

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

TOWN CENTRE

VISION

- To protect and enhance the things we love about Stratford – including the heritage of our town – for current and future residents and visitors;
- To make Stratford a better place to live today - by addressing concerns and supporting changes which people in this town would like to see;
- To support appropriate development to our town over the next 20 years which contributes to a good and sustainable quality of life for residents – including a strong local economy.

We want Stratford to be an even better place to live.

KEY GOALS

To provide a planning framework which affords sustainable economic, social and environmentally based development in support of our Vision :

Economic

Ensure that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places at the right time to support growth and innovation including the provision of infrastructure.

Social

Ensure the provision of a supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations and by providing a high quality built environment with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs; supports its health , social and cultural wellbeing.

Environmental

Ensure the protection of and enhancement of our natural built and historic environment and as part of this improving and minimising the impact on bio – diversity ; providing net gains where possible ; using natural resources prudently , minimising waste and pollution and mitigating and adapting to a low carbon economy.

STRATEGIES

MANAGEMENT

Put in place a visionary , strategic and strong operational town management team in line with the recommendations made in the Portas Review and to action such of the recommendations of the review as are considered appropriate and such other strategies that may be decided as being beneficial for the Town.

The Neighbourhood plan recognises that effective town centre management can contribute to the vitality and viability of the town centre by generating civic pride and giving confidence to investors and retailers. Whilst many factors affecting the quality of a town centre lie outside the planning system, **town centre management initiatives may be developed by local authorities in partnership with the private sector and the local community.**

Vitality is a measure of how busy a centre is and viability is a measure of its capacity to attract on going investment for maintenance, importance and adaptation to changing needs. Regular health checks will be undertaken and as part of the preparation of development plans and when assessing the impact of proposed developments .These health checks will include :

- accessibility: the ease and convenience of means of travel, including the frequency, penetration and quality of public transport services, the quality, quantity, location and type of car parking, and the quality of provision for people with a mobility handicap, pedestrians and cyclists;
- customer views: surveys of customers' views;
- diversity of uses: amount and location of floor space for different uses and how this is changing;
- environment quality of the centre;
- pedestrian flow: the number and movement of people on the streets, in different locations, at different times of the day or evening and over a period of time;
- retailer profile: the existing composition, retailer demand and other potential changes;
- retailers' views: surveys of the views of existing town centre retailers;
- shop rents: pattern of movement in that part of the town centre with the highest rents; and
- vacancy rates: particularly the proportion of vacant street level floor space in primary shopping areas;

The carrying out of town centre health checks will assist the town in identifying early signs of decline .The town may then , where appropriate, develop policies to address the problem of decline and provide a basis for enhancement of the Towns potential as a location for other suitable town centre uses.

When assessing applications for retail leisure ; office and residential ? developments outside of town centres an impact assessment should be required where the development is over x sq/ft. This should include assessment of:

- The impact of the proposal on existing committed and planned public and private investment in a centre or centres within the catchment area
- The impact of the proposal on town centre vitality and viability including local consumer choice and trade in the town centre and wider area for up to five years. For major schemes the impact should be assessed for up to ten years.

Where the application fails to satisfy the test or is likely to have a significant adverse impact it will be refused.

LAND USE/ECONOMIC VITALITY

The Town centre is to be recognised as the heart of the community and policies to be pursued which support its viability and vitality.

Our intention is to aim for a balance of land uses which encourages people to minimise journey lengths for employment shopping leisure education and other activities.

Support existing business sectors ?

Identify and plan for emerging sectors ?

Encourage regeneration ?

Telecoms development ? Masts

To maintain and build upon the existing tourism economy by improving accessibility ; encouraging new attractions in accessible areas and by providing services to facilitate further growth in the tourism industry.

Main town centre uses are to be located in town centres but if not possible then edge of town locations and then edge of centre locations. When edge of centre locations are considered preference will be given to accessible sites that are well connected to the centre.

Define the extent of the town centres boundaries and primary shopping areas based on a clear definition of primary and secondary frontages in designated centres and set policies that make clear which uses will be permitted in such locations.

Retain and enhance the use of the existing market place and ensure that all future temporary markets /fairs are located without the main shopping areas such that they add to the shopping experience acting as anchors .

What are the towns business needs both quantitative and qualitative over the plan period ? Annual reviews of land needs undertaken ?

Allocate appropriate retail sites – scale / type

Allocate appropriate commercial sites – scale/type inc storage and industrial

Allocate appropriate cultural sites – scale/type

Allocate appropriate community sites – scale/type

Allocate appropriate residential sites - scale/type

Allocate appropriate leisure sites eg Hotels – scale /type

Allocate appropriate office sites – scale sites

Identify areas of economic regeneration infrastructure provision and environmental enhancement

It is not the function of land use planning to prevent competition among retailers or between methods of retailing, nor to preserve existing commercial interests. However, the Neighbourhood plan recognises the value and importance of established shopping areas in town and is therefore committed to protecting their vitality and viability.

The Neighbourhood Plans objectives for retail developments are:

- To sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre;
- To focus retail development, in locations where the proximity of business facilitates competition from which all consumers are able to benefit and maximises the opportunity to use means of transport other than the car;
- To maintain an efficient, competitive and innovative retail sector; and
- To ensure the availability of a wide range of shops, employment services and facilities to which people have easy access by a choice of means of transport.
- The town centre consists of a mixture of land uses, often interdependent and with a variety of roles. It provides shopping, employment, services and facilities for all the community. An attractive and flourishing town centre can enhance the quality of life of its visitors, stimulate economic investment and support and encourage a whole range of cultural, leisure, social and commercial activity. The location of such uses in the town centre is encouraged supported by shopping which largely underpins its use and value making a major contribution to its vitality and viability.

Retail development will be allowed where it has been demonstrated that :

- There will be no significant adverse effects on the vitality and viability of the town centre retail
- The development will be incorporated satisfactorily into the centre and will help to maintain a compact centre
- The proposal is compatible in terms of scale and type with the character and function of the town
- The proposal will reinforce the range and facilities and vitality and attractions of the town

Residential development within the town centre can contribute to its vitality. The living over the Shop Scheme could also make a significant contribution to the enhancement of town centres and offer opportunities for supporting urban regeneration policies. Planning permission may be granted for residential use above shops and other business premises, within the town centre, provided that the primary retail core and commercial functions are not prejudiced and that they comply with normal planning and environmental considerations. The level of car parking provision which would be appropriate, for such residential development, will be considered in the circumstances of each particular case.

Proposals for retail warehouses selling bulky electrical, furnishing and DIY goods, may be acceptable within the town centre, however such developments are often difficult to accommodate given their space requirements for large showrooms, parking and servicing. Favourable consideration will, therefore, be given to proposals for retail warehouses of an appropriate scale on suitable sites in edge-of-centre locations. In exceptional circumstances, a retail warehouse proposal elsewhere in an out-of-centre location may be acceptable, where it cannot be practically or appropriately accommodated in either the town centre or on the edge of a town centre, provided that the proposal satisfies the health check. In addition, the proposal must be of an appropriate scale for the location. Permission for retail warehouses may be subject to conditions specifying a minimum or maximum floor space, preventing sub-division into smaller units and restricting the type of goods to be sold.

ACCESSIBILITY including Car parking

Town centres are major generators of journeys for employment, shopping, services, and entertainment. They are the focus for a large number of trips and typically act as the hub of public transport networks. New development in town centres can encourage the use of public transport or enable one car journey to serve several purposes and thus help reduce the number and length of car journeys. Town centres can therefore play an important role in reducing the need to travel and reliance on the car.

The Neighbourhood Plans direction will seek to balance aspirations for mobility and the need for economic growth against responsibility for conserving the built and natural environment for future generations. The overall aims of policy will be to reduce, where possible, the need for travel; encourage the use of alternatives to the private car and provide an efficient, safe and accessible transportation system that offers better choice and mobility for all its users. The Neighbourhood plan is committed to these policy aims and require that all major developments must be implemented placing particular emphasis on public transport provision and on ensuring good access

for pedestrians and cyclists ; incorporating facilities for charging plug in and other ultra – low emission vehicles and consider the needs of people with disabilities by all modes of transport , in accordance with the achievement of these aims.

All developments that generate significant amounts of movement should be supported by a transport assessment and travel plan. Development will be refused where the cumulative impacts of development will be severe on the transport infra-structure. Developments that generate significant amounts of movements are to be located where the need to travel is minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes can be maximised.

Implement a parking strategy which favours retail

The quality and quantity of parking should be improved so that it is convenient, safe and secure including appropriate provision for cycles and motorcycles.

A robust parking policy should be agreed and put in place ensuring that parking charges are set at a level which do not undermine the vitality of the town centre and parking enforcement should be proportionate.

DESIGN AND MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC SPACES/Common Spaces /STREETSCAPE/PUBLIC REALM INCLUDING SAFETY

The quality of the environment in town centres is of great importance. A high quality public realm can increase business confidence, foster civic pride and emphasise local identity. The Neighbourhood Plan supports proposals for:

- further Pedestrianisation where such is supported by robust research;
- environmental improvements, in particular to make the pedestrian environment more welcoming while reducing the priority given to the motor vehicle;
- rear servicing of premises to reduce on-street congestion and conflict between pedestrians and vehicles;
- enhancement of open spaces;
- making better use of derelict, underused or unused land;
- conserving and enhancing historic buildings and townscape;
- provision of an appropriate level of car parking; and
- provision for cycle parking.

The Neighbourhood plan require development proposals in the town centre to make a positive contribution to the townscape and to be sensitive to the character of the area surrounding the site in terms of design, scale and use of materials of both the buildings. New development within the

town centre should minimise visual, functional and physical disruption and enhance or create interest, vitality and variety. Insensitive development which disrupts the scale and rhythm of townscape will be resisted. Building design will need to be architecturally sympathetic to the important townscape elements of sensitive locations, such as Conservation Areas (Is there one ?) or the settings of listed buildings.

Careful design of the pedestrian environment is particularly important for people with disabilities. The needs of people with disabilities will be taken into consideration by measures to help create an accessible environment and in the determination of planning applications for the development of buildings to which the public have access. The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (NI) Act 1978 requires developers of specified types of buildings to provide suitable means of access, parking and toilet facilities to meet the needs of people with disabilities, where practical and reasonable. The types of buildings to which the Act applies are those open to the public (such as shops, restaurants, hotel, places of entertainment, leisure and community buildings), places of employment and education buildings.



Insert more info on what we want public open space to look like

To reduce the risk of flooding and its impact

To protect manage and enhance bio-diversity , the natural environment and formal/informal recreation through the development of a green infra structure strategy

Protect enhance and conserve I

High quality well designed public spaces are crucial elements of the urban environment and in making successful places . A supplementary guidance note has been prepared to which developers should refer ?

Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder and the fear of crime do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion

Quality of maintenancecleaning etc

DESIGN OF BUILDINGS

It is important to protect the distinctive character and intrinsic qualities of areas of the townscape.

Sensitive planning controls are therefore necessary to ensure that both the individual and cumulative effects of development do not detract from the character, appearance and quality.

Developers to produce a high standard of design, which respects and is sympathetic to the particular qualities of the area in question. Notwithstanding the acceptability of proposals in terms of other

planning issues, the Neighbourhood Plan operates a presumption against development that would detract from or fail to maintain the character of the distinct townscape

In effect, new development in the town should seek to reinforce local identity and promote quality and sustainability in order to respect and, where possible, enhance the distinctive character and appearance of the area.

Need to conserve the historic environment:

Sustain and enhance significant heritage assets and put them to viable uses consistent with their conservation

Where proposed development could lead to substantial harm or loss of a heritage asset then permission should be refused.

Designs must function well and add to the quality of an area not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development

Ensure that new development is of the highest design quality and respects safeguards and enhances the special character of the town

Must respond to the local character and history and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation

To ensure that development protects preserves and enhances the important historic environment and distinctive townscape qualities

Visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping

Ensure that the town develops in an integrated and sustainable manner

Protect enhance and conserve

Sustainable building design ?

Designs to provide vitality at street level ?

Shopfront design - improvements to existing which relate sensitively and harmoniously to the building and to the character of the surrounding environment. Shopfronts play an important role in the street .Important traditional or original features should be retained and incorporated into the design. A shop front design guide is attached as appendix ?

Insert more info re Sustainable design criteria.

ENDS