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Planning Design Economics

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

**TOTTON TOWN CENTRE
STRATEGY STUDY**

CL10387/PW/SPe/SPa

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7.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Totton's Strengths and Weaknesses

7.1 The Totton Urban Development Framework (2003) identified a number of issues in Totton, which included:

- Traffic: excessive traffic through the centre conflicts with pedestrian movement;
- Lack of character within the shopping core;
- Poor pedestrian permeability;
- The severance between Old and New Totton: particularly the barrier created by the railway crossing;
- Loss of shops, vacant sites and advertising hoardings in the east of Totton;
- Poor paving and road surfacing;
- Totton Bypass discourages the linkages with Eling to the south of Totton; and
- The unattractive railway station environs.

7.2 Many of these issues have been confirmed by the analysis in this report. The main strengths and weaknesses of Totton town centre identified within the Study are summarised below.

Strengths

- Totton has an excellent provision of food stores suitable for both bulk and top-up shopping. The centre is anchored by a large Asda food store which attracts customers from a wide area.
- The centre has good car parking provision with the lowest levels of dissatisfaction amongst visitors and business occupiers out of the four main centres in New Forest District.
- In terms of comparison (non-food shops) the centre has a reasonable range of outlets, including a small selection of multiples, although the choice in some categories is limited. The centre has some interesting small independent shops.
- The vacancy rate within the centre is relatively low compared with the national average, which suggests a reasonably good balance between the supply of premises and demand from business occupiers.
- The centre provides a concentration of community uses.
- The centre has a loyal customer base, which uses the centre regularly.
- The centre has a number of relatively modern purpose built retail premises.
- Public transport access to the centre is good with high levels of satisfaction amongst visitors and business occupiers.

Weaknesses

- Totton is located within Southampton's catchment area. Therefore, local residents shop within Southampton particularly for comparison shopping.
- The centre has a limited number of comparison national multiple retailers.
- Totton has a poor provision of cafés/restaurants/bars and leisure and entertainment facilities.
- Traffic congestion is perceived to be a problem, which is exacerbated by the railway level crossing. Heavy traffic and queuing have an adverse impact on the quality of the shopping environment, in terms of noise, fumes and pedestrian movement around the centre.
- The centre is elongated and fragmented by major roads and the railway, which hinders pedestrian movement around the centre. Linkages between the Old and New Totton are particularly poor.
- The quality of the streetscape and some buildings and shop fronts are unattractive and could be improved.
- Landscaping and street furniture and litter bin provision in many parts of the centre is poor.

Totton's Future Role

- 7.3 The shopping centre hierarchy is clearly set out in the adopted Local Plan. The six main centres are identified as town centres, and these centres will be the main focus for retail and leisure development within the District. At present Lymington, New Milton and Ringwood town centres are the main foci for comparison shopping, in particular national multiple retailers. Totton has more comparison retail floorspace than these centres, but has a more limited provision of multiple retailers. However, Totton is the main centre in the east of the District.
- 7.4 Totton as the main centre in the north east of the District should continue to be a main focus for retail and leisure development. However, the centre falls within the catchment area of Southampton. Totton cannot be expected to compete on level terms with large regional/sub-regional centres, particularly in terms of higher order comparison shopping and major leisure activities and the development strategy must reflect this.
- 7.5 Totton should be maintained and enhanced as a town centre, and should continue to complement Southampton by providing for bulk convenience food shopping and a reasonable range and choice of comparison shopping facilities and other services. It should serve Totton and the surrounding catchment area, and should embrace a good range of activities. The centre should function as the main comparison

shopping destinations in the north east of the District and also the main destination for leisure, entertainment and cultural activities that serve Totton's residents.

Meeting Shopping and Leisure Needs in Totton

- 7.6 Phase 1 of this study indicates that growth in expenditure should provide opportunities to improve the range and quality of shopping and leisure facilities within the District and specifically within Totton. The assessment of the potential capacity for new floorspace within this study demonstrates that there is scope to improve shopping facilities within the District. Future planning policy and site allocations should seek to identify opportunities to accommodate growth at least up to 2012. Longer term growth up to 2018 should be monitored and updated as necessary.

Convenience Development

- 7.7 On the basis of the assumption that existing convenience retailers trade at reasonable average turnover levels, the quantitative capacity analysis indicates there is potential for about 1,700 sq m net of convenience goods sales floorspace within the District up to 2012. The projection up to 2018 is about 2,500 sq m net. Based on existing shopping patterns, the central and southern area of the District is the priority area for convenience floorspace. Totton is not identified as an area of deficiency. The floorspace projection for the Totton/Hythe area is only 761 sq m net up to 2018. Nevertheless, small scale improvements within Totton town centre could be appropriate

Comparison Development

- 7.8 The development strategy for Totton should seek to maintain the centres' current position in the shopping hierarchy, and where appropriate improve the centre's existing market share of expenditure. In order to maintain or enhance Totton's existing position it will be necessary to improve comparison shopping facilities.
- 7.9 The quantitative capacity analysis indicates that, based on existing shopping patterns as a baseline scenario, there could be scope for about 2,500 sq m gross of comparison floorspace within the Totton/Hythe area up to 2012, or 5,300 sq m gross up to 2018. A limited proportion of this need for new comparison floorspace can be accommodated in existing vacant floorspace in Totton or Hythe town centres, because the vacancy rate is relatively low. In terms of development commitments with planning permission (not implemented before October 2005) there is only one significant proposal in the District, at Water Lane in Totton that will provide 4 units

totalling 500 sq m gross. This leaves a further 2,000 sq m gross to be identified in the Totton/Hythe area by 2012. Other opportunities need to be identified to accommodate need at least up to 2012.

- 7.10 Subject to the availability of suitable town centre development opportunities, it may be possible for Totton to improve its market share of comparison expenditure. If market share can be improved then 4,000 sq m gross could be provided by 2012 or 6,500 sq m gross by 2018 (allowing for the Water Lane commitment). Given uncertainties relating to expenditure growth and internet sales, these floorspace projections could be viewed as maximum estimates.
- 7.11 The provision of large format/retail warehouse stores in the District is currently limited. If suitable development opportunities can be identified there may be potential to improve retail warehouse provision in the District, including Totton. However, Totton is well served by retail warehouse development on the western side to Southampton. However, on the basis that large stores, selling goods traditionally sold within retail warehouses (i.e. DIY, furniture, carpets and large electrical goods), can increase the level of comparison expenditure retained in the District, the following retail warehouse floorspace could be supported in the Totton/Hythe area: 1,700 sq m gross by 2012 or 2,600 sq m gross by 2018.
- 7.12 Any major comparison retail proposals outside the main town centres, which are either outside village and local centres or development, which is out-of-scale in relation to the role of the village and local centre, will be required to comply with the sequential approach to site selection, and the applicant will also need to demonstrate the proposal will not have an unacceptable impact on existing centres.

Commercial Leisure Development

- 7.13 The provision of leisure and entertainment facilities within the District is relatively limited. The District does not offer major commercial leisure uses, such as a multiplex cinema, ten-pin bowling or bingo halls. The canvas of leisure operators identified no interest from operators to develop major facilities in the District. Residents within the Totton area have relatively good access to a range of leisure facilities within Southampton, which will limited the development potential within Totton.
- 7.14 However, in **theoretical** terms there may be potential in the future to provide:
- small (up to 3 screen) cinema in the central/southern area of the District;

- small /medium size health and fitness clubs;
- small bingo hall; and
- small/medium nightclubs.

7.15 The general capacity for Class A3 to A5 (food and drink) floorspace within the District's town centres is as follows:

- 2005 to 2012 - 900 to 1,300 sq m gross
- 2005 to 2018 - 1,800 to 2,600 sq m gross

7.16 Totton/Hythe could provide between 250 to 400 sq m gross by 2012, or 500 to 800 sq m gross by 2018. Most of the Class A3 to A5 uses within Totton are takeaways or cafés rather restaurants. The provision of further restaurants is the main area of deficiency. Further provision could also make a positive contribution to the evening economy of the town centre.

7.17 Town centre developments where appropriate should provide a mix of uses including Class A1 retail and Class A3 in order to meet the above floorspace projections.

Opportunities in Totton

7.18 The need and capacity for additional retail, leisure and business uses, particularly in the short to medium term (over the next 5 years), will need to be considered within the context of available opportunities. The ability of Totton town centre to accommodate some or all of this potential has been addressed. Potential sites and opportunities to accommodate future growth within and adjacent to Totton town centre have been considered. We have considered opportunities that could deliver a reasonable amount of additional floorspace (i.e. 500 sq m or over). This assessment has been based on:

- discussions with Council officers to review potential development sites and emerging proposals; and
- NLP's own street survey in the centres to identify possible areas suitable for redevelopment, refurbishment or expansion.

7.19 Each option identified has been assessed in terms of its suitability for different forms of retail/leisure/business uses. The assessment of potential sites has considered a number of issues, including:

- the PPS6 sequential approach to site selection, including linkages with the town centre and primary retail areas;

- the capacity of the site to accommodate new floorspace and the type of town centre use suitable on the site;
- the availability of sites for development within a 5 year period, or in the longer term;
- an initial view of commercial viability and development constraints;
- land ownership and land assembly difficulties;
- retail/leisure/business operator demand for space within the centre;
- accessibility (particularly by public transport);
- the regeneration benefits of development;
- other preferred uses for the site (such as housing or community uses); and
- service arrangements and potential traffic congestion problems.

7.20 The review of potential opportunity sites in Totton town centre has identified a number of opportunities. These sites have been identified and evaluated, and have been assessed against the following factors:

- existing land uses and availability, categorised as follows:
 - short term - potential to be completed by 2009;
 - medium term - likely to be completed between 2009 and 2012;
 - long term - likely to be completed after 2012;
- commercial potential for retail/leisure development and the most likely form of development, categorised as follows:
 - prime site - likely to attract a developer and business occupiers;
 - secondary site – which may generate limited demand or only demand for a specific kind of use.
- potential scope to accommodate additional retail/leisure floorspace (net increase), categorised as follows:
 - small scale - under 1,000 sq m gross floorspace;
 - medium scale – 1,000 to 2,500 sq m gross floorspace;
 - large scale - over 2,500 sq m gross floorspace;
- potential development constraints; and
- possible alternative uses.

7.21 The overall development prospects of each opportunity, taking on board all of the factors listed above, has been categorised as follows:

- *Good* - development sites that have good prospects for providing additional retail/leisure floorspace, and should be considered for implementation in the short to medium term;
- *Reasonable* - development sites which are well located and may provide potential for additional floorspace, although obstacles to development will need to be overcome, but implementation may only be achieved in the long term; and
- *Poor* - development sites that may be unattractive or unsuitable for retail or leisure development where their delivery is very uncertain.

7.22 This overall rating is based on an initial evaluation for each site. The level of analysis undertaken at this stage is limited, i.e. detailed appraisals of development constraints, land ownership and potential development costs have not been undertaken. More detailed examinations of each site will need to be undertaken before sites can be brought forward for development or ruled out as viable options. The evaluations undertaken for each opportunity are not detailed planning appraisals and they do not imply that planning permission should be granted or refused for retail/leisure development on any site. However, the evaluation is expected to identify potentially suitable development opportunities that may be worthy of further consideration by the Council. This evaluation provides a framework within which the Council can consider the implementation of a development strategy for Totton.

Evaluation of Potential Development Sites

7.23 Each opportunity site identified has been evaluated based on the factors listed earlier in this section. An assessment of 17 sites is provided in Appendix C, and is summarised in Table 7.1 overleaf.

7.24 Within the Totton Town Centre 15 opportunities have been identified that have good or reasonable potential to deliver additional retail/leisure floorspace within the medium term (by 2012). There are three sites with a 'good' overall development rating, but one site (T4) has already obtained planning permission and the retail element of the application has been taken into account within the assessment of retail need.

Table 7.1: Totton Site Evaluation Summary

Site	Potential Scale Retail/Leisure Development	Potential Availability	Overall Development Potential
T1 – Conservative Club	Small	Medium/Long term	Good/Reasonable
T2 – Library Road Car Park.	Small	Short/Medium term	Good
T3 – West of Popes Lane	Medium	Long term	Poor
T4 – East of Popes Lane	Small	Short term	Good
T5 – Q8 Petrol Station	Small	Medium/Long term	Good
T6 – Totton RP servicing area	Small	Short term	Poor
T7 – Land north of Commercial Rd.	Large	Medium/Long term	Good/Reasonable
T8 – Station Road	Medium	Medium/Long term	Reasonable
T9 – South Parade	Medium	Medium term	Reasonable
T10 – Asda Car par	Medium	Short/Medium term	Reasonable
T11 – Railway sidings	Small/Medium	Medium/Long term	Reasonable/Poor
T12 – Salisbury Road Arcade.	Medium	Medium/Long term	Reasonable
T13 – South of Mill Road	Medium	Medium	Reasonable
T14 – Totton Timber	Medium	Short/Medium	Reasonable
T15 – Junction Road	Medium	Medium/Long term	Reasonable
T16 - Junction Rd/Rumbridge St.	Small	Medium/Long term	Reasonable
T17 - Co-op Rumbridge St.	Small	Medium/Long term	Reasonable
T18 – Eling Lane	Small	Medium/Long term	Reasonable/Poor

7.25 The remaining sites rated as ‘good’ or ‘reasonable’ could, if implemented, provide the following retail/leisure floorspace (maximum):

- small high street units - up to about 8,000 sq m gross;
- large format units - up to 5,000 sq m gross;
- extension to food stores - up to 3,000 sq m gross.

7.26 Together these sites could accommodate a significant amount of additional floorspace, and could meet most of the development capacity identified above. The comparison retail floorspace projections suggest that between 2,000 and 4,000 sq m gross of comparison floorspace (high street type shops) could be provided within Totton by 2012, a further 250 to 400 sq m gross of A3/A4/A5 uses could be required. Therefore, the opportunities identified are more than sufficient to accommodate the projections up to 2012. However, most of these opportunities are relatively small and will deliver small increase in floorspace (less than 1,000 sq m gross). It is unlikely that all these opportunities will be delivered by 2012. The main priorities for delivery are:

- Junction Road/Rumbridge Road (up to about 1,000 sq m gross);
- Land north of Commercial Road (up to about 2,000 sq m gross); and

- Library Road Car park (up to 500 sq m gross);
- The Q8 Petrol Station (up to 500 sq m gross);
- Salisbury Road Arcade (up to 1,000 sq m gross).

7.27 In terms of large format stores for retail warehouse operators or D2 leisure uses, three potential sites rated as 'reasonable' have been identified as follow:

- Land north of Commercial Road (up to about 2,000 sq m gross);
- Land south of Mill Road (up to 1,500 sq m gross); and
- Totton Timber (up to 1,500 sq m gross)

7.28 There are also opportunities to extend either the Asda or Somerfield stores, which could provide additional convenience or comparison sales floorspace (up to 3,000 sq m gross). However, the projections set also suggest there may be some limited scope for additional convenience floorspace in Totton, about 800 sq m net up to 2018.

7.29 This analysis suggests there are a number of potential development opportunities in Totton. However, the Council need to priorities the preferred opportunity sites, and it will be necessary to safeguard these future opportunities.

Totton Town Centre Boundaries and Retail Frontages

7.30 PPS6 indicates that local authorities should define the boundary of town centres. It states that for purposes of the policy statement, the "centre" for a retail development constitutes the primary shopping area. For all other main town centre uses the "centre" should be regarded as the area embraced by the town centre boundary. The extent of the town centre should be defined on the proposals map.

7.31 PPS6 states that the Primary Shopping Areas should be the defined area where retail development is concentrated (generally comprising the primary and those secondary frontages which are contiguous and closely related to the primary shopping frontage). The extent of the primary shopping area should be defined on the proposals map. Smaller centres may not have areas of predominantly leisure, business and other main town centre uses adjacent to the primary shopping area, and therefore the town centre may not extend beyond the primary shopping area. Primary frontages are likely to include a high proportion of retail uses. Secondary frontage Secondary frontages provide greater opportunities for a diversity of uses.

7.32 Within the context of this PPS6 guidance, we believe that the town centre boundary of Totton should continue to include non-retail uses, such as the civic area to the north of the centre and business uses along Commercial Road, as currently shown within the Adopted Local Plan. However, it will also be necessary to continue to designate a separate Primary Shopping Area. The area as designated as the Primary Shopping Area within the Local Plan is the main retail focus within the centre and has a predominance of Class A1 retail use, which is consistent with PPS6. Within this area the retail role of Totton should continue to be protected.

7.33 The remaining issues in Totton are:

- Should Rumbridge Street (Old Totton) still be included within the Totton town centre boundary?
- If this area is part of the town centre should it be designated as primary shopping area or other shopping frontage?
- Should this area be designated as a separate local shopping area?

7.34 We believe that Rumbridge Street's designation as a Local Shopping Area within Totton town centre could be confusing. However, many of the uses in this area serve a local shopping function, i.e. serving for residents living within walking distance. There are also specialist retailers servicing a wider area, which add to the town centre's range and choice of shops and services.

7.35 The existing pedestrian linkages between Rumbridge Street and the rest of the town centre are poor. Linked trips do appear to be made but the flows of pedestrians between the two areas did not appear to be significant during our visits. If Rumbridge Street is to continue to perform effectively as part of the wider town centre, then we believe that measure to improve pedestrian linkages and signage between the two areas should be implemented.