

## CHAPTER 8: CENTRAL AREAS AND SHOPPING

### Introduction

- 8.1 The traditional and familiar hierarchy of shopping centres in Leicestershire characterised by the City of Leicester at its head supported by the main market towns, district centres, villages and local shops is the product of many centuries of gradual growth and development. It is a pattern of distribution which is repeated throughout the country.
- 8.2 Each centre has attracted a range of shops and businesses proportional to the available market. In the larger centres office uses, additional services and facilities have congregated around the core area generating significant local employment opportunities. Around these centres there has been investment in infrastructure and other facilities to sustain and improve accessibility. In consequence most town and village centres have evolved as the focus for a complex range of interconnecting commercial, administrative, civic, cultural, recreational and social activities vital to the lives of the communities they serve.
- 8.3 However retailing is an innovative and dynamic industry. Over recent years considerable growth has occurred, particularly in the form of off-centre and out-of-centre developments for retail warehousing and supermarkets. These facilities have been encouraged by changes in the distribution of population, increasing affluence, greater personal mobility delivered by wider car ownership and the development of new markets and marketing techniques. New retail developments, both within the traditional centres and outside, have delivered advantages to the consumer in the form of wider choice, improved convenience and competitive prices.
- 8.4 Future growth rates will depend upon the strength and timing of the economic recovery, however recent indicators give cause for cautious optimism. National projections of annual average consumer retail expenditure suggest that very little growth, if any, was experienced over the period up to 1993. Thereafter long term based projections for all goods expenditure indicate growth rates of between 1.9% and 2.5% per annum. Any such growth may be expected to encourage investment in new developments and in the refurbishment or expansion of existing premises.

### National and Strategic Policy

- 8.5 National planning policy guidance on town centres and retail developments is set out in PPG6 revised in June 1996. The guidance reaffirms that it is not the role of the planning system to restrict competition, preserve commercial interests or to prevent innovation. Rather its purpose is to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres, to promote a wide range of shops and services closely located to encourage efficiency, competition and innovation and to facilitate ease of access by a choice of means of transport.
- 8.6 In pursuit of these objectives considerable emphasis is given to the plan-led approach to promoting development in town centres through appropriate policies and the identification of specific sites. In support of this strategy the sequential approach now requires that in selecting sites for retail, employment, leisure and other key town centre uses, first preference is given to town centre sites, followed by edge of centre sites and only then by out of centre sites in locations which are or can be made accessible by a choice of means of transport.
- 8.7 Within town centres importance is attached to the promotion of mixed use development and the retention of key town centre uses. The production of an integrated town centre strategy embracing parking policy, environmental improvement and management coupled with high standards of urban design, has a major role to play in supporting land use planning in the revitalisation of traditional town centres.
- 8.8 In assessing the acceptability of all retail development the guidance clarifies the three key tests as:
- the extent to which the proposal would put at risk the vitality and viability of a nearby town, district or local centre;

- the provision of, or potential for, service by frequent, reliable convenient public transport, together with facilities for access by pedestrians, cyclists and people with disabilities; and
  - the extent to which the proposal would impact on overall car use by reference to its ease of access to all customers and its ability to facilitate more linked trips (ie. trips serving more than one purpose).
- 8.9 The Structure Plan aims to sustain and increase the role of central Loughborough through provision for retailing, allied services, offices, tourist facilities, improved transport systems and environmental improvements. In addition provision is to be made for residential development in central areas.
- 8.10 New retail facilities are to be encouraged to meet the local needs of new development and in existing areas where provision is deficient.
- 8.11 Strategic policies indicate that major new retail development outside existing centres should usually be permitted where it could not be more appropriately located in such a centre and where it would not undermine the vitality and viability of any town centre as a whole. Such schemes must also provide for easy and convenient access by realistic choice of transport and cause no significant harm to the environment.
- 8.12 It is apparent that retail development proposals in and around the City of Leicester will have implications which have no regard for administrative boundaries. To enable the development of a coordinated policy approach towards the management of retail development pressures within the central Leicestershire area the Borough Council in 1994, joined with a consortium of affected local authorities in engaging consultants to advise upon projected retail development needs. Following the completion of that study further work has been undertaken by the participating authorities to devise a Central Leicestershire Retail Strategy, to guide and coordinate local plan policies within the context of identified needs and current strategic planning guidance. The resultant strategy has been given considerable weight in the formulation of policies and proposals for retail development in the southern parishes of the Borough.

## The Charnwood Perspective

- 8.13 The established shopping hierarchy in Charnwood is headed by Loughborough Town Centre. Although the town centre provides a wide range of shopping and related facilities its potential has been limited by the presence within a 24 kilometre radius of three regional shopping centres in Leicester, Nottingham and Derby. However the centre has recently attracted significant private sector investment in the refurbishment and expansion of the town's major shopping precinct (Carillon Court) while the Borough Council's commitment to the continued vitality and viability of the central area is evidence by the erection of the Woodgate Multi-storey car park at a cost of some £3 million. Elsewhere in this Local Plan related policies and proposals are set out to achieve town centre traffic relief and environmental improvements.
- 8.14 The central function of Loughborough Town Centre is underpinned by a network of district shopping centres. Typically these centres also provide a broad range of shops and services, are usually anchored by at least one supermarket or superstore and benefit from associated off street car parking. Such centres fulfil an important function as a focus for the community and are well served by existing public transport routes. They have traditionally served their surrounding communities well and have attracted investment in associated and dependent development. These centres include the Gorse Covert and Shelthorpe District Centres in Loughborough and those servicing the Borough's larger settlements at Anstey, Barrow upon Soar, Birstall, Shepshed, Sileby, Syston and Thurmaston.
- 8.15 At the foot of the shopping hierarchy are various local facilities including linear frontages such as parades of shops usually located in housing estates, small village centres and individual shops.
- 8.16 Complementing the established shopping hierarchy are substantial "out of centre" shopping developments in Loughborough, primarily in the form of retail warehousing.

- 8.17 The stated aims of the overall strategy of the Local Plan towards town centres and shopping are to:
- i) sustain and enhance the role of Loughborough as the principal centre within the Borough for shopping and allied services; and,
  - ii) maintain the vitality and viability of established town and district centres throughout the Borough with additional provision of shops and services to contemporary standards in areas of need.
- 8.18 These broad aims translate into the following specific policy objectives:
- i) to encourage investment in new and improved shopping facilities within existing shopping centres;
  - ii) to provide for diversification and change within established shopping centres while preserving their primarily retail function;
  - iii) to promote new shopping and related central area development through the identification of specific opportunity sites;
  - iv) to harness the economic advantages presented by commercial development opportunities to enable the achievement of planning and highway related improvements of benefit to the wider community;
  - v) to improve the attractiveness of existing shopping centres through effective management and measures designed to relieve congestion, ease pedestrian movement, encourage the use of public transport and cycles, improve amenities and upgrade their general environmental quality; and,
  - vi) to resist development which would:
    - have a damaging impact upon the vitality and viability of a nearby town, district or local centre;
    - fail to benefit from frequent, reliable and convenient public transport services or to provide for ease of access for pedestrians, cyclists and people with disabilities;
    - encourage continued reliance on the car as opposed to facilitating multi purpose trips; and/or
    - be out of scale with the centre it seeks to serve.

## CENTRAL AREAS

### 8.19 POLICY CA/1

**In locations outside Loughborough Town Centre and its associated business and commercial service areas, designated district centres and local centres, proposals for shops (Class A1), financial and professional services (Class A2), non-residential institutions (Class D1) and places of assembly and leisure (Class D2) will only be permitted if the development is small in scale and primarily intended to service a highly localised or rural community need.**

**In all other cases proposals for shops and leisure uses on out-of-centre or edge-of-centre sites will only be permitted if:**

- i) **the need for additional facilities can be demonstrated;**
- ii) **the site's selection meets with the sequential approach;**
- iii) **the development would not, either individually or cumulatively with other development, occasion an impact upon any nearby town or district centre seriously detrimental to its long term vitality and viability;**

- iv) **the development would not undermine the development plan strategy, including that to attract private sector investment in the Loughborough Town Centre Opportunity Sites and the related enablement of the inner relief road;**
  - v) **the development can be accessed conveniently by a choice of means of transport including frequent and reliable public transport and safe and direct provisions for pedestrians, cyclists and people with disabilities;**
  - vi) **the development would ensure easier access to all customers, facilitate more linked trips and assist overall in reducing reliance on the car;**
  - vii) **the development would not cause serious injury to local visual or residential amenity by reason of its design and appearance or operational activities; and**
  - viii) **the scale of the development is well related to the centre it seeks to serve.**
- 8.20 Existing centres have grown with their communities over many generations and provide a wide range of shops, services, public amenities and leisure facilities easily accessible to those communities by a choice of transport modes. The policy aims, in the first instance, to direct development which gives rise to significant numbers of visits by the public, towards established centres in order that they might remain the focal point for the communities they serve and drive the maximum advantage from public investment in supporting infrastructure and private investment in shops and businesses. In furtherance of the overall objective to sustain and enhance established centres, specific opportunity sites for mixed development have been identified in Loughborough town centre underlining PPG6 preference for development within such centres. Elsewhere district centres have been defined so as to include land which might usefully be developed or redeveloped in such a way as to expand or enhance their roles as multipurpose, accessible centres.
- 8.21 Provision is already made for certain large scale “public buildings” in non central locations. Specific examples include educational establishments, the Loughborough Hospital and sports facilities. However, while other large scale out of centre development could impact adversely upon established centres, it is equally apparent that small scale development, typically new buildings or conversions to provide local convenience stores in urban areas or rural shops and services in those villages where there is no discernible local centre, could have no such impact. Indeed such facilities could assist in fostering a more sustainable distribution of shops and services reducing the need to resort to the car for convenience shopping and supporting the rural economy. What constitutes a shop serving a highly localised need will depend upon the type and range of goods sold in relation to the circumstances in any one locality. If a proposed shop would be likely to serve a wide catchment and would compete with established centres it would not be a local shop. As a general guide shopping developments in excess of 400 sqm. net sales area would not fall within this definition and criteria (i) to (viii) of Policy CA/1 would apply.
- 8.22 The policy proceeds to set out the government’s latest approach that requires proposals which would be located at an edge-of-centre or out-of-centre location and which are not in accordance with an up to date development plan strategy to demonstrate both the need for additional facilities and that a sequential approach has been applied in selecting the location of the site. Developers will need to demonstrate that all town centre options have been thoroughly assessed before less central sites are considered for development for key town centre uses. The first preference should be for town centre sites, followed by edge-of-centre sites, district and local centres and only then out-of-centre sites in locations accessible by a choice of means of transport. In the application of criterion (ii), and what will constitute an edge-of-centre site, it is considered inappropriate, given the diversity of centres in the Borough, to refer to an absolute measurement. In each centre a judgement must therefore be made to arrive at what constitutes an attractive walking distance. The ease and convenience with which the connecting route can be negotiated, the character of the link and the commercial strength of the centre are all likely to be material factors. For general guidance a distance of approximately 300 metres is likely to prove acceptable in Loughborough, but 200 metres is likely to represent the absolute maximum in relation to the district centres.
- 8.23 In considering the potential impact of out-of-centre and edge-of-centre development upon an established centre the Borough Council will take into account the extent to which trade diversion would be likely to harm the continued vitality and viability of that centre. PPG6 produces guidance for the measurement of vitality and viability including:

- diversity of uses;
  - retailer representation and intentions to change representation;
  - shopping rents;
  - proportion of vacant street level property;
  - commercial yields on non domestic property;
  - pedestrian flows;
  - accessibility;
  - customer views and behaviour;
  - perception of safety and occurrence of crime; and
  - state of the town centre environmental quality.
- 8.24 These factors are to be the subject of regular monitoring and review in the main centres with the involvement of the Loughborough Town Centre Manager. The Council will be particularly anxious to ensure that public investment in central area improvement is not put at risk before the dividends of that investment can reasonably be realised.
- 8.25 In granting planning permission of out-of-centre and edge-of-centre retail development the Borough Council will attach conditions where necessary to ensure that the development cannot change its composition and character over time to the extent that it would injure the vitality and viability of a nearby town or district centre. Typically such conditions will restrict the subdivision of units into a larger number of smaller shops and/or limit the range or types of goods which might be sold. Limits on the sale of goods will be determined by local circumstances but it is apparent that particular care must be exercised in the protection of those sectors which provide the main stay of town and district centre vitality and viability: ie; the sale of food for consumption off the premises (other than confectionery), clothing (including sportswear), shoes, toys, fashion accessories, books, computer software, recorded music, video and audio tapes.
- 8.26 In all cases where retail development proposals exceed 2,500 square metres gross floorspace, and in other cases where development might be anticipated to have a large impact on a nearby centre, the Borough Council will expect the submission of a supporting statement defining the applicant's approach to site selection, the likely retail impact of the scheme, accessibility by a choice of means of transport, consequent travel patterns and any significant environmental impacts. Such studies are commonly provided by developers but their conclusions are frequently regarded as less than impartial, having been commissioned by the applicant to justify his proposals. To ensure that such studies are impartial prospective applicants are encouraged to discuss their proposals with the Council at an early stage in order that measures can be agreed to secure the preparation of a reliable report upon which potentially far reaching retail development decisions can be confidently based. Ideally developers might usefully agree to the funding of studies conducted by independent consultants selected by the Borough Council to avoid allegations of bias.
- 8.27 Out-of-centre and edge-of-centre development should be accessible by a choice of means of transport. Criterion v) attempts to provide further guidance in indicating that public transport, in order to meet the test of accessibility, is to be frequent and reliable. In the absence of services to an appropriate standard there will be no genuine choice of transport for shoppers and visitors leading to continued dependence upon car based trips. Accordingly, shopping development (usually more than 2,500 square metres gross) and uses attracting comparable visitor numbers, will be expected to be located within 200 metres of a bus route providing a service at 15 minute intervals during the working day (Monday to Saturday, 7am to 7pm) and will be encouraged to provide bus laybys and waiting facilities within the development site. Out of centre and edge-of-centre development of a lesser scale should be located within 200 metres of a bus service providing a service at 30 minute intervals over the same period.

## Loughborough Town Centre

8.28 Loughborough Town centre accommodates a wide variety of uses which combine with shopping to create the diversity of interest and activity necessary to maintain the overall attraction of the centre recognised in its vitality and viability. However the primary role of the centre is retailing and care must be exercised in the control of development to protect and enhance this function without prejudice to the overall ability of the centre to diversify in response to changing trends in the market. To assist in exercising this control two broad designations have been identified within the Town Centre:

- a) a Core Area, where the principal function is retailing supported by other related uses such as financial and professional services and premises for the sale of food and drink; and,
- b) an Outer Area, where additional uses including places of assembly and leisure, non-residential institutions, and hotels and hostels are found, and where the overall shopping function is weaker.

## Acceptable Uses in the Loughborough Core Area

### 8.29 POLICY CA/2

**Planning permission for ground floor development within the Loughborough Core Area, falling within the following uses (as defined by the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987), will be granted subject to satisfactory design and adequate provision for related vehicular requirements:**

- i) shops (Class A1);
- ii) financial and professional services (Class A2); and
- iii) food and drink uses (Class A3).

**Financial and professional services (Class A2) and food and drink uses (Class A3) will not be permitted where they would:**

- a) result in the loss of a shop use in a key location, such as a prominent corner plot or link position;
- b) isolate a significant shopping facility from the remainder of the retail frontage;
- c) exceed 20% of the total frontage or form a continuous frontage of more than 3 shop units or 15 metres within the following frontages:
  - a) The Carillon Court Shopping Centre;
  - b) all frontages to Market Place;
  - c) 1-21 and 35-72 Market Street;
  - d) all frontages to Cattle Market;
  - e) all frontages to Devonshire Square;
  - f) 1-7 Swan Street; and
  - g) 5-20 and 46-65 Church Gate.

**All ground floor frontage development within the Core Area, will be required to include a shop window frontage.**

- 8.30 The consolidation of shopping and related services within the Core area of the centre will conserve and enhance its function and sustain its overall vitality and viability. Banks, building societies and other financial and professional services make an important contribution to the attractiveness of the centre but it is important that they should not overwhelm the retail frontage. Adequate opportunities for the provision of such businesses are afforded within the secondary frontages of the Outer Area. The maintenance of a retail frontage along the principal pedestrian routes will improve the overall interest and attraction of the centre and confirm its role as the principal shopping centre in Charnwood.

## Acceptable Uses in the Loughborough Outer Area

### 8.31 POLICY CA/3

**Planning permission for ground floor development within the Outer Area of Loughborough Town Centre, falling within the following uses, (as defined by the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987) will be granted subject to satisfactory design and adequate provision for related vehicular requirements and provided the amenity of nearby residents is not adversely affected:**

- i) **shops (Class A1);**
- ii) **financial and professional services (Class A2);**
- iii) **food and drink (Class A3);**
- iv) **hotels (Class C1);**
- v) **non-residential institutions (Class D1);**
- vi) **places of assembly and leisure (Class D2); and**
- vii) **theatres.**

**Shop window display frontages will be required where appropriate, having regard to the established character and appearance of the street scene and adjacent uses.**

- 8.32 The Outer Area of the town centre can accommodate a greater variety of uses without harm to the overall vitality and viability of the town centre. Indeed they can provide for a range of complementary trades and services which will increase the diversity and attraction of the town centre overall. Shop type frontages may not always be present but where a continuous shop style frontage survives any new development should complement the established pattern.

## Opportunity Sites for Development

- 8.33 Over the plan period various opportunities may arise for redevelopment or the refurbishment of commercial property within the town centre. The level of investment in such initiatives is likely to be determined by national economic performance and commercial confidence in Loughborough. Locally it is considered that the scale of new housing development now being proposed around Loughborough must attract interest in the improvement and expansion of the town centre to service adequately a growing market. No detailed studies have been undertaken to quantify the volume of additional floorspace which might be supported; rather the Borough Council's approach has been one of attempting to encourage qualitative improvements through investment in the public infrastructure.
- 8.34 Opportunities for new development in the Town Centre are severely constrained by important parkland and areas of housing which closely crowd the commercial centre. These characteristics also ensure that the town retains its market town intimacy and appearance. However there are immediately adjacent to the town centre pockets of underused and vacant land and blocks of property which are likely to become available during the plan period for operational or relocation reasons. The Borough Council aims to take advantage of these redevelopment opportunities in order to achieve qualitative improvements in town centre shops and facilities and to enhance the overall environment, while taking the opportunity to assist in the delivery of the Inner Relief Road.

- 8.35 The evolution of a comprehensive strategy for the promotion and development of the central area of Loughborough has been founded upon two fundamental concerns:
- i) the town centre does not offer the size and quality of shopping units in prime locations necessary to attract the range and variety of retail representation befitting the role and status of the town; and
  - ii) the town centre does not offer the quality of environment or pedestrian friendly provisions now regarded as standard in competing high street locations and purpose built shopping centres.
- 8.36 The common factor bearing upon both areas of weakness is the presence of the A6 trunk road through the heart of the town which discourages investment in the severed portion of the central area and introduces noise, fumes, pollution and attendant risks of accidents into areas of major pedestrian activity.
- 8.37 Ideally the A6 and the through traffic associated with it should be diverted away from the town centre as an exercise in traffic management. Successive local plans since 1971 have sought to provide a solution in reserving land around the town centre variously to allow for the eventual construction of an Inner Circulatory Road or an Inner Relief Road. The Structure Plan makes provision for an Inner Relief Road and elsewhere in this plan the necessary reservation is the subject of a specific policy.
- 8.38 Funding of the Inner Relief Road remains uncertain; currently no provision is made in any programme of public schemes. Public funding might be encouraged if private contributions can be secured from related development. All four opportunity sites might be expected to attract greater volumes of traffic to the town centre and all four might be expected to benefit commercially from an environmentally attractive well serviced town centre. On that basis it is not unreasonable to seek to negotiate contributions provided the obligations are related to the development and reasonable in scale and proportion to the scheme.
- 8.39 Site assembly may well present difficulties on certain Opportunity Sites but the Borough Council has shown itself to be a willing partner in the use of its own land holdings and in the exercise of its powers of compulsory purchase. Incremental development of the opportunity sites is not unacceptable provided the potential of the remainder of the site is neither prevented nor seriously prejudiced. However, the Borough Council will use its best endeavours to facilitate or enable comprehensive redevelopment to maximise the economic advantage to the town centre as a whole.
- 8.40 Any development must respect the market town traditions and character of Loughborough, Despite the colonisation of the central area by national multiple traders the town retains in the fabric, style and scale of its buildings an independent tradition evolved over several generations, some of which contribute a unique sense of place by virtue of their individual character or setting. The open spaces too conserve Loughborough's medieval market town traditions which must be preserved and complemented in any new development.
- 8.41 Over recent years most new development in town centres has failed to make positive use of upper storeys to the detriment of the overall vitality of those centres. In particular housing has been displaced by new commercial development resulting in the de-population of town centres. The Council is anxious to reverse this trend and will expect proposals for the development of the Opportunity Sites to make positive use of upper storeys with particular encouragement for housing and other uses which will contribute to a lively town centre.
- 8.42 Staff and visitor car parking provision will be required, but may be provided in an accessible off-site location either directly or indirectly through the payment of a commuted sum. Alternatively the scale of related car parking might reasonably be reduced where the development is able to assist in the delivery of improved public transport facilities or amenities to encourage walking and cycling.
- 8.43 Two of the Opportunity Sites include public off-street car parking facilities, the capacity of which the town centre as a whole currently can ill afford to lose. However these facilities are owned and managed by the Borough Council which may negotiate appropriate terms and conditions for their disposal having regard to its overall car parking and town centre transportation strategy, using the capital receipts from any sale to acquire and develop alternative car parks as and when opportunities arise or to fund alternative initiatives to encourage greater use of public transport or walking and cycling.



- 8.44 Design briefs will be prepared for each Opportunity Site to indicate to prospective developers the most sensitive elevations and preferred orientation of the primary aspects of any development, having regard to the shape, size and location of the site concerned. The Borough Council will be anxious to encourage higher standards of design throughout such schemes with a view to avoiding the traditional neglect of service areas and car parking. Particular attention will be paid to siting, access, scale, materials, design of openings, roof space and setting within the streetscene. Implementation will be achieved through negotiations with developers and normal development control procedures.

## **Opportunity Site – Devonshire Square, Loughborough**

### **8.45 POLICY CA/4(a)**

**Planning permission will be granted for the redevelopment of the Devonshire Square Opportunity site provided the ground floor uses fall primarily within the following classes (as defined by the Town and Country (Use Classes) Order 1987):**

- i) shops (Class A1);**
- ii) financial and professional services (Class A2); and**
- iii) food and drink uses (Class A3).**

**And provided the development would:**

- a) avoid partial redevelopment where such an approach would prevent or seriously prejudice the redevelopment of the remainder of the defined Opportunity Site;**
- b) orientate primary frontages towards pedestrian preference areas where possible;**
- c) retain buildings which make an individually important contribution to the existing townscape;**
- d) create new areas of open space for repose and public interaction with pedestrian links to Queens Park;**
- e) screen from wider view service areas and storage compounds;**
- f) respect through design, scale, mass and materials, the local tradition of individual buildings sharing common building lines enclosing Devonshire Square; and**
- g) make a positive contribution to the vitality of the town centre; in particular elements of housing should be provided wherever possible and preferably at first floor and above.**

**In addition the Borough Council will seek to negotiate reasonably related contributions to assist in the provision of those elements of the Loughborough Inner Relief Road necessary to service adequately the redevelopment proposed.**

*(See also in particular Policies ST/3, EV/16, TR/2, TR/5 TR/18)*

- 8.46 The Devonshire Square site extends over approximately 1.2 hectares sandwiched between Queens Park and Devonshire Square. The site already enjoys the benefit of a primary retail frontage to the Core Area within the more firmly established sector of the town centre lying to the south of the A6 corridor. As such the retention of the site for primarily retail and allied uses is important to permit the consolidation of shopping uses within a compact and well defined centre in the event that attempts to realise the opportunity sites to the north of the A6 corridor should prove difficult.
- 8.47 Housing and office uses could be appropriate on elevations fronting the park and above ground floor level. A high quality design solution is called for including the achievement of a satisfactory relationship with Queens Park and appropriate treatment of the principal frontages having regard to the character of neighbouring property. In any scheme the

opportunity will be taken to rationalise car parking provision and associated traffic circulation. The Borough Council has indicated its willingness to commit its own landholdings to the achievement of a successful solution.

## **Opportunity Sites – Fennel Street, Baxter Gate and Leicester Road, Loughborough**

### **8.48 POLICY CA/4(b)**

**Planning permission will be granted for the redevelopment of the identified Opportunity Sites at Fennel Street, Baxter Gate and Leicester Road provided the ground floor uses fall within the following classes (as defined by the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987):**

- i) shops (Class A1);**
- ii) financial and professional services (Class A2);**
- iii) food and drink uses (Class A3);**
- iv) office (Class B1(a));**
- v) hotels (Class C1);**
- vi) residential institutions (Class C2);**
- vii) dwelling houses (Class C3);**
- viii) non-residential institutions (Class D1);**
- ix) assembly and leisure (Class D2);**

**And provided the development would:**

- a) avoid partial redevelopment where such an approach would prevent or seriously prejudice the redevelopment of the remainder of the defined Opportunity Site;**
- b) orientate primary frontages towards pedestrian preference areas where possible;**
- c) retain buildings which make an individually important contribution to the existing townscape;**
- d) create new areas of open space for repose and public interaction;**
- e) screen from wider view service areas and storage compounds; and**
- f) make a positive contribution to the vitality of the town centre; in particular elements of housing should be provided wherever possible and preferably at first floor and above.**

**In addition the Borough Council will seek to negotiate reasonably related contributions to assist in the provision of those elements of the Loughborough Inner Relief Road necessary to service adequately the redevelopment proposed.**

*(See also in Particular Policies ST/3, EV/16, TR/2, TR/5, TR/18)*

- 8.49** The Borough Council is anxious to encourage development which could assist in the early delivery of an Inner Relief Road and permit the expansion of the town centre into the less favoured areas lying to the north and east of the A6 corridor. The combined effects of blight, uncertainty and severance from the central focus of shopping activity around the Market Place have resulted in a degree of under-investment which is reflected in the poorer environmental quality of this sector of the town centre. However the three identified Opportunity Sites are strategically ideally located and hold considerable potential for urban regeneration. Accordingly a flexible policy context is considered appropriate to enable a wide

range of uses in any suitable configuration which might assist in the delivery of the Inner Relief Road and associated environmental improvements.

- 8.50 The Fennel Street Opportunity site extends to approximately 2.8 hectares largely based upon the central bus station and adjacent multi-storey car park. Other significant land holdings include the former National Grid depot and stores the County Education Authority's Limehurst School Annexe. The balance of the site comprises a number of individual commercial and residential interests. The commercial viability of the site would be considerably enhanced by the implementation of the proposed Inner Relief Road which could be in part enabled by the redevelopment itself. With the prospect of good vehicular access and ample space for surface car parking the site has considerable opportunity for the development of a successful food store. In any scheme adequate provision will be required for a rationalised or relocated bus station facility commensurate with the future level of service and operational requirements which must be provided before the existing facility is removed.
- 8.51 The Baxter Gate Opportunity Site extends to approximately 1.2 hectares and is largely in the ownership of the Fosse Health Trust. When resources permit it is intended to relocate existing health services to a new unit to be built alongside the Loughborough Hospital off Epinal Way leaving the Baxter Gate premises surplus to requirements. The prospect of direct access from the proposed Inner Relief Road and improved links to the Market Place through pedestrian preference measures greatly enhances the commercial redevelopment potential of the site. It is apparent that Loughborough's image and relative attraction as a major shopping venue is particularly disadvantaged by the limited representation of national department stores and accordingly the Borough Council is anxious to encourage and promote such development. The Baxter Gate site is considered to be particularly well placed to accommodate such a prestigious shopping facility, although alternative development options are not excluded.
- 8.52 The Leicester Road Opportunity site comprises 0.6 hectare of mixed industrial and commercial uses largely held within a single ownership. Vacant and derelict property within the site detracts from local amenities to the detriment of adjacent residential properties and the image of the town centre overall. The potential for beneficial redevelopment is much enhanced by the prospect of an inner relief road. A range of alternative uses will be appropriate provided the necessary environmental improvements are secured.

## Town Centre Services

- 8.53 Adjoining the main shopping areas of Loughborough's Town Centre are a number of areas containing a variety of uses which require or benefit from an edge of Town Centre location:
- i) Southfield Road;
  - ii) Forest Road;
  - iii) Rectory Place;
  - iv) Nottingham Road; and,
  - v) Leicester Road

These areas have differing characters and contexts which are reflected in the range of acceptable uses.

## Town Centre Business Areas

### 8.54 POLICY CA/5

The following uses (as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987) will be permitted within the Southfield Road, Forest Road and Rectory Place Town Centre Business Areas as identified on the Proposals Map:

- i) financial and professional services (Class A2);
- ii) offices (Class B1(a));

- iii) **hotels (Class C1);**
- iv) **residential institutions (Class C2);**
- v) **non-residential institutions (Class D1); and**
- vi) **dwelling houses (Class C3).**

**Provided that in the case of any proposals fronting Forest Road:**

- a) **the existing building line and walls to the street frontage are retained;**
- b) **provision is made for off-street parking to the rear;**
- c) **a shop window frontage is not included; and,**
- d) **no harm is occasioned to the residential amenities of remaining dwellings by reason of noise intrusion, traffic movements or other disturbance.**

8.55 These service areas represent the major business and professional concentrations within the town and are somewhat detached from the shopping centre. The spread of retail development into these areas would conflict with the objectives of consolidating and improving shopping facilities in and around the Core Area and in particular would undermine the viability of attracting major retail development to the identified Opportunity Sites.

8.56 The spread of office and professional uses into Forest Road has to date been achieved without detriment to the established mature residential character of the street scene. Careful control exercised over the form and content of any further development will ensure the retention of this character and protect the residential amenities of remaining occupiers.

## **Town Centre Commercial Service Areas**

### **8.57 POLICY CA/6**

**The following uses (as defined by the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987) will be permitted within the Nottingham Road and Leicester Road Town Centre Commercial Service Areas as identified on the Proposals Map:**

- i) **shops (Class A1);**
- ii) **financial and professional services (Class A2);**
- iii) **food and drink (Class A3);**
- iv) **retail uses falling outside the definition of “shop” (Class A1);**
- v) **business (Class B1);**
- vi) **hotels (Class C1);**
- vii) **residential institutions (Class C2);**
- viii) **dwelling houses (Class C3);**
- ix) **non-residential institutions (Class D1); and,**
- x) **assembly and leisure (Class D2).**

**Provided that:**

- a) **any retail development would not unacceptably harm the retail character of the town centre;**
- b) **no material harm is occasioned to the residential amenities of adjacent buildings; and**
- c) **in the case of any new built development, a built frontage is retained to the back of the pavement to retain or replace the traditional pattern of development and associated street enclosure.**

- 8.58 The Nottingham Road and Leicester Road Service Areas are characterised by a wide diversity of land uses with no overall pattern discernable in their distribution. Typically many uses have occupied and adapted buildings to suit their particular purpose with minimal outlay in achieving a sensitive conversion. The shopping function is fragmented with a high turnover of occupancy and high vacancy rates. Those shops which survive are primarily involved in specialist or niche retailing sectors. The retailing function, already showing evidence of serious decline, is likely to be further isolated by the consolidation of shopping activities to the west of the proposed Inner Relief Road.
- 8.59 These areas will continue to provide a seed ground for new businesses with their supply of relatively inexpensive accommodation but vacancy rates, particularly in Nottingham Road, indicate an urgent need for new investment and this may bring a need also for new uses for land and buildings. A flexible planning approach is likely to lend maximum support to urban regeneration initiatives. In particular the areas are well placed to serve those retail uses excluded from the Core Area but which nonetheless benefit from an edge of Town Centre location. Any new retail use must not, however, harm the retail character of the town centre.
- 8.60 Both Service Areas abut and contain areas of housing and in these localities particular care will be exercised to protect standards of residential amenity enjoyed by occupiers in the assessment of development proposals. Furthermore the current evidence of decay and neglect will not provide an excuse for poor or inappropriate design in any new development: rather it poses a challenge to the restoration and improvement of the town's principal approach route from the east.

## **Pedestrian Preference in Loughborough Town Centre**

### **8.61 POLICY CA/7**

**Measures will be introduced to limit vehicular access and traffic movement in order to give greater preference to pedestrians and to enable improvements to the pedestrian environment within the following streets:-**

- i) Baxter Gate (between High Street and Lemyngton Street);**
- ii) Devonshire Square;**
- iii) Biggin Street;**
- iv) The A6 Corridor (between Derby Square and Woodgate);**

**Subject to the provision of an alternative route for trunk road and cross town centre traffic, measures will be taken to close the A6 at Market Place to all motor vehicles with the exception of buses.**

**In the development of specific schemes the Borough Council will have regard to the particular needs for vehicular access for the emergency services, essential maintenance, people with disabilities, the servicing of shops and businesses, and to private car parks. In addition provision will be made for cycling consistent with pedestrian safety and comfort.**

*(See also in particular Policies TR/7 & TR/13)*

- 8.62 Shoppers in Loughborough since the mid 1970's have been able to enjoy the traffic free environment afforded by the Carillon Court shopping centre. In 1979 Church Gate was pedestrianised with considerable success and more recently Market Place, Market Street and Cattle Market have been transformed to provide an attractive pedestrian friendly town centre during core shopping hours. These schemes will make a major contribution to the continued vitality and viability of Loughborough's town centre in partnership with related initiatives to improve access by a choice of transport modes, town centre management and special events.

- 8.63 As well received as pedestrian schemes undertaken to date have been, new purpose built supermarkets and shopping centres continue to establish higher standards of customer care and environmental quality which traditional town centres must match, or preferably exceed, if they are to remain competitive. To survive and prosper the town centre must emerge as the area where people want to shop rather than remain the area where they have to shop. Further improvements to the pedestrian environment will go some considerable way towards achieving that objective.
- 8.64 Improvements to provide for pedestrian preference and associated environmental enhancements may be undertaken at any time as and when resources permit but will be more effective when opportunities arise through proposals set out elsewhere in this plan to reduce on-street parking and remove unnecessary traffic movements.
- 8.65 Pedestrian preference measures may take various forms but will typically involve a combination of traffic management and calming schemes directed towards minimising the opportunity for pedestrian/vehicular conflict to deliver an environment within which people can move about the town centre freely in a sense of safety and comfort.
- 8.66 Ultimately the provision of the Inner Relief Road will deliver the prospect of closing the existing A6 to through traffic to bring together the two halves of the town centre opening up at one and the same time the commercial potential of the land currently lying on the “less favoured” side of the A6 corridor.
- 8.67 It is however abundantly clear that the closure of all streets at all times to all traffic is simply not possible, nor indeed desirable. Provision must be made to permit access for emergency vehicles and deliveries, while bus services must be afforded the maximum degree of town centre penetration compatible with the wider objectives of the plan to ensure that they enjoy a competitive advantage in the form of passenger convenience and attractive journey times. Special provision is also likely to be required by town centre businesses whose customers require vehicular access, central area residents and the disabled.
- 8.68 The improvements to the pedestrian environment will typically include the provision of coordinated street furniture, sympathetic lighting, directional signposting, appropriate surfaces and complementary elements of hard and soft landscaping. The overall objective will be to create a town centre environment which is accessible and comfortable for all sections of the community including people using push chairs and wheelchairs and the ambulant disabled. Streetscaping schemes will address such issues as the provision of adequate and convenient car parking, the creation of important footpath links marked by reasonably even surfaces and improved access to all publicly used buildings.
- 8.69 It is not intended that all improvements for pedestrian preference should be implemented at once, but rather incrementally as and when opportunities and resources permit, using experimental periods where appropriate. Before implementing any scheme the Borough Council will invite full consultation with all interested bodies including the traders, Civic Trust, Disability Forum, taxi companies and bus operators.

## **Town Centre Management**

- 8.70 Shopping centre management is an accepted practice in the private sector and is a key element in achieving the popular image projected by the contemporary malled shopping centre. The traditional town centre presents an infinitely more complex system being divest of singular ownership and overall executive control and therefore more demanding of sensitive management.
- 8.71 The Borough Council is persuaded of the need to provide a focal point for the management of Loughborough’s town centre and has appointed a town centre manager in partnership with the local business community. The duties and responsibilities of the post embrace contributions to:
- better communication between the private and public sectors;
  - effective liaison and consultation with all town centre users groups and service providers;

- research into retail trends;
  - improved identification and use of resources;
  - coordination of the promotion of the town centre; and
  - more effective achievement of local plan objectives.
- 8.72 The role of Loughborough Town centre as the primary shopping centre in the Borough is supported by a tier of district centres. These comprise the following village and purpose built centres;
- i) Gorse Covert District Centre, Loughborough;
  - ii) Shelthorpe District Centre, Loughborough;
  - iii) Anstey Village Centre;
  - iv) Barrow upon Soar Village Centre;
  - v) Birstall Village Centre;
  - vi) Shepshed Town Centre;
  - vii) Sileby Village Centre;
  - viii) Syston Town Centre; and
  - ix) Thurmaston Superstore and adjacent units.
- 8.73 These centres are anchored by a large supermarket and provide a broad range of services for their immediately surrounding communities and those of outlying smaller settlements benefiting from only minimal shopping facilities. All are served by frequent, regular bus or rail services and as such form an important component in encouraging a distribution of shopping and related services which is both convenient and sustainable. The established town and village centres have long served as a focus for the communities they serve and patterns of land use are emerging around Loughborough's planned district centres which build upon their interdependence and convenience.
- 8.74 The extent of the existing district centres is shown on the Proposals Map. Consolidation and improvement of these centres will ensure that they retain and enhance their overall vitality and viability for the benefit of the communities they serve.

## Acceptable Uses in District Centres

### 8.75 POLICY CA/8

**Planning permission for development within the designated district centres falling within the following uses (as defined by the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987) will be granted subject to satisfactory design and adequate provision for related vehicular requirements:-**

- i) **shops (Class A1);**
- ii) **financial and professional services (Class A2);**
- iii) **food and drink uses (Class A3);**
- iv) **business (Class B1);**
- v) **dwelling houses (Class C3);**
- vi) **non-residential institutional uses (Class D1);**
- vii) **assembly and leisure (Class D2).**

**Any development proposal should serve to protect or enhance the vitality and viability of the centre, be of a scale appropriate to the centre and not result in the marginalisation or fragmentation of the retail function of that centre.**

- 8.76 A variety of uses will be appropriate in district centres to serve the needs of local communities, including shops, financial and professional services, food and drink, business, residential, non-residential and leisure uses. But, whilst a range of uses can help to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of a centre the result of too many non-retail uses can be a serious decline in a centre's overall health and vibrancy. What constitutes a healthy balance of retail and other uses will be dependent upon the circumstances of that particular centre. When applications, are submitted for new uses within district centres, account will be taken of the current mix of uses and how this has shifted over time, including the number and proportion of under-used and vacant premises. Permission for new uses will only be granted if they would help to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of a centre and would not marginalise or fragment its retail function. Any proposals must also be acceptable in design and access terms.

## Local Centres

- 8.77 Local centres comprise small urban shopping parades and minor village centres which primarily serve the day to day needs of the local community. Their local role is such that a high proportion of customers will tend to shop on foot.
- 8.78 Several villages have experienced already a severe contraction in the retail function of their centres. Although the remaining shops serve an important purpose, particularly for people without access to private transport, their future viability will depend upon the extent to which local people continue to patronise them. Development which will support local centres will normally be permitted. Policy CA/1 will apply to proposals to change the use of a local shop to other uses.

## Acceptable Uses in Local Centres

### 8.79 POLICY CA/9

**Planning permission for development within the designated local centres falling within the following uses (as defined by the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987) will be granted subject to satisfactory design and adequate provision for related vehicular requirements:-**

- i) **shops (Class A1);**
- ii) **financial and professional services (Class A2);**
- iii) **food and drink (Class A3);**
- iv) **business (Class B1);**
- v) **dwelling houses (Class C3); and**
- vi) **non-residential institutions (Class D1).**

**Provided that:-**

- a) **sufficient shops remain to serve the daily needs of the locality;**
- b) **a shop window frontage is included or retained where the appearance of the overall frontage is primarily retail in character;**
- c) **any non shopping element does not prejudice the viability and attractiveness of the local centre as a shopping centre; and**
- d) **the scale of the development is well related to the size of the centre.**

**In the case of food and drink uses (Class A3) planning permission will not be granted where the development would have an adverse impact upon neighbouring residential amenities by reason of cooking odours, noise or other disturbance particularly during unsociable hours.**



**Assembly and leisure uses (Class D2) will be permitted only where they comply with the above requirements, avoid any adverse impact upon neighbouring residential amenities and can be shown to serve the needs of the immediate community alone and would not attract significant patronage from outside the locality.**

- 8.80 Many local centres are typified by a loose grouping of shops and related services, local surgeries, community buildings and housing. Especially in the villages there is little consolidation of retail uses. While planning policies must allow for this variable diverse pattern of land use care must be exercised to protect residential amenities. In local centres development should be well related to the centre in terms of its scale in order that it does not encourage more and longer journeys, especially by car.

## **New Local Centres**

### **8.81 POLICY CA/10**

**Planning permission will be granted for the provision of new local centres in association with major housing commitments and allocations in the following locations:**

- i) land south of Hazel Road, Loughborough; and**
- ii) land north of Harrowgate Drive, Wanlip.**

**In each case the development concerned will be required to meet the following criteria:**

- a) the overall scale, content and character of the local centre should not have any detrimental impact upon Loughborough town centre or any of the Borough's designated district centres;**
- b) the local centre must be designed as an integral and focal part of the wider development scheme on a site easily accessed by pedestrians and cyclists as well as motorists, and adjacent to public transport routes;**
- c) the local centre must be located in close association with other community buildings such as schools, meeting halls and leisure facilities; and**
- d) car parking areas must be landscaped to enhance amenity and afford natural screening from wider view;**
- e) an area within the local centre, easily accessible from the main concourse but screened from wider view must be laid out and retained for the purposes of providing for a waste materials recycling collection bay.**

*(See also in particular Policies ST/3, TR/5, TR/18)*

- 8.82 The present distribution of shopping provision in the Borough is generally adequate in relation to the needs of the various settlements within the Plan Area. However, where major new housing development is to take place there is likely to be a need for additional local shopping provision.
- 8.83 The majority of Charnwood's outstanding housing requirement is to be provided by means of two major residential developments. The Proposals Map identifies broad locations for the provision of new local shopping centres in association with these developments but their precise location will be determined following the preparation of detailed site layouts. It is essential that any new shopping proposal should only be of a scale necessary to serve local needs so as to avoid any detrimental impact upon the vitality and viability of Loughborough Town Centre or any district centre.

## Use of Upper Floors

### 8.84 POLICY CA/11

Within Loughborough Town Centre and its associated service areas, district centres and local centres planning permission will be granted for the following uses (as defined by the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987) of upper floors, subject to the retention of residential amenities where adjacent property continues to be occupied:

- i) shops (Class A1);
- ii) financial and professional services (Class A2);
- iii) food and drink uses (Class A3);
- iv) offices (Class B1(a));
- v) dwellings (Class C3);
- vi) non residential institutions (Class D1); and
- vii) assembly and leisure uses (Class D2).

Planning permission for new built development within the centres listed above will be granted provided that the development is of a scale appropriate to the centre it seeks to serve, and subject to the provisions set out above and to the inclusion of positive proposals for the use of premises at first floor and above which will contribute to the vitality and viability of the centre. In particular elements of housing should be provided wherever possible.

- 8.85 Within many commercial centres space above the ground floor is often vacant or underused, especially in shops which have formerly been dwellings. This property represents an underused resource and the neglect of upper storeys is often evident in the deterioration of the fabric of buildings above the fascia level to the detriment of the overall townscape quality.
- 8.86 The positive use of upper floors has economic, environmental, social and financial benefits since it can supplement the income from ground floor uses to permit investment in the property overall and thereby promote urban regeneration.
- 8.87 The use of upper floors for residential purposes in particular offers a source of affordable housing for the repopulation of central areas returning life and activity outside normal business hours and encourages the natural surveillance of property. The Borough Council has sought to actively pursue the reoccupation of vacant upper floors in partnership with property owners and local Housing Associations under the "Living over the Shop" campaign. However in pursuing the policy the Borough Council will be mindful of the need to avoid conflict with security and servicing of ground floor businesses. In particular it is recognised that in some circumstances the provision of housing above banks, buildings societies and other financial services would be unsuitable where adequate security measures cannot be incorporated into the overall design and construction.
- 8.88 New housing provision above ground floor uses will be specifically sought in the development of the Opportunity Sites identified in Loughborough Town Centre in compliance with Structure Plan policies to make provision for residential development in central areas.

## Shop Front Design

### 8.89 POLICY CA/12

In granting planning permission for shop fronts in new buildings the Borough Council will require that they be designed as an integral part of the overall frontage having regard in particular to the style, materials and proportions of the building and to the overall character of the area.

**Replacement shop fronts will be permitted provided they maintain or improve the appearance of the frontage into which they will be placed and relate well to surrounding buildings and the wider street scene. Shop fronts will be required to reflect the architectural composition of the existing frontage, particularly where a commercial ground floor user crosses several facades of differing character.**

*(See also in particular Policy EV/16)*

- 8.90 Poorly designed and unsympathetic shop fronts can substantially damage the character and appearance of shopping areas. In other policies of this plan the Borough Council is seeking to improve, through pedestrian preference and other measures, the visual attractiveness of the Borough's shopping areas. These policies aim to ensure that the design of new and replacement shop fronts does not detract from these wider initiatives. Where older shop fronts, designed as an integral part of the building, survive intact in a good condition, they should normally be retained.

## **Shop Front Security**

### **8.91 POLICY CA/13**

**Planning permission for the fitting of roller shutters and security grills will be granted provided that all the fittings are colour coated to match the shop front, designed to be unobtrusive during hours of business and allow visibility into the shop when in place.**

- 8.92 Proposals for security fittings which would have an adverse effect on the character or appearance of a listed building or conservation area will normally be refused.
- 8.93 Whilst the need for security is recognised, the Borough Council is concerned about the visual impact of externally fitted shutters and grills on the streetscene. Poorly designed, they can be particularly obtrusive and can have a deadening effect on the character and vitality of shopping areas.

## **Amusement Centres**

### **8.94 POLICY CA/14**

**Amusement centres will be permitted only within Loughborough Town Centre, the town centre service areas off Nottingham Road and Leicester Road and within district and local centres provided that:**

- i) they are not located within the primary frontages of the Town Centre Core Area;**
- ii) they would not exceed the non-shopping frontage allowances specified in relation to the relevant policy area;**
- iii) they would not cause any detriment to the amenities of adjacent housing, schools, churches, hospitals or hotels by reason of noise, or other disturbance particularly after 6pm and during weekends and public holidays; and,**
- iv) a shop window frontage is provided and a window display of visual interest is maintained.**

**Amusement centres will not be permitted in other locations.**

- 8.95 Amusement centres will normally be acceptable in areas of mixed commercial development where noise and other disturbance generated by the use and its clientele will not result in any nuisance to neighbouring residential or institutional premises. They will not be acceptable in locations where the juxtaposition of residential and commercial uses would not be conducive to the integration of an amusement centre. Nor will they be acceptable in the primary shopping frontages listed in Policy CA/2 or in other locations where they would fragment or marginalise the retail function to an unacceptable degree.

## Farm Shops

### 8.96 POLICY CA/15

Planning permission for the establishment of farm shops will be granted provided:

- i) the shop is ancillary to the main agricultural enterprise;
- ii) the shop is accommodated within an existing building, or where this cannot be achieved for reasons of limited space, hygiene or operational safety, any additional development is located adjacent to buildings on the site;
- iii) adequate site access arrangements can be made;
- iv) adequate provision is made within the site for customer car parking and servicing;
- v) the development would not undermine the commercial viability of an existing village shop which is better placed to service the needs of its surrounding community; and
- vi) the development would not by reason of its scale or character give rise to additional traffic on local roads to the detriment of rural amenities or generate significant single purpose trips by private car.

8.97 Planning permission is not required where farm produce is sold from the holding on which it is produced. In other circumstances planning permission will be required. Farm shops can help to meet demand from consumers who want fresh produce at the point of production and contribute to diversity in the rural economy. However farm shops should be associated with existing agricultural enterprises and buildings and should not appear as overtly commercial in a rural setting. Nor should farm shops be permitted to undermine the viability of existing village shops which are otherwise well located to serve local communities without the need to rely on the private car for local shopping trips.

8.98 While farm shops can encourage diversity of economy activity in rural areas they may, if not carefully controlled, give rise to excessive traffic movements on rural roads. Such traffic is likely to be seriously damaging to the character and ambience of the countryside and represents a profligate use of non renewable energy resources, contrary to the aim of encouraging sustainable development and growth.

## Out of Centre Retailing

8.99 Over recent years there has been significant growth in the out of centre retail sector as evidenced by the development of retail warehouses and suburban supermarkets. In previous local plans the Borough Council has sought to make provision for such development through the allocation of specific sites which have subsequently been granted planning permission.

8.100 In Loughborough the demand for out of centre supermarkets has been harnessed successfully to enable the development of an entirely new district centre at Gorse Covert and to revitalise an ageing district centre at Shelthorpe. Each centre is designed to service major areas of residential growth at the margins of the County Town. A new district centre has similarly been achieved at Thurmaston with the intention of servicing the growing communities within the Wreake Valley.

8.101 Retail warehouse development has been concentrated primarily within Loughborough, initially in the form of free standing units on industrial estates and more latterly in purpose built retail warehouse parks. Some 9,000m<sup>2</sup> (gross) have been developed within the Willowbrook Retail Park and a further 11,000m<sup>2</sup> (gross) has been developed on a 3ha site situated at Jubilee Drive. The Borough Council has sought to impose conditions restricting the sub division of units and the range of goods which might be sold in order to protect the vitality and viability of nearby shopping centres.

- 8.102 These developments have undoubtedly improved the range and choice of goods available to the consumer and provided for convenient and efficient shopping facilities, particularly for those with access to the private car. Furthermore it is clear that Loughborough and the other traditional shopping centres within the Borough simply could not have accommodated growth on this scale.
- 8.103 However the whole thrust of government advice is now directed towards the promotion of new shopping development within town centres and support for local and neighbourhood centres. These objectives and the principles of the sequential approach to site selection for retail development are incorporated in Policy CA/1. All proposals for new out of centre retail development and for the change of use or variation of conditions in respect of existing facilities will be evaluated against that policy.