

Planning for Diverse Local Centres Further Information Booklet

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Introduction

This further information booklet supports the 'Planning for Diverse Local Centres' document and contains additional technical information on key aspects covered within the main document. The 'Planning for Diverse Local Centres' document cross refers to sections within this booklet to alert readers to the availability of additional information.

This booklet is intended to be used by both professional planners and those who wish to develop a more detailed understanding of how to plan for diverse local centres. Specifically for professional planners working within local councils, Section A provides a comprehensive overview of how to develop local centre planning strategies for all centres within their town centres hierarchy.

The structure of this booklet is as follows:

Section A: Town Planner's Local Plan Guide – Developing Local Centre Planning Strategies	1
Section B: Local Centre Planning Uses	14
Section C: Local Centre Characteristics and Sources of Information	16
Section D: Neighbourhood Planning Process	22
Section E: Town Centre First Planning Policy Approach	24
Section F: National Planning Policy Framework Policy Schedule	26
Section G: Available Planning Tools	31

Section A: Town Planner's Local Plan Guide: Developing local centre planning strategies

Planning System Overview

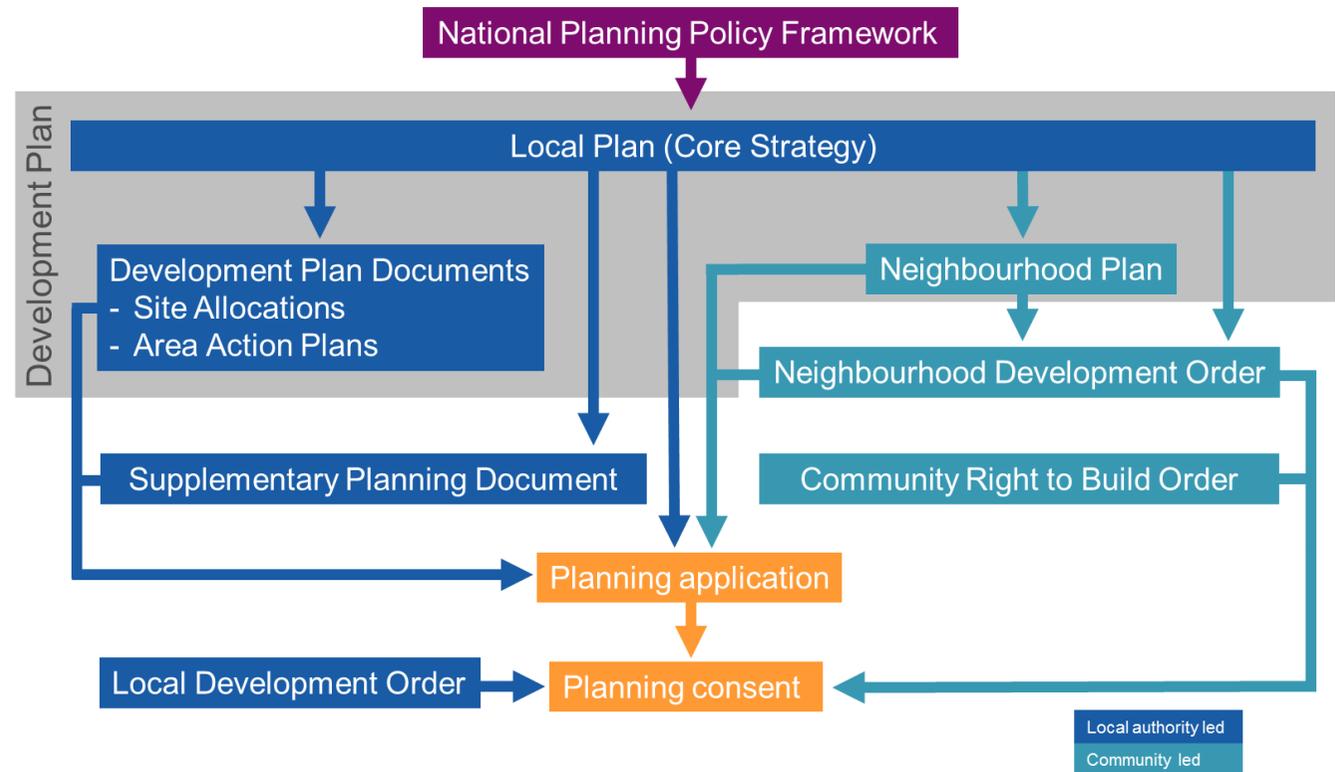
Through the Government's decentralisation and localism agenda the planning system has recently undergone significant reform. The abolition (or impending abolition) of the Regional Spatial Strategies and the creation of neighbourhood planning highlights the importance now afforded to developing locally specific policies. The diagram opposite shows how the various components of the reformed planning system in England now relate.

What is the National Planning Policy Framework?

The Government has recently reviewed all national planning policy and guidance previously contained within Planning Policy Guidance notes, Planning Policy Statements and 'Chief Planning Officer' letters into a consolidated National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF). Previous national local centre related policy within documents such as Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth have been deleted and are therefore no longer relevant in development plan preparation or individual planning application decisions.

What does the NPPF contain?

The NPPF provides a planning framework within which local councils in England should produce their own locally distinctive development plans, which reflect the needs and priorities of their individual areas. Although the NPPF is not legally binding, local councils are expected to use and take into account the Framework's planning objectives and policies when preparing their local plan and when making individual planning decisions.



The NPPF contains a new 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' policy. This policy is described as being at the heart of the planning system and is therefore central to the approach taken to both development plan preparation and individual planning application decisions. The Presumption policy asks local councils to plan positively for new development, and approve all individual proposals wherever possible without delay.

Under this presumption policy, local plans which do not contain sufficiently strong and locally distinctive local centre policies therefore potentially risk unplanned development coming forward and having to be approved by the local council as it conforms with the higher level general national planning policy. It is therefore important to develop local plan policies, which are locally distinctive and relate to individual local centres.

When using the NPPF it is important to remember that the policies within the Framework need to be read as a whole. You should therefore not simply focus on the main local centre policies within the 'Ensuring the Vitality of Local Centres' section as other relevant and important policies which affect local centres are also contained within in other sections of the Framework eg 'Promoting Good Transport', 'Requiring Good Design' and 'Promoting Healthy Communities' etc.

The overarching principles and key planning for diverse local centre policies contained within the NPPF are explained in Section F of this 'Further Information Booklet'. This section of the 'Further Information Booklet' gives examples of the ways in which the NPPF policies are relevant to achieving diverse centres and how they should be used and applied when developing and delivering local plans.

What does the Local Plan contain?

The remainder of this section outlines how a local centres planning strategy within a local plan can be produced to guide future centre development coming forward. The section also outlines how the other plans, policies and strategies can be used to inform and shape the planning strategy.

Although the primary focus of this section is on developing a planning strategy for local centres it is important to remember that local centres are only one element of the content of an overall local plan. Consideration therefore

needs to be given to how the planning strategy for local centres relates and links to the other key planning elements such as housing, transport and other none local centre focused economic development, and vice-versa.

Each local council is required to produce a local plan for its area. The local plan covers a time period of at least 15-years and outlines what the area looks like at the present point in time and then sets out a planning vision of what the area will look like in the future and details of how this planning vision will be delivered on the ground.

To do this the local plan sets the strategic planning priorities and objectives for the whole local council administrative area. Strategic priorities are those issues which affect the area as a whole, for example the overall level and distribution of retail, leisure, other commercial development and housing etc required over the Plan period. The strategic objectives set out what the local plan is seeking to do to address the planning priorities.

The local plan also sets out the planning policies which provide the decision making detail to deliver the planning vision. Planning policies should set out the opportunities for development and clear guidance on what will or will not be permitted and where. These planning policies should set out the planning tools and measures, which will be used to achieve the vision and objectives. Only policies that provide a clear indication of how a decision maker should react to a development proposal should be included in the local plan.

What are the other Development Plan Documents?

Historically, local councils have produced other supporting planning documents which expand on the policies within the local plan. These other development plan documents can contain for example, area/ site, or policy/ issue specific topic detail. In the past, local centre area action plans and development briefs have been commonly produced documents. However, these principally related to the major city or local centres and not necessarily smaller local and neighbourhood centres.

Under the reformed planning system local councils can still prepare such documents where appropriate and justified. But, it is the Government's expectation that neighbourhood planning will now largely replace the need for local councils to prepare additional and more detailed local plan supporting documents. This expectation highlights the importance for ensuring businesses and communities to take an active part in the local plan process. At an early stage in the local plan preparation process local councils should actively seek the views of local businesses and the community on the scope/ intention of bringing forward local centre neighbourhood plans for all local centres within the administrative area.

What stages are there in ‘developing a planning strategy for your local centres’?

Developing the planning strategy for your local centres can be split into three broad stages:

- **Stage 1: Evidence base** – building a picture of all the local centres in their local and wider network context to understand their existing characteristics, issues, constraints and opportunities that will affect their individual and collective local centre planning strategies.
- **Stage 2: Developing the vision, objectives and planning strategy for local centres** – here the information and evidence gathered in the previous stage is used to set out local centre visions and planning objectives to address the key issues identified (stage 1). At this stage the different planning options over how and where new development should go in the future will also be identified and a preferred planning strategy option agreed.
- **Stage 3: Delivery and Implementation** – sets out how the planning strategy will be delivered and monitored.

Stage		Task Description
1: Evidence Base	Task 1: Characteristics of the area	Description of the relevant local characteristics eg centre hierarchy and network, types of uses, transport and access, demographic/ economic data, physical features etc and how they might influence how the individual centre develops in the future.
	Task 2: Issues, problems and challenges	Identified from evidence gathered, other relevant plans, policies and strategies, and views of the local community and other stakeholders.
2: Developing the Vision, Objectives and Strategy	Task 3: Vision and strategic objectives	The planning visions sets out how the individual centres should develop in the future. The objectives expand the vision focusing on the key specific issues that need to be addressed.
	Task 4: Planning strategy	Sets out the clear planning choices about where development should go in broad terms to achieve the individual centre visions and planning objectives. Set out the package of planning tools to be used to deliver the centre visions. It should provide a framework for making individual planning application decisions.
3: Delivery and Implementation	Task 5: Delivery strategy	The local plan needs to show how the planning strategy will be delivered by whom and when.
	Task 6: Monitoring delivery	The delivery strategy should contain clear targets or measurable outcomes. The local plan should set a monitoring framework identifying key targets and indicators that relate to the planning objectives and the planning strategy to provide feedback on performance.

STAGE ONE: EVIDENCE BASE

Task 1: Centre Characteristics

Description of the centres current situation and how the existing situation could influence how the local centre develops in the future.

What Characteristics?

An evidence base needs to be developed which provides a review of individual centre characteristics, for example the centres economic and demographic situation, transport and accessibility, and environment and public realm.

Understanding these characteristics will assist in identifying the factors, which may influence how the centre develops in the future.

It is crucial for the evidence base to build a picture of all the relevant local centres within their individual and wider context.

Where do I find the information?

To a large extent the NPPF sets out the evidence and information local councils should obtain about their local centres when they are preparing their local plan. Section F of this 'Further Information Booklet' sets out further details on how the individual evidence base requirements set out within the NPPF can be undertaken.

In addition to the information required by the NPPF a range of other primary and secondary data sources should also be used to build up a picture of the current situation.

Sources could include independently produced local centre

research and neighbourhood surveys from third parties such as local businesses. A schedule of the types of characteristics which should be looked at as minimum to build up a comprehensive picture of what the local centre is currently like is provided within Section C of this 'Further Information Booklet'. This schedule sets out what the characteristics is, why it is important, where information about it can be obtained and how the information is best used and presented.

Important sources of information include:

- Retail Assessment's
- Leisure and Community Facility Assessment's
- Employment Land Review's
- Centre Management Plan's
- Local Transport Plan's
- Transport Assessment's
- The Regional Spatial Strategy and evidence base (although revoked or soon to be revoked they still contain useful and relevant strategic local centre information and guidance)
- Local Enterprise Partnership reports/ research
- Local centre occupier business reports, or plans

Rather than producing separate studies and assessments for each of the individual centre elements, a more practical and robust approach would be to undertake a collective land assessment. This approach would take a comprehensive look of the current situation and future local centre needs and demand.

The key to diverse local centres is having a broad mix of different local centre uses and activities. It is important that the characteristics review considers and draws together the links between the different centre uses and their characteristics – the review must not simply focus on retail as it is only one component of a healthy centre.

It would also be useful to critically review the existing centre related plans, policies and strategies to understand what worked well and what hasn't worked well. This review of existing plans, policies and strategies could also include examples of good and bad practice from other areas and local centres.

Who else needs to be involved?

At an early stage in the local plan process it is important to identify all of the key local businesses, organisations and individuals who need to be involved with the plans preparation. These key stakeholders are important as they know what works and what doesn't work within their local centres. They therefore may be able to provide important information to identify an individual local centre characteristic. They are also most likely to be people required to deliver the strategy once it has been finalised.

It is also important to actively involve the people who use the centre; this includes local residents, businesses and visitors who use the centre. These are the people the centre needs to attract and provide for their current and future development needs.

Consider setting up a stakeholder sounding group comprising of key businesses and organisations. This group can help inform and shape the local plan as it progresses and monitor progress once adopted.

Task 2: Local Centre Strengths, Opportunities, Issues and Challenges Identified from evidence and information gathered

What issues, problems and challenges?

In addition to developing a picture of the existing area it is also important to understand the existing constraints, opportunities and cross boundary issues that will support and influence how individual local centres will develop in the future. The relevant local and wider area opportunities, issues and challenges need to be identified and presented at this stage of the plan preparation process.

As with the previous task it is also important to look beyond centre boundaries and wider catchment area when completing this exercise. Potential risks and opportunities may lie outside the administrative boundary. For example, residents of a new housing development within a neighbouring council area could potentially be attracted to use the local centre if transport accessibility from a particular direction was improved.

Where do I find the information?

The sources used to identify characteristics (Stage 1) often also provide information on key issues, problems and challenges facing an individual local centre.

Such issues can also be identified and agreed by working with businesses, and seeking the views of local residents and users of the centre (the stakeholder group). Qualitative evidence in the form of community and business views is considered as important as quantitative evidence for developing a local plan. Involving businesses and the community early in the plan process can also help identify gaps or potential weaknesses in the evidence base where further work may be required to support potential planning strategy options (Stage 2).

The review process should only use and contain information that is appropriate to inform the later stages of the local plan and decision-making process. The key questions that should be at the forefront of Stage One preparation are:

- Why is this information/ characteristic being looked at?
- What are you trying to understand/ achieve from this information/ characteristic? What is the information going to tell you?
- How is this information going to be used to inform the local plan?
- How does this information/ characteristic relate to other information/ characteristics?

- What are the causes of this issue/ weakness? To what extent can the planning system resolve this issue (in whole, or part?)
- How reliant is the local centre on these strengths and what can be done to further support these strengths?
- What does this opportunity potentially mean to the local centre and what planning factors need to happen to realise this opportunity?

Who else needs to be involved?

The stakeholders identified as part of Task 1 (the stakeholder group) should be involved with identifying key opportunities, issues and challenges. Centre users and visitor views will also be important.

How do I use and present the local centre evidence base information?

The outcomes of this task will be used to inform the delivery questions about what needs to happen, change, continue, etc in order to support and deliver the local centre vision and planning objectives (Stages 2 and 3).

The individual elements of Stage 1 (characteristics review, and strengths, opportunities, issues and challenges) need to be drawn together to inform and justify later stages of the local plan preparation process. A useful way of presenting and showing this information is through a SWOT analysis and individual centre profiles. These can be included within the introductory sections of the local plan.

The review needs to go further than simply outlining characteristic/ issues etc aspects in isolation. The review needs to understand why these characteristics and issues etc are happening and how they relate to one another. A useful way of analysing this is to map them.

Key issues and characteristics can be mapped, as GIS layers, in the same way as identifying key physical opportunities and constraints, such as rivers, key housing sites, schools, roads etc. For example the primary and secondary local centre boundary, vacant premises, crime and anti-social behaviour hot-spots (actual or perceived), car parking, bus stops and routes, key pedestrian routes, key use areas, areas with an over or under concentration of uses.

Mapping the information in this way can assist with the identification of any wider than single administrative area issues that need to be taken into account when developing and individual local centre planning strategy options (task 4). This mapping approach could also be helpful in identifying any other local centre stakeholders that need to be involved in the process.

When developing the evidence base it is also worth remembering that this evidence base is also potentially required to support and inform neighbourhood plans. Rather than presenting information on an overall local council level, where possible, present the information as neighbourhood specific as possible, focusing on individual centres.

The evidence base can also be used to inform individual planning application decisions. It is therefore important that it is kept up-to-date and is local centre specific. Keeping the evidence base as concise as possible makes it easier to keep it up-to-date. Monitoring information (Stage 6) can be used to keep the evidence base up-to-date and robust. The local stakeholder group could also assist with gathering and reviewing centre monitoring information.

Have I got an evidence base checklist?

Have I completed this task?		If no:
1	Have all relevant local centre characteristics been identified?	See task one above and the 'Local Centre Characteristics' schedule within Section C of this 'Further Information Booklet'
2	Have all relevant plans, policies and strategies been reviewed?	See task one 'Where do I find the information?'
3	Have a comprehensive description of the characteristics of the local centre network and individual local centres (centre profiles), this should include all the elements comprising centres (retail, leisure, employment, residential etc)	Review the information gathered to produce concise profile statements of the local centre network and individual centres.
4	Have all the local centre constraints and opportunities been identified? (including individual and cumulative impacts and opportunities)	See task two 'Local Centre Strengths, opportunities, Issues and Challenges' for further information
5	Have a SWOT analysis of the local centre?	Review the evidence collected and draw out individual centres key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, which will influence how the centre will develop in the future.
6	Have a map(s) of the characteristics, issue and opportunities ?	See the section of 'How do I use and present the centre characteristics information?' within stage 2.
7	Have the key local centre businesses and users been identified and regularly involved with identifying the key issues opportunities and issues?	Develop a list of who the important local centre businesses, organisations and individuals are and ensure they are involved. Set up a stakeholder group comprising of local businesses and community and business organisations.

This information provides the baseline situation of individual centres, which will be used in the next stage to develop centre visions, a set of planning objectives and the centre planning strategies.

STAGE 2: DEVELOPING LOCAL CENTRE VISIONS AND PLANNING STRATEGIES

Task 3: Local Centre Vision and Objectives

The vision sets out how an individual local centre should develop in the future. The objectives expand the vision by focusing on the key specific issues that need to be addressed within the centre and wider planning area to achieve the vision.

What is a local centre vision and what are planning objectives?

The vision for a local plan should be a concise statement (a paragraph or two) setting out how the centre network will look at the end of the plan period. The individual local centre vision needs to feed into this overall local plan vision. The local centre vision should be able to inform and guide planning application decisions. Aspects of the vision might include: sustaining the local centre success; regeneration of the centre, improving the quality of centre diversity and mix etc. Visions should be aspirational but realistic. It is important to remember that not every centre can be at the top of the hierarchy.

A diverse local centre could for example include objectives which focus on providing more housing; providing for business and employment development, to reduce the need to travel by car; to improve environmental quality;

improving connectivity and accessibility to a market area from the main local centre area etc.

The vision will also help attract new investment and growth, as it will provide businesses, investors, and developers with the confidence required to invest. A local centre without a clear planning vision increases uncertainty about what is or is not acceptable development and therefore can deter potential investment.

What information should I use?

Using the map approach and information gathered during tasks 1 and 2 (Stage 1: The Evidence Base), a vision supported by a number of planning objectives can be identified. This will provide the basis for the planning strategy that will be developed during task 4.

It is important to consider the relevant plans, policies and strategies that will have a direct influence on how each local centre will develop in the future. The policies and plans of immediate importance to consider in developing the vision and planning objectives include the NPPF, the sustainable community strategy, any local centre management plans. These plans, policies and strategies should have been identified as part of task 1 of Stage 2.

Reference should be made to the NPPF policy schedule set out in Section F, which highlights how the national planning policies should be picked up in local plans.

Who else should be involved?

It is important that the key people who play a vital role in delivery on the ground are involved during this task. This will ensure they are signed-up to the direction of the planning strategy (task 4); this helps to guarantee the successful delivery of the policies and proposals contained within the plan. The local centre stakeholder group should be involved with this task.

Task 4: Planning Strategy

The planning strategy should reflect the local centre vision and planning objectives and set out the clear planning choices about where development should go and how planning decisions affecting the centre will be made.

What is a local centre planning strategy?

At this stage, the appropriate planning solutions to address the identified issues should begin to be identified. The planning strategy needs to support and deliver the centres vision and objectives identified during Task 3. In developing the planning strategy consideration needs to be given to how the strategy will be delivered on the ground, what new development etc will be needed, and how decision makers are expected to react to development proposals coming forward.

Local centre planning strategies within a local plan should set out where future development should go in broad terms. As a minimum for each centre within the local plan area the strategy should include the amount and type of business, leisure, retail (convenience and comparison) floorspace, the amount of new dwellings that the centre should accommodate, and the amount of new community facilities.

To guide future development the planning strategy also needs to clearly define key aspects such as the primary and secondary boundaries, key use frontages, key sites and buildings.

What information should I use?

The planning strategy needs to have regard to other relevant plans, policies and strategies, in particular the NPPF (See Section F for the key local centre policies within the National Planning Policy Framework).

There are a wide variety of planning tools which planning strategies can use to deliver the vision and planning objectives, including allocating sites, using local development orders, redefining the local centre boundaries, setting local planning application impact assessment thresholds, encouraging neighbourhood planning etc. Further detailed information about the individual tools and how and in which circumstances they can be most appropriately used can be found in section G of this 'Further Information Booklet'.

To develop a workable and robust strategy it is important to scope out and consider the implications of a number of different planning options before determining the final planning strategy. This testing of options will help to demonstrate that the final strategy is the most appropriate and therefore justified.

Using the description (and/or map) of constraints and opportunities developed at the end of task 2, it should be possible to identify different planning strategy options. For example, possible locations for new development, supporting infrastructure, locations to potentially concentrate/ focus certain land-use activities and zones, which would benefit from change of Use Class tightening or flexibility, redefining local centre boundaries (smaller or larger), local floorspace thresholds of impact assessment requirements etc.

The testing of planning options through public consultation should ensure that the key issues associated with each option are picked up, and that the planning strategy developed takes into account any wider than individual local centre boundary issues, such as transport links. If a map is being used, these could be added as additional 'layers' on the constraints and opportunities map (task 2).

When developing potential planning strategy options, consideration should also be given to issues and factors such as, demographic trends and deliverability. For example will the projected future population of the area provide sufficient support to ensure the local centre

development options proposed are viable? These kind of issues need to be understood in sufficient detail to provide confidence that the preferred option can be delivered. This should take into account 'lead in' times, costs and identifying relevant infrastructure providers.

Testing the potential impacts of the planning strategy options on the existing local centre situation is vitally important. The level of detail required to underpin this aspect of a local plan will depend on the nature, location and scale of the likely impacts arising from the planning strategy. The DCLG town centre practice guidance provides detailed technical information about assessing the impacts of retail development on existing centres. These broad principles can be applied to all local centre uses, such as leisure and visitor uses.

Factors outside the scope and control of the planning system should also be considered as these could indirectly impact on the deliverability of the options put forward eg business unit rate agreements and developer/ property owner development, or redevelopment aspirations of key local centre buildings and sites.

What does a preferred local centre planning strategy look like?

The preferred planning strategy should contain a tailored package of planning tools to support and guide new development coming forward. The planning strategy will provide the planning decision maker with sufficient guidance to determine individual planning applications. However, it is important for these policies to be appropriately flexible to respond to varying economic and changing trends.

A local plan should not contain a separate planning strategy/ chapter for each of the main centre uses, eg a chapter on retail, a separate chapter on leisure and tourism etc, but have single coherent and joined up planning strategy for each local centre.

Building on the issues, opportunities and options map the preferred local centre planning strategy can be developed.

Who else should be involved?

In particular the views of local businesses and developers should be sought to identify existing investment, funding and timing, and any other issues so that the preferred local centre planning strategy is realistic and deliverable. The local stakeholder group should be used.

Have I got a town centre vision and planning strategy checklist?

Have I completed this task?		If no:
1	Has consideration been given to all relevant local centre policies, plans and strategies that could affect the local centre area?	See section 3, and the National Planning Policy Framework policy schedule in Section F of this Booklet.
2	Have a vision for the centre which sets out the overall approach to growth and development?	See task 3 'Local Centre Visions and Objectives'
3	Have a set of strategic objectives to outline how the vision will be achieved?	See task 3 'Local Centre Visions and Objectives'
5	Develop a range of planning strategy options to deliver the centre vision and planning objectives. Have a preferred planning strategy approach to include within the local plan	See task 4 'Planning Strategy' and Section G of this Booklet.
4	Have the key business and users been involved in developing the town centre vision and planning objectives?	Identify the key businesses and users and agree what the planning vision for the local centre should be. Set up a stakeholder group comprising of key businesses and community and businesses organisations
5	Have relevant key business and users views been sought in relation to identifying appropriate solutions to address issues?	Test the planning strategy options with the key businesses and users and agree a preferred planning strategy approach
8	Has the deliverability of the supporting infrastructure that is required to support the land use allocations been fully considered, including funding and feasibility of schemes?	Consider deliverability, possibly as part of the planning strategy options testing process. Consult with local businesses and developers on what is realistic and deliverable

STAGE 3: DELIVERY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Task 5: Delivery Strategy

The local plan should clearly show how the planning strategy will be delivered when, and by whom, and how (the necessary actions).

What is a Delivery Strategy?

A delivery strategy is central to achieving the vision and planning objectives. Deliverability can be demonstrated by identifying how much and what type of development will happen where and when and by what means.

What does a delivery strategy look like?

A single delivery strategy should be developed for the whole of the local plan. This should include local centre elements alongside other issues such as the location of housing and transport infrastructure.

A timeline is a helpful way of presenting what **'actions'** need to happen and **'when'** and **'by whom'** to deliver the vision and objectives. It also helps to understand the sequence that things need to happen. This is particularly useful in understanding any dependencies between actions (eg whether development in a certain location is reliant on a piece of infrastructure being provided) and can therefore be valuable in identifying and setting out any contingency plans/ actions that may be required.

The 'actions'

The actions set out what needs to happen. Actions could include for example the bringing forward of a planning application to develop or redevelop a local centre site. The adoption of a Local Development Order or Neighbourhood Development Order which increases Use Class flexibility within a defined zone of the local centre, the adoption of a neighbourhood plan covering a local centre etc. See Section G of this Booklet for further information on the type of planning tools and measures available.

The 'when'

Actions identified within the delivery strategy must be achievable within the life of the local plan, which it supports. Although it is helpful to identify precise dates for each action where possible, this is not realistic for all actions. It may therefore be more appropriate to set out 'short', 'medium' and 'long' term timeframes – and to define what these timescales are (in months or years). In relation to large scale local centre development, the delivery strategy should identify phasing. For any supporting infrastructure the delivery strategy should identify key milestones in the delivery of that infrastructure, including funding sources and availability, where appropriate. Some actions may be 'on going', for example where they relate to determining planning applications.

There may be further actions identified in the delivery strategy that are aspirations (ie they are not key to the delivery of the local plan). Their inclusion may be to set out longer-term aims beyond the period covered by the local

plan. If these are included in the delivery strategy, however, they should be clearly identified so as not to cause confusion as to what is and is not essential.

The 'by whom'

This part of the delivery strategy relates to the mechanism, including funding sources where, by which the action will be delivered and the organisation responsible for delivering it. For example, this could be actions for the local plan itself (eg setting a policy restricting the number of local centres units which can be used for a particular planning Use Class), or for the council (eg in determining planning applications) or actions by other bodies and organisations (eg the local centre manager in delivering the local centre management plan; etc).

Where do I find this information?

The information gathered during 'developing the planning strategy' (tasks 1 to 4) will be helpful in completing the delivery strategy. The planning strategy (produced at the end of task 4) will identify the planning tools needed to support the local plan. The constraints and opportunities map could also be helpful in identifying issues that may require action in delivering the planning strategy.

Who else should be involved?

The local businesses, organisations and partners essential to the delivery of the planning strategy (ie that need to carry out actions to achieve the vision and objectives) must be signed-up to and involved in determining the how the planning strategy will be delivered (the delivery strategy).

Continual discussion with businesses, organisations throughout development plan preparation process will improve its quality and strength, and help to ensure the likelihood of it being successfully delivered.

Task 6: Monitoring delivery

Key local centre health, diversity and performance indicators and targets need to be identified and monitored

What role does monitoring have in diversity

Local plans need to contain clear arrangements for monitoring and reporting results. This is important to show how the plan is progressing and achieving its objectives. It might also highlight areas needing more attention if it shows they are not on target for a successful outcome. This process reflects the concept of 'plan, monitor, and manage', whereby the findings of monitoring feed directly into any review of the planning strategy or an element of the planning strategy eg a specific policy.

Where do I find the information?

At present there is very limited local centre monitoring data available. However, there are a number of companies which monitor activity and can provide information on an individual local centre, at cost. A quick internet search can be used to find such companies.

Other potential sources include local centre economic monitoring reports; local centre management annual reports; and business reports from key local centre uses. As a minimum each local centre planning objective should be monitored and ideally each policy or aspect of the delivery strategy should also be monitored.

Where targets and indicators are necessary, these should be SMART:

- **S**pecific – targets should not be over-complicated, perhaps only relating to one or two topics/items to monitor
- **M**easurable – capable of being monitored (using existing or new monitoring methods)
- **A**greed – targets should be formulated and agreed with the relevant local centre business and community, particularly where those individuals are responsible for achieving the target
- **R**ealistic – consideration should be given to what is reasonable to achieve in the specified timescales, having regard to the measures in place to contribute to reaching the target, the target should not be over-ambitious

- **T**imed – there should be a date for achieving the target.

Who else should be involved?

The key local centre businesses and stakeholders need to be kept regularly informed of the results of the monitoring and implementation of the local plan. There is also an opportunity to link up monitoring information collected across the local centre catchment areas and also the more locally specific neighbourhood plans.

Work with key local centre businesses and interest groups and individuals to deliver and monitor the impacts of the local plan and any other local centre planning tools that have been put in place. The local stakeholder group can assist with on going monitoring and identifying any delivery issues

Delivery and Implementation checklist

Have I completed this task?		If no:
1	Have a set of planning policies and actions to deliver the town centre planning strategy (a delivery strategy)	See task 5 'Delivery Strategy'
2	Have a clear monitoring framework for the town centre	See task 6 'Monitoring Delivery'

Section B: Local Centre Planning Uses

The Town and Country Planning (*Use Classes*) Order 1987 (as amended) puts uses of land and buildings into various categories known as 'Use Classes'. The Use Classes, which collectively make up diverse local centres, and are the uses covered by the national 'town centre first' planning policy include:

A Class: Retail development

Use Class A1 Shops - Shops, retail warehouses, hairdressers, undertakers, travel and ticket agencies, post offices (but not sorting offices), pet shops, sandwich bars, showrooms, domestic hire shops, dry cleaners, funeral directors and internet cafes.

Use Class A2 Financial and professional services - Financial services such as banks and building societies, professional services (other than health and medical services) including estate and employment agencies and betting offices.

Use Class A3 Restaurants and cafés - For the sale of food and drink for consumption on the premises - restaurants, snack bars and cafes.

Use Class A4 Drinking establishments - Public houses, wine bars or other drinking establishments (but not night clubs).

Use Class A5 Hot food takeaways - For the sale of hot food for consumption off the premises.

B Class: Offices

Use Class B1 Business - Offices (other than those that fall within A2),

C and D Class: Leisure, entertainment facilities, and the more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, night-clubs, casino, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres, and bingo halls and **Arts, culture and tourism development** (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities)

Use Class C1 Hotels - Hotels, boarding and guest houses where no significant element of care is provided (excludes hostels).

Use Class C2 Residential institutions - Residential care homes, hospitals, nursing homes, boarding schools, residential colleges and training centres.

Use Class D1 Non-residential institutions - Clinics, health centres, crèches, day nurseries, day centres, schools, art galleries (other than for sale or hire), museums, libraries, halls, places of worship, church halls, law court. Non-residential education and training centres.

Use Class D2 Assembly and leisure - Cinemas, music and concert halls, bingo and dance halls (but not night clubs), swimming baths, skating rinks, gymnasiums or area for indoor or outdoor sports and recreations (except for motor sports, or where firearms are used).

There are a number of uses which because of their individual characteristics do not fall within any of the broad use class categories. These uses are considered '**sui generis**' – class of its own. There are a number of centre activities which fall within this category, namely petrol stations, shops selling and/or displaying motor vehicles, retail warehouses, nightclubs, launderettes, taxi businesses, amusement centres and casinos.

Use Class Flexibility

You can make certain types of minor changes to buildings without needing to apply for planning permission. These are called "**permitted development rights**". They derive from a general planning permission granted not by the local council but by Parliament. What is permitted is set out within the **Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995**. Planning permission is not usually required for a change of use within the same Use Class category. A book shop (Class A1) for example could close one day and open the following day trading as a hairdressers (Class A1). In some instances two or more neighbouring buildings, which share the same use class, can be amalgamated into a single larger premise without the need for planning permission eg two small convenience stores (Class A1) could be amalgamated into a single supermarket sized store. However, there are some instances where local councils have restricted or removed the 'permitted right' to change a building use without planning permission. This usually relates to buildings within Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings etc. If you are unsure of the planning situation of a particular building or site, you should contact your local council who will be able to advise you from their planning records.

Unless specified within the General Permitted Development Order (see table below) planning permission is usually required for changes of use from one Use Class category to another category. The reason for this is that the impacts associated with the two uses are considered to be sufficiently different to potentially have an impact on the surrounding area. For example a change of use from a book shop (Class A1) to a hot food take-away (Class A5) would result in different operating/ opening hours, delivery times and frequency and there would be different levels of associated noise and smells etc. The planning application process would assess the change in impacts to ensure no adverse impacts arise from the change in use in a particular area.

From	To
A2 (professional and financial services) when premises have a display window at ground level	A1 (shop)
A3 (restaurants and cafes)	A1 or A2
A4 (drinking establishments)	A1 or A2 or A3
A5 (hot food takeaways)	A1 or A2 or A3
B1 (business) (permission limited to change of use relating to not more than 235 square metres of floor space)	B8 (storage and distribution)
C4 (houses in multiple occupation)	C3 (dwelling houses)
Casinos (sui generis)	D2 (assembly and leisure)

Additionally, a planning application is not required for change of use in the following circumstances:

- from A1 or A2 to A1 plus a single flat above;
- from A2 to A2 plus a single flat above.

These changes are reversible without a planning application only if the part that is now a flat was, respectively, in either A1 or A2 use immediately before it became a flat.

Local plans, neighbourhood plans, Local Development Orders and Neighbourhood Development Orders can all be used to control changes of use. For example where Class A1 shops are identified as a local priority, a planning policy within a local plan, or neighbourhood plan could be developed to protect against the loss of A1 uses. Development Orders can make changes to what is not allowed under the General Permitted Development Order within a designated area/ zone.

Section C: Local Centre Characteristics and Sources of Information

Characteristic	Why is this characteristic important?	Where or how do I find this information?	How can this characteristic be used and how is the information best presented?
<p>Transport and Access</p> <p>Car parking provision and location</p> <p>Bus service frequency, routes and location of bus stops etc</p> <p>Pedestrian network- walking routes</p> <p>Cycle network and parking facilities</p>	<p>Having good access is important to centre vitality and viability. Poor access or perceptions of poor accessibility will deter people from visiting the centre and new businesses investing/ moving into the centre.</p>	<p>Survey of the centres off-street and on-street parking facilities, including capacity issues and restrictions etc</p> <p>Public transport providers will be able to provide information on bus routes, frequency and stops. For smaller centres a local bus stops survey could be undertaken.</p> <p>Survey people to identify how they travelled to the centre and obtain other views about their transport and accessibility perceptions</p>	<p>Mapping this information will assist understanding of the potential causes of any transport deficiencies or problem 'hot-spots'.</p> <p>Potential opportunities for new transport and accessibility improvements could be identified through a mapping exercise.</p>
<p>Catchment area and network</p>	<p>Provides an understanding where individual centres fit within the wider network.</p>	<p>Local council produced centre assessment</p> <p>Survey of centre users –where they have travelled from to get to the centre.</p>	<p>Mapping the information will help understand the catchment area. Information could be based on appropriate distance isochrones from the centre eg a 5, 10, 15, 20 etc minute drive or walk time.</p>

Characteristic	Why is this characteristic important?	Where or how do I find this information?	How can this characteristic be used and how is the information best presented?
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">People</p> <p>Population and demographic trends</p>	<p>The resident population within the centre catchment are the main users of the centre. It is therefore important to understand what their likely needs and demands are now and in the future. For example does the catchment area consist of an aging population?</p> <p>How affluent is the population?</p> <p>What are the car ownership levels – how does this influence town centre transport and access?</p>	<p>Census and other demographic information such as unemployment rates, disposable income, car accessibility and ownership etc can be obtained from the Office of National Statistics website at a town or neighbourhood level.</p> <p>A survey of users and businesses can also help to identify demographic trends and what people want/ need from the centre.</p> <p>Information on expenditure can be obtained from centre business reports, where available, and the local council produced centre assessments.</p> <p>Data is also available at cost from organisations such as Experian and the Local Data Company.</p>	<p>Provide a description within the centre profile and any sub-centre area character profiles.</p> <p>This information will also inform the vision and planning strategy options over how the centre needs to change to meet the changing population and demographic trends.</p> <p>Locally produced surveys of existing centre users can be used to supplement technical demographic projection modelling – a reality check.</p>
<p>Crime/ Perception of Crime</p>	<p>Crime and/ or fear of crime can deter people from visiting a town centre or area of a town centre. Planning can help design out crime.</p>	<p>Town and neighbourhood crime statistics are available (free) from the Police at: http://www.police.uk/. The perception of crime can be obtained from surveying users of the centre, ideally on different days (weekdays and weekend) and at different times of the day (morning, afternoon, evening and night)</p>	<p>Mapping the information will help understand key crime or perception ‘hot spots’. Surveys could include a map related question where people could indicate ‘hot spot’ locations.</p>

Characteristic	Why is this characteristic important?	Where or how do I find this information?	How can this characteristic be used and how is the information best presented?
<p>Economy</p> <p>Diversity of main centre uses (by number type and amount of floorspace/ size): the amount of space in use for different functions – such as offices, shopping, leisure, cultural and entertainment activities, pubs, cafes and restaurants, and hotels etc. The proportion of multiples and independents.</p> <p>Demand for centre uses waiting to come into the centre, or wishing to change their representation in the centre, or to reduce or close their representation</p>	<p>A diverse and health centre needs to have a good balance of the different main land uses and the type of activities which fall under the main land use categories.</p> <p>To help attract and maintain a good type and mix of centre activities there also needs to be a good mix in the size of premises businesses can occupy – large, medium, small.</p>	<p>The local council produced centre assessment, and employment land reviews</p> <p>Data is also available at cost from organisations such as Experian and the Local Data Company.</p> <p>Undertake a survey of the centre premises and occupants, including markets and market stalls. Survey the type of land uses by planning Use Classes order and mix of uses within the broad planning use class category.</p> <p>Local town centre property owners and agents</p>	<p>Provide a summary description within the centre profile and any sub-centre area character profiles.</p> <p>The information can help to identify any deficiencies or ‘gaps’ in existing provision and over provision of particular type of uses.</p> <p>Mapping the information can help to understand these characteristic spatially – to understand under or over concentrations of particular uses in certain locations.</p> <p>Helps to consider whether an impact assessment threshold below 2,500sq m is appropriate and necessary.</p>

<p>Vacancy: Proportion of vacant street level property and length of time properties have been vacant.</p>	<p>Vacant properties detract from the quality of the centre environment. Long-term vacant properties can cause knock-on effects within a centre.</p> <p>High levels of vacancy could indicate the need to redefine the centre boundary – a smaller but stronger centre.</p>	<p>Local council produced centre assessment</p> <p>Survey of centre premises and property owners/ managers and local estate/ property agencies</p>	<p>Plotting vacant properties on a map can assist with identifying vacancy concentrations within a centre. Overlaying other mapped characteristics can help to identify causes of vacancy.</p> <p>Need to understand the causes of vacancy and identify any planning solutions which can help address the identified causes.</p>
<p>Overtrading, congestion and overcrowding of existing uses</p>	<p>The under provision of certain uses can detract from the quality and appeal of an individual centre.</p>	<p>Local council produced centre assessment</p> <p>Survey of users – perceptions of queues/ overcrowding at certain centre uses</p>	<p>Provide a summary description within the centre profile and any sub-centre area character profiles.</p> <p>The information will assist the planning strategy options over the type of new development (uses) required over the plan horizon.</p>

Characteristic	Why is this characteristic important?	Where or how do I find this information?	How can this characteristic be used and how is the information best presented?
Environment and public realm	Street pattern/ a logical and easy to use layout	<p>Ordnance Survey maps or online satellite imagery from sites such as Googlemaps and Bing</p> <p>Pedestrian counts will also highlighted key routes and potentially less accessible locations.</p> <p>Ask people their views on how easy the centre is to navigate around? Are there any areas they don't go to very often, if not why?</p>	<p>Provide a description within the centre profile and any sub-centre area character profiles.</p> <p>Can inform the planning strategy options – measures to improve centre signage and navigation</p> <p>Mapping can help understand street patterns and legibility.</p>
	Historic and heritage assets	<p>National planning policy encourages historic and heritage assets to be protected and enhanced.</p> <p>Historic and heritage assets can be both constraints to development, but also potential opportunities as they can attract visitors.</p>	<p>English Heritage and local historians.</p> <p>Local council records of heritage and historic assets, including listed buildings and conservation areas etc</p> <p>The SWOT analysis and testing of options needs to take a balanced view of these assets.</p> <p>Mapping key assets can help to inform the planning strategy options</p>
	Quality of the built form	Tired and rundown buildings or street scene, litter etc can deter people from visiting the town centre or areas within the centre.	<p>Survey of the centre</p> <p>Survey of centre users perceptions of the quality of the centre</p>

	Infrastructure capacity	The extent to which the centre can accommodated growth – deliver the vision.	Local infrastructure providers, such as the Highway Authority Local council infrastructure plans	Mapping infrastructure can help to identify potential capacity issue locations and help to identify potential issues associated with the choice of location for future centre growth (planning strategy options).
	Centre boundary and primary and secondary frontages	These boundaries form the basis of how the sequential test is applied as part of the planning application process. These elements need to be clearly and appropriately understood and defined	A centre boundary includes the primary shopping area and areas of predominantly leisure, business and other main uses. In the smaller centres there are not areas of predominantly leisure, business and other centre uses adjacent to the primary shopping area, therefore the centre boundaries do not extend beyond the primary shopping area. Survey of business and users of the centre to help inform the extent of the boundaries.	These boundaries are best shown on a detailed Ordnance Survey based map and the proposals map within the local plan and/or neighbourhood plan.

Section D: Neighbourhood Planning Process

There are five key stages to neighbourhood planning.

Stage 1: Defining the neighbourhood

First, local people and businesses need to decide how they want to work together – what is the scope of the neighbourhood, where is the neighbourhood boundary? In some instances a local centre boundary maybe an appropriate and logical neighbourhood planning area. However, in the majority of case the local centre will form part of the neighbourhood area – the heart of the community!

In areas with a parish or town council, the parish or town council are expected to take the lead on neighbourhood planning.

In areas without a parish or town council, local people and businesses will need to decide which organisation should lead on coordinating neighbourhood planning. In local centres, businesses may want to take as lead. In some places, existing community groups (eg resident associations) may want to put themselves forward. In other places, local people might want to form a new group. In all instances, the group must meet some basic standards. It must, for example, have at least 21 members, and it must be open to new members.

Town and parish councils and community/ business groups then need to apply to the local council to designate their area as a 'neighbourhood' for

neighbourhood planning purposes. The local council will check that the suggested boundaries for different neighbourhoods make sense and fit together- neighbourhood areas cannot overlap. They will also check that community groups who want to take the lead on neighbourhood planning meet the right standards. The local council will again not allow for example, the organisation to be too small or not representative enough of the local community. If the local council agrees that the community group meets the right standards, the group will be able to call itself a 'neighbourhood forum'. (The point where the group has been granted the legal power to do neighbourhood planning.)

Stage 2: Preparing the plan

The key to neighbourhood planning is its flexibility. All neighbourhoods are different so the Government has not prescribed a detailed approach or model to follow – just basic principles. Local people can choose to draw up **either** a neighbourhood plan, **or** a neighbourhood development order, or **both**. It is entirely up to them.

With **a neighbourhood plan**, communities are able to establish planning policies for the development and use of land in the neighbourhood area. They will be able to say for example, where new shops, community facilities, homes and offices should be built, and what they should look like (including mix of use, size, type as well as materials, design and car parking etc) . The neighbourhood plan will set a local plan vision for what

the neighbourhood will look like in the future. It can be detailed, or general, depending on what local people want to achieve. However, in is important to remember that it can only concern itself with the use of land by planning use class and not who uses the land.

With **a neighbourhood development order**, the community can grant planning permission for new buildings they want to see go ahead. Neighbourhood development orders can allow new shops, homes and offices to be built without the developers having to apply for separate planning permission. They can also be used to increase or decrease change of use/ permitted development flexibility (see Section B for more information on planning Use Classes) within designated zones.

However, both must follow some ground rules: They must generally be in line with the local plan and policies within the National Planning Policy Framework (see Section F of this Booklet for the main centre related policies) and they must be in line with other laws (the local council will help identify these).

It is important to remember that neighbourhood planning cannot be used to block development eg it cannot say no more supermarkets within a centre where the council produced local plan identified there is a need for new supermarket floorspace. However, they can influence the size, type, design, location and mix of new development.

The basic preparation approach for both a neighbourhood plan and neighbourhood development order will be broadly similar to the approach taken for producing a local plan document as outlined in the 'Influencing the local plan section' of the main document (page 6).

The neighbourhood plan process starts by generating an evidence base, which is then used to develop a planning vision, objectives, and a planning strategy for the neighbourhood area.

Stage 3: Independent check

Once a neighbourhood plan or order has been prepared it is submitted to the local council who appoint an independent examiner to check that it meets the right basic standards.

If the plan or order doesn't meet the right standards, the examiner will recommend changes. The local council will then consider the examiner's views and decide whether to make those changes.

If the examiner recommends significant changes, then the parish, town council or neighbourhood forum may decide to consult the local community again before proceeding back to the checking process.

Stage 4: Community referendum

The local council will organise a referendum on any plan or order that meets the basic standards. This is to ensure the community and businesses have the final say on whether a neighbourhood plan or order comes into force.

People living in the neighbourhood who are registered to vote in local elections will be entitled to vote in the referendum. Local businesses with premises within the neighbourhood area are also entitled to vote in the referendum.

If more than 50 per cent of people voting in the referendum support the plan or order, then the local council must bring it into force.

Stage 5: Legal force

Once a neighbourhood plan is in force, it carries real legal weight. Decision-makers will be obliged, by law, to take what it says into account when they consider proposals for development in the neighbourhood.

A neighbourhood order will grant planning permission for development that complies with the order. Where people have made clear that they want development of a particular type, it will be easier for that development to go ahead without unnecessary delay.

Funding and support

There are several sources of advice and support for communities who are interested in doing neighbourhood planning:

The **local council** are obliged by law to help people draw up their neighbourhood plans. The main areas of assistance will be:

- Sharing evidence and information
- Helping organise consultation events
- Advice on assessment and evidence
- Advice on national and local planning policy
- Communication with external bodies eg Highways Agency, public transport providers etc

Developers, parish and town councils, landowners and local businesses may all be interested in sponsoring and taking a leading role in neighbourhood planning.

The Government has committed some funding to until March 2015 to support local councils in making neighbourhood planning a success. This funding is available through either:

- The Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment
- CPRE in partnership with NALC
- Locality
- Royal Town Planning Institute.

Section E: Town Centre First Planning Policy Approach

The sequential approach seeks to focus new centre uses with existing centres. When looking for sites for new centre development (See Section B for the main centre planning uses) sites within centres should be considered first.

Where there are no sites which are **available, suitable** and **viable** for the proposed development then sites on **edge of town centres**, followed by sites in **out of centre** locations should be considered.

Available: Whether sites are available now or are likely to become available for development within a reasonable period of time.

Suitable: Whether a site can accommodate the need or demand which the proposal is intended to meet. Developers should try to be flexible in their accommodation approach (scale and format).

Viable: Whether there is reasonable prospect that development on a particular site could be achieved at a particular time.

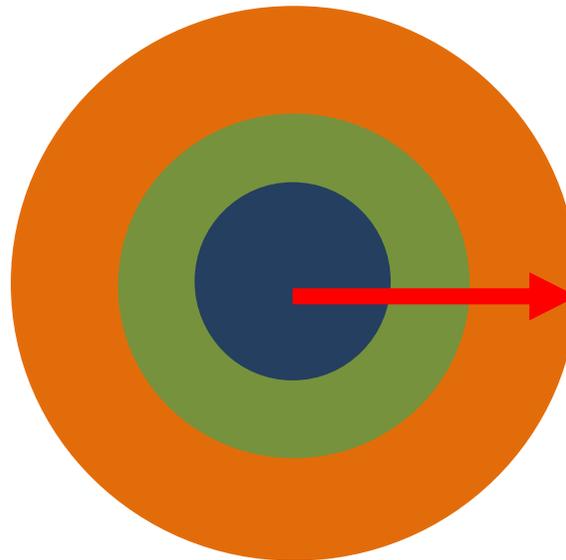
In Centre: Defined as the primary shopping area.

Edge of Centre: For retail purposes, a location that is well connected and up to 300 metres of the primary shopping area. For all other main centre uses, a location within 300 metres of a centre boundary. For office development, this includes locations outside the centre but within 500 metres

of a public transport interchange. In determining whether a site falls within the definition of edge of centre, account should be taken of local circumstances.

Out of centre: locations, which are not in or on the edge of the centre, but not necessarily outside the urban area. These are not usually within easy walking distance of the centre. Out of town – a location out of centre that is outside the existing urban area.

In determining planning applications the National Planning



Policy Framework states in paragraphs 26 to 27:

When assessing applications for retail, leisure and officer 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 is 2,500 sq 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 areas 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.*

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.

It is important for local plan and neighbourhood plans to set out how the national town centre first policy is to be applied locally. What are the local circumstances and issues which need to be taken into account by the decision maker? Is a threshold below 2,500sq m appropriate?

Section F: National Planning Policy Framework Schedule: Local Centre Plan-Making Aspects

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's national planning priorities and objectives. The policies contained within the NPPF should be taken into account when preparing local plans, neighbourhood plans and when determining individual planning applications. The schedule below sets out the key local centre related policies which need to be taken into account when planning for local centres. This schedule should be read alongside the NPPF.

Section		Outcome sought in the Development Plan	How achieved in the Development Plan
11-14	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development	To plan positively to meet the development needs of centres, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change, unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.	<p>Assess the current level of provision of centre uses and identify the amount of development required to move from the current situation to achieving the centre vision. Develop an appropriate planning strategy to deliver the development required.</p> <p>Test the planning strategy options for deliverability. Identify potential contingency options. Develop a delivery strategy and monitoring framework and review and revised the planning strategy as required.</p> <p>From the evidence base identify the economic, social and environmental issues, which could effect and undermine the delivery of the centre vision and planning strategy. Include a policy, which sets out how centre use developments will be assessed.</p>
23	Ensuring the vitality of town centres	Define a network and hierarchy of centres that is resilient to anticipated future economic changes	<p>The network of centres should be identified as part of the evidence base process. The characteristics, opportunities and impacts identified for each centre should be considered spatially as these factors go beyond single centre boundaries.</p> <p>Through the 'Duty to Cooperate' local councils should work together to ensure centre visions, objectives and planning strategies are aligned and do not conflict.</p> <p>Develop a policy which sets out the amount of main centre use development required at each centre to support centre growth, but maintain a balanced network.</p>

Section	Outcome sought in the Development Plan	How achieved in the Development Plan
	Define the extent of the centre and its primary shopping areas	As part of the evidence base characteristics assessment the existing centre boundary and primary shopping areas should be identified and critically reviewed. These should be redefined as appropriate and clearly shown on the proposals map. The planning strategy should clearly set out what uses are appropriate and where.
	Promote competitive centres	Centres need to have as wide a range of activities as possible to cater for different needs, tastes and preferences. This choice provides diversity and competition. The characteristics review will help identify any centre diversity issues. The planning strategy should put in place appropriate policies and planning measures to address any identified diversity/ competition issues and maximise any opportunities to increase diversity and competition.
	Retain and enhance existing markets	As part of the evidence base process look at the existing provision of markets and market stalls/ space within individual centres. Identify any issues and opportunities and put in place appropriate planning policies to address the individual issues and achieve the opportunities for further enhancement.
	Allocate a range of suitable sites to meet the scale and type of retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural, community and residential development needed in town centres. Needs are to be met in full and are not compromised by limited site availability. Allocate appropriate edge of centre sites where appropriate following the sequential approach	<p>Identify the current level of provision both in terms of qualitative and quantitative and identify the development required to achieve the vision for the centre. The planning strategy should identify sufficient land (using the sequential approach) to meet the identified needs. Critically review the suitability of the existing centre stock to meet future needs. In some instances encouraging redevelopment/ change of use maybe more effective than continually expanding centre boundaries.</p> <p>Use monitoring data to ensure sufficient sites are available to meet future needs. Review the planning strategy in light of monitoring information.</p>

Section		Outcome sought in the Development Plan	How achieved in the Development Plan
		Set policies for the consideration of main town centre uses which cannot be accommodated in or adjacent to centres	As not all centre development will be located within centres, appropriate policies should be developed and included within the planning strategy over how the centre first policy approach is to be applied to individual centres. What are the local characteristics and issues that need to be considered as part of the planning application process?
		Recognise that residential development can play an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres	As part of the planning strategy consider centre options which include mixed-use development and residential developments. Residential development can help fund (through developer contributions) centre improvements eg public realm.
		Where centres are declining, plan positively for their future to encourage economic activity.	The issues associated with declining centres should be identified. Planning policies and measures should be included within the planning strategy to address the issues.
26	Assessing impact	Set local floorspace thresholds for assessing the impact of applications for retail, leisure and office development outside centres	Where the evidence base indicates that new development with a floorspace under 2,500sqm could potentially have negative impacts on a centre, an impact assessment policy tailored to local circumstances should be included within the planning strategy. This should include a threshold (or thresholds) at which the policy applies and the type(s) of centre development the threshold(s) apply to. The policy should clearly set out what the impact issues are and how they will be assessed.
28	Rural economy	Promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship	Key village centre facilities and services should be identified as the evidence base is prepared. Appropriate policy protection measures should be developed and included within the Plan. Village centre locations for new centre related development should be identified and supported within the planning strategy.
20	Transport	Support a pattern of development which, where reasonable to do so, facilitates the use of sustainable modes of transport	Focus development within centres and along transport corridors. The evidence base will identify centre locations with good transport accessibility. The planning strategy should look to maximise opportunities within location with high transport accessibility.

Section		Outcome sought in the Development Plan	How achieved in the Development Plan
34	Significant movement generating developments	Developments that generate significant movement should be located where the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes maximised.	Main centres uses individually and collectively generate significant movements. These uses should therefore be located within centres, which are also usually the focus for transport interchanges – bus stations and railway stations etc. The planning strategy could set out what is defined locally as development which generates significant movements. For identified developments a sequential approach style policy could be developed.
35	Movement of goods and people	Development plans should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - locate and design where practical to accommodate the efficient delivery of goods and supplies - priority to pedestrian and cycle movements, and have high quality access to public transport - create safe and secure layouts which minimise conflicts between traffic and cyclists or pedestrians, avoiding street clutter - incorporate facilities for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles - consider the needs of people with disabilities by all modes of transport 	Focusing similar uses within close proximity (such as a centre) could help enable linked deliveries, which reduce the length of travel between delivery drops. The evidence base should identify any pedestrian, cycle or public transport issues and opportunities. The planning strategy should identify ways to improve pedestrian and cycle movements and access to public transport.
37	Minimise journey length	Polices should aim for a balance of land uses within their area so that people can be encouraged to minimise journey lengths for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities	Applying the sequential approach (urban focus) to all forms of development will ensure that the centre is at the centre/ heart of the community. The sequential approach reduces journey lengths through increasing opportunities for linked trips. Develop a planning strategy that focuses on concentrating development around the centre, in particular areas with good public transport accessibility.

Section		Outcome sought in the Development Plan	How achieved in the Development Plan
39	Parking standards	Non-residential parking standards should take into account: accessibility, the type, mix and use of development,; the availability of and opportunities for public transport; local car ownership; an overall need to reduce the use of high-emission vehicles	<p>The evidence base should identify the existing car parking characteristics, issues and opportunities for all centres within the area.</p> <p>Parking policies within the planning strategy should be developed for each centre taking into account their individual characteristics. Separate car parking standards and policies can also be developed for out of centre developments.</p>
58	Design	Development should establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit. Optimise the potential to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses and support local facilities and transport networks. Respond to local character and history. Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion.	The evidence base should identify the design, character and sense of place characteristics of individual centres within the area. Design issues and opportunities for improvement should be identified and appropriate planning policies and measures should be developed
70	Community facilities and services	Protect the loss of valued facilities and services. 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.	<p>Key centre facilities and services should be identified, as the evidence base is prepared). Appropriate policy protection measures should be developed and included within the planning strategy.</p> <p>To assist local shops, facilities and services modernise and adapt to changing circumstances the use of Local Development Orders or Neighbourhood Development Orders should be considered. Such measures should be included within the planning and delivery strategy.</p>

Section G: Available Planning Tools

The schedule below sets out the range of planning tools which are available to local councils and communities which can be used to support local centres. Depending on individual local circumstances the right planning tools can be selected from this schedule and incorporated into local plans and neighbourhood plans, or used as part of the development control process.

Tool	Description	Prepared by	Why used?	How used within a centre planning strategy?
Planning policy	A statement of what development is and what is not acceptable, and how the local council will assess the suitability of a planning application.	Local Council Neighbourhood	<p>Planning policies provide the basis on which individual planning applications are determined.</p> <p>Planning policies provide detail on how the planning vision should be delivered eg the amount, type, size, location and design of new development required.</p> <p>Sufficiently detailed planning policies provide developers and businesses with certainty to invest.</p> <p>Planning law requires that planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan (namely local plans and neighbourhood plans) policies, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Planning policies are therefore powerful tools to prevent inappropriate development.</p>	<p>Policies need to be developed which articulate how the local centre vision and objectives will be delivered. The policies also need to provide the 'hooks' which other planning tools can be developed. Policies could be developed which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Define the area of the centre, including primary and secondary boundaries and set out what uses are appropriate and where - Set out the quantum of new centre uses required within the plan area and how this is most appropriately apportioned across the centre network - Encourage certain types of uses to balance the offer - Control changes to the size of existing units and the mix of unit sizes in any new development/ redevelopment - Require a certain percentage of Use Class units within an identified area - Set a local impact assessment threshold (below 2,500sq m floorspace) - Set out the local impacts that each of the main centres uses will be assessed against - Require developer contributions (Section 106 contributions) to improve local centre public realm, or 'gift' a proportion of units to the local council to manage as affordable units - Include centre enhancing/improvement infrastructure within the Community Infrastructure Levy - Set out permitted changes in circumstances of long term vacancy – defined 'long term'

Tool	Description	Prepared by	Why used?	How used within a centre planning strategy?
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protect key centre buildings in terms of use, sub-division etc - Set parking standards for main centres uses – standards could vary according to sequential location.
Site Allocation	The designation of a defined area of land or building for a particular planning use or uses.	Local Council Neighbourhood	Designating a site within the local or neighbourhood plan provides businesses/ developers and the community with greater certainty about future use. Development proposals on an allocated site which do not accord with the details of the site allocation can be refused by the local council.	They can be used to specify particular sites and/ or buildings for particular centre uses. Allocated sites should be clearly shown on a proposals map and the detailed description of the allocation is set out within a local plan or neighbourhood plan policy.
Supplementary Planning Document	The documents do not form part of the development plan, but supplement the plan. These are therefore 'material planning considerations'. Supplementary documents need to be 'hung off' a policy contained within the adopted local plan for the area.	Local council	They can be used to provide more detail to policies contained within the development plan (see planning policies above). The Government expectation is that neighbourhood plans will provide any additional detail required over the local plan. However, these could still be developed where a neighbourhood plan is not being developed.	Supplementary planning documents can be used to articulate the whole or part of the planning vision and strategy in more detailed that is set out within the local plan policies. See the planning policy section above for the types of policies which could be developed to support centres.

Tool	Description	Prepared by	Why used?	How used within a centre planning strategy?
Area Action Plan	A type of development plan that include area-wide policies and site specific proposals	Local council	<p>Provides detailed planning guidance for a larger than a single site.</p> <p>The Government expectation is that neighbourhood plans will provide any additional detail required over the local plan. However, these could still be developed where a neighbourhood plan is not being developed.</p>	<p>An Area Action Plan could be prepared for the whole or part of a centre. This can be used to develop further the centre planning strategy.</p>
Masterplan/ Development Brief	Provides design detail for a site allocation within the local plan.	Local council	<p>Provides developers, businesses and the community with certainty over what will be acceptable within the area covered by the masterplan/ development brief area.</p> <p>These are usually used for large and complex centre developments/ redevelopment.</p>	<p>A masterplan or development brief can clearly articulate what the centre planning vision is and how it will be achieved. Development within the masterplan or brief does not need to happen all in one go as individual elements can be incrementally developed (phased) following the agreed masterplan/ brief template.</p>

Tool	Description	Prepared by	Why used?	How used within a centre planning strategy?
Local Development Order	Specified classes of development are permitted within a designated area without the need for individual planning applications being granted by the local council	Local Council	<p>Provided planning flexibility to occupiers of buildings/ land within the area covered by the zone. Businesses are able to respond to changing market and economic circumstances as the time period and costs of obtaining planning permission are removed.</p> <p>They create opportunities for relocation or development, provide opportunities for community-based organisations to occupy premises, there is no procedural delays associated with making an application and they provide certainty of outcome.</p> <p>Although a local council could put in place a Local Development Order it is the Government's expectation that neighbourhood Planning (neighbourhood Development Orders) will replace the need for local council's to do so.</p>	<p>They can widen the range of uses occupying premises in centres without the need for planning applications.</p> <p>Although a Local Development Order does not have to be backed by a specific development plan policy, it will give it more strength if the policy intent is already agreed and is supported by evidence and potentially a supplementary development plan/ masterplan or design guide that has provided some certainty about what form of development will be permitted.</p>

Tool	Description	Prepared by	Why used?	How used within a centre planning strategy?
Neighbourhood Development Order	Provide full or partial planning permission within a specified zone or site/ building	Neighbourhood	Provide certainty to investors and planning flexibility to occupiers of buildings/ land within the area covered by the zone. Businesses are able to respond to changing market and economic circumstances as the time period and costs of obtaining planning permission are removed.	A Neighbourhood Development Order can be used to grant planning permission for new centre development/ redevelopment without the need to apply for planning permission from the local council.
Article 4 Direction	A legal direction to remove types of development that normally have permitted development rights therefore requiring planning permission to be approved by the local council.	Local Council	Give the local council greater power to control development taking place if a particular use is causing a particular local issue Although not strictly a planning tool the	Where there is evidence demonstrating that too many of a particular centre land use or type of business is damaging the centre's vitality and viability an Article 4 Direction can be used to increase planning controls. For example it could be to prevent too many premises being used for a particular land use eg betting shops. Local communities and businesses could lobby the local council to put in place an Article 4 Direction. However, putting in place any Direction would be subject to the Council's discretion. The local community and businesses could assist the process by helping to develop the evidence base to justify the removal of permitted development rights.
'Right to Buy' and 'List of Community Assets'	Although not strictly a planning tool this can have direct relevance to the planning system	Neighbourhood	Can be used to help prevent important local centre buildings being lost to alternative uses.	Communities identify community assets, which are important to them. These important assets are listed on a register kept by the local council. If the owner of the asset wishes to sell the asset the community has the opportunity to buy the asset before it is sold on the open market. Assets listed as community assets are afforded greater planning protections against things such as change of use.

Tool	Description	Prepared by	Why used?	How used within a centre planning strategy?
Compulsory Purchase order	Legal powers to acquire land for new development or redevelopment	Local council and other public bodies (such as the Highways Agency)	Assemble land in multiple ownership to bring forward suitable sites for development and secure additional capacity within or on the edge of town centres to accommodate growth and/or to deliver effective regeneration and the promotion of business	Legal process – See Circular 6/2004 for detailed information and guidance on the use and process of Compulsory Purchase powers.

