

**NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION
POSITION STATEMENT OF NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

MATTER 7 – RETAIL



Matter 7 (a): Do Policies Ec8 – 12 make appropriate provisions for Retail Development, having regards to likely population growth?

1. Policy Ec8 provides the retail hierarchy for the district as well as the preferred location for new retail and town centre uses.
2. The amount of new retail floorspace required for the plan period has been informed by the 2015 Retail Capacity Study and Update. The studies tested a number of 'expenditure based' scenarios in order to identify future floorspace requirements, along with account taken of recent retail development and commitments. They concluded an additional requirement of 7,300 sqm of additional retail comparison floorspace in the district for the period between 2016 and 2031. However for all the scenarios no quantitative requirement for additional convenience goods floorspace was identified for the period up to 2013.
3. Policy Ec8 identifies Coalville as the preferred location for this additional retail development. No specific provision is made as part of the Local Plan. This is due to a number of factors.
4. A study was commissioned and subsequently published in June 2016 to consider operator demand for retail property within the town centres of Coalville and Ashby. It concluded that compared to Ashby, Coalville continues to be the main focus of interest from national and regional operators, whereas interest in Ashby is from local operators. However given that there are currently few published operator requirements or interest in these location, the delivery of the identified comparison retail floorspace requirements could be challenging.
5. The draft Local Plan did identify a number of potential sites in Coalville to meet the additional comparison retail provision. Officers undertook further work alongside this, identifying all owners of these sites and making contact to enquire whether the site would be available for retail development. A number of responses were received, some of which expressed an 'interest' in such an approach but there was no firm commitment forthcoming.
6. Therefore we do not have sufficient certainty regarding deliverability as landowners are not promoting development opportunities and there is also a lack of retailer demand. In light of this it is not considered appropriate to allocate sites and the approach we have taken is the most appropriate in the circumstances. In addition the Local Plan policy will complement work undertaken by the Coalville Project.
7. Policy Ec9 provides a locally set threshold for when an impact assessment is required for applications that propose retail, leisure and office development outside of the districts defined town and local centres. This approach is consistent with the NPPF and is not a policy that would adversely affect the district's ability to make appropriate provision for retail development to meet the needs of its future population. The 2012 Retail Study advised the locally set thresholds that should be used for the District's Town and Local Centres.
8. Policies Ec10 to EC12 are focused on supporting and protecting the vitality and viability of our town centres, with an appropriate mix of uses. They support and

promote shopping as the overall predominant use supporting opportunities for new retail development should it arise on an ad hoc basis. These policies do also allow for a range of complimentary other main town centre uses, in compliance with the NPPF. The value of our town and local centres in providing a valuable service, including shopping and providing for day to day needs, is the driver behind these policies. It is also important however that there is some flexibility within these policies to allow for the characteristics of these centres to be considered when determining applications. For example some of our local centres have a comparatively strong residential character and there may be circumstances when a non-main town centres use could be beneficial to the area, for example, it would bring a vacant unit back into use.

Matter 7 (b): Does Policy Ec10 make appropriate provision regarding Primary and Secondary Shopping frontage designation?

9. The NPPF suggests that local plans should define the extent of its primary shopping areas. This has been taken on board and the plan proposes defined primary shopping areas within the centres of Coalville and Ashby de la Zouch, and the totality of our Local Centres of Castle Donington, Ibstock, Kegworth and Measham.
10. The NPPF then goes onto advise that primary shopping areas should be based on a clear definition of primary and secondary frontages and policies should then be set that make clear which uses will be permitted in such locations.
11. Survey work was undertaken in each of our Town and Local Centres in order to identify the type and distribution of uses within these locations. The various appendices within Background Paper 9 (BP/09) provide a detailed assessment of this work and provide justification of the Council's approach. They contain a paper on each of the town and local centres, identifying their characteristics and those areas considered to form the part of the town centre, primary shopping areas and also those frontages which display the characteristics of primary and secondary frontages.
12. This work was used to inform Policy Ec10 which refers to our Primary Shopping Areas. It seeks to retain shops as the predominant ground floor use within these designations, supported by a range of other acceptable main town centre uses (as defined in the NPPF).
13. It was originally intended to also define the primary and secondary frontages in our centres and prepare a separate policy identifying the type of uses that would be permitted in these locations i.e. primary frontages should retain a high proportion of shop uses whereas there would be opportunity for a greater diversity of main town centres uses within the secondary frontages. This was the approach taken in the Draft Local Plan, with Policy Ec11 addressing non-shopping uses within defined shopping areas and Policy Ec13 addressing uses within defined primary and secondary frontages. However in light of representation received it was agreed that it would be beneficial to combine Policies Ec11 and Ec13 so as to avoid duplication. Therefore the relevant sections of Policy Ec13 were combined with Policy Ec10.
14. Having worked through the above process it was considered appropriate to delete reference in the Local Plan to defined primary and secondary frontages as

this was considered to add little value. The scale of our town and local centres is such that it was concluded not to be necessary to separately define primary and secondary frontages.

15. Policy Ec10 seeks to ensure that shops are the predominant use in our primary shopping areas, whilst also allowing for a suitable amount of other main town centre uses within this area. This approach supports a high proportion of retail uses whilst also providing opportunities for a diversity of other uses, thus satisfactorily protecting the vitality and viability of these centres and supporting the characteristics of primary and secondary frontages.