

**Test Valley Revised Local Plan
DPD 2011-2029
Regulation 22 – Submission to
Secretary of State**

**Policy LE11
Main Town Centre Uses
Topic Paper**

July 2014

REVISED LOCAL PLAN

TOPIC PAPER – POLICY LE11 MAIN TOWN CENTRE USES

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This paper has been prepared to provide the background justification for Policy LE11 which would apply to development for ‘main town centre uses’ in the context of the designated and defined town centres of Andover and Romsey.

2 Policy Background

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraphs 23-27 sets out the Government’s planning policies for town centres and retail development.

“Para.23: Planning policies should be positive, promote competitive town centre environments and set out policies for the management and growth of centres over the plan period. In drawing up Local Plans, local planning authorities should:...

- *define a network and hierarchy of centres that is resilient to anticipated future economic changes;*
- *define the extent of town centres...*
- *set policies for the consideration of proposals for main town centre uses which cannot be accommodated in or adjacent to town centres;...”*

“Para.24: Local planning authorities should apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre and are not in accordance with an up-to-date Local Plan. They should require applications for main town centre uses to be located in town centres, then in edge of centre locations and only if suitable sites are not available should out of centre sites be considered. When considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites that are well connected to the town centre. Applicants and local planning authorities should demonstrate flexibility on issues such as format and scale.”

“Para.25: This sequential approach should not be applied to applications for small scale rural offices or other small scale rural development.

“Para.26: When assessing applications for retail, leisure and office development outside of town centres, which are not in accordance with an up-to-date Local Plan, local planning authorities should require an impact

assessment if the development is over a proportionate, locally set floorspace threshold (if there is no locally set threshold, the default threshold is 2,500sq m). This should include assessment of:

- the impact of the proposal on existing, committed and planned public and private investment in a centre or centres in the catchment area of the proposal; and
- the impact of the proposal on town centre vitality and viability, including local consumer choice and trade in the town centre and wider area, up to five years from the time the application is made. For major schemes where the full impact will not be realised in five years, the impact should also be assessed up to ten years from the time the application is made.

“Para.27: Where an application fails to satisfy the sequential test or is likely to have significant adverse impact on one or more of the above factors, it should be refused.

- 2.2 The NPPF Annex 2 Glossary includes a definition of main town centre uses and town centres

“Main town centre uses: Retail development (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres); leisure, entertainment facilities and the more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, night-clubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres, and bingo halls); offices; and arts, culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities).”

“Town centre: Area defines on the local authority’s proposal map, including the primary shopping area and areas predominantly occupied by main town centre use within or adjacent to the primary shopping area. Reference to town centres or centres apply to city centres, town centres, district centres and local centres but exclude small parades of shops purely of neighbourhood significance. Unless they area identified as centres in Local Plans, existing out-of-centre developments, comprising or including main town centre uses, do not constitute town centre.”

- 2.3 The NPPF does not provide definitions for different types of centre in the hierarchy or their characteristics, although one was provided by the former PPS6 (see Annex 1). Andover and Romsey have defined town centres and Stockbridge is designated as a local centre. There are no city centres or district centres designated in the Borough.

3 Main Town Centre Uses, Sequential Assessment and Impact Assessment

- 3.1 The policy has been written to reflect NPPF paras.24-27 and provide a local policy framework for the consideration of development proposals.

SEQUENTIAL ASSESSMENT THRESHOLD

- 3.2 The NPPF does not provide any default threshold for a Sequential Assessment, therefore a locally set threshold is required.
- 3.3 The policy includes a locally set threshold of 280sqm threshold for the size of development for which a Sequential Assessment is required, where this is outside of Andover and Romsey town centres. This is based upon the size threshold of 'larger stores' which are restricted by the Sunday Trading Act 1994 to the number of hours of trading on a Sunday (maximum of six hours between 10am and 6pm). Although not a size distinction based on planning law, this is considered a reasonable size to adopt for the differentiation between large and small stores and is well understood. It is increasingly being used to differentiate smaller stores from supermarkets within Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging schedules. Local planning authorities which have set a local threshold for sequential assessments have commonly adopted thresholds between 200sqm and 300sqm e.g. 200sqm Swale and Mendip, and 250sqm West Devon. To have a threshold towards the higher end of this range adds a degree of greater flexibility and reflects that some local convenience stores are larger.
- 3.4 The evidence base (para.5.8, *Test Valley Retail Update 2012, NLP*) suggested that a threshold of 500sqm be considered. The Council's concern was that it would allow for medium sized stores and other significant main town centre uses to be developed outside of the town centres within a sequential assessment. It is considered that this would be too high a threshold and would exclude development from such examination, which should appropriately be properly subject to this requirement. A threshold 280sqm is therefore suggested.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT THRESHOLDS

- 3.5 The NPPF provide for a default national threshold of 2,500sqm to be used when no locally set threshold is set. It is considered that including a locally set threshold is justified.

- 3.6 The default national threshold is considered to be too high for the Borough. The policy includes locally set thresholds of 1,000sqm for Andover and Romsey and 500sqm elsewhere within the Borough for development for which an Impact Assessment is required, where this is outside of Andover and Romsey town centres. These thresholds are as informed by the evidence base, reflecting as recommended in para.5.8 *Test Valley Retail Update 2012*, *NLP* taking account of local circumstances, particularly the size of Andover and Romsey town centres, their role in the retail hierarchy and network of centres. They are also set in the context of the projections of the likely amount of additional retail floorspace which could be supported in the town centres over the plan period, in the light of increases population and retail spending in their catchment areas.

4 Main Town Centre Uses (Policy LE11)

Policy LE11: Main Town Centre Uses

Main town centre uses (such as large scale retail, office, entertainment and leisure) will be permitted within the town centres of Andover and Romsey (see map 44-45)

Development for main town centre uses and extensions, with a gross floorspace exceeding 280sqm, outside of Andover and Romsey town centre will not be permitted if following a Sequential Assessment they could be accommodated firstly within a town centre, or then secondly within, an edge of centre location.

Development for retail, leisure and office uses outside of the defined town centres of Andover and Romsey with a gross floorspace exceeding:

- a) 1,000sqm within Andover and Romsey, or
- b) 500sqm elsewhere,

will be permitted if, following an Impact Assessment, it would not have a significant adverse impact. Any main town centre uses that would harm the vitality and viability of town centres will not be permitted.

- 4.1 The policy seeks to protect the vitality and viability of the town centres in line with the approach of town centres first. It provides a policy framework for developments for main town centre and includes locally set thresholds for the size of development for when a Sequential Assessment and Impact Assessment are required, taking account of local circumstances.
- 4.2 The boundaries of the town centres have been revised (see Topic Paper Ground Floor Uses in Romsey and Andover Town Centres Policy LE12 and LE13) in light of the NPPF glossary.
- 4.3 Taking account of the NPPF and the circumstances of the town centres of Andover and Romsey it is considered that the policy is justified.

TYPES OF CENTRE AND THEIR MAIN CHARACTERISTICS

Type and Characteristics	Centres in Test Valley
<p>City City centres are the highest level of centre identified in development plans. In terms of hierarchies, they will often be a regional centre and will serve a wide catchment. The centre may be very large, embracing a wide range of activities and may be distinguished by areas which may perform different main functions. Planning for the future of such areas can be achieved successfully through the use of area action plans, with masterplans or development briefs for particular sites.</p>	None
<p>Town Town centres will usually be the second level of centres after city centres and, in many cases, they will be the principal centre in a local authority's area. In rural areas they are likely to be market towns and other centres of similar size and role which function as important service centres, providing a range of facilities and services for extensive rural catchment areas. In planning the future of town centres, local planning authorities should consider the function of different parts of the centre and how these contribute to the overall vitality and viability.</p>	Andover Romsey
<p>District District centres will usually comprise groups of shops often containing at least one supermarket or superstore, and a range of non-retail services, such as banks, building societies and restaurants, as well as local public facilities such as a library.</p>	None
<p>Local Local centres include a range of small shops of a local nature, serving a small catchment. Typically, local centres might include, amongst other shops, a small supermarket, a newsagent, a sub-post office and a pharmacy. Other facilities could include a hot-food takeaway and launderette. In rural areas, large villages may perform the role of a local centre.</p>	Stockbridge

Notes

(1) Small parades of shops of purely neighbourhood significance are not regarded as centres.

(2) Source: PPS6 Planning for Town Centres, Annex A (superseded, although remains most recent as no NPPF definition)