

Ware Neighbourhood Plan: Draft Town Centre Policies

KEY MESSAGES:

The town centre should:

Retain a variety of retail businesses and a strong presence of independently owned shops;

Strengthen Ware's leisure-based opportunities and be a vibrant social centre for the whole community;

Enhance its attractiveness and character for both able-bodied and disabled visitors and residents alike;
and

Improve its accessibility, balancing the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and car users.

TOWN CENTRE POLICY 1

What does this Policy set out to do?

To define the Town Centre and the priorities for development in that area.

This includes independent shops, enhanced leisure and tourism, the potential for commercial offices and flats above shops, and a welcoming and charming historic environment.

Details:

POLICY 1– Development proposals within the town centre area [to be defined] will be supported if they meet (or do not undermine) these following aspirations:

They maintain a strong and vibrant retail presence within the town centre area. They enable the continued presence of a varied range of small independent shops.

They ensure the continued operation of Ware's market.

They enhance the leisure activities for both residents and tourists. These could include cultural, arts and community venues, additional overnight accommodation and food or drink establishments.

They provide opportunities for office-based employment, which complement and support the town centre's vitality and viability.

They offer opportunities for housing on otherwise underused upper floors where these are shown to be no longer suitable for commercial use.

They protect and enhance the town centre's historic and architectural charm.

They create safe and pedestrian-friendly public spaces.

They provide sufficient public and private car parking for the town centre and the parking provision caters for forecast future needs.

TOWN CENTRE POLICY 2

What does this Policy set out to do?

To define the primary shopping area and main frontages, and the different uses/changes allowed that should support the vitality of the town centre.

Whilst shops remain important, other uses that bring people to, and generate activity in, the town centre will also be encouraged.

Details:

POLICY 2 – For the main shopping frontages within the primary shopping area (as defined), the use of ground floor or street level units should fall within one or more of the following use classes:

Retail (A1).

Financial and professional services (A2) – provided that A2 uses do not become the predominant use in that stretch of shop frontage.

Restaurants and cafes (A3), pubs and wine bars (A4) or hot food takeaways (A5).

Assembly and leisure use (D2 – e.g. cinemas and sports halls), or non-residential institutions (D1 – e.g. day nurseries, libraries, art galleries, training centres).

To preserve and enhance the character and design of our historic town centre through the application of character and design guidance to any proposed future development or redevelopment.

An important emphasis is that any new building will be of very high quality, that enhances the town centre, both in its architecture and materials used. This does not mean that it must reference the surrounding historic architecture or local building materials, but that in its design and realisation, it is a development of which the town can be proud.

TOWN CENTRE POLICY 3

What does this Policy set out to do?

To preserve and enhance the character and design of the historic town centre through the application of character and design guidance to any proposed future development or redevelopment.

An important emphasis is that any new building will be of very high quality, that enhances the town centre, both in its architecture and materials used. This does not mean that it must reference the surrounding historic architecture or local building materials, but that in its design and realisation, it is a development of which the town can be proud.

Details:

POLICY 3 – Any street lighting, street signs, litterbins or benches should be consistent with the guidance set out in the [XX Guidelines].

Shopfronts need to retain entrances and openings so people can access them from the street and so they appear connected with and provide interest to the street.

The loss of historic shopfronts will be resisted. They should be maintained and enhanced through adopting the following principles:

Shop front signage should preserve and enhance the historic character of the shopfront – painted fascias and swing signs will normally be preferred; plastic signs are discouraged

The introduction of solid or perforated external security shutters that would have a detrimental impact will be resisted

Any alterations or replacements of windows and doors should favour painted wood as the primary material. They should retain the traditional design and glazing, where possible, although alternative glazing options to single-glazed units may be considered due to the greater energy efficiency (and better visibility for internal displays).

The merging of adjoining shops or units together may be favourably considered provided that the external integrity and historic nature of the front of the building(s) is preserved. The design should allow for joined units to be separated back into individual units to provide flexibility for future uses.

The redevelopment of late 20th and early 21st century buildings that detract from the historic character of the town centre will be encouraged where this would enhance the historic character of the area.

To ensure that planning decisions pay full regard to congestion and the need for parking in the town centre, as the provision of sufficient and affordable parking is critical to the centre's continuing success.

National planning guidance recognises the need to improve the quality of parking in town centres and, where it is necessary to ensure the vitality of town centres, the quantity too

TOWN CENTRE POLICY 4

What does this Policy set out to do?

To ensure that planning decisions pay full regard to congestion and traffic speed, and also the need for parking in the town centre, as the provision of sufficient and affordable parking is critical to the centre's continuing success.

National planning guidance recognises the need to improve the quality of parking in town centres and, where it is necessary to ensure the vitality of town centres, the quantity too.

Details:

POLICY 4 – Proposals that increase the level of parking provision should be strongly supported.

Developer contributions may be required to facilitate the provision of additional off-street parking spaces and improvements to its management.

Proposals that reduce the number of off-street parking spaces to serve the town centre will be resisted.

Proposals for installation of electric/ultra-low emission vehicle charging points should be supported, provided there is demonstrable demand. Their installation should not significantly affect parking available for other vehicles.

Planning policies that seek to increase parking provision are unlikely to be sufficient on their own. Practical measures are needed to manage parking demand and congestion. Options including using signposting, altering the length of stay coupled with better enforcement to be considered.

A possible reduction in the speed limit in the high street also to be considered in the interests of safety and also in improving traffic flow. Also introduce measures to restrict on-street parking on the high street, including shop deliveries.