

Prospective Revision To Policy DM21

Formatted: Font: 13 pt

Protecting and supporting district and local centres

Policy DM21

Management of uses within district and local centres

Key principles

Within existing and proposed district and local retail centres, as defined on the Policies Map and shown in Appendix 4, appropriate supporting services including main town centre uses, public and community uses, and other uses complementing local shops will be encouraged and permitted where:

- a) their scale and function is consistent with the position of the centre in the hierarchy of centres set out in JCS Policy 19.
- b) they would not have a harmful impact on the vitality, viability and diversity of services in the centre, in particular increasing the number of units which would not be available to the public during the normal working day.
- c) they would not have a harmful impact on residential amenity, traffic or the environment which could not be overcome by the imposition of conditions;
- d) they would provide a community benefit or address an identified deficiency in provision in the area which can be shown to outweigh the loss of a retail use.

Changes of use involving the loss of shops or shopping floorspace (use class A1) will be permitted where they satisfy the above criteria and additionally:

- f) would not result in the proportion of A1 retail uses at ground floor level falling below 60% (in the case of district centres) or 50% (in the case of local centres), and
- g) would not result in the loss of, or significant reduction in, retail floorspace within any main foodstore serving the centre;

Deleted: ¶

Deleted: non-retail uses in classes A2, A3, A4, A5, community uses and other main town centre uses

Deleted: where

Deleted: a

Deleted: the proposal would

Deleted: not result in the proportion of A1 retail units at ground floor level within the centre falling below 60% (for district centres) or below 50% (for local centres);

Deleted: and would

Deleted: or

Deleted: ¶

¶
b)

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

Deleted: in cases where the proportion of A1 retail uses is already below the applicable threshold in clause a), the proposal would not result in the loss of, or significant reduction in, retail floorspace within any main foodstore serving the centre;¶
c) in cases where the proposal is for a community use or other non-retail service and would conflict with the provisions of clauses a) or b):¶

It would provide a community benefit or address an identified deficiency in provision in the area which can be shown to outweigh the loss of the retail use, and ¶
It could not reasonably be accommodated in a more accessible or sustainable location either within the same centre or in an alternative local or district centre in the vicinity

Deleted: ;

Deleted:

Deleted: and, in all cases¶
¶
d) the proposal would not result in a harmful impact on the vitality, viability and diversity of services in the centre; and¶
e) the proposal would offer a service whose scale and function is appropriate to the centre's position in the retail hierarchy; and¶
f) the proposal would not give rise to unacceptable environmental effects which could not be overcome by the imposition of conditions.¶

Other requirements

The beneficial use of upper floors will be permitted where the use is compatible with surrounding uses. Proposals involving the use of ground floors only must ensure that separate access is maintained to, and should not prejudice the beneficial existing or potential future use of, lower and upper floors.

Where necessary, permission will be granted subject to conditions restricting hours of opening and/or removing permitted development rights to change to alternative uses to protect the amenity of surrounding occupants and the vitality and viability of the centre concerned.

Deleted: Proposals which are not for main town centre uses, with the exception of community uses, will not be permitted at ground floor level within district and local retail centres. ¶

Supplementary text

- 21.1 The NPPF in Section 8: Promoting Healthy Communities, requires local authorities to plan positively for shared space and community facilities such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural facilities, public houses and places of worship and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments. They should also guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs; ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable, and retained for the benefit of the community; and ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.. Both this policy and policy DM22 following reflect those aspirations and the emphasis of the JCS on protecting and enhancing neighbourhood centres and supporting communities.
- 21.2 Norwich's neighbourhoods are generally well served by local and district retail centres. These retail centres provide convenient facilities for local people which are readily accessible on foot and by cycle and which are normally on or close to high frequency bus routes. Policy 12 of the JCS requires that local and district centres should be protected and enhanced. This policy seeks to ensure that a suitable range of local services is maintained within these centres to provide for everyday needs. It complements policy DM18 dealing with proposals for substantive new development for town centre uses.
- 21.3 For the purpose of this policy the same definitions of district and local centre are used as in the JCS. A district retail centre is a group of shops containing at least one supermarket or superstore and other services, providing for a catchment extending beyond the immediate locality. A local retail centre is a group of shops or services forming a centre of purely local significance.
- 21.4 As is the case in the city centre, the council has, historically, sought to protect the vitality and viability of district and local centres by requiring that these

centres should, wherever possible, retain a minimum percentage of their premises in retail use. This minimum was fixed at 60% in the previous local plan. Trends toward a higher proportion of non-retail uses in some centres has meant that a 60% threshold has been exceeded in many cases and is no longer appropriate.

- 21.5 The council undertook detailed research in 2010 to establish whether there were any local and district centres where different percentage thresholds would be suitable, instances where local centres should be upgraded to district centres, or where the changing function of particular groups of shops not previously identified as local centres justified giving them status as such. Changes were recommended to the boundaries of some local and district centres and local centres are newly designated at the University of East Anglia, Aylsham Road/Copenhagen Way, Magdalen Road/Clarke Road, Long John Hill and St Stephens Road.
- 21.6 The results of this research informed the draft version of this policy, which took the approach of applying a range of minimum retail percentage thresholds which differentiated between groups of centres according to their particular form and function. It also incorporated detail on the criteria to be used for the assessment of other town centre uses and community facilities proposed in district and local centres.
- 21.7 In Norwich, the majority of neighbourhood shopping centres are characterised by parades or clusters of small and medium sized shop units. Many rely for their continued vitality and viability on having a diverse mix of uses in which local shops predominate. Local centres in Norwich will usually include at least one small-scale local foodstore to meet day to day needs for top-up shopping. However, two particular centres – Eaton District Centre and the newly identified local centre at Aylsham Road/Copenhagen Way – are based around a single foodstore alongside a diversity of supporting uses rather than necessarily having a high representation of small traditional shops. The continued vitality and viability of these centres relies effectively on the retention of the foodstore and not to any great degree on the protection of a minimum proportion of retail units elsewhere in the centre.
- 21.8 As is the case with the city centre, the particular characteristics and mix of shops and services in district and local centres in Norwich has changed markedly since the inception of the previous local plan in 2001. There has been strong growth in one-stop local convenience retailing: national foodstore operators have sought opportunities to establish small scale local foodstores within and close to existing local and district centres, both through the development of completely new stores and by conversion of existing shops and other commercial premises to food supermarkets.
- 21.9 The trend toward one-stop convenience shopping and the growth of supporting non-retail services (in particular hot food takeaways) is a reflection of changing lifestyles and is sometimes alleged to have resulted in a

harmful impact on retail diversity and local independent retailing; however the most recent research undertaken by this council shows that the introduction of new foodstores into local centres has in fact supported those centres and resulted in lower vacancy rates. It is not the role of this policy to inhibit competition between individual retailers as this would be contrary to national policy. Nor can the policy or the planning process in general influence the particular operator or business model of retail development accepted in these centres. Rather, this policy aims to be responsive to objectively assessed needs and aims to ensure that the vitality, viability and diversity of centres is protected and strengthened to meet day to day shopping needs and reduce the need to travel.

- 21.10 The council's approach to local and district centres is to seek a balance between retaining an appropriate range and choice of shops to meet local needs and allowing other beneficial supporting uses which complement and are appropriate to the scale and function of the centre. Priority will be given to promoting and supporting shopping, other main town centre uses and community uses in accordance with the NPPF and policy DM18, although uses which do not fall readily into either of these categories can be accepted where they would be complementary and beneficial to the vitality and diversity of the centre.

- 21.10a In recognition of the changing characteristics of neighbourhood centres and the generally higher proportion of supporting services in them, the indicative minimum threshold for the proportion of A1 retail units has been set at 50% for local centres and 60% for district centres. The policy also seeks to discourage the loss or depletion of local foodstores, which are an essential feature of most centres, allowing for flexibility in circumstances where the retention of an anchor foodstore may be more critical to the vitality and viability of the centre than keeping a high proportion of smaller shops.

Deleted: I

Deleted: , alongside a requirement to seek to retain local convenience floorspace. This allows more

Deleted: the proportion of retail units is already lower than the indicated minimum and where

- 21.11 The requirement that proposals should not have a harmful impact on the diversity of services in centres should also ensure that particular types of service such as hot food takeaways would not become over-represented in any one centre and prevent centres becoming completely dominated by large format retailers. It will be particularly important to ensure that the range and choice of services in any one centre contributes to diversity and vitality across the whole of the working day and evening. Consequently the council would normally seek to achieve a balance of uses which is not disproportionately weighted towards evening-only services such as hot food takeaways, which often contribute very little to local and district centres if they are closed during the day. Conversely, uses such as cafés can offer significant benefits to the vitality and viability of local centres in both the daytime and evening through their role as community hubs and meeting places.

- 21.11a The policy does not seek to impose a strict quota on the number and type of non-retail A class uses and other services in centres. Rather, the impact on diversity of services of any particular proposal will be a matter of judgement

Formatted: Indent: Left: 0 cm, Hanging: 1.27 cm

Deleted: I

on a case by case basis taking account of community needs, operators' business requirements, likely impact on neighbour amenity and considerations of how the range of services in individual centres might be changing and developing. More specific criteria for the consideration of hot food takeaways are included in policy DM24.

Deleted: is

- 21.12 For the purposes of this policy, main town centre uses are as defined in the NPPF. The representation of A1 retail use within a defined centre, will be calculated on the basis of the total number of separate premises at ground floor level within that centre. The boundaries of local and district centres have been redefined in some cases. This is to ensure that premises which do not contribute to their neighbourhood centre function, for example, isolated dwellings within or at the end of a parade of shops, are not included within the centre and are not taken into account in calculating the proportion of non-retail uses. Where suitable locations emerge adjacent to centres which can accommodate their appropriate expansion, the council will support such proposals consistent with the criteria in policy DM18.

Formatted: Indent: Hanging: 1.27 cm, Outline numbered + Level: 2 + Numbering Style: 1, 2, 3, ... + Start at: 1 + Alignment: Left + Aligned at: 0.63 cm + Tab after: 1.27 cm + Indent at: 1.27 cm

Deleted: proportion

Deleted: units

Deleted: a defined

- 21.13 The policy allows additional flexibility for the acceptance of other beneficial uses where it can be demonstrated that the use is underrepresented in the centre or it is for a community purpose which is appropriate to the scale of the centre. Appropriate uses include residential, offices, restaurants and cafes, pubs and bars, non-residential institutions and leisure uses which are at an appropriate scale to serve a local catchment. The acceptance of these uses will be subject to compliance with other policies of the plan, in particular that they should not give rise to unacceptable impacts on the living and working conditions of neighbours (Policies DM2, DM11).

Deleted: and could not be accommodated in a more accessible or sustainable location, either within the same centre or elsewhere in the locality

- 21.14 The NPPF advises local authorities to recognise that residential development can play an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and set out policies to encourage residential development on appropriate sites. Local and district centres should be at the heart of communities and are the most sustainable and accessible location for new residential development as well as providing a wide range of retail and other services. Residential use is supported by this policy and where it is accepted in close proximity to centres should be at a higher density where this is in keeping with character of surrounding area (in accordance with policies DM3 and DM12). The beneficial use of upper floors within local and district centres will also be supported. Proposals providing for a main use of a building at ground floor level only must maintain or reinstate separate accesses to upper and lower floors to ensure that the future use of those areas of the building is not prejudiced. The council will not support proposals for ground floor uses that do not make provision for the effective use of upper floors in the long term.

- 21.15 It is important to ensure that uses proposed at all levels of a building are compatible. In assessing proposals for change of use, consideration will be given to likely impacts on the amenity of existing and future occupiers in accordance with policy DM2 of this plan. Conditions will be used as

appropriate to limit hours of opening and/or restrict otherwise permitted future changes of use which would result in such undesirable impacts.

- 21.16 A new district centre at Hall Road (Harford Place) is proposed in the Site Allocations Plan in recognition of the need for a centre to serve the south of the city and of longstanding proposals to provide this through redevelopment of the former Bally Shoes site. Additionally, that plan provides for local shopping and leisure facilities to serve new mixed use development at the Deal Ground site at Trowse. The precise siting of any local centre has yet to be determined and, since it partly extends into South Norfolk, a discrete local centre to serve the Deal Ground may or may not be situated within Norwich.
- 21.17 Once implemented, the Harford Place centre will be considered as a District Centre and proposals for changes of use within it will be determined in accordance with this policy. A 60% indicative minimum threshold for retail uses will apply. In the event of a purpose built neighbourhood centre being established at the Deal Ground within the city boundary, it would be regarded as a local centre and also subject to the provisions of this policy.

Alternative options

It is considered that not having a policy on district and local centres is not an option as national policy and the JCS do not contain sufficient detail to determine individual planning applications within Norwich's district and local centres.

One alternative is to adopt different boundaries for the district and local centres. The boundaries chosen are considered appropriate as they are defined so as to reflect the extent of retail and other complementary supporting services and to exclude uses which are clearly not contributors to the function of the centre. The boundaries reflect an up-to-date assessment.

Another option is to continue the Local Plan approach which sets a uniform 60% minimum for the retention of retail uses in all local and district centres. It is considered that this does not acknowledge the higher proportion of supporting services in many centres or the need for flexibility to respond to change over the plan period.

A further option is to retain the approach taken in the draft version of this policy and introduce more differentiation in the thresholds applied to individual centres. This approach is now considered to be too inflexible in responding to change and, in particular, does not acknowledge that in many centres it is the retention of a main foodstore and not the existence of a particular minimum number of A1 shops elsewhere that is the key to protecting its vitality and viability. The proposed policy is considered to strike the appropriate balance between promoting vitality, viability and diversity and preventing damaging changes to the core functions of neighbourhood centres.

References

Deleted: —Page Break—

- NPPF: CLG, 2012: Section 8: Promoting healthy communities: Deliver community facilities and local services; ensure that established shops and facilities are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable and retained for the benefit of the community.
- Parades to be proud of: Strategies to support local shops, CLG, June 2012
- JCS policy 7: Supporting communities
- JCS policy 12: The remainder of the Norwich urban area, including the fringe parishes
- JCS policy 19: The hierarchy of centres
- Norwich Sub Region: Retail and Town Centres Study (GVA Grimley, 2007)
- Retail Topic Paper: Local and District Centres (September 2010)
- Retail and Town Centres Topic Paper (January 2012).