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Oadby Town Centre Area Action Plan Preferred Options Addendum Report

November 2008



Oadby & Wigston
Borough Council



FABER MAUNSELL | AECOM



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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Taylor Young, in conjunction with BE Group and Faber Maunsell and in association with White Young Green, has been commissioned by Oadby and Wigston Borough Council to undertake an Area Action Plan (AAP) for the town centre of Oadby. This is being prepared in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004, and its subsequent alterations, and as such will form part of the Council's Local Development Framework (LDF) in accordance with their Local Development Scheme (LDS). Running in parallel to this work is the preparation of an AAP for Wigston Town Centre.

Status

- 1.2. This report is the Preferred Options Addendum Report. It follows the Issues and Options and Preferred Options Reports which underwent six-week periods of consultation in July 2007 and November 2007 respectively, during which the public and stakeholders had the opportunity to submit comments to the Council. The report has taken into consideration comments upon both periods of consultation, and puts forward the revised preferred options. There is also a summary of the key issues raised during the latter public consultation stage and, where appropriate, responses are provided to specific concerns.
- 1.3. This report should therefore be read in association with the Preferred Options report. It sets out and justifies key areas of change resulting from the consultation and subsequent additional research.
- 1.4. Under the requirements of paragraph 25 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 and The Town and Country Planning (Local Development)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2008, this report is subject to an extended period of consultation.
- 1.5. This report has also undergone a process of Sustainability Appraisal, and the associated report is also available for consultation over the same time period.
- 1.6. The AAP process not only provides the planning policy for the town but also provides an interpretation of policy through a masterplan for the future of the town, which will help in its regeneration – setting out possible deliverable site layouts and commercial information that will help in the achievement of the masterplan.

2. Preferred Options Consultation

- 2.1. The preferred options consultation period generated 602 representations from 233 individuals / organisations.
- 2.2. Key areas of objection are as follows:
 - Place of Worship
 - Car Parking
 - Removal of shops
 - Allocation of the Invicta site
 - Junction re-alignment at Leicester Road / The Parade

Place of Worship

- 2.3. A number of representations, whilst not objecting to the principle of the Place of Worship, objected to the impact of such a development on the car parking facilities for the town.
- 2.4. Other representations raised concern regarding the proximity between the existing Methodist chapel and the proposed location for the place of worship.
- 2.5. Finally, a number of representations objected outright to the introduction of a Place of Worship in the town, often citing unfounded and incorrect assumptions.

Car Parking

- 2.6. As mentioned above, many people objected to the impact on car parking of other development, particularly the proposed Place of Worship.
- 2.7. Other objections related to the numbers of spaces not being sufficient, as well as their future management.

Removal of shops

- 2.8. Objections questioned the need for new retail facilities, particularly in relation to levels of vacant property and the proposed demolition of a number of properties to enable the development of the masterplan.
- 2.9. Questions were also raised regarding the impact on smaller shopkeepers and how they would be able to afford new premises.

Allocation of the Invicta site

- 2.10. Objections have questioned the need for 'another supermarket' on this site.

Junction re-alignment at Leicester Road / The Parade

- 2.11. Objections related to the need to undertake this major engineering operation and the loss of the existing retail premises.

3. Additional Information

- 3.1. The Preferred Options period of consultation established a number of key concerns, as set out above. To inform further the Council’s Local Development Framework and the town centre AAPs in particular, the Council has commissioned an independent Faith Community and Places of Worship Needs Assessment and a Retail Capacity Study. Key findings in relation to Oadby are set out below.

Retail Capacity Study

- 3.2. The report’s findings set out predicted retail capacity for the Borough up to 2026, and suggest a split across the three towns of Oadby, Wigston and South Wigston based on their relative current floorspaces.
- 3.3. In relation to Oadby, the report sets out that the percentage of convenience outlets is in line with the national average, whereas for comparison the figure is well below. The level of service units is above the average, and the level of vacant units is below the average.
- 3.4. The household survey identified that key areas for improvement to encourage people to visit the town more included better shops, parking, cafes and restaurants.
- 3.5. The comparison and convenience floorspace capacity to 2026 are therefore set out below:

| Comparison | Existing (sqm) | Additional Capacity by 2026 (sqm) |
|-------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Oadby | 4801 | 4514 |
| Wigston | 12517 | 11768 |
| South Wigston | 1728 | 1625 |
| Total | 19046 | 17906 |

| Convenience | Existing (sqm) | Additional Capacity by 2026 (sqm) |
|--------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Oadby | 2015 | 699 |
| Wigston | 4505 | 1562 |
| South Wigston | 751 | 260 |
| Total | 7271 | 2521 |

| Combined Convenience & Comparison | Existing (sqm) | Additional Capacity by 2026 (sqm) |
|--|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Oadby | 6816 | 5213 |
| Wigston | 17022 | 13330 |
| South Wigston | 2479 | 1885 |
| Total | 26317 | 20428 |

- 3.6. The draft report concludes that this does not take into consideration the significant amount of leaked expenditure (82%) that could be 'clawed back' from new and improved retail attractions.

Faith Community and Places of Worship Needs Assessment

- 3.7. This study concludes that there is a significant diversity in religion in the Borough. In particular, it sets out that the BME population of the Borough is 18.2% (2001 census), well above the Leicestershire average of 7.3% and the East Midlands average of 8.7%. Oadby Uplands and Oadby Grange wards have the highest proportions of BME population in the Borough – 41.4% and 36.1% respectively.
- 3.8. The report also sets out the national, regional and local policy framework for the provision of facilities to meet the demands of the population including those for religious purposes.

- 3.9. Evidence was collected through a number of ways including engagement with representatives from the principal faith groups of Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh and the faith groups within those groups, including for Christian; Baptist, Methodist, Protestant, Salvation Army, Seventh Day Adventist, United Reform Church and Evangelical. For Hindu; Arya Sumaj, Arya Vedic Society and Geeta Bhavan. For Jewish, Progressive and Orthodox, and for Muslim, Sunni and Shia.
- 3.10. The research identified that most Christian groups have premises and capacity within the Borough. However it also identifies that with a growing congregation, the Evangelical Church may be seeking more appropriate premises in the future. The Jewish community reported that their needs are met by traveling to a Synagogue in Leicester.
- 3.11. This research identified that there is a need in particular for facilities for the Muslim, Sikh and Hindu population of Oadby, with residents currently traveling to the Central Mosque and to Masjid Umar outside the Borough to worship.
- 3.12. This evidence is supported by more quantitative assessment which sets out that with an estimated 4,000 – 5,000 Muslims in the Borough, the need for an appropriate Place of Worship is high. It also concludes that the need for a place of worship for the Hindu and more permanent arrangements for the Sikh population is also high.
- 3.13. The report concludes that there is a need for at least one Place of Worship in Oadby to help meet this demand. It also concludes that the most appropriate location is as close to the town centre as possible, as such locations will have good access by a choice of travel mode, including walking, and accessibility to car parking facilities, as well as proximity to where people live and work, and other community uses.

4. Responses to objections & Masterplan alterations

- 4.1. The Council has responded to each objection and this information is available on its website.
- 4.2. The associated revised masterplan is shown below at figure 4.1.
- 4.3. In relation to the key objection themes, the Council's responses are set out below:

Place of Worship

- 4.4. The Faith Study clearly concludes that there is the demand for at least one additional Place of Worship in Oadby, and that the town centre is preferable for such uses. However, bearing in mind the level of objection to the original proposed location at East Street car park, it is now proposed to be incorporated into the main Sandhurst Street retail development.
- 4.5. This is advantageous as it relates well to adjoining car parking (see following paragraphs) as well as other town centre facilities including public transport and good (and improved) walking routes to nearby residential areas. By moving the proposed location this also overcomes a significant number of objections.
- 4.6. More regular movement in this part of town will help to maintain natural surveillance over the new shopping area, which will also help to overcome a small number of concerns raised over safety and security.
- 4.7. Reducing the proposed quantum of retail floorspace in this area also reduces the overall retail floorspace provision for the town, which ensures that there is not significant oversupply in accordance with the findings of the retail study.
- 4.8. Linking it to more major development will also offer an opportunity for wider improvements and possibly S106 contributions related to the retail development in particular.
- 4.9. It is proposed to include a criteria-based policy to restrict change of use of existing community facilities across the Borough, unless it can be proved that there is no demand for another community use. A further policy will also set out a positive criteria-based approach to applications for places of worship in appropriate locations elsewhere within the Borough (e.g. on unallocated sites). These policies will be included within the Core Strategy.

Car Parking

- 4.10. Objections related to car parking are proposed to be addressed by the introduction of single decked car park facilities at both East Street and Sandhurst Street. In order to minimise impact on neighbouring property, it is proposed that these are sunk to half a storey and well clad and landscaped.

- 4.11. This results in an overall increase of car parking from 413 current / existing spaces to 460 spaces within Oadby town centre, 430 of which will be for public use. With reference to the Leicestershire County Council parking standards, the maximum number of allowable car parking spaces consistent with the Masterplan developments is 151 private spaces (121 associated with the residential and 30 associated with the commercial developments) and 456 public spaces. Thus the Masterplan proposals do not exceed the calculated maximum allowance for public car parking. There is scope to increase the number of private car parking spaces, however considering the town centre location and immediate local facilities, sustainable travel should be encouraged and managing car park demand will help to achieve this.
- 4.12. This has to be balanced against a requirement to reduce the overall need to travel in accordance with the guidance set out in PPG13 and the desire to promote more sustainable travel modes. This can also be linked to improved public transport and walking facilities in the town which should help to reduce travel demand.

Removal of shops

- 4.13. The Retail Study sets out that vacancy levels are below average, and that there is capacity over the plan period for additional retail floorspace. This has not taken into account the possibility of clawing back leaked expenditure. The alterations have reduced the levels of retail floorspace from 9,125sqm to 5,870sqm. This compares to the capacity as set out above of 5,213sqm, allowing a level of clawback and development of the Invicta site should it come forward.
- 4.14. In order to be successful into the future and withstand competition from neighbouring facilities, the town has to move forward. This inevitably means new and improved retail floorspace that better accommodates the needs and demands of modern retailing. The plan also allows for a range of smaller retail development which could accommodate smaller / independent retailers.
- 4.15. To enable this redevelopment, therefore, a certain level of demolition is necessary. The detailed development plans will examine how phased demolition and construction can minimise disruption to existing retailers. This may include temporary relocations to vacant premises elsewhere in the town centre whilst construction takes place.

Allocation of the Invicta site

- 4.16. This site is proposed to be allocated for retail-led, mixed-use development. A public consultation event has recently been undertaken by a known supermarket operator and therefore a planning application can be expected in the near future. Such an application will be determined in accordance with the adopted development plan, and this report will be a material consideration in that determination.
- 4.17. However, the allocation is proposed to remain as a retail led mixed use allocation in order to facilitate the future development of the rest of the site if proposals come forward, for example for employment or community use.

Junction re-alignment at Leicester Road / The Parade

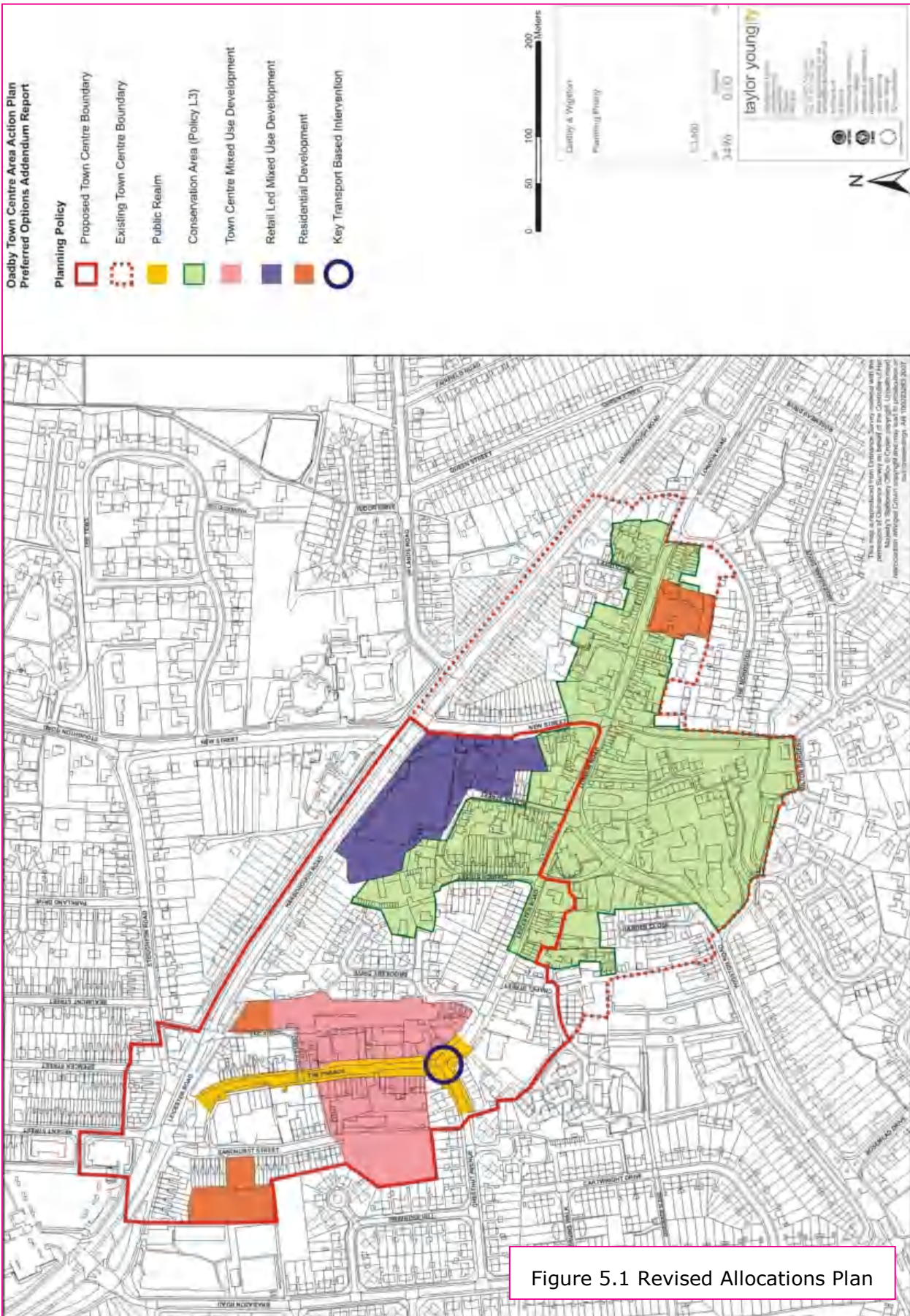
- 4.18. Whilst the original principles to open up The Parade to make the town centre more visible, thereby attracting more passing trade, are maintained, it is acknowledged that this would be an expensive engineering operation and would include the loss of an existing prominent store in the town centre.
- 4.19. The proposals are therefore amended to include only minor alterations to the junction to facilitate safe and appropriate pedestrian crossing facilities and maintain efficient traffic flows. It is also proposed to seek to improve the elevation of the current 'Instore' store to achieve a more welcoming environment to the centre. This would be achieved by working closely with the tenant and landowner.



Figure 4.1 Revised Masterplan

5. Policy alterations

- 5.1. The policy approach as set out in the Preferred Options report is proposed to be maintained.
- 5.2. Minor alterations include the widening of the East Street / Sandhurst Street / The Parade allocation as shown on the plan below at figure 5.1. The revised area allows for a more flexible approach to its redevelopment, including the possible inclusion of a Community Use which could be a Place of Worship, health centre, day nursery, gallery and other uses under Use Class D1. It is proposed that this approach will also be reflected in the Core Strategy.



6. Conclusions & Next steps

- 6.1. This report sets out the changes to the preferred options report as a result of the previous round of public consultation and additional research undertaken.
- 6.2. It will now be the subject of public consultation from 28th November 2008 to 23rd January 2009. Representations received will be considered by the Council, and the revised, Pre-Submission reports will be subject to a final period of consultation later in 2009, followed by Submission, Examination and Adoption to run in association with the progression of the Council's Core Strategy.

