

Out of Centre Retail and Leisure Uses

- 7.45 The Council will seek to maintain the vitality of the boroughs designated centres and the pivotal role they play for local communities by ensuring any proposals for main town centres uses are appropriately located and of a scale that would not have any significant adverse impacts to any existing centres.

Policy PR5 – Out of Centre Retail and Leisure Uses

Sequential Test

In accordance with national policy, main town centre uses should be located within existing centres, then in edge of centre locations, and only if suitable sites are not available (or expected to become available within a reasonable period) should out of centre sites be considered.

Proposals should take a flexible approach to scale and format to determine whether it would have any significant adverse impacts.

Impact Assessment

The Council will strongly resist any out of centre development that could harm the health and vitality of any existing centre. Therefore, where there is an out of centre application, an impact assessment will be required and should satisfy the locational requirement floorspace threshold set out locally;

- Rochdale 2,000 sq.m gross and above
- Middleton 1,000 sq.m and above
- Heywood, Littleborough and District / Local Centres 500 sq.m gross and above

For the avoidance of doubt, the above thresholds apply to new floorspace (including mezzanine), extensions, changes of use and applications seeking to vary any existing conditions.

Applications which do not satisfy the sequential test or where it is deemed the proposal would have significant adverse impacts to an existing centre will be refused.

Places for Everyone Links:

Policy JP-P4 New Retail and Leisure Uses in Town Centres

Reasoned Justification

- 7.46 For some time, town centres have faced competition from developing out of town locations including those hosting bulky-good retail parks, many of which eventually evolved into shopping parks. Large out of centre stores have also applied pressure on town centres through influencing shopping behaviours, in effect providing a mini and alternative shopping centre providing free parking, enhanced environments and extended openings.

- 7.47 Main town centre uses are central to the viability and vitality of town centres. National planning policy recognises the importance of maintaining healthy centres and the pivotal role they play to local communities. The Council is therefore keen to support the borough's centres by ensuring that they remain the focus for main town centre uses. By locating large scale retail and leisure facilities in the borough's designated centres, helping to drive footfall and trading revenue to business in town centres, in turn, maintaining and enhancing town centre vitality and also reducing the need to travel and make multiple linked trips.
- 7.48 Where a retail impact assessment is required, it must include a thorough appraisal of its impact to the catchment area of the proposed development, with due regard to its scale, the cumulative impact of any recent developments and the impact on the town centre in the context of local consumer choice and trade in the centre. The Council expects applicants to consider both existing, committed and planned public and private investment in these centres to justify a chosen location outside of the preferred designated central locations within a sequential test. The onus is on the applicant to demonstrate compliance with sequential test requirements including evidence they have first considered locations which fall within an existing town centre, as well as the preferable edge of centre sites. If the authority is satisfied the evidence presented prove these locations are unsuitable, the test will be passed.
- 7.49 Compliance with both an impact assessment and sequential test does not guarantee permission will be granted. The application will still be subject to all relevant planning considerations.
- 7.50 Policy PR1 establishes the Boroughs hierarchy of centres, taking into account a variety of factors, with each tier offering a different level of resistance to new development in that catchment area. The centres highest on the list, considered Rochdale's 'main town centres', will inevitably offer the strongest impact resistance to the introduction of new development without it undermining its vitality and viability. These centres will most likely be able to accommodate larger scale development outside of their town centre boundaries, subject to the necessary assessments. Lower down in the tier, the district and local centres are of smaller scale, with a more localised catchment and retail offer therefore will be more sensitive to large scale development which may significantly impact investment and activity in these areas.
- 7.51 The deviation from the nationally set threshold of 2,500sq.m is considered appropriate to allow the Council to retain appropriate control and expectations for development in these catchments. This should not be interpreted that proposed developments with a floorspace above the set thresholds for that area are necessarily inappropriate in scale but there to give better consideration as to its impact.