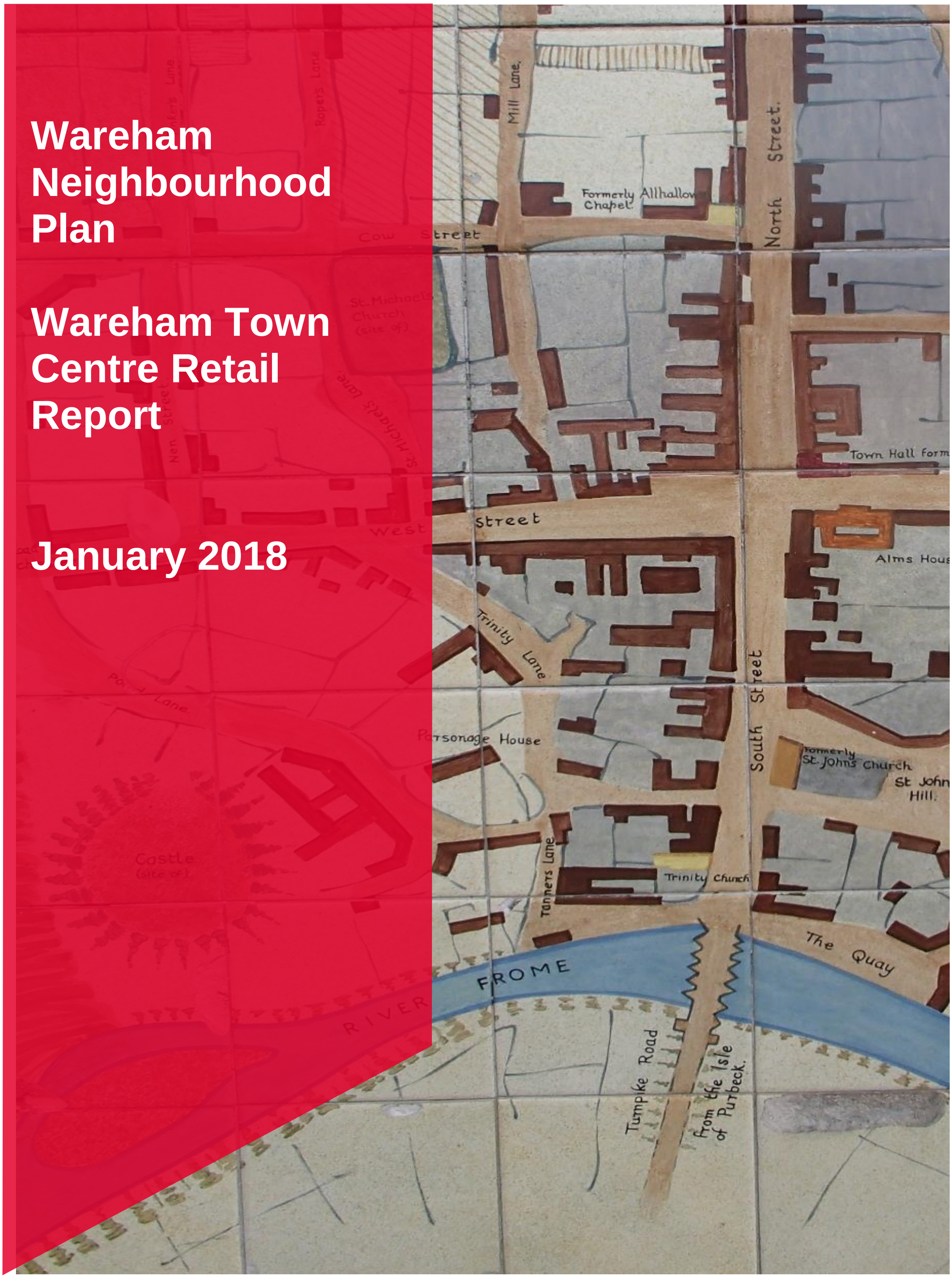
Wareham Neighbourhood Plan

Wareham Town Centre Retail Report

January 2018



Contents

1. INTRODUCTION 1
2. SETTING THE CONTEXT 3
3 ALLOCATING LAND 11
4 OUT-OF-CENTRE RETAILING 17
5 IMPROVING TOWN CENTRE VITALITY AND VIABILITY 20
6 CAR PARK STRATEGY 28
7 SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS 33
BIBLIOGRAPHY 35

Author

Chris Hays MRTPI MIHBC
(Director, UK Development)

1. INTRODUCTION

Introduction

1.1. Cushman & Wakefield is instructed to provide specialist retail planning advice to feed in to the preparation of the Wareham Neighbourhood Plan (WNP).

1.2. The National Planning Policy Framework promotes positive planning to support town centres, based on the preparation of a vision or strategy articulated through local planning. This should be based on evidence of the current state of a town centre and it should identify opportunities for meeting development needs and supporting vitality and viability. The neighbourhood planning process gives local communities the power to develop a vision/strategy and set individual policies in support of town centres, reflecting local knowledge and ambitions.

1.3. Based on early consultation and review of evidence, a key potential objective of the WNP identified by the Wareham Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group (in the consultant's brief for this study) is to *'protect the vitality of the Town Centre, by retaining the diversity of shops and leisure facilities and clear and accessible car parking and public toilets'*. Furthermore, other stated potential objectives of the emerging WNP, such as guiding development to appropriate sites and ensuring it meets locally identified needs, will also be relevant in establishing appropriate policies and proposals for the Town Centre.

1.4. This report sets out our advice on a range of specific issues relevant to the future planning and management of the Town Centre having regard to established evidence base and our own research. Our advice draws on our in-house expertise in relevant market sectors including our understanding of national trends in retailing and town centres. Our advice has also been informed by the feedback from a workshop event organised by the Wareham Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group and the local Chamber of Trade & Commerce that took place on 2 October 2017.

The Brief

1.5. The Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group has identified four key issues to be addressed by this study:

1. The need to allocate additional land for town centre uses in order to strengthen its vitality and viability, having regard to likely demand;

2. The approach to 'out-of-centre' foodstore provision (and other main town centre uses);

3. Means of strengthening the Town Centre's vitality and viability and how this could be achieved through changes to planning policy; and

4. The need to resist the loss of public car parks serving the Town Centre.

1.6. This report sets out a context for the study by providing a summary review of the Town Centre (role, composition, health, etc). It then considers each of the above key issues in turn. Finally, the report provides a summary of the recommendations arising from the analysis.

2. SETTING THE CONTEXT

Overview

2.1 Wareham has a compact Town Centre structured around the historic street pattern that makes up the core of this market town. Town centre uses are concentrated along the main streets (North, South, and West) and extend into the southeast quadrant including the 'Quay'. North and South Street is the principal axis and main vehicular route in and out of the Town Centre.

2.2 A Town Centre boundary has been defined for planning purposes and this is proposed to be slightly altered as part of the current Partial Review of the Purbeck Local Plan[1], as shown on the plan at Fig.1 below. The proposed amendments involve a more consistent definition of the extent of those premises in the Town Centre (ie. actual premises and not including the rear of plots) and the removal of some properties in the vicinity of The Quay and St John's Hill that are now predominantly in residential use. A full explanation of the proposed changes is provided in the Wareham Town Centre Background Paper, January 2015[2].

2.3 Local organisations including the Town Council have supported the proposed revision and observations on the ground confirm that the revised boundary is generally appropriate based on the current distribution of town centre uses. However, further consideration of the extent of the Town Centre is given in Section 5 of this report.

[1] https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/media/201406/Reviewing-the-Plan-for-Purbecks-Future---Issues-and-Options-Consultation-Document/pdf/Purbeck_Local_Plan_Partial_Review_Issues_and_Options_W.pdf

[2] https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/media/201420/Wareham-Town-Centre/pdf/Wareham_Town_Centre_Background_Paper.pdf

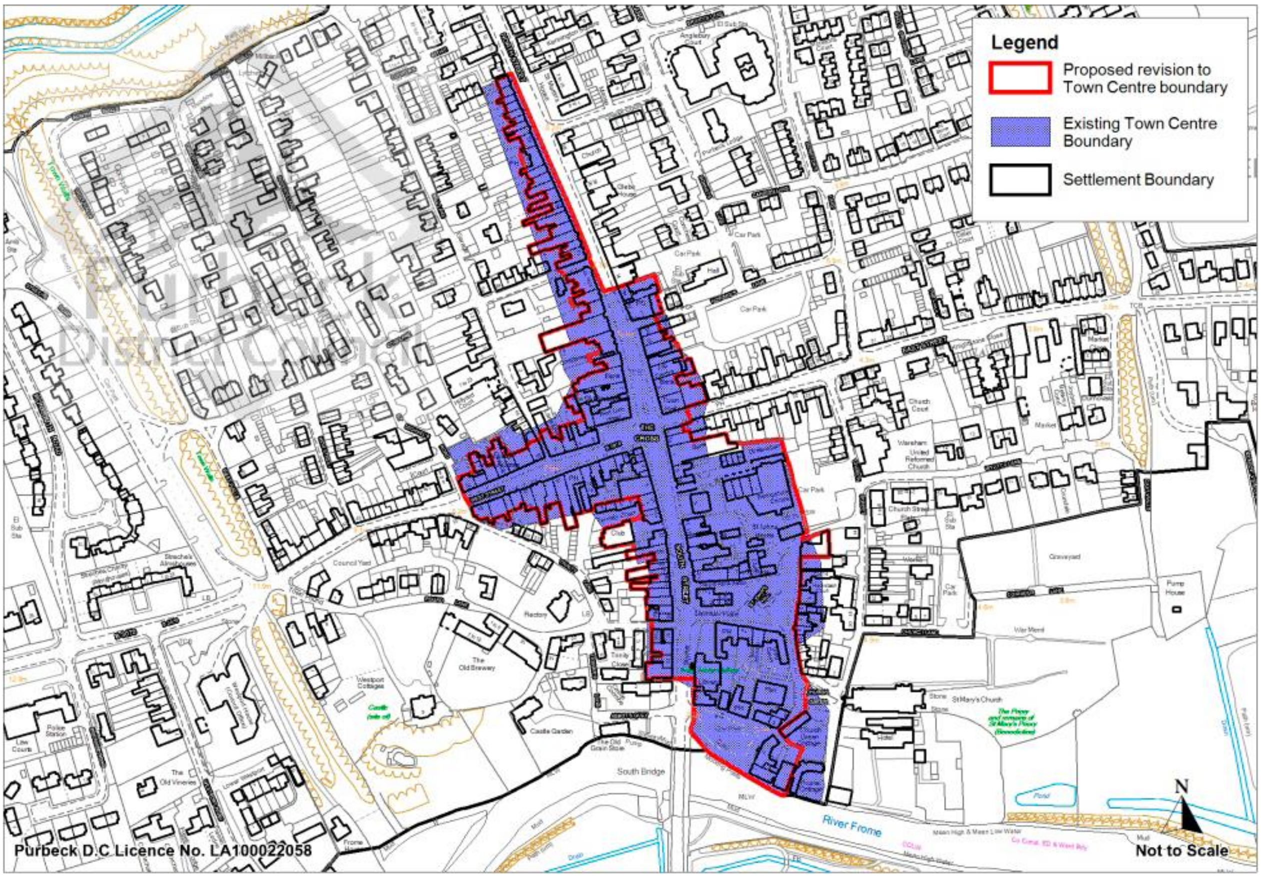


Fig 1. Extract from Purbeck local Plan Partial Review – Issues and Options Consultation (January 2015) showing Wareham Town Centre.

2.4 Wareham Town Centre functions as the second largest centre in Purbeck and contains around 120 units. Its proximity to Poole, Bournemouth, and to a much lesser extent Swanage (albeit this is the largest centre in Purbeck with around 150 units), curtails its role and influence as a shopping destination and means that there is inevitable leakage of locally-generated shopping expenditure to these competing centres (both in terms of convenience and comparison shopping). This is particularly owing to the good road access to Poole and Bournemouth and opportunities for combined trips to the conurbation, including work-related journeys.

2.5 The Poole and Purbeck Town Centres Retail and Leisure Study 2014[3] household shopping survey showed that only 30% of convenience goods expenditure was retained within the Wareham area at that time with the Tesco Extra at Fleets Corner, Poole (some 15km from Wareham Town Centre) attracting nearly the same amount of convenience spending from the Wareham area as the Sainsbury's in

[3]The Poole and Purbeck Town Centres Retail and Leisure Study 2014 (Peter Brett Associates) provides a full analysis of shopping patterns based on a household telephone survey. https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/media/201423/Poole-and-Purbeck-Town-Centres-Retail-and-Leisure-Study---Final-Report/pdf/Poole_and_Purbeck_Retail_Study_23012015.pdf

Wareham Town Centre and the Asda (West Quay Road, Poole) not far behind. Furthermore, only 5% of total spending on comparison goods was retained within the Wareham area in 2014 with most spending directed to Poole's Town Centre and its retail parks.

2.6 Nevertheless, Wareham Town Centre is an important day-to-day convenience and service centre, as well as having a limited and largely independent comparison shopping role, for residents of the town and its hinterland, whilst also acting as an important visitor destination.

2.7 Fig.2 below shows the composition of Wareham Town Centre over the period 2010 – 2017 in relation to the proportion of units within particular use categories, along with the current (March 2017) national average. The current retail offer of the Town Centre is below the national average in terms of proportion of retail units, with a higher than average proportion of units in service uses, which is likely to be a reflection of the importance of the town as a visitor destination. It is particularly noteworthy that the proportion of vacant units (2.3%) is significantly below the current national average of around 12%.

SECTOR	2010 (% OF ALL UNITS)[4]	2014 (% OF ALL UNITS[5]	2017 (% OF ALL UNITS[6]	UK Average (March 2017)[7]
Convenience	14.1	11.1	7.0	9.4
Comparison	35.9	46.7	35.9	39.2
Service	43.5	37.8	52.3	38.1
Miscellaneous	Not recorded	1.1	2.3	1.2
Vacant	6.5	3.3	2.3	12.2

Fig 2. Composition of Wareham Town Centre 2010 – 2017 (*figures may not add due to rounding)

2.8 It is apparent from current observations and interrogation of historic data that over the past few years, the Town Centre has seen a notable growth in service units (especially food and drink outlets) and a corresponding reduction in the number of retail units (convenience and comparison sectors), reflecting national trends for smaller town centres.

[4] https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/media/156249/Retail-Impact-Assessment---Final-September-2010/pdf/Purbeck_Retail_Impact_Assessment_With_Appendices_September_2010.pdf

[5] https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/media/201423/Poole-and-Purbeck-Town-Centres-Retail-and-Leisure-Study---Final-Report/pdf/Poole_and_Purbeck_Retail_Study_23012015.pdf

[6] Cushman & Wakefield review of Town Centre, August 2017

[7] Experian GOAD Centre data on national averages at March 2017

2.9 The analysis indicates that generally there is a healthy balance of retail and service uses within the Town Centre having regard to its prevailing functions. In this regard, the Town Centre offer reflects the importance of Wareham as a visitor destination but this bias towards service uses (food and drink uses specifically) is not considered to detract from the ability of the Town Centre to provide for the day-to-day needs of the local catchment population, having regard to Wareham Town Centre's established role in the shopping hierarchy.

2.10 Monitoring also shows that the overall amount of floorspace in 'town centre' uses within the Town Centre has remained more or less static over the period since 2006 (a reduction of only 65sqm)[8]. This may indicate that any loss of retail/service floorspace has been compensated by new/replacement town centre operators. It may also indicate that planning policies are effectively protecting the Town Centre from pressures to change floorspace to alternative (non-'town centre') uses, albeit the data suggests that there has been limited pressure for such changes over this period.

Healthcheck

2.11 Fig.3 below provides a SWOT analysis based on the observed health of the Town Centre and a review of available evidence.

STRENGTHS	OPPORTUNITIES
• High quality built environment • Very low vacancy rate • Varied retail/service mix • Strong independent sector (not a 'clone' town) • Good balance between offer for local community and visitors • Sainsbury's is a strong anchor • The Quay • New independent entrants raising quality (eg. Purbeck Living, Salt Pig) • Good overall amount of parking provision on multiple sites and reasonable pricing	• Create clear vision and strategy • More quality independent retailers • Establish specialist/niche role? • Capitalise on the 'Destination' • 'Brand Wareham' place marketing • Social media potential? • Neighbourhood Plan – framework and policies to protect and enhance • Exploiting the Saturday market to wider benefit? • Pop-up shops/services? • Library site redevelopment

[8] Purbeck Local Plan Part 1 – Monitoring Report (April 2014 – March 2016). https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/media/219159/Retail-Monitoring-Report-2016/pdf/retail-provision-monitoring-report-2016.pdf

• Compact, safe and legible centre • Free on-street parking	
WEAKNESSES	**THREATS**
• Some areas of poor quality public realm (eg. paving on North Street) • Tight urban grain/historic fabric means limited scope for new development and modernising units • Congestion and parking problems on Saturdays • Busy road junction at heart of town • Poor directional signage/routing to some car parks (eg. Church Lane Long Stay) • Seasonality • Patchy opening hours of some operators • Sainsbury's overtrading at peak times	• Out-of-centre retailing, particularly food • E-commerce • Loss of key services (eg. bank rationalisation) • Longevity of independent retailers (future viability of niche retailers) • Impact of higher business rates • Removal of free on-street parking provision • Disposal and redevelopment of car parks • Long-term vacancies

Fig 3. Wareham Town Centre SWOT Analysis

2.12 The Workshop event with local stakeholders highlighted the following key issues in relation to, and in addition to, the above:

- The essential role played by Sainsbury's in attracting shopping trips to the Town Centre;
- The view that any continuing overtrading[9] at Sainsbury's is not manifesting in significant problems for customers in terms of uncomfortable shopping conditions for the vast majority of its opening time (other than parking pressure at the Rempstone Centre which is seen as a consistent problem, especially on Saturday mornings and summer holidays). Overtrading is not seen as a basis for encouraging or justifying additional convenience provision out-of-centre;
- Wareham Town Centre is well-placed to benefit from the trend in more frequent, local food shopping;

[9] Overtrading is a term used when a particular shop outperforms relative to the company's average performance (in terms of turnover). Significant overtrading can result in uncomfortable conditions for shoppers because a store is too busy. However, in a company's portfolio, there will naturally be stores that trade better than others, and overtrading may not be at a level that creates pressure for expansion of for other qualitative improvements.

- A consensus that out-of-centre retail development (particularly food) will be highly damaging to the Town Centre and should not be contemplated as an option in the WNP, regardless of any ongoing patterns of high expenditure leakage;

- Recognition that recent new entrants (eg. Salt Pig, Purbeck Living) are having a positive effect in terms of raising the standards of independent representation in the Town Centre, with this likely to act as a catalyst for more interest and investment in the Town Centre;

- Concerns over the future of the level crossing and its replacement with ramps[10] and how this may deter pedestrian trips to the Town Centre from residents in north Wareham;

- A consensus that the amount of dedicated car parking in the Town Centre is adequate. However, it is considered that there is increasing pressure on (free) on-street parking in surrounding streets that is adversely affecting the Town Centre's attractiveness. This is partly attributed to allowing new infill housing development on the edges of the Town Centre with no dedicated off-street parking provision;

- A real need for traders and other stakeholders to communicate and work together in promoting the Town Centre as a location for new investment and supporting each other's vitality;

- The need to develop the 'Brand Wareham' and exploit social media;

- A need to rationalise and extend opening hours in to the evening to attract shoppers (particularly food shopping) after working hours;

- Recent increased business rates is hitting retailers hard;

- The prevalence of on-line grocery shopping in recent years;

- Uncertainty regarding the ongoing impact of e-commerce on the Town Centre and acceptance that Wareham should focus on the quality of the destination and its independent offer to maintain its health; and

- A need to strike the right balance between protecting retail units and allowing changes of use that benefit the health of the Town Centre. A key concern is the change to professional services and offices that do not enliven the streetscene.

[10] https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/wareham-level-crossing

2.13 Overall, Wareham Town Centre continues to perform well against established health indicators. In particular, it benefits from a highly attractive historic environment that is the bedrock to its function as a visitor destination. It is a characterful centre derived from a diverse mix of independent retailers and service uses. The very low vacancy rate and recent introduction of several high-quality independent retailers is an indication of continuing confidence in the viability of Wareham Town Centre as a trading destination.

Trends

2.14 Town Centres have to face up to a number of challenges relating to the changing needs and preferences of consumers. Not all of these challenges are relevant to town planning, but policies and strategies for town centres can play an import part in enabling them to adapt to modern requirements and promote vitality and viability, based on an underlying understanding of the dynamics of the high street.

2.15 The following points summarise key underlying trends of relevance to this study and the future planning of Wareham Town Centre:

- E-commerce: growth in non-store retailing and the wider impacts on the traditional high street are well-documented. Internet sales have rocketed in recent years, now accounting for close to 15% of total retail sales and will continue to grow in the short-term as relatively new technologies become more established (eg. purchasing through mobile phones and interactive TVs). However, leading retail expert, Experian is now predicting that the growth in internet sales will moderate markedly after about 2022, reaching around 20% by the mid-2030s[11]. 'Click and Collect' facilities are becoming commonplace on the high street (eg. Argos, Tu and eBay collections are located in the Sainsbury's and an Amazon collection point is located in Horseys in Wareham Town Centre) and add to the overall offer of the town centre and help drive footfall. With more internet banking and the recent emergence of online estate agents, there is a risk that such services will scale back from the high street in coming years, potentially leading to higher occurrence of vacant units.

- Market Polarisation – with national multiple comparison goods retailers rationalising their portfolios and gravitating to larger, stronger centres, places such as Wareham Town Centre are not considered as viable or desirable trading locations and comparison retailer requirements will be very limited. This places added importance on the role of independent and specialist/niche comparison retailers in supporting the health of smaller centres such as Wareham.

---

[11] Retail Planner Briefing Note 14, Experian, November 2016

- Food shopping (convenience) – an increasing proportion of food shopping expenditure is taken up by day-to-day basket/top-up shopping trips rather than bulk food shopping trips. Recent research by the Co-op indicates that 48% of households no longer tend to do a big 'weekly' shop, preferring instead to make multiple food shopping trips throughout the week[12]. The main national grocers have responded by focussing growth in smaller-format stores, often in town/district centres or local parades, as well as increasing the quality and depth of the offer found in these smaller convenience stores. The established Sainsbury's and Co-op foodstores in Wareham Town Centre are well-suited to this shift in shopping patterns and there may be demand for new representation in the Town Centre if this trend continues. In contrast, with large-format stores no longer being the primary driver for growth, the interest in establishing new large out-of-centre foodstores from the main national grocers has subsided in recent years.

- Food shopping (value) – the growing popularity of discount retailers Aldi and Lidl has fuelled an increase in their combined market share to around 12% and there is ongoing aggressive expansion throughout the UK. These two retailers are currently represented in Hamworthy and Poole (8 and 9.5 km from Wareham) and do not currently have confirmed requirements for new foodstores in Wareham itself. Given both retailer's rigid store format requirements, it can be assumed that any requirement arising could only be addressed out-of-centre given the physical constraints associated with Wareham Town Centre and its immediate surroundings (as considered further in this report), meaning that the impacts of such provision would need to be carefully considered.

- 'Destination' and 'Experience' – consumers are increasingly influenced by the quality of a destination and the wider experiences that can be gained from visiting a town centre. This will encompass the quality of the built environment and wider offer of the town centre (eg. the range of good quality restaurants, cafes, bars, and commercial leisure facilities; markets, festivals and events; cultural attractions). With declining demand for traditional retail space, specialist and niche forms of retailing (lifestyle, more engaging offer, strong local vibe, etc) can play an important role in defining a destination and enhancing the visitor experience. This can be viewed as a key consideration for Wareham given its established role as a visitor destination, providing a strong basis on which to exploit its position.

2.16 The above matters are relevant to the formulation of local planning policies since they are driving factors in the likely demand for new floorspace, both in and out-of-centre, and also inform strategies relating to the future composition and wider evolution of the town centre.

[12] 'Back to the Future – 50 years of Convenience Retailing' (Co-op, July 2015) http://news.co-operativefood.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Co-op-Convenience-Report-FINAL.pdf

3 ALLOCATING LAND

Introduction

3.1 The basis for identifying and allocating additional land for retailing in the WNP is based on the following key considerations:

- Identifiable quantitative and qualitative needs;
- Likely operator demand and associated requirements;
- The physical capacity to accommodate additional development for town centre uses; and
- Competing development needs and market factors (eg. viability and land values)

Need

3.2 The latest major study of retailing in Purbeck is the 'Poole and Purbeck Town Centres, Retail and Leisure Study' (Peter Brett Associates, 2014). The study assessed the quantitative and qualitative needs for new convenience and comparison shopping floorspace over the period to 2031 based on a review of shopping patterns, projections on population and expenditure growth, and a range of qualitative factors.

3.3 The Study indicates that there is a quantitative need for 750-950sqm net additional comparison goods floorspace and 1200-1800sqm net convenience floorspace in Wareham and Swanage (combined) over the period to 2031. To put this into perspective, the Co-op in Wareham Town Centre is estimated to have a net floorspace of approximately 600sqm and the Sainsbury's around 950sqm.

3.4 It is noteworthy that Co-op has expressed plans to extend its existing foodstore in Swanage Town Centre that would soak up some of the floorspace capacity identified above, albeit this is not a commitment at the current time.

3.5 We also note that Co-op is currently extending its convenience store at Sandford Garage, some 2.5km northeast of Wareham Town Centre, by 224sqm, further soaking up potential expenditure capacity.

3.6 The Purbeck Local Plan is currently undergoing a Review which may result in additional homes being allocated within the Parish of Wareham. It is expected that this is likely to be in the region of 200 new homes which, in itself, will not generate additional expenditure headroom to support significant new retail floorspace.

3.7 Evidence of overtrading at Sainsbury's, Wareham (estimated turnover was around 28.5% above company benchmark at the time of the 2014 study, based on its household shopping survey), along with the Co-op, Swanage, was also identified in the study as evidence of qualitative need for enhanced convenience shopping provision in both towns.

3.8 Whilst observations and feedback from the Workshop event indicate that the Sainsbury's foodstore is continuing to trade healthily, uncomfortable shopping conditions for customers (eg. congestion in aisles, long queues at checkouts) only appear to be encountered at peak times (some Saturday mornings and around holiday periods). The main issue appears to be difficulties with store parking, given the limited supply of spaces at the Rempstone Centre (Fig.4), with in-store shopping conditions generally fine for the vast majority of time. Accordingly, overtrading at Sainsbury's is not considered to add materially to any case for enhanced foodstore provision in Wareham.

Fig.4 Rempstone Centre Car Park

3.9 The 2014 study of household shopping patterns in the Wareham area showed that there was significant leakage of local convenience expenditure, as highlighted in Section 2 of this report. With no convenience 'superstore' in Wareham, it is unsurprising that a high proportion (70% recorded in the 2014 study) of convenience shopping expenditure within its catchment area was shown to leak to competing destinations, notably highly-accessible foodstores Poole (Tesco Extra, Fleets Corner; Asda, West Quay Road). Such trips are likely to be linked with working patterns and also multi-purpose trips to Poole (comparison shopping and leisure) which will curtail the potential to claw back such expenditure.

3.10 With the general trend towards more frequent food shopping in smaller stores in recent years (and since the 2014 study), it is likely that residents in the Wareham catchment area are now looking more and more towards meeting their convenience shopping needs in Wareham Town Centre instead of, or in conjunction with larger stores further afield. Accordingly, it may well be the case that convenience expenditure leakage has reduced since the last household shopping survey. This may put increased pressure on the established convenience stores in the Town Centre and advance the case for better provision of smaller stores in the Town Centre. However, current trends do not advance a case for the provision of large-format convenience facilities in the town, which in the case of Wareham, would inevitably have to be located out-of-centre.

3.11 Poole Town Centre and out-of-centre retail parks in the Poole area account for the lion's share of comparison goods spending by residents in the Wareham catchment area. The 2014 study indicates that only 5% of comparison goods spending is retained. This is a clear reflection of the relative offer of Poole compared to Wareham Town Centre, the latter having a small and largely independent comparison goods shopping function and lacking in key sectors such as fashion/clothing stores.

3.12 With the ongoing trend of national multiple comparison retailers focussing on higher order centres, there is limited prospect of Wareham Town Centre significantly improving its market share of locally-generated comparison expenditure. The 2014 study advised that there was little scope to claw back comparison expenditure and improve the town's market share.

Operator Demand

3.13 At present, there are no confirmed operator requirements for new foodstores in Wareham. Notably, both of the key discount retailers (Aldi and Lidl), who are particularly active in expanding their portfolios, do not identify a requirement in Wareham. This is understandable given that both retailers are already represented around 5-6 miles from Wareham.

3.14 As highlighted above, there may be operator interest in improving smaller-scale convenience store provision in Wareham if current food shopping trends continue and suitable premises are available (eg. Tesco is not currently in the Town Centre and could conceivably seek representation if an opportunity became available). However, demand for larger (out-of-centre) foodstores is not identified and there are no clear signs that the main national foodstore operators will upscale in the coming years.

3.15 There are currently no identified firm requirements from national multiple comparison goods retailers and any demand from them is likely to be associated with the provision of click and collect services. Traditional 'bricks and mortar' demand is likely to be associated with small-scale independent retailers based on the availability of vacant town centre units.

Options for Town Centre Growth

3.16 Whilst the very low vacancy rate and high utilisation is clearly an indicator of a vital and viable Wareham Town Centre, it does limit the opportunities for potential new entrants and can lead to a stagnation. It is generally considered healthy to have a constant supply and churn of vacant town centre units to provide opportunities for new entrants. Current opportunities in Wareham Town Centre are very limited.

3.17 Given the tight urban grain and high proportion of buildings of historic significance within Wareham Town Centre and its immediate surroundings, there is very limited scope to grow the Town Centre. A review of the town has not identified any readily available or suitable sites/areas in and adjoining the Town Centre that offer scope to significantly increase floorspace for town centre uses.

3.18 Whilst there are a number of 'backland' areas and other sites at the edges of the Town Centre that present scope for redevelopment, these opportunities are considered to be unsuitable for town centre use (by virtue of their lack of prominence, isolated position relative to current frontages, or poor access for deliveries/servicing) and more suited to other land uses (notably housing). Examples are the vacant Cottees site on East Street and the Transco site adjoining the River Piddle at the North Street entrance to the town.

3.19 In reality, the Town Centre is likely to evolve and improve organically through the piecemeal change of use, modernisation or enhancement of individual premises as they are vacated/change hands. This could potentially include the amalgamation of plots to provide larger units where there are no heritage constraints.

3.20 The Library site on South Street (Fig 5) is one example where redevelopment could conceivably provide new commercial floorspace within the existing Town Centre, notably through development of its parking area that occupies a prominent corner plot, albeit this is likely to be a long term proposition and the library function should be suitably accommodated as part of any redevelopment or otherwise relocated within the Town Centre.

Fig 5. The Library Site, South Street

3.21 The area comprising the neighbouring Howards Lane/Bonnets Lane car parks and the Masonic Hall (outside but at the edge of the Town Centre) (Fig 6) could potentially provide a future opportunity for townscape enhancement, particularly through new frontage development that better defines the streets in keeping with the prevailing historic character of the town. However the maintenance of existing parking provision is more of a priority in maintaining the vitality and viability of the Town Centre and therefore it is not recommended that the Town Centre boundary be altered in this area as a means of promoting redevelopment.

Fig 6. The Howards Lane/Bonnets Lane car parks and Masonic Hall area

3.22 Overall, the analysis points to there being limited opportunities to allocate land for town centre uses in the WNP. However, in the longer term, the Library site potentially offers some scope for townscape enhancement and provision of new town centre floorspace suited to potential demand.

3.23 Consideration of out-of-centre retailing is given in the next section of this report.

Summary

- **Expenditure growth, leakage and overtrading provide scope for improved retail facilities**
- **Demand for new convenience floorspace is likely to be in the form of small convenience stores as opposed to large foodstores**
- **No confirmed retailer requirements**
- **Low vacancy rate and high utilisation in the Town Centre limits opportunities for new entrants**
- **The Library site presents a possible longer-term opportunity to provide new floorspace within the Town Centre subject to the Library being retained on-site or elsewhere within the Town Centre**

4 OUT-OF-CENTRE RETAILING

Introduction

4.1 National planning policy and established local plan policies adopt a 'town centre' first approach. The policy approach to out-of-centre retailing (and other 'town centre' uses) is based on two well-established tests: the 'sequential approach' and 'impact'. The former involves the consideration of whether the identified need can be met within the town centre or at locations well-related and with good linkage to the town centre. The latter is a consideration of whether the provision of out-of-centre development will give rise to harmful effects on the vitality and viability of a centre, including whether there will be an impact on public and private investment in a centre.

4.2 Changes in shoppers' habits have to some extent reduced the threat posed to town centres from out-of-centre development in recent years. In particular, consumers have embraced shopping locally and frequently in respect of meeting their food needs, particularly with the main national grocers increasing their presence on the 'high street'. Experian also highlights that high streets are benefitting from an increasing number of service outlets that is boosting demand for town centre space[13]. In respect of comparison goods shopping, smaller Town Centres such as Wareham will have already witnessed and absorbed effects associated with market polarisation and the Town is unlikely to be of interest to national comparison retailers seeking new large-format out-of-centre outlets.

Appraisal

4.3 The previous section of this report has highlighted that whilst there is scope to improve shopping facilities in Wareham, the evident need (or justification) arising from expenditure growth, leakage, and overtrading at Sainsbury's does not provide a cogent basis for the WNP to plan positively for the provision of new out-of-centre retail floorspace. This is especially given the fact that there is no confirmed evidence of any latent demand from national retailers seeking representation in Wareham, and because there are opportunities (albeit limited) to provide new commercial floorspace within the Town Centre and at its edge that are likely to be suitable to address any demand arising, as identified in the previous section of this report.

4.4 Whilst the analysis of the Town Centre reports positively in respect of a range of indicators, out-of-centre retail development would also clearly represent a threat to its ongoing vitality and viability.

[13] Retail Planner Briefing Note 14, Experian, November 2016

4.5 In particular, a new medium-/large-scale out-of-centre foodstore is likely to have a significant detrimental impact on the Town Centre through direct trade diversion (from Sainsbury's, Co-op, and smaller independents) and secondary effects in terms of decreased use of the wider Town Centre. With Sainsbury's acting as the obvious anchor for the Town Centre, any threat to its ongoing viability could potentially have a disproportionate impact on the Town Centre.

4.6 Given that there is no foundation for allocating land to accommodate out-of-centre development for town centre uses, proposals for such development, should they arise, can be determined in accordance with prevailing national policy and established local plan policies, reinforced in the WNP having regard to local circumstances.

4.7 It is noted in this respect that current adopted policy in the adopted Purbeck Local Plan Part 1 sets a threshold of 1,000sqm gross floorspace above which an impact assessment is required for developments outside town centre boundaries[14].

4.8 Given the relatively small-scale nature of retailing in Wareham Town Centre (average unit size is around 120sqm), it is considered that there is merit in setting a lower threshold for the application of the impact test in the WNP. This is on the basis that retail proposals under the current 1,000sqm threshold could pose a significant threat to the vitality and viability of the Town Centre (eg. a new foodstore of around 1,000sqm gross floorspace will be of similar size to the established Sainsbury's and Co-op in Wareham Town Centre).

4.9 We note that the 2014 Retail Study suggested adopting a threshold of 200sqm gross floorspace for proposed developments outside the town centres in Purbeck. There may well be retail developments above this suggested threshold that can be readily absorbed without detriment to the Town Centre (eg. a small convenience store serving a very localised catchment or a bulky goods comparison retailer that would not compete directly with the offer of the Town Centre). Accordingly, a locally-set lower threshold impact test should naturally be applied in a proportionate and locally appropriate way with the scope and level of detail to be provided in support of individual applications agreed in advance with the local planning authority.

Summary

- **National and Local Plan Policies are in place to protect Town Centres**

[14] Purbeck Local plan Part 1 - Policy RP: Retail Provision https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/media/177912/Purbeck-Local-Plan-Part-1-Planning-Purbecks-Future/pdf/Local_Plan_Part_1-_Planning_Purbecks_Future_Adopted.pdf

- **The evident need arising from expenditure growth, leakage, and overtrading does not provide a basis to plan positively for new out-of-centre retail floorspace**
- **There is no demand for new out-of-centre development for town centre uses**
- **There are opportunities, albeit limited, to provide new commercial floorspace in the Town Centre, suited to likely demand arising.**
- **Out-of-centre retail development (especially convenience) is likely to have an adverse effect on the Town Centre**
- **Include a Local Impact Test setting a lower 200sqm threshold for impact assessments, to be applied proportionately**

5 IMPROVING TOWN CENTRE VITALITY AND VIABILITY

Introduction

5.1 A planning strategy and policies for the town centre should be based on evidence of the current state of the town centre and opportunities to meet development needs and support vitality and viability. This will include:

- Establishing what is an appropriate and realistic role for the town centre;
- Creating a vision for the town centre;
- Capacity for growth and options available;
- Complementary strategies to enhance the town centre; and
- The approach to car parking.

5.2 The key ways in which vitality and viability can be supported through planning strategies and policies at the local level include the following:

- expanding the town centre to encourage growth (as considered in Section 3);
- controlling change of use on main town centre frontages, either restricting change or allowing flexibility to encourage diversification;
- site-specific allocations for town centre uses (as considered in Section 3);
- car park identification and protection policies (as considered in the Section 6);
- traffic/highways/accessibility improvements;
- public realm improvements and other enhancement strategies; and
- promoting other forms of development that support the health of the centre (eg. increasing the amount of housing in the town centre).

5.3 This study has established the following:

- Wareham Town Centre currently displays very good levels of vitality and viability against a range of indicators;

- However, there is a number of threats, weaknesses and opportunities to improve the health of the centre;

- High utilisation, low vacancies, and the compact, historic nature of the town restricts the capacity for growth, albeit a couple of possible opportunities for new commercial floorspace have been identified in this report;

- There is no confirmed demand for new premises from national convenience or comparison retailers;

- The importance of independents and signs that the quality of the independent offer is improving; and

- The important visitor/tourist role of the Town Centre.

Town Centre Role

5.4 To begin with, the role and position of Wareham Town Centre within the centre hierarchy is well-established and the analysis does not indicate that there is any basis to alter this underlying function. In this regard, the vision and strategy for the Town Centre will be about maintaining and enhancing its role as a local service centre and visitor destination. To this end, a step change in the size and nature of the Town Centre is not envisaged, with the focus on organic adaptation, growth and enhancement.

5.5 With there being limited scope to expand the Town Centre, it will be especially important to ensure that there is no harmful dilution of town centre uses within its defined boundary, especially as this has been tightly drawn.

Town Centre Boundary

5.6 As introduced in Section 2, a Town Centre boundary has been defined for planning purposes and this is proposed to be slightly altered as shown on the plan at Fig.1. The planned changes are considered appropriate.

5.7 The following areas have been identified for potential inclusion within the Town Centre boundary (shown indicatively at Fig 7 below):

- Howards Lane/Bonnets Lane car parks and the Masonic Hall area (1);
- Rempstone Centre Car Park (2); and
- The dedicated car park at the rear of the Co-op unit, accessed via Mill Lane (3).

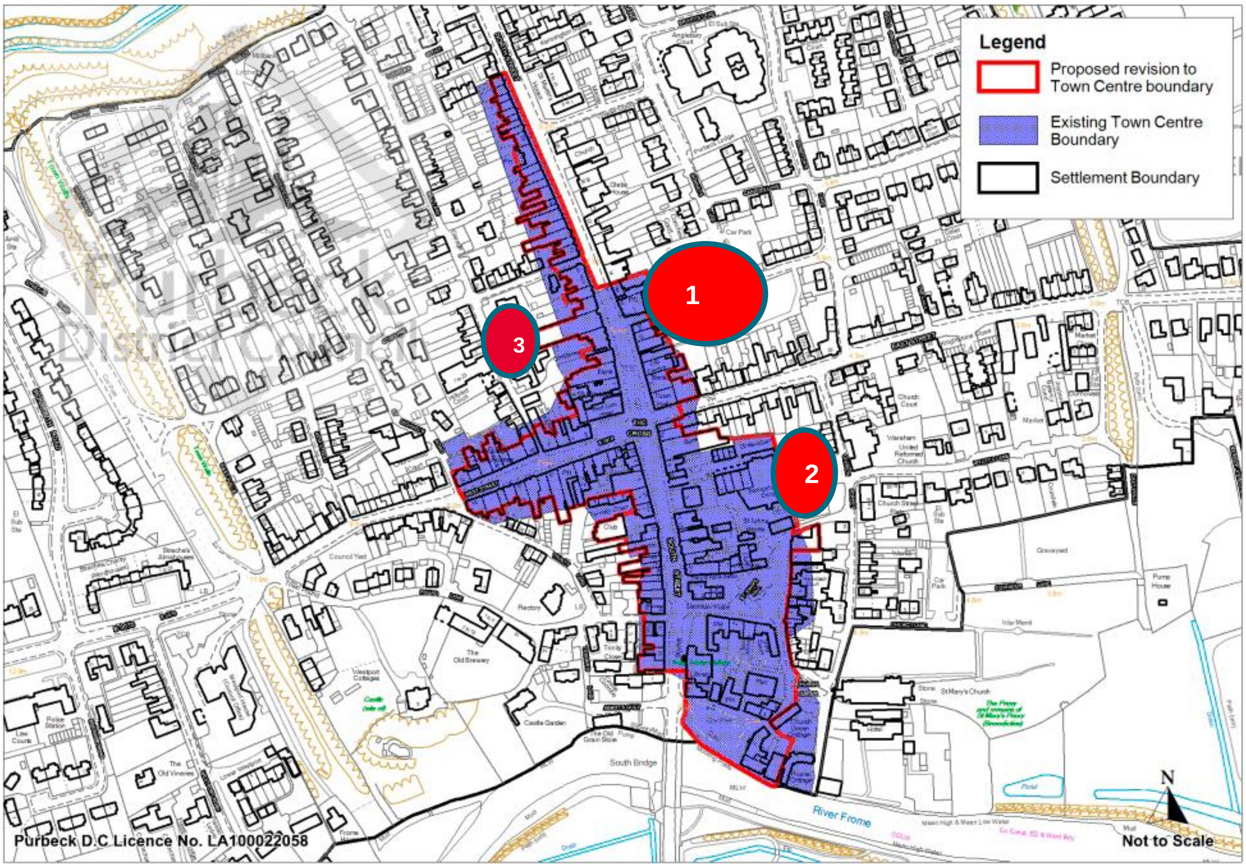


Fig.7 Wareham Town Centre Boundary with Areas for Possible Inclusion (red ovals)

5.8 The Howards Lane/Bonnets Lane/Masonic Hall area already functions as part of the Town Centre (public car parking, public toilets, and non-residential institution). As highlighted in Section 3, the area is an opportunity for townscape enhancement, albeit it is considered essential that the current level of parking provision is maintained. For this reason, it is considered that there is no need to include this area within the Town Centre boundary as a means of promoting redevelopment. A general 'safeguarding' policy can protect the parking provision in this area, as considered in Section 6 of this report.

5.9 The small dedicated customer car park at the rear of the Co-op unit was identified in the Workshop as a potential area for inclusion within the Town Centre boundary. This was on the basis that the car park is an integral part of the Co-op operation, unlike land at the rear of most other properties in the Town Centre (which are now proposed to be excluded from the Town Centre). It was also suggested that including the land within the Town Centre boundary could facilitate the future expansion of the unit if the Co-op so desired. In this case, it is considered that there is a policy basis to include the whole of the Co-op demise within the Town Centre as this would confirm the appropriateness of Co-op expanding in principle.

5.10 The Workshop also highlighted the potential inclusion of the Rempstone Centre car park within the Town Centre owing to its essential role in serving the Sainsbury's foodstore, thus underpinning the health of the Town Centre. However, it is recommended that the Rempstone Centre should be separately identified under a general safeguarding policy given its important parking function.

Protection of Town Centre Frontages

5.11 Established policy in the Purbeck Local Plan Part 1 protects ground floor uses falling within the A Use Class (shops, financial and professional services, food and drink uses) in defined town/local centres from changing to alternative uses[15]:

Safeguarding Retail Provision
Development leading to loss of uses within Class A of the Use Classes Order in town centre and local centres will only be permitted if:

- *The facility has been sufficiently and realistically marketed over a 9 month period;*
- *That the current use is demonstrably no longer viable; and*
- *The change of use would not harm vitality and viability of the town centre or local centre.*

5.12 As can be seen from the policy extract above, proposals for the change of use to non-A Class uses are considered on their individual merits in relation to three criteria. This flexibility is considered important since there will be instances where non-A Class uses can make a valuable contribution to vitality of the Town Centre, either as a local community or visitor resource, particularly if such uses are absent or under-provided for (eg. the provision of new leisure uses or visitor accommodation).

5.13 There may also be instances where ongoing A-Class use is unviable having regard to prevailing demands and commercial requirements, particularly concerning poorly-configured historic premises. It may be in the interests of the Town Centre to allow alternative uses in order to avoid longer-term vacancies and

[15] Policy RP: Retail Provision

potential decline in the built fabric through lack of investment (especially buildings of special architectural or historic interest or buildings or particular prominence).

5.14 It is open to the WNP to set more stringent local criteria for assessing the appropriateness of proposals for changes to non-A Class uses within the defined Town Centre, or for the introduction of a test for the loss of Class A1 (shops) specifically. For example, there could be a test associated with the number or proportion of units that should be retained in Class A1 use with any proposal exceeding a set threshold being deemed unacceptable unless there are overriding considerations. This type of approach is often adopted in larger town centres where there are distinct 'primary' and 'secondary' frontages, so that a healthy proportion of Class A1 units is maintained on primary frontages and other uses are encouraged to colonise secondary areas. It is not so common in smaller town centres such as Wareham where there is no clear distinction between primary and secondary frontages.

5.15 With underlying trends pointing towards the need to retain flexibility for town centres to evolve with the times (including diversifying and growing service functions to create a 'destination' and managing a declining retail function), it is considered that there is no merit in the WNP adopting a rigid policy stance towards the protection of Class A1 uses. The WNP should set a flexible policy context that enables control over proposals affecting A Class uses but which allows colonisation of other uses in circumstances where this would support the overall health of the Town Centre.

5.16 In appropriate cases, we do not consider that it should be necessary to demonstrate a 9-month period of unsuccessful marketing or otherwise demonstrate that the current A Class Use is unviable (as currently required in Local Plan Policy RP) if the proposed alternative use will clearly support the vitality and viability of the Town Centre.

5.17 Notwithstanding the above, the WNP can introduce specific criteria for the consideration of whether a change of use proposal supports the overall vitality and viability of the Town Centre. This could include the following considerations:

- is the character of the particular frontage undermined (eg. through concentration of non-A Class uses)?
- does the proposal maintain an active and publicly-accessible ground floor use?
- does the proposed use maintain a balance and diversity of uses in the town centre?
- does the proposal include a shopfront or other means of display that enlivens the streetscene?
- if relevant, will the proposed use and associated works enhance the special architectural or historic interest of the building?

5.18 The introduction of a WNP policy along the above lines would respond to a number of concerns expressed at the Workshop that the introduction of some non-Class A uses in Wareham Town Centre has undermined its overall attractiveness as a destination, notwithstanding that they involve uses that one would normally associate with a Town Centre (eg. offices, betting shops).

A current example where such a policy could usefully apply is in relation to the vacant building at 33 North Street (Fig.8). It is understood that this building has been vacant for a long time. The building is Grade II listed and whilst it is believed to date from the C18, a modern neo-Georgian shopfront has been inserted. A flexible approach to the re-use of the premises could assist in bringing the building back into active use and facilitate complementary works that will enhance the appearance of the building and wider streetscene, to the overall benefit of the Town Centre.

Fig.8 33 North Street

Specialist Roles/Functions

5.19 As highlighted elsewhere in this report, Wareham Town Centre has a well-established independent representation and there are signs that this is flourishing. Given the exodus of national multiple retailers from smaller town centres in recent years, consideration is often given to the potential for establishing specialist/niche retailing or other functions (eg. antiques, arts and crafts, artisan food, outdoor pursuits, markets, events and festivals) to counter the decline in mainstream shopping, as part of a town centre vision and strategy.

5.20 It is important to ensure that any growth in specialist functions is not at the expense of the ability of the Town Centre to meet the everyday needs of the local resident population; However, the town’s location means that there is potential to encourage more visitors and longer stays by improving/diversifying the offer and enhancing the quality/attractiveness of the Town Centre, with spin off benefits for established traders.

5.21 It has been noted already in this report that recently-established independent traders have brought high standards of quality (product and shopping environment) and this upward trend may be considered as important as the potential benefits associated with establishing a niche role for the Town Centre, given its wider appeal.

5.22 Whilst there are many ways in which specialist functions can be encouraged to establish and then flourish, town planning can only play a background, enabling role in maintaining and enhancing the general attractiveness of the Town Centre as a location for investment and activity. Other facets of town centre strategies such as branding, marketing and promotion, and upkeep of the environment are the key drivers.

5.23 Accordingly, it is not considered that the WNP has a specific role to play in promoting or facilitating the establishment of a niche role for the Town Centre through specific changes in planning policy or through the introduction of new policies. Nevertheless, the other recommendations of this report are all aimed at maintaining and enhancing the quality and attractiveness of the Town Centre for local residents and visitors alike through the establishment of a positive policy context for its management. Amongst other things, this is aimed at providing a positive and flexible basis for future investment that may or may not be linked with a specialist function.

Town Centre Environment

5.24 What is central to Wareham Town Centre’s appeal and potential is the quality of the built environment. Importantly, the protection of heritage assets and their significance is embedded in planning legislation and policy, with the Town Centre forming the nucleus of a designated Conservation Area and containing a high proportion of listed buildings. This provides the context in which development control decisions are made and enhancement strategies conceived (eg. shopfront design, signage, street furniture, public realm works).

5.25 The Conservation Area Appraisal undertaken by Purbeck Council in 2012[16] provides a number of recommendations for improving the character and appearance of the Town Centre, including the identification of parts of the Town Centre that make a negative contribution (some of which have since been addressed). The WNP can embed these recommendations where still relevant, and where they do not conflict with other important policy objectives such as retaining sufficient on- and off-street car parking, in policies and specific proposals for the enhancement of the Town Centre.

5.26 The Wareham Library building and associated car park fronting South Street is an example of where in the long term redevelopment might be possible as a means of enhancing the Conservation Area and the health of the Town Centre through the provision of new commercial space (assuming that the Library function is maintained or otherwise re-provided in the Town Centre).

5.27 More generally, the WNP can identify specific strategies, proposals, and priorities for piecemeal improvements in the character and appearance of the Town Centre. This may include priorities for improvement works to street paving, initiatives for co-ordinating signage, lighting and other street furniture, or particular proposals to enhance public open spaces and routes.

Summary

- **Include the Co-op car park within the Town Centre**
- **Maintain a flexible approach to the protection of Class A uses within the Town Centre but introduce specific criteria for assessing whether proposals for alternative uses will support the vitality and viability of the Town Centre**
- **Conservation Area Enhancement measures**
- **Identify the Library site as a potential longer-term redevelopment site subject to the suitable re-provision of the library within the Town Centre. The Library site presents an opportunity to enhance the townscape / Conservation Area**

[16] https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/purbeck/adopted_conservation_area_appraisals

6 CAR PARK STRATEGY

Introduction

6.1 The availability and quality of public parking facilities is widely recognised as an important facet of the overall vitality of town centres. It should be convenient, safe and secure, reasonably charged, and properly managed. It is also an emotive issue with under-provision or costly parking often perceived as a contributor to the underperformance or decline of a town centre.

6.2 The Steering Group has identified parking as a key issue, particularly whether the WNP should resist the loss of dedicated public car parks, based on the current amount, and also whether spaces are being managed effectively.

6.3 There is no simple formula for assessing the appropriate amount of town centre parking provision. Observations on current usage is a useful starting point from which car parking strategies and policies can be developed. However, it also requires consideration of a wide range of strategic and local factors including the size and role of the centre, competition (ie. alternative shopping locations with free parking), patterns of use, accessibility by non-car modes, scarcity of land and competing demands for its use, and wider town centre/regeneration/transport strategies (eg. expansion/contraction, improving accessibility, land assembly, and reducing congestion).

6.4 Other non-land use planning factors may influence decisions such as revenue generation, management costs, and opportunity cost against other potential land uses.

6.5 In the particular circumstances of Wareham, it is important to factor in parking demand from visitors. Demand during the summer holiday period is inflated.

Existing Provision

6.6 The following public parking provision serves the Town Centre:

LOCATION	OPERATOR	SPACES	FUNCTION
Streche Road	Purbeck District Council	73	Long-Stay (Includes provision for coaches)
Connegar Lane	Purbeck District Council	27	Long-Stay
Howards Lane	Wareham Town Council	78	Medium-Stay (up to 4 hrs)

Bonnets Lane (E and W)	Purbeck District Council	46	Medium-Stay (up to 4 hrs)
St John's Hill/Church Green	Dorset County Council	26	Medium-Stay (up to 4 hrs)
The Quay	Dorset County Council	27	Medium-Stay (up to 4 hrs)
Rempstone Centre (Sainsbury's)	Purbeck District Council	61	Short-Stay (up to 2 hrs)
Town Centre Free On-Street	Dorset County Council (as Highways Authority)	c60	On-street (restricted to 1 hr 10am-6pm)

6.7 The above dedicated parking facilities are all conveniently located within or at the edge of the Town Centre (although the long-stay car and coach park at Streche Road is located around 400m walking distance away from The Cross). This is reflective of the relatively compact nature of the Town Centre with all short- and medium-stay car parks located close to core areas of activity (The Cross, Sainsbury's, The Quay). Provision reflects the historic character and urban grain of the town and the fact that are no practical opportunities to create large and/or multi-storey car parks within the Wareham Walls.

6.8 Also of note is the small dedicated car park (12 spaces) at the rear of the Co-op foodstore on Mill Lane.

6.9 In addition to the above, there are opportunities for free parking in the streets surrounding the Town Centre (North Street, South Street, West Street), albeit feedback from the Workshop indicated that such provision is becoming increasingly stretched as new infill residential development occurs, often with no dedicated off-street parking.

6.10 Whilst no formal parking accumulation counts have been undertaken as part of this study, observations suggest the following typical utilisation:

LOCATION	WEEKDAY PM (SUMMER HOLIDAY)	WEEKDAY PM (OUTSIDE HOLIDAY PERIOD	SATURDAY MORNING
Streche Road	80-90%	50%	20%
Connegar Lane	50%	40%	90%
Howards Lane	80-90%	50%	60%
Bonnets Lane (E and W)	50%	35%	50%

St John's Hill/Church Green	90-100%	75%	80%
The Quay	90-100%	60-70%	n/a (market)
Rempstone Centre (Sainsbury's)	90-100%	75%	100%
Town Centre On-Street	90-100%	70%	90%

Appraisal

6.11 Observations suggest that the overall amount of car parking serving the Town Centre is adequate and that the mix of short-/medium-/long-stay works well. Importantly, there is flexibility for up to 4 hours parking in nearly all of the car parks, and sufficient dedicated long-stay, giving visitors (including tourists) the opportunity to dwell.

6.12 It is considered appropriate to restrict the Rempstone Centre to up to 2 hours so that this car park can function foremost in support of the Sainsbury's foodstore, ensuring a reasonable churn rate of spaces.

6.13 The availability of free on-street parking on the Town Centre's principal streets, on a restricted basis, is also of particular importance in terms of overall provision by providing the opportunity to make convenient and quick stops. A recent study of on-street parking carried out by Wareham Town Council concluded that on-street short-stay parking should remain free.

6.14 There does not appear to be any overriding need to expand the amount of parking serving the Town Centre based on observed usage at peak times. In any event, there is limited opportunity to do this within the Walls and it may also run counter to other planning objectives such as promoting sustainable travel choices and meeting more pressing development needs.

6.15 It is recommended that regular monitoring is undertaken to build up a more accurate picture of usage of the public car parks over time. This will provide useful evidence in the consideration of any potential proposals to redevelop car parks including the justification for compensatory provision.

6.16 In the absence of firm data suggesting otherwise, the WNP should provide a policy context that sets a presumption for the protection of established public car park provision (safeguarding policy) but which allows for their redevelopment in circumstances where there is demonstrated to be an overriding benefit to the vitality and viability of the Town Centre/local wellbeing or otherwise where the loss can be suitably mitigated by alternative provision on- or off-site.

6.17 The WNP should also promote the retention of on-street parking within the Town Centre unless there are overriding benefits associated with a loss of spaces (eg. public realm improvements, traffic management).

6.18 Additionally, in view of the apparent increasing pressures on on-street parking, consideration should be given to the introduction of an effective development management policy to promote the provision of adequate off-street car parking for housing developments in and around the Town Centre

6.19 Given the morphology of the Town, it is a consequence that the public car parks are dispersed with no evident scope to rationalise provision onto larger, more prominent and accessible sites. Directional signage to car parking is generally adequate from the main approaches into the Town, although it is inevitable that a visitor unfamiliar with the Town may not be aware of all the opportunities available (eg. the Church Lane long-stay is tucked away at the edge of the built up area and is accessed via narrow streets). Nevertheless, the Town is relatively small with the consequence that visitors will generally be able to seek out parking opportunities with relative ease at all but the busiest times.

6.20 Given the above, it will be beneficial to undertake a full audit of directional signage to the car parks and identify potential opportunities to improve legibility. However, the benefits of providing additional signage will need to be balanced with Conservation Area considerations and avoiding clutter in the streetscene. A review of directional signage should consider the opportunities for introducing new technology in smart/real time parking systems to improve the visitor experience.

6.21 The public car parks are provided with pay and display parking machines that require cash payment only in some cases (County and Town Council facilities). Whilst the charging regime is considered reasonable, cash payment is not always convenient for users. Consideration should be given to the upgrade of parking terminals that allow a variety of payment options (cash, card, phone, phone app) and consistent application across all car parks. This can be promoted through the WNP.

6.22 Finally, it is understood that there are currently no electric car charging points in the Town. With there being a dramatic rise in electric car sales in the UK over the past few years, consideration should be given to the opportunities for providing charging points at several locations. Streche Road and Howards Lane are considered to be suitable locations for new charging points. This can be promoted through the WNP.

Summary

- **No overriding need to increase off-street parking provision**
- **Undertake regular monitoring of car parks to build up accurate evidence of usage**
- **Protect existing dedicated car parks from redevelopment unless there are overriding planning benefits or loss of parking is appropriately mitigated**

- **Promote retention of Free short-stay on-street parking in the main shopping streets**
- **Introduce policy that promotes adequate off-street parking for housing developments in and around the Town Centre**
- **Review car park directional signage to identify opportunities for improvement**
- **Consider improved flexible payment options and consistency across all car parks**
- **Consider introduction of electric charging points**

7 SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 This report has set out our advice on a range of specific issues relevant to the future planning and management of the Town Centre

7.2 The Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group identified four key issues to be addressed by this study:

- The need to allocate additional land for town centre uses in order to strengthen its vitality and viability, having regard to likely demand;
- The approach to 'out-of-centre' foodstore provision (and other main town centre uses);
- Means of strengthening the Town Centre's vitality and viability and how this could be achieved through changes to planning policy; and
- The need to resist the loss of public car parks serving the Town Centre.

7.3 This report has provided a summary review of the Town Centre's role and health. It has then considered each of the above key issues in turn. A summary of the recommendations arising from the analysis in respect of the above issues is reproduced below:

Allocating Land

- Expenditure growth, leakage and overtrading provide scope for improved retail facilities
- Demand for new convenience floorspace is likely to be in the form of small convenience stores as opposed to large foodstores
- No confirmed retailer requirements
- Low vacancy rate and high utilisation in the Town Centre limits opportunities for new entrants
- The Library site presents a longer-term opportunity to provide new floorspace within the Town Centre

Out-of-Centre Retailing

- National and Local Plan Policies are in place to protect Town Centres
- The evident need arising from expenditure growth, leakage, and overtrading does not provide a basis to plan positively for new out-of-centre retail floorspace
- There is no demand for new out-of-centre development for town centre uses

- There are opportunities, albeit limited, to provide new commercial floorspace in the Town Centre suited to likely demand arising.

- Out-of-centre retail development (especially convenience) is likely to have an adverse effect on the Town Centre

- Include a Local Impact Test setting a lower threshold for impact assessments (200sqm floorspace), to be applied proportionately

Improving Town Centre Vitality and Viability

- Include the Co-op car park within the Town Centre

- Maintain a flexible approach to the protection of Class A uses within the Town Centre but introduce specific criteria for assessing whether proposals for alternative uses will support the vitality and viability of the Town Centre

- Conservation Area Enhancement measures

- Identify the Library site for longer-term redevelopment subject to retention of a library facilities in the Town Centre

Car Park Strategy

- No overriding need to increase off-street parking provision

- Undertake regular monitoring of car parks to build up accurate evidence of usage

- Protect existing dedicated car parks from redevelopment unless there are overriding planning benefits or loss of parking is appropriately mitigated

- Promote retention of free on-street parking on main streets

- Introduce policy that promotes adequate off-street parking for housing developments in and around the Town Centre

- Review car park directional signage to identify opportunities for improvement

- Consider improved flexible payment options and consistency across all car parks

- Consider introduction of electric charging points

BIBLIOGRAPHY

'Back to the Future – 50 years of Convenience Retailing' (Co-op, July 2015) http://news.co-operativefood.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Co-op-Convenience-Report-FINAL.pdf

Retail Planner Briefing Note 14 (Experian, November 2016)

Retail Impact Assessment – Purbeck District Council (Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners, September 2010) https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/media/156249/Retail-Impact-Assessment---Final-September-2010/pdf/Purbeck_Retail_Impact_Assessment_With_Appendices_September_2010.pdf

Poole and Purbeck Town Centres Retail and Leisure Study – Final Report (Peter Brett Associates, November 2014) https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/media/201423/Poole-and-Purbeck-Town-Centres-Retail-and-Leisure-Study---Final-Report/pdf/Poole_and_Purbeck_Retail_Study_23012015.pdf

Planning Purbeck's Future - Purbeck Local Plan Part 1 (Purbeck District Council, November 2012) https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/media/177912/Purbeck-Local-Plan-Part-1-Planning-Purbecks-Future/pdf/Local_Plan_Part_1-_Planning_Purbecks_Future_Adopted.pdf

Wareham Conservation Area Appraisal Document (Purbeck District Council, January 2012) https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/purbeck/adopted_conservation_area_appraisals

Reviewing the Plan for Purbeck's Future – Purbeck Local Plan Partial Review - Issues and options Consultation (Purbeck District Council, January 2015) https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/media/201406/Reviewing-the-Plan-for-Purbecks-Future---Issues-and-Options-Consultation-Document/pdf/Purbeck_Local_Plan_Partial_Review_Issues_and_Options_W.pdf

Reviewing the Plan for Purbeck's Future – Purbeck Local Plan Partial Review – Wareham Town Centre Background Paper (Purbeck District Council, January 2015) https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/media/201420/Wareham-Town-Centre/pdf/Wareham_Town_Centre_Background_Paper.pdf

Purbeck Local Plan Part 1 – Monitoring Report (April 2014 – March 2016). https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/media/219159/Retail-Monitoring-Report-2016/pdf/retail-provision-monitoring-report-2016.pdf