



8. Town centres

The principal locations for development

TC1 Development in Oxford city centre will be permitted where it maintains and enhances the sub-regional role and diversity of the centre.

Apart from Oxford city centre, the other main locations for the development of retail and other facilities will be the town centres of Banbury, Bicester, Didcot, Witney and Wantage.

Development in other town and district centres will be encouraged to sustain and enhance their vitality and viability.

- 8.1 PPS⁶³² advises that development plan documents should set out a hierarchy of centres with a strategy for locating employment, shopping, leisure and entertainment, hospitals, higher education and other uses which generate many trips and which should be well served by public transport.
- 8.2 In terms of an overall hierarchy policy TC1 identifies the sub-regional role of Oxford city centre and the towns of Banbury, Bicester, Didcot, Witney and Wantage as the other main locations for new retail and other town centre development. The policy recognises the important role of the other towns in the county as employment and service centres and the need to maintain their vitality and viability and also the important function that the district centres in Oxford city perform.
- 8.3 The definition of the hierarchy for centres other than those identified in policy TC1 is a matter to be dealt with as necessary in local plans/local development frameworks. The County Council is keen that rural centres should continue to be viable.

Maintaining and enhancing centres

TC2 Major new development should be located on city or town centre sites. If there are no suitable town centre sites then edge-of-centre, followed by out-of-centre sites will be considered where the need for the development can be demonstrated, where there are no other alternatives and the development would no harm the viability of existing centres or local shops.

Proposals should sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of centres by:

- (a) extending the range and quality of shops and other central facilities;
- (b) improving the environment, character and quality of a centre;
- (c) encouraging diversity of uses, including residential accommodation; and
- (d) improving accessibility.

³² Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2005.

- 8.4 PPS6 seeks to ensure that a sequential approach should be applied in selecting appropriate sites for development within centres. Policy TC2 sets out a sequential approach for locating development in centres as set out in PPS6. The sequential approach applies to retail and other key town centre uses which attract a lot of people, including commercial and public offices, entertainment and leisure facilities, hotels and other such uses.
- 8.5 The preferred location for most retail and other key town centre uses is within existing centres, both to boost their vitality and viability and because they provide greater accessibility by modes of transport other than the private car.
- 8.6 Where new edge-of-centre or out-of-centre development is proposed a developer must demonstrate need, that the sequential approach has been followed and that the development is accessible by means of transport other than the private car.
- 8.7 The increase in home shopping through the internet could in the future reduce the number of car trips and space required for parking. Town centre management provides one way of promoting the vitality and viability of existing centres. It can also assist in helping to make town centres safe and secure places, through encouraging safety and crime prevention measures.

