



The Plan for Stafford Borough Part 2

Examination Statement – Issue 7 – Retail Boundaries

June 2016

Issue 7: Retail Boundaries

7.1. In view of the requirements of PSB1 policy E8, should PSB2 define retail frontages and if so, what should be the appropriate policy wording?

- 7.1.1 Paragraphs 3.1 to 3.3 of the Plan for Stafford Borough Part 2 Publication sets out the Council's position regarding retail boundaries (P2-A1). In terms of the national policy context it is noted that specific retail frontage policies are not explicitly required by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Paragraph 23 of the NPPF (P2-F1) requires Local Authorities to *'define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas, based on a clear definition of primary and secondary frontages in designated centres, and set policies that make clear which uses will be permitted in such locations.'*
- 7.1.2 The Borough Council has identified the extent of the town centres and primary shopping areas at Stafford and Stone within the adopted Plan for Stafford Borough (P2-C3). Adopted Policy E8 makes clear which uses will be acceptable in these locations, and provides a range of mechanisms by which the Council will manage development in the town centres, with the aim of promoting their vitality and viability. Policy E8 guides development by retail area rather than by retail frontages, with paragraph 9.30 stating that the primary and secondary frontages for Stafford and Stone will be identified in the Plan for Stafford Borough Part 2.
- 7.1.3 The Background Paper on Retail Boundaries and Frontages (P2-G20) was produced as part of the preparation of the Plan for Stafford Borough Part 2 (herein referred to as Part 2). Section 5 of this paper assesses the need for a Primary and Secondary Frontages policy, and includes a table that summaries the advantages and disadvantages of adopting such a policy. This table was also included in the Proposals Document which was consulted upon in June and July 2015 (P2-G1 Table 17).
- 7.1.4 The Council sought views on the concept of identifying Primary and Secondary Frontages, through the Part 2 Proposals Document (P2-G1) which identified primary and secondary frontages for Stafford and Stone, with Question 47 of the Proposals Document asking whether a specific policy was required to identify such frontages.
- 7.1.5 A response was received that supported not advocating the identification of Primary and Secondary Frontages, for the reasons set out in Table 17 of the Proposals document (P2-G1). Further responses were received from Stone Town Council and Stone Independents Group with regard to identifying more secondary frontages in Stone.
- 7.1.6 Following receipt of the responses to the Proposals Document, and taking into account the background paper prepared (P2-G20), the Council concluded that identifying frontages may restrict flexibility and could have a negative impact upon the vitality and viability of Stafford and Stone Town Centres as explained at paragraph 3.3 of the Part 2 Publication Document (P2-A1). Regarding the decision not to include a specific policy

on Primary and Secondary Frontages, no representations were received as part of the formal consultation stage on the Part 2 Publication (P2-A1).

7.1.7 Adopted Plan Policy E8 (P2-C1) provides a clear strategic framework to define and strengthen the role, and enhance the vitality and viability of Stafford and Stone Town Centres, and other local centres across the Borough. This policy approach helps reinforce the dominant role of Stafford and Stone Town Centre as key retail centres, providing new retail floor space and new jobs while increasing the vitality in Stafford Borough. A key part of this strategy is to ensure flexibility within town centres to meet the changing nature of uses to maintain vitality and viability. The boundaries of Stafford and Stone Town Centres, including the primary shopping areas are defined in the Plan for Stafford Borough - Policies Map and the Stafford Inset Map and Stone Inset Map. These boundaries have been drawn based on knowledge of the location of appropriate town centres uses, whilst providing scope for estimated future needs to be met within those boundaries, in accordance with the approach set out in NPPF paragraphs. 23 and 24 (P2-F1).

7.1.8 Adopted Policy E8 is consistent with paragraph 23 of the NPPF (P2-F1), which recognises town centres as the heart of their communities. It defines a network and hierarchy of centres for the Borough, comprising town and local centres, together with village and neighbourhood shops. Policy E8 defines the extent and primary uses of each town, local and other centres. In accordance with NPPF para. 23, this promotes the individuality of town, local and other centres.

7.1.9 Within the context of Policy E8 the Borough Council does not consider it is necessary to define retail frontages. The adopted Plan Policy E8 provides a strategy for increasing vitality, and enhancing the role of town and local centre across Stafford Borough. The provision of defined retail frontages, which could restrict the flexibility of uses within the town centres, is not considered appropriate.