Policy Title:
LPS8 - Town Centres, Retail and Leisure

Existing Policies Which adopted Core Strategy or Policies Sites and Places (PSP) policy would eventually be replaced	**Core Strategy policy CS14 – Town Centres and Retail** **Policies Sites and Places Plan policy PSP31 – Town Centre Uses**
Non-Strategic / Strategic	**Strategic**

Purpose

South Gloucestershire's Town Centres are envisaged to be places where people can live, work, meet together, and access a range of facilities and services by walking, wheeling, and cycling, as well as public transport connections to other destinations. They will offer a thriving daytime and evening economy, fulfilling needs of the communities they serve, being inclusive, age friendly and accessible to all. They will support a range of uses, including major employment, with the flexibility to adapt to changing market conditions, and provide opportunities for regeneration with urban greening and high-quality public realm.

In this way Town Centres support making effective use of land, and they can be vibrant and successful places over the long term. This policy promotes their vitality and viability, recognising their importance to the local community and economy, their social function, and their sense of place.

The National Planning Policy Framework requires a network and hierarchy of town centres to be defined. The majority of South Gloucestershire's population lies within the two urban areas, within which are 9 town centres, and in the three market towns. In addition to retail these 12 centres all provide, to a greater or lesser extent, a range of services and facilities including financial, community, leisure, employment and housing.

Local Centres are smaller centres within urban areas, around market towns, and larger village settlements, that meet the needs of residents for everyday convenience goods and basic services within walking distance.

South Gloucestershire's town centre hierarchy therefore comprises two levels:

1. 12 Town Centres of equal status; then
2. 58 Local Centres (47 existing, 4 new (designated from existing facilities), 7 proposed)

Local shops and other smaller facilities within urban areas, market towns and villages, where not having Local Centre status, also provide an essential and valuable service to their communities as focal and community service points for which there is a need to protect against their loss.

Policy wording

Network and Hierarchy of Centres

1. **Development proposals for main town centre uses shall be directed sequentially to South Gloucestershire's Town Centres and Local Centres listed in Table 1.**
2. **Proposals for main town centre uses within existing and proposed Local Centres will be supported where they are of an appropriate scale and size to the centre.**
3. **Cribbs Causeway/Mall, Abbey Wood and Longwell Green Retail Parks will be treated as Out of Centre. Development proposals within these areas will need to satisfy the Sequential Test, and where required, an Impact Assessment.**

Range of permitted uses in Primary Shopping Areas

4. **Primary Shopping Areas, as defined on the Policies Map, are locations where new comparison and convenience retailing, including both large and smaller scale retail proposals, should first be directed. Café's, restaurants, public houses, community buildings, libraries, banks, health and leisure facilities will also be permitted where they support the vibrancy and offer of key services of the Primary Shopping Area, and its retail character. All uses must provide daytime active frontages.**
5. **New residential development in vacant upper floors of properties will be supported provided that it would not undermine operation of commercial frontage(s) in the primary shopping area, nor in the wider town centre, nor the centre's vitality and viability. Proposals to redevelop for, or change of use at ground floor to, residential use will not be permitted.**

Range of permitted uses in the Wider Town Centre

6. **Small scale retail proposals, non-retail other main town centre uses, and other Economic Development uses, which contribute to the vitality and viability of the Town Centre, and provide daytime or nighttime active frontages, will be supported.**
7. **New residential development in vacant upper floors of properties will be supported provided it would not undermine operation of commercial frontage(s) within the town centre, nor the centre's vitality and viability. Proposals to redevelop for or change of use at ground floor to, residential development, or other uses with an inactive frontage, will need to demonstrate that:**
    a. **Following Effective Marketing that there is no realistic prospect of securing the continued existing use of the unit, nor any alternative main town centre use with an active frontage; and**
    b. **Grants, loans and other funding sources to secure the continued existing use, or an alternative main town centre use, have been fully explored; and**
    c. **The proposal would not, individually or cumulatively, have a detrimental impact upon adjoining main town centre uses nor the vitality and viability of the town centre.**

Edge of Centre and Out of Centre Development Proposals

8. **Edge of Centre and Out of Centre proposals for main town centre uses, except for offices within Safeguarded Employment Areas, offices within the University of the West of England, and Small Scale Facilities meeting criterion 11 of this policy, will need to demonstrate through application of the sequential test:**
    a. **That no suitable sites are available within the Town Centre to accommodate the proposal; and**
    b. **Flexibility of the proposal including consideration of alternative formats and scales; and**
    c. **That the site would be accessible and well connected by pedestrian, cycle, and public transport links to the Town centre.**

    Out of Centre proposals will additionally need to demonstrate that there are no suitable Edge of Centre sites available to accommodate the proposal.

Impact Assessments

9. **An Impact Assessment will be required for:**
    a. **Retail proposals larger than 350m² gross internal floorspace in all locations outside of Primary Shopping Areas; or**
    b. **Leisure development proposals above 1000m² gross internal floorspace, where they are outside of the designated Town Centre boundary.**

Local Centres and Small Scale Facilities

10. **Development of new Local Centres will be supported where they:**
    a. **Demonstrate meeting requirements of criterion 8, and where exceed the floorspace thresholds, criterion 9 of this policy; and**
    b. **Would facilitate sustainable choices for new residents and the surrounding community; and**
    c. **Would not undermine the vitality, viability, role or function of existing Town and Local Centres.**

    New Local Centres proposed within Strategic Sites should additionally adhere to the scale, type and format set out within the relevant strategic site policy.
11. **Development of Small Scale Facilities providing main town centre uses, in urban areas, market towns and rural areas, will be supported where they would not undermine the vitality, viability, role or function of existing Town and Local Centres, and would not cumulatively when considered together with other existing and/or proposed facilities within a 300m radius exceed 350m2 gross internal floorspace.**

12. **Within Local Centres listed in Table 1, and established Small Scale Facilities (including valued local shops and other facilities that meet a community's day-to-day needs in rural areas), proposals to redevelop for, or change of use at ground floor to, non-main town centre uses will need to demonstrate that:**

    a. **Following Effective Marketing that there is no realistic prospect of securing the continued existing use of the unit, nor any alternative main town centre use with an active frontage; and**

    b. **Opportunities for community ownership and/or operation of the unit have been fully explored over the Effective Marketing period; and**

    c. **Grants, loans and other funding sources to secure the continued existing use, or an alternative main town centre use, have been fully explored; and**

    d. **The proposal would not, individually or cumulatively, have a detrimental impact upon vitality and viability of other main town centre uses in the Local Centre/ within 300m radius of the Small Scale Facility.**

Markets and Garden Centres

13. **Development proposals which would undermine or lead to the loss of existing markets will not be supported unless appropriate alternative market provision would be provided.**

14. **Development proposals for new garden centres, or remodelling of existing garden centres, unless within a Town or Local Centre will need to demonstrate meeting requirements of criterions 8 and 9 of this policy. Proposals will additionally be assessed to ensure that any general sales, and other uses taking place within them, remain ancillary to plant sales.**

General Assessment Criteria

15. **Development proposals for all main town centre uses, in any location, should:**

    a. **Positively respond to any Town Centre health check; and**

    b. **Be in proportion to the locality in which it is proposed; and**

    c. **Demonstrate a positive contribution towards the street scene and the public realm; and**

    d. **Be conveniently and safely accessible by Active Travel means; and**

    e. **Be well served by public transport; and**

    f. **Have appropriate provision of staff, customer and goods parking and servicing areas (both for cycles and vehicles); and**

    g. **Have appropriate provision for electric vehicle charging; and**

    h. **Make efficient use of land.**

16. **Any shopfront(s), sign(s) or advertisement(s) should be of a scale, detail, siting and type of illumination appropriate to the character of the host building, wider street scene and avoid harmful effects on amenity of the surrounding area.**

Supporting text

Network and Hierarchy of Centres

1. **Town Centres** are South Gloucestershire's nine town centres within the North and East Fringe Urban Areas, and three Market Towns, listed in Table 1. Boundaries of the Town Centres and Primary Shopping Areas are defined on the Policies Map.
2. Creation of new Town Centres are not anticipated during the local plan period. Proposals for a new Town Centre, including elevating an existing or proposed Local Centre to Town Centre status, should therefore be assessed as a departure from the Local Plan and be subject to the Sequential Test and Impact Assessment as required under criterions 8 and 9 of this policy. A key consideration for assessment will be the overall effect that creation of a new Town Centre would have upon the existing network and hierarchy of centres, including whether it would offer a level of facilities exceeding that of existing Town Centres within South Gloucestershire. It must not undermine the purpose of existing Town Centres including their being vibrant and successful places for people to live, work, meet together, and to access a range of facilities by sustainable means, nor should it have any detrimental impacts upon the network and hierarchy of centres within adjoining authorities.
3. 47 (out of 49) **Local Centres** are carried forward from the previous Local Plan, and 4 Local Centres are designated from existing facilities at Alveston, Charfield, Cheswick Village and Wick. These are listed in Table 1 and their general locations shown on the Policies Map, but without a defined boundary, allowing them flexibility to grow in response to the needs of the communities that they serve.
4. 7 proposed Local Centres are anticipated to come forward in the following **Strategic Sites** to support the growth of communities in their areas; East of Harry Stoke, Ladden Garden Village, Lyde Green, New Woodlands, North Lyde 'ecotech' Village, and Carsons Green and Rockhouse Farm New Neighbourhoods, and Former Filton Airfield (Brabazon). These form part of the Network and Hierarchy of Centres listed in Table 1 and their expected general locations are shown on the Policies Map. The principle of providing new Local Centres in these locations, including their broad role, is confirmed through this policy, with additional criteria for their location, content and function (other than for Lyde Green) set out in the following strategic site policies:

    a. Saved Core Strategy policy CS27 - East of Harry Stoke New Neighbourhood (until replaced)

    b. Saved Core Strategy policy CS31 - North Yate New Neighbourhood (until replaced)

    c. Policy LP5 - New Woodlands

    d. Policy LP6 - North Lyde 'ecotech' Village

    e. Policy LP7 - Carsons Green and Rockhouse Farm New Neighbourhoods

    f. Policy LP13 - Land at Former Filton Airfield – Brabazon

    Further assessment of the detailed proposals will however be required as they come forward.

5. Proposals for new local centres should include supporting information on its anticipated catchment, the scale and format of the uses proposed within it, and analysis of any similar provision and/or overlap within the nearest existing town and/or local centres. To ensure viability in early stages of their establishment, information should also be included on the proposed marketing strategy and a timetable for their implementation.

Definitions

6. Main Town Centre Uses, Primary Shopping Areas, Edge of Centre, and Out of Centre are defined in the National Planning Policy Framework.
7. Primary Shopping Areas within each of the 12 town centres have a focus on shops for food, drink, clothing and household goods, and their boundaries are defined on the Policies Map. Permitted development rights cover a range of main town centre uses, but where planning permission is required, retail uses - particularly larger shops, will be directed to the primary shopping areas. Other main town centre uses, such as café's, restaurants, community buildings, health and leisure facilities may also be appropriate to support viability of this town centre core. Where proposed these uses should demonstrate supporting the main purpose of the Primary Shopping Area for retail and shopping, and their contribution to it being an active, vibrant and interesting environment. Residential uses at ground floor, being inactive frontages, are considered harmful to viability and vitality of primary shopping area, and consequently the town centre as a whole since the primary shopping area serves as the town centre core. Where planning permission is required, changes of use to residential at ground floor should therefore be refused.
8. The **Wider Town Centre** is the area within the town centre boundary but outside of the primary shopping area boundary. Large scale retail developments are less appropriate in these areas having potential to detract from primary shopping areas as the core of town centres. Large scale retail developments are therefore directed to the primary shopping areas through application of the sequential test where required. Criterion 6 for small scale development proposals applies to new build development, redevelopment, and changes of use.
9. **Effective Marketing** is where the site is proactively marketed without any constraints that may unduly influence the scope of interest being received, using a range of media, by an appropriate professional agent experienced in marketing main town centre uses. For Town Centres, and Local Centres within Urban Areas and Market Towns, this marketing is required to be undertaken for a minimum period of 12 months. For Local Centres and Small Scale Facilities within rural areas, as loss of these valued services may leave communities without a nearby alternative facility, marketing is required to be undertaken for a minimum period of 24 months. Longer marketing periods to these stated minimums may be necessary in some circumstances, such as during an economic recession and/or disruption resulting from national/ international events. It must be demonstrated that the sale/ lease/ rental price sought is reasonable over full duration of the marketing period.
10. **Retail Development** means development falling within Use Classes E(a), (c), and F2(a), as well as retail warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres (Sui Generis) of the Use Classes Order 1987 (as amended), or any future equivalent provision.
11. **Small Scale Retail Development** in South Gloucestershire is Retail Development of 350m² gross internal floorspace or below.

12. **Large Scale Retail Development** in South Gloucestershire is Retail Development above 350m² gross internal floorspace.
13. **Leisure Development** means development falling within Use Classes E(b), F2(c) and (d), as well as theatres, amusement arcades, centres and funfairs, nightclubs, casinos, betting offices, pay day loan shops, public houses, wine bars, drinking establishments, drinking establishments with expanded food provision, hot food takeaway, live music performance venues, cinema, concert halls, bingo halls, and dance halls (Sui Generis) of the Use Classes Order 1987 (as amended), or any future equivalent provision.
14. **Small Scale Facilities** are main town centre uses of 350m² gross internal floorspace or below.
15. **Economic Development** uses are defined in Policy LP19 - Non-Safeguarded Employment Sites.
16. **Active Travel** means modes of travel which involve a level of activity, including walking, wheeling and cycling. Wheeling encompasses a range of modes such as trips made by wheelchair, mobility scooters, adapted cycles, e-cycles, scooters, and cycle sharing schemes.[1]

Application of the Policy

17. South Gloucestershire's Town Centres range in their size and scale of uses, and so while vibrancy of particular uses, for example nightlife, may be positive in some centres, it may not be appropriate in others. The characteristics of each centre are therefore important considerations in decision making.
18. Guidance on application of the Sequential Test and Impact Assessment is set out in National Planning Practice Guidance: Town Centres and Retail. This includes a distinction between the definition for Edge of Centre for retail uses, and Edge of Centre for other main town centre uses, in application of the Sequential Test.
19. Proposals for offices within Safeguarded Employment Areas, and in the University of West of England (the boundaries of which are defined on the Policies Map), are not subject to requirements of the Sequential Test. This is because they would be in accordance either with Policy: Safeguarded Employment Areas or Policy: University of the West of England. The principle of office use, of any size, is therefore accepted in those locations.
20. Saved policy PSP32, until such time as it is replaced, provides additional criteria relating to **Local Centres**, as shown on the policies map and listed in Table 1, and for **Small Scale Facilities**. Definitions for **Retail Development** and **Small Scale Retail Development** within this policy shall take precedence over definitions for Retail Uses and Small Scale Retail Uses, and for Use Classes Order references, within paragraphs 7.69 and 7.70 of the supporting text to saved policy PSP32.
21. To provide for day-to-day needs of communities Small Scale Facilities with main town centre uses are supported out of centre in both urban and rural areas, subject to meeting requirements of criterion 11. The radius for cumulative impacts reflects national planning policy and guidance for distances from primary shopping areas and town centre boundaries.

22. In South Gloucestershire some town centres are relatively small and experiencing reduced vitality. A dominance of edge of centre or out of centre floorspace, particularly for retail can have significant impacts on our designated town and local centres which serve an important role for local and sustainable access to services and facilities. Consequently, relatively smaller developments can, on their own or cumulatively, have a significant impact on existing centres. The locally set threshold of proposals larger than 350m² gross internal floorspace to be subject to an impact assessment therefore reflects this, and are applicable not only to new development, but also section 73 Applications and variations to S106 agreements that seek amendments to existing permissions restricting the level and type of goods that can be sold.

23. The impact assessment should include an assessment on the health of, and investment within, both existing and planned new Town and Local Centres. Applicants should agree the scope of the impact assessment with the council including which centre(s) it should cover, the key impacts, and level of detail required based on the proposed development's scale, nature, and its proximity to existing and planned centres, together with any local considerations to be taken into account.

24. Proposals in any location involving the loss of main town centre uses to non-economic development uses will also need to meet the requirements of Policy LP19 - Non-Safeguarded Employment Sites and Policy LP20 - Employment and Skills Development.

25. Appropriate cycle and vehicle parking/ servicing and EV charging provisions referenced in criterion 15 includes meeting requirements of Policy LP22 - Parking Requirements, including Electric Vehicles.

26. In addition to this policy, development proposals should be considered against other Local Plan policies, including those covering design, travel, climate and impacts upon amenity, to determine whether they are appropriate in each location.

[1]'What Active Travel Means' https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/active-travel-local-authority-toolkit/active-travel-local-authority-toolkit

Additions	
Key evidence	Topic Paper: Retail & Town Centre Planning Policy Matters (February 2025)
Other relevant policies to cross-reference?	LP5 – New Woodlands LP6 - North Lyde 'ecotech' Village LP7 - Carsons Green and Rockhouse Farm New Neighbourhoods LP13 - Land at Former Filton Airfield – Brabazon LP19 - Non-Safeguarded Employment Sites LP20 - Employment and Skills Development LP22 - Parking Requirements, including Electric Vehicles Saved Policy CS27 – East of Harry Stoke New Neighbourhood (until replaced) Saved Policy CS31 – North Yate New Neighbourhood (until replaced) Saved Policy PSP32 – Local Centres, Parades and Facilities (until replaced) Saved Policy PSP34 – Public Houses (until replaced) Saved Policy PSP35 – Food and Drink Uses (Including Drive Through Takeaway Facilities) (until replaced)

Table 1 – Town Centre Hierarchy

North Fringe of Bristol Urban Area	
Town Centres	
Bradley Stoke	Filton
Patchway	Stoke Gifford
Local Centres	
Gloucester Road North	Gloucester Road, Patchway
Filton Avenue (Nos. 508-550 & 551-557)	Kingsway, Little Stoke
Filton Avenue (at junction with Conygre Rd)	Chelford Grove, Patchway
Station Road, Filton	Ratcliffe Drive, Stoke Gifford
The Parade, Coniston Road, Patchway	Peartree Road, Bradley Stoke
Coniston Road, Patchway	Webbs Wood Road, Bradley Stoke
Brabazon**	East of Harry Stoke**
Cheswick Village*	New Woodlands**
East Fringe of Bristol Urban Area	
Town Centres	
Kingswood	Staple Hill
Hanham	Downend
Emersons Green	
Local Centres	

Oldland Common Village	Burley Grove
Poole Road, Soundwell	Cleevewood Road, Downend
Pound Road, Kingswood	Dibden Road, Mangotsfeld
Quakers Road Parade, Downend	Ellacombe Road, Longwell Green
Soundwell Road, Kingswood	High Street, Hanham
Station Road, Kingswood	Holly Hill Road
Stockwell Drive, Mangotsfeld	Longwell Green Parade, Bath Road
Mangotsfeld Village (St James Place, St James's St, Cossham St)	Warmley Village (Deanery Road, High St, Stanley Rd, Tower Rd North)
Memorial Road, Hanham	Westbourne Road Parade, Downend
New Cheltenham Road, Kingswood	Westcourt Drive, Oldland Common
Newton Road/School Road, Cadbury Heath	Westons Way, Kingswood
North Street/Pleasant Street/Victoria Street	North Lyde 'ecotech' Village**
Carsons Green and Rockhouse Farm New Neighbourhoods**	Lyde Green**
Yate and Surrounding Areas	
Town Centres	
Yate Market Town	Chipping Sodbury Market Town
Local Centres	
Lower Stone Close, Church Road and Woodend Road, Frampton Cotterell	Bradley Avenue, Winterbourne

Flaxpits Lane, Whitegates and high Street, Winterbourne	Park Avenue, Winterbourne
Abbotswood Shopping Centre	Cranleigh Court Road
Brimsham Park, Yate	Firgrove Crescent
Heron Way	Westerleigh Road Stores
Wellington Road	Ladden Garden Village**
Thornbury and North Rural	
Town Centre	
Thornbury Market Town	
Local Centres	
Oakleaze Road	Charfield Village (Manor Lane/Poskett Way/ Station Road)*
Alveston*	
South and East Rural	
Town Centre	
(None)	
Local Centres	
Wick*	

*Existing facilities to be designated as New Local Centres

**Proposed Local Centres