

**Site Specific Proposals
Local Development Document (LDD)**

Background Paper: Town Centres & Town Centre Uses

- **Section A: Options for Burton Latimer, Desborough and Rothwell Town Centres**
- **Section B: The location and scale of town centre uses – Location - Sequential Assessments**
- **Section C: The location and scale of town centre uses – Scale - Impact Assessments**



February 2012

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This background paper is split into three sections. Section A assesses the need for allocations and environmental improvements in Burton Latimer, Desborough and Rothwell town centres to identify options for policies and development in these town centres. Section B of the paper addresses the issue of the PPS4 requirement for a sequential test for main town centre uses outside of existing centres and whether a more flexible local policy is required. Section C of the paper addresses the issue of PPS 4 impact assessments for main town centre uses outside existing centres and whether a more flexible local policy is required.

Section A) - Burton Latimer, Desborough and Rothwell Town Centres

A1. INTRODUCTION

The majority of additional retail development within the Borough will be focused in Kettering town centre where the Core Spatial Strategy identifies a minimum net increase in comparison shopping floorspace of 20,500. Retail development within Kettering town centre will be allocated in the Kettering Town Centre Area Action Plan which is due to be adopted in July 2011.

Each of the smaller towns will receive significant growth within the period of this plan and the aim of the Site Specific Proposals LDD is to provide a town centre environment with the range and types of facilities which meets the needs of the local residents.

In preparing the Site Specific Proposals LDD decisions will need to be made on the level of detail the document should provide for future development in the small town centres. This could range from criteria based policies to guide applications for development to allocations and detailed proposals for development in these town centres. This paper looks at all the options available and assesses these against the needs and opportunities in the town centres to assess the appropriate level of detail to be provided in the Site Specific Proposals LDD.

A2. POLICY CONTEXT

Planning Policy Statement 4:

The aim of national policy is to promote the vitality and viability of towns and other centres as important places for communities. To achieve this the Government wants to focus growth of main town centre uses in existing town centres, to address deficiencies in areas with poor access to facilities; competition between retailers; enhance consumer choice; and the conservation of historic, archaeological and architectural heritage of centres to create a sense of place and a focus for community and civic activity.

Core Spatial Strategy:

The Core Spatial Strategy sets out the framework for development in Kettering Borough. This identifies Burton Latimer, Desborough and Rothwell as localised convenience and service centres where there are no specific retail allocations and a consolidation of the existing retail offer. The specific roles for each of the towns are:

- Burton Latimer – provide a quality and convenient town centre environment
- Rothwell – provide a quality and convenient town centre environment including high grade speciality shops
- Desborough – environmental improvements, upgrading of retail stock, small-scale infill development

A3. EVIDENCE BASE

There are a significant number of studies, reports and proposals relating to Rothwell, Desborough and Burton Latimer town centres which provide the evidence base for developing policies for these town centre. The key findings and proposals contained in these are summarised below:

North Northants Centres Project (DTZ Pidea Consulting, 2004)

This study provided an initial assessment of the potential future roles for North Northamptonshire centres.

The study identified specialist roles for the three smaller towns:

- Burton Latimer (Regeneration) – convenience shopping role will remain and complement Kettering
- Rothwell (Consolidation) – build on strengths serving local area and attractive heritage environment through MTI (market town initiative)
- Desborough (Regeneration) – improve retail and leisure offer, environment, signage and accessibility/ circulation

Consolidation – emphasis on enhancing quality of the offer rather than the quantity

Regeneration – emphasis on enhancing both quality and quantity of offer

The study identified the need for further work looking at the future of the town centres. The action plan includes assessing need and capacity for further town centre uses.

Roles and Relationships Study (2005):

This study focuses on Kettering, Corby, Wellingborough and Rushden. It provides a qualitative assessment of smaller towns and identifies that Desborough, Rothwell and Burton Latimer will support strategic centres through roles as localised convenience and service centres.

Qualitative assessments:

Desborough: reasonable range of facilities for what is now a district centre but has clearly been downgraded over time. No vacant units but mainly because these have been converted into residential use. The Town Centre Partnership has an aspiration for additional speciality/niche shops, which would enhance the centre's role. Improving the bus linkages to and from neighbouring larger centres would be beneficial for its users.

Rothwell: reasonable range of shops for a town of its size, including a number of speciality shops, and is performing well. There are no vacant units but there is a slight

lack of parking availability. There is a residential feel to the town centre although to a lesser extent than Desborough.

Burton Latimer: a convenience retail offer providing top up goods and small locally run speciality businesses. Good infrastructure and public transport links.

North Northamptonshire Retail Capacity Update 2011

The *North Northamptonshire Retail Capacity Update 2011*, was prepared by Roger Tym & Partners and is considered a key tool in the review of the Core Strategy. It revisits the findings of the 2005 Study and 2006 Update and presents a revised assessment of the quantum of additional comparison and convenience floorspace which is required across North Northamptonshire to 2031.

Desborough and Rothwell

The MHE Index for the performance of centres and retail parks in North Northamptonshire ranks Desborough as the highest-ranking 'Minor Local' centre at 2,356th position and Rothwell is ranked 3,870th position. The MHE indexes are largely based on national retailer representation, and the presence of large 'anchor' stores or retailers.

Rothwell and Desborough form zone 3 which is considered collectively in the report. Zone 3 (Rothwell & Desborough) has the lowest localised retention rate, at just 11.6 per cent, and there is clear scope for improvement of this. The centres in these zones only have small 'top up' shopping supermarkets, which do not sufficiently cater for many residents' main food shopping needs. Proposals for convenience floorspace in smaller centres, of an appropriate scale, will help bring about a reduction in the need for residents to travel further afield, should be looked on favourably. Rothwell and Desborough in zone 3 also suffer from higher levels of deprivation than much of the NNCA.

Burton Latimer

The MHE Index for the performance of centres and retail parks in North Northamptonshire, ranks Burton Latimer at 2,608th position.

No retail floorspace targets are identified for Burton Latimer, Desborough, and Rothwell, as it is envisaged that these centres will continue to perform roles as localised service centres, where the retail offer is largely based on convenience and services goods.

Desborough Conservation Area Appraisal (30th March 2007)

The bulk of the conservation area is made up of workers' housing. These houses are characterised by their grouping in terraced rows along New Street, Mansefield Close and Burghley Close and along the southern side of Gladstone Street. The houses are tightly spaced creating a high density, late Victorian domestic townscape.

Opportunity sites within the Conservation Area:

The UDF for Desborough (2003) highlights the area dominated by the Lawrences Factory, but also proposes smaller schemes to support the heritage of the town centre. These include introducing high quality paving along the High Street, new street furniture

and the lighting of strategic buildings. The UDF also proposes environmental improvement works to the Burghley Street/Mansefield Close car park.

In addition, careful consideration should be given to the re-introduction of traditional building materials and detailing back into the area.

Consultation highlighted the state of the roads as an area of concern. A management plan could seek to address these issues in conjunction with the County Council.

Rothwell Conservation Area Appraisal (23 March 1978)

The main physical remnants of Rothwell's antiquity are:

- The Church of the Holy Trinity, constructed in the twelfth century with later additions. The property is Grade I listed.
- The "Rowell Fair" held each year at the Holy Trinity since King John granted its Charter in 1204.
- The thirteenth century fishponds to the south of the Church.
- Market House, begun and partially constructed by Sir Thomas Tresham between 1575 and 1580, finally being roofed in 1895. The property is a Grade I listed building. The market, of which this building is evidence of its one time importance, is believed to have closed with the onset of the plague in 1666.
- Jesus Hospital, originally an almshouse for old men, was founded by Owen Ragsdale in 1591 and additions were made in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Today the property still caters for old people and it is a Grade II* listed building.

Development throughout the centre is almost universally set close up to the back of the pavement, largely comprising two and three storey properties being constructed of ironstone or red brick with Welsh slate as the predominant roofing material. The properties are generally in good external condition and are very much of a human scale, being arranged along roads and around open areas in a manner which has created a very interesting pattern of enclosures, visual 'channels' and open views.

No opportunity sites have been identified in this appraisal.

Burton Latimer Conservation Area Appraisal (24 November 2009)

There are three distinct character areas in the recently reviewed Conservation Area:

Church Street: Church Street takes on the role of the historic heart of Burton Latimer. It is the original Conservation Area and it has a distinct character. It is dominated by the spire of St Mary's Church and the noticeable characteristics include stone buildings that abut the highway, the predominance of traditional local materials and a distinct sense of greenery and open space to the rear of the properties.

The High Street: The High Street is worthy of inclusion for two reasons. Firstly, there are a significant amount of buildings which positively contribute to the character of the area. Secondly, the High Street is a historically important point of communication. It became a turnpike road in the 18th century, it formed part of the London to Carlisle road and it was later designated part of the A6 trunk road.

The Industrial Core: This character area is worthy of inclusion due to its historical significance in the development of Burton Latimer. This area is to the west of the High Street and along Station Road. It is recognisable by the residential properties which are typical red-brick Victorian terraced houses. The area is high density and would traditionally have been interspersed with factories from the boot, shoe and clothing industries.

Opportunity sites within the Conservation Area:

Within the **Church Street** character area there are likely to be few opportunities for development, as increasing the density of this area would be contrary to the open, rural appearance of this locality. Principal concerns for any new development are the scale of the new building, the appropriateness of its overall mass and its relationship to its context. It should fit with the rural context and relate to the established grain of development by respecting the street pattern and built form.

The Car Park to the front of The Olde Victoria: Historic photographs of Church Street demonstrate that several modest stone cottages used to be sited on what is now the car park. If an alternative location for the car park can be found this site could offer potential for sensitive redevelopment. For example, an appropriate public realm scheme that creates an attractive frontage for the Olde Victoria pub, allowing the Olde Victoria to be the centrepiece of a small public space. Alternatively, the car park could be redeveloped for some sensitively designed low status stone cottages that follow the traditional street pattern of Church Street.

The former Tanners Cars site, Kettering Road: Any proposed retail and/or residential redevelopment may help to increase the active frontage along Kettering Road and achieve a suitable redevelopment of a prominent site.

The corner of Pioneer Avenue and Kettering Road: This site is currently in use as a car retailer. If this site were to become vacant a suitable corner development that makes full use of this prominent site would be welcomed. A small, suitably designed retail or commercial unit at ground floor level with residential accommodation above may be appropriate. The design must take into account the surrounding character and compliment the appearance of the properties on Pioneer Avenue.

35-39 High Street: This site was formerly the Red Cow Inn, a Coaching Inn that was important to the history of Burton Latimer. Although any new development cannot replicate the historical significance of the building, care must be taken to ensure that any new development is appropriate for this site, in terms of scale, form and character. Well designed ground floor commercial use, replicating the active frontage that previously existed on this site, would be considered. Residential development above the ground floor and to the rear is appropriate.

Land and gardens on the corner of Churchill Way/High Street: An area that has been identified by the Burton Latimer Urban Design Framework as an area to be redeveloped. The size of the site mean that many uses are suitable, but any redevelopment must preserve 90 High Street.

St Mary's Primary School: Reinstatement of the iron railings to the front of this impressive historic school building will improve its appearance within the streetscene.

The Library and former Health Centre: A suitable and high quality design for redevelopment of this area could improve this part of the High Street. The design must not detract from 149 High Street.

Sainsbury's Supermarket: The expanse of tarmac at the front of this store lacks suitable landscaping. To soften this in the short term the planting of new trees and shrubs, especially along the highway, would be welcome. The supermarket set to the rear of the site does not retain the character of buildings abutting the highway. Any plans to redevelop the site in the long term should look at reintroducing some form of street frontage.

Land next to 59 Duke Street: A corner plot that is currently a garden, but is likely to have previously had terraced housing on it at some stage. It currently represents a very open frontage that is uncharacteristic of this area. A suitably designed corner property would help to define the street by enhancing the enclosed form and nature of this street.

Land next to 81 Alexandra Street: Another corner plot that would benefit from an appropriately designed residential building that is in-keeping with the terraced character of the surrounding properties.

Burton Latimer Working Mens Club, Finedon Street:

This impressive building could be returned to its former glory with a suitable use. To further enhance the area the redevelopment of the car park with a high quality building, which considers the surrounding character as described in this document, would help to improve the street frontage. A design that takes its influence from neighbouring terraced properties is more likely to be considered in a positive light.

Desborough Town Centre Healthcheck (Roger Tym & Partners, July 2010)

Summary of findings:

- The level of convenience shopping which is equivalent to 14.6% of the total retail offer is above the UK average of 9.53%.
- The proportion of comparison goods is significantly below average accounting for just 31.7% compared to the UK average of 42.9%.
- Service outlets make up 41.5% of units compared to the UK average of 34%. There is strong representation of 'Restaurants, cafes, coffee bars, fast food & take-aways' although most of these units are takeaways. Representation of 'Hairdressers, beauty parlours & health centres' is also above average.
- There are currently 4 vacant units in the town centre (9.8% of units and below the UK average of 12.3%.
- There are a large number of residential units within the Established Shopping Area.
- One of the largest units in the town centre is used for a non-retail use (currently the Heritage Centre)
- There are significant areas of vacant land and buildings adjacent to the Established Shopping Area. In particular there are two areas which, if brought forward, would allow for consolidation of Desborough's role as a smaller town. Two sites are: Former Lawrence's Factory site, New Street and former Co-Op Dairy, High Street.

- There is currently no interest from national comparison goods multiple retailers for premises in Desborough at present. There is however demand from national food retailers. The majority of demand for premises in the town centre is from small-scale, new-start businesses, which is in part a reflection of the size and nature of the floorspace available within the centre.
- High retail yields which indicates limited investor confidence.

The top three most disliked attributed of Desborough town centre were:

- Lack of choice of multiple shops (i.e. high street chains)
- Lack of choice of independent/ specialist shops
- Quality of shops is inadequate

The top five answers for how the town centre could be improved were:

- Better choice of shops in general (67.97%)
- Better quality shops (35.29%)
- Bigger/ better supermarket (29.41%)
- More/ better eating places (29.41%)
- Improve appearance/ environment of centre (20.92%)

Desborough Town Centre Healthcheck – Update (KBC, May 2011)

Summary of findings:

- No significant changes in the retailer representation or footfall in the town centre since the original healthcheck

Rothwell Town Centre Healthcheck (KBC, May 2011)

Summary of findings:

- In terms of diversity of uses Rothwell has above average representation of convenience retail and the service sector and below average representation of comparison provision, better choice of shops was identified by a number of respondents as a required improvement to the town.
- There is currently no out-of-centre retail floorspace in Rothwell which can be considered to undermine the vitality and viability of the centre.
- The vacant former Medical Centre on Bridge Street provides a good opportunity for development in the town centre, although being set back, provides little frontage.
- Footfall in the town centre is focused around the convenience retail provision and falls significantly in the western end of the town centre.
- Accessibility to the town centre is good although at busy times there may be capacity issues in the main car park as this is also used by the market, accessibility by bus, cycle and on-foot is generally good. A significant proportion of people walk to the town centre.
- The environmental quality of the town centre is good but this could be enhanced by removing on-street parking on Bridge Street and addressing congestion in the town centre.
- There is a demand for small scale retail/ small scale business units in the town centre but no demand from national comparison or convenience retail.
- Smaller units take in the region of 4-6 months to market and lease where as larger units take in the region of 6-12 months.

The on-street survey provided a good indication of respondents' views and behaviour. The following are a summary of key points:

- The survey supported the current role of Rothwell as a local service centre. The majority of respondents using the town centre live in Rothwell and a high proportion of these walk to the town centre.
- The key things people like about the town centre are that it is near/ convenient, the historic buildings and that parking is free.
- A significant proportion of respondents said there was nothing they disliked about the town centre. Things people disliked were the on-street parking on the main road and congestion in the town centre.
- Respondents were generally happy with the environmental quality of the town centre.

When asked how the town centre could be improved the following were the most common answers:

- 29% of respondents said there was nothing they would like improved in the town centre
- 22% of respondents said they would like a better choice of shops
- 17% of respondents said they would like the on-street parking on Bridge Street removed
- 14.6% said they would like to improve the appearance/ environment of the town centre

In general Rothwell town centre performs well against the vitality and viability criteria set out in PPS4. The surveys and pedestrian counts highlight the important role the convenience retail provision plays in attracting people to the town centre and enforces its role as a local service centre. There are improvements which could be made to the choice of comparison shops and the environmental quality of the town centre, particularly in relation to congestion and on-street parking, but overall the quality of the environment in the town centre is good.

Burton Latimer Town Centre Healthcheck (KBC, May 2011)

Summary of findings:

- In terms of diversity of uses Burton Latimer has average provision of convenience food stores within the ESA although when the store outside the ESA is taken into account it has above average provision. Provision of service units is significantly above average, the key areas where there provision is significantly above average is 'Restaurants, cafes, coffee bars, fast food and takeaways' and 'Hairdressers, beauty parlours and health centres'.
- Burton Latimer has below average provision of comparison good retailers, better choice of shops was the most popular response when respondents' were asked how they would like the town centre improved.
- There is currently no out-of-centre retail floorspace in Burton Latimer, however out-of-centre retail floorspace in Kettering potentially impacts on the potential for a significant increase in the number of comparison shops in Burton Latimer town centre.

- There are several opportunities within the town centre for redevelopment to enhance the appearance and vitality of the town centre although there are currently no significant areas of vacant land in the town centre.
- Footfall in the town centre is low; the main areas of footfall are focused around the centre area of the High Street, Churchill Way and people visiting the Sainsbury's Store.
- Accessibility to the town centre is generally good although cars parking on the High Street can cause congestion. A significant proportion of people walk to the town centre.
- The environmental quality of the town is generally good but there are areas of the town where the appearance of buildings could be improved and the removal of on-street parking on the High Street would help address the issue of congestion at busy times.
- There is demand for smaller scale/ start up business units but no interest from national convenience and comparison retailers.

The on-street survey provided a good indication of respondents' views and behaviour. The following are a summary of key points:

- The survey supported Burton Latimer's role as a local service centre. The majority of people visiting the town centre live in Burton Latimer and a high proportion of these walk to the town centre.
- The main things people like about the town centre are the people and sense of community, it is near/ convenient and that parking is free.
- A significant proportion of respondents' said there was nothing they disliked about the town centre. However, those who did respond to this question disliked, the lack of choice of shops, on-street parking and the presence of youth at night.
- Respondents were generally happy with the environmental quality of the town centre.

When asked how the town centre could be improved the following were the most common answers:

- Better choice of shops (31.25% of respondents')
- More youth activities (18.75% of respondents')
- Stop on-street parking (18.75% of respondents')
- Nothing (12.5% of respondents')
- Improve the appearance/ environment of the town centre (9.4% of respondents')
- Better incentives to enable shops to open (9.4% of respondents')

In general Burton Latimer performs well against the vitality and viability criteria set out in PPS4. The pedestrian counts highlighted the relatively low footfall in the town centre but the surveys supported the current role of Burton Latimer as a local service centre. There are improvements which could be made to the choice of shops in the town centre and to the environmental appearance of the town. There are several opportunity site which if redeveloped could enhance the current role of the town centre in the future.

Retail floorspace in the Burton Latimer, Desborough and Rothwell

Town centre	No. units	Total floorspace in town centre use ^[1]	Average (town centre use) unit floorspace
Burton Latimer	37	4,630m ²	125m ²
Desborough	41	3,716m ²	90.6m ²
Rothwell	66	5,465m ²	83m ²

Burton Latimer - Urban Design Framework (August 2006)

Summary of UDF:

Relatively modest investment in the town now can address concerns over potential threats to function, vitality and viability of the town centre avoiding the need for major intervention later on.

Strategic Objectives:

- Consolidation and strengthening the town centre based on a vibrant High Street, which is a destination for an improved range of quality town centre uses
- Creating a significant improvement in the quality of the public realm within the town centre as a selling point for the town, to attract more people to use the town centre
- Enhancing the Kettering Road approach to the town centre, lifting the quality of frontage development and creating a stronger gateway from the north
- Maximising positive features of the old village and the vernacular character of the town, where new buildings reinforce local distinctiveness and live up to historic precedent
- Improving northern High Street to create an attractive two-sided shopping street, maximising active ground floor uses and making more of underused land
- Strengthening the 'Town Heart' based on new shops on High Street, an improved Town Square and a new focal point public building and enhance Paddock Court
- Strengthen the town centre function of southern High Street through the redevelopment of underused land to create a two-sided Shopping Street
- Enhancing the southern gateway to the town centre improving linkages with the new healthcare uses along Higham Road
- Above all creating a town centre which is more attractive and which people want to use more often and for longer

Opportunity Sites:

Town Square/ Community Service Centre – Redevelopment of community facilities and open space to enlarge existing building and create a higher quality open space
Paddock Court Redevelopment/ Council Car Park Redevelopment – Environmental upgrade of the public realm and new development. Including new 2 storey mixed use development, re-orientating the existing car park, upgrading of the court to create a high quality urban space and improvements to pedestrian links through re-opening of lanes.
Redevelopment of the former surgery and existing library – commercial led mixed use scheme

^[1] Includes uses according to Valuation Office Agency website 2010 - shops, hairdressers, cafes, takeaways, restaurants; Excludes pubs, cars sales, workshops, stores etc.

Desborough Urban Design Framework (January 2004)

Summary of UDF:

Vision for Desborough established by the UDF is *'to help create an attractive and accessible heart to the town by enhancing –*

- *Its environmental quality;*
- *Its range of facilities and shops;*
- *Its civic pride and sense of community; and*
- *Its accessibility, particularly for pedestrians*

Key areas for action:

- To reduce the barrier created by the A6 to allow people to walk/ cycle more easily into the centre from the west of the town and other pedestrian/ vehicle hot spots will also be tackled
- To improve the level and quality of parking provision in the town centre, both in the shorter and longer term
- To secure significant enhancement of the town centre in conjunction with the new development arising from the Strategic Development Area
- To seek to build upon the character of Desborough and the strength of its community in the town centre improvements
- The range and scale of retail provision in Desborough will be increased to provide a better retail offer in the town
- The range of complementary town centre uses will be increased to create greater vitality and variety within Desborough both during the day and evening
- To provide an enhanced setting to enable the local market to flourish and expand as part of public realm improvements within the centre of Desborough
- To encourage local manufacturers to locate their factory shops within the town centre at a central site identified for the outlets
- To retain suitable employment opportunities within the town centre to encourage vitality and activity
- To enhance the town's gateways with creative new development and townscape improvements to provide a more memorable and attractive entry to the town. The town will also need to be identified from the A6 bypass to announce Desborough to visitors
- To create a new public square, most probably at the junction of High Street and the A6, to provide a focus for the town's civic activities to provide a proper setting for the market
- To undertake high quality streetscape works, in the first instance in High Street and Station Road then in other areas of the town centre
- To secure high architectural quality in new developments with a view to creating a new architectural image for the town. This will apply equally to key sites as well as lesser ones
- To encourage new community facilities in the town centre, including the provision of a centralised multi-use building either at High Street or at the Lawrences factory site.
- To provide youth facilities at the Dunkirk Avenue recreation ground
- To ensure that the safety and enjoyment of the town centre by all age groups will be improved through better building design, maximising activity at all times of the day and early evening and through enhanced street lighting and CCTV

- To help ensure protection of heritage assets where possible and assist the delivery of a heritage strategy that seeks to take advantage of these historic assets to promote heritage based regeneration and tourism, including the establishment of a heritage centre, possibly at the Lawrences site.

Key Opportunity Sites:

1. High street/Gold Street/Station Road/A6 junction
2. Lawrence factory/ Desborough Motors site
3. Station Yard

Other Opportunities:

- Bowls Club
- Factory site, Station Road
- Littlewood and Goodwin factory, Victoria Street
- Garage building to the rear of public open space – Station Road/Havelock Street
- St Johns Ambulance Hall, Paddock Lane
- Factory premises at the junction of Union Street/ King Street
- Gateways sites at Gold Street/ A6 junction
- Former omnibus depot and garage, Harborough Road
- Gateway site, Pipewell Road (part of approved housing site)
- Premises and shops next to Baptist Chapel, Station Road
- Hazelwood House, High Street
- The Gaultney, Station Road
- The former Co-op Dairy site, High Street

Rothwell does not have an Urban Design Framework.

A4. Consultation Feedback

Summary of Issues Paper comments	KBC response
Desborough:	
Desborough needs a community hall (2)	Noted
Desborough needs a suitable site for the market stalls (1)	Creation of a market square has been included in the options for redevelopment proposals
Desborough needs small shops, cafes and workshops (3)	These uses have been included in the options for proposed redevelopments
Desborough needs a permanent home for the Heritage Centre (460)	Noted
The UDF design brief for the Lawrences site should be brought forward (7)	A development brief for the Lawrence's factory site was produced and approved by the Borough Council's Executive committee 17 October 2007. The site was marketed through the Official Journal of the European
Lawrences site should be developed to be a focal point for Desborough and an attractive gateway to the town (2)	
Lawrences site should be used for a leisure centre (1)	

<p>Lawrences site should not be developed for a large supermarket (6)</p>	<p>Union (OJEU) and the Estates Gazette. In April 2008 developers William Davis Ltd were chosen as the proposed developers for the site. Unfortunately the requirements set out in the development brief could not be met and the proposed development proved to be financially unviable. On 16 September 2009 the Council's Executive committee approved the redevelopment of the Lawrence's Factory site for a supermarket as its preferred solution. A planning application has been received for a supermarket (2407 square meters of retail) on this site. This site would include 180 car parking spaces, which has been at an end of the town where additional car parking has been identified as a need. The application proposes to create 140 new jobs.</p>
<p>The proposals set out in the UDF should be brought forward (3)</p>	<p>Where possible the options identified seek to bring forward proposals in the UDF however in some instances the uses identified have been found to be financially unviable and in these circumstances alternative uses have been identified</p>
<p>An education centre and children's centre could attract people to the town centre (1)</p>	<p>Noted. A Sure Start Centre is now available in the new library building.</p>
<p>Desborough needs more offices for small businesses (1)</p>	<p>Small scale employment opportunities have been included in the proposed redevelopment opportunities</p>
<p>Mixed use for all sites would be the best for the town (1)</p>	<p>This has been taken into consideration when assessing proposed uses on the sites</p>
<p>Desborough needs retail chains as well as small independent businesses (1)</p>	<p>Options for proposals include a supermarket, however there is currently no interest from national comparison goods multiple retailers for premises in Desborough</p>
<p>The former Co-op dairy site, Ritz, former</p>	<p>These sites have been considered</p>

shop units in Station Road and Tailbys yard need to be added to the other sites (1)	for redevelopment and where appropriate identified as opportunities for redevelopment.
Reducing the width of the former A6, providing more area for Key site 1 and enhancing the market square, plus re routing the existing road could bring significant benefits. Car parking to be incorporated, together with excellent pedestrian and cycle links to all housing. (1)	The options include environmental enhancement to the former A6 and proposals for Key site 1
Bowls club should not be included as an opportunity for development (1)	This site has not been included as an opportunity for development
Buildings still in use should not be marked as opportunities for redevelopment (1)	It is sometimes necessary to identify buildings still in use as these provide opportunities for enhancement of the town centre should the existing use cease. It is therefore beneficial to set out proposals for these sites to ensure they are redeveloped for the most appropriate uses.
Co-op dairy site should be used for 2-3 small shops. (1)	This has been included as an opportunity site.
UDF opportunity site 4 – Small shops could be put here, set back to provide a public square (1)	This had been identified in the options as a mixed use site.
UDF site 8 – frontage and outline should be preserved – could be used for exhibition/ conference space (1)	Noted
The derelict Station Road factory site should be used for community facilities not just retail (1)	Noted
Proposals for key site 1 should take note of the Grade II listed milestone at the corner of Buckwell Close (1)	Proposals will take this into consideration
The Ritz should be re-used not redeveloped (1)	Noted. The Ritz is now being re-used.
The deliverability of the 3 Key sites should be questioned as they have not come forward in the time since the UDF and are subject to physical and legal constraints (1)	Deliverability will be an important consideration when considering sites for allocation.
Burton Latimer:	
No specific comments	
Rothwell:	
Development in Rothwell needs to incorporate plans for youth (1)	Noted
The old doctors surgery, the market place and area surrounding the Coop	These sites have been considered for redevelopment and where

and former Blue Bell public house should be redeveloped (1)	appropriate identified as opportunities for redevelopment.
3 Bridge Street, Former Health Centre, 5 Bell Hill and Coopers yard should be redeveloped (1)	These sites have been considered for redevelopment and where appropriate identified as opportunities for redevelopment.
A policy should be included to protect the site on Market Hill for its use for the Rowell Fair (1)	This has been included in the criteria for assessing proposals within the town centre boundary
General comments:	
New development should make a significant contribution to town centre development (1)	New developments will be required to contribute to town centre improvements
Encourage local small businesses not multiple or chain stores (1)	The options identified seek to include small scale retail development
In all small towns improved, free, parking facilities (1)	Where a shortage of parking has been identified options for redevelopment and environmental improvements have sought to improve the level of parking available
Redevelopment of disused or derelict sites should be encouraged (1)	The options identified will seek to redevelop disused or derelict sites

Town Council Meeting - Comments relating to town centres

Rothwell:

- The status of the former A6 through Rothwell needs to be lowered so that through traffic is discouraged and there will be sufficient space for additional parking along this route, including herringbone parking.
- Former Health Centre needs redeveloping as a priority. Suitable uses could include; additional town centre parking, retail/ business, a community meeting place.
- Abishot Mouldings in Rushton Road should be given the opportunity to relocate to more suitable premises. The site would then be suitable for residential development
- It is imperative to retain Rothwell's historic and unique identity and therefore the Conservation Area must be protected and Rowell Fair continue to be held in the town centre.
- Coopers Yard, off the bottom of Desborough Road, obviously has very historic features, and was possibly part of the original Nunnery. This site would be ideal to be sympathetically restored to create small business units

Desborough:

- Support for identification of more car parking, site at High Street/ Station Road suggested as suitable location as proposed in the past
- Support for provision of an additional supermarkets in the town
- Need to increase employment in the town
- Desborough needs a Civic Centre/ Community Hall facilities

- A permanent home for the Heritage Centre is needed

Burton Latimer:

- The Town Council would like to see land allocated for small scale/ incubator employment opportunities allocated in the Plan.
- Progress is being made in preparing the Burton Latimer Parish Plan. The findings from the Plan should be incorporated within any future planning policy development and influence planning applications.

A5. SWOT ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

This section provides a summary of the town centres strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and identifies potential options for future development.

Burton Latimer Options

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality restaurants • Latimer Business Park • Good public transport links with Kettering • Central community square • Good links to the strategic road network 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of activities for youngsters • Competition from Kettering limits opportunities for comparison retail provision
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance evening economy • Underused sites in the town centre provide opportunities to enhance the town centre 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk that the town could become a dormitory settlement • Further loss of footfall • Vandalism and anti-social behaviour is an issue in the evenings

Opportunity sites

The Paddock Court/ Council car park would benefit from environmental upgrade of the public realm and new development. Alternative option is to not identify the site for redevelopment. **Identify as an opportunity for redevelopment.**

The Churchill Way retail parade provides a good range of shops and makes an important contribution to the town centre. However these buildings are visually out of character with the rest of the town centre. These units provide a good opportunity for refurbishment which would allow the retention of the existing uses but would improve the appearance of this area of the town. **Identify as an opportunity for redevelopment.**

The Churchill Way/ High Street Backland areas are currently under used and provide a good opportunity for redevelopment within the town centre. Uses should include active town centre uses at ground floor with residential or business uses above and some small scale car parking to support the additional uses. Alternative options are to identify these areas for residential led development or to not identify these areas of opportunities for redevelopment. **Identify as an opportunity for redevelopment.**

Jock's Auto's provides a good opportunity area for redevelopment should the current use of the site relocate or cease. Uses should include active town centre uses at ground floor with residential or business uses above and some small scale car parking to support the additional uses. Alternative options are to identify these areas for residential led development or to not identify these areas of opportunities for redevelopment. **Identify as an opportunity for redevelopment.**

The Kettering Road frontages provide a good opportunity for redevelopment. These sites are located on the periphery of the town centre and would therefore be suitable for redevelopment for residential or employment development. Alternative option is to not identify the site for redevelopment. **Development for appropriate uses could come forward within the existing policy framework.**

Environmental Improvements

The approach to the town from Kettering Road would benefit from identification as an area of environmental improvement. These improvements could include improvements to frontage development and the creation of a stronger gateway to the town. Alternative option is not to identify this area for environmental improvement. **Include as an option for environmental improvement.**

The High Street would benefit from identification as an area of environmental improvement. This could include improvements to make the street more pedestrian friendly and to reduce the speed of traffic, removal of on-street parking and to improve the quality of the public realm and street furniture. Alternative option is to not identify this area for environmental improvement. **Include as an option for environmental improvement.**

The southern gateway to the town would benefit from identification as an area for environmental improvement. These improvements should focus on enhancement of this gateway to the town centre. Alternative option is to not identify this area for environmental improvement. **Include as an option for environmental improvement.**

The area at Town Square would benefit from identification for environmental improvements. These improvements should include enhancement of existing open space. **Include as an option for environmental improvement.**

Development within the town centre boundary

To include a policy setting out criteria to be applied to development proposals within the town centre boundary. These principles could include:

- Development should enhance the historic character of the town and should be designed in the context of this historic character. The positive character of the old village should be reflected in the town centre.
- Should not result in the loss of retail units and promote comparison retailing.
- Proposals for small scale retail of small scale employment within the town centre will be supported.
- Development should not result in the loss of active uses at ground floor level in the town centre.
- Development proposals within the town centre should provide active uses at ground floor level. Active uses include shops, services, restaurants and professional and business uses.
- Proposals which support A3 uses in the town centre will be supported.

Desborough Options

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonably broad range of retail facilities for its size – is this still the case? • Good links to the strategic road network 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of jobs • Retail presence has declined (station road cited as an example) • Poor internal access with narrow streets and bottlenecks (southern end of Station Road and the High Street) • Bus services not frequent enough • Retail and services are concentrated at either end of Station Road with shops scattered along it but with housing in between providing a low-key/residential feel • Lack of choice of shops • Lack of car parking
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements to shop fronts • Identification of a permanent home for the heritage centre • Aspiration for speciality/niche shops • Areas of vacant land in the town centre which could be redeveloped • Demand for small-scale, new-start businesses • Creating attractive gateways into the town centre 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land ownership/ Restrictive covenants • Limited funding opportunities

Opportunity Sites

Key Site 1 - To identify the area at High Street/ Station Road for the creation of a new market square, redevelopment of shop units, car parking and landmark community building as set out in the UDF. Alternatives are to identify a smaller portion of the area at High Street/ Station Road for the creation of a new market square and car parking or to not identify the site for redevelopment. **Identify as an opportunity for redevelopment.**

Key Site 2 - To identify the Lawrences factory site for a supermarket. A development brief for the Lawrence's factory site was produced and approved by the Borough Council's Executive committee 17 October 2007. The site was marketed through the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) and the Estates Gazette. In April 2008 developers William Davis Ltd were chosen as the proposed developers for the site. Unfortunately the requirements set out in the development brief could not be met and the proposed development proved to be financially unviable. On 16 September 2009 the Council's Executive committee approved the redevelopment of the Lawrence's Factory site for a supermarket as its preferred solution. A planning application has been received for a supermarket (2407 square meters of retail) on this site. This site would include 180 car parking spaces, which has been at an end of the town where additional car parking has been identified as a need. The planning application proposes to create 140 new jobs. **Identify as an opportunity for redevelopment.**

Key Site 3 - To identify Station Yard as an opportunity site and set out proposals for future uses of the site as set out in the UDF. (New smaller scale retail units, new station, new pedestrian square, car parking to serve station, new offices/ workshops, railway bridge) Alternatively uses could include small scale retail units and small scale employment. Re-use of the site would be subject to relocation of Albany Sheds. **Identify as an opportunity for redevelopment.**

Opportunity site 1 – Bowls Club – This site is actively used as a bowls club however should the use of this site cease this would provide a redevelopment opportunity close to the town centre. The site does not have a frontage into a main shopping street and would not need to be protected for primary town centre uses. Appropriate redevelopment of the site could therefore come forward within the existing policy framework. **Development for appropriate uses could come forward within the existing policy framework.**

Opportunity site 2 - (Factory Site, Station Road) – An application for a restaurant and 4 flats has been approved on this site (KET/2010/0080). May be opportunity for redevelopment to the rear of this however this is not a key frontage site and therefore would not need to be protected for key town centre uses. Appropriate development could therefore come forward within the existing policy framework. **Development for appropriate uses could come forward within the existing policy framework.**

Opportunity site 3 – Littlestones and Goodwins Factory – Site located outside the town centre boundary. Given location would not need to be protected for key town centre uses and therefore appropriate development could take place using existing policy framework. **Development for appropriate uses could come forward within the existing policy framework.**

Opportunity site 4 - To identify the corner of Havelock Street/Station Road a site for redevelopment and set out proposals for future uses of the site for a high quality mixed use scheme. **Identify as an opportunity for redevelopment.**

Opportunity site 5 – St John’s Ambulance Hall, Paddock Lane. Given location would not need to be protected for key town centre uses and therefore appropriate development could take place using existing policy framework. **Development for appropriate uses could come forward within the existing policy framework.**

Opportunity site 6 – Factory premises at junction of Union Street/ King Street. Given location would not need to be protected for key town centre uses and therefore appropriate development could take place using existing policy framework. **Development for appropriate uses could come forward within the existing policy framework.**

Opportunity site 7 - Gateway sites at Gold Street/ A6 junction – **Identified for environmental improvement as set out below**

Opportunity site 8 – Former omnibus depot and garage, Harborough Road – Given location would not need to be protected for key town centre uses and therefore appropriate development could take place using existing policy framework. **Development for appropriate uses could come forward within the existing policy framework.**

Opportunity site 9 – Gateway site, Pipewell Road. Given location would not need to be protected for key town centre uses and therefore appropriate development could take place using existing policy framework. **Development for appropriate uses could come forward within the existing policy framework.**

Opportunity site 10 – Premises and shops next to Baptist Church, Station Road (since developed) (KE/04/0339 – Erection of 12 flats). **No longer available for development.**

Opportunity site 11 – Hazeland House, High Street – Council owned Housing with support. Good opportunity for redevelopment should the current use of the site cease. Redevelopment should seek to create an active frontage along the High Street to improve the sense of enclosure and overlooking on this street. **Not likely to become available within the plan period**

Opportunity site 12 – The Gaultney, Station Road – Council owned housing without support. Could provide town centre uses fronting on to the High Street should the current use of the site cease. **Not likely to become available within the plan period**

Opportunity site 13 - To identify the vacant Co-op Dairy site as a site for redevelopment and set out proposals for future uses of the site. These uses could include small scale retail units/ new-start business units. **Identify as an opportunity for redevelopment.**

Environmental improvements:

The area along the High Street/ Station Road would benefit from identification as an area of environmental improvement. Environmental improvements could include high

quality paving, new street furniture, planting and lighting of strategic buildings. **Include as an option for environmental improvement.**

The junctions of Lower Street/ Rothwell Road and Gold Street/ A6 junction provide good opportunities for gateway enhancement and the old A6 would benefit from identification for environmental improvement. These environmental improvements could include road narrowing and planting to help re-connect residential areas to the west of the A6 with the town centre. **Include as an option for environmental improvement.**

The Burghley Close/ Mansfield Close car park would benefit from environmental improvement. This area is currently not well overlooked. **Include as an option for environmental improvement.**

Development within town centre boundaries:

To include a policy setting out criteria to be applied to development proposals within Desborough town centre boundary:

- Should not result in the loss of retail units
- Should where possible increase footfall in the town centre both during the day and in the evening
- Should consider the re-introduction of traditional materials, including local stone, and detailing both in the design of buildings and through the re-introduction of traditional boundary treatments. Alternatively contemporary designs should be of high architectural quality.
- Should create attractive active frontages onto streets and building form should maintain or recreate a sense of enclosure
- Design of developments should reflect the location of the development within the town. Design of buildings in key locations should reflect the importance of these buildings in the street scene. However design on less prominent sites should also be of high architectural quality. All designs should respond to the local context.
- Should seek to enhance pedestrian connectivity within the town and to surrounding residential areas and to public open spaces

Rothwell Options:

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality restaurants • Small speciality shops • Reasonable range of shops for its size • Good links to the strategic road network 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of jobs • Slight lack of parking • Potential for deliveries • On street car parking at top of Bridge Street
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on the restaurant provision and enhance the evening economy • Former Medical Centre site 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vandalism and other night-time anti-social behaviour is an issue • Loss of footfall

Opportunity Sites:

The former Medical Centre is a good opportunity for redevelopment. The site is located within the town centre boundary and uses could include; retail and employment provision, additional town centre parking. Alternative options are to identify the site for housing development or to not identify the site for redevelopment. **Identify as an opportunity for redevelopment.**

The Library/ Fire Station site would provide a good opportunity for redevelopment should the existing uses relocate. The site fronts onto Bridge Street and future uses could include; retail, small scale employment, residential to the rear of the site as well as some small scale car parking. Alternative options are to identify the site for predominantly residential development or to not identify the site for redevelopment. **Identify as an opportunity for redevelopment.**

The Coopers Coaches site is a good opportunity for redevelopment. This site is located outside the town centre and would not be a suitable location for primary town centre uses. The site is currently disused and has been considered for redevelopment in the housing and employment site assessments. **Assess as option for housing or employment development.**

Abishot Mouldings in Rushton Road would provide a good opportunity for redevelopment should the current use relocate. This site does not relate well to the town centre as it is located behind the public house. It would therefore be more appropriate for use as residential or employment rather than for main town centre uses. **Development for appropriate uses could come forward within the existing policy framework.**

Factory Unit, Bell Hill would provide a good opportunity for redevelopment should the existing use of the site cease. The site does not relate well to the town centre and would not need to be identified for primary town centre uses. **Development for appropriate uses could come forward within the existing policy framework.**

Environmental Improvements:

The High Street/ Desborough Road would benefit from identification as an area for environmental improvement. Environmental improvements could include narrowing of the road and provision of on street parking, removal of on-street car parking at the top of Bridge Street; the widening of pavements to prevent excessive speeds on this road and aid pedestrian flows; and environmental improvements to provide a strong gateway entrance into the town.

Development within the town centre boundary

To include a policy setting out criteria to be applied to development proposals within the town centre boundary. These development principles could include:

- Development of small scale office development and independent retail will be supported
- Development should not prejudice the future use of Market Hill for the Rowell fair

- Development should respect the historic character of Rothwell town centre and should enhance this character
 - Ground floor uses should create active frontages and should front on to the street. New development should maintain or create a good sense of enclosure
 - Development should not result in the loss of retail units at ground floor level
-

Section B) The location and scale of town centre uses – Location - Sequential Assessments

Introduction

This paper addresses the issue of the PPS4 requirement for a Sequential Assessment for main town centre uses outside of existing centres and whether a more flexible local policy is required.

B1. PPS4 requirements

Planning Policy Statement 4 (PPS4) (Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth), in seeking to protect the vitality and viability of town centres, sets out requirements for planning applications involving 'main town centre' uses, defined in PPS4 as:

1. Retail development (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres);
2. Leisure, entertainment facilities, and the more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, night-clubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres, and bingo halls);
3. Offices; and
4. Arts, culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities).

PPS4 sets out a sequential approach to these uses which means that they should, in the first instance, be located within existing centres, and only where it can be demonstrated that there are no sequentially preferable town centre sites should edge-of-centre or out-of-centre sites be considered. Policy EC14.3 of PPS4 states that:

A Sequential Assessment (under EC15) is required for planning applications for main town centres uses that are not in an existing centre and are not in accordance with an up to date development plan.

This includes any applications which create additional floorspace, including applications for internal alterations where planning permission is required, and applications to vary or remove conditions changing the range of goods sold.

Effectively, this means that a Sequential Assessment is required for *all* applications for town centre uses proposed outside of existing centres and not in accordance with an up to date Development Plan, regardless of their scale and likely impact on town centres. The only types of development that do not have to satisfy the test are extensions to an existing retail or leisure use of less than 200m² gross floorspace.

PPS4 then outlines the requirements for Sequential Assessments in Policy EC15:

EC15.1: In considering Sequential Assessments required under policy EC14.3, local planning authorities should:

- a) *ensure that sites are assessed for their availability, suitability and viability;*
- b) *ensure that all in-centre options have been thoroughly assessed before less central sites are considered*
- c) *ensure that where it has been demonstrated that there are no town centre sites to accommodate a proposed development, preference is given to edge-of-centre locations which are well connected to the centre by means of easy pedestrian access*
- d) *ensure that in considering sites in or on the edge of existing centres, developers and operators have demonstrated flexibility in terms of:*
 - i. *scale: reducing the floorspace of their development;*
 - ii. *format: more innovative site layouts and store configurations such as multi-storey developments with smaller footprints;*

- iii. car parking provision; reduced or reconfigured car parking areas; and
- iv. the scope for disaggregating specific parts of a retail or leisure development including those which are part of a group of retail or leisure units, onto separate, sequentially preferable, sites. However, local planning authorities should not seek arbitrary sub-division of proposals

EC15.2: In considering whether flexibility has been demonstrated under policy EC15.1.d above, local planning authorities should take into account any genuine difficulties which the applicant can demonstrate are likely to occur in operating the proposed business model from a sequentially preferable site, for example where a retailer would be limited to selling a significantly reduced range of products. However, evidence which claims that the class of goods proposed to be sold cannot be sold from the town centre should not be accepted.

PPS4's Practice Guidance (*Planning for Town Centres: Practice guidance on need, impact and the sequential approach*) is clear that the sequential approach is intended to achieve two important policy objectives:

- First, the assumption underpinning the policy is that town centre sites (or failing that well connected edge-of-centre sites) are likely to be the most readily accessible locations by alternative means of transport and will be centrally placed to the catchments established centres serve, thereby reducing the need to travel.
- The second, related objective is to seek to accommodate main town centre uses in locations where customers are able to undertake linked trips in order to provide for improved consumer choice and competition. In this way, the benefits of the new development will serve to reinforce the vitality and viability of the existing centre.

B2. Kettering Borough Council's experience of applying PPS4

KBC's experience of applying PPS4 in Development Management situations is that PPS4 can be somewhat of a blunt instrument - a consequence of which is a mandatory requirement for a Sequential Assessment for very minor proposals. The lack of criteria or a threshold in PPS4 for Sequential Assessments means that PPS4 it is in effect very strict.

KBC Officers believe that, in certain circumstances, the requirement for a Sequential Assessment for small scale applications may be too onerous and might fetter the development of small businesses and economic growth.

This concern is best illustrated with an example:

- A proposal is made for a small (100m²) fish and chip takeaway in the suburbs, to serve a local residential catchment;
- Policy EC14.3 of PPS4 would require the application to demonstrate accordance with the sequential approach and supply a Sequential Assessment;
- This could be considered an onerous requirement for such a small scale proposal;
- The Sequential Assessment would also be very unlikely to be passed – it is likely that there will always be available units within a town centre suitable for a fish and chip shop;
- The proposal would, therefore, be considered to be contrary to PPS4 – the town centre sites should be developed first.
- The proposal could be refused.

It is the opinion of KBC officers that in practice this requirement is both unnecessarily onerous and impracticable, and would potentially mean small scale developments (such as the fish and chip shop example) to serve a housing estate example would never be permitted if PPS4 were applied rigidly. PPS4's requirement for Sequential Assessments has created, on occasion, problems in practice for KBC officers and an unsatisfactory and unnecessarily bureaucratic process for applicants. The level of work and detail required by a Sequential Assessment is, at

times, not in proportion with the scale of the proposal. In certain circumstances, therefore, this serves as an unnecessary barrier to sustainable economic development.

Additionally in terms of A5 uses, an associated unintended consequence of the sequential approach applied in this manner may be an over concentration of takeaway uses in town centres, which would be better suited to sporadic distribution around the town to serve local needs. This issue has been a problem in Kettering town centre and the Kettering Town Centre Area Action Plan makes provision to avoid a further over-proliferation of A5 uses in the town centre. The rigid application of PPS4's Sequential Assessment would, therefore, be counter-intuitive to this objective.

Examples of recent applications which have encountered this issue were provided by Development Management Officers. Further research was undertaken by monitoring applications from 1st April 2010 to 31st March 2011 and investigating those for small scale applications for main town centre uses out of existing centres. A summary of both of these sources of research is provided in Table B.1, below. The table shows a significant number of applications have, rightly or wrongly, been curtailed as a result of this issue.

Ref	Address	Proposed use	Floorspace proposed	Outcome
PRE/2011/0045	99-101 Montagu Street, Kettering	A5 Takeaway	80m ²	Withdrawn - no Sequential Assessment.
KET/2010/0798	Rothwell Grange	B1 - offices	292m ²	Withdrawn
KET/2010/0492	Unit 5 Northfield Point, Cunliffe Drive, Kettering	D2 – dance studio	139m ²	Approved – additional Sequential Assessment was required
KET/2010/0692	Stoke Albany Golf Club	B1 - offices	36m ²	Refused – no Sequential Assessment. Applicant has appealed.
KET/2010/0623	The Elms, Isham Road, Pytchley	Change of use from cart shed building / barn to B1 office	190m ² (95m ² per floor)	Refused – no Sequential Assessment. Applicant has appealed.
KET/2010/0703	62a Windmill Avenue, Kettering	Conversion of workshop to hot food take-away A5	49m ²	Withdrawn

Table B.1: Small scale applications involving PPS4 Policy EC14.3

The issue is particularly pertinent in the rural context where PPS4 and local objectives to offer local employment opportunities, to diversify the rural economy and to support rural economic development are being undermined by requirements to sequentially channel all uses such as offices into town centre sites, regardless of scale. Some areas of the borough are geographically detached from the activities of Kettering town centre and small scale employment or retail uses, for example, in these locations would not be to the detriment of the town centre's vitality and viability. In such cases the application of the Sequential Assessment is considered flawed, and counterintuitive to further guidance contained in Policy EC13 of PPS4 which states that:

*EC13.1 When assessing planning applications affecting shops, leisure uses including public houses or services in... villages, local planning authorities should:
respond positively to planning applications...
respond positively to planning applications for farm shops...*

The identification of the issues described above in applying PPS4 has led to the inclusion of an option to set a more locally flexible policy for Kettering Borough within the Site Specific Proposals LDD, which will be discussed in the next section.

B3. Options development & Sustainability Appraisal of options

PPS4, and its practice guidance, makes provision for Local Authorities to set more locally applicable policies in their LDF, through references to: the need for an up to date development plan; the possibility of locally set thresholds; and (in the practice guidance) the encouragement for the LDF process to “*consider the appropriateness and the need for floorspace thresholds*”. Whilst references to locally-set floorspace thresholds in the PPS and supporting guidance mainly refer to the requirements for impact assessments, the principle is equally applicable to the sequential approach. Moreover, the overarching spirit of PPS4 is to facilitate and encourage sustainable economic development. It is considered that developing a more flexible local approach to the need for a Sequential Assessment in the Site Specific Proposals LDD would help achieve this objective.

The idea is also in accordance with the emerging Localism agenda which encourages locally distinct approaches to development and policies formulated according to the local context. By developing the option for a policy that supplements PPS4 in certain cases at this stage of the Site Specific Proposals LDD, it enables effective community consultation to be carried out to ensure that any policy deemed necessary reflects local opinion in line with the emerging Localism agenda.

An option is therefore presented in the Site Specific Proposals LDD to omit the requirement for a Sequential Assessment for certain developments. It is suggested that this could be achieved by setting a threshold and accompanying criteria to take account of proposals for small scale local facilities.

There are effectively 2 options in relation to this issue, which are discussed in turn:

Option a) – to include a policy setting out local requirements for Sequential Assessments for proposals involving main town centre uses not in a centre

The policy must capture proposals which will not be a threat to the vitality/viability of town centres, whilst ensuring the intentions of PPS4 are applied to larger scale developments as necessary. It is important that any local policy strikes the correct balance between setting out a more workable and applicable local policy and the robustness intended in PPS4 to protect town centres. As such a threshold is proposed, together with some supporting text which describes the kind of developments which will be exempt from the Sequential Assessment.

The draft thresholds to be consulted on were arrived at following analysis of recent applications in which the PPS4 Sequential Assessment requirement has been an issue (as outlined in Table B.1, above) and through analysis of the average or typical floorspace for various small scale operations of main town centre uses. This was taken from analysis of past applications and some wider research. The results are shown in table B.2, below.

Use	Average / typical floorspace	Would we like to see a Sequential Assessment for this use at this scale?
Newsagent	30-50m ²	No
Takeaway	50-90m ²	No
Hairdressers	30-50m ²	No
Small shop	95m ² (e.g. 67 High Street, Kettering)	No
Average town centre unit in 3 smaller towns	100m ²	No
Farm shop	40-50m ²	No
Tesco Express	200m ² – 280m ²	No
Sainsburys Local	190m ² – 280m ²	No
Cluster of 3-4 retail	400m ²	Yes

units		
Co-op Local Superstore	465m ² (recent pre-application advice for retail store)	Yes
Fast food restaurant, e.g. McDonalds	260m ²	Yes
Small office development	36-190m ² (approx 2 – 11 jobs)	No
More significant office development	300m ² (approx 17 jobs)	Yes
Village local pub	150-360m ²	No for small scale to serve localised need. Yes to larger establishments likely to generate significant visitor numbers.

Table B.2: Example uses and typical floorspace

A draft threshold of 250m² for the potential policy has been arrived at as a result of this analysis. The 250m² threshold is considered a reasonable level to set to achieve the balance between facilitating economic development, particularly diversification in rural areas, and protecting town centre vitality and viability. The proposed threshold would omit the need for a Sequential Assessment for proposals of a scale which will serve a purely localised need rather than a materially wider catchment area (e.g. a newsagents) and small scale leisure uses such as local pubs and tearooms.

If further flexibility were considered necessary, the policy could outline subsequent further criteria to enable exceptions to be made for the requirement for proposals above the 250m² in exceptional circumstance, including considerations of:

- Local catchment need;
- Location specific developments; or
- Rural employment provision.

The Policy could also include a caveat to enable Officer judgement to be applied on a case by case basis and require a Sequential Assessment if necessary for exceptional developments under the 250m² threshold. The final policy would also need to ensure that the policy is sufficiently robust, for example in considering cumulative impacts and issues or sub-division of units or piecemeal extensions coming forward over time. This would ensure the spirit of the policy is robustly maintained and seek to prevent circumnavigation of the threshold.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal

The **advantages** of this approach, as assessed in the Sustainability Appraisal (SA), are summarised against the relevant SA topic below:

- Accessibility – A less onerous requirement for Sequential Assessments could potentially improve accessibility to local facilities (for example newsagents, small scale local shops, and local takeaways) which could be developed at a small scale in housing areas most accessible to the local catchment area they are intended to serve, i.e. the areas where people live.
- Community - Potential facilitation of the development of local facilities, as described above, could impact positively on community as such facilities are an important place for social interaction.
- Liveability – An uncertain impact is noted against this topic with the potential enhanced liveability of housing areas through the provision of local facilities offset by potential decreases in liveability in town centres through potentially diluting the protection PPS4 provides for town centre vitality and viability.
- Climate change – A potential positive impact is noted. If local facilities are developed to serve local catchment areas, people will not need to travel day-to-day, probably by car, to access such facilities.
- Employment - The facilitation of small scale economic development without onerous Sequential Assessments could enhance opportunities for local job creation, particularly in rural

areas where small scale local employment opportunities and economic diversification would be encouraged.

- Wealth creation - The reduction in red tape and facilitation of small scale economic development without Sequential Assessments could enhance opportunities for wealth creation and make small business proposals more viable, particularly in rural areas.

The only **disadvantage**, as assessed in the SA, is against the topic of town centres. It is noted that a local policy could potentially undermine the robust protection afforded to town centres, through PPS4's consistent requirement for Sequential Assessments for all non-centre proposals for main town centre uses. The green light for numerous developments for main town centre uses may undermine the vitality and viability of our town centres. Cumulative impacts must also be a consideration.

However, this could be mitigated by careful and considered policy development which ensures that only those developments small enough and least suited to town centres are able to proceed without a Sequential Assessment whilst those which may impact on town centre health must go through the PPS4 requirements. It is noted that policy formulation and testing must consider cumulative impacts. As noted in the SA, care must be taken when setting the threshold to ensure that town centres, which are ultimately the most sustainable location for employment uses are still the focus for medium to large scale employment generating proposals.

An additional risk is that if the local policy is not robust, multiple developments will be permitted which are contrary to national policy, undermining the objectives of PPS4. This could be mitigated by ensuring the correct threshold is set and that the local policy continues to protect the aims of PPS4, but allows a more flexible approach to small scale developments.

Option b) – to 'do nothing' and continue to apply the guidance in PPS4

The alternative option is to continue to rely on national policy and guidance set out in PPS4 and require a Sequential Assessment for all proposals for main town centre uses which are not in a centre, with the exception of extensions to existing retail or leisure uses where the gross floorspace is less than 200m².

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal

The **advantages** of this approach, as assessed in the SA, are that robust protection will be afforded to our town centres, through the consistent requirement for Sequential Assessments for all non-centre proposals for main town centre uses. This option, therefore, scores positively against the 'Town Centres' aspect of the SA. It would in theory ensure all main town centre uses are directed to town centres, aiding their vitality and viability.

However, it is noted in the commentary that such a stringent approach could have unintended resulting consequences, for example an over-proliferation of A5 or small convenience retail uses in town centres effectively 'using up' finite floorspace capacity better suited to comparison retail. This is a very real risk in Kettering town centre, as evidenced in the background work behind the Kettering Town Centre AAP.

The **disadvantages**, as assessed in the SA, are summarised against the relevant SA topic below:

- Accessibility – negative impacts are noted against this option in terms of the requirement for Sequential Assessments potentially preventing the development of local facilities (for example newsagents, small scale local shops, and local takeaways) in areas most accessible to the local catchment area they are intended to serve, i.e. the areas where people live.
- Community - Potential prevention of the development of local facilities, as described above, could be to the detriment of community as such facilities are an important place for social interaction.

- Liveability – an uncertain impact is noted here in that the liveability of housing areas may be negatively impacted through the lack of provision of local facilities. However, this may be offset by improvements in liveability in town centres through the protection PPS4 provides.
- Climate change – a potentially negative impact is noted here in that if local facilities are not developed, people will need to travel more day-to-day, probably by car, to access shops and takeaways.
- Employment and wealth creation - The stringent requirement for Sequential Assessments may fetter small scale economic development, hinder local job creation and make some small scale business proposals unviable in terms of cost and intended catchment customers.

B4. Conclusions

On balance, the SA process indicates that option a), to include a local policy, performs best in terms of sustainability, with numerous positive impacts noted as well as potentially solving the operational difficulties in applying PPS4 which KBC has encountered (as discussed above). Risks and potential negative impacts can be mitigated by careful policy articulation and the setting of a robust threshold. This option is, therefore, taken forward in the Site Specifics LDD as a 'preferred option' put forward for public consideration.

Section C) The location and scale of town centre uses – Scale - Impact Assessments

Introduction

This paper addresses the issue of the PPS4 requirement for an Impact Assessment for main town centre uses outside of existing centres and at what threshold level this requirement should be activated. Consideration is given to whether a local threshold policy is required. The issue in the case of the Impact Assessment is really the opposite to that of the Sequential Assessment issue discussed in section B, above, where the PPS4 requirements were considered to be too onerous. In the case of the Impact Assessment the issue is whether the threshold set in PPS4 affords sufficiently robust protection to the town centres in Kettering Borough, and whether a lower threshold may be necessary to require Impact Assessments for smaller scale developments than those covered by PPS4.

C1. PPS4 requirements

As stated in section B, above, PPS4 in seeking to protect the vitality and viability of town centres, sets out requirements for planning applications involving 'main town centre' uses. One of these requirements is an Impact Assessment, required in certain circumstances to demonstrate that a proposal for out-of-centre development will not have adverse impacts on town centres. PPS4 requires an Impact Assessment for proposals for retail and leisure developments over 2,500m² gross floorspace not in an existing centre and not in accordance with an up to date development plan. Currently, PPS4 makes provision for KBC to request an Impact Assessment for a proposal which falls below this threshold if it is considered it would be likely to have a significant impact on other centres. However, upon publication of the final version of the Site Specifics LDD, if no local floorspace threshold has been set within it, this will cease to be the case meaning retail and leisure proposals outside of town centres up to 2,499m² will not be required to demonstrate their impact on town centres.

This is because where authorities decide not to set out specific floorspace thresholds in LDFs, PPS4 Policy EC14.4 would become the default policy which requires Impact Assessments to be submitted for retail and leisure developments where proposals are:

> over 2,500 sq m gross not in an existing centre and not in accordance with an up to date development plan;

Because an up to date development plan would be in place KBC would no longer be able to apply the following caveat in PPS4:

> In advance of the specification of local thresholds where proposals are below 2,500 and not in an existing centre and not in accordance with an up to date development plan that would be likely to have a significant impact on other centres.

By setting local thresholds LPAs will avoid the situation whereby upon publication of their Development Plan there becomes a local 'policy vacuum' and the PPS4 threshold of 2,500m² becomes the default threshold for requiring Impact Assessments.

In this connection, scope is made in the national guidance for locally set thresholds to be developed. PPS4 and its practice guidance encourage Local Authorities to set locally appropriate thresholds - to "consider the appropriateness and the need for floorspace thresholds". In planning for centres, Policy EC3.1(d) of PPS4 stipulates that, at the local level consideration should be given towards setting thresholds for the scale of edge-of-centre and out-of-centre development which should be subject to an Impact Assessment taking into account the criteria set out in Policy EC16.1 and that local authorities should specify the geographic areas these thresholds will apply to. Policy EC3 states that authorities should set out a strategy for the management and growth of centres, including the following:

- a) **Flexible policies for centres;**
- b) Defining the network and hierarchy of centres;
- c) Define the extent of the centres and primary shopping areas;

d) Consider setting floorspace thresholds for edge-of-centre or out-of-centre proposals that would require an impact assessment;

(emphasis added)

The idea of a local threshold is also in accordance with the emerging Localism agenda which encourages locally distinct approaches to development and policies formulated according to the local context. By developing the option for a policy that supplements PPS4 in certain cases at this stage of the Site Specific Proposals LDD, it enables effective community consultation to be carried out to ensure that any policy deemed necessary reflects local opinion in line with the emerging Localism agenda.

Additionally, the emerging Draft National Planning Policy Framework indicates that LPAs will be required to set local thresholds:

79. When assessing applications for retail and leisure development outside of town centres, which are not in accordance with an up to date Local Plan, local planning authorities should require an impact assessment if the development is over a proportionate, locally set floorspace threshold. If there is no locally set threshold, the default threshold is 2,500 sq m.

C2. Kettering Borough Council's experience of applying PPS4

As stated above, failure to set our own local thresholds would mean sizeable retail and leisure developments of up to 2,499m² outside of existing centres would not have to demonstrate their impacts on town centres. Given the size of some of the Borough's town centres, especially the smaller centres of Burton Latimer, Desborough and Rothwell, out-of-centre development of this scale would be significant additions to the existing floorspace levels. These 3 towns are referred to in the CSS as 'Smaller Towns', are classified as 'localised convenience and service centres' and it is made clear that their town centre's vitality and viability should be protected and enhanced and be a focus for regeneration. In these towns out of town centre retail or leisure development less than the PPS4 default threshold of 2,500m² could have a significant negative impact and undermine the objectives of the CSS.

An analysis of the current floorspace composition of each of the smaller town centres was conducted using information from the Valuation Office Agency. The approximate floorspace of each unit in retail or leisure in each of the town's main town centre streets was obtained in order to find out the total floorspace and average unit size in each town. The results are presented in Table C.1, below:

Town centre	No. units	Total floorspace in town centre use¹	Average (town centre use) unit floorspace
Burton Latimer	37	4,630m ²	125m ²
Desborough	41	3,716m ²	90.6m ²
Rothwell	66	5,465m ²	83m ²

Table C.1: Smaller town centres current floorspace

As can be seen each of the centres has a relatively low amount of town centre floorspace currently in town centre use, reflecting their small scale. Average unit sizes are also low. In particular, Desborough for a town of its size has a very low amount of floorspace and number of units and the need to regenerate the town centre is well documented (for example in the Desborough Town Centre Health Check, KBC 2011). Burton Latimer town centre is also in need of regeneration (Burton Latimer Town Centre Health Check, KBC 2011) and has a fairly low

¹ Includes uses according to Valuation Office Agency website 2010 - shops, hairdressers, cafes, takeaways, restaurants; offices; Excludes pubs, cars sales, workshops, stores etc. Pubs were excluded owing to complexities in the way Valuation Office Agency hold data.

amount of floorspace, especially when it is considered that 1,100m² of the total figure is made up by one supermarket. Rothwell town centre is comparatively thriving (Rothwell Town Centre Health Check, KBC 2011)) and has good vitality and viability which must be protected. The relative scale of a retail or leisure development of up to 2,499m² at each of these towns outside of their centres is easy to see. A development comprising 2,499m² would represent the following percentage of the existing retail floorspace in each town:

- Burton Latimer – 54%
- Desborough – 67%
- Rothwell – 46%

It is clear that out-of-centre developments of this scale would be likely to have negative impacts on the town centres in each town and, therefore, that it would be reasonable to require an Impact Assessment for developments below this threshold.

In terms of the Borough's principle town centre of Kettering, significant negative impacts from edge and out-of-centre retail and leisure developments on the health of Kettering town centre have already been evidenced. The 2011 *North Northamptonshire Retail Capacity Update* (Roger Tym and Partners) reports that the significant mass of such developments, individually and especially cumulatively has been to the detriment of town centre retail and leisure market share, vitality and viability. The study notes that out-of-centre retail parks in North Northamptonshire sell not only bulky goods but also a range of goods more typically found in town centres.

Centre	Name of development	Estimated comparison Floorspace sq.m	Anchor tenants
Kettering	Kettering Retail Park (Venture Retail Park)	6,600	Focus DIY, Currys, Next, Laura Ashley
Kettering	Northfield Avenue Retail Park	10,973	Wickes Extra, Sports Direct, Dreams, Halfords, Carpetright
Kettering	Belgrave Retail Park	2,107*	PC World, Comet, Maplin
Kettering	Stanier Road (<i>planning permission granted, undeveloped</i>)	4,843*	Dunelm Mill (<i>understood confirmed tenant</i>)
Kettering	Meadow Road	2,519	B&Q, former Comet (<i>now vacant</i>)
Kettering	Tesco	5,783	Carina Road, Kettering
Kettering	Aldi	754	Carina Road, Kettering
Kettering	Lidl	846	Northfield Avenue, Kettering
Kettering	Co-Op	1,394	Cunliffe Drive, Kettering

Table C.2: Kettering - out-of-centre retail floorspace. (NB the former Co-op is now an Asda Superstore which sells a range of comparison goods as well as convenience produce).

The report sets out the quantum of principle out of town retail shopping provision in Kettering, reproduced in Table C.2 below. The table shows the significant mass of floorspace which now exists, which includes cumulative growth from incremental development, including single units or extensions which individually fell below the 2,500m² threshold.

As well as the overall significant quantum, it can be seen from the above figures that a number of the developments which collectively have had such a detrimental impact on Kettering town centre, fall around or below the 2,500m² threshold set in PPS4. This is in addition to the problem of incremental developments through extensions to existing operations, single units, subdivision and applications to amend conditions in terms of goods sold. The figures also do not include leisure development, so excludes the impact from the out-of-centre cinema and associated restaurant and drinking establishment offer.

The Roger Tyms study evidences the significant detrimental impact the increase in out-of-centre retail floorspace has had on the health of Kettering town centre. The town centre's market share has fallen over 9% from 52.9% in 2005 to 43.5% whilst the market share of retail parks has increased from 5.9% to 24.9% - nearly a quarter of all expenditure.

As such it is clear that there it is justified and reasonable to consider setting a lower threshold for the requirement of Impact Assessments in Kettering in order to protect town centre vitality and viability and not exacerbate the existing problem of out-of-centre erosion of town centre health.

C3. Options development & Sustainability Appraisal of options

An option is therefore presented in the Site Specific Proposals LDD to require Impact Assessments according to local context and proportionate impact in order to best protect the vitality and viability of our centres. It is suggested that this could be achieved by setting a locally appropriate threshold for different areas, primarily each town in the Borough, each lower than the 2,500m² threshold suggested in PPS4.

There are effectively 2 options in relation to this issue, which are discussed in turn:

Option a) – to include a policy setting local floorspace thresholds for Impact Assessments for proposals involving main town centre uses not in a centre

The policy must capture proposals which may be a threat to the vitality/viability of town centres, whilst ensuring that sustainable economic development is not fettered by overly onerous requirements on applicants. It is important that any local policy strikes the correct balance between augmenting the robustness intended in PPS4 to protect the Borough's town centres by assessing impacts using a threshold more appropriate to our context, and not requiring unnecessary or excessive Impact Assessments. As such the thresholds which are used are very important and it is considered that setting individual thresholds for each town would be the best way of ensuring the most appropriate level is used in each case.

The thresholds to be consulted on were arrived at following analysis of floorspace and units in each town centre (presented in section C2, above) and based on existing evidence gathered including Town Centre Health Checks and consultant reports. The thresholds were drafted in accordance with national guidance including the Practice Guidance on Need, Impact and the Sequential Approach that accompanies PPS4 which specifies that, in setting floorspace thresholds for requiring an Impact Assessment, important considerations are likely to include the scale of known proposals relative to town centres; the existing vitality and viability of town centres; the cumulative effects of recent developments; the likely effects on a town centre strategy and the impact on any other planned investment.

It is important to note at this point that the setting of thresholds requiring Impact Assessments do not imply that any proposals above the threshold are of an inappropriate scale or that the development should not be permitted, but simply that anything at or above these levels would need to demonstrate that there would not be a significant adverse impact on town centres.

Smaller town centres

In assessing thresholds for the smaller town centres, a number of potential levels were tested using the current floorspace characteristics of each centre, based on a percentage of the total existing floorspace in that centre. For example a threshold (or development proposal) of 695m² in Burton Latimer would represent 15% of the total existing floorspace in the town centre. The analysis is presented in Table C.3, below. Thresholds that were considered too low are shown in blue and italics, too high in red and normal font, and the approximate optimum level shown in green and bold font. The level of slightly under 10% was considered the most appropriate to use in each case – that is development proposals outside of centres for floorspace amounting to 10% or more of existing town centre floorspace would be likely to have significant impacts and could reasonably be expected to provide an Impact Assessment.

Town centre	Burton Latimer	Desborough	Rothwell
Total floorspace in town centre use ²	4,630m ²	3,716m ²	5,465m ²
Average (town centre use) unit floorspace	125m ²	90.6m ²	83m ²
Threshold at 5% of total floorspace	<i>232m²</i> <i>(approx 2 units)</i>	<i>186m²</i> <i>(approx 2 units)</i>	<i>273m²</i> <i>(approx 3 units)</i>
Threshold at 10% of total floorspace	463m² (approx 4 units)	370m² (approx 4 units)	546m² (approx 7 units)
Threshold at 15% of total floorspace	695m ² (approx 6 units)	557m ² (approx 6 units)	819m ² (approx 10 units)
Threshold at 20% of total floorspace	926m ² (approx 7-8 units)	743m ² (approx 8 units)	1,093m ² (approx 13 units)

Table C.3: Smaller town centres floorspace potential thresholds

The following thresholds have therefore been drafted which are considered to be a proportionate and appropriate level for each town's context:

- Burton Latimer - 400m²
- Desborough - 300m²
- Rothwell - 500m²

Kettering town centre

For Kettering the threshold has been set at a level considered necessary to assess the potential impact of further out of town developments to prevent the further erosion of trade from the town centre. Analysis of approximate unit sizes of existing out-of-centre developments were used to inform this level, as presented in Table C.4, below. The level has been set at a scale of unit about which KBC would be concerned about potential adverse effects on the town centre – 750m².

Name of development	Total floorspace	No. units	Approximate average / typical floorspace per unit	Would we be concerned about the potential impact on the town centre of retail or leisure use at this scale?
Kettering Venture Park	6,600m ²	6	1,100m ²	Yes
Northfield Avenue Retail Park	10,973m ²	6	1,825m ²	Yes

² Includes uses according to Valuation Office Agency website 2010 - shops, hairdressers, cafes, takeaways, restaurants; offices; Excludes pubs, cars sales, workshops, stores etc. Pubs were excluded owing to complexities in the way Valuation Office Agency hold data.

Belgrave Retail Park	2,107m ²	3	702m ²	Yes
Stanier Close	4,843m ²	1	4,843m ²	Yes
Meadow Road	2519m ²	2	1,259m ²	Yes
Tesco	5,783m ²	1	5,783m ²	Yes
Aldi	754m ²	1	754m ²	Yes
Lidl	846m ²	1	846m ²	Yes
Asda	1,394m ²	1	1,394m ²	Yes

Table C.4: Existing out-of-centre unit floorspace

The Policy would need to be sufficiently robust, for example in considering cumulative impacts and issues or sub-division of units or piecemeal extensions coming forward over time. This would ensure the spirit of the policy is robustly maintained and seek to prevent circumnavigation of the thresholds. The policy would need to capture extensions or variations of conditions which would result in the total gross floorspace of the operation exceeding the floorspace threshold and assessments of impact must assess the impact of the operation as a whole not just the extension.

It may also be necessary for the policy to include a caveat enabling Kettering Borough Council to require an Impact Assessment for developments under the above thresholds, where it was considered that adverse impacts on centres were likely.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal

The **advantages** of this approach, as assessed in the Sustainability Appraisal (SA), are summarised against the relevant SA topic below:

- Community – The policy scored well for its robust protection of the vitality and viability of each town’s centre, each of which is an important focal point for social interaction and community and civic activities.
- Liveability – Policy puts town centres first which should improve their liveability, including through protecting their vibrancy as opposed to encouraging further soulless out of town retail parks.
- Built Environment – An uncertain positive impact is noted in that the threshold should encourage development in town centres which contribute positively to the built environment rather than retail parks which tend to be characterised by unattractive big box sheds.
- Climate change – Policy will encourage retail and leisure development in town centres which are the most central and accessible locations for people to access via a range of means. Developments in town centres can further reduce car journeys by linked trips as several facilities are found in town centres. Out-of-centre retail and leisure developments are car focussed.
- Air and Climate – Policy aims to reduce car journeys and emissions, as described above.
- Town centres - The policy scores well for the robust protection afforded to each of the Borough’s town centres through a locally specific, proportionate threshold requiring developments out of that centre which are likely to have negative impacts on it, to supply an Impact Assessment.

No certain **disadvantages** are assessed in the SA, but uncertain negative impacts are possible against Employment and Wealth Creation. In that the increased requirements for potentially onerous impact assessments could inhibit economic development and opportunities for local job creation. However, it is noted that this could be mitigated by setting a threshold which only applies to retail and leisure uses, not principal employment uses such as offices; and by carefully setting the threshold to ensure that only those developments which may impact on town centres are required to provide impact assessments and that smaller proposals remain unfettered.

Option b) – to ‘do nothing’ and continue to apply the 2,500m² threshold in PPS4 for Impact Assessments

The alternative option is to continue to rely on the national policy and guidance set out in PPS4 and only require an Impact Assessment for proposals for retail and leisure uses which are not in a centre where the gross floorspace is above 2,500m².

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal

In terms of **advantages**, the SA shows that this option would generally have neutral or negative impacts. Potential positive impacts are noted against Employment and Wealth Creation in that not requiring Impact Assessments reduces the burden on applicants and may encourage economic development and job creation; however it is uncertain whether this development would still come forward if Impact Assessments are required. It is also noted that the policy would apply only to retail and leisure uses, not principal employment uses such as offices; and that the policy merely seeks to direct the location of development to central areas and does not seek to prevent economic development in any way. It is also considered that this potential impact could be mitigated by careful setting of the threshold.

Disadvantages of this option are effectively the opposite of the advantages of option a), as outlined above. Negative impacts are noted against:

- Community – Failing to set a local threshold would open the door to out-of-centre retail and leisure developments which would harm the vitality and viability of town centres which are an important focal point for social interaction and community and civic activities.
- Built Environment – Option would encourage more out of town retail parks which tend to be characterised by unattractive big box sheds and contribute negatively to the built environment.
- Climate change & Air and Climate – This option would not encourage development in the most sustainable location – town centres and would instead facilitate out-of-centre retail and leisure developments which are car focussed and increase car journeys and emissions.
- Town centres - Not including a policy would fail to robustly protect town centres, particularly the smaller centres which would be most at risk from significant negative impacts were the PPS4 default threshold of 2,500m² to be applied.

C4. Conclusions

On balance, the SA process indicates that option a), to include a local policy and Impact Assessment threshold, performs best in terms of sustainability, with numerous positive impacts particularly on town centres and associated sustainability benefits such as community, liveability and climate change. The policy would also address the recognised problem of town centre market share loss to out of town retail parks evidenced in Kettering. Risks and potential negative impacts can be mitigated by careful policy articulation and the setting of robust proportionate thresholds appropriate to each centre. This option is, therefore, taken forward in the Site Specifics LDD as a 'preferred option' put forward for public consideration.