



Matter 5: Town Centres and retail

Examination of the Cheshire East Local Plan Site
Allocations and Development Policies Document

for Orbit Investments (Properties) Ltd

Emery Planning project number: 17-087

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This hearing statement is submitted on behalf of Orbit Investments (Properties) Ltd in relation to Matter 5: Town Centres and Retail. The hearing session is scheduled to take place on 20th October 2021.

2. Retail Hierarchy (Policy RET1)

Q77. Should the new local centres proposed as part of the strategic allocations in the LPS be included as ‘local urban centres’ or ‘neighbourhood parades of shops’ in the retail hierarchy in Policy RET 1, to ensure that, once built, there is a clear and effective policy framework for guiding future development, including changes of use, within them?

- 2.1 New local centres proposed as part of strategic allocations in the LPS should be considered as neighbourhood parades of shops.
- 2.2 The purpose of the retail provision within the LPS strategic allocations is to meet local needs. For example Policy LPS33 for North Cheshire Growth Village refers to a new mixed-use centre including retail provision to meet ‘local needs’.
- 2.3 The definition of town centre in the Framework (discussed in more detail below) is clear that references to town centres excludes small parades of shops of purely neighbourhood significance. Defining the retail provision within strategic allocations as neighbourhood parades of shops would be consistent with this definition.
- 2.4 This approach would ensure that existing established centres are protected in accordance with the defined retail hierarchy.

Q78. Based on the evidence submitted, is Policy RET 1 justified in designating Dean Row Road as a local urban centre or should it be designated as a local centre?

- 2.5 No. Dean Row Road should be designated as a Local Centre.

- 2.6 Policy PG2 of the LPS sets out the settlement hierarchy in terms of Principal Towns (Crewe and Macclesfield), Key Service Centres (Alsager, Congleton, Handforth, Knutsford, Middlewich, Nantwich, Poynton, Sandbach and Wilmslow) and Local Service Centres (Alderley Edge, Audlem, Bollington, Bunbury, Chelford, Disley, Goostrey, Haslington, Holmes Chapel, Moberley, Prestbury, Shavington and Wrenbury).
- 2.7 The retail hierarchy in Policy RET1 follows the settlement hierarchy in Policy PG2 of the LPS and in doing so overlooks local centres such as Dean Row Road, Wilmslow which are situated within the settlement boundaries of Principal Town and Key Service Centres. Whilst there are correlations between the settlement hierarchy and the retail hierarchy, the two are distinct.
- 2.8 Policy RET1 proposed that Dean Row Road, Wilmslow be included in the plan as a Local Urban Centre, a tier below Local Centres. The Glossary describes Local Urban Centres as a:

“Defined area comprising of a range of shops and services that generally function to meet local, day-to-day shopping needs, sometimes including small supermarkets. Local urban centres do not fall within the definition of town centres.”(our emphasis)

- 2.9 The explanatory text to draft Policy RET1 of the SADPD at paragraph 9.6 also states that Local Urban Centres such as Dean Row Road and neighbourhood parades of shops do not fall within the definition of town centres in the glossary of the Framework.
- 2.10 The Framework (and the Glossary to the SADPD which repeats the Framework definition verbatim) defines town centres as:

“Areas defined on the local authority’s policies map, including the primary shopping area and areas predominantly occupied by main town centre uses within or adjacent to primary shopping area. References to town centres or centres apply to city centres, town centres, district centres and local centres but exclude small parades of shops of purely neighbourhood significance. Unless they are identified as centres in the development plan, existing out-of-centre developments, comprising or including main town centre uses, do not constitute town centres.”

- 2.11 The proposed Local Urban Centre designation for Dean Row Road means it is not considered to be a ‘centre’ in terms of the Framework. This designation is inconsistent with the evidence base for the SADPD.

2.12 Table 8 from the Wilmslow Settlement Report dated August 2020 (ED43) (copied below) explains that Dean Row is a reasonably sized shopping centre comprising 18 units with an excellent range of convenience retail and other services including a public house, offices, day nursery, vets and community centre. The report states that the supermarket is of a scale to have a catchment extending beyond the immediately surrounding residential area. Furthermore, Appendix 2 of the Wilmslow Settlement Report proposes to amend the settlement boundary to extend it to the east to include the community centre and Dean Row centre. This confirms the role of Dean Row as a centre which goes far beyond being a small parade of shops. Dean Row should be considered a local centre in terms of the definition in the Framework. It is clearly not a small parade of shops of purely neighbourhood significance and this is confirmed by the evidence base.

Dean Row Road

Dean Row Road (Summerfields)	
Location and Description (including current status in the legacy local plan)	This is a reasonably-sized shopping area centred around Village Way in the north of Wilmslow. It is designated as a 'local centre' in the MBLP.
Total number of units	18
Range of uses	Supermarket; convenience store; charity shops; sandwich shop; dry cleaners; veterinary surgery; hairdressers; beauty salon; pharmacy; travel agency; public house; offices; day nursery; community centre; car showroom.
Proximity to other centres	Wilmslow town centre is around 1.5km to the south west.
Accessibility	The centre is accessible by bus service 130, with bus stops located close to the centre.
Environmental Quality	Summerfields is a relatively modern, purpose built neighbourhood centre and the environmental quality is good with enhanced paving and street furniture. There is a large free car park.
Recommendations	It is recommended that this area be identified as a local urban centre. It has an excellent range of convenience retail and other services to meet the day to day needs of nearby residential areas as well as some more specialist provision serving a wider catchment. The supermarket is of a scale to have a catchment extending beyond the immediately-surrounding residential areas.

Table Wilmslow 8: Review of Dean Row Road area

2.13 In terms of its designation in the current development plan, Policy S4 of the saved Macclesfield Borough Local Plan identifies Dean Row Road Neighbourhood Centre as a Local Centre where the council will “seek to maintain a level of shopping provision...commensurate with the role that the centre serves in the community...” The explanatory text explains that the Local Centres provide access to important day to day shopping facilities.

- 2.14 The role of Dean Row Centre has not declined or reduced since the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan was adopted in 2004. This is evident from the assessment within the Wilmslow Settlement Report and the proposed amendment to the boundary for the centre to include the two community centres. There is no justification for Dean Row to now be positioned in a lower tier of the retail hierarchy than it was in 2004.
- 2.15 In summary, Dean Row functions as a 'centre' in accordance with the definition in the Framework, it is not a '*small parade of shops of purely neighbourhood significance*' sufficient to justify its exclusion as a centre. Its designation should be commensurate with its function as a local centre. Dean Row Road (Summerfields Centre, Wilmslow) should be included within the schedule of Local Service Centres to better reflect its offering

Q79. Should the proposed minor amendment to paragraph 9.6 in the justification to Policy RET 1, which seeks to ensure local urban centres are included within the definition of 'town centres', be considered as a Main Modification? Should the definition of a 'local urban centre' in the Glossary to the SADPD be similarly modified? Would these changes be consistent with national policy?

- 2.16 We refer to our response above in respect of Dean Row. We have set out that Dean Row should be included within the schedule of Local Service Centres and therefore considered as a centre.
- 2.17 We have been unable to locate the minor amendment which seeks to ensure local urban centres are included within the definition of 'town centres' and request that this is discussed further at the hearing sessions.
- 2.18 Notwithstanding this, the definition of town centre in the Framework (repeated verbatim in the Glossary of the SADPD) confirms that references to town centres includes district and local centres. The definition only excludes small parades of shops of purely neighbourhood significance.
- 2.19 To ensure consistency with the Framework, only neighbourhood parades of shops should be excluded from the definition of centre. Local Urban Centres should be included within the definition of town centres consistent with the Framework.

2.20 We would also note that footnote 25 to Policy RET3: Sequential and Impact Tests includes local urban centres in the definition of a 'defined centre'. We consider that local urban centres should be considered as defined centres.

3. Boundaries to town, local and urban centres, and neighbourhood parades

80. Are the boundaries for the principal town centres, town centres, local centres, local urban centres and neighbourhood parades, as proposed on the draft Policies Map, consistent with national policy aims for town centres, positively prepared and justified by proportionate evidence, and would they be effective in guiding development proposals for main town centre uses alongside the relevant policies in neighbourhood plans?

- 3.1 Subject to our responses to questions 78 and 79 above, we raise no objection to the proposed boundary for Dean Row as a centre including the extension to incorporate the community centre and Dean Row Centre.