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Wigston 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 Wigston. This is being prepared fully 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 Oadby 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 129 representations from 53 individuals / organisations.
- 2.2. Key areas of objection are as follows:
 - Car parking
 - Proximity of new build to Pentecostal Church
 - New road layout
 - Bus route alterations reducing accessibility
 - Need for additional retail provision

Car Parking

- 2.3. A number of objections were received relating to the lack of car parking in the preferred option masterplan.
- 2.4. Objections also related to the spread of car parks by location in relation to existing car parks being built upon and new car parks proposed.
- 2.5. Objections were also received relating to the locations of disabled spaces.

Pentecostal Church, Frederick Street

- 2.6. Representations related to the proximity of the proposed new retail development to the Church and the impact of the new road layout and use of Frederick Street, in terms of compromising the operational requirements of the Church, both on a day-to-day basis, as well as accommodating events such as weddings and funerals.

New road layout

- 2.7. Objections received covered the operation of the proposed traffic circulation system, as well as the proposed demolition to enable the development.
- 2.8. Other objections raised concern over the operation of the one-way section of Frederick Street and how the shared surface area would be designed and managed.
- 2.9. Access to Spring Lane was also questioned.

Bus Routing

- 2.10. This relates in part to the new road layout; objections related to the impact of the revised road layout on bus routing in the town, and whether this would compromise ease of access to the existing retail outlets from existing stop locations.

Need for additional retail provision

- 2.11. Objections questioned the need for additional retail floorspace, citing existing vacancy levels, and the proposals for demolition of existing floorspace to create new floorspace. Questions were also raised regarding the impact on smaller shopkeepers and how they would be able to afford new 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 commissioned an independent Retail Capacity Study. Key findings in relation to Wigston 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 Wigston, the report sets out that the percentage of convenience outlets is higher than the national average (skewed by Sainsbury, Farm Foods, Aldi and a high number of independent traders), whereas for comparison and service units the figure is just below. The level of vacant units is well 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, improved cleanliness, traffic free pedestrian streets and improved public transport.
- 3.5. The comparison and convenience floorspace capacity to 2026 are therefore set out below:

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

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

Combined Convenience & Comparison	Existing (sqm)	Additional Capacity by 2026 (sqm)
Wigston	17022	13330
Oadby	6816	5213
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.

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:

Car parking

- 4.4. Objections related to car parking are proposed to be overcome as follows:
 - Making the Multi-storey car park at Junction Road one storey taller (to 5 storeys). This would still be hidden by the 3-storey office block. Typical floor to floor heights of a modern office development are 3.5 metres, with additional height at roof level for plant. This could result in a building of 13m in height. Floor to floor heights for a multi storey car park are 2.5m, so a 5-storey car park, with an open 5th storey, would be 11 – 12m in height. Standing at ground level therefore, it would not be possible to see the top storey of the car park from most locations within the town.
 - Increased car parking in the south of the town between Paddock Street and Bell Street at surface, undercroft and underground levels. This will maximise the falling site levels, enabling some undercroft car parking to be covered as opposed to having to excavate underground, which will help to minimise build costs.
 - Disabled parking in the centre of the town at convenient locations, including at the library and public transport facility.
 - Layby drop off / taxi drop off at the western end of Bell Street.
- 4.5. This will allow an increase from 535 (current / existing) spaces to 838 in Wigston town centre which will be a mix of public and private use. Private spaces for the proposed commercial and residential developments will be allocated within the Junction Road and Paddock Street parking areas respectively. With reference to the Leicestershire County Council parking standards, the maximum number of allowable car parking spaces consistent with the Masterplan developments is 389 private spaces and 721 public spaces, a total of 1,110 spaces.

Proximity of new build to Pentecostal Church, Frederick Street

- 4.6. The proposals have been amended in this area to allow a small parking / layby area that would accommodate weddings / funerals etc. This has also been achieved by the drawing back of the new retail proposals which reduces the overall quantum of floorspace as set out at paragraphs 4.12 – 4.14.

- 4.7. The current width at the pinch point (i.e. the narrowest point) between the church and Sainsbury's on Frederick Street is 6.8m which includes approximately 1.1m footway widths on each side of the carriageway. The Masterplan proposes to extend Frederick Street to join Bull Head Street, providing a one-way eastbound section between the Sainsbury's ramp access and Bull Head Street. Outside the church it is proposed to provide a 3.65m carriageway and 1.6m footway on either side, thus increasing the existing footway provision at this location.

New road layout

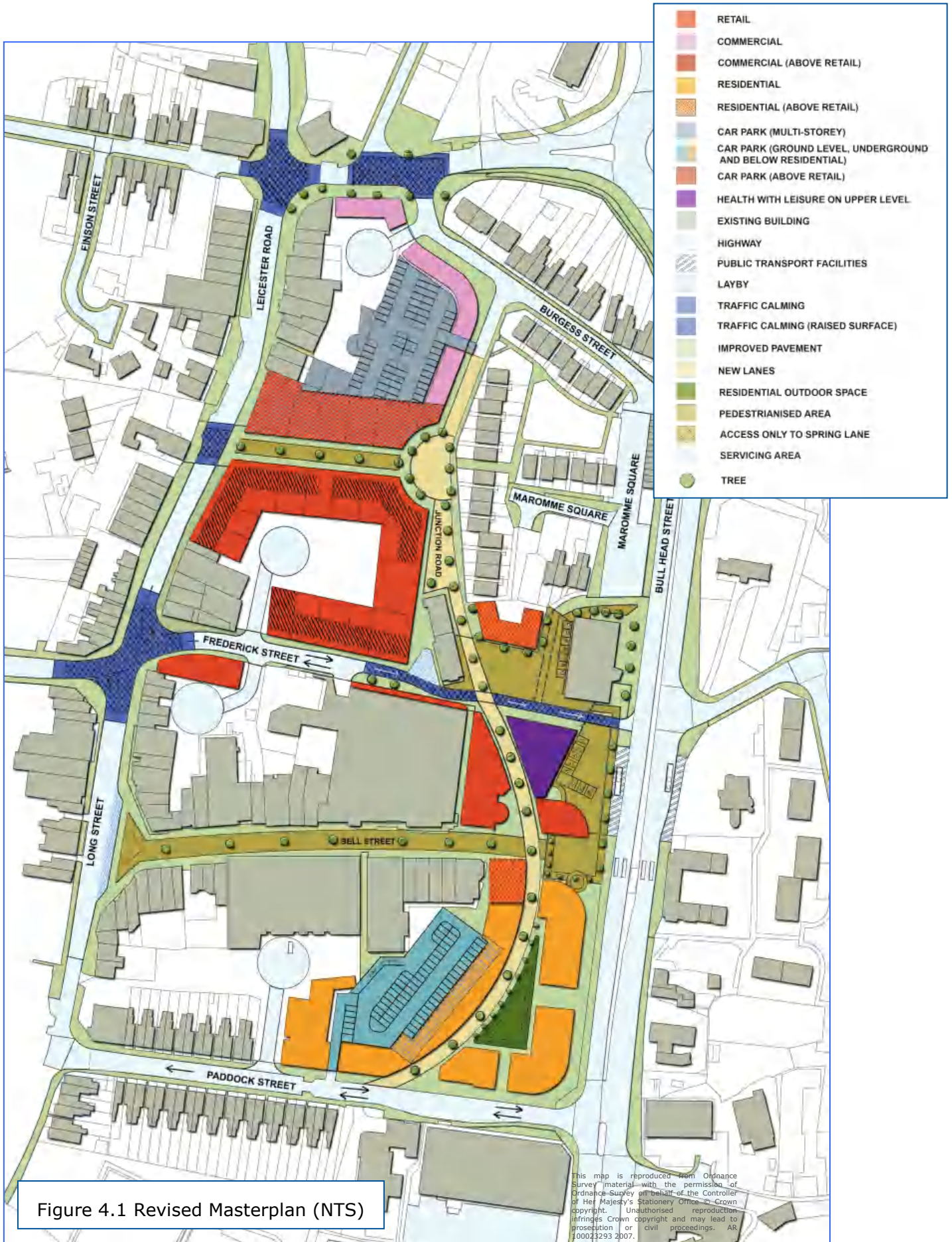
- 4.8. It is proposed to reconfigure the town centre road layout to aid the distribution of through traffic from Aylestone Lane to Bull Head Street. Frederick Street will be extended to meet Bull Head Street at a left only priority T-junction. Frederick Street itself will be one-way eastbound from the Sainsbury's ramp access to Bull Head Street to minimise traffic flows and pedestrian conflicts. The one-way eastbound section mirrors that of Paddock Street which is one-way westbound, thus providing through routes to and from the local highway network without vehicles using the busy retail area along Leicester Road north.
- 4.9. The mini-roundabout junction of Leicester Road/Aylestone Lane will be changed to a priority crossroads to provide an obvious through route from Aylestone Lane to Frederick Street. To assess if this junction arrangement is achievable, vehicle counts and traffic modelling work will be required. However, initial design work as shown on the masterplan requires the demolition of adjoining property to achieve the necessary alignments and the safe and efficient operation of the junction.
- 4.10. The section of one-way road through the new public space will be shared surface which will help to reduce vehicular dominance. Whilst this area will have to be carefully designed, the principles of shared surfaces are well established and proven across the country. This area also allows for access only to properties on Spring Lane as well as 7 disabled parking spaces.

Bus route alterations reducing accessibility

- 4.11. It is considered that many of the objections relating to the public transport facilities have resulted owing to misunderstanding of the proposals. It is not proposed to alter any of the existing bus routes through the town centre; the transport interchange will simply provide an additional location for passengers to board any future services along Bull Head Street. Future services or re-routing will be dependant on there being a commercial case and would be led by the bus operators. Increased pedestrian circuits within the town centre will provide safe and convenient routes to existing bus stops on Leicester Road and Paddock Street.

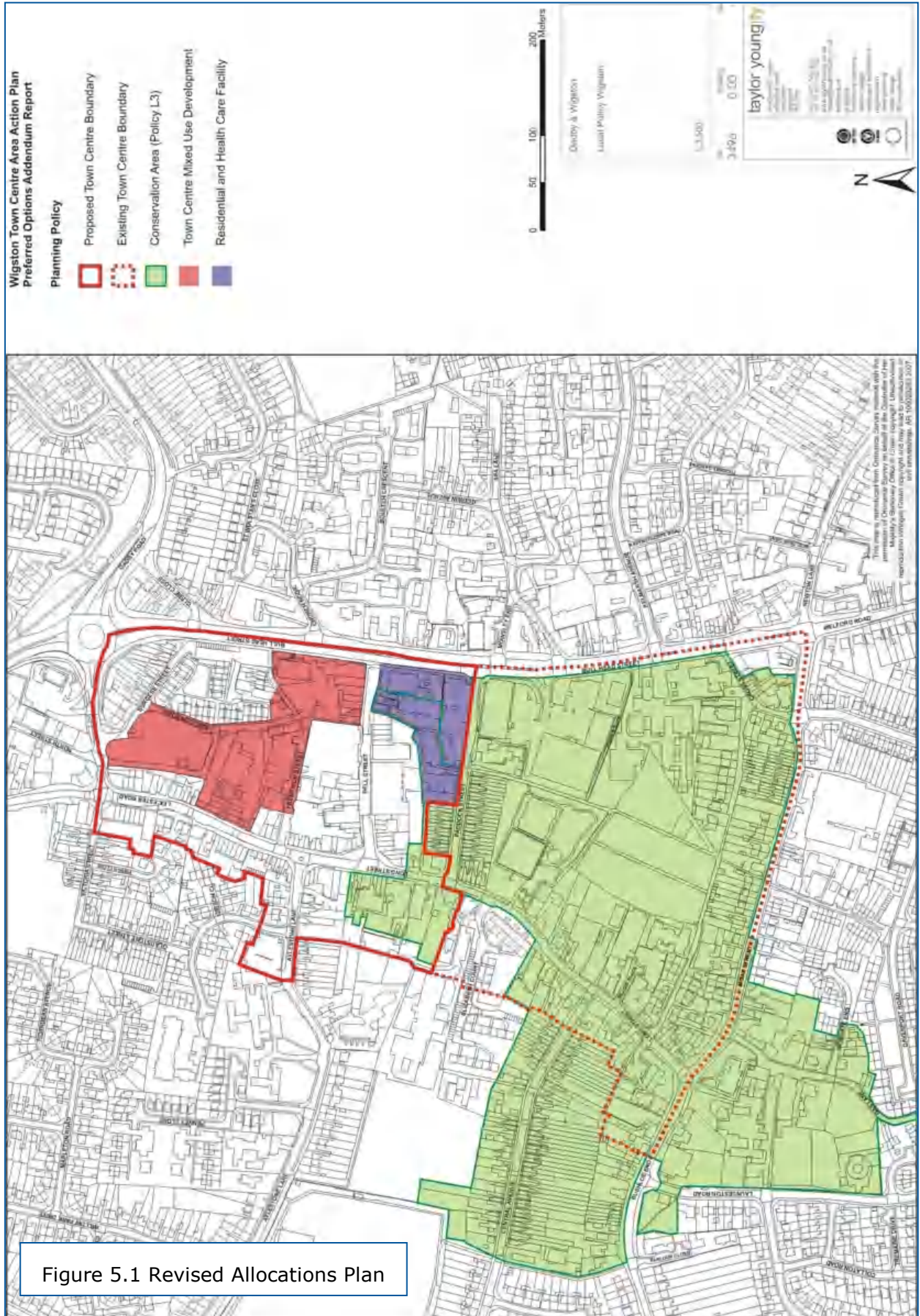
Need for additional retail provision

- 4.12. 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 15,425sqm to 13,225sqm. This compares to the capacity as set out above of 13,330sqm.
- 4.13. 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.
- 4.14. To enable this redevelopment a certain level of demolition is therefore necessary. It is accepted that the proposals will require relocation of some existing businesses, including retail outlets, and the detailed phasing of development would aim to minimise disruption or closures by working closely with occupiers to secure temporary or permanent alternative accommodation within the town centre.



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 alteration of allocation boundaries in the south of the town to increase the residential allocation, and minor alterations to the town centre redevelopment allocation to reflect the revised masterplan, as set out in figure 5.1.



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 of 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.

