



Nathaniel Lichfield  
& Partners  
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**Retail Capacity Study 2016**

**Executive Summary**

Oadby and Wigston Borough Council

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Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners  
3rd Floor  
One St James's Square  
Manchester M2 6DN

[nlplanning.com](http://nlplanning.com)

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Registered Office:

14 Regent's Wharf

All Saints Street

London N1 9RL

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## Executive Summary

This Retail Capacity Study has been prepared by Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners (NLP) on behalf of Oadby and Wigston Borough Council. It is intended to form part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan which will cover the period to 2036. The study provides a qualitative analysis of the existing retail and leisure facilities within the Borough, and a quantitative and qualitative assessment of the need for new retail facilities. The key findings of the study are set out below.

### Overview of the Shopping Hierarchy

Wigston town centre is the main shopping centre in the Borough. Centres at Oadby and South Wigston effectively function as district centres (albeit Oadby is only marginally smaller than Wigston) and the Borough also contains a number of local centres.

Wigston, Oadby and South Wigston address localised needs, with major retail provision located close by within Leicester City Centre and Fosse Park. Meridian Leisure Park is also located close by and contains major commercial leisure facilities. The strength of competition outside of the Borough restricts the Borough's market share of expenditure, particularly for comparison goods.

Wigston town centre has a reasonable number of convenience and comparison retail units and a mix of both multiple and independent traders. The proportion of comparison goods operators is above the national average, and the centre has a good provision and range of comparison categories. The main convenience offer of the centre is the small to medium sized Sainsbury's supermarket, along with Aldi, Farmfoods and Iceland foodstores. Shopping facilities are supported by a variety of non-retail services, community and leisure facilities. The centre has a good provision of banks, hairdressers, restaurants and takeaways.

Oadby district centre is under performing in terms of the comparison goods sector, with the proportion of comparison units below the national average, albeit, there is a reasonable range of comparison categories. Oadby is particularly strong in the convenience sector, with the district centre containing a Co-op, Marks & Spencer Simply Food and Waitrose, with a large Asda foodstore and a large Sainsbury's foodstore located nearby. Oadby has a high number of national multiples relative to the size of the centre.

South Wigston is noticeably smaller than Wigston and Oadby. However, it is currently defined as a district centre; it is considered that South Wigston meets the definition of a district centre as should continue to be defined as such. In the convenience sector, there is a small Co-op convenience store within the district centre; however, a very large Tesco foodstore is located close to the district centre boundary. The majority of comparison units are independents

and the services sector is dominated by fast food/take aways and hairdressers/beauty parlours.

The local centres typically contain a small convenience store and a small number of retail/service units that are independently operated and these centres meet a localised need.

## **Future Requirements**

The retail needs assessment identified floorspace requirements for the Borough over the Plan period to 2036.

The short to medium term capacity figures up to 2021 suggest surplus of available convenience goods expenditure could support an additional 341 sq. m net of sales floorspace (487 sq. m gross), primarily concentrated in Wigston town centre.

In the long term, surplus expenditure at 2036 could support 675 sq. m net of sales floorspace in the Borough as a whole.

For comparison goods, for the Borough as a whole, the surplus expenditure could support an additional 607 sq. m net (867 sq. m gross) by 2021. The surplus expenditure at 2036 could support 5,482 sq. m net (7,831 sq. m gross). The vast majority of this surplus is for Wigston town centre and Oadby district centre, with only a limited amount identified for the rest of the Borough.

If the five land use allocation sites in Wigston and Oadby which are set out in the AAP come forward, then collectively, these sites would absorb a significant proportion of the retail floorspace requirements for the Borough.

The commercial leisure assessment concludes that there is a qualitative need for restaurants and indoor play centres in the Borough. Large scale commercial leisure facilities are located in Leicester City Centre and at Meridian Leisure Park and operators of major commercial leisure facilities are unlikely to seek a presence within Oadby and Wigston Borough.

## **Recommendations**

The principles of the NPPF indicate that the Council's policy approach should aim to at least fully meet needs, so that the local economy is not constrained and potential investment is not diverted elsewhere or lost. The sequential approach suggests that designated town centres should be the first choice for retail, leisure and main town centre uses. All development should be appropriate in terms of scale and nature to the centre in which it is located.

Vacant premises should help to accommodate future growth in Wigston, Oadby and South Wigston. There will always be a certain proportion of units vacant as part of a natural churn. However, a target would be for vacancy levels to fall to the pre-recession national average (i.e. approximately 8%). The reoccupation of vacant premises will contribute in part to help accommodate growth.

Within Wigston town centre, the 'Burgess Junction', 'Long Lanes' and 'Chapel Mill' sites are key opportunities for accommodating growth. The 'Brooksby' and 'Baxters Place' sites within Oadby district centre are potential sites for new retail and leisure development within the district centre.

Within South Wigston district centre, development options for additional retail floorspace are limited. The future strategy for South Wigston should focus on the re-occupation of vacant units and small scale intensification and extensions.

Other local centres in the Borough should continue to play their important role in providing day to day shops and services that are accessible to residents. It is recommended that the shops located at Brabazon Road in Oadby and at London Road in Oadby (Old Oadby) be included as additional local centres.

If the potential strategic residential development at land south of Newton Lane and east of Welford Road, Wigston is delivered then a new local centre (of around 750 sq.m gross) would be appropriate to support the new residents. This would need to ensure that it would complement rather than compete directly with nearby defined centres.

The study provides a broad overview of the potential need for further retail and commercial development in the short – medium term up to 2021, with longer term forecast up to 2031 and 2036. Projections are subject to uncertainty and forecasts may need to be amended to reflect emerging changes as and when new information becomes available, in particular longer-term projections up to 2031 and 2036 should be treated with caution.



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