

Issue: Main centres – supporting and enhancing their role

The Issues and Options document provides the overall definition and background to this particular issue. The identification of this issue as an essential part of the Core Strategy is justified by the evidence set out in Section 1 and by the emphasis throughout the Community Plan towards improving the availability of and access to a wide range of high quality services.

Desirable outcomes by 2026

The Community Plan sets out clear aims about where the District wants to be in 2015:

- build on the market town initiative to develop partnerships to support community-based activities and facilities
- provision of leisure and recreational facilities to meet the needs of local people
- tourism will support the economy across the whole District
- a range of transport initiatives developed to help people access services and facilities

The emerging Regional Spatial Strategy Revision covering the period to 2026 specifies the following intention for town and local centres in rural areas such as Stratford District:

- Stratford-upon-Avon is the only 'strategic' centre in the District and is the preferred location for major retail, leisure and office developments
- local authorities should take a proactive approach to identifying potential sites for development within strategic centres
- priority should be given to encouraging a wide range of uses in town centres to avoid vulnerability due to excessive reliance on limited functions
- smaller centres are intended to meet day-to-day needs of their communities for convenience shopping and local services

Section 1: Existing evidence base relating to the issue

A considerable amount of information and data is available on this issue. The following table sets out the current situation and the key trends that have a bearing on the formulation of future planning policies that are appropriate for this District.

NB. need to keep updating and checking that evidence input to assessment of options is still valid, eg. that there are no significant changes of circumstances that would lead to a different outcome.

Issue/Challenge	Current State	Trends	Source of Information
Supporting and enhancing the role of main centres	Stratford-upon-Avon <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • main retail and commercial centre in District. • good quality retail offer for size of town. • wide range of other commercial and leisure uses provided. • high rents mean that independent traders and 'local' businesses are squeezed out of prime locations. 	Stratford-upon-Avon <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing competition from larger centres outside District and other forms of retailing. • conversely, increasing consumer spending and growth in leisure shopping (although recent downturn in economy) • Increasing pressure on environment due to volume of visitors and traffic. 	Stratford-upon-Avon <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bert Nicholson & Associates Health Check 2003 • Colliers CRE Retail Study 1997 and 2003 Update • Urban Design Framework 2007 • Colliers CRE Retail Study 2008
	Main Rural Centres <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scale and range of retail and commercial offer varies between centres • consequently, they each play differing roles for their catchment population. • parts of each centre are in need of some environmental improvement and investment. • benefit from free/cheap parking, attractive local traders and generally pleasant environment. 	Main Rural Centres <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing competition from larger centres. • degree of stagnation due to limited investment and lack of new businesses locating there. • relationship to local catchments is weakening. • leakage of spending by their own population to larger centres. 	Main Rural Centres <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • various Health Checks, Vision Statements and Parish/Town Plans. • Colliers CRE Retail Study 2008

The existing evidence base identifies some clear issues to be addressed. These include the need to:

- Extend the comparison retail offer in Stratford-upon-Avon to bolster its role as a strategic town centre
- Improve the environment of all town and comparable centres in the District to make them more attractive to shoppers and other visitors
- Provide a mid-range foodstore in Alcester, Shipston and Southam.

These issues when addressed successfully will help to achieve the desired aims of the Community Plan.

Section 2: Analysis of public consultation on the Issues and Options stage

A wide range of representations were received on specific questions relating to issues concerning the local economy.

Should there be more retail development in Stratford-upon-Avon town centre?

Answer to parent question	Comments made on question	Analysis of response
<p>Of those who expressed an opinion:</p> <p>21% said yes</p> <p>79% said no</p>	<p>Trust believes there is a need for additional provision in town centre. Convenience and comparison retail floorspace could be located within Rother Triangle and as part of redevelopment of Canal Quarter.</p> <p>The Trust, with other landowners and interested parties, is assessing development proposals for a mixed use development, including retail floorspace on the Rother Triangle which comprises land and buildings bounded by Rother Street, Greenhill Street and Grove Road. The Trust would like to see the principle of these proposals supported by the Core Strategy.</p> <p>What does the retail assessment suggest?</p> <p>Complex question which needs to be addressed by detailed retail analysis and impact assessment. It would only drive away existing businesses.</p> <p>facilities for small shops and enterprises at lower rent. Do not assume retailing in Stratford town is a given.</p> <p>see question 36</p> <p>Need proper shops not gift and tourist shops.</p>	<p>There was limited support for further retail development in the town centre. However, RSS identifies Stratford-upon-Avon as a Strategic Centre where considerable shopping development should take place.</p> <p>A range of types of provision were suggested by those who were supportive, including</p>

	<p>Retail space should available in all towns with population over 3,000. No, unless this leads to pressure for more out-of-town developments This has to be in the town centre and not on the edge of the town. If rents were lower they would get jobs in Stratford and terrible parking, park and ride not used. Just improve what is currently there. Medium-sized supermarket in SUA town centre - experience in Shipston and Southam where out-of-centre supermarkets hae been refused shows more choice form 2 smaller town centre supermarkets. Retail floor space should be confined to existing town centre. Local facilities should be provided south of the river- perhaps centre incorporating park and ride, food retail, doctors, community space. Improve what we have at present.Disagree with the results of health check-would anyone consider Bell Court a high quality environment. Economic development should occur where it is most suited. In existing retail places which are currently empty. Local independent shops giving Stratford its own identity. There are too many empty properties already-due to no reasonable priced parking facilities close to shops and rent/rates charges too high. Except should create affordable units for small businesses in Town Square. No there's enough, too many gift shops. No because there are vacant premises. There is plenty of space. Limit number of tatty shops. Reduce council tax on traditional small shops such as grocers, greengrocers, hardware shops etc. Encourage use of available units with cheaper tax and enhancement of sites. Already empty units. Butchers, bakers and groceries - centred in town as of old. Only for small ones at reduced rate Subject to retail assessment to identify need and check would not adversely impact other centres. More comparison and convenience floorspace is required in and around town centre to ensure Stratford maintains its role as a strategic centre in the face of competition from destinations outside the district. Section 5.1 of UDF identified urgent need to broaden retail sector in SUA, in particular provide large units for national multiple retailers, as well as deveopment of niche fashion specialist non-food outlets. Reduce the rates and rents to encourage a greater diversity of business. It has been sad to see local family businesses go and small businesses lasting short times due to high costs. Too congested. Encourage distinctive shops to stop SUA becoming a clone town. Supermarket south of the river (Stratford) Make current vacant properties more viable for new businesses. Stratford can't support its current retail outlets, so why have more? new supermarket/ shops south of river in SUA. Cannot utilise existing, and more will be soon completed on Birmingham Road. town square shouyld be re-developed as a 2-storey retail centre. Need for quality and variety, not quantity. There is a need for a new District wide shopping study to form part of the Evidence Base for the Core</p>	<p>convenience, comparison and specialist/independent outlets.</p> <p>There were three mentions in support of providing retail facilities to meet the needs of the town's residents who live south of the river.</p>
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	<p>Strategy. This would allow the council to quantify requirements for new retail space and guide future retail development. The 2003 update by Colliers CRE to the 1997 retail study is too out-of-date to rely on.</p> <p>Small local businesses selling local goods with parking.</p> <p>Towns and rural centres need regeneration funding and investment in culture, recreation, environmental improvements and public transport. Need to balance economic benefits of tourist attractions in rural areas with disadvantages such as traffic generation - better to encourage longer stays at existing attractions than create new attractions.</p> <p>This is for residents of Stratford.</p>	
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Should there be more retail development in the larger rural centres?

Answer to parent Question	Comments made on question	Analysis of response
<p>Of those who expressed an opinion:</p> <p>46% said yes</p> <p>54% said no</p>	<p>Bidford on Avon with a population in excess of 5000 a general spread of a variety of further retail development would be welcomed.</p> <p>Complex question which needs to be addressed by detailed retail analysis and impact assessment. It will depend on the needs of each settlement.</p> <p>Alcester town square redevelopment.</p> <p>see question 36</p> <p>Southam- butchers, greengrocers and local shops, not supermarkets.</p> <p>Alcester - town centre shops with long stay car park.</p> <p>Permanate market in Henley.</p> <p>No views.</p> <p>Alcester centre needs shops and parking. Long stay parking away from centre.</p> <p>It should be Passed on the existing shops which should be supported to expand the goods they have.</p> <p>Alcester - more town centre food store floorspace. Shipston - enlarge slightly the two town centre supermarkets. Southam - regenerate main range of shops north of library and former court site with conservation frontages.</p> <p>Alcester-potentially extending the local industrial estate.</p> <p>Larger rural centres should be allowed further retail if the demand exists and it will not affect</p>	<p>There were mixed opinions about this issue, but clearly a body of support for further retail development. The Retail Study has recommended that a large foodstore be provided in each of Alcester, Shipston and Southam to help retain spending and support their roles.</p> <p>However, there were insufficient responses for a clear pattern to emerge as to</p>

	<p>character. Southam needs a large general store such as Argos or Asda. Good parish plan should address the issue. Re-instatement of village shops and post offices through local community. If rural centres have enlarges population then retail development (not out of town supermarkets) will have to be considered. E.g. Quinton Out-of-twon areas should have decent quality shops. Any settlement over 1,500 people should have a shop. SUA South of the River. Supermarket in Southam. Each centre should state its own requirements and be listened to and acted upon Enhanced convenience retail in larger settlements which are currently poorly served in order to reduce need to travel. Shipston and Wellesbourne. Not major chains but more interesting and unusual retail. Alcester centres needs bigger units in town centre. Out of town, all day parking, with restricted-stay parking in centre. Local shops are not successful. If locals want it. More commercially viable levels of floor space (over 1000msq) in main rural centres. High tech clusters in rural centres. Larger rural areas should be consulted. Market towns should be more self-sufficient to reduce shopping journeys by car. Supermarket south of SUA to ease traffic. Wide variety of high street shops in Wellesbourne.</p>	<p>whether any specific provision should be made in a particular centre.</p>
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Should measures be taken to support the function of town and rural centres?

Answer to parent Question	Comments made on question	Analysis of response
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<p>Of those who expressed an opinion:</p> <p>58% said yes</p> <p>42% said no</p>	<p>Bidford on Avon. A high % of the working population work more than 10 miles away. More employment opportunities are required.</p> <p>Potential for mixed use development to strengthen the retail and commercial sector for the districts centres.</p> <p>There has been a loss of services in Alcester. Lack of growth has affected the town's prosperity to such an extent that even the CPRE has highlighted the growth in charity shops in the town. Also new housing to compensate for current moritorium.</p> <p>Address run-down appearance of SUA - narrow uneven pavements, 'every town' shopfronts etc. The role and function of the town urban centres can be enhanced through mixed use schemes</p> <p>Village shops should be helped and encouraged.</p> <p>encourage business start ups particularly retail. Transport service to avoid use of the car see question 36</p> <p>Protect post offices at Harbury and Bishops Itchington.</p> <p>Aclester - adequate car parking, funded community centre, sensible and realistic planning considerations for isted buildings.</p> <p>Support parish councils and provide cinema facilities.</p> <p>No views.</p> <p>Adequate parking. Funded community centre. Sensible protection of listed buildings.</p> <p>All local centres struggle to compete which large supermarkets and out of town shopping. These should be reinvested.</p> <p>Assistnat in site assembly on small scale for town centres as detailed in q25. Assist Somerfiled in Shipston to exapnd in frontage of historic buildings. Help advance plan for redevelopment of library and former court site in Southam.</p> <p>Bus rates are forcing small bus to close in Alcester niid to lobby government to allow this to be set locally.</p> <p>Improve environmental attraction - pavements, mixed mode surfaces, lighting, quality materials etc.</p> <p>Resist new supermarket development and encourage local retailers and new start-ups.</p> <p>Rural villages need proper meeeting places.</p> <p>Maintenance of roads, street lighting and drug litter.</p> <p>Ensure mix of different goods in shopping centres.</p> <p>See Q24.</p> <p>Pedestrianisation of SUA centre. Encourage use of bicycles such as provision to lock cycles safely.</p> <p>Encourage walking to school.</p> <p>Greater police presence.</p> <p>Get rid of estate agents etc. and return them to large or small market towns.</p> <p>No consideration has been given to community in any of the latest large housing developments, this needs to be changed and addressed in the future.</p> <p>Promote the provision of essential infrastructure such as health facilities to serve rural settlements.</p> <p>providing new employment land on the periphery of the town may provide the catalyst for redevelopment of existing outdated employment areas to the general enhancement of the town</p> <p>Innovative development of community buildings - village hall, shop, post office, sports facilities all</p>	<p>A wide range of suggestions were made as to what measures should be taken.</p> <p>However, there is no clear pattern by which to identify clear courses of action to take.</p>
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	<p>under one roof for example Better preservation of established conservation areas. Out-of-towncentre all day parking for workers. Funding of community buildings and organisations. Greater support for post offices, especially in the villages. Car parking, free and attractive and landscaped with trees. Also toilets. All rural centres need new and young people but housing and jobs must be available. villages. Lower rates, improved public transport and parking, support local tourism. Look at lessons learnt from the Market Town initiatives.</p>	
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Section 3: Identification and assessment of Options relating to the main commercial centres

The evidence base, together with representations received on the above questions, indicate that there are three distinctive, realistic and strategic options that should be considered in relation to planning for the future of the District’s main centres. These are:

- Option 1: Maintaining the existing situation in terms of retail provision and other facilities in the main centres
- Option 2: Encouraging the provision of further retail and other facilities only in Stratford-upon-Avon town centre
- Option 3: Encouraging the provision of further retail and other facilities in all the main centres in the District

The following symbols have been used to assess each factor against the options:

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| + positive impact | ++ more positive compared with a positive impact for other options |
| - negative impact | -- more negative compared with a negative impact for other options |
| o neutral impact | / not applicable |

Factors	Option 1 Maintaining existing level of provision	Option 2 Encouraging provision in Stratford town centre only	Option 3 Encouraging provision in all main centres	Commentary
Consistency with				PPS6 looks to local authorities to promote and manage

national policy	-	+	+	change in town centres. A hierarchy of centres should be defined and each should play its appropriate role to meet the needs of their catchments.
Consistency with regional policy	-	+	+	Existing RSS and emerging revision both identify a hierarchy of settlements with Stratford-upon-Avon being the only 'strategic centre' in the District. As such it should be the focus of a significant amount of additional retail and office development. Smaller centres should focus on meeting local needs for shopping and services.
Consistency with Community Plan and Corporate Strategy	o	+	+	Community Plan looks to build on the market towns initiative to support the commercial and community functions of centres. One of the aims of the Corporate Strategy is to develop sustainable communities by addressing needs and improving provision of and access to facilities. Review of the Corporate Strategy seeks the delivery of action plans to achieve market town area visions.
Consistency with response to Issues & Options consultation document	+	-	o	There was a strong measure of support for improving the main commercial centres of the District. However, the level of support specifically towards more retail provision is not so strong, especially in Stratford-upon-Avon.
Participation – provide scope to contribute to decision-making	/	/	/	
Crime – reduce crime/anti-social behaviour and fear of crime	/	/	/	
Education – provide facilities for all stages of life	o	+	++	An improvement to education facilities is a component part of bolstering the role of centres.

Health – provide facilities and promote healthy lifestyles	o	+	++	An improvement to health facilities is a component part of bolstering the role of centres.
Poverty – tackle disadvantage	o	+	++	An improvement to facilities generally would help to support those who are disadvantaged.
Access – improve services and opportunities	-	+	++	Provision of improved services in all the main centres in District will increase access.
Culture & recreation – increase participation	-	+	++	An improvement to leisure facilities is a component part of bolstering the role of centres.
Housing – provide good quality and affordable homes	/	/	/	
People – balance needs of residents and visitors	o	+	++	Provision of improved services in all the main centres in District will benefit local people and visitors.
Historic and cultural heritage – preserve and manage assets	o	+	++	Improving facilities can increase confidence to invest in the maintenance of historic buildings and spaces in main centres but care needs to be taken to manage the impact of change on such assets.
Landscape and townscape – maintain character and appearance	o	o	o	Provision of additional facilities need not have an impact on such features although care will have to be taken.
Environmental assets – preserve natural	o	o	o	Provision of additional facilities need not have an impact on such features although care will have to be taken.

and built features				
Biodiversity – protect and enhance species and habitats	o	o	o	Provision of additional facilities need not have an impact on such features although care will have to be taken.
Land use – optimise use of brownfield land	o	+	+	Emphasis on providing additional and improved facilities in main centres should provide scope to use brownfield sites.
Urban development – achieve high quality environments	o	o	o	
Stewardship – encourage local responsibility	/	/	/	
Pollution - minimise air, water and soil pollution	o	o	o	
Climate change – minimise District’s contribution	o	+	++	Providing improved facilities in all main centres should help to reduce the need to travel.
Flood risk – avoid increasing risk	o	o	o	
Energy – increase efficiency and use of renewable sources	o	o	o	
Conservation – reduce consumption of natural resources	o	o	o	

Standards – improve design and construction of buildings	o	o	o	
Planning – promote sustainable locations and effective use of infrastructure	o	++	+	Stratford-upon-Avon is the most sustainable and accessible centre in the District.
Transport – encourage modal shift from use of private car	o	+	+	Improved facilities in all main centres should give more scope to walk, cycle and use public transport.
Waste – reduce consumption and increase re-use and recycling	/	/	/	
Local sourcing – encourage local supply of goods and materials	/	/	/	
Growth – achieve sustainable economic growth	-	+	++	Providing scope for business and commercial activity in all main centres will help to sustain their role.
Employment – provide opportunities suited to workforce	o	+	++	Providing scope for business and commercial activity in all main centres will help to increase number of local jobs.
Investment – assist prosperity	-	+	++	Providing scope for business and commercial activity in all main centres will help them to prosper.

Skills – engage in learning and skills development	/	/	/	
Innovation – encourage culture of enterprise	-	+	++	Providing scope for business and commercial activity in all main centres will help to encourage enterprise.
Technology – promote new technologies	/	/	/	
Responsibility – involve local organisations and agencies	/	/	/	
Tourism – enhance visitor experience	o	o	+	Provision of improved services in all the main centres in District will help benefit visitors.

Section 4: Identification of Preferred Option

Based on the above assessment, it is apparent that Option 3 makes a more positive contribution towards the objective of achieving sustainable development given the circumstances faced by Stratford District.

It is clear that merely maintaining the existing level of shops, services and commercial activity in the main centres of the District would result in a relative decline and gradual deterioration in their role and value. Although Stratford-upon-Avon is clearly the largest centre in the District and, in accordance with strategic policy, should be the focus of major commercial development, there would be clear advantages in also providing scope for the rural centres to expand their role in order to benefit local people and businesses.

Reasons for supporting Option 3

- consistent with national and regional policy
- consistent with Community Plan and Corporate Strategy
- some level of support expressed in consultation process (although limited support in relation to Stratford-upon-Avon)
- improvement in provision of facilities in centres would assist quality of life and opportunities for local people
- on balance, such improvements should help to maintain character of centres rather than be a threat
- would help to reduce the need to travel and make a positive contribution towards managing climate change
- would be the most sustainable approach by providing scope for all the larger centres to experience managed growth
- provides scope for providing new employment opportunities
- provides scope for investment and innovation by businesses
- would help to spread the benefits of tourism across the District

Reasons for rejecting Option 1

- not consistent with overall objective of national and regional policy
- would lead to relative decline in role of centres and reduce their value to local people
- would lead to relative decline in access to local facilities
- would increase the need to travel in order to gain access to greater range of facilities

Reasons for rejecting Option 2

- would restrict the role of rural centres in meeting the needs of local people