

Review of the district and local centres boundaries November 2015

Introduction

1. Core Strategy Policy CP12 defines the hierarchy of shopping centres to be maintained and enhanced. These are divided into city centre, town centre, district centre and local centre, and each centre is listed. The delivery section of CP12 states that the boundaries of the district and local centres reflect those of the Bath and North East Somerset Local Plan 2007 and that the boundaries will be reviewed through the Placemaking Plan.

Methodology

2. In order to undertake the boundary review required as part of the Placemaking Plan, it is necessary to develop a methodology. Given that the existing boundaries were drawn up in the 2007 Local Plan, this is an obvious starting point for the review. The definitions of district and local centres used in the 2007 Local Plan came from the now withdrawn Planning Policy Guidance 6 (1996), as follows:

District shopping centres - Groups of shops, separate from the town centre, usually containing at least one food supermarket or superstore, and non-retail services such as banks, building societies and restaurants.

Local centre - small grouping usually comprising a newsagent, a general grocery store, a sub-post office and occasionally a pharmacy, a hairdresser and other small shops of a local nature.

3. The above definitions focus on the types of uses that would usually need to be present in order for a centre to be categorised as a district or local centre, as well as some limited guidance on scale. PPG6 did not offer further detail on how to define the extent of the centre. However, this was considered in more detail as part of the examination of the Local Plan 2007, as part of a response to objections regarding Widcombe Parade in Bath. Proof of Evidence 177 states (extract):

*“The boundary of the local centre as shown on the RDDLP Proposals Map is drawn so as to include the **main group of premises that are in retail use** [emphasis added]. This results in some other services/facilities that serve local residents falling within the local centre and some services/facilities being excluded (e.g. the doctors surgery and the social club). The boundary is defined within the context of and for the purposes of the shopping policies, which are the only policies in the Plan that expressly refer to local centres.”*

4. Subsequent government guidance does not offer any further clarification, with Planning Policy Statement 6 (2005) largely maintaining the definitions used in PPG6. In the NPPF, separate definitions of local and district centres are abandoned, and “references to town centres or centres apply to city centres, town centres, district centres and local centres, but exclude small shops and parades of purely

neighbourhood significance.” The NPPF definition of district and local centres is therefore “**predominantly occupied by main town centre uses, larger than parades of purely neighbourhood significance¹**”. Main town centre uses are defined as²:

Retail development (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres); leisure, entertainment facilities 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).

5. The Planning Practice Guidance does not expand on how to define the extent of district and local centres.
6. The above analysis essentially means that district and local centres should be predominantly occupied by town centre uses, but beyond this, it is for local authorities to develop their own methodologies for defining the extent of district and local centres. This is compatible with the approach previously followed in the 2007 Local Plan and in the absence of reasons to the contrary, and for consistency it would seem sensible to adopt the same methodology.
7. Merging the definitions from the 2007 Local Plan and the NPPF yields a methodology which has been followed for the Placemaking Plan:

The boundary around district and local centres will be drawn so as to include the main group of premises that are predominantly occupied by main town centre uses, and are more significant than parades of purely neighbourhood significance.

8. This methodology will not always translate directly into circumstances on the ground. Built form may be such that the end of a group may not be obvious. In such cases local circumstances have been considered, such as the existing location of the boundary and existing use of the building.
9. The district and local centres of the district have been surveyed at various times. To assist in the redefinition of boundaries, the existing use of premises at the time of surveys will be taken into account. In Bath, surveys are available for the years 2009, 2014 and 2015. For areas outside Bath, information is available for 2010 and 2015 only. For Chew Magna, data is only available for 2015 and this is not considered sufficient to inform potential changes to the boundary of the centre.
10. To further guide the definition of centres, the following principles will also be followed:
 - If a retail unit at the end of a group of shops has changed use to residential, it will be removed from the centre, as it would be very unlikely to return to a retail use
 - If a retail unit was vacant in 2010, 2015 and 2014 (where data is available), it will be removed from the centre, as retail use is demonstrably unlikely.
11. Following the above methodology the proposed change to district & local centre boundaries as defined in the 2007 Local Plan, including reasoning, can be found in Appendix 1.

¹ NPPF p. 57:

² NPPF p. 53

Appendix 1

District and local centres with no proposed boundary alterations – Bath

- Bathampton
- Bathwick Hill
- Bathwick Street
- Bear Flat
- Bradford Road
- Camden Road
- Chandag Road
- Chelsea Road
- Chew Magna (only 1 monitoring year available)
- Julian Road
- Larkhall
- Lower Bristol Road
- Odd Down (Frome Rd/Upper Bloomfield Rd crossroads)
- Peasedown St John
- Salford
- Twerton
- Upper Bloomfield Rd
- Westfield
- Widcombe Parade
- Whitchurch

District and local centres with proposed boundary alterations

District or Local Centre	Alteration	Reasoning
Batheaston	Remove 244-286 High Street	Largely residential 2010 & 2015, only three units in this group of buildings are occupied by main town centre uses. The four units are dispersed. They are considered of equal or less significance to a neighbourhood parade.
Belvedere	Remove 1-3 (inclusive) Lansdown Road	1 Lansdown Road: A5 in 2009, D1 in 2014 & 2015; 2, 2a&3 Lansdown Road: vacant in 2009 & 2014 & 2015
Cleveland Place	Include 11 Cleveland Place West (The Curfew PH)	A5 in 2014 & 2015
Combe Down	Remove 56-62 (inclusive) Combe Rd	Residential completions (including demolitions of previous). Lack of town centre uses.
London Road	Correct digitising error:	Sutcliffe House is a

District or Local Centre	Alteration	Reasoning
	Remove Sutcliffe House and include Sutcliffe Showroom	residential property set back from the retail frontage on London Road. Sutcliffe Showrooms is in retail use and part of the retail circuit.
Margaret's Buildings	Include 9A Margaret's Buildings	A1 in 2014 & 2015
Moorland Road	Remove 16-19 (inclusive) Moorland Road	C3 (residential) in 2009, 2014 & 2015
Mount Road	Remove 114-116 (inclusive) Mount Road	116 vacant in 2009, in residential use in 2014 & 2015. 114 & 114A residential in 2009, 2014 & 2015
Paulton	Remove 5-8 High Street (inclusive)	5-8 vacant in 2015. 6&7 vacant in 2010, 5&8 A1 in 2010.
Queen's Road	Include 61 Queen's Road	Recent change of use from A5 to A1
St James Street	Include 38 St James Square	A1 in 2014 & 2015
Timsbury	Remove 1-3 High Street	Residential in 2010 & 2015
Walcot Street	Include 14 Chatham Row	A1 in 2014 & 2015
Walcot Street	include 88 Walcot Street	A2 in 2009; A1 in 2014 & 2015
Weston	Remove 124a High Street	Vacant 2009, 2014 & 2015
Weston	Remove 1 Trafalgar Road	A3 2009, 2014 & 2015