Sustainability Appraisal Appendix T4.7

Wigan Council

LDF

WIGAN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK CORE STRATEGY

Retail and centres
Final Topic Paper 7

AUGUST 2011

Core Strategy Submission Version

Places Directorate
www.wigan.gov.uk/ldfcorestrategy

Contents

ONE

Introduction

Purpose of this document

1.1 This is Topic Paper 7 on 'retail and centres'. It is one of 13 topic papers that we have produced to help ensure that our Local Development Framework Core Strategy is properly backed by robust and credible evidence. The 13 topic papers are:

1. Health and recreation
2. Community safety and neighbourhood quality
3. Community development and involvement
4. Education and learning
5. Economy and employment
6. Housing
7. Retail and centres
8. Accessibility
9. Built environment and landscape
10. Wildlife habitats and species
11. Energy
12. Waste
13. Natural resources and pollution

1.2 Each topic paper provides a summary and analysis of the evidence which informs the Core Strategy and the Sustainability Appraisal. The evidence is set out in detail in a series of evidence reviews of the same name which sit alongside the topic papers. This topic paper focuses on the following Core Strategy policy: SP2 'Our town and local centres'.

1.3 We have combined the evidence gathering stages for both the Core Strategy and the Sustainability Appraisal, to streamline the documentation produced and avoid duplication. This has ensured that sustainable development is embedded in the process of producing the Core Strategy. This topic paper also sets out how we have engaged with the community and other stakeholders and established the legality and soundness of the policies. More details of this are set out in Section 9 'An assessment of legality and soundness'.

1.4 Each topic paper can be read in isolation but, inevitably, there are important related matters in other topic papers and evidence reviews. The key related topic areas for 'retail and centres' are:

- Built environment and landscape
- Accessibility
- Economy and employment
- Education and learning
- Community safety and neighbourhood quality
- Health and recreation

1.5 Rather than preparing an additional report on climate change, we have considered this important theme within each topic paper. This is to make sure that it is not viewed as a 'stand alone' issue.

How the Local Development Framework will be used

1.6 The Local Development Framework is the planning strategy for the borough. The Core Strategy is the principal development plan document in our Local Development Framework. It sets out what development is needed for the next 10-15 years, where this will go and how it can be achieved. For the most part the details will be determined in other policy documents that will make up the Local Development Framework. These will include an Allocations and Development Management Plan, area action plans and supplementary planning documents. All of these other documents will have to conform to the Core Strategy and be equally founded on a robust and credible evidence base.

1.7 We have to work with national and European legislation on Sustainability Appraisal and national and regional planning policy. Of particular importance to retail and centres are Planning Policy Statement 4 'Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth' and the Regional Spatial Strategy, which is currently part of the development plan for the borough but will be revoked once the Decentralisation and Localism Bill is enacted.

1.8 Retail plays an important role in the borough, ranging from the large town centres at Wigan and Leigh and standalone superstores and retail parks that serve a catchment area beyond the borough, to the smaller town, district and local centres that serve their surrounding communities. As well as satisfying basic needs, retail in town centres can offer a social and leisure activity in conjunction with other associated town centre uses. The Local Development Framework will provide planning policies that will strengthen the borough's town centres and provide good access to retail facilities for all. This is achieved in line with the principles of sustainable development, ensuring that economic, social and environmental objectives are secured together.

How the Sustainability Appraisal framework will be used

1.9 The purpose of the Sustainability Appraisal is to appraise the social, environmental and economic effects of strategies and policies in the documents that form the Local Development Framework. This has been done from the outset in preparing the Core Strategy to ensure that decisions are made that accord with sustainable development.

1.10 A framework of sustainability objectives has been used to test and ask questions of each approach considered in the Core Strategy. The appraisal process has a number of set stages that must be followed, but each stage has been revisited as new information became available.

1.11 For the purpose of the sustainability appraisal process, retail issues have been considered across a range of other topic areas, such as 'accessibility', 'economy and employment' and 'health and recreation'. Therefore, this topic paper has not been a major source of information for the sustainability appraisal scoping report.

1.12 This topic paper contains the information we have used to help us establish the issues for our retail and centres policy. This information has helped us to establish a set of sustainability objectives and sub-questions to tackle these issues - see Section 8 'Our sustainability framework'.

Viewing documents

All documents related to the Core Strategy are available to view on our website at: www.wigan.gov.uk/ldfcorestrategy.

Paper copies of the Core Strategy, Sustainability Appraisal and the 13 Topic Papers are also available at:

Viewing documents

- All our public libraries (except the children's library)
- Wigan Town Hall*
- Wigan Life Centre, College Avenue, Wigan, WN1 1NJ*

** Until January 2012, after which documents will be available at the One Stop Shop, Wigan Life Centre, The Wiend, Wigan, WN1 1NH.*

TWO

Key plans, policies and strategies reviewed

2.1 This section focuses on the most relevant published plans, policies and strategies for retail and centres in Wigan Borough and draws out the key messages for the Core Strategy and Sustainability Appraisal. The key plans and strategies which provide support for policy SP2 are:

National plans, policies and strategies

Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth (2009)

The Government's key objective for town centres is to promote their vitality and viability by:

- planning for the growth and development of existing centres, reinforcing a 'Town Centres first' attitude;
- promoting and enhancing existing centres, by focusing development in and around such centres; and
- encouraging a wide range of services in a positive environment, accessible to all.

There is no longer requires potential retail applicants to demonstrate need for new floorspace for town centre uses. Further weight is now given to impact tests and sequential tests with regards to site selection.

In terms of decision making, relies heavily on having an up to date reliable evidence base. Much of the evidence base work has been undertaken through the Wigan Borough Retail Study. The following requirements are to be considered through the plan making process:

- Identification and allocation of sites for retail development via a sequential approach and impact tests;
- Development of spatial policies to strengthen / identify opportunities for growth;

- Support a diverse range of uses which appeal to a wide range of age and social groups, ensuring that these are distributed throughout the centre;
- Promoting a diversification of uses where town centres are in decline;
- Encouragement of well-designed and, where appropriate, high density development in town centres;
- Taking measures to conserve and, where appropriate, enhance the established character and diversity of town centres;
- Ensure local shopping and other services are well provided for. Appropriate information should be regularly collected in order to monitor the vitality and viability of town and local centres;
- Encourage a diverse range of complementary evening and night-time uses which appeal to a wide range of age and social groups, making provision where appropriate, for leisure, cultural and tourism activities such as cinemas, theatres, restaurants, public houses, bars, nightclubs and cafes.

Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development (2005)

The main objective of this Planning Policy Statement is for planning to facilitate sustainable development. In the context of this topic paper, this is particularly relevant in terms of:

- ensuring that development supports existing communities and contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable, liveable and mixed communities;
- addressing accessibility (both in terms of location and physical access) for all members of the community to jobs, health, housing, education, shops, leisure and community facilities.

Planning Policy Guidance 13: Transport (2001)

The main objectives of this Planning Policy Guidance is for planning policies to promote more sustainable transport choices, promotes access to jobs and services by sustainable modes and to the reduce the need to travel, especially by car. In the context of this topic paper, this is particularly relevant in terms of:

- promoting accessibility to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling

Regional / sub-regional plans, policies and strategies

North West of England Plan - Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 (2008)

The Regional Spatial Strategy forms part of the development plan for the borough, setting the context for our Core Strategy and other Development Plan Documents. There is one retail policy in the document, Policy W5. It sets out a hierarchy of regional and sub-regional retail centres including Wigan and states that retail development should be directed towards town and city centres, assisting in regeneration and economic growth.

2.2 Another regional / sub-regional strategy which provides support for Policy SP2 is:

- **Greater Manchester Town Centres Study (Drivers Jonas, 2010) -** This was commissioned by the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities. It study assessed the relative economic contribution of Greater Manchester's town centres outside of the regional centre, using those identified in the Regional Spatial Strategy. These are Altrincham, Ashton-under-Lyne, Bolton, Bury, Oldham, Rochdale, Stockport and Wigan. The document can help to shape the approach to meeting employment growth needs over the next ten to fifteen years and the role of Greater Manchester's town centres in meeting those needs. The key points from the document are summarised in section 3.

Local plans, policies and strategies

Wigan Unitary Development Plan (2006)

Retail policies are contained within Chapter 11 of the Unitary Development Plan. Policy S1F Retail and Leisure Development Outside Town centres and Local Centres will be replaced, this replacement is in line with Planning Policy Statement 4.

Local planning policies for retail and leisure in Chapter 11 'Shopping and Town Centre Policies' of the Unitary Development Plan. There are policies on hierarchy and role of centres (S1); Principle shopping areas (S1A); town Centres (S1B); Retail

Development - Station Road, Wigan Town Centre (S1C); local centres (S1D); small shops and services (S1E); retail and leisure development outside town centres and local centres (S1F) and retail development - Leigh East ARLFC site, Leigh (S1H). It is proposed to replace only policy S1F, with policies SP2, as set out in Appendix A of the Draft Core Strategy (Proposed Submission version). The remaining policies will remain in force until replaced by a future development plan document.

2.3 Other local planning policies and strategies which provide support for policy SP2 including:

- Vision 2026: Sustainable Community Strategy (2008) **-** Policy SP2 is in line with the 'Ambitious Communities' and 'Strong Community Priority Areas' identified in the Community Strategy.

2.4 There are other relevant plans and strategies that contribute to the retail and centres evidence base. These are summarised in our 'retail and centres evidence review' what is available on our website.

THREE

Other key evidence reviewed

Key sources of information

3.1 This section brings together and analyses the key evidence relating to the retail and centres topic area. It outlines key characteristics, trends, issues and opportunities and supports the policies relating to retail and centres in the Core Strategy. It also gives an overview of the infrastructure and climate change considerations and a summary of stakeholder and community involvement.

3.2 The main sources of information used are:

National:

- High Street Britain: 2015 (House of Commons: All-Party Parliamentary Small Shops Group, 2006)
- Shoppers and How They Travel (Sustrans, 2006)
- Nightvision – Town Centres for All (The Civic Trust, 2006)
- The Real Choice – How Local Foods Can Survive the Supermarket Onslaught (Campaign to Protect Rural England, 2006)
- The Retail Planning Knowledge Base Briefing Paper 4: Neighbourhood Retailing (Institute for Retail Studies, University of Stirling, 2006)
- The Future of Retail Property: Future Shopping Places (The British Council of Shopping Centres, 2007)
- The Contribution of Local High Streets to Sustainable Communities (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2007)
- The Retail Planning Knowledge Base Briefing Paper 8: The Sequential Approach (Institute for Retail Studies, University of Stirling, 2007)
- The Future of Retail Property: Shopping Places for People (The British Council of Shopping Centres, 2007)
- Annual Discretionary Income Study 2007/8 (Ernst and Young)
- The Retail Property Industry: Its Contribution to the UK Economy (British Council of Shopping Centres, 2008)
- Top 100 Retail Parks (Retail Week, 2008)

- Retail Rents 2008 (Colliers CRE, 2008)
- Venuescore Retail Rankings (Javelin Group, 2009)
- Better Town Centres at Night (Association of Town Centre Managers, 2010)
- Midsummer Retail Report (Colliers CRE, 2010)
- National Retail Barometer (Colliers CRE, 2010)
- Retail week: 10 point manifesto for the High Street (Retail Week, 2010)
- Re-imagining the High Street, Escape From Clone Town Britain (2010 Clone Town Report)

Regional:

- The Lancashire Shopping Study (Nathaniel Lichfield Partners for Lancashire County Council, 2003)
- St Helens Retail Capacity Study (White Young Green for St Helens Council, 2005)
- Preston Retail and Leisure Study (Drivers Jonas for Preston City Council, 2005)
- Greater Manchester Town Centre study (Drivers Jonas, 2010)

Local:

- Wigan Borough Retail Study Appendix 1 (White Young Green, 2007)
- Wigan Borough Retail and Leisure Study (2007) with Retail Need and Capacity update (2009)
- Wigan Council Town and Local Centre Vitality and Viability Surveys (2010)

Wigan Borough Retail and Leisure Study with 2009 Retail Need and Capacity update

The vitality and viability of town centres

3.3 The main findings and key points of this study are outlined below, with detailed focus on the main centres in the borough.

Wigan

3.4 Wigan town centre is the largest centre in the borough and is the main centre for shopping, services and employment. The town centre plays a vital role as one of the sub-regional town centres in Greater Manchester. It primarily serves the west and centre of the borough but its influence and catchment area area extends into the eastern parts of the borough and beyond the borough boundary into parts of Chorley and West Lancashire.

3.5 The key issues to come out of the study are :

- In recent years Wigan's rank in the sub-regional shopping hierarchy has increased and commercial yields have decreased, indicating a strengthening retail sector.
- The financial and business service sector is under provided for in Wigan when compared to the national average 9.2% of outlets and 7.2% of floorspace compared to 11.6% and 9.3% respectively.
- At the time of the retail study (2006), the GOAD (Large scale maps showing individual shops and businesses and their names) data for the town centre found vacancies were much higher than nationally 17.1% of outlets and 11.4 of floorspace compared to 9.7% and 8%. In 2010 the overall vacancy rate was 14.5% (Local Data Company 2010) respectively.
- Inadequate customer car parking, high rents / overheads and lack of footfall in certain areas are seen as main constraints by businesses.
- The Grand Arcade has created a number of new vacancies throughout the town as the retail core has shifted towards it.
- The Grand Arcade has been successful in pulling in new retailers and drawing in trade to the town centre.
- Wigan town centre is under provided for by convenience stores.

Leigh

3.6 Leigh is second largest centre and primarily serves the east of the borough. It offers a key role in supporting employment, services and retail. The key issues to come out of the study are:

- Vacancy rates have stayed relatively low over the past few years, highlighting strength in Leigh’s retail sector.
- The convenience, comparison and leisure retail sectors were shown to be strong when compared to national average.
- There is capacity for additional convenience retail floor space both in the short term and medium term.

Ashton-in-Makerfield

3.7 Ashton is the third largest centre and primarily serves the south west of the borough. However it significantly lags behind both Wigan and Leigh in its retail offer and strength. The key issues to come out of the study are:

- Vacancy rates have decreased in recent years.
- Zone A rents (rental values for the first 6 metres depth of floor space in retail units from the shop window) have continued to increase, whilst yields have decreased in recent years, which is indicative of a commercially healthy centre.
- The centre has a high amount of retail service units against the national average (over half of these being health and beauty salons). The amount of comparison retail units is low, which is to be expected given the proximity of the town to larger centres such as Wigan, Leigh, St Helens and Warrington.
- Leakage of expenditure has been identified as the key issue in Ashton it is something that needs to be addressed.

Smaller town centres

3.8 Within the borough there are 6 smaller town centres that serve local catchment areas. The key issues to come out of the study are :

- Vitality and viability in Golborne and Tyldesley is showing signs of decline.
- There are few national retailers (comparison goods) in the smaller town centres of Atherton, Golborne, Hindley and Pemberton.
- Golborne, Pemberton and Tyldesley are dominated by ‘fast food’ and ‘take away’ traders.

The appropriate scales, locations and phasing of new retail developments

3.9 The report made several conclusions relating to each town centre:

Wigan

3.10 In Wigan town centre there is a demonstrable need for immediate additional convenience retail floorspace. Current convenience stores in and around the town centre, including Morrisons, Tesco (Central Parkway) and Asda (Robin Park) are all 'over-trading'.

There is a need for further comparison floorspace in the medium to longer term. Such retail development should take place in sustainable town centre locations or edge of centre locations.

Leigh

3.11 The study suggests a need for Leigh to increase its retail capacity, particularly for convenience retail due to the overtrading ASDA store located on the edge of the centre. Since this study however, the impending completion of a large Tesco super store and associated units on Spinning Jenny Way and a Morrisons super store at Leigh Sports Village will have accommodated this capacity / need. There is a notable need for further comparison goods floorspace in the medium term. It is important for Leigh to maintain its current status in the retail hierarchy and to be responsive to the competition it faces from new development in Wigan, Warrington and Bolton.

Ashton-In-Makerfield

3.12 Ashton-in-Makerfield should be elevated within the local retail hierarchy to become one of the main centres within the borough. Although there is no clear demonstrable capacity for further convenience goods floorspace and only slight capacity for comparison goods floorspace, it would be appropriate to reflect the centre's proposed elevation within the hierarchy to seek to 'clawback' expenditure towards the town centre. Therefore expansion of the retail offer in Ashton town centre is to be promoted.

3.13 The elevation of Ashton in the retail hierarchy can be enhanced by the current availability of several sites within the town centre boundary that are suitable for commercial development.

Smaller town centres

3.14 There is limited capacity for additional comparison and convenience retail floorspace in Hindley and Tyldesley in the short to medium term.

3.15 There is need for immediate additional convenience floorspace in Atherton, however any new developments would need to take into account any improvement in convenience retailing nearby. These include, an enlarged replacement Tesco store being constructed in Walkden (Salford) and an existing permission for a new foodstore in Farnworth (Bolton). Nevertheless, it is important that the Local Development Framework recognises any need so that Atherton can maintain its role as a shopping destination.

3.16 Golborne has an immediate need for additional convenience floorspace, which can be attributed to the ASDA store on the edge of Golborne town centre that attracts trade from a wide catchment area and is 'overtrading' by a considerable amount. As stated previously, the elevation of nearby Ashton-in-Makerfield in the retail hierarchy will have future implications on capacities within Golborne. Currently comparison goods floorspace capacity is seen as limited in the short to medium term, with longer term projections showing a more meaningful capacity.

3.17 Pemberton and Standish both have a very limited need for additional floorspace and the emphasis for these centres should be on maintaining the role that they perform in meeting local shopping needs.

The hierarchy of centres in Wigan

3.18 Data from the Wigan Borough Retail and Leisure Study and the Council's vitality and viability surveys of the town centres has been used to identify the hierarchy of centres in the borough. This is shown in table 1.

3.19 It can be concluded from the key survey data and the retail and leisure study, particularly in relation to floorspace and numbers of units, that Wigan can be classed as our principal town centre and Leigh and Ashton can be classified as our main town centres.

3.20 With specific reference to Ashton, it is clear from the data presented in table 1 that Ashton is under performing when compared to centres such as Atherton and Hindley that have a larger scale convenience offer close to, or within, their centres. Ashton also suffers from a leakage of expenditure to other areas due to this absence of a larger scale convenience retailer. To claw back some of this expenditure, promote more sustainable shopping patterns and realise its full potential it is suggested that Ashton should be promoted from its current position in the retail hierarchy to a main town centre. The promotion of Ashton in the hierarchy will also help to strengthen the centre against new developments in the surrounding areas, both in and out of the borough that could exacerbate the leakage of expenditure.

3.21 The other six centres noted in table 1 can be classed as smaller town centres. Smaller town centres are usually made up of groups of shops often containing at least one supermarket or superstore, and a range of non-retail services, such as banks, building societies and restaurants, as well as local public facilities such as libraries (PPS4, 2009).

3.22 The rest of the small scale centres in the borough can be classified as local and neighbourhood centres because they include a range of small shops of a local nature, serving a small catchment. Typically, local centres include, amongst other shops, a small supermarket, a newsagent, a sub-post office and a pharmacy (PPS4, 2009).

Centre	Conv Turnover (£m)	Comp Turnover (£m)	Units	Floorspace (m^2)	A1 Units	% Vacant 2009	% Vacant 2010	PSA Units	PSA Floorspace (m^2)	PSA A1 Units	Multiple A1 units
Wigan	29.0	253.7	526	121,868	266	16.7	14.5*	334	62,583	199	95
Leigh	13.8	110.5	311	55,859	164	8.7	6.9	156	24,283	107	56
Ashton	9.1	9.9	200	21,885	104	8.5	8.6	79	11,678	50	18
Atherton	31.4	9.7	163	19,521	78	12.9	17.8	85	7,669	53	12
Hindley	24.2	8.4	149	20,834	53	16.1	17.2	67	11,208	33	3
Golborne	3.2	7.0	81	9,055	31	21.0	21.7	25	2,147	16	1
Pemberton	4.4	5.2	100	10,801	56	7.0	8.2	72	6,843	43	6
Standish	8.6	1.6	84	10,315	39	3.6	4.8	26	3,273	12	5
Tyldesley	3.4	2.5	149	16,092	56	10.1	15.0	***	2,301	14	6

Table 1 - Data from the Wigan Borough Retail and Leisure Study and the Council's 2010 Vitality and Viability Surveys

- Comp = Comparison
- Conv = Convenience
- A1 = Retail Uses

PSA = Principal Shopping Area
* Wigan figure from Local Data Company Mid year report 2010
*** no data present

3.23 When looking at convenience turnover in the borough the figures for Atherton and Hindley would appear anomalous. These figures are skewed to show a high turnover for convenience goods because of the proximity of large food stores in relation to their town centres. This is again reflected in a relatively low figure for Ashton, a town regarded as a main centre, which underlines the lack of a larger scale convenience offer in the town centre. The Core Strategy should address this by acknowledging and promoting the elevation of Ashton as a main town centre.

Wigan Borough's retail market share

3.24 The convenience goods market share of the borough is 82% of expenditure generated in the study area for the Wigan Borough Retail Study; 9% of convenience goods spending is directed to West Lancashire.

3.25 The comparison goods market share of the borough is 56% of expenditure generated in the study area. This is understandable given the proximity of Manchester City Centre and the Trafford Centre. Since the study a major retail development has opened in Liverpool City Centre, considerably extending its retail offer as further competition for the boroughs centres.

Growth rates in the Wigan Borough Retail and Leisure Study (2009 Update)

3.26 Growth rates for the Wigan Borough Retail and Leisure Study were derived from the Experian Retail Planner Briefing Note 4.0 (October 2006). These growth rates were the annual rate, from 2006 to 2015. The retail study methodology utilised this up to 2027. The 2009 update shown below is based on the forecast growth rates contained in MapInfo Brief 09/02, which was published in September 2009. Importantly, the growth forecasts take into account the slowdown in the UK economy, which has had a marked impact on the retail sector.

- The growth rates for convenience goods per annum are projected as:

Year	Growth Rate
2008	**-0.7%**
2009	-0.8%
2010	-0.8%
2011-2014	+1.1%
2015 onwards	+0.7%

Table 2 - Convenience Goods - Projected Growth Rates

- The comparison goods market share declined in the short term and should pick up with the projected economic recovery.
- The growth rates for comparison goods per annum are projected as:

Year	Growth Rate
2008	+4.6%
2009	-2.7%
2010	-2.7%
2011-2014	+3.8% per annum
2015 onwards	+4.5% per annum

Table 3 - Comparison Goods - Projected Growth Rates

- The convenience goods market share declined in the short term and should pick up with the projected economic recovery.
- The Wigan Borough Retail Study applies these growth rates to current consumer expenditure.

3.27 The economy had seen growth every quarter between 1992 and 2008, until the economy saw zero growth in the first quarter of 2008. The UK's Gross Domestic Product decreased in the last two quarters of 2008 meaning that the UK was in recession. The UK exited recession in the last quarter of 2009 after six consecutive quarters of contraction (Office for National Statistics).

3.28 One of the more obvious effects of the recession has been the increase in vacancy rates in some of our centres, as shown in Table 1 above.

Accessibility to town centres and retail facilities

- In the survey of Wigan town centre businesses, 78% of respondents saw traffic congestion as poor and 74% saw parking provision as poor. 95% of respondents considered cheaper car parking would improve Wigan and 90% considered reducing traffic congestion would improve Wigan. Most visitors to Wigan town centre arrive by car; this issue should be closely monitored.
- Centres such as Hindley and Pemberton that are formed along main roads are seen to have vehicular and pedestrian conflicts that should be managed. Traffic congestion blights these centres.
- Traders in Standish are concerned by the lack of car parking in that centre. It may be necessary to improve car parking facilities in some centres to keep them attractive to passing trade. Smaller town centres and local centres serve a local residential catchment, many of whom arrive on foot.

The role of leisure and evening and late night economy in town centres

- There are very low amount of restaurants in Wigan and Leigh town centres compared to national average.
- In smaller centres with a large number of hot food takeaways, steel roll-shutters create a dead and unattractive frontage during the daytime.
- There is a deficiency in cinema provision in the east of the borough; Leigh was identified as the most appropriate town to address this and the 7 screen Cineworld proposal on Spinning Jenny Way should satisfy this.
- Leisure provision in Wigan is located outside of the town centre, mainly at Robin Park.

- The new swimming pool, gym, library and Life Centre currently being constructed in Wigan town centre will go towards creating a better evening offer in the town centre.
- Wigan town centre's evening economy is otherwise dominated by the pubs/bars/clubs situated in and around King Street.

The role of freestanding stores and retail parks

- Whilst strengthening town centres is a key policy objective at a national, regional and local level, the function of freestanding supermarkets and retail parks should be taken into account by Policy SP2.
- 10 supermarkets account for 70% of the borough’s main-food shopping expenditure. Almost 40% is accounted for by the top 3 supermarkets Asda at Leigh and Robin Park and Tesco at Wigan. Currently over 60% of Leigh’s convenience expenditure goes to the ASDA at Leigh and over 60% of Atherton’s convenience expenditure goes to Tesco at Atherton. This will alter with the construction of the proposed new Tesco store on Spinning Jenny Way in Leigh.
- Retail parks such as Robin Park in Wigan and Parsonage in Leigh attract high percentages of expenditure for comparison goods, particularly DIY and electrical goods.

Greater Manchester Town Centres Study - Drivers Jonas (2009/10)

3.29 This study was introduced in section 2. It offers a set of recommendations for town centres, including Wigan, in respect of future policy guidance, direction and strategy. It shows in detail the strengths and weaknesses of all the centres in the region and gives an appropriate current snapshot of the Greater Manchester Area.

3.30 In recent years investment attraction and retention has been significantly affected by the increased prominence of the regional centre (Manchester) and the investment driven attitude of policy and decision makers to out-of-centre and motorway-centric development. This growth shift has led to a decline and diminished opportunity in Greater Manchester town centres. In a theoretical ‘Policy off’ environment the trend would point towards further consolidation in the regional centre and decline in our main town centres such as Wigan and Leigh.

3.31 Therefore, looking forward, this document seeks to stem the decline in town centres by suggesting an intervention strategy based upon a key set of principles:

- The reinforcement of the core functionality of town centres.
- The need for a distinctive element to town centre strategies.
- The potential for 'conurbation accelerator' projects, both inside town centres and across districts.
- Accept that there is a new agenda of sustainable development, which embraces not only environmental issues but also social exclusion and economic development, the discovery of a new generation of activity for town centres and to recognise the obsolescence of out-of town development.
- The urgent need to address issues of street management, short term uses, events, marketing and capitalising on committed investments.

3.32 At a local level it is suggested that the key policy challenge for Wigan town centre is to retain more investment and economically active people, both in terms of employment and resident population.

3.33 Suggested opportunities and strengths have been highlighted in the document for Wigan itself:

- Offices could provide a good opportunity, given the right quality is on offer
- The opportunity exists to connect the Pier Quarter to the remainder of the town centre
- The college offers a major opportunity to develop the educational offer
- Evening town centre uses such as a cinema would be a good opportunity as part of a town centre re-development
- The Westwood site is a key area for potential employment near the town centre.

Other relevant town centre studies

3.34 In recent years a number of local studies have been commissioned and completed to contribute towards policy development. The following studies focus in further detail on key centres in the borough and individual areas within Wigan town centre.

Wigan Pier Quarter Strategy (2006)

3.35 This strategy, undertaken by Wigan Council, sets out the planning and regeneration framework for the development of the Wigan Pier Quarter to 2016. The Wigan Pier Quarter is a large area connected to the south of the town centre, which is rich in heritage. The key issues brought out in the report were:

- The current links from Wigan Pier to Wigan town centre and other adjacent areas are poor. Development should seek to improve this.
- Development should comprise an acceptable amount of land uses and be complimentary to the role of Wigan town centre.
- The Queen Street/Caroline Street area has the scope in the medium - long term to become a higher quality mixed use area.

Wigan Town Centre Northern Crescent Masterplan and Urban Design Framework (2007)

3.36 This report was commissioned by Wigan Council and undertaken by BDP in partnership with CBRE. The overall objectives were to consider market demand and development opportunities in the Northern Crescent area of Wigan town centre. The key issues brought out in the report were:

- Further retailers may leave the Galleries and Market Gate centres
- The retail core is shifting towards the Grand Arcade
- The outdoor market is in decline and needs to be addressed
- The study points to Radical intervention in the Galleries and Market Gate centres.

Wigan Eastern Gateway Development Framework(2007)

3.37 This report was completed by Wigan Council in response to speculative development interest in the Eastern Gateway since the opening of the Grand Arcade. The report identifies strengths and weaknesses in the area and the council has proposed a series of measures to manage and guide future development. The key issues brought out in the report were:

- The eastern edge of the town centre lacks a sense of place
- The main streets lack pedestrian interaction and the quality of the public realm is poor
- The River Douglas is in a poor condition, with limited public access
- The area contains a significant amount of derelict and vacant land.

Atherton Centreplan (2003)

3.38 The council's Atherton Centreplan, set out a plan of action to improve and regenerate central area of Atherton. It forms part of strategic policy approachto ensure that town centres throughout the borough are attractive, thriving and successful areas that are accessible to all. The key issues brought out in the report were:

- These are high levels of through traffic in Market Street, however this has been addressed by a traffic management scheme.
- Narrow footways create a poor trading environment.
- A high number of solid steel roller shutters on Market Street present a dead frontage.
- These are poor quality of gateway sites into the town centre.

Hindley Centreplan (2005)

3.39 The Hindley Centreplan, looked at reversing the decline in Hindley's vitality and viability. It promoted a co-ordinated plan of environmental improvements and identifying sites for development which will be beneficial to the town centre. The key issues brought out in the report were:

- There is a large number of vacant shop units.
- The town centre is a vehicle dominated environment with narrow footpaths on Market Street.

Ashton Town Centre Masterplan (2009)

3.40 The Ashton Town Centre Masterplan, by BDP provides the framework for future investment in the town centre. It was developed with input from a range of key stakeholders. It aims to provide a framework for future management of the town centre. The key issues brought out in the report were:

- There are a number of attractive and important buildings that form the basis of the Ashton Conservation Area.
- The town centre is well served by car parking and the local bus network.
- It is an attractive and distinctive town centre and one that offers a wide selection of independent traders.

- High volumes of traffic and congestion along Gerard Street detract from most positive attributes of the town centre.
- There are gap sites, poor quality shop fronts and, in places, poor quality public realm are key issues.
- Several available sites are present within the town centre for development.

Leigh Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan (2009)

3.41 This strategy and action plan, by DTZ sets out a plan to improve and regenerate Leigh town centre. It provides a vision, which is shared by all partners and users of the town centre, to ensure that Leigh fulfils its potential as a thriving centre and contribute to transforming the quality of life for the people of Leigh. The key issues brought out in the report were:

- Relatively low levels of shop vacancies
- Lack of rail links
- Difficult to navigate by motor vehicle
- Town centre and edge of centre displaying vitality
- The four priority areas for intervention are the Civic quarter, the Eastern Gateway, the retail heart and south of the town centre
- The plan highlighted a number of proposals and opportunities for specific sites, identifying a number of development and investment opportunities, and considerations for improvement of traffic management and car parking, pedestrian and cycle movement, environmental quality and crime prevention and security.

3.42 It is anticipated that much of the data and information held will be used to identify specific policies for forthcoming area action plans for Wigan and Leigh town centres as well as providing a strong basis for policy SP2 in the Core Strategy.

National guidance / best practice / research

3.43 A wide variety of literature has been reviewed to inform the evidence base for policy SP2 in the Core Strategy. Below is a summary from the main points arising on the economy, design of town centres, accessibility, evening and night time economy, planning policy issues, consumer behaviour and town centre rents.

The state of the economy

- The UK economy entered recession in the last two quarters of 2008 and exited in the last quarter of 2009, with a number of well known retailers going out of business, such as Woolworths, MFI and Adams who all had a presence in the borough.
- Retailing is undoubtedly going to be affected by the squeeze on consumer spending from tax increases and job losses that are inevitable as the new government seeks to reduce the national deficit (Midsummer Retail Report, 2010).
- Household spending is set for a significant period of retrenchment. Experian forecasts indicate that household spending growth will remain weak, growing by only 0.6% in 2010. In 2011, household spending is expected to improve to 1.8% with continuing improvement expected in 2012 when it begins to return to long-term trend (Midsummer Retail Report, 2010).
- There has been a 1.4% decrease in prime rents over 2010/2011, which is a large improvement on the 11.5% fall in 2008/2009. It is forecasted that there will be a 15-20% fall in rents, in real terms, over the next 3 years and that prime yields will increase, which is indicative of declining investor confidence. Nationally, growth in rents has been at its lowest level since 2001 (Midsummer Retail Report, 2010).
- There is evidence that shows discretionary income has dropped by 15% since 2003 and most consumers are facing rises in household costs against relatively modest increases in wages (Annual Discretionary Income Study 2007/8).

Design and management of town centres

- Evidence shows that in the future it will be important for shopping destinations to have a greater sense of place and that they will need a strong identity to differentiate themselves from competitors (Future Shopping Places).
- There should be more emphasis on shopping experience, with town centres featuring retail combined with leisure uses, with the outcome being a high quality customer experience (Design Reviewed: Town Centre Retail).
- Retail schemes should respect urban morphology, the wider movement framework and contribute to creating a high quality public realm (Design Reviewed: Town Centre Retail).
- Complexity of the urban fabric in town centres, along with land ownership, can prolong the time needed to develop town centre schemes (Focus on Retail).

- It is important that different agencies work together, with the appointment of a town centre manager seen as crucial to this process (Design Reviewed: Town Centre Retail, The Contribution of Local High Streets to Sustainable Communities).
- Public realm strategies, town centre management strategies, area action plans and business improvement districts are identified as tools to deliver successful town centres (Focus on Retail).
- Mixed use schemes are becoming important, with notable schemes in the region at Warrington, Macclesfield and Crewe (The Retail Property Industry: Its contribution to the UK economy). These can help integrate peripheral sites with the rest of town centre and wrap around 'big box' developments (Focus on Retail, Design Reviewed: Town Centre Retail).

Accessibility

- In large scale retail developments, it is felt that the role of the car needs to be realistic, as it is the favoured mode of transport for most consumers (Future of Retail Property: Shopping Places for People).
- In town centres it is felt that schemes aimed at cutting congestion have had unintended consequences in making town centres less desirable for the car borne consumer (High Street: 2015).
- In local centres traders may overestimate the importance of the car because of uncertainty of where customers are travelling from (Shoppers and How They Travel).

Evening / late night economy

- There is a need for a balance to be struck between the economic benefits associated with a strong evening economy and the negative effects, such as nuisance and disturbance. A lot of town centres lack infrastructure to help deal with issues at 'chucking out time' (Town Centre Management Articles – Urban Design Quarterly).
- The evening economy is currently geared towards alcohol. More people would go out at town centres if there was a broader range of activities / places to go. Shopping and other services could be introduced into the evening and the public realm can be made more welcoming for all (Nightvision – Better Town Centres at Night).

- Leisure and catering retailers are now sought after shopping centre tenants, encouraging more out of hours activity in town centres (The Retail Property Industry: Its contribution to the UK economy).
- Mixed use developments can extend the scope of the evening economy, by having an immediate residential catchment in town centres (Focus on Retail).

Planning policy issues

- There is little evidence of flexibility on the part of developers/non-food retailers in adopting formats for sequentially preferable sites. (The Sequential Approach to Retail Development).
- It is felt that there is a lack of guidance on neighbourhood retailing (The Retail Planning Knowledge Base Briefing Paper 4: Neighbourhood Retailing) and a lack of policy to support local food networks (The Real Choice – How local foods can survive the supermarket onslaught).
- Competition assessments in planning policy could put local planning authorities at risk of appeal. It may also be difficult to incorporate competition issues into the development plan (Provisional Decision on Planning remedies).

Changes in consumer behaviour

- The comparison retail sector is shifting towards national multiples in large (regional) centres, placing smaller centres under threat. Centres further down the hierarchy will need public and private sector investment to remain competitive.
- The internet is expected to account for 20% of all retail sales in 2012, which is another threat to smaller centres (Wigan Borough Retail Study Appendix 1, The Future of Retail Property – Future Shopping Places).
- By 2011, sales of non-food goods in supermarkets will account for almost £1 in every £5 spent in supermarkets (Wigan Borough Retail Study: Appendix 1).
- An ageing population will play a part in changing shopping environments (Future of Retail Property: Shopping Places for People).
- Tobacco and newspapers are the only two sets of goods expected to see negative growth in the next 5 years, which will impact on local centres / local convenience stores (The Retail Property Industry: Its contribution to the UK economy).

Retail distinctiveness

- Supermarkets have over 80% of the food retail market – they are therefore able to control suppliers and food producers (Clone Town Britain).
- A lack of diversity means that town centres are vulnerable to company fortunes and changing economic conditions / globalisation (Clone Town Britain).
- Once a 'tipping point' is reached many small shops could be lost instantly as wholesalers no longer find it profitable to supply them, resulting in the urgent need for a review of the market (High Street Britain).
- Threats to independent retail include supermarket domination, regulation placing disproportionate burdens on smaller retailers and lack of information about food and its origins for consumers (The Real Choice – How Local Foods Can Survive The Supermarket Onslaught).

Rents

- Growth in the retail warehousing sector is the lowest for 20 years at 0.16% (Top 100 Retail Parks). In real terms, the region experienced a fall in rents of -1.6%, the national figure was -3.1% (Retail Market Overview).
- Wigan's rents are considerably lower than Bolton, Preston and Warrington and similar to St Helens. Despite this, growth of 20% in Wigan's rents in the last five years has outstripped the above centres (Retail Rents 2008).
- Leigh's rents are slightly lower than neighbouring towns of a similar size, but like Wigan growth of 40% in the last five years has been significant (Retail Rents 2008).
- Since 1987, the gap in rents between Wigan and larger regional centres has increased. Rents in Manchester, Leeds and Newcastle were roughly double Wigan's in 1987, but are now three times more than in Wigan (Retail Rents 2008).

Retail Provision

- In terms of retail provision, Wigan town centre is ranked 105th nationally, out of over 1,000 centres. There was a fall of 29 places since 2008, mainly because the methodology for assessing centres changed to include food service retailers, something which Wigan achieves a low score in.

- Wigan is ranked 12th in the region, between Stockport and Birkenhead. Nationally, Wigan has a similar score to Slough, Portsmouth, Shrewsbury and Islington, (Venuescore Retail Rankings 2009).
- Leigh is ranked 337th.

Climate change considerations

3.44 For the purpose of the sustainability appraisal process, climate change considerations facing retail and centres have been considered across a range of other topic areas, such as 'accessibility', 'economy and employment' and 'health and recreation'.

Key community and stakeholder involvement

3.45 A number of 'key stakeholders' have played an important role in the development of our approach to retail and centres issues. By identifying and involving these key stakeholders from an early stage, we have been able to establish a stronger evidence base and more sustainable policy options.

3.46 The following key stakeholders have been involved:

- Retailers and shopping centre owners
- Adjacent local authorities
- Major developers and landowners
- Wigan Borough Partnership (our local strategic partnerships)
- Community groups (including Townships and Community Network)
- The residents of the borough
- Transport providers.

3.47 These key stakeholders have been involved at all stages of the Core Strategy's preparation including issues and options, preferred options, revised proposals and draft policies and proposed submission. Common themes raised at early consultation stages on retail and centres issues are summarised as follows:

- Competition facing Wigan, with continuing development in nearby centres
- The impact of the economic downturn on development opportunities in Wigan
- The need to maintain and enhance the cultural and leisure offers in town centres
- The impact of transport accessibility (both public and private transport) on our town centres
- How the periphery of Wigan town centre can be joined up better with the town centre
- Certain parts of the borough may be under served by retail
- Whether or not it was appropriate for Leigh to compete with large sub-regional retail destinations
- The need for town centre foodstores
- Parking restrictions placed in centres
- The decline in smaller centres such as Atherton, Golborne and Tyldesley
- Concern about the loss of local facilities such as Post Offices.

3.48 At the proposed submission stage, there were four representations on this policy, one in support. Of the objections, one seeks the inclusion of new town centre boundaries; one considers that the policy wording prejudices the task of reviewing the Wigan town centre boundary in the Area Action Plan; and the other, from Natural England, seeks minor wording changes. The Core Strategy is not the appropriate document to review a town centre boundary in. Furthermore, we do not agree that the wording of the policy prejudices any such review in a later document. As such no changes to the policy are proposed.

3.49 Throughout the consultation process with key stakeholders and the wider public, there have been very few objections to our retail and centres proposals and draft policies.

3.50 Further information is available in our Consultation Reports.

Infrastructure audit

3.51 The table below lists the existing main retail and centres provision in the borough.

Category	Number	Centres
Sub regional	1	Wigan
Main centre	2	Leigh, Ashton
Town centre	6	Atherton, Golborne, Hindley, Pemberton, Standish and Tyldesley
Local centres	25	Aspull, Astley (Blackmoor), Beech Hill, Borsdane, Bryn, Hawkley, Higher Folds, Higher Ince, Lower Ince, Lowton, Marsh Green, Newtown, Norley Hall, Orrell, Orrell Post, Platt Bridge, Scholes, Shevington, Springfield (Park Road), Swinley (Mesnes Road), Swinley (Wigan Lane), Tyldesley (Sale Lane), Winstanley, Worsley Hall and Worsley Mesnes.
Out of centre / retail park	5	ASDA (Golborne), Morrisons (Ince), Marus Bridge Retail Park / Sainsbury's (Wigan), Parsonage Retail Park / Sainsbury's / ASDA (Leigh) and Robin Retail Park / ASDA Wal-Mart(Wigan) Tesco (Wigan Morrisons (Tyldesley)

3.52 A review our local centres, including their boundaries and whether there is a need for a separate tier of smaller 'neighbourhood centres', will be undertaken in a future development plan document.

3.53 The table below extracts key data for the main centres from Table 1 in Section 3.

Centre	Units	Floorspace (m^2)	A1 Units	% Vacant 2010
Wigan	526	121,868	266	14.5
Leigh	311	55,859	164	6.9
Ashton	200	21,885	104	8.6
Atherton	163	19,521	78	17.8
Golborne	81	9,055	31	21.7
Hindley	149	20,834	53	17.2
Pemberton	100	10,801	56	8.2
Standish	84	10,315	39	4.8
Tyldesley	149	16,092	56	15.0

A1 = retail uses
***Wigan figure from LDC mid year report 2010**

3.54 In most centres in the borough the condition of some of the older commercial property stock is a cause for concern. Many properties have suffered from a lack of investment, making them difficult to attract occupiers and creating vacancies.

3.55 Some of the shopping centres in the borough are no longer suitable for modern commercial requirements. This has led to a number of vacancies within these centres. Leisure and cultural facilities are also limited within the borough's town centres.

3.56 Topic Papers 1 'Health and Recreation', 5 'Economy and Employment' and 8 'Accessibility' include other infrastructure issues related to retail and centres.

FOUR
Key messages

4.1 A number of key messages have been drawn from the evidence identified in Sections 2 and 3. The table below identifies these and the most relevant source documents. These key messages have all been addressed in the Core Strategy, particularly by policy SP2.

Message	Source documents
Wigan, Leigh and Ashton-In-Makerfield face a high level of competition from other regional/sub-regional centres. This is because of the proximity of other larger centres, other centres performing strongly, and planned developments.	• Greater Manchester Town Centres Study (2010) • Venuescore Retail Rankings (2009) • The Lancashire Shopping Study (2003) • Preston Retail and Leisure Study (2005) • St Helens Retail Capacity Study (2005) • Wigan Borough Retail Study 2007 & 2009 Update • Leigh Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan (2009) • Ashton Town Centre Masterplan (2009)
There is a need to retain small shops to serve the local community.	• Planning Policy Statement 1 Delivering Sustainable Development (2005) • Planning Policy Statement 4 Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth (2009) • North West of England Plan - Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 • Greater Manchester Town Centres Study (2010) • Wigan Borough Retail Study 2007 & 2009 Update
National retail policy is being driven by town centres first and sequential philosophies where as retailers prefer out of town sites	• Planning White Paper 'Planning for a Sustainable Future' • Provisional Decision on Planning Remedies

Message	Source documents
that are easier and/or more cost effective to develop. This can cause conflict between planning policy and economic aspirations.	• Greater Manchester Town Centres Study (2010) • Planning Policy Statement 4Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth (2009)
There is a need to provide retail opportunities that are accessible by sustainable transport modes, including walking and cycling.	• Planning Policy Guidance 13 Transport (2001) • Shoppers and How They Travel (2006) • North West of England Plan - Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 (2008) • Greater Manchester Town Centres Study (2010) • Wigan Borough Retail Study 2007 & 2009 Update
There is a need to improve the vitality and viability of all centres.	• Planning Policy Statement 4 Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth (2009) • North West of England Plan - Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 (2008) • Greater Manchester Town Centres Study (2010) • Wigan Borough Retail Study 2007 & 2009 Update • Wigan Town Centre Northern Crescent Masterplan and Urban Design Framework (2007) • Wigan Eastern Gateway Development Framework (2007) • Leigh Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan (2009) • Ashton Town Centre Masterplan (2009) • Atherton Centreplan (2003) • Hindley Centreplan (2005)

Message	Source documents
There is a need to improve and diversify the evening leisure and entertainment offer within the major centres.	• Better Town Centres at Night (2010) • Nightvision – Town Centres for All (2006) • Wigan Borough Retail Study 2007 & 2009 Update • Leigh Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan (2009) • Ashton Town Centre Masterplan (2009)

FIVE

Main spatial planning issues identified

5.1 Set out below are the issues relating to retail and centres which have been identified during preparation of the core strategy. Section 5 of the Draft Core Strategy lists the headline issues for the borough.

Issue RC 1

Recent investment has boosted Wigan as a sub-regional shopping centre in the face of stiff competition from other centres. But other parts of the town centre need to catch-up. There is a very limited office market; relatively little variety in leisure, entertainment and cultural activities; and limited food-retailing. Public transport is not 'joined-up' effectively and too little is made of its location on the west coast mainline railway. The railway line acts as a barrier to the south and roads act as barriers to the east, meaning that the centre is not connected effectively with many surrounding areas. There are number of derelict sites particularly in the 'Eastern Gateway'.

Issue RC 2

Leigh town centre faces strong competition from larger centres including Wigan, Bolton, Manchester and Warrington. It performs well in the face of this competition but the retail offer will need to be improved further if it is to continue to perform well. There is also a limited range of leisure, entertainment and cultural activities. However, these issues will be improved by the retail and leisure development at Spinning Jenny Way, Leigh.

Issue RC 3

Ashton-in-Makerfield faces strong competition from larger centres including Wigan and Warrington and performs poorly in the face of this competition. There are a large number of vacant and underutilised sites, parts of the building stock are deteriorating and traffic has a major impact on the quality of the town centre.

Issue RC 4

The other town centres, including Atherton and Hindley provide a relatively basic level of services convenient for their respective towns. There are also limited ranges of leisure and entertainment activities. They have to fight hard to survive against competition from larger centres. There is evidence in some parts of physical deterioration in the building stock.

Issue RC 5

The range of smaller local centres play a vital role in serving the day to day needs of their local communities. Some of these centres have lost important facilities such as Post Offices but continue to provide a vital local convenience shopping function for their local catchments.

SIX

Main infrastructure issues identified

6.1 The infrastructure audit in chapter 3 identifies the current position in the borough. A number of key issues are identified below:

Issue RC 6

In most centres in the borough the condition of some of the older commercial property stock is a cause for concern. Improvements are required to allow these properties to be safeguarded.

Issue RC 7

Some of the shopping centres in the borough are no longer suitable for modern commercial requirements. Remodelling or refurbishment will be required to meet future requirements.

Issue RC 8

Leisure and cultural facilities such as restaurants, cinemas, theatres and performance venues are limited within the borough's town centres.

SEVEN

Main sustainability issues identified

7.1 We have identified key issues for the sustainability appraisal to ensure that it is appropriately focused on what is most important and relevant for Wigan Borough. These helped to inform the sustainability appraisal framework.

7.2 For the purpose of the sustainability appraisal process, retail issues have been considered across a range of other topic areas, such as 'accessibility', 'economy and employment' and 'health and recreation'. Therefore, we have not identified any distinct sustainability issues in this topic paper.

EIGHT

Our sustainability framework

Sustainability objectives and criteria

8.1 For the purpose of the sustainability appraisal process, retail issues have been considered across a range of other topic areas, such as 'accessibility', 'economy and employment' and 'health and recreation'. Therefore, we have not identified any distinct sustainability objectives or criteria in this topic paper.

8.2 For links to 'retail and centres' in the appraisal framework see:

- Topic Paper 5: Economy and employment
- Topic Paper 8: Accessibility
- Topic Paper 9: Built environment and landscape

Baseline position

8.3 Whilst retail issues have been considered across a range of other topic areas, for the purpose of the sustainability appraisal process, the baseline position still needs to be established to provide a basis for impact assessment and monitoring. This is set out overleaf.

Indicator	Wigan baseline	Wigan trends	Relevant targets	Comparisons	Issues / Comments
Retail development in town centres	$1526m^2$ out of $3969m^2$ (2007/8)	$35768m^2$ out of $36166m^2$ (2006/7) $2787m^2$ from $15467m^2$ (2005/6)	N/A	N/A	2006/7 was an exceptional figure as the Grand Arcade was completed.
Average Town Centre Vacancy Rate (% of units)	11.6% (2007/8)	11.6% (2007/8)7.5% (2006/7) 9.9% (2005/6)	N/A	11.2% (2008) UK - Experian Goad Retail Data	There are significant differences between different centres and a percentage figure for smaller centres can lead to changes being exaggerated.
Average percentage of convenience retail units in town centres	7.7% (2007/8)	8.1% (2006/7) 8.1% (2005/6)	N/A	9.09% (2008) UK - Experian Goad Retail Data	In most centres, particularly smaller ones, there has been a shift away from convenience to retail service uses.

Indicator	Wigan baseline	Wigan trends	Relevant targets	Comparisons	Issues / Comments
Average percentage of comparison retail units in town centres	29.5% (2007/8)	32.0% (2006/7) 32.4% (2005/6)	N/A	44.95% (2008) UK - Experian Goad Retail Data	Although there is some variation, every town centre in the borough is below the national average in terms of comparison retail provision.
Wigan Zone A Rents	£1200 / m² (2007/8)	£1155 / m² (2006/7) £800 / m² (2001)	Higher than 2001 figure	N/A	In Wigan rents have increased following the completion of the Grand Arcade.
Leigh Zone A Rents	£550 / m² (2007/8)	£575 / m² (2006/7) £450 / m² (2001)	Higher than 2001 figure	N/A	There has been a slight reduction in Leigh reflecting the economic climate.
Wigan Retail Yields	6.5% (2007/8)	6.25% (2006/7) 7% (2001)	Lower than 2001 figure	N/A	Increasing yields are indicative of declining retailer and investor confidence.

Indicator	Wigan baseline	Wigan trends	Relevant targets	Comparisons	Issues / Comments
Leigh Retail Yields	7.75% (2007/8)	7.25% (2006/7) 8% (2001)	Lower than 2001 figure	N/A	Increasing yields are indicative of declining retailer and investor confidence.

* Wigan Borough Town Centres Vitality and Viability Surveys (2010)

NINE

An assessment of legality and soundness

9.1 This topic paper provides a summary of the evidence required for our Core Strategy and Sustainability Appraisal. The policy in the Core Strategy that this topic paper serves is policy SP2 'our town and local centres'. The purpose of this section is to show that we have produced our Core Strategy in line with legal requirements and this policy is 'sound'.

9.2 Some of the legal requirements are procedural and concern the Core Strategy as a whole rather than individual policies; these are covered in the Self Assessment of Soundness and Legal Compliance document that accompanies the Core Strategy. The 4 legal requirements that are specific to contents of the Core Strategy are:

1. Community and stakeholder involvement
2. Subject to sustainability appraisal
3. Conforms generally to the Regional Spatial Strategy
4. Regard to the sustainable community strategy

9.3 A further requirement is to have "regard to national policy" but this is also covered under a similar 'test of soundness'.

9.4 To be sound the Core Strategy must be **justified**, **effective** and **consistent with national policy**. Compliance with these tests of soundness is assessed against the following 6 'soundness' sub-headings:

1. Founded on a robust and credible evidence base; and
2. The most appropriate strategy when considered against the reasonable alternatives
3. Deliverable, including:

    - Identifying what physical, social and green infrastructure is needed to enable the amount, type and distribution of development proposed for the borough;
    - Ensuring that there are no regulatory or national policy barriers to delivery;
    - Ensuring that partners who are essential to delivery are signed up to it;
    - Being coherent with the core strategies prepared by our neighbouring councils.

4. Flexible
5. Able to be monitored
6. Consistent with national policy

9.5 The remainder of this section sets out the case for policy SP2 against these 4 legal requirements and the tests of soundness.

Policy SP2 Our town and local centres

Community and stakeholder involvement

9.6 The community and key stakeholders including retailers and shopping centre owners, major developers and landowners, community groups (including Townships and Community Network) and residents of the borough have all been involved at each stage of the Core Strategy's preparation. Their views and comments have been considered and have helped to shape the content and direction of policy SP2 and other policies where appropriate. Policy SP2 therefore complies fully with the Statement of Community Involvement in respect of who has been involved or consulted, and how and when consultation has taken place. Details of this involvement are set out in Section 3 of this Topic Paper and within the Consultation Reports.

Subject to sustainability appraisal

9.7 Policy SP2 has been shaped by the outcomes of a robust sustainability appraisal that satisfies the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. The appraisal process was founded on the collection of thorough baseline information about town centres and retail trends and needs and key stakeholders were involved, including English Heritage, GMPTE, local business representatives and town centre managers / forums. The process informed the original choice of policy and subsequently tested it against sustainability principles and objectives. It was then further adapted to address sustainability issues and, as a result, is the most sustainable policy for Wigan Borough that we could reasonably include in the Core Strategy. The full details of the appraisal can be found in the Sustainability Appraisal Report (August 2011).

General conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy

9.8 Policy SP2 is in general conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy, specifically:

- It promotes retail investment where it assists in the regeneration and economic growth of the Northwest’s town and city centres, in accordance with Policy W5;
- It promotes retail investment where it assists in the regeneration and economic growth of our town centres, in accordance with Policy W5.

Regard to the Sustainable Community Strategy

9.9 Our sustainable community strategy 'Vision 2026' was produced in 2008 in line with the Core Strategy timeframe. It identifies four priority areas and policy SP2 is broadly in line with two of them:

- Ambitious Communities; and
- Strong Community.

9.10 Policy SP2 strives to lay the foundations for a prosperous economy and underlines that our centres provide core services and functions that are required and utilised by strong and ambitious communities.

Founded on robust and credible evidence

9.11 Policy SP2 is founded on robust and credible evidence as shown in sections 2, 3 and 4 of this topic paper. This is backed up further by our separate 'Retail and Centres' evidence review document. The key sources of evidence which support policy SP2 are:

- Wigan Borough Retail Study 2007 & 2009 Update
- Greater Manchester Town Centres Study– Drivers Jonas 2010
- Planning Policy Statement 4 Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth (2009)
- Planning Policy Guidance 13 Transport (2001)
- North West of England Plan - Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 (2008)
- Atherton Centreplan (2003)
- Hindley Centreplan (2005)
- Wigan Town Centre Northern Crescent Masterplan and Urban Design Framework(2007)
- Wigan Eastern Gateway Development Framework (2007)
- Leigh Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan (2009)
- Ashton Town Centre Masterplan (2009).

The most appropriate strategy when considered against the alternatives

9.12 The alternatives would be to not provide the policy framework to protect and enhance our town and local centres. This would be likely to result in reduced investment in . of our towns and local centres and potentially more development outside of those centres, impacting on their vitality and viability. Therefore, our approach is deemed the most appropriate strategy in the context of the significant reviewed evidence and wider consultation.

Deliverable

9.13 The key messages brought out in chapter 4 of this document indicate what needs to be addressed in the borough with regards to retail and centres.

9.14 To address these issues and deliver change and improvement in the borough, Policy SP2 has indicated a set of key delivery items. These are set out in the table beneath the policy and include preparing the Wigan Central Area Action Plan and a Leigh Central Area Action Plan; planning applications for town centre / retail developments; and a review of local and neighbourhood centres.

9.15 Alongside the council, a number of organisations including private developers/landowners and town/local centre stakeholders will play a crucial role in the delivery of this policy. We have received no objections from these key stakeholders.

9.16 Neighbouring authorities have been involved at all stages of the policy's preparation. No representations have been received from neighbouring authorities relating to policy SP2 indicating that the policy is coherent with their Core Strategies.

9.17 There are no regulatory or national policy barriers to the delivery of the policy.

Flexible

9.18 Policy SP2 establishes a focus on how our town centres will be enhanced as thriving, attractive and locally distinctive places, which can support a broad range of activities. Within these centres Policy SP2 will support proposals to improve their prosperity. Policy SP2 is not specific on how this will be achieved, subsequent development plan documents such as the Wigan Central Area Action Plan will bring forward specific policies with regards to our centres. However, the strategic nature of the policy SP2 provides direction to new development whilst retaining flexibility and therefore an ability to adapt to future changes during the plan period.

Able to be monitored

9.19 The means for monitoring this policy are set out in chapter 10 of the Draft Core Strategy: Proposed Submission version, specifically:

- Vitality and viability of our town centres
- Health of our local centres
- The proportion of retail and leisure floorspace in edge-of-centre and out-of-centre locations
- The amount of office floorspace in Wigan, Leigh and Ashton town centres
- Progress on the central area action plans.

Consistent with national policy

9.20 SP2 is consistent with national policy with regards to the key documents reviewed-

- Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth (2009)
- Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development (2005)
- Planning Policy Guidance 13: Transport (2001)

TEN

Next steps

10.1 This is the final version of the topic paper summarising and analysing evidence on retail and centres that we have gathered to inform our Core Strategy: Submission Version and the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal.

10.2 Previous versions of each topic paper and evidence reviews are available from the 'Issues and Options', 'Preferred Options' and 'Draft Core Strategy - Proposed Submission version' webpages for the Core Strategy, on our website at www.wigan.gov.uk/ldfcorestrategy. This is to provide a record of what evidence was available at each stage of Core Strategy preparation.

10.3 We may update this topic paper to inform a future development plan document or a review of the Core Strategy.

Emerging Evidence to look out for:

10.4 Work has commenced on the Wigan Central Area Action Plan. An Issues Paper was produced in March 2011 and consulted upon in April-May 2011. A draft Area Action Plan is anticipated in Autumn 2011. As part of the Local Development Framework the plan will provide the detailed planning framework for the central area of Wigan up until 2026 and will help the council make decisions on planning applications. It will also influence decisions about transport, jobs and community and leisure facilities.

LDF

WIGAN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK CORE STRATEGY

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