally refer to retail development?

4.14.1 This question stems from an typographical error in paragraph 5.49 of the Area Action Plan where the reference to office development should actually be a reference to retail development. This has been corrected in the schedule of minor changes.



4.14.2 To clarify the position regarding retail development, spatial objective 3 of the Core Strategy sets a target for 5,213 sq m (gross) of retail development. Core Strategy Policy 2 rounds this down to approximately 5,000 sq m (gross). The Town Centres Area Action Plan makes provision for 5,070 sq m. This reflects the objective for Oadby to be established as a small town centre because in order to achieve this it would be reasonable to see an increase in the amount of retail space provided. Although the current economic climate should not be ignored, the vacancy rate in Oadby is very low and the Town Centres Area Action Plan covers the period to 2026 during which time, the economic prospects are likely to improve.

4.14.3 To clarify the position regarding office development, the amount of office space has not been reduced. This reflects the fact that Oadby is the defined office centre in the Borough and the Town Centres Area Action Plan aims to further exploit this existing critical demand during the plan period whilst ensuring that provision remains complimentary to that provided in Leicester city. In addition, the Borough is very dependant upon warehousing and industrial floorspace in terms of providing employment opportunities. The Town Centres Area Action Plan provides an opportunity to balance this and also to contribute towards meeting the objectives of the Borough Council's Economic Development Strategy. There would however, be some flexibility in the amount of office space identified in Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 17 by reducing the number of storeys identified in Block C4 on the Masterplan which would respond to the concerns raised by the Oadby Town Centre Association in their Statement (paragraph 3; page 8; paragraph 2, page 9; and, paragraph 2, page 11).

4.15 Is the amount and type of housing provision appropriate for the needs of Oadby? Is the proposal for 35 units, 3/4 storeys high on the part of the existing East Street car park appropriate in streetscape terms? Is a proportion of affordable housing appropriate and if so, how much?

4.15.1 The adopted Core Strategy states a target of 80 dwellings are required to be delivered in the centre of Oadby. The overall figure of 75 dwellings is broadly in conformity with this target. There is very little land available for strictly residential development within Oadby district centre and so in order to make the most efficient use of the land available apartment development is the best option. At present there is very little apartment development in Oadby as opposed to Wigston.

4.15.2 The Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Housing Market Assessment notes that even in the current economic climate, Oadby's housing market was still relatively buoyant and it is a "desirable 'escalator' location" (SHMA, Appendix 16, paragraph 16.1.b). Although there is evidence to support the need for more family housing in Oadby generally, this would be difficult to achieve with the confines of the district centre. Such development would be more appropriate to other sites outside the boundary of the centre.



4.15.3 The area of the East Street car park site proposed to deliver the residential development element is considered as a key gateway to Oadby centre. It provides one of the few opportunities to announce the centre to passers by. Surrounding buildings, whilst predominately 2 storey, have a range of heights yet it is considered that a taller building here would not be overly dominant or be sufficiently out of character if it designed to be in sympathy with its surroundings.

4.15.4 The Strategic Housing Market Assessment makes plain that housing demand greatly outweighs supply in the Borough, particularly for affordable housing. This is particularly relevant to Oadby which is the Borough's most affluent settlement, particularly in terms of housing land values. Hence Core Strategy Policy 11 seeks to secure 30 per cent affordable housing target (based on the findings of the Borough Council's Affordable Housing Viability Assessment). It is therefore vital that the residential element of the Oadby Masterplan is maintained as it will contribute towards meeting the Borough's challenging affordable housing targets especially in an area where residential provision has been relatively low but affordable housing needs remain high. The Borough's Housing Manager provided the following information from the Borough Council's Choice Based Lettings System. This has details of those people registered on the Council's Housing Register who have bid for a vacant Council housing association property (i.e. those looking for affordable housing). To date the number of bids made of recent vacancies, the following levels of interest can be illustrated:

- 1 bed flat – 30 applicants
- 2 bed flat – 25 applicants
- 2 bed house – 55 applicants
- 3 bed house – 60 applicants

4.15.5 In paragraph 5 of page 5 of the Oadby Trinity Methodist Church's further statement they posit that the deletion of the housing requirement from the Brooksby Square proposal would not take the Area Action Plan out of conformity with the Core Strategy. As Core Strategy 1 Spatial Strategy for Development in the Borough of Oadby and Wigston makes clear, residential development in town centres is necessary to help deliver the regeneration of each centre. This directly equates with Spatial Objective 1 Regeneration of town and district centres and Spatial Objective 7 a Balanced Housing Market which both stipulate a town centre focus for new development. It is difficult to see how deletion of the residential development element of the Oadby Area Action Plan policies would not be totally out of conformity with the adopted spatial strategy contained in the Core Strategy.



4.16 In all other respects are the proposals for development in the key development sites at Brooksby Square, Baxter's Place and The Parade (policies 18, 19 and 20 respectively) justified and effective? If the AAP proposals for Brooksby Square were deleted, would the AAP be out of conformity with the Core Strategy?

4.16.1 The Council is confident that the proposals in the key sites in Oadby are in conformity with the Adopted Core Strategy's policies and are therefore justified and effective.

4.16.2 Core Strategy Policy 2: Development in the centres of Oadby, Wigston and South Wigston; includes approximate new commercial and retail floor space figures that the town centres should look to be providing through their regeneration. The Brooksby Square site will help to deliver those targets as set out within the adopted policy.

4.16.3 The adopted Core Strategy states a target of 80 dwellings are required to be delivered in the centre of Oadby. The overall figure of 75 dwellings is broadly in conformity with this target. There is very little land available for strictly residential development within Oadby district centre and so in order to make the most efficient use of the land available apartment development is the best option. If proposals for Brooksby Square did not come forward, it would have an impact upon the Council meeting the targets as set out in the Core Strategy and therefore would not be in general conformity with it, particularly in terms of housing provision. Removal of the Brooksby Square proposals would also risk the available expenditure not being captured by the town and as a result, the town could be at further risk of slipping behind its competitors.

4.16.4 Trinity Methodist Church raise concerns in their Statement over the costs of establishing the decked car parking and in general with regard to the deliverability of the Brooksby Square policy, particularly given the current economic climate. The sensitivity analysis in the Delivery Strategy provides a number of options that would allow the successful delivery of the schemes. It must also be borne in mind that the Area Action Plan covers the period to 2026 and it would be inappropriate to limit the vision and objectives for Oadby town centre to reflect the current economic and market circumstances when the likelihood is that these circumstances will change over the course of the plan period.

4.17 What other development opportunities in Oadby should the plan be addressing, eg public amenities such as toilets?

4.17.1 To ensure shoppers are attracted to centres and will return it is a must that they are accessible and people feel assured that they will be able to use good quality, clean and safe amenities. The provision of a well-maintained and properly equipped public toilet is accepted as a necessary amenity for the general health, comfort and wellbeing of visitor to a centre, particularly for carers of young children and the elderly.



4.17.2 The Borough Council are confident that the majority of development opportunities that were required to be taken account of in the preparation of the Town Centres Area Action Plan have been. Other development opportunities such as the location of publicly accessible toilets is a matter of detail that will be addressed through the detailed planning work for example development briefs or site specific Masterplans.

4.17.3 The Borough Council has no plans to close any of the public toilets it operates in the Borough. Where public amenities need to be removed for redevelopment of sites to take place, these will be replaced in some form. This could be by incorporating such facilities into new developments. Other alternatives that could be considered are the entering into a reciprocal agreement with a range of town centre businesses and organisations to allow public access to their private toilet facilities in return for an annual fee. This is known as a community toilet scheme.



Appendix 1 – Pedestrian distances between car parks

Note – distances are based on shortest pedestrian route.



| Number | Distance to Sandhurst Street Car Park | Distance to East Street Car Park |
|--------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 | 207 metres | 151 metres |
| 2 | 153 metres | 139 metres |
| 3 | 93 metres | 173 metres |
| 4 | 133 metres | 107 metres |
| 5 | 194 metres | 139 metres |
| 6 | 236 metres | 201 metres |

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