Maryport Town Centre Review 2012

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1. Introduction

As part of the preparation of the Local Development Framework Allerdale Borough Council will be reviewing its existing policy with regards to Town Centres and retail development. As part of this review, the Council will set locally distinctive policies in relation to:

- the definition of boundaries and frontages within its town centres; and
- the floorspace threshold for scale of edge-of-centre and out-of-centre development which should be subject to an impact assessment.

This document summarises the investigative work carried out as part of this review and highlights relevant evidence that will be used to inform the preparation of these new policies, from the following sources:

- Town Centre Health Checks (2011)
- West Cumbria Retail Study (2009)
- Site visits (October/November 2011)

2. National Policy

Whilst the Draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is currently under consultation, Planning Policy Statement 4 (PPS4) remains the extant national policy.

The Government recognises that town centres are important places for communities. Planning Policy Statement 4 (PPS4) states that the principal objective of national policy for town and other centres is to promote their vitality and viability. This means ensuring that existing centres are alive and busy, at different times of the day and evening throughout the week, and that they are attractive to businesses and investors both economically and environmentally. In order that polices may be set which protect and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres, it is necessary that the spatial boundaries and physical limits of the centres are defined and documented.

PPS4 states that Local Planning Authorities (LPA) should clearly outline the extent of town centres within their plan area, within which realistically defined primary and secondary frontages can be set. Once defined, it should be made clear which uses will be permitted in such locations.

PPS4 also states that LPA’s should consider setting locally distinctive thresholds, to which the impact test (EC16.1) would apply for proposals in edge-of-centre or out-of-centre locations. Where a local threshold is not set, PPS4 requires impact
assessments to be submitted for retail and leisure developments over 2,500sq.m gross.

Whilst Planning Policy Statement 4 (PPS4) remains the extant national policy, the Draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is currently under consultation and expected to be adopted in spring 2012. It is therefore important to consider the emerging national policy direction from this document.

The draft NPPF maintains the current ‘town centre’s first’ principle and continues to direct LPA’s to define town centre boundaries and frontages. It also recommends the introduction of a locally defined threshold to which the Impact assessment should apply. Therefore, at present, there is no indication of a shift in national policy and this review of town centre boundaries, frontages and thresholds is considered relevant and necessary in the course of the preparation of the LDF.

3. Local Policy

3.1 Cumbria & Lake District Joint Structure Plan (JSP) - 2001 - 2016

The JSP recognises the importance of mixed uses within town centres and sets out policies which seek to secure and promote the sustainability of communities. The sequential approach for retail and leisure development in edge or out-of-centre locations is supported, however the requirements for compliance are mainly related to the assessment of ‘need’ which has now been revoked from national policy and accessibility issues.

3.2 Allerdale Local Plan (1999)

The Allerdale Local Plan (1999) follows the ‘town centre’s first’ approach as based upon national guidance at the time of its production (PPG6 - 1996). As such existing local town centre policies relate mainly to the development of retail and shopping services and do not refer to other relevant town centre uses such as leisure, culture or office developments.

Policy RG2 sets out the need for sequential assessments of out-of-centre retail development, however the requirements for compliance relate mainly to shopping services and accessibility. There are currently no thresholds set for the requirement of an impact assessment and the test is not required for leisure, cultural or office developments.

Policies RG7 - RG10 relate to the town centre as a whole and cover issues relating to non-retail uses; cultural and leisure facilities and use of upper floors within town centres. As in line with the national policy direction of the time, the main focus of
the policies within the Local Plan is upon the protection of the retail presence within the town centre. It is therefore considered that these policies are now out of date and require a full review.

Policy MRG2 allocates a small area north of Maryport town centre for the siting of a street market. This allocation was never taken up for the location of a street market and it is considered that the site would now be inappropriate. The future allocation of a street market within Maryport is discussed in Section 9.
4. Maryport Town Centre - Existing Boundary & Uses

The existing Maryport town centre boundary, as defined by the Allerdale Local Plan (1999), focuses on the main shopping streets of Senhouse Street and Crosby Street, with clusters of shops around the junction of Wood Street and extends along the Curzon Street frontage to incorporate the Co-Op supermarket.

Evidence gathered as part of the Allerdale Town Centres Health Check (2011) provides up to date information regarding the existing distribution of uses throughout Maryport town centre. When recorded spatially, the data can be used to create a table of ground floor units by different use types for individual streets. This process allows an initial identification of the town centre boundary. Higher proportions of A1 retail uses will suggest the areas suited to primary frontage policies. Areas with a higher diversity of uses will be identifiable for secondary frontages.

Figure 4.1 - Existing town centre boundary as defined in Allerdale Local Plan (1999).
Figure 2 - Existing distribution of uses in Maryport Town Centre (Allerdale Town Centres Health Check 2011)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Street and Cross Street</th>
<th>Units</th>
<th>% of Total (186)</th>
<th>Av Floorspace - sq.m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Curzon Street</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Senhouse Street</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Crosby Street / Wood Street</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Assessment of Maryport Town Centre 2011

This section sets out the council’s assessment of existing town centre boundaries informed by evidence gathered through the Town Centre Health Checks (2011) and site visits carried out in October 2011.

5.1 Northern Boundary

The current northern town centre boundary is complex as there are no clear or logical limits, however, evidence suggests that there is potential to re-define the boundaries to better reflect current use. The area extending along High Street continues to be primarily residential and there is little to suggest extending the boundary into this zone. Town centre uses such as retail and drinking establishments remain important along Crosby Street, however, the west side of the road adjacent to Wood Street is predominantly residential with a character suggesting revision to tighten boundary around this area. The far east of the area around the corner of Curzon Street and Wood Street includes a parade of retail and cafes suggesting that the boundary could be extended to take in this section of town. Likewise the north side of Wood street opposite the parade includes a diversity of use classes and although there are several vacant units, if these were filled, the volume of units would generate a critical mass suggesting further extension of the town centre in this zone. In extending the boundary in this corner careful consideration has been given to the area along Church Street as it includes several potential small development sites, in addition to new residential units and a telephone exchange. While the character of Church Street is not overly dominated by retail or other town
centre uses the area could have the potential to provide development land and its inclusion would round off the north eastern edge of the revised town centre.

5.2 Eastern Boundary

Figure 5.2 – Curzon Street to Selby Terrace

This area to the east of the currently defined town centre offers the potential to expand the centre as a gateway the railway station. However desirable this may be, the clear change of use classes either side of Curzon Street present a clear and relatively straightforward boundary. Furthermore, the majority of the area is residential with a limited retail offer on Curzon Street opposite Senhouse Street and a garage in the far south of the area. The area also hosts a church in the south and health care facilities in far east on the intersect between Senhouse and Selby Street. The clear difference in use and character suggests that the area should remain outside the town centre limits.

5.3 Southern Boundary
The current boundary does not extend south of Senhouse Street, except along Curzon Street including the Co-op supermarket adjacent to the River Ellen. Much of the area is residential, with mainly terraced properties along and between High Street, Selby Street and Furnace Lane. In addition to the residential units the area also includes a car park serving the town centre extending from the supermarket in the south to Senhouse Street. The eastern edge of this area on to Curzon Street includes a concentration of retail uses south until Station Road, where a terrace of units many of which have been converted into residential use leads to the supermarket. Evidence from the Health Checks and the site visit does not provide an argument for extending the boundary to take in much of this area, however, the low concentration of traditional town centre uses along the south section of Curzon Street does suggest the potential to tighten and reduce the boundary. After consideration it was decided to maintain the existing southern boundaries in given the concentration of residential streets and the prominence of the supermarket in the extreme south of the area.
5.4 Western Boundary

The current western boundary is drawn just west of the High Street after the Golden Lion public house. A continuation of similar uses along Senhouse Street straight towards the bridge suggests a potential to expand the boundary taking in further leisure and tourist uses, including the Maryport Maritime Museum. The River Ellen represents a clear and defensible boundary to the centre, however, evidence clearly shows a continuation of town centre uses; mainly leisure in the form of pubs and bars, in addition to tourist attractions and venues such as the Wave Maryport and the Lake District Coast Aquarium along South Quay and Irish Street. Furthermore, the area also includes a large section of residential properties as well as health care facilities and office accommodation. The continuation of town centre uses down Senhouse Street and to the east of the marina suggests that the current western town centre boundary is too tight and should be extended accordingly.
6. Preferred town centre boundary

The main changes are shown on the map above and include;

- Expansion of the western edge to include Senhouse Street and the area between the marina and the river.
- Reduction and tightening of the boundary along the Northern edge along Wood Street and Cosby Street.
- Expansion of the north eastern edge to include the parade of shops along Wood Street as well as the telephone exchange and several sites along Church Street.

7. Frontages

Whilst the Town Centre Boundary represents the broad area of functional town centre including all uses, the guidance on the definition of the Primary Shopping Area is clear. PPS6 states that the Primary Shopping Area is the;

‘defined area where retail development is concentrated (generally comprising the primary and those secondary frontages which are contiguous and closely related to the primary shopping frontage)’.
7.1 Primary Shopping Frontages

Establishing the Primary Shopping Frontage Boundary is relatively straightforward given the size of the town centre and the evidence gathered. Figure 7.1 below shows the main use classes by functional areas clearly demonstrating the relative importance of each use to the diversity and vitality.

![Figure 7.1 – Mix of use class](image)

**Senhouse Street** has long been the most important retail street and remains the clear choice to be designated primary shopping frontage.

Evidence clearly demonstrates the importance of retail, accounting for 53% of all the streets usage. Given these factors it is considered that Senhouse Street from High Street in the west to Curzon Street in the east be designated as the Primary Shopping Area. Although Crosby and Wood Street also have a good level of retail usage these are generally spread out more and different in character to Senhouse therefore these streets are considered outwith the Primary Shopping Area. Curzon Street as a whole is also not considered to be a retail area, however, the strip of retail from the corner of Senhouse Street southward is of sufficient critical mass to include in the protection afforded to the Primary Shopping Frontage within Maryport. Figure 7.2 below demonstrates the primary shopping frontage.

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1 Category ‘Other’ includes any uses out with those listed such as: hot food take away, hotels, offices and Sui Generis.
7.2 Secondary Frontages

It is considered that Maryport does not require the designation of secondary shopping frontages given the extent of the primary area and the size and nature of the remaining town centre.

8. Thresholds - Impact Assessment

Maryport town centre is characterised by small mainly independent businesses, with an average floorspace of 117 m$^2$ with 68% of units are below 100 m$^2$. Noteable large units include the Co-op supermarket (1,468 m$^2$), Nixons’s Department Store (645 m$^2$), Ellis Bros (630 m$^2$), The Carlton Café (420 m$^2$), The Original Factory Shop (412 m$^2$) and Heron Frozen Foods (370 m$^2$).

National policy (PPS4) allows local planning authorities to set out specific floorspace thresholds in LDFs for edge of centre and out of centre development above which impact assessments will be required. Where authorities decide not to set out a specific floorspace threshold national policy requires impact assessments to be submitted for retail and leisure developments over 2,500sq.m.

In setting such thresholds, the PPS states that important considerations include;

- the scale of known proposals relative to town centres;
- the existing vitality and viability of town centres;
• the cumulative effects of recent developments;
• the likely effects on a town centre strategy and;
• the impact on any other planned investment.

Given the size and nature of Maryport and the considerations above it is clear that this threshold is excessive and the LDF should consider setting a more locally distinctive level.

In order to inform the provision of a locally distinctive floorspace threshold, analysis of the typical scale of floorspace within the centre has been undertaken. The following charts show the level of floorspace currently occupied within Maryport town centre for each Use Class (Figure 8.1) and each town centre category (Figure 8.2).

![Figure 8.1 - Floorspace per Use Class](image1)

![Figure 8.2 - Floorspace per category](image2)
A threshold of 200sq. m is considered an appropriate level, however, following PPS4 there may be occasions where it may occasionally also be relevant to consider the impact of proposals below this threshold, where the proposal is likely to have a disproportionate effect or ‘tip the balance’ of a vulnerable centre.

9. Markets

As part of the evidence gathering and evaluation of Maryport’s Town Centre it is important to consider the need for all types of uses and forms of retail such as street market stalls. A street market can be a good opportunity to increase trading and footfall within a town centre, adding to the retail offer. This review considered the need to identify a site that would be suitable for a market within Maryport town centre, however, it was decided that at this time there is not a clear enough need or location in order to do so. Discussions revealed a certain interest in the prospect of establishing a market, however, given this was at an early stage it would be premature to suggest plans or potential locations. As the council prepares the local plan it is important to keep a watching brief on this topic and provide an update to the policy context when appropriate.