

South Worcestershire District and Local Centre Review

March 2021



Contents

1.0	Introduction.....	1
2.0	District Centres.....	3
3.0	Local Centres	5
4.0	Conclusion.....	7

Appendices

Appendix A:	Barnards Green District Centre Map
Appendix B:	Malvern Link District Centre Map
Appendix C:	St John's District Centre Map
Appendix D:	Ankerage Green Local Centre Map
Appendix E:	Barbourne Local Centre Map
Appendix F:	Brindley Road Local Centre Map
Appendix G:	Broadway Local Centre Map
Appendix H:	Canada Way Local Centre Map
Appendix I:	Cranham Drive Local Centre Map
Appendix J:	Dines Green Local Centre Map
Appendix K:	Port Street, Evesham Local Centre Map
Appendix L:	Ronkswood Local Centre Map
Appendix M:	St Peter's Local Centre Map

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Tetra Tech Planning (formerly WYG Planning) has been commissioned by Worcester City Council , Malvern Hills District Council and Wychavon District Council (South Worcestershire Councils) to review the role and function of the defined District Centres and the boundaries of the defined District and Local Centres in South Worcestershire. It follows the preparation of the South Worcestershire Retail and Town Centre Study which we produced in July 2019 and subsequent June 2020 Retail Capacity Update.
- 1.1.2 In drawing up Local Plans, Paragraph 85 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) defines a network and hierarchy of centres. Policy SWDP10 of the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) (2016) identifies the hierarchy of retail centres. Worcester City Centre, Great Malvern, Droitwich Spa, Evesham, Pershore, Upon-upon-Severn, and Tenbury Wells town centres are identified as the highest order retail centres across South Worcestershire with 4 District Centres below, and 10 Local Centres, and 20 Neighbourhood Centres below this.
- 1.1.3 A review of the role and boundaries of the highest order retail centres was undertaken in the 2019 South Worcestershire Retail and Town Centres Study. This report considers whether the 3 District Centres defined in Policy SWDP10 continue to perform the role of a District Centre and reviews the boundaries of the defined district and Local Centres. The District/Local Centres are as follows:

District Centres

- Barnards Green
- Malvern Link
- St Johns

Local Centres

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| • Ankerage Green | • Cranham Drive |
| • Barbourne | • Dines Green |
| • Brindley Road | • Port Street |
| • Broadway | • Ronkswood |
| • Canada Way | • St Peter's |

- 1.1.4 As part of this commission we have not been instructed to review the role of the 20 neighbourhood centres defined under Policy SWDP10.

Methodology

- 1.1.5 In the absence of any definition to rely on in the NPPF or the 'Town Centres and Retail' section of the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), the definition of different tiers of the retail hierarchy provided by the now superseded Planning Policy Statement 4 (PPS4) remains of some relevance. In respect of town, district and Local Centres, PPS4 states the following:

"Town centres will usually be the second level of centres after city centres and, in many cases, they will be the principal centre or centres in a local authority's area. In rural areas they are likely to be market towns and other centres of similar size and role which function as important service centres, providing a range of facilities and services for extensive rural catchment areas. In planning

the future of town centres, local planning authorities should consider the function of different parts of the centre and how these contribute to its overall vitality and viability. In London the 'major' and many of the 'district' centres identified in the Mayor's Spatial Development Strategy typically perform the role of town centres.

"District centres will usually comprise groups of shops often containing at least one supermarket or superstore, and a range of non-retail services, such as banks, building societies and restaurants, as well as local public facilities such as a library.

Local centres include a range of small shops of a local nature, serving a small catchment. Typically, Local Centres might include, amongst other shops, a small supermarket, a newsagent, a sub-post office and a pharmacy. Other facilities could include a hot-food takeaway and launderette. In rural areas, large villages may perform the role of a Local Centre."

1.1.6 Our review of the district and Local Centres therefore takes account of these definitions.

Structure of Report

1.1.7 The report is structured as follows:

Section 2: provides a review of the role, function and boundaries of the District Centres

Section 3: sets out our commentary in respect of the Local Centre boundaries.

Section 4: sets out a summary of our findings

1.1.8 Plan showing our recommendations in terms of centre boundaries are provided at **Appendices A-M**.

2.0 Review of the Role & Boundaries of Defined District Centres

Introduction

2.1.1 This section of the report reviews the role and function of the defined District Centres in South Worcestershire. It also provides recommendations on any changes to the boundaries of the centres. As noted in Section 1, Policy SWDP10 of the SWDP identifies 3 District Centres: (1) Barnards Green; (2) Malvern Link; and (3) St Johns.

Barnards Green District Centre

2.1.2 Barnards Green lies approximately 1km to the east of Great Malvern Town Centre. The District Centre contains 39 retail/commercial units and is situated at the junction between the Barnards Green Road, Court Road, Pickersleigh Road, Upper Chase Road, and Avenue Road.

2.1.3 Figure 2.1, below, provides a breakdown of the commercial and leisure uses in the centre.

Figure 2.1 – Composition of Barnards Green District Centre

Category	No. of units	%
Convenience	8	21
Comparison	11	28
Retail Service	11	28
Leisure Services	8	21
Financial and Business Services	0	0
Vacant	1	3
Total	39	100

2.1.4 We consider that Barnard's Green currently fulfils the role of a District Centre. It accommodates a Co-Op foodstore, a reasonable range of comparison goods retailers, and several other non-retail services including a hairdressers, barbers, post office, travel agent and an opticians. Although the centre does not accommodate any specific local banking or other financial & business service providers, given the trend of the closure of banking facilities in smaller centres we do not consider that the absence of such facilities results in Barnards Green not fulfilling a District Centre role.

2.1.5 We consider that the size of Barnards Green, the range of facilities offered within the centre means that it fulfils the role of a District Centre and should therefore retain its position as such in the retail hierarchy.

2.1.6 We have reviewed the extent of the boundary of the District Centre and we do not recommend that any changes should be made to the existing District Centre boundary.

Malvern Link

2.1.7 Malvern Link is larger than Barnard's Green, accommodating some 55 retail and commercial units along Worcester Road, approximately 2.2km to the north west of Great Malvern Town Centre.

2.1.8 The centre contains a good range of retail, commercial and service units, including a bank, several pubs and takeaway outlets, a Co-Op foodstore and a collection of comparison goods retailers.

Figure 2.2 – Composition of Malvern Link District Centre

Category	No. of units	%
Convenience	4	7
Comparison	12	22
Retail Service	15	27
Leisure Services	13	24
Financial and Business Services	6	11
Vacant	5	9
Total	55	100

2.1.9 Having reviewed the range and offer of retail and commercial provision in the centre we consider that Malvern Link continues to function as a District Centre and its current position within the retail hierarchy should be maintained.

2.1.10 Taking account of the function and the land uses within Malvern Link, we have recommended several minor amendments to the boundary of the centre. These comprise the removal of nos. 6-12 Pickersleigh Close and 148-150 Worcester Road which appear to be in residential use, and the addition of 19 Victoria Park Road to the north eastern extent of the centre in line with its longstanding use as a hair salon.

St John's, Worcester

2.1.11 St John's District Centre is located on the western side of the River Severn in Worcester, approximately 1km from the City Centre. The centre accommodates 85 retail, commercial and service units including a large Sainsbury's supermarket, several banks and financial services, a range of retail service providers, and numerous leisure units including pubs, cafes and takeaways.

Figure 2.3 – Composition of St John's District Centre

Category	No. of units	%
Convenience	8	9
Comparison	19	22
Retail Service	20	24
Leisure Services	16	19
Financial and Business Services	11	13
Vacant	11	13
Total	85	100

2.1.12 Having carefully reviewed the centre, we consider that St John's provides a good range and mix of uses which are akin to District Centre. It provides a group of shops including a supermarket and a range of non-retail services, including banks, building societies and restaurants.

2.1.13 In order to help consolidate the centre around the retail core, where there are several vacant units, we recommend that the boundary of St John's is marginally reduced at its southern and south eastern edges. We recommend that Our Lady Queen of Peace RC Church on Bransford Road is removed from the District Centre boundary along with the car dealership on the corner of Bransford Road/ Malvern Road. To the south, we recommend that St John's Sports Centre and associated sports pitches are also be removed as these uses are not defined as 'main town centre uses' in the NPPF.

3.0 Local Centres

Introduction

- 3.1.1 This section of the report reviews the extent of the defined Local Centres in South Worcestershire. It provides, where necessary, recommendations on any changes to the boundaries of the centres. As noted in Section 1, Policy SWDP10 of the SWDP identifies 10 Local Centres. We set out a summary of our recommendations in turn below with boundary plans provided as appendices.

Ankerage Green, Worcester

- 3.1.2 The existing Local Centre boundary provides sufficient coverage at Ankerage Green. Therefore, no changes are recommended to the boundary.

Barbourne, Worcester

- 3.1.3 No changes are recommended to the existing Local Centre boundary at Barbourne which provides sufficient coverage.

Brindley Road, Worcester

- 3.1.4 We do not recommend any changes to the boundary as the existing Local Centre boundary provides sufficient coverage.

Broadway

- 3.1.5 Broadway is the largest of the Local Centres in South Worcestershire with the majority of the retail and commercial units in the centre catering to the tourism market. The Local Centre boundary presently extends east to west along High Street. We recommend that this boundary is expanded slightly to incorporate retail units at Keil Close adjacent to the Lodge Hotel along with areas to the south of Saddlers Barn and to the east of High Street next to the museum, where several further small retail and leisure units located.

Canada Way, Lower Wick, Worcester

- 3.1.6 No changes to this Local Centre are recommended as the existing boundary provides sufficient coverage.

Cranham Drive, Worcester

- 3.1.7 No changes are proposed to the Local Centre boundary.

Dines Green, Worcester

- 3.1.8 We recommend reducing the size of Dines Green Local Centre, removing St Michael's Church and the community centre from its boundary. These uses do not fall within those described in the definition of Local Centres provided by PPS4 and they are not 'main town centre uses' set out by other policies.

Port Street, Evesham

- 3.1.9 Within Port Street Local Centre, we recommend that the boundary is amended slightly to incorporate retail uses off Castle Street. No further changes are considered necessary.

Ronkswood, Worcester

- 3.1.10 It is evident that Ronkswood Local Centre has undergone significant change following the demolition of Holy Trinity and St Matthew's Church in 2014 and the subsequent residential developments in its place. We recommend that the boundaries of the Local Centre are amended to account for these changes and that the Local Centre is consolidated around the retail units either side of Wells Road. We recommend that the Punch Bowl public house, Philadelphia Christian Assembly and site of the former church are all removed from the Local Centre designation.

St Peter's, Worcester

3.1.11 We recommend that the boundaries of St Peter's Local Centre are amended slightly with areas which do not meet the definition of Local Centre uses removed. To the north, we advise that St Peter's Baptist Church and adjacent sports and play spaces are taken out of the Local Centre, and to the south and west, we recommend that the boundaries are realigned to remove a cycle path and part of the roundabout on St Peter's Drive.

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1.1 In drawing up Local Plans, Paragraph 85 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) defines a network and hierarchy of centres. Policy SWDP10 of the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) (2016) identifies the hierarchy of retail centres. Worcester City Centre, Great Malvern, Droitwich Spa, Evesham, Pershore, Upon-upon-Severn, and Tenbury Wells town centres are identified as the highest order retail centres across South Worcestershire with 4 District Centres below, and 10 Local Centres, and 20 neighbourhood centres below this.
- 4.1.2 This report considers whether the 3 District Centres defined in Policy SWDP10 continue to perform the role of a District Centre and reviews the boundaries of the defined district and Local Centres.
- 4.1.3 In terms of the 3 defined District Centres, a review of Barnards Green, Malvern Link and St John's, Worcester in South Worcestershire finds that they each continue to fulfil the role and function of a District Centre. All 3 provide a range of retail and non-retail services. We do not recommend any changes are made to the District Centre boundary at Barnards Green, but several changes are recommended to the boundaries of Malvern Link and St John's, Worcester.
- 4.1.4 In terms of the 10 defined Local Centres, no changes are recommended to the boundaries of Ankerage Green, Barbourne, Brindley Road, Canada Way, and Cranham Drive. Minor amendments are recommended at Broadway, Dines Green, Ronkswood, and St Peter's to include uses consistent with those found in Local Centres and/or to remove uses that are not.