

## 11. RETAIL TOPIC AREA

### R1 TOWN CENTRE PRIMARY FRONTAGE AREAS

**Proposals for shops, financial and professional services, and food and drink establishments (Use Class A) will be permitted within the defined town centre primary frontage areas at ground floor level of Chippenham, Calne, Wootton Bassett, Corsham, Malmesbury and Cricklade subject to the following criteria. where:**

- i) They do not individually or together with other proposals undermine the vitality or viability of the town centre;**
- ii) The proposal is consistent with the scale and function of the town centre;**
- iii) No more than 5% of uses within the Primary frontage areas are non shopping uses (A1 use) or that there are no more than any two adjacent units in uses other than A1 uses, whichever is less; and**
- iv) Consideration is given to ensuring that proposals do not eliminate separate access arrangements to the upper floors, which could be used for residential or alternative uses.**

**11.1** The six town centres are of a sufficient size to provide a broad range of facilities and services, including the retailing of convenience and comparison goods, financial and professional services and restaurants/ pubs to serve local residents, shoppers and visitors. The town centres can provide a range of uses which have benefits for the environment, where the need to travel is reduced by creating combined trips.

**11.1A** Specifically, Chippenham is a market town and is classified as the major retailing centre within the district area. In general terms it is performing well as a town centre, with a nominal vacancy rate. Malmesbury and Calne are also market towns. The shopping in Malmesbury is dominated by comparison goods and the provision of services, with a similar position being presented in Calne although there are also two large central supermarkets present. Corsham is an attractive town centre, linear in nature. The centre attracts both locals and visitors with this being reinforced by the presence of numerous niche retailers. Wootton Bassett is again linear in nature and is anchored by two small shopping centres/ arcades and three primary supermarkets. Finally, Cricklade is the smallest of the centres in the district, providing predominantly day to day services.

**11.2** The District Council commissioned a Retail Needs Assessment Survey in 2004. In future, this will be used to inform decisions for planning applications. The Retail Survey has found that there has been a general shift away from smaller town centres in North Wiltshire, with the regional centres including Swindon absorbing much of their traditional trade. There is a need to continue to maintain and develop the towns and to enable the 'claw-back' of the trade lost to competing centres.

**11.2a** In line with Government guidance contained within PPS6 (Planning for Town Centres) a network of six town centres is proposed, with large-scale development directed towards Chippenham.

**11.2b** A sequential approach to the assessment of sites will be used. All options in the town centres will be thoroughly assessed before less central sites are considered for development for main town centre uses. The sequential approach requires that locations are considered in the following order:

- First, sites in existing centres which are an appropriate scale of development in relation to the role and function of the centre; and then
- Edge-of-centre locations, with preference given to sites that are or will be well-connected to the centre; and then
- Out-of-centre sites, with preference given to sites which are or will be well served by a choice of means of transport and which are close to the centre and have a high likelihood of forming links with the centre.

**11.2c** In line with PPS6 main town centres uses which will be assessed through the sequential approach include retail, leisure/entertainment facilities, offices and culture/tourism facilities.

**11.3** This Local Plan defines the primary frontage areas within which the Local Planning Authority is seeking to ensure the main use remains as shops (Use Class A1) because this will contribute to making sure the vitality and viability of the town centres in North Wiltshire are maintained and enhanced. The Local Planning Authority will seek to ensure no more than 5% of uses within the Primary frontage areas are non shopping uses (A1 use) or that there are no more than any two adjacent units in uses other than A1 uses, whichever is less, thus ensuring Use Class A remains the main function of the Town Centre Primary Frontage Areas. However, it is recognised that other uses including employment, offices of local and central government, leisure and entertainment, hospitals and higher education can ensure the health of a town centre and these will be directed towards the Town Centre Secondary Frontage Areas subject to the requirements of Policy R2.

**11.4** This policy applies to new uses, change of use and the reuse of vacant buildings.

## **R2 TOWN CENTRE SECONDARY FRONTAGE AREAS**

**Proposals for shops, financial and professional services, food premises, leisure facilities and night clubs (Use Class A, D1 and D2) will be permitted within the defined town centre secondary frontage areas of Chippenham, Calne, Wootton Bassett, Corsham, Malmesbury and Cricklade, subject to all the following criteria:**

- i) They do not individually or cumulatively undermine the vitality or viability of the town centre.**
- ii) The proposal is consistent with the scale and function of the town centre.**
- iii) Consideration is given to ensuring that proposals do not eliminate separate access arrangements to the upper floors, which could be used for residential, community or employment uses.**

**11.5** Whilst the Local Planning Authority seeks to ensure that retailing remains the primary function in the town centres, it is recognised that growth in other sectors such as offices, and community and leisure uses can contribute towards sustaining activity in these centres. This is so long as the vitality and viability of the centres are not compromised. Different and complementary uses can reinforce each other, making town centres more attractive to local residents, shoppers and visitors.

**11.6** The appropriateness of leisure proposals will be considered against the nature and role of the centre, site availability, quality and availability of car parking, the likely traffic generated and compatibility of adjoining uses. In considering applications for leisure

proposals, the District Council will ensure that the design and any conditions attached mean that the amenities of nearby residents are fully considered.

### **R3 RETAIL DESIGNATIONS**

**Development shall be permitted for retail development (Use Classes A1, A2 and A3) at:**

#### **Bath Road Car Park, Chippenham – 0.5ha**

**11.7** The Retail Needs Assessment Survey 2004 has included a sequential analysis of sites within the North Wiltshire towns. The Study has proposed that Chippenham as the largest town is suitable for future retail development, which will address the need to 'claw-back' lost trade to regional centres such as Swindon and Bath.

**11.8** This site is considered to represent a natural extension to the Chippenham Town Centre.

### **R4 PROPOSALS OUTSIDE TOWN CENTRE PRIMARY AND TOWN CENTRE SECONDARY FRONTAGE AREAS**

**Retail development proposals (Use classes A1, A2, A3,) on the edge, or outside, the defined Town Centre shopping areas of Chippenham, Calne, Wootton Bassett, Corsham, Malmesbury and Cricklade, will only be permitted where:**

- i) There is a demonstrable need for the development;**
- ii) It can be demonstrated the sequential test approach has been followed, whereby there are no suitable sites in the town centre and edge of centre sites;**
- iii) Proposals do not individually or cumulatively undermine the vitality or viability of existing centres; and**
- iv) The proposal is accessible by a range of means including walking, cycling and by public transport.**

**Applications to vary the goods sold or to allow subdivision of units will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the proposal would not harm the vitality and viability of the town centre.**

**11.9** This policy relates to retail proposals situated on the edge of or outside the defined town centre primary and town centre secondary frontage areas. For the purposes of this policy, the definition of 'edge of centre' is that contained within national planning guidance and are such locations within easy walking distance (i.e. up to 300 metres) of the Town Centre Primary Frontage Areas boundary. The definition of an existing town, district or local centres as noted within national planning policy guidance. In both cases retail developments should not be of such a scale, or type, or in such a location as to undermine the vitality or viability of the existing centres and should be accessible by a range of transport modes.

**11.10** Developers will be expected to submit a retail assessment and supporting information for all proposals of 1500 square metres or more. Assessments may also be

necessary for smaller developments, depending on the relative size and nature of the development in relation to the centre. Developers will be expected to demonstrate a need for additional facilities and that the sequential approach, as defined in national Planning guidance, has been applied when selecting sites for new development. The Council will expect developers to demonstrate flexibility in terms of the format, design and scale of their development, tailoring these to fit local circumstances.

**11.11** The Local Planning Authority in determining planning applications will take into account the findings of the Retail Needs Assessment undertaken in 2004.

**11.12** If planning permission is granted, appropriate conditions or other means of legal agreement may be used to limit the size of the units and the range of goods to be sold, in order to prevent harm to the existing town centres.

## **R5 LOCAL SHOPS AND SERVICES**

**Proposals for local shops and services (Use Class A) will be permitted within towns and also within the framework boundaries of, villages provided that:**

- i) The proposed retail use is consistent with the scale and function of the local centre or village and;**
- ii) The proposed development would improve the range of local social and community facilities.**
- iii) The proposed development will contribute to meeting local people's day-to-day needs, so reducing the need to travel.**
- iv) The proposed development would not harm the vitality or viability of a town or local centre in the vicinity.**

**11.13** Local shopping areas can consist of individual or a small group of shops. For example, a newsagent, sub post office, pharmacy or hairdressers. These shops provide a valuable service to local residents in meeting local convenience shopping requirements. For example, a small parade of shops and services may be appropriate for new housing developments or such shops can help to maintain and enhance a village community. Where appropriate, the provision, or expansion, of small-scale retail facilities should be encouraged, particularly where they are accessible by a range of transport modes and appropriate to the character and function of the area.

## **R6 EXISTING LOCAL SHOPS AND SERVICES**

**The change of use of existing local shops and services (Use Class A), local centres will be permitted subject to:**

- i) The business no longer being viable and every reasonable attempt to market the premises has been made.**
- ii) Development would result in the provision of alternative services of equivalent or greater community benefit.**
- iii) There are alternative facilities, within walking distance, available in the locality.**

**11.14** The District Council seeks to retain the provision of existing shops and services, which provide a local service. The retention of local convenience shops, which residents might use on a weekly, if not daily basis, is considered particularly important. The loss of A1, A2 and A3 uses, which have a detrimental impact to the vitality or viability of the local shopping area, will not normally be permitted unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated.

**11.15** However, the Council acknowledges that it would be unreasonable to resist a change of use where local patronage is such that a business (e.g. a public house) is no longer viable. In these circumstances, applicants will need to demonstrate that the existing use is not well supported and is not capable of being viably operated, or that there are satisfactory alternative facilities available within a convenient walking distance.

**11.16** If necessary, the Council will commission its own survey in order to establish the viability of existing premises.

## **R7 UPPER FLOORS IN TOWN CENTRES**

**Use of upper floors of new and existing premises within town and local shopping centres for residential use, or in some cases community or employment uses, will be permitted, provided the use does not jeopardise the retail use of the ground floor.**

**11.17** The District Council seeks to promote residential use on the upper floors of retail premises, where such a use does not jeopardise the retail function of the ground floor use. Encouraging residential uses in shopping areas can add to the vitality and viability of the centre, increasing activity and providing a mixture of uses which reduces the need to travel in the interests of sustainability.

**11.18** Where it is not possible to provide residential uses on the upper floors of premises in town centres, and where the floorspace is not required in connection with the ground floor retail use, a change of use to a community or employment use may be considered acceptable. Such uses could add to the diversity of town centre uses and be beneficial to the local community and economy.

**11.19** In both cases, proposals will need to accord with policies elsewhere in this plan, and in particular the development control core policy.