
TESS SQUARE, MARNHULL



RETAIL SEQUENTIAL TEST STATEMENT

September 2024

Version: 2

Version Control	Name	Date
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Executive Summary

This Retail Sequential Test (RST) statement supports a planning appeal for full compliance of a hybrid application namely a mixed-use development comprising a food store, office space, café, and mixed-use space and 2x 2-bed flats, the demolition of redundant agricultural sheds, as well as parking provision for St. Gregory's Church and St Gregory's Primary School alongside associated landscaping, engineering operations, access arrangements.

The Test Square parcel is located on the western side of Church Lane, situated between the two conservation areas in Marnhull. The appeal site adjoins the settlement boundary of Marnhull, there are a number of listed buildings proximate to the appeal site. The site is otherwise unencumbered by planning and environmental designations.

Guided by the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and relevant case law, this assessment seeks to identify and assess the availability of alternative premises and alternative sites and premises with the potential to accommodate the proposed quantum of floorspace, looking first at:

- Town centre locations, followed by;
- Edge-of-centre locations, and only then at; and
- Out-of-centre locations.

The proposal has been expressly designed to meet the needs of Marnhull one of largest villages in North Dorset. The proposal will enhance the everyday facilities to the expanding village of Marnhull, and will reduce the need to for travel aiding climate change. aA retail impact assessment is not required.

Potential sites have been identified from various sources, including:

- Desktop and walkover survey;
- Survey of vacant premises and sites being actively marketed through commercial agents;
- Reports (press and Council) of under-utilised sites;
- The Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment;
- The Council's Brownfield register;
- Extant planning permissions and live applications;
- Allocations in the Development Plan; and
- A review of emerging Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policies.

Site suitability and availability have been given due consideration. With respect to suitability, this takes account of physical (such as size and topography), environmental (such as flood risk) and planning constraints. Availability relates to ownership (and degree of fragmentation), the presence of a willing and able vendor (or otherwise), terms and market viability.

The assessment identified 60 potential premises and sites worthy of more detailed investigation; albeit each was dismissed on the basis of suitability and / or availability. As such, there are considered to be no sequentially preferable sites that could reasonably accommodate the proposed development.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Retail Sequential Test (RST) statement has been prepared on behalf of Mr Paul Crocker (“the appellant”) to assess the implications of the proposed food retail store and smaller town centre uses which were proposed as part of the planning application ref: P/OUT/2023/02644 consisting of:

‘Hybrid planning application consisting of:

A full planning application for a mixed-use development comprising a food store, office space, café, and mixed-use space for E class uses (e.g. estate agents, hairdresser, funeral care, dentist, vet), and 2x 2-bed flats. Demolition of redundant agricultural sheds. Plus, a new parking area with 30 parking spaces for St. Gregory’s Church and St Gregory’s Primary School. Associated landscaping and engineering operations, access arrangements, on land west of Church Hill, Marnhull.’

Outline planning application with all matters reserved except for access for up to 120 dwellings on land off Butts Close and Schoolhouse Lane, Marnhull’

- 1.2 This planning application was refused on 16th July 2024. Reason for refusal no. 2 of the decision notice stated:

‘2.The proposed development includes main town centre uses (use class E) measuring 2,356 sqm which is not considered to be small scale rural development contrary to Policies 2, 11 and 12 of the adopted North Dorset Local Plan Part 1, and paragraphs 90 and 91 of the National Planning Policy Framework.’

- 1.3 The accompanying case officer report refers to Policy 12 (Retail, Leisure and Other Commercial Developments) of the North Dorset Local plan which requires applications to be supported by a Retail Sequential Test. The Council, therefore, consider the following:

‘Part of the proposal comprises the creation of a new centre, consisting of a convenience food store (including post office and in-store café), and units for E class uses (stated to be estate agent, hairdresser, funeral care, dentist and vet, and office units). Together the floor area for these total 2,356sqm. Cumulatively, and in some cases individually, these uses are ‘main town uses’. It is considered that this constitutes a significant development that would have a significant impact on this rural village Marnhull.’

- 1.4 The northern parcel is located outside of but adjacent to the settlement boundary of the village of Marnhull. The parcel is situated to the west of Church Hill. This parcel is relatively level and includes the existing doctors surgery, pharmacy and car park accessed off Church Hill. The doctors surgery and pharmacy are clearly community facilities. When they were granted permission in 2002 they were (and still are) on land outside of the settlement boundary (the map was adopted Jan 2003). The appeal proposal is to provide additional local services and community facilities to the south and west of the existing doctors/pharmacy building, to primarily serve the existing and future residents (from consented housing developments which are being built out) of Marnhull which will reduce the need of these residents to travel beyond Marnhull. Therefore, this proposal will reduce emissions and be a sustainable form of development. Marnhull is a large village in North Dorset. The closest town centre is Sturminster Newton, followed by Gillingham, Shaftsbury and finally Blandford.
- 1.5 This Sequential Test is submitted without prejudice; and in the alternative should the Inspectorate opine that the proposed development goes beyond what might reasonably be regarded as small-scale development which is to serve the existing and future residents of Marnhull.
- 1.6 The figure below shows the location Marnhull in relation to the surrounding settlements:



Figure 1: Site Location relative to surrounding settlements

- 1.7 This Section provides an introduction, while Section 2 describes the site and its surroundings. Section 3 sets out the relevant retail planning policy context against which the application falls to be considered against. Section 4 outlines the parameters of the sequential test, whilst Section 5 provides details of its methodology. Section 6 assesses the proposal against the sequential test. Finally, our conclusions are provided at Section 7.

2. Relevant Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

- 2.1 The Government published the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in December 2023. The NPPF sets out the overarching policy priorities for the planning system, against which local plans will be prepared and decisions made on planning applications. The policies in the revised NPPF are material considerations when determining planning applications.
- 2.2 At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking. For decision taking, this means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, granting planning permission unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework as a whole.
- 2.3 The NPPF makes clear that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Paragraph 9 of the NPPF sets out to facilitate sustainable development, planning policies and 'decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area'. Pursuing sustainable development includes making it easier for jobs to be created in cities, towns and villages, and improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure.
- 2.4 The NPPF covers several topic areas. Those that are of most relevance to the proposed development include: building a strong, competitive economy; ensuring the vitality of town centres; promoting healthy and safe communities; and making effective use of land.
- 2.5 Paragraph 85 of the NPPF demonstrates the government's commitment building a strong and competitive economy through the planning system in order to create jobs and prosperity, stating that '*decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development*'. The draft NPPF was published for consultation on 30th July 2024 with the consultation closing on 24th September 2024 that further demonstrates and reaffirms the government's commitment building a strong and competitive economy through the planning system in order to create jobs and prosperity.
- 2.6 Paragraph 86 recognises the need for flexibility when it comes to seizing opportunities for economic growth, requiring councils to '*be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan... and enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances*'.

- 2.7 The Government's approach to planning for retail development is set out in Section 7 of the NPPF, entitled 'Ensuring the vitality of town centres'. Paragraphs 90 – 95 of the NPPF seek to ensure the vitality of town centres, with paragraph 91 setting out the requirement for a sequential approach to locating town centre uses which are for 'main town centre uses which are neither in an existing centre nor in accordance with an up-to-date plan'.
- 2.8 Paragraph 91 continues stating that 'Main town centre uses should be located in town centres, then in edge of centre locations; and only if suitable sites are not available (or expected to become available within a reasonable period) should out of centre sites be considered'.
- 2.9 Paragraph 92 outlines that 'when considering edge or out-of-centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites that are well connected to the town centre. Both applicants and councils should demonstrate flexibility on issues such as format and scale, in order that opportunities for using suitable town centre and edge-of-centre sites are fully explored'.
- 2.10 Paragraph 94 explains that when assessing planning applications for retail development that are outside of town centres, which are not in accordance with an up-to-date local plan, councils should require an impact assessment if the development is over a proportionate, locally set floor space threshold (if there is no locally set threshold, the default threshold is 2,500sqm of gross floorspace).
- 2.11 The Development Plan does not impose a threshold and it is noteworthy that the proposed development would not exceed the default floor space threshold set out in the NPPF. As such, a full retail impact assessment is not required.
- 2.12 Paragraph 95 details that where an application 'fails to satisfy the sequential test or is likely to have significant adverse impact on one or more of the considerations in paragraph 94, it should be refused'.
- 2.13 The appellant is of the opinion that the proposal is to provide retail facilities which will serve the existing and future occupants of Marnhull which means locationally the proposal needs to be in Marnhull. Therefore, to provide the proposed retail facilities within one of the town centres in North Dorset would not provide locational link with Marnhull and would not fulfil the purpose of this application which is to create a village centre.
- 2.14 Paragraphs 96 and 97 of the NPPF encourage councils to plan positively for the provision of community facilities, including shops, and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments.
- 2.15 Of relevance to this guidance is the glossary which explains what is covered within the definition of 'Town centre' within Annex 2: Glossary:

'Town centre: Area defined on the local authority's policies map, including the primary shopping area and areas predominantly occupied by main town centre uses within or adjacent to the primary shopping area. References to town centres or centres apply to city centres, town centres, district centres and local centres but exclude small parades of shops of purely neighbourhood significance. Unless they are identified as centres in the development plan, existing out-of-centre developments, comprising or including main town centre uses, do not constitute town centres.'

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

2.16 National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) offers further guidance on the sequential test:

How should the sequential test be used in decision-making?

It is for the applicant to demonstrate compliance with the sequential test (and failure to undertake a sequential assessment could in itself constitute a reason for refusing permission). Wherever possible, the local planning authority is expected to support the applicant in undertaking the sequential test, including sharing any relevant information. The application of the test will need to be proportionate and appropriate for the given proposal. Where appropriate, the potential suitability of alternative sites will need to be discussed between the developer and local planning authority at the earliest opportunity. In this instance officers requested a report which assessed the need for the retail and commercial element of the proposal at the point of registration. A Retail Technical Note by Lichfield's was submitted in support of the application. There was no request for a Retail Sequential Test at the point of registration.

The checklist below sets out the considerations that should be taken into account in determining whether a proposal complies with the sequential test:

- *with due regard to the requirement to demonstrate flexibility, has the suitability of more central sites to accommodate the proposal been considered? Where the proposal would be located in an edge of centre or out of centre location, preference should be given to accessible sites that are well connected to the town centre. It is important to set out any associated reasoning clearly.*
- *is there scope for flexibility in the format and/or scale of the proposal? It is not necessary to demonstrate that a potential town centre or edge of centre site can accommodate precisely the scale and form of development being proposed, but rather to consider what contribution more central sites are able to make individually to accommodate the proposal.*
- *if there are no suitable sequentially preferable locations, the sequential test is passed.*

In line with paragraph 86 of the National Planning Policy Framework, only if suitable sites in town centre or edge of centre locations are not available (or expected to become available

within a reasonable period) should out of centre sites be considered. When considering what a reasonable period is for this purpose, the scale and complexity of the proposed scheme and of potentially suitable town or edge of centre sites should be taken into account.

Paragraph: 011 Reference ID: 2b-011-20190722

Revision date: 22 07 2019

How should locational requirements be considered in the sequential test?

Use of the sequential test should recognise that certain main town centre uses have particular market and locational requirements which mean that they may only be accommodated in specific locations. Robust justification will need to be provided where this is the case, and land ownership does not provide such a justification.

Paragraph: 012 Reference ID: 2b-012-20190722

Revision date: 22 07 2019

Development Plan

2.17 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the adopted Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance, the Development Plan comprises:

- North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 (2016);
- Saves Policies of the North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan 1st revision (2003); and
- Made Neighbourhood Plans – Blandford, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton.

North Dorset Local Plan Part 1

2.18 Policy 1, titled 'Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development', echoes the NPPF's presumption in favour. This confirms the Council's commitment to working positively and proactively to approve proposals wherever possible, to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental facets of the area. This policy also clarifies:

Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether: a any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or b specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.

2.19 Policy 11, titled 'The Economy', States that Economic development in the countryside (including at Stalbridge and the District's villages) will be supported by:

d- enabling rural communities to plan to meet their own local needs, particularly through neighbourhood planning; and

e- countryside policies (Policies 29 to 32) which may permit: the re-use of existing buildings; the retention and small-scale expansion of existing employment sites; the provision of certain forms of tourist accommodation; and equine-related developments.

2.20 It is considered in this case that the proposal will meet the local needs of Marnhull, which is one of the biggest villages in North Dorset. Therefore, complying with part d of Policy 11.

2.21 Policy 11 continues by saying that mixed-use sites will be considered at edge-of-town-centre locations, with a focus on offices and non-B class employment uses; while town centres will be the main focus for retail, leisure and other commercial activities in line with Policy 12.

2.22 Policy 12, titled 'Retail, Leisure and Other Commercial Developments', sets out for the 'purposes of considering any proposal for retail and other main town centre uses in North Dorset Blandford Forum, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton are designated as town centres.'

2.23 Policy 12 continues, clarifying that:

'The Council will seek to meet the identified needs for main town centre uses by...

f permitting retail and other main town centre uses in town centres and on sites identified for mixed-use regeneration on the edge of Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton town centres, as identified in Policy 11 – The Economy and Policies 17 to 19.'

2.24 Policy 12 goes on and sets out that:

'Proposals for retail and other main town centre uses that are not in an existing town centre and are not in accordance with the development plan will only be permitted if:

h they satisfy the 'sequential test' in national policy; and

i they will not have a significant adverse impact on existing, committed and planned public and private investment in a centre or centres in the catchment area of the proposal; and

j they will not have a significant adverse impact on town centre vitality and viability.'

2.25 Policy 16 titled 'Blandford' sets out the Council's development strategy for the town in supporting economic development the policy states:

*In the period up to 2031, additional retail floorspace will be provided through:
n the extension of the existing Tesco supermarket at Stour Park; and
o the provision of a new supermarket off Shaftesbury Lane.*

Town centre regeneration will embrace a range of town centre uses, not only retail and commercial but community and leisure as well as residential uses, and will be encouraged. An important element of town centre regeneration will be land to the south of East Street, including land around the existing retail store. On appropriate sites, all development and redevelopment schemes which support town centre regeneration, such as the extension of existing retail units south of Market Place and East Street, will be viewed positively within the recognised constraints of heritage and flooding considerations. The emerging neighbourhood plan for Blandford will have a key role to play in identifying regeneration opportunities in the town

- 2.26 Policy 17 titled 'Gillingham' sets out the Council's development strategy for the town in supporting economic development the policy states:

*In the period up to 2031, additional retail floorspace will be brought forward:
o with a focus on comparison retailing as part of the mixed-use regeneration of the Station Road Area; and
p as local shops forming an integral part of the local centre to serve the SSA to the south of the town, in accordance with Policy 21.*

The main focus for additional retail provision and other town centre uses will be land within the existing Town Centre and land proposed for mixed use regeneration at Station Road.

- 2.25 Policy 18, titled 'Shaftesbury', sets out the Council's development strategy for the town in supporting economic development the policy states:

*i- Employment needs of the town for the period up to 2031 will be met through: i the development of land to the south of the A30; and
j the development of vacant sites on existing industrial estates; and
k the retention of existing employment sites.*

Mixed-use regeneration will be encouraged on land within and to the east of the existing town centre. Within the town's settlement boundary, opportunities for tourist-related development that is sensitive to the landscape and historic setting of the town will be considered favourably.

- 2.26 Policy 19 titled 'Sturminster Newton' sets out the Council's development strategy for the town in supporting economic development the policy states:

The main focus for additional retail provision and other town centre uses will be the existing town centre and the redevelopment of the Station Road area. Any scheme for the Station Road area should be designed in accordance with the design and development brief for the area.

To note in the preamble to this policy is at 8.132 Sturminster Newton comprises the main town of Sturminster on the northern side of the River Stour and the smaller village of Newton to the south. The settlement, together with Stalbridge and Marnhull, provide services to the rural west of the District.

Material Considerations

Blandford + Neighbourhood Plan 2011-2033

2.27 The Blandford + Neighbourhood Plan was made in October 2021.

2.28 The Neighbourhood Plan under Policy B8 entitled 'Blandford Forum Town Centre' states:

'Within the Primary Shopping Area, proposals for new Retail floorspace will be supported. Proposals for new E(c) Financial Services, E(g)(i) Offices, C3 Residential and E(e) and F.1 Community Uses on the upper floors of buildings that contribute to the vibrancy and vitality of the town will be supported. Loss of established ground floor Retail floorspace or of an active frontage as a result of a change of use will be resisted.'

2.29 Policy B8 proceeds and outlines that inter alia 'All proposals for development, including a change of use, must preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.'

Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan (2018)

2.30 The Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan was made in July 2018.

2.31 The Neighbourhood Plan states under Policy 7 that 'Main town centre uses, including new retail outlets, offices, leisure facilities and largescale tourist accommodation (such as a hotel), will be supported in the Town Centre area (as defined in Figure 8.1).'

2.32 Policy 7 continues and states that:

'Retail uses should be focused along the primary shopping frontages (as defined in Figure 8.1). The loss of retail outlets to residential use on the ground floor in areas of primary and secondary shopping frontages will be resisted.'

2.33 This neighbourhood plan considers town centre redevelopment opportunities. Paragraphs 8.10 to 8.12 sets out how the development of this area 'Station Road' needs to be considered 'comprehensively'.

Policy 8 Station Road Mixed Use Area states that:

Development in this area should be compatible with the main aims for its mixed use regeneration, i.e.:

a) To provide for the comprehensive mixed use redevelopment of underutilised land in the area, to comprise a mix of town centre uses including retail units, cafés / restaurants, a new, modern hotel (if there is sufficient developer interest), office space, land for informal recreation including an equipped play area and around 200 new homes.

b) To provide an improved transport hub at the station in line with Policy 10.

c) To rationalise and improve the overall car parking provision within and adjoining the town centre in line with Policy 11.

d) To improve pedestrian linkages and movement within the area and linking the Station to the High Street, including suitable public open spaces within this network of routes.

e) To direct new retail frontages to within the area of search identified in Figure 8.1, which will become part of the primary and secondary shopping frontages.

f) To ensure that existing and proposed uses are compatible in terms of any noise, disturbance that they may generate.

g) To reflect the heritage and character of Gillingham in the design, whilst allowing for a modern, forward-looking scheme.

A comprehensive masterplan prepared in partnership with the major landowners, transport providers, the Local Planning Authority and Town Council and involving retail representatives and the local community will be prepared to help guide these proposals.

The post-amble to this policy at 8.13 states:

There are other, smaller sites within the town centre area that provide potential opportunities for redevelopment. The Town Council welcomes approaches from new businesses looking to establish in the town centre and will direct them to any potential opportunity sites where these exist

2.34 Therefore, the appellant is of the opinion that any sites which may be found within the area identified 'Station Road' can be dismissed as the NP is looking for comprehensive redevelopment of the area.

Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan (2022)

2.35 The Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan was made in June 2022.

2.36 The Neighbourhood Plan under Policy SFTC1 outlines that development proposals within the town centre area (the area within the blue line on Map SFTC1) will be supported if they meet one or more of a number of aspirations.

2.37 Policy SFTC2 advises that for the main shopping frontages within the primary shopping area (as shown by the red line on Map SFTC1), the use of ground floor or street level units should fall within one or more of the following use classes.

- Commercial, Business or Service (Class E)
- Learning and non-residential institutions (Class F1)
- Local community (Class F2)
- Other sui generis uses deemed compatible, including public house or drinking establishments; hot food takeaway establishments (except within the section known as The Narrows, as shown on map SFTC1); live music venues; theatres; cinemas; concert halls; bingo halls; and dance halls.

Sturminster Newton Neighbourhood Plan

2.38 The Sturminster Newton Neighbourhood Plan 2016-2031 was made in March 2019.

2.39 The Neighbourhood Plan under Policy 15 entitled 'Improving the Town Centre' states '*Development proposals within the town centre area (as defined on Map 11) that demonstrate that they contribute to, and do not undermine, the improvement of the town centre*' as assessed against a range of aspirations as set out in Policy 15 will be supported.

Development proposals within the town centre area (as defined on Map 11) that demonstrate that they contribute to, and do not undermine, the improvement of the town centre as assessed against the following aspirations will be supported:

- *maintaining a strong and vibrant retail presence within the town centre area, including the*
- *continued operation and expansion of the street market*
- *maintaining a range of services and facilities which attract visitors to the town (including*
- *cultural/arts/community venues, overnight accommodation and food/drink establishments)*
- *providing opportunities for office-based employment, which complement and support the town centre's vitality and viability*
- *providing opportunities for housing on otherwise underused upper floors*
- *protecting and enhancing the area's historic and architectural charm*
- *creating a safe and pedestrian friendly public realm*
- *providing sufficient public and private car parking serving the town centre to cater for forecast needs*

Material Considerations

Joint Retail and Commercial Leisure Study (2018)

- 2.40 This study was commissioned jointly by North Dorset, West Dorset and Weymouth and Portland Councils. It looks at retail and leisure across the study area, taking into account health checks and predicting future needs.
- 2.41 The study assesses the future need (“capacity”) for new retail (convenience and comparison goods) floorspace over the Plan period to 2040. The overall findings of this update will be used to inform the emerging Dorset Council Local Plan.

Emerging Local Plan

- 2.42 The Council has rolled forward its 2003 District-wide Local Plan First Edition policies maps, subject to some amendments brought about through the 2016 North Dorset Local Plan Part 1. The Council intended to undertake a wholesale review of the Development Plan policies map through the Local Plan Part 2; however, this was subsequently abandoned in favour of an all-encompassing Dorset Local Plan.
- 2.43 Dorset Council is at the early stages of a Dorset-wide local plan, including that of North Dorset. The local plan timetable has now been pushed back to proposed adoption being May 2027. In line with NPPF paragraph 48, minimal weight can be attributed to the emerging plan at this stage.

3 Parameters of the Sequential Test

- 3.1 Paragraph 91 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that:

‘Local planning authorities should apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses which are neither in an existing centre nor in accordance with an up-to-date plan. Main town centre uses should be located in town centres, then in edge of centre locations; and only if suitable sites are not available (or expected to become available within a reasonable period) should out of centre sites be considered.’

- 3.2 Main town centre uses are defined in the glossary of the NPPF as including retail development. The sequential test aims to direct such development to the optimum location, focusing growth within town and city centres where possible.
- 3.3 *Where no such sites are available, the next sequentially preferred location for retail development will be at the edge of the centre, which is defined by the glossary of the NPPF as ‘well connected to, and up to 300m from, the primary shopping area’.* For all other main

town centre uses, a location within 300 metres of a town centre boundary. An out-of-centre location is defined by the NPPF as a location that is not in or on the edge of a centre, but not necessarily outside the urban area.

- 3.4 In order to carry out a retail sequential assessment, the site needs to be looked at in the context of the NPPF's tests, with the first stage being to assess sites within the town centre boundaries. Thereafter, the test requires an assessment of sites within 300m of the primary shopping area. Sturminster Newton, Gillingham, Shaftsbury and Blandford all have adopted Neighbourhood Plans (NP) and these NP all define the relevant town centre boundaries, which will be discussed in the relevant sequential tests areas.

Blandford Forum

- 3.5 Policy B8 entitled ‘Blandford Forum Town Centre’ of the made Blandford + Neighbourhood Plan 2011-2033, establishes the Town Centre Area boundary and the Primary Shopping Area, as shown on the Town Centre Policies Map appended to the Neighbourhood Plan. The Town Centre boundary is identified outlined in blue while the Primary Shopping Area is identified in yellow shading.
- 3.6 An excerpt of Town Centre Policies Map is provided in Figure 2 below.

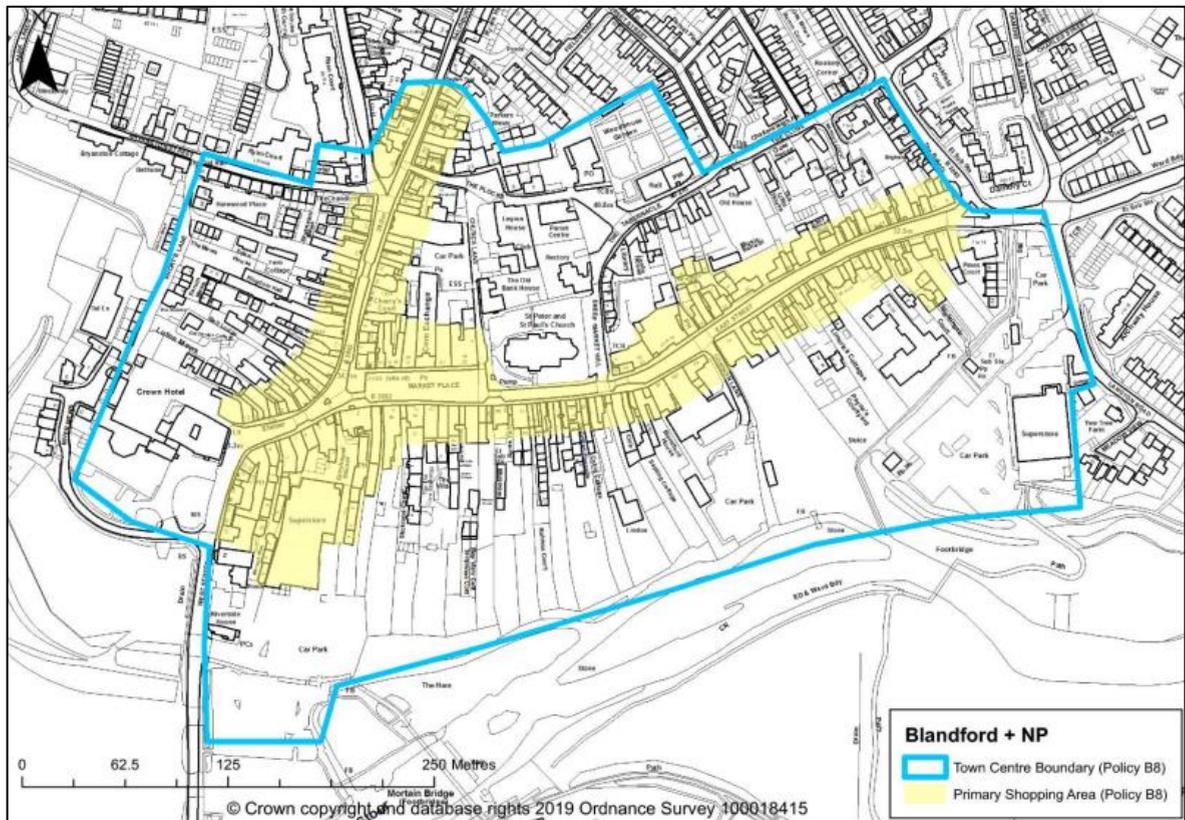


Figure 2: Excerpt of Town Centre Policies Map

- 3.7 Figure 3 below sets out the Town Centre Boundary outlined in red and a 300m radius around it illustrated in yellow.



Figure 3: Blandford Town Centre Area boundary + 300m radius

Gillingham

3.8 Policy 7 entitled ‘Development within the Town Centre boundary’ of the made Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan, defines the Town Centre Area and the Primary Shopping Frontage, as shown on the Gillingham Town Centre map. The Town Centre area is encircled by a broken brown line and the Primary Shopping Frontage area is identified outlined in a continuous red line.

3.9 An excerpt of Town Centre Area Map is shown in Figure 4 below.

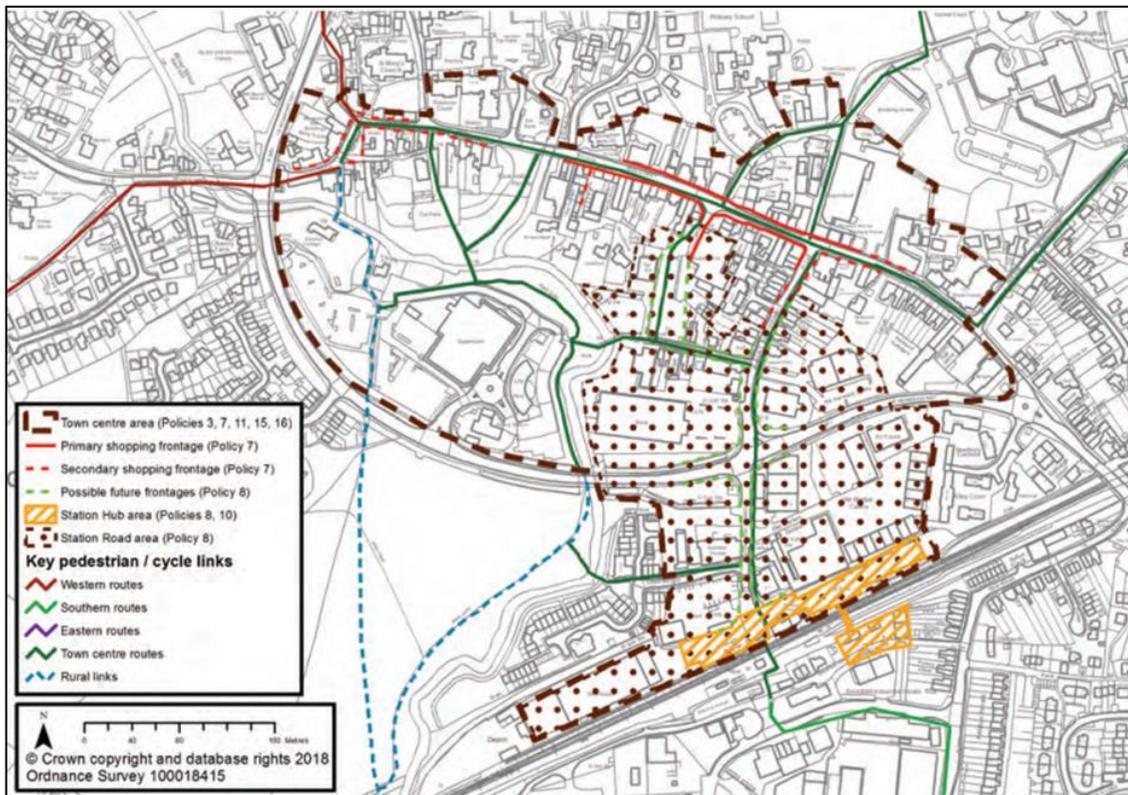


Figure 4: Excerpt of Gillingham Town Centre area Map

3.10 Figure 5 below sets out the boundary of Gillingham Town Centre in red with a 300m radius around it in yellow.

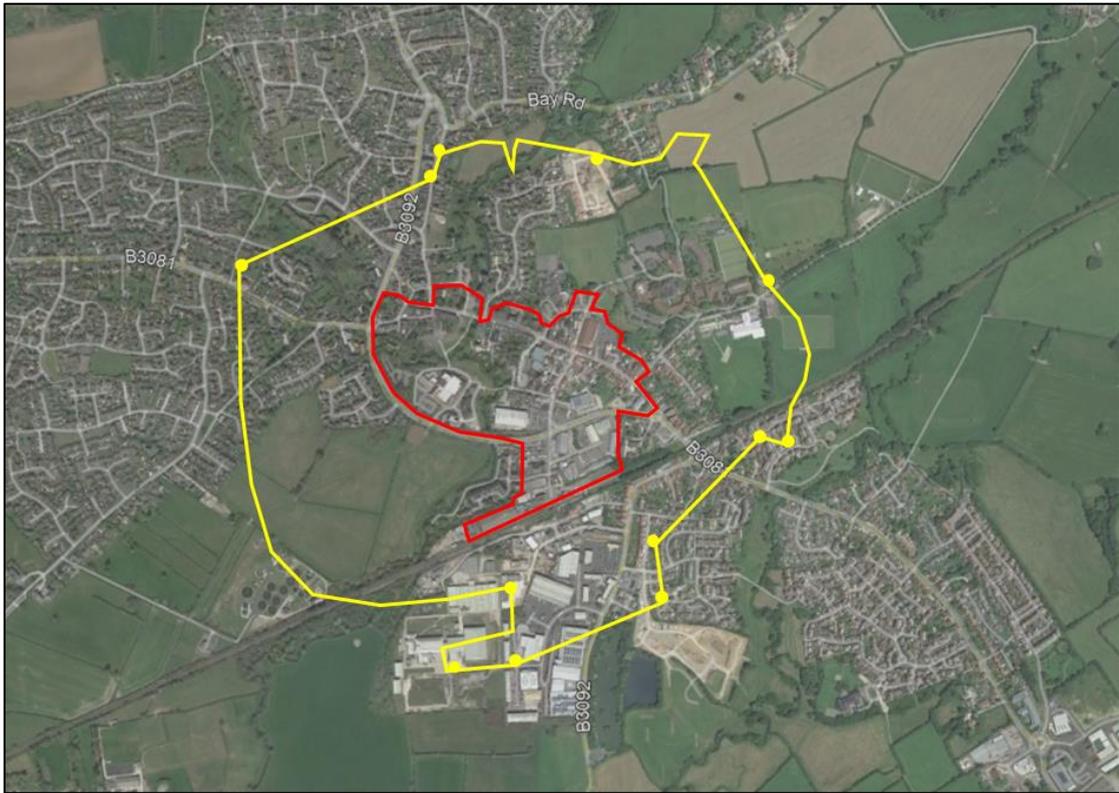


Figure 5: Gillingham Town Centre Area + 300m radius

Shaftsbury

- 3.11 Policy SFTC1 of the made Shaftsbury Neighbourhood Plan, defines the Town Centre Area and the Primary Shopping Frontage, as shown on the Shaftsbury town centre map. The Town Shopping is encircled by a continuous blue line and the Primary Shopping Frontage area is identified shaded in yellow.
- 3.12 An extract of Town Centre Map is shown in Figure 6 below.

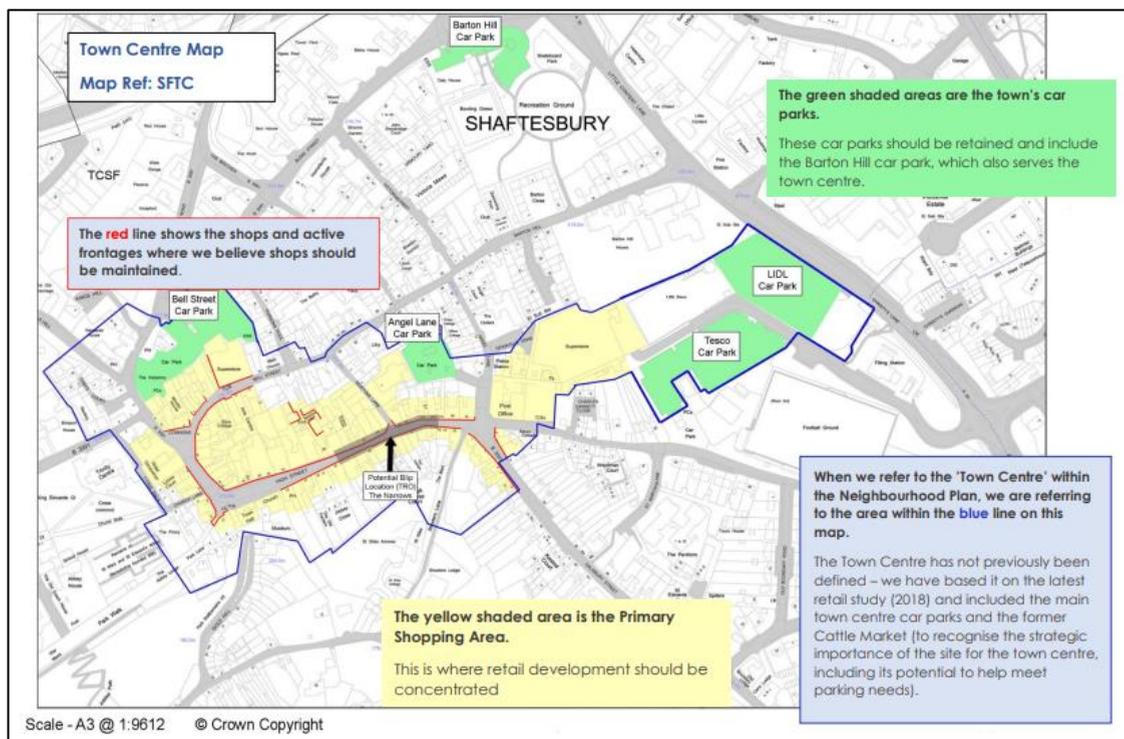


Figure 6: Extract of Shaftsbury Town Centre Area Map

- 3.13 Figure 7 below sets out the boundary of the Shaftsbury Town Centre in red with a 300m radius around it outlined in yellow.



Figure 7: Shaftsbury Town Centre Area + 300m radius

Sturminster Newton

- 3.14 Policy 15 entitled ‘Improving the Town Centre’ of the made Sturminster Newton Neighbourhood Plan defines the Town Centre Area and the Shopping Frontages Area, as shown on Map 11. The Town Centre Area is encircled by a continuous brown line and the Shopping Frontages Area is identified shaded in a broken brown line.
- 3.15 An extract of Town Centre area Map and Shopping Frontages Area is shown in Figure 8 below.

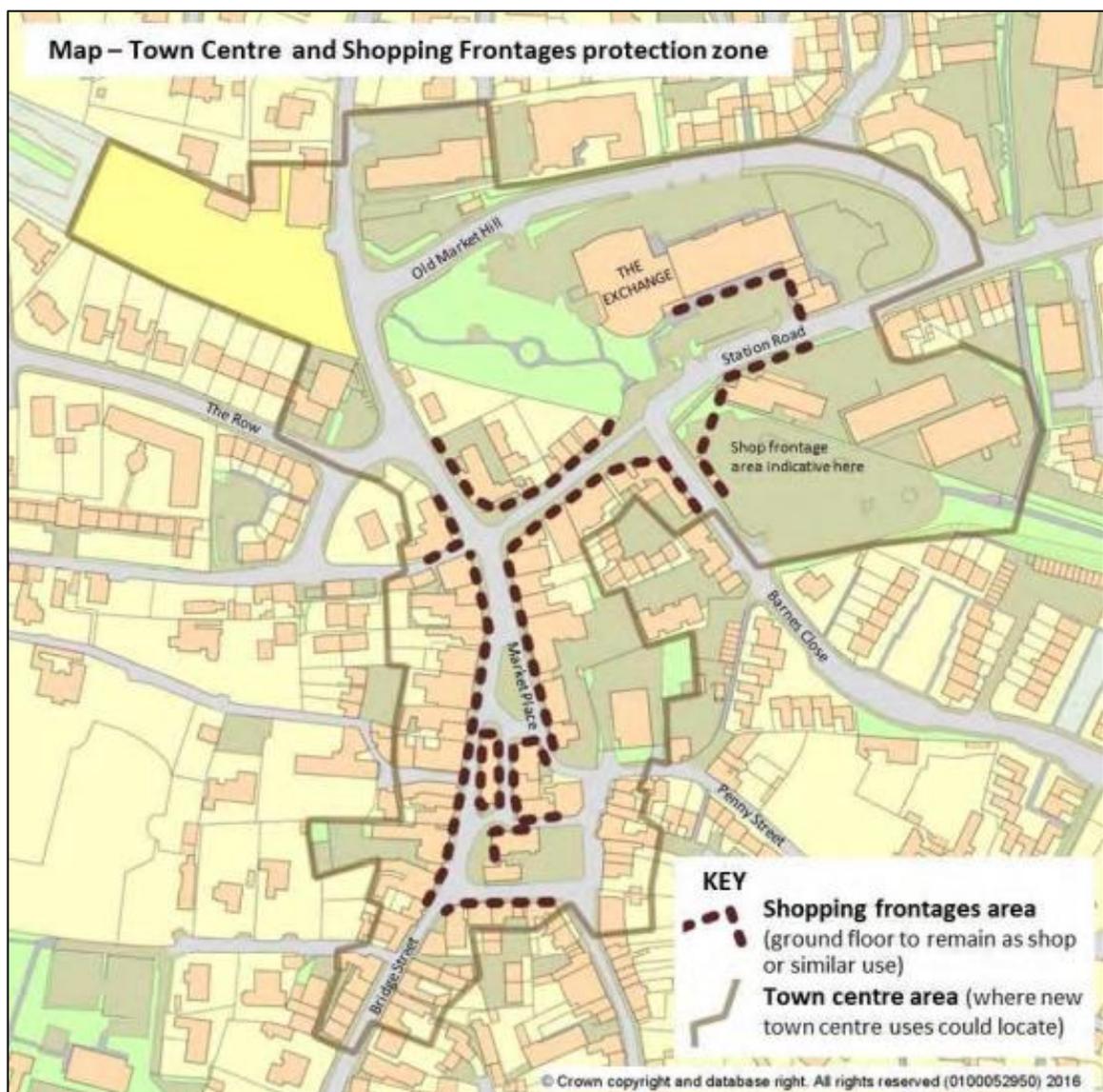


Figure 8: Extract of Town Centre Area

- 3.16 Figure 9 below sets out the boundary of the Sturminster Newton Town Centre Area in red with a 300m radius around it indicated in yellow.



Figure 9: Sturminster Newton Town Centre Area + 300m radius

4 Methodology

- 4.1 As stated above, paragraph 92 of the NPPF confirms that both applicants and LPAs should demonstrate flexibility on issues such as format and scale. Flexibility may include, for example, providing the development over two or more levels. It does not, however, require the applicant to disaggregate separate parts of the business model. This position has been confirmed through the *Tesco Stores Limited v. Dundee City Council* Supreme Court Judgement (21st March 2012), which found that the key consideration is whether ‘an alternative site is suitable for the proposed development, not whether the proposed development can be altered or reduced so that it can be made to fit an alternative site’ (paragraph 29).
- 4.2 The relevant question is therefore not whether there is a site ‘*suitable for meeting identified deficiencies in retail provision in the area*’, but whether there is a site ‘suitable for the development proposed by the applicant’. This is supported by the appeal decision for Land at Vulcan Road, Sheffield (appeal ref: APP/J4423/A/13/2189893) dated 3rd July 2013, which confirms that the business model of the operator can be the key factor in the consideration of whether a site is suitable. The Mansfield judgment incorporates the degree of flexibility the judge regarded as reasonable.
- 4.3 Chapman Lily Planning has taken the above judgments into account in defining the parameters for assessing the suitability and availability of potentially sequentially preferable sites. In order to carry out the sequential assessment, it is necessary to identify the minimum site requirements for the proposed development as this assists the identification of reasonable alternatives. This included vacant premises and vacant sites. In this case the minimum site requirements are:

Convenience Food Store (including in-store café and post office):

- Minimum total floorspace of 1,455sqm with a minimum 814 tradable floor area (these figures assume a minimum space necessary to provide a strong range of stock and create a suitable offer to customers).
- Class E Use Class.
- 0.5ha site area.
- Mains services within close proximity to the site for economies of development.
- Comfortable relationship with neighbouring users.
- Dedicated parking, free parking.
- Appropriate access for loading and deliveries.

- Appropriate access to the food store taking account of the needs of customers with impaired mobility.

Other retail/service units

- Minimum total floorspace of 721sqm
- Class E Use Class.
- 0.2ha site area.
- Single storey building/s
- Mains services within close proximity to the site for economies of development.
- Comfortable relationship with neighbouring users.
- Dedicated parking, free parking.
- Appropriate access for loading and deliveries.
- Appropriate access to the retail/ service units taking account of the needs of customers with impaired mobility.

4.4 Due regard has been given to the following publications and data sources:

- Desktop survey;
- Survey of vacant premises and sites being actively marketed through commercial agents;
- Reports (press and Council) of under-utilised sites;
- The Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment;
- The Council's Brownfield register²;
- Extant planning permissions and live applications;
- Allocations in the Development Plan: and
- A review of emerging Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policies.

4.5 Site suitability and availability have been given due consideration. With respect to suitability, this takes account of physical (such as size, topography, connectivity to the town); environmental (such as flood risk); and planning constraints. Planning encompasses both planning policy and development management, whereby a site's history or presence of an extant consent might dictate potential uses and / or indicate alternative use values. A 'policy-

off' approach has been adopted in the first instance, with the purpose of any planning designations / allocations being subject to more in-depth scrutiny.

- 4.6 Availability relates to ownership (and degree of fragmentation); the presence of a willing and able vendor (or otherwise); terms; and market viability.

5 Assessment

Blandford Forum

5.4 We have undertaken an assessment of available and suitable premises and sites within Blandford Forum town centre, edge-of-town centre and out-of-centre areas to ascertain whether there are any premises or sites capable of accommodating the proposed mixture of uses. Tables 1, 2 and 3 provides a summary of the premises and the sites that we have considered.

Town centre

Desktop survey

5.5 Aerial photographs and the Council's policies map was analysed. This led to further investigation into car parks. These car parks are well utilised. Many are located within the flood zone being located adjacent to the River Stour, and therefore not considered suitable. None of these car parks are being promoted for re-development. Other land parcels that appeared to be of an appropriate size were also investigated.

Survey of vacant premises and sites being actively marketed through commercial agents

5.6 Our empirical survey identified four vacant premises being actively marketed in the town centre area that were available, as outlined below:

- 37B Salisbury Street. This unit is presently being marketed by Primer Olds B.A.S and falls under Class E use and has a GIA of 54 sqm, however it is too small for the proposed use and therefore is unsuitable.
- 9A Market Place. This unit is currently being marketed by Primer Olds B.A.S and falls under Class E use and has a GIA of 52 sqm, however it is too small for the proposed use and therefore is unsuitable.
- The former Kings Arms Hotel. This premises is being marketed by Blue Alpine and it has a Sui Genesis use and has a GIA of 513 sqm, however it is too small for the proposed use and therefore is unsuitable.
- 17 Market Place. This unit is currently being marketed by Blue Alpine and falls under Class E use space and has a GIA of 248 sqm, however it is too small for the proposed use and therefore is unsuitable.

5.7 In summary, all of the vacant premises currently being actively marketed are too small and are considered unsuitable by virtue of size.

The Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

- 5.8 There is a single site identified in the Council's SHLAA in the town centre area.
- Land adjacent to Shorts Lane & Luton Mews (also identified on the Council's brownfield register). This site is considered unsuitable principally due to size being too small at 0.11 ha.
- 5.9 The site is considered unsuitable to accommodate the proposed use.

The Council's Brownfield register

- 5.10 Our search revealed one site identified on the Council's brownfield Register.
- Land adjacent to Shorts Lane & Luton Mews. This site is considered unsuitable principally due to size being too small at 0.11 ha
- 5.11 The site is considered unsuitable to accommodate the proposed use.

Extant planning permissions and live application

- 5.12 Our search revealed there are no extant planning permissions or live planning applications in the town centre area.

Allocations in the Development Plan

- 5.13 Our search revealed there are no allocations in the adopted Development Plan in the town centre area.

Neighbourhood Plan policies

- 5.14 No town centre sites have been allocated for retail/commercial.

A review of emerging Local Plan and

- 5.15 Our review of emerging Local Plan revealed no results.

Site No	Name	Source	Characteristics	Assessment	
				Suitable	Available
1	Marsh and Ham car park	Map search	<p>Sui genesis use class, within a conservation area and comprises of previously developed land</p> <p>Primarily serves the adjacent supermarket car parking requirement and town centre.</p> <p>This site is within an area at risk of flooding (adjacent to the river Stour) and ruled out in SHLAA</p>	No	No
2	Langton Road car park	Map search	<p>Sui genesis use class, within a conservation area and comprises of previously developed land</p> <p>Primarily serves the car parking requirement of the town centre.</p> <p>This is within an area at risk of flooding</p>	No	No
3	Church Lane car park	Map search	<p>Sui genesis use class, within a conservation area and comprises of previously developed land</p> <p>Primarily serves the car parking requirement of the town centre.</p>	No	No
4	37B Salisbury Street	Rightmove	<p>Class E use class, ground floor premises within a conservation area.</p> <p>The floor area is too small</p>	No	Yes
5	9A Market Place	Rightmove	<p>Class E use class, ground floor premises within a conservation area.</p> <p>The floor area is too small</p>	No	Yes
6	The former Kings	Rightmove	<p>Grade II listed building used as hotel/public house within conservation area.</p>	No	Yes

	Arms Hotel		This site is too small, heritage implications.		
7	17 Market Place	Rightmove	Class E use class, prominent former bank premises within a conservation area. Property benefits from rear access. This site is too small.	No	Yes
8	Shorts Lane & Luton Mews	SHLAA & on the Brownfield Land Register	Previously developed land within a conservation area. This site is too small at 0.11ha	No	No

Table 1: Town Centre Premises and Sites

Edge-of-centre

Desktop survey

5.16 Aerial photographs and the Council's policies map was analysed. This led to further investigation into car parks, These car parks are well utilised being adjacent to residential dwellings. The car park is not being promoted for re-development. Other land parcels that appeared to be of an appropriate size were investigated.

Survey of vacant premises and sites being actively marketed through commercial agents

5.17 Our empirical survey identified there were no vacant premises or sites being actively marketed in the edge-of-town area.

The Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

5.18 There are one SHLAA sites in the edge of centre which are as follows:

- Blandford Brewery. This site is allocated for housing and has planning permission for residential development which is currently being built out.

5.19 The site, therefore, is considered unsuitable to accommodate the proposed use.

The Council’s Brownfield register

5.20 Our search revealed there were no sites on the Council’s Brownfield register in the edge-of-centre area.

Extant planning permissions and live application

5.21 Our search revealed there are no extant planning permissions or live planning applications in the edge-of-town area.

Allocations in the Development Plan

5.22 Our search revealed there are no allocations in the adopted Development Plan for the edge-of town area.

A review of emerging Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policies

5.23 Our review of emerging Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policies yielded no results.

Site No	Name	Source	Characteristics	Assessment	
				Suitable	Available
10	Blandford Brewery	SHLAA	Previously developed land, former brewery building and associated buildings within a conservation area. Planning permission for residential development is currently being built out	No	No

Table 2: Edge-of-centre Premises and Sites

Out-of-centre

Desktop survey and walkover survey

5.24 Aerial photographs and the Council’s policies map was analysed. This led to further investigation into car parks but as set out above, these are not considered suitable. Other land parcels that appeared to be of an appropriate size were investigated.

Survey of vacant premises and sites being actively marketed through commercial agents

5.25 Our empirical survey identified no vacant premises currently being marketed in the out-of-centre area.

The Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

5.26 Our search revealed there are three sites in the out-of-centre area.:

- Castleman House and Bungalow site. This site extends to circa 0.56 ha and is identified as a site suitable for housing development with developable area of 0.46ha. Access is from Fairfield Bungalows or Peel Close. Owned by Council.
- Blandford Day Centre. This site is 0.28ha. Is identified as being suitable for housing development. Notes say only developable subject to day centre being surplus to requirements as development plan policy seeks to protect non-commercial community facilities such as the day centre located on this site. Owned by Council.
- Nordon Council Offices Site. This site has now been built out for housing, therefore not suitable or available.

5.27 In summary, the first two sites are not considered to be a reasonable alternative due to size of the developable site being under 0.5ha due to tree constraints; sites identified suitable for housing. Site is owned by the Council and currently in use as a community facility.

The Council's Brownfield register

5.28 Our search of the Council's brownfield land register identified there are two premises or sites in the out-of-town area.

- Castleman House and Bungalow Site
- Blandford day centre

5.29 Both of these flats also appear in the SHLAA and have been already been discounted.

Extant planning permissions and live application

5.30 Our search of extant planning permissions and live application in the out-of-centre area yielded no results.

Allocations in the Development Plan

5.31 Our search revealed there are no allocations in the adopted Development Plan in the out-of-centre area.

A review of Neighbourhood Plan policies

5.32 Our review of Neighbourhood Plan policies revealed no results.

A review of emerging Local Plan policies

5.33 Our review of Neighbourhood Plan policies revealed no results.

Site No	Name	Source	Characteristics	Assessment	
				Suitable	Available
11	Castleman House and Bungalow	SHLAA	C2 use class, previously developed land Potential restricted access for service vehicles.	No	No
12	Blandford Day Centre	SHLAA	Day centre in Class E (f), previously developed land. Currently in a community use- policy resistance to loss of a community use.	No	No
13	Nordon Council Offices	SHLAA	Site had now been redeveloped to residential	No	No

Table 3: Out-of-centre Premises and Sites

Gillingham

5.33 We have undertaken an assessment of available and suitable premises and sites within Gillingham town centre, edge-of-town centre and out of centre zones to ascertain whether any of these sites are capable of accommodating the proposed use. Tables 4, 5 and 6 provides a summary of the premises and the sites that we have considered.

Town centre

Desktop survey

5.34 Aerial photographs and the Council's policies map was analysed. This led to further investigation into car parks. There are a number of well utilised car parks in the town centre, however as they are not currently for sale they are not considered suitable. Other land parcels that appeared to be of an appropriate size were investigated

Survey of vacant premises and sites being actively marketed through commercial agents

5.35 Our empirical survey of vacant premises and sites identified that there are two vacant premises and sites in the town centre area as follows:

- Former Rose's Yard and Premises. This site is currently being marketed by Chesters Harcourt as a redevelopment site, extending to circa 0.2ha. Full planning permission (F/FUL/2022/02984) has been granted for the erection of 17no dwellings & flexible commercial space (use class E). This site is part of a wider site 3.77ha which is allocated for 'comprehensive mixed use development' in the GNP.
- Bracher House, Newbury. This is presently being marketed by Chaffers and falls under Class E use and has a GIA of 117 sqm, however it is too small for the proposed use and therefore is unsuitable.
- Former Joubere Premises, Station Road. This site is being marketed by Symonds & Sampson. The site area is 0.29 ha. The site area is slightly larger than that required for the small class E uses. This site is part of a wider site 3.77ha which is allocated for 'comprehensive mixed use development' in the GNP.

5.36 In summary, the Former Roses Yard and Former Joubere premises fall within part of a wider site earmarked for 'comprehensive mixed use development' in the Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan (GNP). Whilst either site would be of a size capable of accommodating the class E uses proposed, if located with Gillingham they would not serve the existing and future residents of Marnhull and wouldn't reduce the need to travel which is the aims of this proposal.

The Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

5.37 There are three SHLAA sites in the town centre area. These are:

- The former Co-Op store. This site has planning permission (ref: P/FUL/2022/02397), granted at appeal, for the *'Demolition of existing former co-op store & redevelopment of the site to provide 42no. residential units, comprising 4no. houses (C3), 30no. apartments (C3) and 8no. assisted living apartments (C2), 83sqm of commercial space (Class E) allotments, landscaping & other associated works'*. The site is presently being built out. This site, therefore, cannot be regarded to be a suitable alternative site.
- Lloyds Bank. This site has planning permission for the *'Erection of three storey residential block of 3no. apartments 1no. commercial unit & a two storey detached block of 3no. apartments to the rear with associated parking, landscaping and refuse collection/cycle storage'* granted. The site measures circa 0.17 ha, therefore, is it not considered to be a suitable alternative for the proposed use.
- Station Road (Lower). Total site area is 3.86ha. Town centre uses including retail units, cafés / restaurants, a modern hotel, office & informal recreation together with housing is anticipated as part of a comprehensive redevelopment as set out in the GNP. Part of the site is in Flood zone 2.

5.38 These sites could not be considered a reasonable alternative for the reasons set out above and as set out above.

The Council's Brownfield register

5.39 Our search of the Council's Brownfield Land Register identified there are two sites within the town centre area – The Former Co-Op store, Lloyds Bank and Lower Station Road. As previously set out above, both of these sites are not considered as suitable alternative for the proposed use.

Extant planning permissions and live application

5.40 Our search revealed there are no extant planning permissions or live planning applications in the town centre area.

Allocations in the Development Plan

5.41 Our search revealed there were no allocations in the Development Plans in the Town Centre area.

A review of Neighbourhood Plan policies

5.42 Our review of Neighbourhood Plan policies revealed policy 8 is seeking 'comprehensive' redevelopment of the Station Road area are for a mixed use scheme.

A review of emerging Local Plan policies

Our review of emerging Local Plan policies revealed no results.

Site No	Name	Source	Characteristics	Assessment	
				Suitable	Available
18	High Street Car Park	Map Search	Sui genesis use class, within a conservation area and comprises of previously developed land	No	No
19	Chantry Fields Car Park	Map Search	Sui genesis use class, within a conservation area and comprises of previously developed land. Site liable to flooding due to proximity to the river.	No	No
20	Chantry Fields	SHLAA	Agricultural fields Heavily treed around site edges, whole site is subject to a TPO. Substantial areas of the site are at flooding. Flood Risk Zone 2, 3 & 3b modelled. The site is potentially affected by flooding from other sources including from surface water and reservoir flooding.	No	No

21	Former Rose's Yard and Premises	Rightmove	Sui genesis use class, within a conservation area and comprises of previously developed land. Planning permission for residential development	No	Yes
22	Bracher House	Rightmove	Class E use class, previously developed land	No	Yes
23	Former Co-Op store	SHLAA	Previously developed land, prominent former retail premises, planning permission for residential development which is being built out.	No	No
24	Lloyds Bank	SHLAA	Previously developed land, prominent retail premises,	No	No

Table 4: Town centre Premises and Sites

Edge-of-centre

Desktop survey

5.43 Aerial photographs and the Council's policies map was analysed. This led to further investigation into car parks but as set out above, these are not considered suitable. Other land parcels that appeared to be of an appropriate size were investigated.

Survey of vacant premises and sites being actively marketed through commercial agents

5.44 Our empirical survey of vacant premises and sites identified that there are no vacant premises and sites in the edge-of-centre area.

The Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

5.45 There are two SHLAA sites in the edge-of-centre which are as follows:

- Adult Learning Centre and St Martins Residential Home. This site is allocated for housing and comprises of a recently built out extra care housing development. It is therefore not considered to be a reasonable alternative for the proposed use.

- Churchbury House, Queen Street. This site extends to circa 0.037ha and is allocated for housing. Planning permission was granted for '*Change of use and extension of office building to form 8 no. dwellings (C3) (demolish existing rear extension)*'. This followed with a Non-material amendment application for changes to the extension, internal layout, fenestration and cycle parking planning permission P/FUL/2021/04280 that was granted in April 2024. Furthermore, this site is currently being built out. The site area is too small. It is therefore not considered to be a reasonable alternative for the proposed use or available.
- Land at Barnaby Mead. This site is 0.62ha (dev area). Outline planning permission P/2021/02187 for '*Develop land by the erection of up to 20 No. dwellings, form vehicular access and associated infrastructure. (Outline application to determine access)*' approved in April 2024. This site it too large
- Loden Farm and Loden House Site is 0.19ha. Listed building on site. Site is too small.

5.46 In summary, all these sites are not considered to be a reasonable alternative due to size as site-specific designations and are identified suitable for housing and have planning permission for residential development an or have been built out.

The Council's Brownfield register

5.47 Our search of the Council's Brownfield Land Register identified there are two sites within edge-of-centre area - Adult Learning Centre and St Martins Residential Home and Churchbury House. Neither of these sites could be considered a reasonable alternative for the reasons set out in the above paragraphs.

Extant planning permissions and live application

5.48 Our search revealed there are no extant planning permissions or live planning applications in the edge-of-centre area.

Allocations in the Development Plan

5.49 There are site allocations in the Development Plan on the northern and southern sides of the town centre which are allocated for housing and employment and are built out, therefore are not considered reasonable suitable alternative sites.

A Review of Nighbourhood Plan policies

5.50 Our review of Neighbourhood Plan policies revealed no results.

Review of emerging Local Plan policies

5.51 Our review of emerging Local Plan policies revealed no results.

Site No	Name	Source	Characteristics	Assessment	
				Suitable	Available
25	Adult Learning Centre and St Martins Residential Home	SHLAA; brownfield register	Previously developed land, planning permission for residential development (extra care) which has been built out.	No	No
26	Churchbury House	SHLAA; brownfield register	Previously developed land, planning permission for residential development	No	No

Table 5: Gillingham edge-of-centre Premises and Sites

Out-of-centre

Desktop survey and walkover survey

5.50 Aerial photographs and the Council's policies map was analysed. This led to further investigation into car parks, these are not considered suitable as they are not currently being marketed. Other land parcels that appeared to be of an appropriate size were investigated.

Survey of vacant premises and sites being actively marketed through commercial agents

5.51 Our empirical survey identified that there are no vacant premises or sites that are currently being marketed in the out-of-centre area.

The Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

5.52 There are several included SHLAA sites in the out-of-centre area. These are as follows:

- Woodwater Farm. The site extends to circa 76.68ha is located within flood zone 2 and a number of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) bisect the site. The SHLAA identified that the site is unsuitable for the built development and concluded that the site was an unsuitable site. It is therefore not considered to be a reasonable alternative for the proposed use.

- Purns Mill and land to the east of B3092. The site extends to circa 20.02ha, is situated in flood zone 2 and contains a Grade II listed building as well sections of the site are located in a conservation area. The SHLAA concluded that the site was unsuitable. It is therefore not considered to be a reasonable alternative for the proposed use.
- Bowridge Hill, land north of Bay Road. The site extends to circa to 35ha, is located in flood zone 2 and there are a number of TPOs alongside the site's boundaries while a power lines bisect the site. The site also lies within a conservation area. It is therefore not considered to be a reasonable alternative for the proposed use.
- Land to the west of Colesbrook Farm. The site extends to circa 2ha and lies within a conservation area. The SHLAA concluded that the site is an unsuitable site.
- Land North of Wavering Lane. The site is extends to circa 9.8ha and located in flood zone 2. The west western half of the site is allocated for sports pitch provision in the Adopted Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan. The SHLAA concluded that the site was an unsuitable site. It is therefore not considered to be a reasonable alternative for the proposed use.
- Land south of Bay Road. The site extends to circa 26.63, is situated in flood zone 2 and is contains a scheduled monument. The SHLAA concluded that the site was an unsuitable site. It is therefore not considered to be a reasonable alternative for the proposed use.
- Land east of Madjeston. The site extends to circa 5ha, is located within flood zone 2. The SHLAA concluded that the site was an unsuitable site. It is therefore not considered to be a reasonable alternative for the proposed use.
- Land west of Pound Lane. The site extends to circa 1.7ha and contains a Grade II listed building and is included in the Dorset Gardens Trust Local List as part of the Wyke Hall site. The SHLAA concluded that the site was an unsuitable site. It is therefore not considered to be a reasonable alternative for the proposed use.

5.53 In summary, all these sites are not considered to be a reasonable alternative due to size as site-specific designations and are considered as unsuitable.

Extant planning permissions and live application

5.54 Our search revealed that there are no extant permissions or live applications within the out-of-centre area.

Allocations in the Development Plan

5.55 There are site allocations in the adopted Development Plan on the northern and southwestern sides of the town centre which are allocated for housing and employment as well as are built out, therefore these are not considered reasonable suitable alternative sites to the proposed use.

A review of emerging Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policies

5.56 Our review of emerging Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policies revealed no results.

Site No	Name	Source	Characteristics	Assessment	
				Suitable	Available
27	Woodwater Farm	SHLAA	Previously developed land. Excluded from the SHLAA on flooding grounds	No	No
28	Purns Mill and land to the east of B3092	SHLAA	Greenfield site. Excluded from the SHLAA on heritage and flooding grounds	No	No
29	Bowridge Hill, land north of Bay Road	SHLAA	Previously developed land. Flooding, TPO and heritage constraints	No	No
30	Land to the west of Colesbrook Farm	SHLAA	Previously developed land. Excluded from the SHLAA on heritage and flooding grounds	No	No
31	Land south of Bay Road	SHLAA	Greenfield site. Excluded from the SHLAA on heritage and flooding grounds	No	No
32	Land east of Madjeston	SHLAA	Previously developed land. Excluded from the SHLAA on heritage and flooding grounds	No	No
33	Land west of Pound Lane	SHLAA	Previously developed land. Excluded from the SHLAA on heritage and flooding grounds	No	No

Table 5: Gillingham out-of-centre premises and sites

Shaftsbury

5.57 We have undertaken an assessment of available and suitable premises and sites within Shaftesbury town centre, edge-of-town centre and out of centre zones to ascertain whether any of these sites are capable of accommodating the proposed use. Tables 6 and 7 provides a summary of the premises and the sites that we have considered.

Town centre

Desktop survey

5.58 Aerial photographs and the Council's policies map was analysed. This led to further investigation into car parks, these are not considered suitable as they are not currently being marketed. Other land parcels that appeared to be of an appropriate size were investigated.

Survey of vacant premises and sites being actively marketed through commercial agents

5.59 Our empirical survey identified two vacant premises actively being marketed as follows:

- The Old School House. This property is currently being marketed by Boatwrights and falls under Class E and has a GIA of 43 sqm, however it is too small for the proposed use and therefore is unsuitable.
- 44-46 High Street. This unit is currently being marketed by Symonds and Sampson and falls under Class E and has a GIA of 92 sqm, however it is too small for the proposed use and therefore is unsuitable.
- 1 Bell Street. This unit is currently being marketed by Gerrald and Matthews and has a GIA of 56-91 sqm, however it is too small for the proposed use and therefore is unsuitable.
- 27A High Street. This unit is currently being marketed by Wooley and Wallis and has a GIA of 47 sqm, however it is too small for the proposed use and therefore is unsuitable.

5.60 In summary, all of the vacant premises are too small to accommodate the proposed mixture of uses on the site even alone or when combined, therefore, are considered suitable by virtue of size.

The Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

5.61 Our search revealed there is one site on the Council's SHLAA in the town centre, ATS Garage. This site has planning permission (ref: 2/2016/0629/FUL) to '*Demolish existing ATS garage, erect 28 No. sheltered apartments for the elderly including communal facilities, access, car*

parking and landscaping’ granted on 3rd November 2017. It is currently being built out. This site, therefore, can not be regarded to be a suitable alternative site.

The Council’s Brownfield register

5.62 Our search revealed there is one site on the Council’s Brownfield register in the town centre, ATS Garage. Planning permission (ref: 2/2016/0629/FUL) to ‘Demolish existing ATS garage, erect 28 No. sheltered apartments for the elderly including communal facilities, access, car parking and landscaping’ granted on 3rd November 2017. The site has commenced. This site, therefore, cannot be regarded to be a suitable alternative site to the proposed use.

Extant planning permissions and live application

5.63 Our search revealed there are no extant planning permissions and live applications in the town centre area.

Allocations in the Development Plan

5.64 Our search revealed there are no allocations in the adopted Development Plan in the town centre area.

Review of emerging Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policies

5.65 Our review of the emerging Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policies revealed no results.

Site No	Name	Source	Characteristics	Assessment	
				Suitable	Available
34	Bell Street Car Park	Map search	Previously developed land and within a conservation area	No	No
35	Angel Lane Car Park	Map search	Previously developed land and within a conservation area	No	No
36	The Old School House	Rightmove	Grade II Listed Building. Prominent central trading position within a Conservation area	No	Yes
38	44-46 High Street	Rightmove	Prominent central trading position, retail premises within a conservation area	No	Yes
39	1 Bell Street	Rightmove	Prominent central trading position, retail premises within a conservation area	No	Yes

40	27A High Street	Rightmove	Prominent central trading position, retail/office premises within a conservation area	No	Yes
41	ATS Garage	SHLAA ,brownfield register and marketed by Savills	Prominent central trading position, retail/office premises within a conservation area. Previously developed land. Planning permission for older persons' accommodation. This development has commenced through the clearing of the site. Site is currently under offer on the Savills website.	No	No

Table 6: Shaftsbury town centre premises and sites

Edge-of-centre

Desktop survey and walkover survey

5.66 Aerial photographs and the Council's policies map was analysed. This led to further investigation into car parks, these are not considered suitable as they are not currently being marketed. Other land parcels that appeared to be of an appropriate size were investigated.

Survey of vacant premises and sites being actively marketed through commercial agents

5.67 Our empirical survey identified no premises actively being marketed in the edge-of-centre area.

The Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

5.68 Our search revealed there are no sites identified on the Council's SHLAA in the edge-of-centre area.

The Council's Brownfield register

5.69 Our search revealed there are no sites on the Council's Brownfield register in the edge-of-centre area.

Extant planning permissions and live application

- 5.70 Our search revealed there are no extant planning permissions or live applications in the edge-of-centre area.

Allocations in the Development Plan

- 5.71 Our search revealed there are no allocations in the adopted Development Plan in the edge-of-town area.

Review of emerging Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policies

- 5.72 Our review of the emerging Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policies revealed no results.

Out-of-centre

Desktop survey and walkover survey

- 5.73 Aerial photographs and the Council's policies map was analysed. This led to further investigation into car parks, these are not considered suitable as they are not currently being marketed. Other land parcels that appeared to be of an appropriate size were investigated.

Survey of vacant premises and sites being actively marketed through commercial agents

- 5.74 Our empirical survey identified no premises actively being marketed in the out-of-centre area.

The Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

- 5.75 There are various SHLAA sites in the edge-of-centre zone which are as follows:

- Land adjacent Enmore Court. The site is 1.2ha. Outline planning permission for 23 affordable homes granted on appeal in September 2021. A reserved matters application P/RES/2024/05119 is currently being considered by the Council. This site, is too large and is not available.
- Land at Higher Blandford Road. The site area is 1.8ha. There have been a number of planning applications approved on this site for residential development. There is currently an application (P/MPO/2024/01049) under consideration by the Council for modifications to the S.106. This site, too large, is under construction and is not available

- Land off Wincombe Lane. The site area is 4.6ha. Planning permission granted for residential development. Non material amendment recently approved. This site, is too large and is not available.
- Land south of Wincombe Lane. Site area is 3.72ha. The site is too large.
- Land to the east of the A350. Planning permission allowed on appeal for residential development in February 2024. The site, is to large and is not available.
- Blackmore Vale. Site area is 1.7ha. Access constraints due to Wimcombe Lane and the reserved bypass corridor. The existing business is well established at this location. Site also exposed to open countryside / AONB. The site is to large and not available.

5.76 With the above considered and site-specific constraints, neither of these sites can be considered a reasonable alternative to the proposed use.

Extant planning permissions and live application

5.77 Our search revealed there are no extant planning permissions and live applications in the out-of-town area.

Allocations in the Development Plan

5.78 At set out previously, there are a group of sites located on the eastern side of the town which are identified in the North Dorset Local Plan for mixed use development which are currently being built out.

A review of emerging Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policies

5.79 Our review of the emerging Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policies revealed no results.

Site No	Name	Source	Characteristics	Assessment	
				Suitable	Available
42	Land adjacent Enmore Court	SHLAA	Planning consent for residential development. Reserved matters application P/RES/2024/05119 is currently being considered by the Council	No	No
43	Land south of Wincombe Lane	SHLAA	Greenfield site. Land inside the settlement boundary is allocated for residential in the North Dorset Local Plan (2003). Land outside the SB is allocated for the eastern bypass corridor.	No	No

44	Land off Wincombe Lane	SHLAA	Planning permission for residential development being built out. Non material amendment recently granted planning consent.	No	No
45	Land north of Mampitts Lane	SHLAA	Greenfield site. Area of TPO on southern half of site. Area TPO on southern half of site. Another area TPO at NE corner. Mature trees / hedgerows on field perimeters. Land reserved for outer bypass runs north-south through site. 4.85 ha	No	No
46	Land south of Mampitts Lane and north of Salisbury Road (A30)	SHLAA	Greenfield site. Outer bypass corridor reservation running north-south along the western side of site. 4.38ha	No	No
47	Wessex Sale ground, north of Salisbury Road	SHLAA	Reserved bypass corridor along western edge - severs links to the town. Careful consideration needs to be given to access arrangements and whether it is appropriate to build on the eastern side of the SUDs and proposed bypass corridor. This site was ruled out for housing. 4.3ha	No	No
48	Land south of Salisbury Road	SHLAA	Although site to the west has permission for residential development, the land to the south and east is allocated for employment (B use class), and so	No	No

			any development needs to be compatible with that use. Site would be suitable for commercial or employment redevelopment. Site area 0.99ha		
49	Salisbury Road	SHLAA	Previously development land. An allocated employment site. Flooding and arboricultural constraints. 8.5ha	No	No
50	Blackmore Vale Farm	SHLAA	Greenfield site. Identified suitable for housing subject to a policy change Access constraints due to Wimcombe Lane and the reserved bypass corridor. The existing business is well established at this location. Site also exposed to open countryside / AONB.	No	No
51	Land at Higher Blandford Road	SHLAA	Former greenfield site. Planning permission for residential development. Currently being built out	No	No
52	Land to the east of the A350	SHLAA	Former Greenfield site. Planning permission allowed on appeal for residential development in February 2024. The site, is to large and is not available.	No	No

Table 7: Shaftsbury out-of-centre premises and sites

Sturminster Newton

5.80 We have undertaken an assessment of available and suitable premises and sites within Sturminster Newton town centre, edge-of-town centre and out-of-centre areas to ascertain whether any of these are capable of accommodating the proposed use. Tables 9, 10 and 11 provides a summary of the premises and the sites that we have considered.

Town Centre

Desktop Survey

5.81 Aerial photographs and the Council's policies map was analysed. This led to further investigation into car parks, namely Station Road car park, which is considered under the SHLAA heading.

Survey of vacant premises and sites being actively marketed through commercial agents

5.82 Our empirical survey identified there is two vacant premises being actively marketed for rent or sale.

- Former British Legion site. The site has planning permission in principle for residential development. The site is for sale. The site area is 0.16ha which is not of a scale to be considered a reasonable alternative.
- No. 4 The Parade (ground floor) is available for rent. The floor area is 0.006ha which is not of a scale to be considered a reasonable alternative.

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5.83 There are four SHLAA sites in the town centre area which are as follows:

- Clarkes Yard. This site has planning permission for residential development (ref: 2/2016/0788/OUT and ref: P/RES/2021/00696 and a current planning application for 28 dwellings is under consideration by the Council). The developable site area is 0.4ha and is not of a scale to be considered a reasonable alternative.
- Sturminster Newton Library. This site at 0.1ha is not of a scale to be considered a reasonable alternative.
- Former livestock market site & railway gardens. This site is allocated for housing in the SNNP. This site at 0.19ha is not of a scale to be considered a reasonable alternative.
- Former Creamery and Car Park, Station Road. This site at 0.6ha is too large to be considered a reasonable alternative. The site isn't being actively marketed and has a mix of ownerships both Council and private and includes a flat with a 99 year lease

from 1987 and a further lease on site of Gas Governor of 99 years from 1981. The car park is fully operational. It would take time to assemble the land for development. The policy in the SNNP is looking for mixed development housing and retail/commercial across 2.5 to 3 storeys.

- 5.84 None of these sites are considered to be reasonable alternatives because they are either too small, are permissioned for residential development, allocated for housing, not available and wouldn't meet the aspirations of the SNNP policy.

The Council's Brownfield Register

- 5.85 The sites Clarkes Yard, Former livestock market site & railway gardens, Former Creamery and Car Park and the Sturminster Newton Library, were all identified on the Council's Brownfield register. As set out above, none of these sites are considered to be reasonable alternatives.

Extant Planning Permissions and Live Applications

- 5.86 Our search revealed there are no extant planning permissions or live planning applications in the town centre area, other than Clarkes Yard which has already been discussed, therefore there no reasonable alternatives to the proposal.

Allocations in the Development Plan

- 5.87 The Former Creamery and Car Park site is allocated in the North Dorset Local Plan. As set out above this site is not considered to be a reasonable alternatives to the proposed use.

A review of Neighbourhood Plan policies

- 5.88 Our review of Neighbourhood Plan revealed Policy 20 Station Road, this states:

Proposals for the mixed-use development of the Station Road area (as identified on Map 10 area 2) will be supported provided they deliver all of the following key outcomes. If comprehensive development is not possible, the design and layout of any partial scheme of redevelopment must not prejudice the development potential of the residual site to achieve the remaining outcomes.

> Creation of a large outdoor motor traffic-free public plaza in the area where Station Road, the Trailway and The Exchange are located, to provide a focus for town events and other functions and to assist the further development of the town as a social and cultural destination. This should be designed so that it could provide an alternative location for a larger outdoor market

> A mix of retail and service uses, particularly at ground floor level, in classes A1-A5, to provide a new shopping frontage facing onto the Plaza, Station Road and the link with Barnes Close, with residential, office or business uses on upper floors, to provide a degree of public surveillance at all times > Public conveniences, cycle parking provision and at least the equivalent amount of publicly accessible car park spaces as there are today, to meet the needs of visitors and businesses

operating in the town centre, and users of the Trailway. These should be provided within the site, although an element may be relocated (provided these would be conveniently sited where they would continue to serve the town centre and Trailway)

> The extension of The Trailway through the site, along the line of the former railway, and a link connecting the Jubilee Path with Lovers Lane.

The general mix of uses may include other main town centre uses and residential uses, where these would be compatible with neighbouring uses and not undermine the above outcomes.

The layout of the development should provide positive street frontages with ancillary areas and functions such as service yards to the rear, to avoid detracting from the public realm. The design and layout should emphasise the ‘arrival points’ for visitors and create clear visual and functional links from these points to and from the connecting routes with the historic part of the town centre that are safe, convenient and attractive.

Building heights will be generally 2-2.5 storeys with occasional 3 storey buildings where appropriate to provide architectural emphasis. The positioning, scale and design of buildings should ensure a view of Hambledon Hill could still be enjoyed from the majority of the Railway Gardens. The design of buildings facing The Exchange and the public plaza should be of suitably high-quality materials and detailing. The public realm and buildings fronting onto the line of the former railway should also indicate the importance of the site as the former railway station area, and its role in the town’s historic development.

Development of the Station Road area would benefit from the preparation of a Planning and Development Brief.

A review of emerging Local Plan policies

5.89 Our review of the emerging Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policies revealed no results.

Site No	Name	Source	Characteristics	Assessment	
				Suitable	Available
53	No. 4 The Parade	Rightmove	Vacant ground floor for rent (existing E use class) Within a conservation area Floor area is 0.006ha which is too small for the proposal.	No	Yes
54	Clarkes Yard	SHLAA; brownfield register	Site has planning permission for residential development and there is a current planning	No	No

			<p>application being considered for residential development.</p> <p>Site is 0.4ha which is too small for the proposal.</p>		
55	Former Creamery and Car Park, Station Road	SHLAA, brownfield register	<p>Used as car park drawing in revenue for town council.</p> <p>The site isn't being actively marketed and has a mix of ownerships both Council and private and includes a flat with a 99 year lease from 1987 and a further lease on site of Gas Governor of 99 years from 1981. The car park is fully operational. It would take time to assemble the land for development.</p> <p>The policy in the SNNP is looking for mixed development housing and retail/commercial across 2.5 to 3 storeys</p>	No	No
56	Former livestock market site & railway gardens	SHLAA, brownfield register	<p>Previously developed land Site allocated for housing in the SNNP</p> <p>Site is 0.19ha which is too small for the proposal.</p>	No	No
57	Sturminster Newton Library	SHLAA, brownfield register	<p>Existing F1 use class. Previously developed land. Large building in conservation area. Inadequate access off Brinsley Close.</p> <p>Site is 0.1ha which is too small for the proposal.</p>	No	No
58	Royal British Legion Club	Dorset Council planning portal & advertised via	Previously development land with planning permission for residential development	No	Yes

		commercial agent	Site is 0.16ha which is too small for the proposal.		
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Table 9: Sturminster Newton town centre premises and sites

Edge-of-centre

Desktop survey

5.89 Aerial photographs and the Council’s policies map was analysed. Land parcels that appeared to be of an appropriate size were investigated- none were found.

Survey of vacant premises and sites being actively marketed through commercial agents

5.90 Our empirical survey for the edge-of town centre area identified no premises or sites being currently actively marketed for rent or sale. None were found.

The Council’s Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

5.91 There are two SHLAA sites in the edge-of-centre area which are as follows

- Market Fields. This site is larger than the proposal and is allocated in the SNNP for residential development as well is the subject of a planning application for the ‘Erection of 86no. dwellings, formation of access, green space & associated infrastructure’ (P/FUL/2023/06986) which is pending consideration.
- Hammonds Yard. This site is 0.14 ha and too small to be considered a reasonable alternative. This site is allocated in the SNNP for residential development.

5.92 Neither of these sites are considered to be reasonable alternatives because they are either too small, or are allocated for housing.

The Council’s Brownfield register

5.93 Hammonds Yard is on the Council’s brownfield register within the edge of-centre area.

Extant planning permissions and live application

5.94 Our search revealed there are no extant planning permissions or live planning applications for retail use in the edge-of-town area.

Allocations in the Development Plan

5.95 There are an allocation in the edge-of-centre area which are as follows

- Land north of Livestock Market. As set above this site is allocated for housing in the Sturminster Newton Neighbourhood Plan for residential development

5.96 In summary, this site is not considered to be reasonable alternative to the proposed use due to size and are allocated for housing.

A review of emerging Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policies

5.97 Our review of emerging Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policies revealed no results.

Site No	Name	Source	Characteristics	Assessment	
				Suitability	Availability
59	Market Fields	SHLAA	Greenfield site within urban area, allocated for housing in SNNP, live planning application for residential developmeny.	No	No
60	Hamonds Yard	SHLAA	Previously developed land, allocated for housing in SNNP, Site 0.14ha is too small for the proposal.	No	No

Table 10: Sturminster Newton edge-of-town premises and sites

Out-of-centre

Desktop survey

5.98 Aerial photographs and the Council’s policies map was analysed. This led to further investigation into car parks, however, they are not currently being marketed and are not considered suitable or available. Other land parcels that appeared to be of an appropriate size were investigated.

Survey of vacant premises and sites being actively marketed through commercial agents

5.99 Our empirical survey for the out-of-centre area identified no premises or sites being currently actively marketed for rent or sale.

The Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

5.100 There are no sites identified in the Council's SHLAA in the out-of-town area (within the built up area)

The Council's Brownfield register

5.101 There are no premises or sites on the Council's Brownfield register within the out-of-centre area.

Extant planning permissions and live application

5.102 This source yielded no results.

Allocations in the Development Plan

5.103 Our search revealed there are no allocation in the adopted Development Plan in the out-of-town area.

A review of emerging Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan policies

5.104 Our review of emerging Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policies revealed no results.

6 Conclusion

6.1 The Retail Sequential Test (RST) has been carried out in line with the requirements of the NPPF and as governed by case law. It has involved looking for suitable alternative and accessible sites that could feasibly accommodate the following minimum requirements.

Convenience Food Store (including in-store café and post office):

- Minimum total floorspace of 1,455sqm with a minimum 814 tradable floor area (these figures assume a minimum space necessary to provide a strong range of stock and create a suitable offer to customers).
- Class E Use Class.
- 0.5ha site area.
- Mains services within close proximity to the site for economies of development.
- Comfortable relationship with neighbouring users.
- Dedicated parking, free parking.
- Appropriate access for loading and deliveries.

- Appropriate access to the food store taking account of the needs of customers with impaired mobility.

Other retail/service units

- Minimum total floorspace of 1,455sqm with a minimum 814 tradable floor area (these figures assume a minimum space necessary to provide a strong range of stock and create a suitable offer to customers).
- Class E Use Class.
- 0.2ha site area.
- Mains services within close proximity to the site for economies of development.
- Comfortable relationship with neighbouring users.
- Dedicated parking, free parking.
- Appropriate access for loading and deliveries.
- Appropriate access to the food store taking account of the needs of customers with impaired mobility.

6.2 The assessment began with a search of town centre sites, followed by edge-of centre and finally out-of-centre sites. It has found that physical constraints / planning constraints / availability are significant barriers for all sites that could not be overcome. Therefore, the assessment concludes that there are no sequentially preferable sites.

