



**SMALLER CENTRES
STUDY:
ADDENDUM REPORT**

**England
& Lyle**

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 England & Lyle Limited were commissioned by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council in June 2010 to undertake the Smaller Centres Study. The Smaller Centres Study report was completed in November 2010. The report comprises Volume 1: Main Study Report, and Volume 2: Appendices.

1.2 In the Main Study Report, Section 14 on ‘Other Policy Advice’ advises on floorspace thresholds for impact assessments; monitoring; locally important impacts; and PPS4 policy on smaller centres. Following the publication of the Smaller Centres Study, England & Lyle have carried out two further studies for the Council – the Town Centre Retail Capacity Study (March 2011) and the report Retail Impact Analysis of Potential Superstore Developments in Barnsley (May 2011).

1.3 The May 2011 report on Retail Impact has reviewed the advice on floorspace thresholds for impact assessments across the Borough as part of the advice on how to handle proposals for large-scale retail developments outside centres. The advice relates to proposals outside Barnsley town centre, the district centres and local centres. We have reviewed our original advice on floorspace thresholds for the smaller centres in the light of two factors:

- the relative sizes of centres in the hierarchy, taking account of the adoption of a threshold of 2,500 sq.m. gross for the town centre (in line with PPS4), and
- consistency with Core Strategy policy CSP32 Small Local Shops defining these as having a gross floorspace of 500 square metres or less

1.4 This Addendum Report to the Smaller Centres Study revises Section 14 of the November 2010 report so that the report is consistent with the Borough-wide advice in the report Retail Impact Analysis of Potential Superstore Developments in Barnsley. It separates the content of the original Section 14 into a new Section 2 on Floorspace Thresholds for Impact Assessments and a new Section 3 on Other Policy Advice on Smaller Centres.

1.5 Section 2 on Floorspace Thresholds for Impact Assessments revises paragraphs 14.1 to 14.7 of the Smaller Centres Study. The content of Section 3 is unchanged from paragraphs 14.8 to 14.15 of the Smaller Centres Study covering monitoring, locally important impacts, and PPS4 policy on smaller centres.

2. Floorspace Thresholds for Impact Assessments

2.1 PPS4 states that the Council should consider setting floorspace thresholds for the scale of retail development outside centres (ie. edge-of-centre and out-of-centre locations) which should be subject to an impact assessment under Policy EC16 and specify the geographic areas these thresholds will apply to. The application of floorspace thresholds for impact assessments should be based on the different levels of centres in the retail hierarchy. A distinction should be made between the District Centres and Local Centres.

2.2 PPS4 refers to the need to assess the impact of developments over 2,500 sq.m. gross floorspace. In our view such a threshold is too large in the context of the smaller centres in Barnsley Borough.

Retail Development outside District Centres

2.3 We suggest that major shopping proposals in locations outside the District Centres as defined on the maps in Figure 4 of the Smaller Centres Study report should not be permitted, in order to protect the vitality and viability of existing centres, unless the proposal can be demonstrated to be acceptable under national planning policies contained in PPS4.

2.4 A “major” shopping proposal in the context of the District Centres should be defined as a retail development of more than 1,000 sq. metres gross floorspace. Below this threshold, retail developments with a smaller amount of floorspace outside the Primary Shopping Area are not likely to have a significant impact on the town centre. However, the Council should have the discretion to request a retail impact assessment for a proposed development of less than 1,000 sq. metres gross where in the Council’s view it may have a significant impact on particular centres, depending on the relative size and nature of the development in relation to the centre.

Retail Developments Elsewhere

2.5 We suggest that proposals for small-scale retail developments outside the boundaries of Local Centres defined on the maps in Figure 4 of the Smaller Centres Study report should be permitted where they are below 500 sq. metres gross floorspace.

2.6 A small-scale retail development of less than 500 sq. metres gross floorspace would be appropriate to meet local needs. Above 500 sq. metres the impact of a proposed retail development should be assessed.

2.7 The adoption of these thresholds would give the Council a high degree of control over proposed retail developments outside centres. The thresholds would ensure that impact assessments are prepared with a level of detail and type of evidence and analysis that is proportionate to the scale and nature of the proposal and its likely impact. The type and level of information that needs to be included within an impact assessment should be discussed and agreed between the applicant and the Council.

3. Other Policy Advice on Smaller Centres

Monitoring

3.1 The Council should carry out health check at regular intervals (at least every three years) to keep the following matters under review in order to inform consideration of the impact of policies and planning applications:

- the network and hierarchy of centres
- the need for further development and
- the vitality and viability of centres.

3.2 To measure the vitality and viability and monitor the health of centres in Barnsley Borough over time and inform judgements about the impact of policies and development, the Council should also use available resources to collect market information and economic data at regular intervals on the key indicators set out at Annex D to PPS4. Consistent with the monitoring section in the Core Strategy, we would recommend that the health checks of the District and Local Centres are carried out every three years. This will allow the Council to keep the evidence base up-to-date, as emphasised in PPS4.

Locally Important Impacts

3.3 The Council should define any locally important impacts on centres which should be tested in impact assessments of new development proposals under Policy EC16 of PPS4.

3.4 With reference to the District Centres we believe that the locally important impacts that need to be considered are as follows:

- a qualitative need to improve choice and competition in the retail offer, in particular the representation of supermarkets and non-food multiples
- protection of the character of the District Centres so that new retail development preserves and enhances the appearance of centres.

3.5 With reference to the Local Centres we believe that the locally important impacts that need to be considered are concerned with qualitative need, in particular:

- improving the retail offer and retailer representation in the centre
- increasing consumer choice for residents, and
- creating a critical mass of shopping that better serves the local community.

3.6 We believe that allocating sites for new retail development in and on the edge of the smaller centres will have positive locally important impacts.

PPS4 Policy on Smaller Centres

3.7 PPS4 does not specifically give policy advice on smaller centres, although it does refer to the need for local authorities to take account of the requirements of its smaller centres, for example in:

- identifying any deficiencies in the provision of local convenience shopping and other facilities which serve people's day-to-day needs
- supporting shops, services and other important small scale economic uses in local centres and villages.
- ensuring that the scale of sites identified is in keeping with the role and function of the centre within the hierarchy of centres and the catchment served.

3.8 PPS4 refers to the need for local authorities to take account of the requirements of smaller centres, for example in:

- identifying any deficiencies in the provision of local convenience shopping and other facilities which serve people's day-to-day needs
- supporting shops, services and other important small scale economic uses in local centres and villages, and
- ensuring that the scale of sites identified is in keeping with the role and function of the centre within the hierarchy of centres and the catchment served.