

## 8. RETAILING AND SERVICES

### POLICY RS1- TOWN AND LOCAL CENTRES

#### Deposit Policy

**Retail, commercial and community uses or mixed-use development including a residential element will be permitted in the centres of Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow, Stansted Mountfitchet or Thaxted if it meets all the following criteria:**

- a) **It maintains or enhances their role as retail and service centres;**
- b) **It does not harm their historic and architectural character;**
- c) **It contributes to the diversity of retail and other commercial activity;**
- d) **It does not result in significant loss of houses or flats in the centres;**
- e) **It does not prejudice the effective use of upper floors as living or business accommodation.**

#### REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

##### Representations of Support

**Ref.No: 156 Rep.No: 17**

**Representor:** White, Saffron Walden Town Council **Agent (if applicable):**

The Town Council supports these proposals (RS1 & RS2). The Town Council is extremely concerned at the effect of out-of town shopping on the viability of the town centre. Mixed messages appear to be coming from the Government and through interpretation of policy. The Town Council wishes to make it clear that it is vehemently opposed to any further out of town developments on the edge of the town and would wish to see an unequivocal policy

**Ref.No: 60 Rep.No: 2**

**Representor:** Leeming, **Agent (if applicable):**

The provision under RS1 that retail and commercial uses should not result in significant loss of houses or flats is excellent. Retention of houses in residential use in the centre of Saffron Walden is an essential part of its character. It is somewhat curious that new sites for retail development are being explored while the problem of so many empty shops in the town centre needs to be addressed.

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##### Representations of Objection

**Ref.No: 122 Rep.No: 2**

**Representor:** , Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd **Agent (if applicable):** White Young Green

**Amendment(s) Sought:** RS1 should include important criteria relating to Retail Need and the sequential approach to site selection.

**Reason(s) for Amendment(s) Sought:** The retail chapter has not been prepared in the light of independent specialist retail advice based on population change, economic growth or decline, retail floorspace, shop counts, expenditure patterns accessibility, pedestrian flows and consumer attitudes. Further, we are not aware whether the Council has had access to any up to date, comprehensive or accurate

forecasts of the quantitative and qualitative need for additional convenience or comparison floorspace. Clearly if a need exists then site(s) should be identified and allocated, even if in principle. However, if the Council only wish to proceed by way of a general non-site specific policy such as RS1 it must first be fundamentally revised. We say this because RS1 is out of tune with PPG6 and recent guidance by failing to include important criteria relating to retail need and the sequential approach to site selection

**Ref.No: 122 Rep.No: 3**

**Representor:** , Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd **Agent (if applicable):** White Young Green

**Amendment(s) Sought:**

**Reason(s) for Amendment(s) Sought:** Annex B of PPG6 clearly states that plan should be based on up to date information (see objection 2). Until this essential background information is completed or further evidence included with the emerging Local Plan and what works have been completed if that is the case. We remain unconvinced that the new Local Plan will be able to maintain an efficient, competitive and innovative retail sector

**Comments:**

*Structure Plan policies TCR1 and TCR2 provide policy guidance on the strategic hierarchy of centres and the sequential approach. The policy context for this chapter is based on findings and evidence from recent Section 78 appeals. It is considered that the policy approach balances the need to ensure access to services whilst protecting the character of the District.*

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**Ref.No: 212 Rep.No: 11**

**Representor:** Locke, Uttlesford Area Access Group **Agent (if applicable):**

**Amendment(s) Sought:** Add new criteria f) it has regard to the need of social inclusion including accessible public toilets.

**Reason(s) for Amendment(s) Sought:** The group felt that suitable wording for new criteria should be as shown

**Comments:**

*Modified GEN policies and Supplementary Planning Guidance will deal with this issue.*

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**Recommendation**

*No Change*

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**Paragraphs 8.2-8.3**

**8.2 This policy is intended to enable development appropriate to the character of the four centres. Their health as retail centres was somewhat fragile in 2000 and vulnerable to loss of trade. This Plan allows for extensions to existing shops and for opportunities to develop small units, which could**

meet the need for additional retail floorspace as a consequence of available expenditure within the centre's catchments or improved shopping environments for consumers, albeit not in large stores because of an absence of suitable sites within centres or in edge of centre locations. Local centre partnerships will be encouraged to help promote the centres. Government and county structure plan policy is that retail and other town centre uses attracting large numbers of people should be located in town centres.

- 8.3 Local facilities in the villages are vital to many residents and are an important feature of rural life. The planning process cannot ensure that a business stays open but, subject to circumstances, it can provide a framework for considering proposals to change the use of a shop or pub to a dwelling, for example. It is important that communities make good use of local facilities to make a sound case for refusing changes of use.

### Representations of Objection

**Ref.No: 219 Rep.No: 21**

**Representor:** Fletcher, English Heritage **Agent (if applicable):**

**Amendment(s) Sought:**

**Reason(s) for Amendment(s) Sought:** While we welcome the recognition that large stores are inappropriate because of the lack of suitable sites the point should also be made that out-of-town and edge of town development is inappropriate to the settlements in the district by virtue of their small size and the need to support the traditional town centres.

**Comments:**

*It is considered that the existing text is adequate.*

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**Ref.No: 218 Rep.No: 46**

**Representor:** Dale, Saffron Walden Friends of the Earth **Agent (if applicable):**

**Amendment(s) Sought:** Para 8.2 add town centre after existing in 3rd sentence. Para 8.3 Delete subject to circumstances in 2nd sentence

**Reason(s) for Amendment(s) Sought:**

**Comments:**

*The suggested amendments are considered prescriptive and could for instance restrict extensions to neighbourhood centres. The existing text is considered adequate.*

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**Ref.No: 191 Rep.No: 6**

**Representor:** Warren, East of England Tourist Board **Agent (if applicable):**

**Amendment(s) Sought:** Recognition of the above factors

**Reason(s) for Amendment(s) Sought:** Whilst supporting the paragraphs content it could be enhanced by recognising the role that local services play as part of the rural tourism infrastructure and the potential for visitor spending to help retain the services

**Comments:**  
Agree

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**Recommendation**

*Amend paragraph 8.3 to refer to the role that local facilities play as part of the rural tourism infrastructure.*

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**POLICY RS2 – RETENTION OF RETAIL AND OTHER SERVICES IN RURAL AREAS**

Deposit Policy

**Change of use of a shop, post office, public house or garage in a rural community will not be permitted if both the following criteria apply:**

- a) **It meets a significant community need;**
- b) **The use is viable financially.**

REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

**Representations of Objection**

**Ref.No: 213 Rep.No: 24**

**Representor:** Herrman, CPREssex **Agent (if applicable):**

**Amendment(s) Sought:** We suggest that the policy be altered to read: Change of use of a shop, post office, public house or garage in a rural community will not be permitted if local evidence indicates that it meets a significant community need.

**Reason(s) for Amendment(s) Sought:** CPREssex objects to the inclusion of criteria (b). With respect, and with full understanding of the reasons for drafting this criterion we consider that financial viability - or the lack of it- is not a land use planning matter. We fear that its inclusion here may have the unfortunate effect of reducing or even negating the impact of the Council's excellent intention to help the retention of services in rural areas.

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**Ref.No: 215 Rep.No: 4**

**Representor:** Vose, Countryside Agency **Agent (if applicable):**

**Amendment(s) Sought:** Replace the existing wording with: Proposals which through conversion of development would result in the loss of a community facility (village shops, post offices, public houses, garages, doctors/dentists surgeries and village halls) will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the facility is no longer financially viable or there is no significant demand for the facility within that locality of equivalent facilities in terms of their nature and accessibility are available or would be made available nearby

**Reason(s) for Amendment(s) Sought:** Our objection to this policy is a technical one. We fully support its intentions but suggest that these be better secured through revised wording and additional guidance on the evidence of viability to be addressed by the applicant. The policy should be supported by text defining what the Council mean by financial viability including the information that may be required of an applicant in order to arrive at a decision. The marketing test is a frequently used tool with a number of plans deeming an advertising period of 12 months as a reasonably time to determine the marketability of the enterprise.

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**Ref.No: 218 Rep.No: 47**

**Representor:** Dale, Saffron Walden Friends of the Earth **Agent (if applicable):**

**Amendment(s) Sought:** Amend policy- change of use involving the loss of a shop, post office, public house or garage in a rural community will only be permitted if both the following criteria apply (a) there is no significant community need for the facility and (b) the use is not viable.

**Reason(s) for Amendment(s) Sought:**

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**Comments:**

*It is considered appropriate to amend the policy to take on board the suggestions of the Countryside Agency.*

**Recommendation**

*Change of use of community facilities such as shop, post office, public house, garage, doctors/dentist surgeries and village halls will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:*

- a) The facility is no longer financially viable*
- b) There is no significant demand for the facility within that locality or;*
- c) Equivalent facilities in terms of their nature and accessibility are available or would be made available nearby*

*Supporting text to define an advertising period of 12 months to determine the marketability of the enterprise.*

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**New policy – Large Scale Retail Development**

**Ref.No: 156 Rep.No: 18**

**Representor:** White, Saffron Walden Town Council **Agent (if applicable):**

**Amendment(s) Sought:** A new policy RS3 should be included to read "large scale retail development on the edge of town will not be permitted".

**Reason(s) for Amendment(s) Sought:** Town council is concerned at the effect of out of town shopping on the viability of the town centre. A new policy should be introduced

**Comments**

*Structure Plan policies TCR1 and TCR2 provide policy guidance on the strategic hierarchy of centres and the sequential approach. It is proposed to amend paragraph 8.2 that edge of town developments are considered inappropriate. A new policy is unnecessary.*

**Recommendation**

*No Change*

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