

# Town Centres and Retail





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## 7. Town Centres and Retail

### Introduction

- 7.1. Trafford's town centres are focal points for activity and community life. They serve as hubs for employment, shopping, leisure, and services, while contributing to the character and identity of both the local areas and the wider borough. However, traditional high street centres face significant challenges due to shifting consumer behaviour, the rise of online shopping, new retail models, and the competition posed by out-of-town retail developments. In Trafford this competition includes the significant retail and leisure offering at the Trafford Centre.
- 7.2. Despite these challenges, Trafford's town centres are enhanced by significant assets, such as strong connectivity for public transport, walking, and cycling, as well as distinct characteristics and offerings.
- 7.3. This chapter sets out the hierarchy of centres, and policy on how these centres will be protected and enhanced.

### Corporate Plan Priorities



### Policy Exclusions from the Local Plan

- 7.4. The Local Plan needs to be read alongside Places for Everyone (PfE) and national policy / guidance. Policy requirements which are adequately covered by other existing policies have, where possible, not been duplicated in the Local Plan. This includes identification of the main town centres in the PfE plan area.



## Trafford's Town and Retail Centres

### Policy TC1: Hierarchy of Centres

- A. Trafford's retail hierarchy, as defined on the policies map, is as follows:
- i. Main Town Centre:
    - Altrincham
  - ii. Other Designated Town Centres:
    - Sale
    - Stretford
    - Urmston
  - iii. District Centres
    - Hale
    - Sale Moor
    - Timperley
  - iv. Local Centres (see Appendix 1)
  - v. Neighbourhood Centres (see Appendix 1)
- B. Loss of retail units for non-commercial, business and service uses (as defined within national regulations) will only be supported in exceptional circumstances (for example where there are clear public benefits, a justified need for another appropriate use or other significant material considerations)

### Places for Everyone Links

JP-Strat12

### Relevant Strategic Objectives

SO6

- 7.5. Trafford has a range of strong, vibrant centres which meet the needs of the local community, as well as visitors. The town centres provide an opportunity to create successful, walkable neighbourhoods and serve as community hubs, offering a variety of services that are essential to meet residents' everyday needs. As shopping habits change and the rise in



home working, it will be important for town centres to embrace change and provide a diverse offering.

- 7.6. New commercial development will be directed to the town centres, and any new “town centre” uses should be of a scale and nature that support each centre and allows it to serve its proper function.
- 7.7. The local and neighbourhood centres also play a vital role. They form a network of local hubs that complement the larger centres, helping to meet residents' everyday needs and reducing the need to travel.

#### Main and other designated Town Centres

- 7.8. Places for Everyone (PfE) seeks to direct development to the most sustainable areas, including town centres, taking advantage of the services and facilities on offer in these locations.
- 7.9. PfE Policy JP-Strat 12: Main Town Centres identifies Altrincham as one of eight main town centres in the PfE plan area. The growth of Altrincham, alongside the other designated town centres in Trafford (Sale, Stretford and Urmston), will be supported where it complements existing businesses and services in the town.
- 7.10. There is a significant opportunity to increase the number and variety of homes in the vicinity of the town centres, alongside improved infrastructure, amenities, and green spaces. Housing development along key public transport routes and close to services and facilities will be supported, helping to diversify the uses in these areas.
- 7.11. The growth of the main town centres in Trafford will be carefully managed so that it preserves and enhances their character, as well as natural and historic assets.

#### District Centres

- 7.12. Trafford's ‘district centres’ are Hale, Sale Moor and Timperley. These have an important role as a focus for activity and identity in the wider community and provide access to shops and services. These centres will be protected and enhanced.



- 7.13. Place Plans for Hale and Sale Moor centres have been produced, which provide a vision for their future use and identify improvements. These will be considered as part of the planning application process.

#### Local and Neighbourhood Centres

- 7.14. Local and neighbourhood centres serve as vital hubs for community services, retail, and social activities. Local centres are larger than neighbourhood centres and may include more extensive retail offers, such as supermarkets, while neighbourhood centres tend to focus on smaller-scale retail and services. Both types of centres are important in providing easy access to essential amenities, and in helping to minimise car journeys in the borough. They typically offer a variety of essential goods and services, such as convenience stores, pharmacies, cafes, and other small retailers, which cater to the daily needs of the community.
- 7.15. All local and neighbourhood centres identified on the policies map will be maintained and protected. This includes the two new local centres at the PfE Davenport Green (Timperley Wedge) and New Carrington allocations.

#### **Consultation Question 7-1**

Do you support Policy TC1? Are there any changes required which would improve the policy? Please provide any supporting evidence which you think is relevant.

#### **Consultation Question 7-2**

Do you agree with all of the proposed boundaries for the Town, Other Designated, Local and Neighbourhood centres as shown on the policies map?



## **Roles and Functions**

### **Policy TC2: Role and Function of Centres**

#### **Designated Town Centres: Altrincham, Sale, Stretford and Urmston**

- A. All designated town centres will be maintained and enhanced as key locations for retail, leisure, office, residential and other main town centre uses, as defined within national planning guidance.
- B. Proposals for residential development will be supported where they:
  - i. Are of an appropriate scale, character and design, having regard to any locally adopted design guidance.
  - ii. Avoid the loss of ground floor active frontages.
  - iii. Are in accordance with Places for Everyone Policy JP-H4: Density of New Housing.
  - iv. Support residents' opportunities to travel via sustainable modes of transport, particularly where this addresses the severance caused by the A56 in Stretford and Sale.
  - v. Would not have a detrimental impact on local heritage assets, in accordance with Policy BE1.

#### **District Centres: Hale, Sale Moor and Timperley**

- C. The district centres will continue to be a focus for convenience retailing of an appropriate scale, opportunities for local services, and small-scale independent retailing of a function and character to meet the needs of the local community.

#### **Local Centres**

- D. The Council will maintain and enhance the local retail function, complemented by a range of other service uses, of all local centres, as identified on the policies map.
- E. The Council will support proposals for new retail development, which is of an appropriate scale, and where it is in accordance with relevant policies in the Trafford Local Plan and national planning guidance.
- F. New Local Centres will be designated at New Carrington and Davenport Green (Timperley Wedge) in accordance with the PfE allocation policies.



### **Neighbourhood Centres**

G. The Council will seek to maintain and enhance the important function and role in the community that neighbourhood centres play in Trafford.

### **Places for Everyone Links**

JP-Strat12 and JP-P4

### **Relevant Strategic Objectives**

SO1 and SO6

### **Altrincham**

- 7.16. Altrincham is Trafford's main town centre, as defined by PfE JP-Strat 12. It is the largest town within Trafford and acts as a sub-regional shopping centre (with Altrincham Market a particularly popular leisure destination). The centre is located at the hub of south Manchester's modern transport infrastructure, served by an integrated rail, Metrolink and bus Interchange, which has undergone significant redevelopment.
- 7.17. With its attractive town centre, Altrincham has maintained a degree of economic autonomy and prosperity while also providing a place to live for those commuting to the city centre and elsewhere. The range of services and facilities within Altrincham Town Centre make it an attractive sub-regional destination for retail and leisure trips for residents from within Trafford and beyond. The night-time economy plays an important role and will be supported.
- 7.18. The centre has a high number of independent retailers, cafes and restaurants, a number of which are located within the popular Altrincham Market. It is also home to several cultural and leisure facilities including the Everyman Altrincham cinema, Planet Ice Altrincham and The Altrincham Garrick Playhouse to the north of the centre.
- 7.19. Over recent years Altrincham Town Centre has seen significant improvements to the public realm, built environment, walking, wheeling & cycling, and transport infrastructure. This includes redevelopment of





Stamford Quarter Shopping Centre, Altrincham Interchange and George Street, and Regent Road public realm schemes.

#### Sale Town Centre

- 7.20. Sale is a key commercial, retail and leisure hub, it includes the Stanley Square and School Road shopping area as well as four supermarkets.
- 7.21. There are ambitious redevelopment proposals for Sale, recently the refurbishment of Stanley Square to provide additional office space above shops and improvements to the public realm has taken place. Further improvements to the public realm and retail/leisure offering in Sale Town Centre and surrounding streets is set out in a Public Realm and Movement Strategy 2021.
- 7.22. There are opportunities to reuse and redevelop vacant or under occupied units and improve walking, wheeling and cycling links within the centre, and further improvements to the public realm will be explored. The Council will be supportive of planning applications and developments that help address these.

#### Stretford Town Centre

- 7.23. Stretford Town Centre is located in the north of the borough and the town centre is focused on the Stretford Mall area. Significant changes are proposed for the town centre with several large investments in and around the area which will transform the Stretford Mall, the A56 and natural assets like Longford Park. Key opportunities include the redevelopment of Stretford Mall and regeneration of surrounding area, and improving walking, wheeling & cycling routes and public realm improvements.
- 7.24. The A56 and Bridgewater Canal currently act as spatial barriers, shaping the development pattern and affecting the movement of pedestrians and traffic and the redevelopment proposals for the town centre will seek to address this.



- 7.25. Recent improvements to public realm around Kingsway and Barton Road to make the area greener and safer, and more pedestrian and cyclist friendly will also assist in the success and preform of the town centre.
- 7.26. The Future Stretford Study 2023 looked at the current and future needs of residents and businesses, and considered the measures required to ensure the town is a viable, sustainable, and dynamic place. The Strategic Interventions identified in the study will continue to guide future development in Stretford over plan period.

#### Urmston Town Centre

- 7.27. Urmston Town Centre is located in the west of Trafford and is largely focussed on the Eden Square shopping centre. The centre primarily serves local residents including the nearby areas of Davyhulme and Flixton. The centre accommodates a diverse range of independent and niche retailers, as well as a number of supermarkets. The centre's comparison goods offer is more limited because of competing retail destinations in the vicinity, such as the Trafford Centre and neighbouring retail parks.
- 7.28. There are residential development opportunities in the vicinity of the town centre, which could maximise previously development land.
- 7.29. The Urmston Plan (2025) sets a framework to improve the vitality and sustainability of the town centre, strengthen its performance as one of the borough's four town centres, improve its visual and environmental appearance and improve accessibility and walking, wheeling & cycling travel.

#### Hale Centre

- 7.30. Hale is an 'other designated centre' in the hierarchy. It is a popular centre with a range of high-end independent leisure services and comparison goods operators which serve the needs of the surrounding neighbourhood, including affluent residential areas. Opportunities should be taken to diversify the convenience and comparison goods offer to ensure the centre's continued viability. The Hale Place Plan Refresh



(2023) outlines a physical framework for prioritising interventions and presenting a deliverable vision. The plan seeks to establish clear development and design principles; identify priorities for public sector investment and support; and provide a framework for continued stakeholder and public engagement in realising the Vision for Hale.

#### Sale Moor Centre

- 7.31. Sale Moor Centre is well-used by local residents, offering a variety, but limited number, of service and comparison goods retailers. Key challenges include the need for an improved retail and leisure offer, and a high volume of traffic directed through the centre by a gyratory system which limits pedestrian movement.
- 7.32. The Sale Moor Village Place Plan Refresh (2023) outlines a range of recommendations that could help revitalise the centre, including mixed-use redevelopment of Warrener Street Car Park to provide additional retail space, including a small to medium sized supermarket to meet the needs of the Sale Moor community.

#### Timperley Centre

- 7.33. Timperley Centre is a moderately sized district centre located within a primarily residential area. It is an attractive centre which accommodates a good range of retail operators which meet many of the day-to-day needs of the surrounding community. Timperley is performing strongly and is regarded as thriving. Timperley should be protected and enhanced through encouraging a greater range of facilities and services, and through improvements to the public realm.

#### Local and Neighbourhood Centres

- 7.34. Trafford's local and neighbourhood centres are listed in full in Appendix 1. These centres have an important function, and as such applications for change of use to the detriment of their offerings to the communities they serve will be resisted.



### **Consultation Question 7-3**

Do you support Policy TC2? Are there any changes required which would improve the policy? Please provide any supporting evidence which you think is relevant.

## **Beyond the Town Centres**

### **Policy TC3: Out of Centre Retail and Leisure**

- A. Outside of the centres identified in Policy TC1 (and defined on the policies map) the Council will not support development of retail, leisure and other town centre uses, except where it can be demonstrated that the proposal satisfies the requirements of the sequential test.
- B. An Impact Assessment will be required for retail and leisure development proposed outside of identified town centres where:
  - vi. It would provide a gross floorspace in excess of 500 sqm; or
  - vii. The proposal is located within 800 metres of the boundary of a district or local centre and would provide a gross floorspace in excess of 200 sqm.
- C. The above thresholds apply to new floorspace (including mezzanine floorspace), extensions to existing floorspace, changes of use and applications seeking the variation of restrictive conditions.

### **Places for Everyone Links**

JP-Strat12 and JP-P4

### **Relevant Strategic Objectives**

SO6

- 7.35. This policy will direct new retail and leisure development to Trafford's defined centres, and such development should be of a size and scale to support the relevant centre.



### Sequential Test

- 7.36. Where retail or leisure uses are proposed outside of a defined centre, the applicant will be required to demonstrate, in line with national policy, that no suitable sites are available firstly within the defined centre, or within an edge of centre location as defined in national planning policy.

### Impact Assessment Thresholds

- 7.37. National policy states that it is appropriate to identify thresholds for the scale of edge of centre and out of centre retail and leisure development that should be the subject of an impact assessment.
- 7.38. The purpose of the policy in applying an impact threshold which deviates from the national threshold of 2,500 sqm is to allow the Council to retain appropriate control in respect of the potential for development to impact on the future health of defined centres within Trafford. By applying a lower threshold, applications for developments which could potentially have a harmful effect on the overall vitality and viability of a defined centre, will need to be supported by a proportionate impact assessment which will set out the potential trade diversion impact assumptions.
- 7.39. The Retail and Leisure Study (2019) considers that town centre anchor units will typically provide a minimum of 500 sqm of gross floorspace. A unit of this size could potentially accommodate an operator capable of attracting shoppers to a centre thus increasing the potential for linked trips. There are relatively limited numbers of units greater than 500 sqm in the four town centres and the vacancy rates vary across the centres. In this context it is considered that the impact threshold for the four town centres should be set at 500 sqm for both retail and leisure proposals. This threshold is the default to be applied borough wide (other than for proposals in proximity to district and local centres as set out below).

### District and Local Centre Impact Assessment Thresholds

- 7.40. Due to the smaller scale of Trafford's district and local centres, and the relatively modest size of most of their commercial units, it is considered appropriate that a lower impact threshold of 200 sqm should be applied to



potential developments proximate to these centres. This is in keeping with their more localised role and functions but demonstrates the potential implications out of centre developments could have on these centres. There are relatively few units substantially larger than 200 sqm in any of Trafford's district and local centres; as such to lose an occupier of this magnitude could have a significant adverse impact on the centre as a whole.

#### The Trafford Centre

- 7.41. The Trafford Centre is one of the largest retail destinations in the UK and is a major shopping and leisure hub. It offers a wide selection of shops, restaurants, entertainment venues, and attractions. The area around the Trafford Centre also encompasses attractions like Chill Factore, iFly, Sea Life Manchester, LEGOLAND Discovery Centre, and Aerial Extreme. Together, these draw over 40 million visitors each year.
- 7.42. The Retail and Leisure Study (2019) recommends that careful consideration is given before granting planning permission for proposals that would further improve the offer at the Trafford Centre to the detriment of the four town centres

#### Retail Warehouse Parks

- 7.43. The Retail and Leisure Study (2019) concludes that overall Trafford is well served by out of centre retail parks through the provision of a range of operators who otherwise could not always occupy a unit within one of the four town centres. However, it is important for the Council to continue to monitor applications for the potential expansion of the retail parks or relaxation of use due to the potential implications such applications could have on the health of defined centres across Trafford. Proposals for out of centre development will be considered against the sequential test outlined in national policy.



### Consultation Question 7-4

Do you support Policy TC3? Are there any changes required which would improve the policy? Please provide any supporting evidence which you think is relevant.

## Monitoring

- 7.44. Table 12.2 of Places for Everyone (PfE) sets out a monitoring framework for the Town Centres and Retail related policies within that plan. Key indicators include the following:
- Number of residential units (net) delivered in main town centres
  - GVA in and within 800m of the main town centres
- 7.45. The Local Plan will not replicate the above PfE monitoring indicators. The following additional indicators have been identified to monitor the delivery of the Local Plan Town Centres and Retail policies.

Indicator	Target
Loss of retail units for non-commercial, business and service uses.	No target. Aim to reduce loss in designated centres.
Proportion and amount of new Class E floorspace (gross) granted consent and delivered within designated centres.	No target
Vacancy levels in each designated centre	No target – Decrease from previous year
Changes in % of floorspace occupied by the following uses in each centre: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Class E comparison shops</li><li>▪ Class E convenience shops</li><li>▪ Class E service</li><li>▪ Class E financial and professional services</li></ul>	No target. Aim to maintain a balanced mix of uses within individual centres to support their vitality and viability.



Indicator	Target
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Class E café or restaurants</li><li>▪ Sui generis pub or drinking establishment</li><li>▪ Sui generis hot food takeaway</li><li>▪ Other uses</li></ul>	

### Consultation Question 7-5

The Local Plan should be read alongside the Places for Everyone Plan and national policy / guidance. Where possible, the Local Plan has not repeated or duplicated policy.

However, are there any policy areas related to this chapter which you consider are missing and which should be included in the Local Plan?