



# Central Lancashire Retail and Town Centres Policy Advice

Final Study

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ON BEHALF OF CENTRAL LANCASHIRE AUTHORITIES

February 2025

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## 1. Introduction and Overview

- 1.1 Nexus Planning was instructed by the Central Lancashire Strategic Planning Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) comprising members from Preston City Council, South Ribble Borough Council and Chorley Council in October 2024 to prepare independent advice in respect of town centre policies of relevance across the three authority areas.
- 1.2 Central Lancashire covers the geographical areas of Preston, Chorley and South Ribble, which functions as one integrated local economy and commuting area. The three Central Lancashire authorities of Preston City Council, South Ribble Borough Council and Chorley Council are working together to produce a single Central Lancashire Local Plan. This will form part of the statutory development plan for each district alongside other documents such as Neighbourhood Plans. It will replace the Central Lancashire Core Strategy 2012 and the three district Local Plans adopted in 2015.
- 1.3 The principal purpose of the commission is to provide a Study to form a key part of the evidence base and to inform policies and strategies to be included within the Strategic Plan. The Study focuses on strategic policy issues affecting the Central Lancashire centres and seeks to establish recommendations which can be used to address the identified trends, in order to protect the long-term vitality and viability of the centres.
- 1.4 This Study provides an opportunity for the partner Councils to take stock of the recent changes in the Use Classes Order, Permitted Development Rights and general retail and leisure climate, and seek to plan for the longer-term health of their centres to ensure that they continue to meet residents' needs.
- 1.5 The specifics of the commission can be summarised as follows:
  1. To provide full healthchecks of the three principal centres within Central Lancs: Preston City Centre, Chorley town centre and Leyland town centre;
  2. To compile the respective local authorities district, local and neighbourhood centre data into comparable matrixes from which policy recommendations can be made;
  3. To review the provision of hot food takeaways within the centres to help inform policy recommendations;
  4. To review specific designations of centres within Central Lancashire (the list provided by the client); and
  5. To review specific boundaries of centres within Central Lancashire (the list provided by the client).
- 1.6 The Study has also included a full review of the existing adopted planning policy at both the national and local level.
- 1.7 There are a number of recurring themes identified throughout the planning policy review which will be important to consider in the context of future development for main town centre uses within the Central Lancashire area, including:
  - **Supporting flexibility in town centres** – town centre accommodation needs to be adaptable to a number of uses to address future needs. This presents both opportunities and challenges for Central Lancashire's defined centres. The previous orthodoxy of protecting A1 retail uses within Primary Shopping Areas may unwittingly be restricting the ability of town centres to diversify and develop distinctive identities and associated offer to consumers. Whilst supporting flexibility is therefore key, there must still be an overarching concentration of retail uses within defined centres, given the draw and attraction of such uses and their assistance in helping to support the vitality and viability of centres overall.
  - **Encouraging a mix of town centre uses** – town centres are increasingly diverse with the emergence of a greater proportion of leisure, food and drink uses. There is also an identified need to concentrate multi-functional public services in town centre locations to realise agglomeration benefits. However, town centres

face rapidly increasing competition from retail parks and higher order centres as well as online shopping. The integration of commercial and residential uses within town centres is important to their overall vibrancy, to encourage footfall within centres throughout the day and evening. This includes access to high quality public transport.

- **The hierarchy of centres** – the role of each defined centre within Central Lancashire needs to be clearly articulated to provide it with a distinct and recognisable identity appropriate to its role. It will be important to identify the unique attributes of each defined centre during the production of the new Local Plan

1.8 Given the above, the remainder of this Study is structured into the following key sections:

- Section 2 provides an overview of the current adopted local plan policies of relevance to this Study;
- Section 3 provides an overview of the current and emerging retail leisure trends, and how these trends are impacting the Central Lancashire centres;
- Section 4 provides an overview of Nexus' healthchecks and the Councils' own healthchecks, including the city, town, district, local and neighbourhood centres;
- Section 5 provides our overarching summaries and policy recommendations.

## 2. Policy Background

2.1 In order to shape the direction of this Study, it is helpful to understand relevant retail and town centre planning policy at a national and local level. As such, we first summarise national planning policy of relevance before considering retail and town centre development plan policy as set out in the current development plan. We also consider changes to the Use Classes Order and the application of permitted development rights to town centre uses.

### Revised National Planning Policy Framework

2.2 The most recent iteration of the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') was published in December 2024. The NPPF reflects the fact that the traditional role of town centres has been somewhat undermined by structural changes in the retail sector, and that there may be a need to plan for a more diverse range of uses going forward. As such, the NPPF advocates a more flexible policy framework to support the future vitality and viability of town centres.

2.3 NPPF policies are considered on a thematic basis below.

#### Plan-Making

2.4 Paragraph 20 of the NPPF indicates that development plans should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, including policies to deliver retail, leisure and other commercial development. Paragraph 31 states that the preparation and review of all policies should be underpinned by relevant and up-to-date evidence. This should be proportionate and take into account relevant market signals.

#### Building a Strong, Competitive Economy

2.5 Paragraph 85 of the NPPF indicates that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand, and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.

#### Ensuring the Vitality of Town Centres

2.6 Paragraph 90 specifically relates to planning for town centres. It states that:

**'Planning policies should:**

- a. define a network and hierarchy of town centres and promote their long-term vitality and viability – by allowing them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allows a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and reflects their distinctive characters;**
- b. define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas, and make clear the range of uses permitted in such locations, as part of a positive strategy for the future of each centre;**
- c. retain and enhance existing markets and, where appropriate, re-introduce or create new ones;**
- d. allocate a range of suitable sites in town centres to meet the scale and type of development likely to be needed, looking at least ten years ahead. Meeting anticipated needs for retail, leisure, office and other main town centre uses over this period should not be compromised by limited site availability, so town centre boundaries should be kept under review where necessary;**
- e. where suitable and viable town centre sites are not available for main town centre uses, allocate appropriate edge of centre sites that are well connected to the town centre. If sufficient edge of centre sites cannot be identified, policies**

should explain how identified needs can be met in other accessible locations that are well connected to the town centre; and

- f. recognise that residential development often plays an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and encourage residential development on appropriate sites.’

- 2.7 The requirement to plan to meet needs across a minimum ten-year period represents a change from the previous NPPF which required town centre needs to be met in full across the entire plan period.
- 2.8 In addition, it is notable that the NPPF Annex 2 Glossary fails to make any reference to the designation of primary and secondary frontages. Page 32 of the Government Response to the Draft Revised National Planning Policy Framework Consultation<sup>1</sup> indicates that, whilst the revised NPPF has removed the expectation in national planning policy that such frontages must be defined, this does not necessarily preclude authorities from doing so where their use can be justified. However, it is evident that the general intention is to provide for more flexibility through a less prescriptive approach to land use.
- 2.9 Paragraph 94 of the NPPF states that it is appropriate to identify thresholds for the scale of edge of centre and out-of-centre retail and leisure development that should be the subject of an impact assessment. Any such threshold policy applies only to the impact test. All planning applications for main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre and not in accordance with an up-to-date development plan will generally be the subject of the sequential test.

### Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities

- 2.10 Paragraph 97 seeks to support the social, recreational, and cultural facilities and services communities need. The guidance states that planning policies and decisions should:
- ‘Plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaced, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses, and places of worship), and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;
  - take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community;
  - guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community’s ability to meet its day-to-day needs;
  - ensure that established shops, facilities, and services are able to develop and modernise, and are retained for the benefit of the community; and
  - ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.’

### Ensuring the Vitality of Town Centres Planning Practice Guidance

- 2.11 The Town Centres and Retail Planning Practice Guidance (‘the Town Centres PPG’) was published in July 2019 and thereafter updated in September 2020. It provides additional direction in respect of how retail and town centre planning policy should be applied in respect of plan-making and decision-taking. The Town Centres PPG affirms the Government’s aspiration to support town centres in order to generate employment, promote beneficial competition and create attractive, diverse places where people want to live, work and visit.
- 2.12 Paragraph 004 of the Town Centres PPG indicates that a local planning authority’s strategy for their town centres should include:

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<sup>1</sup> Published July 2018.

- The realistic role, function and hierarchy of town centres over the plan period. Given the uncertainty in forecasting long-term retail trends and consumer behaviour, this assessment may need to focus on a limited period (such as the next five years) but will also need to take the lifetime of the plan into account and be regularly reviewed.
- The vision for the future of each town centre, including the most appropriate mix of uses to enhance overall vitality and viability.
- The ability of the town centre to accommodate the scale of assessed need for main town centre uses, and associated need for expansion, consolidation, restructuring or to enable new development or the redevelopment of under-utilised space.
- How existing land can be used more effectively – for example, the scope to group particular uses such as retail, restaurant and leisure activities into hubs or for converting airspace above shops.
- Opportunities for improvements to the accessibility and wider quality of town centre locations, including improvements to transport links in and around town centres, and enhancement of the public realm.
- What complementary strategies are necessary or appropriate to enhance the town centre and help deliver the vision for its future, and how these can be planned and delivered. For example, this may include consideration of how parking charges and enforcement can be made proportionate.
- The role that different stakeholders can play in delivering the vision. If appropriate, it can help establish the level of cross-boundary/strategic working or information sharing required between both public and private sector groups.
- Appropriate policies to address environmental issues facing town centres, including opportunities to conserve and enhance the historic environment.

2.13 This Study seeks to provide a high-level authority-wide retail and leisure strategy, which will provide an overall context to the determination of planning applications for such uses and will support the Council’s future development plan policy. The Study will also help underpin future town centre-specific strategies or masterplans.

2.14 Paragraph 006 of the Town Centres PPG identifies a series of key indicators of relevance in assessing the health of a centre over time. The indicators allow the role, performance, and function of centres to be monitored and are considered in greater detail at Section 4 of this report (which specifically addresses the vitality and viability of centres across the authority areas).

### Use Classes Order

2.15 Significant changes to the Use Classes Order have been enacted through the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020, which came into force on 1 September 2020.

2.16 The amendments include the revocation of Parts A and D, and the introduction of three new Use Classes, these being Classes E, F1 and F2. The Government’s objective is that the changes will support the revival of the high street and allow for greater flexibility in changing uses within town centres without the need for planning permission.

2.17 In addition to the three new Use Classes, the changes also result in some changes in respect of uses classified as sui generis. In practical terms, the changes comprise:

- **Use Class E** – Commercial, business and service uses include: shops or retail; cafes or restaurants; financial services; professional services; any service appropriate to provide in a commercial, business or service locality; indoor sports, recreation or fitness; medical or health services; crèche, day nursery or day centre; and, offices.

- **Use Class F1** – Learning and non-residential institutions include any non-residential use for the: provision of education; display of works of art; museum; public library or public reading room; public hall or exhibition hall; for or in connection with public worship or religious instruction; or, as a law court.
- **Use Class F2** – Local community uses include: a shop selling mostly essential goods, including food, no larger than 280 sq.m and where there is no other such facility within 1,000 metres radius of the shop’s location. A hall or meeting place for the local community, an area or place for outdoor sport or recreation and an indoor or outdoor swimming pool or skating rink.
- **Sui Generis** – Use within this Class now include a public house, wine bar or drinking establishment; a drinking establishment with expanded food provision; a hot food takeaway for the sale of hot food where consumption of that food is mostly undertaken off the premises; live music venue; cinema; concert hall; bingo hall; or, dance hall.

2.18 The introduction of Class E is significant and places a wide range of uses including retail, food, financial services, gyms, healthcare, nurseries, offices, and light industry into a single use class. Unless restrictive planning conditions extinguish the provisions of Class E, the ability to change the commercial use of premises without planning permission allows centres to evolve in a flexible manner.

2.19 However, the provisions of the Use Classes Order are not linked to any spatial considerations. As such, the expanded Use Class E applies equally to both town centres and out-of-centre locations, and there may be unintended consequences in providing for additional flexibility across Class E outside of town centres. Accordingly, it may be necessary for the Council to apply restrictive conditions to certain forms of development to restrict the authorised use to that which has been justified in the application submission. This will help ensure that unacceptable impacts do not arise from future Class E development.

### Town Centre Use Permitted Development Rights

2.20 An amendment was made to the General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (the ‘GPDO’) in March 2021. This allows for the change of use from Class E properties to residential from August 2021 (extending a right that had previously been restricted to office uses). This permitted development right is subject to maximum size requirements, the property having been in use as Class E for two years, and the property having been vacant for three months. In addition to this, ‘prior approval’ for the change of use must be sought from the planning authority. Restrictions on this right apply in conservation areas and for nurseries and health centres, as well as in areas that are covered by an Article 4 direction.

### Local Planning Policy Context

2.21 We provide below a summary of the key policies of relevance to this commission from the Central Lancashire authorities.

### Central Lancashire Adopted Core Strategy

2.22 The Central Lancashire Adopted Core Strategy was adopted by the three Councils (Chorley Council, Preston Council and South Ribble Borough Council) in July 2012. The Core Strategy sets out the Central Lancashire authorities’ spatial planning proposals for the combined area of Preston, South Ribble and Chorley- establishing an overall strategic direction for planning in the area from 2010 to 2026, in line with national planning policies.

2.23 Each Council has developed their own Local Plans which are in general conformity with the strategic objectives of the adopted Core Strategy but seek to implement its strategic vision for their own individual areas and the wider Central Lancashire.

**Table 2.1: Relevant Policies from the Central Lancashire Adopted Core Strategy**

Policy Reference	Key Policy Topic	Policy Summary
Policy 1	Locating Growth	<p>Policy 1 states that growth and investment will be focused on the Preston/South Ribble Urban Area, three allocated, strategic sites and the following Key Service Centres of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Leyland / Farington (focussing on regeneration of Leyland Town Centre and brownfield sites)</li> <li>2. Chorley Town (focussing on the regeneration of the Town Centre but with some greenfield development)</li> <li>3. Longridge</li> </ol> <p>The Policy also states that limited growth and investment will be encouraged in a few Urban and Rural Local Service Centres in order to meet local housing and employment needs.</p>
Policy 9	Economic Growth and Employment	<p>Policy 9 sets out the ways that economic growth and employment will be provided for in Central Lancashire. In particular, it states that regional and sub-regional office developments will be located in Preston City Centre, including the Central Business District area and the Tithebarn Regeneration Area, with more local office schemes in Chorley and Leyland town centres.</p> <p>Additionally, other major developments for employment will be in the Preston/South Ribble urban area, Leyland and Farington, and Chorley Town- with regionally significant schemes planned at Samlesbury, Cuerden (Lancashire Central), Buckshaw Village, Central Preston.</p> <p>Mixed use developments will be encouraged in central and accessible locations.</p>
Policy 11	Retail and Town Centre Uses and Business Based Tourism	<p>Retail and other town centre uses of a scale appropriate to the retail hierarchy and in sustainable locations will be supported, provided that the development respects and assists in maintaining its existing retail function.</p> <p>The hierarchy is as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>City Centre:</b> Preston</li> <li>2. <b>Principal Town Centres:</b> Leyland and Chorley</li> <li>3. <b>District Centres:</b> Bamber Bridge, Clayton Green, Longton, Penwortham and Tardy Gate, and those proposed at Buckshaw Village and Cottam.</li> </ol> <p>Retail and town centre use development will focus on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Delivering a mixed-use scheme to facilitate the regeneration of the Tithebarn Regeneration Area of Preston.</li> <li>b. Encouraging other retail, office and leisure investment of an appropriate scale in Preston city centre, so as to retain its role as the largest retail, commercial and service centre in the Lancashire as a whole.</li> <li>c. Maintaining and improving the vitality and viability of Chorley town centre by building on the success of the Market Walk</li> </ol>

Policy Reference	Key Policy Topic	Policy Summary
		<p>shopping centre, through investing in further retail development, supporting a range of other retailers and services, as well as improving the centre's appearance and accessibility.</p> <p>d. Maintaining and improving the vitality and viability of Leyland town centre, in particular the accessibility, design and environmental improvements put forward in the Leyland Town Centre Masterplan.</p> <p>e. Maintaining, improving and controlling the mix of uses in the existing District and Local Centres and proposed centres at Strategic Sites and Locations, so as to appropriately serve local needs.</p> <p>f. Focussing main town centre uses in the defined town centres.</p> <p>g. Supporting city and town centre development providing for tourists and visitors, particularly business based tourism.</p>
Policy 12	Culture and Entertainment Facilities	Central Lancashire plan for culture and entertainment by promoting Preston City Centre as a sub-regional centre for cultural and entertainment facilities, and promoting Leyland & Chorley providing for local cultural and entertainment requirements. Also, by promoting public art and public realm works in town centres and gateways and encouraging cultural and heritage-based tourism and leisure facilities-particularly in Preston City Centre.
Policy 25	Community Facilities	<p>Ensure that local communities have sufficient community facilities provision by:</p> <p>a) Working with public, private and voluntary sector providers to meet demonstrable need;</p> <p>b) Encouraging and coordinating new provision at locations that are accessible by all modes of transport;</p> <p>c) Resisting the loss of existing facilities by requiring evidence that they are no longer viable or relevant to local needs;</p> <p>d) Assessing all development proposals for new housing in terms of their contribution to providing access to a range of core services including education and basic health and care facilities</p>

## Chorley

2.25 The development plan of Chorley Council includes:

- Central Lancashire Core Strategy (adopted July 2012)
- Chorley Local Plan (adopted July 2015)
- Joint Lancashire Minerals and Waste Development Plan Document (adopted September 2013)

2.26 Table 2.2 provides the other policies of relevance from the Chorley Local Plan.

**Table 2.2: Relevant Polices from the Chorley Local Plan**

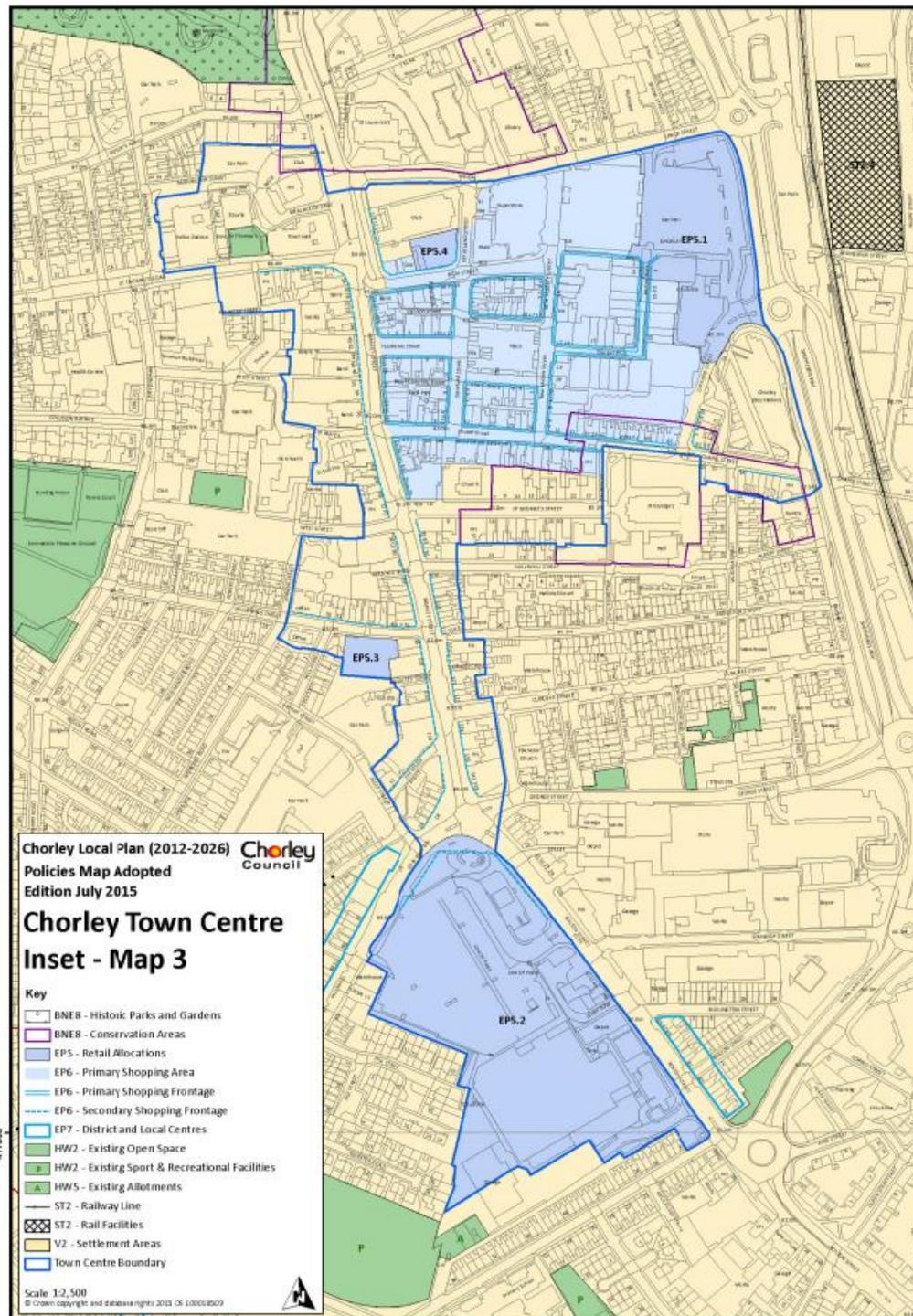
Policy Reference	Key Policy Topic	Policy Summary
Policy EP2	Botany Bay/Great Knowley Area – Sub-Regional	Development, within the area defined on the Policies Map at Botany Bay/Great Knowley, will be permitted if it proposes comprehensive development (demonstrated through a masterplan), implements: an

Policy Reference	Key Policy Topic	Policy Summary
	Employment and Mixed Use Site	<p>agreed design code, a phasing and infrastructure delivery schedule and an agreed programme of implementation in accordance with the masterplan.</p> <p>Botany Bay (EP1.2) redevelopment should include employment, hotel, restaurant/café, drinking establishment, leisure, and retail uses.</p> <p>Botany/Great Knowley (EP1.1) redevelopment should include employment use, 200 residential units, restaurants and cafes, drinking establishments and water based leisure/recreation uses.</p>
Policy EP4	Employment Development in Residential Areas	New small scale employment development (Use Classes B1, B2, B8, A1, A2), will be permitted in areas where housing is the principal land use provided there would be no detriment to the amenity of the area in terms of scale, character, noise, nuisance, disturbance, environment and car parking.
Policy EP5	Retail Site Allocations in Chorley Town	<p>The following sites are allocated for retail development within Chorley Town Centre:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. EP5.1 Flat Iron Car Park</li> <li>2. EP5.2 Bolton Street/Pall Mall</li> <li>3. EP5.3 5-9 Gillibrand Street</li> <li>4. EP5.4 High Street/Cleveland Street</li> </ol>
Policy EP6	Chorley Town Primary Shopping Area, Primary and Secondary Frontages	<p>Within the Primary Shopping Area of Chorley Town Class A1 use (shops) will be permitted at ground floor and first floor levels. Class A3 use (restaurants and cafes), Class A4 use (drinking establishments), Class A5 use (Hot food takeaways) and (except for properties in Market Walk) Class A2 use (financial and professional services) will be permitted in circumstances where they do not adversely impact on the function, vitality and viability of the Primary Frontage.</p> <p>Within the Secondary Frontage area, a combination of retail and town centre uses will be permitted where they maintain and enhance the vitality of this area (promoting the evening and daytime economy, providing for independent retailers that contribute to the overall vitality of the Town Centre; and, at first floor level, providing offices and residential uses).</p> <p>Proposals for residential use at ground floor level will not be permitted within the secondary frontage area.</p>
Policy EP7	Development and Change of Use in District and Local Centres	In terms of changes of use and development in District and Local Centres: Planning permission will be granted for A1, A2, A3, and A4 uses which support the role and function of District and Local Centres; hot food takeaways) will be permitted where the proposal would not adversely impact, either individually or cumulatively, on the function, vitality and viability of the centre; and, planning permission will be <b>not</b> be granted for non-retail uses unless it can be shown that there is no demand for retail or commercial use or the property was last occupied by a non-retail/non-commercial use (this will need to be demonstrated through an active 12 month marketing process showing that the property has been offered for sale on the open market at a realistic price and that no reasonable offers have been refused).

Policy Reference	Key Policy Topic	Policy Summary
		The provision of flats on the upper floors of the building will be encouraged but this will not apply where the applicant can demonstrate that the whole building will be fully utilised for retail/commercial purposes.
Policy EP8	Existing Local Shops	Development proposing the change of use or loss of any premises or land currently or last used as a local shop outside of the defined town, district or local centre boundaries will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that: the use is not financially viable; there is sufficient provision in the local area; and, the facility is in an isolated location remote from public transport routes.
Policy EP9	Development in Edge-of-Centre and Out-of-Centre Locations	Outside of the centres, changes of use and development for small scale local shopping and town centre uses (either as part of mixed use developments or in isolation) will be permitted where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The proposal meets a local need and can be accessed in its catchment by walking, cycling and public transport; and</li> <li>b) It does not harm the amenity of an adjacent area; and the</li> <li>c) Sequential Test and Impact Assessment are satisfied setting out how proposals do not detract from the function, vitality and viability of the borough’s hierarchy of centres.</li> </ul>
Policy HW6	Community Facilities	Development proposing the change of use or loss of any premises or land currently or last used as a community facility (including community centres, village and church halls, places of worship, public houses, children’s centres, libraries, cultural facilities and health facilities) will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The facility no longer serves the local needs of the community in which it is located; and</li> <li>b) Adequate alternative provision has been made, or is already available, in the settlement or local area; and</li> <li>c) The use is no longer financially viable; and</li> <li>d) The facility is in an isolated location remote from public transport routes; or</li> <li>e) There is an amenity or environmental reason why the facility is no longer acceptable.</li> </ul>

2.27 The plan below is taken from the adopted local plan, showing Chorley town centre. This includes the adopted Primary Shopping Area, Primary and Secondary Frontages and the wider Town Centre Boundary.

Figure 2.1: Existing Adopted Chorley Town Centre Boundaries



2.28 In November 2023, the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities announced the successful bids for the third round of funding (previously known as the Levelling Up Fund) allocating Chorley £20 million for regeneration of the town centre.

2.29 The funding will focus on 3 schemes within the town centre:

- the formation of a new civic square in front of the historic town hall which will act as a new destination in the town, with event, residential and commercial space plus parking
- a residential scheme on the site of the council’s current depot on Bengal Street. Delivering high-quality energy efficient homes in the town centre, enhancing the opportunity for people to live and work centrally
- refurbishment of the council’s Union Street offices with potential to attract tenants who may be interested in operating from an accessible town centre location.

## Preston

2.30 The development plan of Preston Council includes:

- Central Lancashire Core Strategy (adopted July 2012)
- Preston Local Plan (Site Allocations and Development Management Policies) (adopted July 2015)
- Preston City Centre Area Action Plan (adopted June 2016)
- Joint Lancashire Minerals and Waste Development Plan Document (adopted September 2013)

2.31 Table 2.3 provides the other policies of relevance from the Preston Local Plan.

**Table 2.3: Relevant Polices from the Preston Council Local Plan**

Policy Reference	Key Policy Topic	Policy Summary
Policy EP3	Cottam District Centre	Within the proposed Cottam District Centre, mixed use retail and commercial development, that supports the role and function of the District Centre, will be permitted.
Policy EP4	Local Centres	<p>The following criteria apply for change of use and development within Local Centres</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Planning permission will be granted for retail development provided the proposal is commensurate to the size of centre and of a design which does not detract from its character.</li> <li>2. Uses within Local Centres will be protected and enhanced wherever possible for retail use (A1) and, where appropriate, for A2 (financial and professional services) and A3 (Restaurants and Cafes). This is providing they do not threaten the centre’s viability and vitality or prejudice residential amenity/highway safety.</li> <li>3. Other non-retail uses, including residential, will be permitted if criteria above are met and if they do not result in a break in the shopping frontage that would threaten the centre’s viability and vitality.</li> </ol> <p>The provision of flats on the upper floors of the building will be encouraged but this will not apply where the applicant can demonstrate that the whole building will be fully utilised for retail/commercial purposes.</p>
Policy EP5	Riversway	Phase B Site Specific Policy Development of site EP5.1 will be permitted for a combination of a park & ride car park, business, industrial/storage & distribution uses and/or leisure uses. Proposals should also be comprehensive and cover the whole site.
Policy WB1	Protection of Community Facilities	Development proposing the change of use or loss of any premises or land currently or last used as a community facility will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:

Policy Reference	Key Policy Topic	Policy Summary
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) the use no longer serves the needs of the community in which it is located; and</li> <li>b) adequate alternative provision has been made, or is already available, in the local area; and</li> <li>c) the use is no longer financially viable; or</li> <li>d) there is an amenity or environmental reason why the facility is no longer acceptable.</li> </ul>

2.32 In addition to the above, the development plan for Preston also includes the Adopted City Centre Plan (June 2016), which sits alongside the Local Plan. The City Centre Plan forms part of the Council’s statutory development plan and will be used to promote and coordinate investment and help reach decisions on planning applications within the city centre. The policies of relevance from the City Centre Plan are set out below.

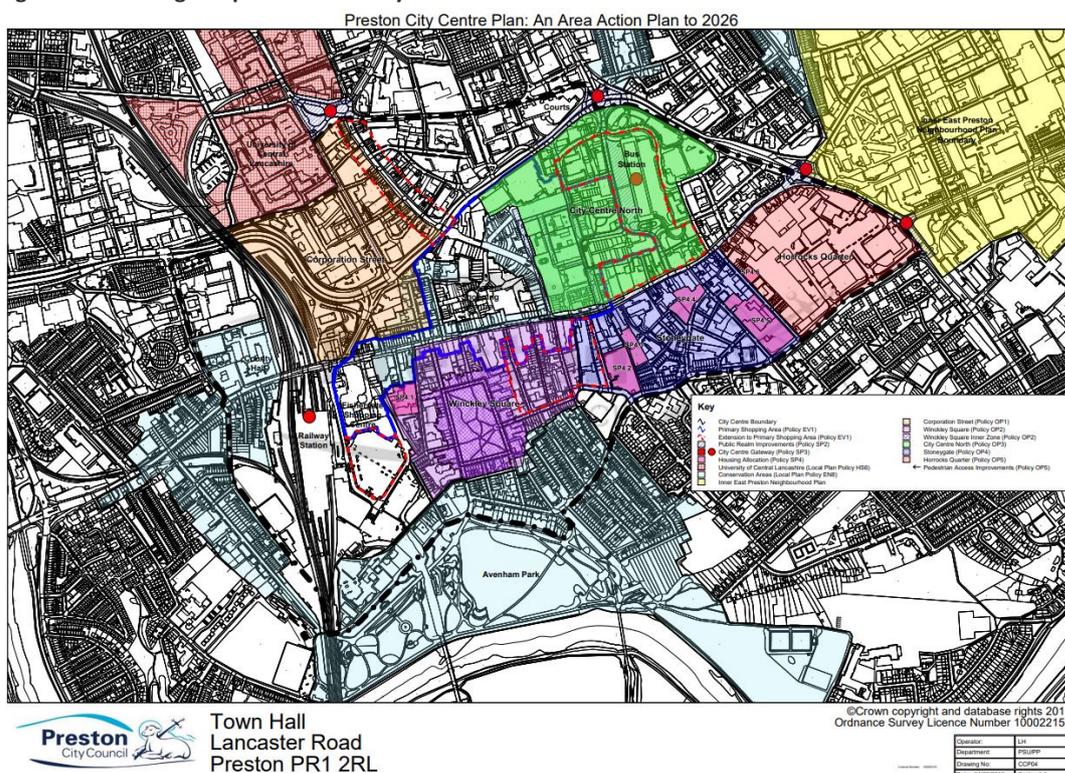
**Table 2.4: Relevant Polices from the Preston City Centre Plan**

Policy Reference	Key Policy Topic	Policy Summary
Policy EV1	Main Shopping and Other Main Town Centre Uses	<p>a) Shopping</p> <p>Within the Primary Shopping Area (as extended), as defined on the Policies Map, shopping development, including major redevelopment proposals, will be permitted in accordance with Policies 1 and 11 of the Core Strategy.</p> <p>Shopping proposals within the Horrocks Quarter Opportunity Area will be subject to the provisions of Policy OP5.</p> <p>Any shopping proposal located outside the Primary Shopping Area (as extended) or the Horrocks Quarter Opportunity Area must demonstrate there are no suitable or available sites to accommodate the development within the Primary Shopping Area (as extended) or the Horrocks Quarter Opportunity Area. When such proposals also exceed 2,500 square metres, an impact assessment will also be necessary.</p> <p>Within the Opportunity Areas, shopping proposals will not be required to demonstrate compliance with the sequential test assessment where such uses are specifically permitted by and comply with Policies OP1 to OP5 as relevant.</p> <p>The Council will work with the City Centre BID, retailers and businesses, to help encourage and promote later opening hours within the Primary Shopping Area to increase activity and vibrancy within the city centre in the early evening.</p> <p>b) Other Main Town Centre Uses</p> <p>Proposals for other main town centre uses, as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework, will be supported both within the Primary Shopping Area (as extended) and elsewhere within the city centre. This will be subject to the provisions in Policy EV2</p>

Policy Reference	Key Policy Topic	Policy Summary
		in the case of cinema development, and the provisions of the Opportunity Area Policies.
Policy OP5	Horrocks Quarter	<p>The area identified as Horrocks Quarter on the Policies Map is allocated for town centre uses, which may include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Shops: Food (A1)</li> <li>b. Business: Offices B1(a)</li> <li>c. Hotels (C1)</li> <li>d. Dwelling Houses (C3)</li> <li>e. Assembly and Leisure (D2) – excluding cinemas</li> <li>f. Shops: Non-food (A1)</li> <li>g. Financial &amp; Professional Services (A2)</li> <li>h. Restaurants &amp; Cafés (A3)</li> <li>i. Drinking Establishments (A4)</li> <li>j. Hot Food Takeaways (A5)</li> </ul> <p>Any net increase in floorspace comprising uses falling within categories (f) to (j) above shall not, individually or cumulatively, exceed 12,500 square metres gross unless a sequential assessment demonstrates that proposals cannot be located in the Primary Shopping Area and an impact assessment demonstrates that the proposal has no significant adverse impact on the Primary Shopping Area.</p>

2.33 The adopted proposals map for the city centre is provided below. This provides the currently adopted Primary Shopping Area, and the proposed extension to the Primary Shopping Area.

Figure 2.2: Existing Adopted Preston City Centre Boundaries



## South Ribble

2.34 The development plan of South Ribble Borough Council includes:

- Central Lancashire Core Strategy (adopted July 2012)
- South Ribble Borough Council Local Plan (adopted July 2015)
- Joint Lancashire Minerals and Waste Development Plan Document (adopted September 2013)

2.35 Table 2.5 provides the other policies of relevance from the South Ribble Borough Council Local Plan.

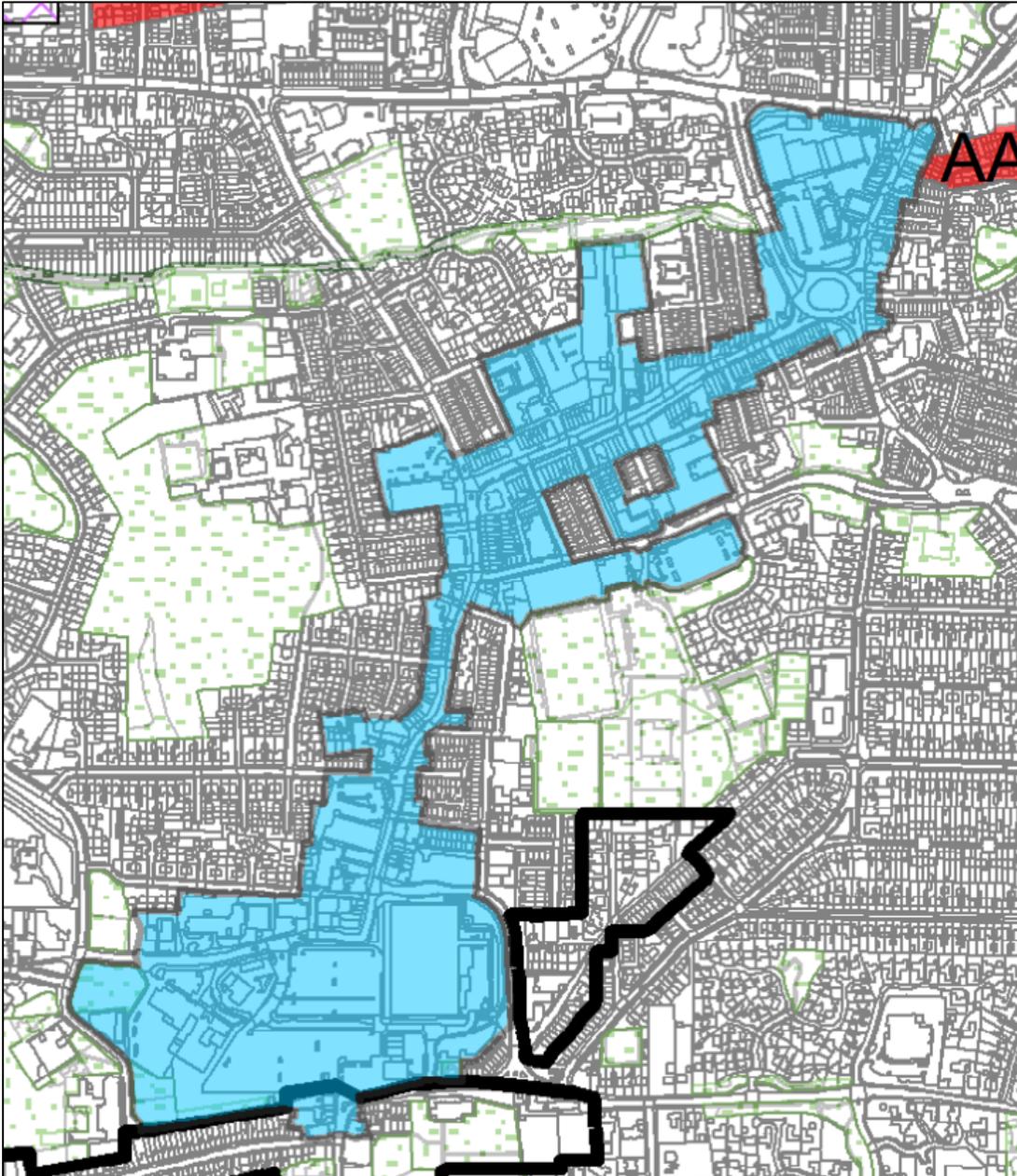
**Table 2.5: Relevant Polices from the South Ribble Borough Council Local Plan**

Policy Reference	Key Policy Topic	Policy Summary
Policy B3	Commercial and Employment Site at South Rings Business Park, Bamber Bridge	Within South Rings Business Park, Bamber Bridge, development, will be permitted to provide offices, non-food retail, employment, leisure, recreation and tourism facilities.
Policy B4	Commercial and Employment Site at Cuerden Way, Bamber Bridge	Within Cuerden Way, Bamber Bridge, development will be permitted to provide for the following uses: offices, food retail, employment, leisure, recreation and tourism facilities.
Policy B5	The Capitol Centre, Walton-le-Dale	Within Capitol Centre, Walton-le-Dale, development will be permitted to provide non-food retail, leisure, recreation and tourism facilities, provided that the development would not harm the vitality and viability of any existing town or district centre; and significantly reduce the range and variety of uses on the site. The Council does not encourage further food retail outlets on this site.
Policy E3	Leyland Town Centre	<p>Within the Primary Retail Frontage of Leyland Town Centre, planning permission will be granted for new buildings, redevelopment of existing sites, extensions to, or change of use of existing buildings for the following uses:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A1 (Retail Uses) – which will be encouraged to achieve a minimum of 60% of the overall units within the Primary Retail Frontage;</li> <li>A3 (Café and Restaurant) uses and A4 (Drinking Establishments) uses – to enhance the evening economy; and</li> <li>Other town centre uses including A2 (Financial and Professional Services) and B1 (Offices) will be permitted where this would not harm the sustainability of the shopping area;</li> <li>Living accommodation or B1 (Office) use will be permitted at first floor level.</li> </ol> <p>The remaining area of the defined town centre (sitting outside the Primary Retail Frontage) is classified as the Secondary Retail Frontage, uses in these areas will be protected and enhanced wherever possible for A1 (Retail Use), A3 (Cafés and Restaurants) and A4 (Drinking establishments) may be appropriate to maintain the vitality and viability of the area.</p> <p>New buildings, redevelopment of existing sites, extensions and/or change of use of existing buildings in the Town Centre will either be expected to use existing car parking facilities within the town centre (if they are in close proximity) or provide the appropriate level of car parking based on their location and type of development.</p>

Policy Reference	Key Policy Topic	Policy Summary
Policy E4	District Centres	<p>The District Centres will be protected and enhanced to maintain their vitality and viability. District Centres are allocated at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Liverpool Road, Penwortham</li> <li>(b) Longton</li> <li>(c) Station Road, Bamber Bridge</li> <li>(d) Tardy Gate</li> </ul> <p>Planning permission will be granted for new buildings, redevelopment of existing sites, extensions to, or change of use of existing buildings for the following uses: A1 (Retail Uses) - which will be encouraged to achieve a minimum of 60% of the overall units; and, A3 (Cafés and Restaurants) uses.</p> <p>Applications for other district centre uses including A2 (Financial and Professional Services), A4 (Drinking Establishments) and B1 (Offices) will be permitted where this would not harm the sustainability of the shopping area.</p>
Policy E5	Local Centres	<p>Local Centres are allocated at:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Earnshaw Bridge</li> <li>2. Farington</li> <li>3. Gregson Lane</li> <li>4. Higher Walton</li> <li>5. Kingsfold</li> <li>6. New Longton</li> <li>7. Seven Stars</li> <li>8. Walmer Bridge</li> <li>9. Walton-le-Dale</li> </ol> <p>Within the Local Centres, A1 (Retail) uses will be protected and enhanced wherever possible in order to achieve a minimum of 60%. This is to maintain the vitality and viability of the centre.</p> <p>Applications for other local centre uses including A2 (Financial and Professional Services), A3 (Cafés and Restaurants) and A4 (Drinking Establishments), and B1 (Offices) may be appropriate where it does not undermine the sustainability of the shopping area.</p>
Policy H1	Protection of Health, Education and Other Community Services and Facilities	<p>Proposals and schemes, for all developments should ensure appropriate health, cultural, recreational, sport and education facilities are provided either on site or in the surrounding area through CIL and/or developer contributions. Development proposing the change of use and/or loss of any premises and/or land currently/last used as a community facility will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the use no longer serves the needs of the community in which it is located or the use is no longer financially viable, and it has been demonstrated through a marketing exercise or such process agreed with the Council.</p>

- 2.36 The adopted Town Centre Boundary for Leyland town centre is shown in the excerpt from the Local Plan Policies Map – Main Urban Area map below.

Figure 2.3: Existing Adopted Leyland Town Centre Boundary



- 2.37 WYG was appointed by South Ribble Borough Council to develop a Town Centre Improvement Strategy for Leyland Town Centre. The strategy has been commissioned to help guide future policy, action and investment within the town centre in order for Leyland to best meet its full potential. The Improvement Strategy will seek to put Leyland on a path towards being a sustainable town centre, which is well equipped to meet the current and future needs of its residents and visitors, and which effectively supports the role of local businesses.
- 2.38 As part of the wider Leyland Town Deal works, Leyland Market has already been relocated ahead of the planned refurbishment of the existing building. An update on the appointment of the contractor for the wider development works will be provided in the new year. These works will include:

- The creation of a new Business Hub, which will overlook a newly developed town square and provide space for start-ups, learning, events, and commercial use, along with a café for informal meetings.
- The construction of new offices, further residential units, and enhanced public realm improvements.
- The refurbishment of the market building,
- Addition of new external stalls that will wrap around the structure and directly connect to the new market square.
- The interior of the existing market building will be refurbished to update the branding and signage for the stalls and central stalls will be upgraded.

2.39 The existing market hall structure will be refurbished while retaining the internal historic building structure (formerly a Leyland Motors building), and the long-term problematic roof will be replaced with a new sustainable structure.

2.40 The Leyland Town Deal project is scheduled to be complete in 2026.

## 3. Commercial Market Overview

- 3.1 In order to provide a context for this Study and to help identify the sectors that are more likely to be the subject of additional development proposals, we set out a summary of current retail and leisure trends below. In reading the summary, it should be noted that the retail and leisure sectors are dynamic and, whilst online shopping and economic conditions have impacted on the high street, new retailers and formats continue to evolve to meet shoppers' needs.
- 3.2 The below commentary should therefore be taken as a 'snapshot' in respect of current market conditions; it will be necessary to judge future development proposals for main town centre uses with reference to the prevailing circumstances at the time of a proposal's determination. Whilst the impact of Covid-19 on the retail and leisure sectors has lessened in 2023 and 2024, the trading outlook remains challenging due to inflationary pressures and significant increases in the cost of living. We reflect further on the current economic outlook below.

### Economic Conditions

- 3.3 The UK economy was impacted significantly by the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021, and by restrictions on movement and behaviour which sought to mitigate its impact. This uncertain background caused retail and leisure expenditure (and business investment) to decline. Household spending fell by over 20% quarter-on-quarter in the second quarter of 2020 following the imposition of national lockdown measures. This is the largest quarterly contraction on record. Retail sales volumes also suffered double-digit falls in April 2020 as all but essential stores closed during the height of the lockdown.
- 3.4 However, following the gradual reopening of businesses over the summer of 2020, the economy returned to growth, with this gathering momentum as a greater number of sectors reopened, including hospitality and leisure services. A resurgence in the number of cases of Covid-19 then resulted in the Government reinstating a nationwide lockdown in early 2021. The general economic outlook in 2022 and 2023 has continued to be of concern given very significant increases in the rate of inflation and the general cost of living.
- 3.5 In February 2024, Experian published its Retail Planner Briefing Note 21 ('ERPBN21'), which identifies anticipated future growth in the retail and leisure sectors and considers likely changes in bricks and mortar retail floorspace and online sales.
- 3.6 ERPBN21 anticipates that retail spending has been squeezed in 2022 and 2023 as a consequence of inflationary pressure and increases in the cost of living. Page 5 of ERPBN21 provides the following summary of the economic outlook:
- 'Looking ahead, spending growth over the course of 2024 remains affected by the lingering effects of the cost-of-living crisis, as though inflation is slowing towards target, high interest rates continue to constrain household budgets, particularly those with mortgage debt. A high tax burden is also acting as a dampener on discretionary income. Rising real pay growth and continued strength in the labour market should still allow for a less negative year than 2023.'**
- 3.7 It is clear that the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the shift to online retailing with a consequent reduction in bricks and mortar retail floorspace. As a consequence, the proportion of expenditure committed via special forms of trading (i.e. internet and mail order sales) has increased.
- 3.8 More generally, as a result of relatively modest growth forecasts and the shift to online retailing, Experian forecasts that there will be a reduction in the stock of retail floorspace over the next few years.

- 3.9 In terms of inflation, Office for National Statistics data<sup>2</sup> indicates that the rate of inflation (as measured by the consumer price index) increased from 0.8% at April 2020 to 1.5% at April 2021, before then increasing significantly to 9.0% at April 2022. The rate of inflation appears to have peaked at 11.1% in October 2022 and has reduced significantly to 6.7% at August 2023 and to 2.6% as of September 2024. Retail has been an industry under significant stress, as many retailers find themselves squeezed between rising costs and the increasing volume of sales over the internet. Such difficulties have, of course, been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis associated with rising energy prices and inflation.
- 3.10 There will still be the need and demand for physical stores, despite the increase in shopping online. This is particularly the case for convenience goods sales given that online shopping orders are typically picked from the shelves of physical stores. In respect of comparison goods, there is a need for the offer to become more 'experiential' to encourage shoppers onto the high street, and to ensure that shopping is viewed as a pleasurable pastime. The shopping experience needs to evolve and diversify both to attract footfall and convert increased activity into sales. Independents clearly have an important role to play in adding interest and in providing differentiation between shopping venues.
- 3.11 In considering the current strength of the retail and leisure sectors, it is important to recognise that different types of retailer have been the subject of different fortunes.
- 3.12 Non-essential retailers have been impacted by enforced 'lockdown' closures in 2020 and 2021. However, dispensing chemists traded more strongly from March 2020, and their sales continued to be above pre-pandemic levels into 2022 and early 2023. Foodstores also generally traded consistently above their pre-pandemic levels. This was initially due to a degree of stockpiling of grocery goods, but some ongoing boost in sales was evident due to the ongoing prevalence of working from home and therefore the increased localised spending. Furniture and homeware retailers also generally benefitted from people spending more time in their homes and wanting to improve their own environment. However, in light of increasing inflation and changes to working patterns throughout 2022, it is understood that there has now been a shift away from this pattern.<sup>3</sup>

### Available Expenditure and the Impact of the Internet

- 3.13 Experian expenditure data and growth forecasts confirm that the pandemic has resulted in turbulent short term changes in per capita convenience and comparison goods expenditure. In this regard, ERPBN21 identifies that per capita convenience goods expenditure decreased by 5.8% in 2022 with a further reduction of 3.0% in 2023. This follows a previous reduction of 1.7% in 2021. Before this, in 2020, per capita convenience goods expenditure increased by 8.6%. The strong level of growth at 2020 is largely attributable to consumers spending more on such goods as a result of lockdown measures. Limited annual per capita convenience expenditure growth (relative to that which has been achieved historically) is anticipated to return across the medium to long term.
- 3.14 As the below Table 3.1 shows, the position in respect of annual per capita comparison goods expenditure has been changeable in the past few years. Whilst annual per capita comparison goods growth of 8.1% was recorded in 2021, this followed a reduction of 7.9% in 2020. Forecast per capita comparison goods expenditure increases over the medium and longer term are positive but still below the level apparent at the turn of the millennium.

<sup>2</sup> ONS 'Consumer price inflation tables' dataset, July 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Article headlined 'Retail sales in Great Britain rise despite cost of living crisis', The Guardian, 19 August 2022.

**Table 3.1: Experian’s Identified and Forecast UK Convenience and Comparison Goods Per Capita Expenditure Growth**

Volume Growth per Head (%)	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026-29	2031-40
Convenience goods	-0.2	-1.0	8.6	-1.7	-5.8	-3.0	-0.5	-0.2	0.0	0.1
Comparison goods	0.4	2.9	-7.9	8.1	-3.3	-3.3	-1.2	2.7	3.1	2.8

Source: Figure 1a and Figure 1b of Experian Retail Planner Briefing Note 21

- 3.15 Whilst the above figures identify a level of growth which is significantly below that which has historically been achieved, the situation for high street stores is exacerbated through the increasing amount of expenditure which is committed through special forms of trading<sup>4</sup> and, in particular, through online sales.
- 3.16 The below Table 3.2 sets out Experian’s identified and forecast level of special forms of trading as a proportion of overall convenience and comparison goods expenditure. Experian estimates that special forms of trading will account for just under four out of every ten pounds spent on comparison goods and almost a quarter of convenience goods expenditure at 2034.

**Table 3.2: Experian’s Identified and Forecast Market Share of Non-Store Retail Sales for Convenience and Comparison Goods Sectors**

Volume Growth Per Head (%)	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2029	2034	2039
Convenience goods	10.8	12.9	17.1	19.2	16.4	15.8	17.3	21.2	23.3	24.6
Comparison goods	21.8	25.0	39.2	37.9	31.5	30.4	32.5	36.5	38.5	39.7

Source: Figure 5 of Experian Retail Planner Briefing Note 21

- 3.17 The ongoing popularity of internet shopping continues to have clear implications in respect of the viability of some ‘bricks and mortar’ retailers. However, it is important to note that changes in how people shop also bring about some opportunities for retailers trading from the high street. In particular, many stores sell online but fulfil orders from regular stores rather than warehouses<sup>5</sup>, with purchases therefore helping to sustain tangible retail floorspace. As a consequence, Experian also provides an ‘adjusted’ estimate of special forms of trading, which relates to expenditure which is not available to actual stores. These figures are provided in Table 3.3 below. The figures demonstrate the high proportion of online sales which are fulfilled from physical stores, and therefore the importance of retaining this offer on our high streets.

**Table 3.3: Experian’s Identified and Forecast Adjusted Market Share of Non-Store Retail Sales for Convenience and Comparison Goods Sectors**

Volume Growth Per Head (%)	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2029	2034	2039
Convenience goods	3.2	3.9	5.1	5.8	4.9	4.7	5.2	6.3	7.0	7.4
Comparison goods	16.3	18.8	29.4	28.5	23.6	22.8	24.3	27.4	28.8	29.7

Source: Figure 5 of Experian Retail Planner Briefing Note 21

<sup>4</sup> Including internet sales, mail order, stalls and markets, door-to-door and telephone sales.

<sup>5</sup> This is particularly the case with food shopping and speciality comparison goods purchases, where retailers often try to tap into a wider market through an online presence.

## Convenience Goods

3.18 Recent socio-economic conditions have led to significant shifts in convenience goods retailing, which have resulted in the 'big four' supermarket operators' market share being cut. Indeed, analysis from Kantar<sup>6</sup> has identified that the traditional 'big four' supermarket operators are no longer such, with Aldi's market share overtaking that of Morrisons over the 12 weeks to 4 September 2022. Aldi continues to achieve a market share (10.0%) higher than Morrisons (8.7%) as of June 2024.<sup>7</sup>

3.19 Mintel<sup>8</sup> finds that the decline of the food superstore is well-established and can be attributed to two matters as follows:

- Firstly, people are undertaking food shopping in different ways. More people are living in town and city centres, and are generally purchasing their own home at a later age than was previously the case.<sup>9</sup> Mintel indicates that such people are more likely to undertake food shopping on an 'as needs' basis and are more likely to eat out or use takeaways. As such, they are less likely to have need to undertake a weekly 'main food shop'.
- Secondly, the current uncertainty in the economy has made discount foodstore operators (namely Aldi and Lidl) a more attractive proposition, and many such foodstores are thriving given that shoppers are currently having to be 'money savvy'. Discounters have also made efforts to try to compete more directly with the 'big four' supermarket operators, with larger stores, greater ranges of goods, fresh foods, and premium products becoming increasingly prevalent. It is evident that the likes of Aldi and Lidl are no longer 'hard discounters' in quite the same way they once were, as they now fulfil a wider range of customers' needs by offering a greater range of products. The move towards the middle ground has allowed discounters to secure market share from both superstores and smaller convenience stores. In addition, we note that discount retailers are often happy to trade alongside more upmarket convenience goods retailers (such as M&S Foodhall) as, collectively, the two stores can meet a comprehensive range of grocery shopping needs.

3.20 The shifts in the sector are illustrated with reference to changes in retailers' market share in recent years, as shown in Table 3.4.

3.21 The past few years have seen the closure of a number of unprofitable grocery stores (from small convenience stores to large superstores) and the continuation of Aldi and Lidl's expansion programme. Aldi announced in September 2023 that it intends to open another 500 stores in the coming years.<sup>10</sup> Lidl intends to open a further 250 stores across the UK.<sup>11</sup>

3.22 Whilst the traditional 'big four' remain more cautious in respect of new openings, a limited number of proposals for mid-sized foodstores are currently being promoted by these operators in areas where there is a growing population, or an obvious shortfall in existing provision. These stores are often of a scale that is broadly comparable to that provided by Aldi and Lidl, which allows customers to shop in a convenient and efficient manner.

<sup>6</sup> An international market research company based in London.

<sup>7</sup> Kantar, Great Britain Grocery Market Share (12 Weeks Ending), 9 June 2024.

<sup>8</sup> 'UK Retail Rankings', Mintel (a market research company), April 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Article headlined 'Average UK first-time buyer is now older than 30, says Halifax', The Guardian, January 2022.

<sup>10</sup> Article headlined 'Aldi claims it is increasingly shoppers' main supermarket for weekly shop', The Guardian, 8 September 2023.

<sup>11</sup> As set out in the press release headlined 'Lidl continues to search to secure sites for new stores', 24 April 2023 (<https://corporate.lidl.co.uk/media-centre/pressreleases/2023/lidl-continues-search-to-secure-sites-for-new-stores>).

**Table 3.4: Market Share of Convenience Goods Operators**

Operator	December 2017	December 2018	December 2019	December 2020	December 2021	December 2022	December 2023	December 2024
Tesco	28.1%	27.8%	27.4%	27.3%	27.9%	27.5%	27.6%	28.1%
Sainsbury's	16.5%	16.1%	16.0%	15.9%	15.7%	15.5%	15.8%	15.9%
Asda	15.3%	15.2%	14.8%	14.3%	14.2%	14.0%	13.6%	12.3%
Morrisons	10.8%	10.6%	10.3%	10.4%	10.1%	9.1%	8.8%	8.6%
Aldi	6.8%	7.4%	7.8%	7.4%	7.7%	9.1%	9.3%	10.3%
Co-op	5.8%	5.9%	6.1%	6.0%	5.8%	5.6%	5.4%	5.5%
Lidl	5.0%	5.3%	5.9%	6.1%	6.3%	7.2%	7.7%	7.7%
Waitrose	5.2%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%	5.1%	4.7%	4.6%	4.4%
Iceland	2.2%	2.2%	2.3%	2.5%	2.4%	2.5%	2.4%	2.2%
Symbols & Independent	1.7%	1.5%	1.6%	1.7%	1.6%	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%
Other Outlets	1.6%	1.7%	1.6%	1.8%	1.8%	1.8%	1.8%	1.8%
Ocado	1.1%	1.2%	1.3%	1.6%	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%	1.8%

Source: KANTAR Grocery Market Share. Figures shown are for the final reporting period in each calendar year

## Comparison Goods

- 3.23** The comparison goods sector is currently being squeezed by a number of factors, including increasing operator costs and a reduction in discretionary spending as a result of increases in the cost of living.
- 3.24** Whilst the sector is continually evolving and there are a number of retailers performing well (including JD Sports, Next, Primark, and Zara), recent headlines have focused on failing retailers and store closures. High profile retailers that have struggled include Debenhams, which announced the closure of all 124 stores in December 2020, and the Arcadia Group, which owned Topshop, Topman and Dorothy Perkins. Arcadia Group announced the closure of around 500 stores in February 2021.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, Intu Properties, one of Britain's biggest shopping centre owners, fell into administration in June 2020 after failing to secure an agreement with its creditors.<sup>13</sup>
- 3.25** More recently, Wilko entered into administration in August 2023 and ceased trading shortly after, and The Body Shop announced the closure of 75 stores at the end of February 2024, after falling into administration.
- 3.26** Whilst the loss of some of the above names will have significant repercussions for certain towns (particularly those that have lost one or more of Debenhams, Marks & Spencer, or House of Fraser from their high street), some well-known retailers have failed to 'move with the times' and update their offer, accommodation, and online presence. This is partly a consequence of retailers struggling to reinvest in their business when margins are tight (or non-existent).
- 3.27** Many operators have also rationalised their portfolio with the aim of serving the UK by concentrating on larger centres, supplemented by a strong online presence. It will be interesting to see whether any permanent change in respect of working from home may act to counterbalance this 'polarisation' trend, given the prospect of fewer commuters travelling to larger centres and greater numbers of people spending the working day in and around their home. The impact on larger centres may be to reduce footfall, particularly within the week, and result in the

<sup>12</sup> Article headlined 'After Topshop owner Arcadia's demise, what now for UK clothes shopping?' The Guardian, 13 February 2021.

<sup>13</sup> Article headlined 'Shopping centre owner Intu collapses into administration', The Guardian, 26 June 2020.

shift in expenditure being directed to the smaller town, district, and local centres. Whilst this will be a positive for the smaller centres, larger centres may suffer as a result.

- 3.28 Whilst structural changes have had a material impact on the vitality and viability of many UK high streets, there are some beneficiaries. Notwithstanding Wilko's recent problems, some 'discount variety' operators – such as B&M Bargains, Home Bargains and Poundland – have taken advantage of lower rents and reoccupied a number of medium to large retail units. However, as evidenced by recent events, including the closure of Wilko, the discount variety market may be approaching capacity.

### Leisure and Food & Drink

- 3.29 The greater availability of high street units appears to have helped stoke an entrepreneurial spirit in recent years, with a number of centres beginning to benefit from a greater focus on independent retailers and also modern markets, which are frequently focused around food and drink operators.
- 3.30 More generally, the food and drink sector was buoyed pre-pandemic by the success of mid-market national multiples, which expanded quickly across the UK. However, this market has become saturated in many locations and a number of high-profile operators have been in financial difficulty, including the closure of Byron Burger, Chiquito, and Frankie & Benny's branches. Given the problems suffered by such operators, the market has become more cautious and mid-market operators are picking new sites carefully as a result. Instead, we have seen a number of independent operators flourish, both before and throughout the pandemic, and a desire from customers to choose local operators over larger regional and national brands.
- 3.31 A further significant recent high street success story has been the resurgence of the town centre leisure sector, which has resulted in new cinemas being developed close to the shopping core and the emergence of 'competitive socialising' concepts, which include bowling, crazy golf, table tennis, darts, axe-throwing, escape rooms and other seemingly niche pursuits.
- 3.32 Cinema openings have been on the up in the early part of this century (until the Covid-19 pandemic) and 'boutique' cinema operators – including Curzon, Everyman, and The Light – are able to operate from smaller sites in town centres (partly as a consequence of digital technology). Town centre cinema development has successfully underpinned wider mixed-use developments, as food and drink operators are typically keen to locate in close proximity to benefit from spin-off custom. New, innovative leisure operators have been particularly beneficial both in re-using existing difficult-to-let premises, and in driving the evening economy.
- 3.33 More generally, the gym market continues to perform well, with there now being around 7,200 health and fitness clubs across the UK, which are estimated to have a total turnover of approximately £2bn.<sup>14</sup> Around one in every seven Britons has a gym membership. Budget gyms are currently particularly popular, with operators such as Pure Gym, The Gym Group, and easyGym utilising a format that is based on low costs and high volume.

### The Night-Time Economy

- 3.34 The term night-time economy is used to describe a wide range of activities that (typically) take place after 5pm. This could range from a trip to the theatre or cinema, to a family meal, to a night out at a club. A successful night-time economy generally caters for a wide range of demographics and interests.

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<sup>14</sup> 'Number of health clubs in Europe in 2020, by country' dataset, Statista, 27 October 2022.

- 3.35 Creating a safe, vibrant and well-balanced evening and night-time offer is a challenge that can dramatically improve the overall health of a town centre and boost the economy.
- 3.36 The Association of Town and City Management ('ATCM') has identified a number of themes to help improve the attraction and operation of the night-time economy, which are summarised as follows:
- **Alive After Five** – This relates to revisions to trading hours to better suit customers' shopping needs and availability. A Retail Trading Hours Study commissioned by ATCM found that sales between 5 pm and 8 pm are typically 50% greater than those between 9 am and 11am. Revising trading hours to open and close later could increase sales by around 10% to 12%.
  - **Late Night Transport** – The lack of frequent, efficient and safe public transport late at night, or at least the perception of this being the case, could be having a detrimental effect on night-time economy and social scene. One way of increasing night-time visitor numbers is to promote late-night travel provision and its publicity.
  - **Purple Flag** – This is an accreditation scheme which recognises excellence in the management of town and city centres at night. Obtaining Purple Flag accreditation demonstrates that a town's night-time economy offers clean and safe environments, great bars and clubs, a variety of arts and cultural attractions, and excellent transport links.
  - **Evening Economy Ambassadors** – The ambassadors improve the evening and night-time experience in a town centre by liaising between visitors, police, door staff, licensees, and transport operators.
  - **Light Night** – This is an initiative where town or city centres stays open after dark for people to enjoy local shops and services within a wider cultural event involving music, art and, most importantly, through the lighting up of buildings and light-based art installations.
- 3.37 The above list is not exhaustive, and the development of a bespoke evening economy strategy can help prioritise and deliver events and initiatives which draw on a town centre's strengths and address weaknesses.

### Planning Reform on the High Street

- 3.38 One of the most impactful planning reforms in recent times has been the consolidation of a number of separate Use Classes under a single Class E 'Commercial, Business and Service' use. This update to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (the 'UCO') came into effect in September 2020. The new Use Class combines shops, restaurants, offices, gyms and nurseries (amongst other uses) such that planning permission is no longer required to switch uses.
- 3.39 Furthermore, in March 2021, an update was made to the General Permitted Development (England) Order 2015. This allows for the change of use from Class E properties to residential from August 2021 (extending a right that had previously been restricted to office uses). This permitted development right is subject to maximum size requirements, the property having been in use as Class E for two years and having been vacant for three months. An application to the determining authority for 'prior approval' is also required for limited consideration of impacts relating to transport, contamination, flood risk, noise, light, and neighbourhood amenity. Further limitations apply in Conservation Areas and for nurseries, as well as in areas covered by 'Article 4 directions' where permitted development rights are extinguished.
- 3.40 On 20 July 2021, paragraph 53 of a new iteration of the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') set out limitations on the use of Article 4 directions. The revised national policy seeks to qualify the areas in which it is justified to introduce Article 4 directions, limiting local authorities' ability to control development.

- 3.41 The changes in the application of Article 4 directions were first put forward in the January 2021 consultation for draft revisions to the NPPF. However, the actual policy provision differs from the initial consultation in a couple of key areas. Paragraph 53 of the previous NPPF of July 2021 recognised that the loss of the ‘essential core of a primary shopping area’ could result in wholly unacceptable adverse impacts on an area’s vitality and viability. This was the Government’s first acknowledgement of the potential for the permitted development rights to undermine the health of centres in the NPPF. The updated text also introduced a requirement for ‘robust evidence’ to support the removal of development rights. The most recent iteration of the NPPF, published in December 2024, retains these changes.
- 3.42 This can be seen as generally good news for local authorities concerned about the erosion of retail and service uses, and the need to protect vulnerable centres from potentially poor-quality residential development. Protection of the vitality and viability of a high street or town centre against the adverse impacts of change of use is now established as justification for issuing an Article 4 direction.

### Out-of-Centre Retailing

- 3.43 Another key format of retailing (and provision of leisure uses) are out-of-centre retail warehouse destinations. Whilst local authorities need to retain control over out-of-centre provision from a planning perspective, such provision does play an important part in providing space for operators who may not be able to viably trade from in-centre locations. Such uses include ‘bulky’ retail operators, including DIY stores, electrical goods retailers, furniture stores and so on.
- 3.44 In their UK Retail Warehousing August 2023 Spotlight Report, Savills note that: ‘from a retailer’s point of view, there are definitely reasons to be cheerful. Generally, it appears that higher input and operating costs have, to some degree, been successfully passed onto the shopper. Added to this are some areas where costs are lower (such as business rates and rents).’ In terms of the nature of the operators, it is the value orientated brands which continue to top the charts of the most acquisitive retail and leisure operators.
- 3.45 In this regard, Savills note that the retailers with a focus on essential product categories that have continued to drive footfall to out-of-centre schemes, which remain at near parity with the levels seen pre-Covid. Furthermore, operators which focus on essential products have dominated the new openings, including Aldi and Lidl, Home Bargains, B&M Retail and leisure operators such as PureGym, Greggs and Starbucks.
- 3.46 In addition to the above, most out-of-centre shopping locations retain their apparent significant competitive advantages over town centres and high streets in terms of their supply of larger format modern outlets, their lower occupancy costs, extensive free parking and easy and convenient access to the surrounding highways and key arterial routes. This is still an attractive proposition for those retailers that are still seeking space in the current market, but the implications of the attraction of out-of-centre facilities on defined centres, needs to be monitored carefully and the ongoing ease of access, parking and overarching attraction of out-of-centre facilities can of course have implications for town centre operators and retail and leisure planning policy.

## 4. Healthcheck Overview

### Introduction

4.1 Paragraph 90 of the NPPF indicates that planning policies should promote the long-term vitality and viability of town centres by allowing them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries. The same paragraph also states that town centres should accommodate a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and provide for development that reflects a centre's distinctive character.

4.2 Paragraph 006 of the Town Centres PPG identifies a range of indicators that should be assessed over time in reviewing the health of a town centre. The indicators include the following:

- diversity of uses;
- proportion of vacant street level property;
- retailer representation and intentions to change representation;
- pedestrian flows;
- accessibility;
- perceptions of safety and occurrence of crime;
- the state of town centre environmental quality;
- the balance between independent and national multiple retailers; and
- the extent to which there is an evening and night-time economy offer.

4.3 The assessments are based on a site visit which was undertaken in November 2024. These assessments should be taken as a 'snapshot' of the performance of each centre at a moment in time. Full copies of the healthchecks for Preston, Chorley and Leyland are provided at **Appendix 1** and a summary of our findings are provided below.

### Preston City Centre

4.4 Preston city centre serves as the primary retail, leisure, and service destination within the Borough of Preston and an essential hub for the wider sub-region. Its historic layout reflects its origins as a market town, with retail and leisure activities concentrated around Fishergate, Church Street, and Friargate.

4.5 Key facilities include St George's Shopping Centre and Fishergate Shopping Centre, which provide modern retail and leisure spaces. Across the city centre, 706 commercial units account for approximately 174,760 sq.m of floorspace, highlighting its scale and sub-regional importance.

**Table 4.1: Composition of Preston City Centre, as of November 2024**

Type	Floorspace (sq.m)	Floorspace (%)	Floorspace UK Average (%)	Units (no.)	Units (%)	Units UK Average (%)
Comparison	53,900	30.8%	26.3%	165	23.4%	29.2%
Convenience	9,860	5.6%	9.3%	57	8.1%	15.6%
Financial & Business	7,980	4.6%	8.3%	40	5.7%	6.2%
Leisure	42,620	24.4%	25.8%	206	29.2%	26.7%
Retail Service	7,320	4.2%	16.0%	79	11.2%	7.4%
Vacant	53,080	30.4%	14.1%	159	22.5%	14.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>174,760</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>706</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

- 4.6 Comparison goods dominate Preston’s retail offer, accounting for 30.8% of floorspace, notably above the UK average of 26.3%. However, this strength is not fully reflected in unit numbers, with comparison units making up 23.4% of all units, below the national average of 29.2%. The comparison retail offer is concentrated along Fishergate and within St George’s Shopping Centre, featuring a strong mix of high street clothing retailers such as New Look, H&M, Next, River Island, and Matalan. The presence of household goods providers like B&M and Home Bargains further reinforces the city’s role in meeting a broad range of non-food shopping needs.
- 4.7 The convenience retail sector accounts for just 5.6% of Preston city centre’s total floorspace, significantly below the UK average of 9.3%. This underrepresentation is also reflected in unit numbers, with convenience stores making up 8.1% of all units compared to the national average of 15.6%. Anchored by key stores such as M&S and Sainsbury’s Express, alongside several independent convenience outlets, the sector provides essential goods but remains limited in scale. Preston Market, located along Market Street, plays an important role in attracting footfall, with observed movement between the market and nearby retail areas such as St George’s Shopping Centre.
- 4.8 Leisure uses occupy 24.4% of total floorspace and 29.2% of all units, reflecting its strong presence in the city centre and its importance in supporting both the daytime and evening economy. Preston has a diverse range of food and drink establishments, bars, and takeaways that contribute to the vibrancy of the area. The forthcoming Animate New Leisure Development, set to open in Spring 2025, will further bolster the city’s leisure offer with a cinema, restaurants, and entertainment venues, reinforcing Preston’s appeal beyond retail.
- 4.9 Financial and business services occupy 4.6% of total floorspace, below the UK average of 8.3%, and make up 5.7% of total units, slightly below the national figure of 6.2%. While the sector includes banks, building societies, estate agents, and solicitors, its lower representation suggests limited financial and professional service provision in the city centre. The decline of high street banking, with several national branches closing in recent years, has further impacted the sector’s presence. Strengthening the financial and business offer could help diversify the local economy and enhance Preston’s role as a service hub.
- 4.10 Retail services account for 4.2% of floorspace and 11.2% of units, both significantly below the UK averages of 16.0% and 7.4%, respectively. This sector includes beauty salons, dry cleaners, and travel agents, but its lower representation suggests potential for growth. Similarly, financial and business services are underrepresented, occupying just 4.6% of floorspace compared to the UK average of 8.3%, and 5.7% of units compared to 6.2% nationally.

- 4.11 Vacancy rates are above the national average within Preston City Centre, with 30.4% of floorspace and 22.5% of units unoccupied. These figures are significantly above the UK averages of 14.1% and 14.3%, respectively, highlighting the scale of the challenge. High vacancy levels can detract from the city's vitality, creating gaps in the retail and service offer while potentially discouraging footfall.
- 4.12 The rise of online shopping, changing consumer habits, and economic pressures have likely contributed to reduced demand for physical retail space. However, it is important to note that a notable proportion of vacant units (approximately 28.2%) were undergoing refurbishment or awaiting new occupiers at the time of survey, indicating potential future take-up. Addressing long-term vacancies through diversification of uses, incentives for businesses, and targeted regeneration efforts will be essential to revitalising the city centre and improving its overall attractiveness.
- 4.13 The ongoing redevelopment of the Stoneygate and Harris Quarter areas represents a significant opportunity to regenerate and transform key parts of the city centre. After a period of decline, these areas have seen investment in new residential, retail, and leisure developments, as well as improvements to the public realm, which will enhance Preston's appeal.
- 4.14 A considerable amount of pedestrian activity was observed throughout all areas of Preston city centre at different times of the day and evening. During the daytime, activity was generally busiest along Fishergate and Friargate. The pedestrianised nature of several key streets in the city centre results in a compact and walkable environment, which accommodates easy movement on foot. We observed a number of linked trips between different operators in this central part of the city centre, particularly between the bus station, retail areas, and cultural venues. Overall, the city centre benefits from a good level of footfall driven by its strong comparison retail and leisure services offer and a number of key anchors.
- 4.15 Preston city centre enjoys a good standard of accessibility by public transport. Road access to the city centre by private car is set to be improved through works associated with the City Transport Plan. With regard to accessibility for people with impairments or mobility requirements, travelling through the city centre will not prove difficult as the majority of pedestrianised areas are well adapted for such purposes. In general, however, the pavements are even and well-maintained, the streets are wide and clutter-free, and there is good provision of benches and other street furniture available for those who need to stop and rest.
- 4.16 The public realm in the city centre is generally of good standard, with Preston benefiting from a number of valuable heritage assets, including several Grade II listed buildings. Notwithstanding, there are a few parts of the city centre where the environmental quality is of a somewhat poorer standard. The northern part of the city centre has lower environmental quality due to the presence of underutilised sites and ongoing redevelopment works.
- 4.17 Preston city centre is also somewhat lacking in green/open space, although there are landscaped areas and tree planting along key pedestrian routes. This could be an area of focus for the Council in the near future. Additionally, a broader range of family-friendly food and beverage options would enhance the city centre's appeal.
- 4.18 Overall, Preston city centre is considered to be vital and viable, benefitting from robust daytime and night-time economies that befit its status as a regional centre, excellent accessibility, and a high level of environmental quality. The number of regeneration opportunity sites across the city centre and the positive signs of both public and private sector investment mean that there are substantial positive indicators for Preston's future.

## Chorley Town Centre

4.19 Chorley town centre serves as the principal retail, leisure and service destination within the Borough of Chorley, as well as an important centre for the wider sub-region. Its layout reflects its longstanding history as a market town, with key shopping areas centred around Market Street and the covered market at Market Place. In addition, Market Walk Shopping Centre and the newer development around Flat Iron Parade in the north-east of the town offer modern, purpose-built retail and leisure facilities. The Goad area of Chorley comprises 300 commercial units, providing for approximately 54,580 sq.m of floorspace.

**Table 4.2: Composition of Chorley Town Centre, as at November 2024**

Type	Floorspace (sq.m)	Floorspace (%)	Floorspace UK Average (%)	Units (no.)	Units (%)	Units UK Average (%)
Comparison	16,360	30.0%	29.2%	91	30.3%	26.3%
Convenience	11,990	22.0%	15.6%	28	9.3%	9.3%
Financial & Business	3,600	6.6%	6.2%	25	8.3%	8.3%
Leisure	12,420	22.8%	26.7%	72	24.0%	25.8%
Retail Service	4,970	9.1%	7.4%	52	17.3%	16.0%
Vacant	5,260	9.6%	14.3%	32	10.7%	14.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>54,580</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

- 4.20 Chorley enjoys a strong retail offer which exceeds national averages in terms of both floorspace and units. Comparison national multiples are concentrated in the shopping centre. While these retailers are somewhat weighted towards the lower or value end of the market, they effectively meet a wide range of everyday needs. Notable stores include clothing and footwear retailers such as JD, Peacocks, and Shoezone; household goods providers like B&M and Poundland; and chemist/toiletries retailers such as Boots and Bodycare. In addition, Chorley has an excellent variety of independent non-food shops, with representation across 27 of Goad's comparison retail sub-categories.
- 4.21 Convenience provision is anchored by four in-centre supermarkets, comprising the Asda superstore in the south of the town centre and the Booths, M&S and Iceland stores in the north-east. These are supplemented by a number of high-quality independent convenience operators, including bakers, butchers, confectioners, convenience stores and other food retailers.
- 4.22 Chorley town centre's specialist and traditional markets play a significant role in enhancing its retail offer, as they help increase footfall and form popular attractions in their own right. Chorley is home to two main markets: the covered market, which trades four days a week from Market Place, and the Tuesday market, which comprises over 150 stalls set up along Fazakerley Street, Chapel Street, New Market Street, Cleveland Street, Market Street, and the lower half of High Street. The markets primarily host local and independent traders selling a diverse range of food and non-food products. The recently opened 1498 food and beverage area provides communal seating for customers wishing to consume items purchased from the café and other food-to-go options within the market.
- 4.23 Although the proportions of leisure floorspace and units in Chorley fall below the national averages, the overall offer is strong for a centre of this size. Major large-format leisure uses include a cinema and theatre. The town

centre also enjoys a number of food and drink operators which contribute to its evening economy, including bars and wine bars, public houses, restaurants and takeaway operators. These are scattered throughout the centre, ensuring that most parts benefit from activity and footfall after normal business hours.

- 4.24 Chorley also constitutes an important service destination for local residents. Its retail services offer is focussed on the health & beauty sector but also provides for a range of other daily needs such as dry cleaning and launderette, opticians, post office, petrol filling station and travel agent services. Representation in the financial & business services sector is in line with national averages and the town centre contains a number of banks, building societies, and financial and legal service providers.
- 4.25 Vacancy rates in Chorley town centre are comfortably below the equivalent UK averages in terms of both floorspace and units. There are few concentrations of vacancies, although there are a couple of prominent empty premises which detract from the street-scene in their vicinities.
- 4.26 The largest individual unoccupied unit is the former post office on Cleveland Street, which measures 870 sq.m gross and has been vacant since 2016. We understand, however, that planning permission was granted in 2021 (under ref: 21/00810/FUL) to allow the change of use of the ground floor of this unit to a Class F1 educational facility to be operated by Kip McGrath, which provides tuition services to students of all ages.
- 4.27 A key component of Chorley's vitality and viability is its accessibility, particularly by public transport. The town centre is connected via its bus interchange and railway station to a number of regional and sub-regional destinations, including Preston, Manchester, Blackpool, Bolton and Wigan. This accessibility helps to drive the town centre's high footfall, especially around the covered market.
- 4.28 The environmental quality is generally good, with the Market Street area in particular having benefitted from investment in the public realm resulting in new, easily navigable paving and modern street furniture.
- 4.29 Our overall conclusion is that Chorley town centre is reasonably vital and viable, having clearly benefitted from recent investment.

### Leyland Town Centre

- 4.30 Leyland town centre is the principal shopping, leisure and service destination in the South Ribble Borough. It is largely linear in nature, with its commercial stock arranged around the main shopping streets of Hough Lane, Towngate and Chapel Brow, but also encompasses the large-format retail warehouse units at Churchill Retail Park in the north of the centre.
- 4.31 The Goad area of Leyland contains 210 commercial units, providing for approximately 41,000 sq.m of floorspace.

**Table 4.3: Composition of Leyland Town Centre, as at November 2024**

Type	Floorspace (sq.m)	Floorspace (%)	Floorspace UK Average (%)	Units (no.)	Units (%)	Units UK Average (%)
Comparison	9,620	23.4%	29.2%	50	23.8%	26.3%
Convenience	12,500	30.5%	15.6%	16	7.6%	9.3%
Financial & Business	3,180	7.7%	6.2%	21	10.0%	8.3%
Leisure	7,950	19.4%	26.7%	54	25.7%	25.8%
Retail Service	3,480	8.5%	7.4%	47	22.4%	16.0%
Vacant	4,310	10.5%	14.3%	22	10.5%	14.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>41,040</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

- 4.32 Comparison provision in Leyland falls below national averages in terms of floorspace and units, although the shortfall in floorspace is more pronounced given the relatively small size of most of the town centre’s non-food shops. There are a limited number of national multiples, which include B&M, Home Bargains, Savers and a number of charity shops. The majority of comparison retailers, however, are independent. These provide for a good range of the day-to-day needs of the local catchment, with representation from carpets/flooring retailers, chemists, clothes shops, gift shops, electronics retailers, florists, furniture stores, and a number of specialist operators.
- 4.33 In contrast, Leyland’s level of convenience floorspace is almost double the proportion found in a typical UK centre. This is primarily due to the large size of the Tesco Extra superstore in the south of the centre, which measures 7,570 sq.m gross and which provides a comprehensive offer that draws footfall and expenditure from a wide area. There is also a medium-sized Asda store (1,050 sq.m gross) and an Iceland supermarket (600 sq.m). These are supplemented by a range of smaller, primarily independent, convenience traders which provide for a good range of daily needs including bakers, butchers, confectioners and CTN stores.
- 4.34 The retail offer in the town centre is complemented by its Market, which operates on Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. At the time of our site visit, Leyland Market had been temporarily moved to Kings Court, which lies a short distance from its usual location on Northcote Street and still within the defined town centre. This relocation is part of a multi-million-pound refurbishment of the market building as part of the Leyland Town Deal, which aims to transform the town centre, including improvements to highways and public spaces. The existing market building will be refurbished, with the upgrades including improved signage, and expanded, with new external stalls and a new market square. It is set to reopen in September 2025. The refurbishment works and associated investment represent an important opportunity to support and enhance Leyland’s future vitality and viability.
- 4.35 Leyland’s leisure offer is focused on the food and drink sector, with operators including bars and wine bars (4), cafes (6), fast food and takeaway outlets (24), public houses (9) and restaurants (7). These units are spread throughout the centre and contribute to an evening economy that brings some activity and footfall to most parts after normal business hours. There is, however, a concentration of takeaway operators around Chapel Brow and Golden Hill Lane in the north of the centre. A number of these are closed during the daytime, which detracts from the streetscene and feeling of security in this part of the centre in the daytime.
- 4.36 Leyland is an important day-to-day service centre for its local catchment. Its proportions of retail service and financial & business service operators exceed the UK averages in terms of both floorspace and units.

- 4.37 Vacancy rates in the town centre are below the national averages in terms of floorspace and units. The majority of vacant units are small in scale and scattered throughout the centre, with no major concentrations, and this limits their detrimental impact on the look and feel of Leyland. The exception, however, is the two vacancies at Churchill Retail Park, which are large and prominent. These comprise the former Lidl supermarket (which measures 1,070 sq.m gross) and the former Poundstretcher unit (1,330 sq.m gross). These units represent significant opportunity sites and refilling them should be a priority.
- 4.38 Leyland performs relatively well against other healthcheck indicators. It is accessible by a range of means of transport, and supports a reasonably high level of footfall commensurate with its size and role in the hierarchy. The environmental quality is generally good, with the majority of commercial units being well-maintained and with some greenery and street furniture which contribute to the generally pleasant environment.
- 4.39 Our overall conclusion is that Leyland is a reasonably healthy centre which serves an important convenience retail and service function for its local residents. It is also set to benefit from significant investment in the form of the Town Deal improvements, which should help to ensure its future vitality and viability.

### District and Local Centres

- 4.40 As part of the commission, the three local authorities have produced composition matrix for the smaller centres across Central Lancashire.
- 4.41 Nexus has compiled a matrix to determine how the commercial provision is performing and as such, where they should sit within the recommended hierarchy. As set out above, the matrix is based on an assessment of the provision of facilities, ATM services and the proportion of national operators, types and scale of facilities provided and vacancies which were located in each centre.
- 4.42 As was the case for the majority of the commercial parades assessed as part of this part of the Study, the identified group of commercial units clearly played a vital role in providing day-to-day facilities for the local catchment, particularly in respect of convenience provision (providing facilities to enable residents to purchase goods such as milk and bread), retail service facilities such as hairdressers and barbers and cafes.
- 4.43 Details in respect of the centres assessed for this part of the Study are provided at **Appendices 2 and 3**, and recommendations were then used to help formulate the recommended policy approach contained within the final part of this Study.

## 5. Policy Recommendations

### Context

- 5.1 The principal purpose of the commission was to better understand the ongoing challenges for Central Lancashire's high streets and opportunities for their revitalisation and reimagining, and to set out a range of strategic policy recommendations to assist the preparation of the Central Lancashire Local Plan.
- 5.2 Central Lancashire covers the geographical areas of Preston, Chorley and South Ribble, which functions as one integrated local economy and commuting area. It is a single housing market area with high levels of self-containment, or families moving within the area. It is therefore appropriate to work strategically in collaboration to ensure our policy is joined up and complementary.
- 5.3 As part of this process, the Councils will be updating the policies of relevance to town centre and retail planning including matters such as defined town centre boundaries, the hierarchy of defined centres and local impact thresholds for retail and leisure developments.
- 5.4 The Study has been underpinned by a range of on-site surveys within the defined centres, in order to better understand the current vitality and viability of centres and to provide defensible recommendations to the Councils in respect of the future formulation of planning policies.
- 5.5 As such, the purpose of this final section of the Study is to provide an overview of the recommendations formed as part of this Study, both on a centre-by-centre basis but also in terms of the overarching policy objectives which we consider should form an important role within the new Local Plan.
- 5.6 We address a series of planning policy considerations below of relevance to the emerging Central Lancashire Local Plan. We also provide comments in respect of the draft policy wording.

### Impact Thresholds

- 5.7 Paragraph 94 of the NPPF indicates that it is appropriate to identify thresholds for the scale of edge of centre and out of centre retail and leisure development, which should be the subject of an impact assessment. Any such threshold policy applies only to the impact test (most<sup>15</sup> planning applications for main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre and not in accordance with an up-to-date development plan will be the subject of the sequential test).
- 5.8 The purpose of applying an impact threshold within the development plan which deviates from the national threshold of 2,500 sq.m for retail and leisure proposals, is to allow the Councils to retain appropriate control in respect of the potential for development to impact on the future health of defined centres within the authority areas. By applying a lower threshold, applications for developments which could potentially have a harmful effect on the overall vitality and viability of a defined centre, will need to be supported by a proportionate impact assessment which sets out the potential trade diversion impact assumptions.
- 5.9 Paragraph 16 of the Town Centres PPG provides specific guidance in relation to floorspace thresholds and states:

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<sup>15</sup> Paragraph 93 of the NPPF states that the sequential approach should not be applied to applications for small scale rural offices or other small scale rural development

**‘The impact test only applies to proposals exceeding 2,500 square metres gross of floorspace unless a different locally appropriate threshold is set by the local planning authority. In setting a locally appropriate threshold it will be important to consider the:**

- scale of proposals relative to town centres
- existing viability and vitality of town centres
- cumulative effects of recent developments
- whether local town centres are vulnerable
- likely effects of development on any town centre strategy
- impact on any other planned investment.’

5.10 Using the above guidance, we set out the justification to support our view that lower thresholds should be applied across the hierarchy of centres within Central Lancashire. To note, the local authorities do not currently have a lower than national impact threshold. However, it is also worth noting that Policy OP5 of the City Centre Plan includes a site-specific impact threshold for the Horrocks Quarter allocation within the City Centre Boundary. In this regard, Policy OP5 allows for up to 12,500 sq.m of Class E Uses without the need to provide detailed sequential and impact evidence.

5.11 In accordance with national policy, we would advise that the thresholds adopted apply to all retail and leisure development across the board, instead of different thresholds for retail and leisure. This is due to the importance of both types of uses in supporting the future vitality and viability of centres, and the wide range of unit sizes occupied by both retail and leisure operators.

5.12 Importantly however, national policy no longer requires applications for office development outside of centres to be supported by an impact assessment (but should be supported by a sequential test).

5.13 Annex 2 of the NPPF provides a definition of ‘main town centre uses’ which includes both retail and leisure uses. The definition states:

**‘Main town centre uses: Retail development (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres); leisure, entertainment and more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, nightclubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres and bingo halls); offices; and arts, culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities).’**

### Methodology and Justification

5.14 In considering the setting of a local impact threshold, it is important to give consideration to the type of development (relating to convenience and comparison goods retail uses, and leisure uses) which would, in practice, provide space for key operators who could act to ‘anchor’ a centre. Should one of these anchor units or operators leave a centre, there will likely be the potential for a significant adverse impact to arise.

5.15 In terms of retail proposals, typical ‘anchors’ comprise foodstores which range from those of a medium scale (approximately 2,000 sq.m gross upwards) and larger format comparison units (approximately 500 sq.m upwards). The typical leisure ‘anchors’ of centres can also vary in terms of scale, which includes prime food and beverage operators, up to the larger format leisure uses such as cinemas, ten pin bowling and other competitive socialising uses. In both cases, the range of unit sizes is broadly comparable and the draw of such uses will be key to help support the health of centres moving forward.

- 5.16 In Central Lancashire, key leisure developments, such as the Escape/Reel Cinema scheme in Chorley town centre and the Level and forthcoming Animate schemes in Preston city centre, represent important investments that attract new trade and footfall to support the health of their respective centres.
- 5.17 As such, where there is genuine potential for an application proposal to divert a material level of expenditure away from a defined centre, or potentially remove a key tenant from that centre, there will likely be a requirement to consider the impacts arising from the proposal in detail.
- 5.18 In respect of lower order centres, the introduction of even a small convenience store nearby (of the type operated by Sainsbury's Local or Tesco Express) may have the potential to impact on the ongoing viability of key operators. Small convenience stores operated by national multiple grocers can generate a relatively substantial turnover. If this is diverted from existing retailers in defined centres, the impact on the overall vitality and viability through the loss of spend and footfall, could be of a significant adverse magnitude.
- 5.19 Therefore, in implementing a local threshold policy, it is considered more appropriate to apply a range of thresholds in accordance with the type of centre to which the proposed development is proximate. The thresholds should not only apply to new floorspace, but also to changes of use and variations of conditions to remove or amend restrictions on how units operate or trade in practice.
- 5.20 In terms of policy recommendations relating to the impact policy threshold, this relates to the defined centre, which for the purposes of retail development comprises the primary shopping area, and for all other main town centre uses comprises the town centre boundary. We provide our recommendations in respect of the defined boundaries below, noting that we only recommend the designation of a primary shopping area within the city centre.
- 5.21 In Preston city centre, 11.5% of all units have a gross floorspace which is greater than 500 sq.m. The vacancy rate equates to 30.4% of total commercial floorspace and 22.5% of all units. In total, convenience and comparison retail uses account for 63,760 sq.m of floorspace and leisure uses account for 42,620 sq.m of floorspace. It is clear therefore that proposals located on the edge or outside of the city centre measuring over 500 sq.m could potentially directly compete with the city centre offer, jeopardising the vitality and viability of the centre. The average leisure unit size is 207 sq.m, indicating the importance of also providing sufficient control over future leisure proposals in edge or out of centre locations.
- 5.22 In this context, we recommend that the impact threshold of relevance to Preston city centre is set at 500 sq.m for both retail and leisure proposals. This threshold would effectively be the default to be applied across Central Lancashire, should a proposal not fall within the criteria set out below.
- 5.23 The above recommendation is also reflective of the city centre vacancy rates and the potential for out of centre retail developments to become even stronger in the future at the expense of centres' vitality and viability. The existing out of centre commercial destinations all offer a range of comparison goods and a leisure offer which traditionally would have been found within defined centres. As such, the recommendation is reflective of the need to safeguard against the out of centre retail destinations becoming even stronger at the expense of the health of defined centres.
- 5.24 We are of the view that the previous site-specific impact threshold applied to the Horrocks Quarter is no longer of relevance now that Queens Retail Park is fully operational and the wider site is due to be developed into alternative uses outside of Use Class E (residential and so on). The original policy sought to encourage a range of uses at the Horrocks Quarter, whilst seeking to protect the Primary Shopping Area through the imposition of an impact

threshold for development above 12,500 sq.m. Now that the retail park is functioning, it is considered that any future expansion should be appropriately controlled and that the allowance for a certain quantum of floorspace without having to comply with the sequential and impact tests should be removed. This is particularly the case due to the importance of retailing within the Primary Shopping Area of Preston city centre, and the overarching requirement to continue to protect this moving forward.

5.25 In terms of the lower order centres (town, district and local centres) we are of the view that the thresholds should be lower, in light of the potential for relatively small developments to have a material impact on the overarching vitality and viability moving forwards. Due to the sizes of the units, the offer, the catchment and types of operators, we are of the view that such an approach has considerable merit.

5.26 Turning firstly to the defined town centres of Chorley and Leyland, we note that:

- In Chorley town centre, just 5.7% of units have a gross floorspace which is greater than 500 sq.m, and 12.3% have a gross floorspace which is greater than 300 sq.m. The vacancy rate equates to 9.6% of total commercial floorspace and 10.7% of all units. In total, convenience and comparison goods uses account for 28,350 sq.m of floorspace, or 51.9% and leisure uses account of 12,420 sq.m of floorspace or 22.7%. It is clear therefore that proposals located on the edge or outside of Chorley town centre measuring over 300 sq.m could potentially directly compete with the city centre offer, jeopardising the vitality and viability of the centre.
- In Leyland town centre, just 8.2% of units have a gross floorspace which is greater than 500 sq.m, and 11.6% of units have a gross floorspace which is greater than 300 sq.m. The vacancy rate equates to 10.5% of total commercial floorspace and 10.5% of all units. In total, convenience and comparison goods uses account for 22,120 sq.m of floorspace, or 53.9% and leisure uses account of 12,500 sq.m of floorspace or 30.5%. It is clear therefore that proposals located on the edge or outside of Leyland town centre measuring over 300 sq.m could potentially directly compete with the city centre offer, jeopardising the vitality and viability of the centre.

5.27 We have demonstrated above that leisure uses are an important part of the overarching provision of both centres. The average leisure unit size in Chorley town centre is 173 sq.m and in Leyland town centre the average leisure unit size is 147 sq.m, again indicating the important of protecting centres from future competing leisure development outside of the defined centres.

5.28 The district centres across Central Lancashire vary in scale and overarching offer, but will be typically 'anchored' by a foodstore, which functions alongside a wider main town centre offer. There are fewer units and the units are smaller in scale, and therefore the potential loss of any single individual operator could be a cause for concern. As such, sufficient control over competing applications should be provided to planning officers.

5.29 Overall, town and district centre anchor units will typically provide at least 300 sq.m of gross floorspace, particularly in the context of Central Lancashire's centres, which (as we demonstrate above and at Appendices 1, 2 and 3) typically have relatively low average unit sizes and low vacancy levels). The low threshold therefore ensures that applications at edge and out of centre destinations are appropriately assessed against the relevant impact tests and that the defined centres within Central Lancashire are appropriately protected.

5.30 For local centres, the centre anchor units will typically provide for at least 200 sq.m. Examples of 'anchor' units in local centres may include local convenience stores (which generally have a gross floorspace of approximately 350 sq.m), or local newsagents, which are smaller and range from between 100 and 200 sq.m. Typically, the centres then feature a small number of smaller units of a scale less than 200 sq.m. As such, a development proposal of a

similar scale in an edge or out of centre location could significantly impact on the vitality and viability of the local centres.

- 5.31 We believe that a lower threshold for local centres is appropriate as a consequence of their localised role and function, and the fact that the opening of a small format convenience store outside of these smaller centres is likely to directly compete with the type of local needs provision typically found within such centres. We therefore believe it is reasonable for applicants proposing developments of 200 sq.m gross floorspace or more outside of local centres to demonstrate that their proposal will not have a significant adverse impact on smaller centres sharing part of the same catchment.
- 5.32 The proposed thresholds at local centre level are considered to reflect the relatively small size of some of the centres at the lower end of the retail hierarchy and their consequent potential susceptibility to alternative 'out-of-centre' provision. In practice, it is envisaged that a proposal of just greater than 200 sq.m adjacent to a local centre would generally require an impact assessment of proportionate length (i.e. for development of such a scale, impact may on occasion be able to be dealt with as part of the covering letter accompanying the application).

### Recommended Policy Approach

- 5.33 Where an application proposal is above the respective stated impact threshold, we would recommend that the applicant discusses and agrees the scope of the retail impact assessment with the relevant Council prior to submission. The lower threshold of 200 sq.m for local centres is considered appropriate due to potential for convenience stores of even a relatively small nature to substantially impact upon the performance of existing operators, due to the potential higher sales densities of such proposals. This would ensure that particular protection of these smaller centres is considered appropriately.
- 5.34 For the purpose of drafting future planning policy, it is important to qualify the area to which each local impact threshold will apply. We recommend that the threshold of relevance to the town and district centres (i.e. 300 sq.m) and local centres (i.e. 200 sq.m) would be applicable within 800 metres of the boundary of the relevant centre. The distance of 800 metres is broadly commensurate with the potential walk-in catchments of smaller centres and is identified by Guidelines for Providing for Journeys on Foot (The Institution of Highways & Transportation, 2000) as being the 'preferred maximum' acceptable walking distance to a centre.
- 5.35 For clarity, we consider it to be appropriate for the higher threshold of 500 sq.m to apply across Central Lancashire when the centre-specific thresholds do not apply (i.e. beyond 800 metres of these centres), due to the lesser likelihood of significant adverse impacts arising from retail and leisure development. This general 500 sq.m threshold would therefore apply to proposals outside of the 800 metre boundary of the defined centres due to the lesser likelihood of the proposals having an impact.
- 5.36 It is important to emphasise that, whilst the locally set threshold would require the submission of an impact assessment for all edge-of-centre and out-of-centre developments exceeding the thresholds, national guidance states that the impact test should be undertaken in a proportionate and locally appropriate way, commensurate to the scale of development proposed. The level of detail would typically be agreed with planning officers during the pre-application process in order to avoid overly onerous requirements that may otherwise restrict and delay development opportunities from coming forward.
- 5.37 Based on the above, we are of the view that an impact assessment will be necessary to accompany proposals for retail and leisure uses (including those relating to mezzanine floorspace and the variation of restrictive conditions) which are not located within a defined centre where:

1. the proposal provides a gross floorspace in excess of 500 sq.m gross; or
2. the proposal is located within 800 metres of either;
  - a) a town or district centre and is in excess of 300 sq.m gross; or,
  - b) a local centre and is in excess of 200 sq.m gross.

5.38 In our experience, it will only generally be development of a scale greater than these thresholds which could lead to a 'significant adverse' impact, which could merit the refusal of an application for town centre uses in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 95 of the NPPF. The setting of a 'tiered' threshold is consistently accepted by Inspectors at Local Plan Examination and, in our view, acts to appropriately ensure that only those proposals which could genuinely result in an unacceptable impact are the subject of an impact assessment.

## Boundaries

5.39 Paragraph 90 of the NPPF requires local plans to 'define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas', with there being no specific requirement to identify primary and secondary frontages.

5.40 The removal of the requirement to define frontages reflects the general need to be flexible in planning for the future of town centres due to the rapid changes taking place in the retail and leisure industries. Whilst the removal of the requirement does not preclude local planning authorities from identifying primary and secondary shopping frontages where supported by local circumstances, we do not believe that this is merited in this instance. There is a clear need to repurpose and reoccupy centres across Central Lancashire in the manner that Use Class E generally provides for. In this context, the designation of primary and secondary frontages would serve no useful purpose.

5.41 Annex 2 of the NPPF indicates that a primary shopping area is the 'Defined area where retail development is concentrated'. Annex 2 also identifies that a town centre is the:

**'Area defined on the local authority's policies map, including the primary shopping area and areas predominantly occupied by main town centre uses within or adjacent to the primary shopping area'.**

5.42 In this regard, it is important to note that although there is the opportunity to define a PSA and a town centre boundary as separate entities, there is no general requirement to unless the specific context of the centre allows for it. The Government has encouraged the diversification of centres and whilst retail will still in most cases be a focus of the offer within the centres, lower-order centres are typically diverse and uses are typically spread throughout the boundaries and therefore, defining the town centre boundary and the primary shopping area as one single designation may be appropriate.

5.43 Furthermore, it is also important to recognise the purpose of defining both a PSA and town centre boundary. In this regard and in terms of applying policies, distinguishing between the PSA and town centre boundary is only of relevance when referring to the impact policy test in relation to retail proposals. As such, if a PSA is not defined as well as a town centre boundary (instead of considering them as one boundary) what is defined as 'in centre' would be all uses within the town centre boundary, thus providing protection to the overarching offer within centres.

5.44 In this regard, we have reviewed the current boundaries of the following centres and maps providing our recommendations are provided at Appendix 6:

- Preston city centre;
- Chorley town centre;
- Leyland town centre;
- Buckshaw Village;

- Lancaster Lane, Clayton-le-Woods; and
- Market Place, Adlington.

5.45 We provide a summary of our recommendations below in Table 5.1 in respect of Preston city centre and Chorley and Leyland town centres.

**Table 5.1: Summary of Boundary Recommendations for the City Centre and Town Centres**

City and Town Centres	Authority	Boundary Recommendations and Justification
Preston city centre	Preston	<p><b><u>City Centre Boundary</u></b></p> <p>We recommend that the city centre boundary is amended to take account of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removing residential dwellings on Avenham Road, Chaddock Street, and Bairstow Street, with the boundary ending at Cross Street.</li> <li>• Adjusting the southwest boundary to exclude the units south of East Cliff.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Primary Shopping Area</u></b></p> <p>We have reviewed the currently defined Primary Shopping Area and consider this to still appropriately define the area within which retail uses are focused in the city centre.</p>
Chorley Town Centre	Chorley	<p><b><u>Town Centre Boundary</u></b></p> <p>We recommend that the southern boundary be revised to exclude the Asda superstore on Bolton Street and the adjacent smaller commercial units. The proposed new southern boundary commences with the commercial units located around Market Street to the north of Pall Mall. Due to its distance from the primary shopping area, the physical and visual barrier formed by the Bolton Street/Pall Mall/Market Street junction, and the expanse of car parking that separates it from the other main town centre uses, we consider that the Asda functions as an edge-of-centre store which generates a limited number of linked trips to the wider town centre.</p> <p>We also propose the following changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• amend the western boundary to include Fleet Street Car Park, which is a busy car park which supports the function of the town centre;</li> <li>• amend the western boundary to exclude nos. 17 to 23 Gillibrand Street, which are in residential use;</li> <li>• amend the western boundary to include Chorley Theatre;</li> <li>• amend the eastern boundary to include Chorley Youth Zone; and</li> <li>• minor adjustments as shown, in order to accurately reflect the curtilage of individual sites and buildings and ensure consistency with the OS base maps.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Primary Shopping Area (PSA) Boundary</u></b></p> <p>We recommend the following changes to the Primary Shopping Area (PSA) boundary:</p>

City and Town Centres	Authority	Boundary Recommendations and Justification
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• amend the northern boundary to exclude the car park on the northern side of High Street and the vacant former Post Office on Cleveland Street;</li> <li>• amend the northern boundary to exclude Flat Iron car park; and</li> <li>• amend the western boundary to include properties on the western side of Market Street (i.e. nos. 1 to 72 Market Street).</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Allocations</u></b></p> <p>The adopted Local Plan includes the Chorley Town Centre Inset Map (Map 3), which shows five retail allocations within the town centre. Our recommendations with regard to these allocations are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>EP5.1: Flat Iron Car Park</b> – Since the adoption of the current Local Plan, an extension to the Market Walks Shopping Centre has been developed on this site (planning permission reference 15/00375/FULMAJ) and thus there is no need to retain the allocation in the new Local Plan.</li> <li>• <b>EP5.2: Bolton Street/Pall Mall</b> – This site has also now been developed and is occupied by the Asda foodstore, car park and adjacent commercial units. The allocation can therefore be removed from the new Local Plan.</li> <li>• <b>EP5.3: 5 to 9 Gillibrand Street and Ep5.4: High Street/Cleveland Street</b> – Both of these sites were in active use as car parks on the day of our site visit. They are therefore unlikely to be developed over the plan period and, given that there is no identified capacity for either convenience or comparison retail space over the plan period, the allocations can be removed from the new Local</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Primary and Secondary Frontages</u></b></p> <p>National planning policy no longer explicitly prescribes the designation of primary and secondary frontages. The Government has confirmed that the removal of this requirement reflects the general need to be flexible in planning for the future of town centres due to the rapid changes taking place in the retail and leisure industries. Whilst the removal of the requirement does not preclude local planning authorities from identifying primary and secondary shopping frontages where supported by local circumstances, we do not believe that this is merited in this instance. Although, the Study has generally identified lower than average vacancy rates in the principal centres, there is nonetheless a need to repurpose and reoccupy floorspace within centres across the authority area in the manner that Use Class E generally provides for. In this context, the separate designation of both primary and secondary frontages would serve no useful purpose.</p>
Leyland Town Centre	South Ribble	<p><b><u>Town Centre Boundary</u></b></p> <p>We recommend only minor changes to the Leyland town centre boundary, comprising the exclusion of the factory on Quin Street and other minor adjustments, primarily to the area to the north of Hough Lane, to accurately reflect the curtilage of individual sites and buildings and ensure consistency with the OS base maps.</p> <p><b><u>Primary Shopping Area (PSA) Boundary</u></b></p>

City and Town Centres	Authority	Boundary Recommendations and Justification
		<p>In respect of the Primary Shopping Area (which is identified as the 'primary retail boundary' on the map at Appendix 3 of the adopted South Ribble Local Plan), we recommend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an extension to the east to include all of the commercial units on Hough Lane; and</li> <li>• an extension to the north to include the Leyland Market building, which is temporarily closed for refurbishment but which will support the vitality and viability of the town centre when it reopens in September 2025.</li> </ul>

## Hierarchy

5.46 Paragraph 90 of the NPPF indicates that local planning authorities should define a network and hierarchy of town centres. However, very little detail is provided in this regard and, notably, neither the NPPF nor the Town Centres PPG differentiate between different types of town centre and the role each serves.

5.47 The most recent definitions provided by the Government were provided by Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth ('PPS4'), which was published in December 2009 (and was superseded by publication of the original iteration of the NPPF in March 2012). Whilst PPS4 should be considered on this basis (i.e. it is not up to date practice guidance), in the absence of any other definitions, it is of some relevance to the consideration of a retail centres hierarchy.

5.48 Annex B of PPS4 identifies that:

**'City centres are the highest level of centre identified in development plans. In terms of hierarchies, they will often be a regional centre and will serve a wide catchment. The centre may be very large, embracing a wide range of activities and may be distinguished by areas which may perform different main functions. Planning for the future of such areas can be achieved successfully through the use of area action plans, with masterplans or development briefs for particular sites. In London the 'international' and 'metropolitan' centres identified in the Mayor's Spatial Development Strategy typically perform the role of city centres.**

**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.**

**Small parades of shops of purely neighbourhood significance are not regarded as centres for the purposes of this policy statement.'**

- 5.49 Nexus has given consideration to the existing hierarchy as set out at Policy 11 of the Central Lancashire Local Plan. We have also taken account of the findings of the healthchecks undertaken alongside the definition as provided above and set out our suggested hierarchy below. Importantly, this retains Preston city centre at the top of the hierarchy, with Chorley and Leyland town centres at the second tier. Below this, we recommend the retention of Cottam as a district centre, alongside the range of existing district centres.
- 5.50 Turning firstly to Cottam district centre, it is clear that Policy EP3 of the adopted Local Plan continues to propose a district centre at Cottam to support both the new Cottam Strategic Site and north west Preston as a whole. The current policy permits the development of mixed-use retail and commercial developments within the proposed district centre. A range of appropriate uses will be encouraged including a supermarket, food and drink, leisure uses, public and community uses and other uses which are complimentary to local shops.
- 5.51 It is noted that the provision of larger format foodstores, and general day-to-day shopping and leisure provision within the north west of Preston is limited. Previous studies have indicated the qualitative need to improve provision in the north west of Preston to ensure that residents have access principally to convenience shopping provision (see paragraphs 7.5.10 and 7.5.21 of the 2019 Preston Retail and Leisure Study). This position has remained unaltered subsequent to the publication of the previous Study other than the delivery of the Lidl at Eastway Hub, and there is still a qualitative requirement in that area for commercial uses to meet residents' needs. As such, the continued allocation of a centre to serve the local catchment around Cottam should form part of the hierarchy in the new Local Plan.
- 5.52 However, it is unclear whether a wider range of commercial uses as currently referred to within the adopted Local Plan would be supported in the area and as such, sufficient flexibility should be applied in terms of the overarching provision of the centre and the allowance for a wider range of uses should appropriate market testing dictate as such. As such, we recommend that the retention of the allocation is provided for within the new Local Plan, but that the precise future uses and quantum of floorspace to be provided for is not overly constrained and appropriate flexibility is allowed for in terms of future uses.
- 5.53 In addition to Cottam, the North West Preston Masterplan SPD also allows for a main local centre at William Young Way, supported by another local centre at Eastway Hub. In both cases, there is a clear qualitative requirement for additional commercial floorspace in the two locations to meet the needs of the growing residential population.
- 5.54 Eastway Hub already provides for a commercial offer which meets local needs and Sandy Lane (Harrow Drive) has two extant permissions for the construction of additional commercial uses (application references 06/2020/0966 and 06/2020/1421). In both cases, the continued allocation of the centre would assist local residents in terms of their easy and sustainable access to local commercial facilities. As such, we recommend the allocation of one local centre on Sandy Lane to take account of the range of commercial uses which will come forward in this location, with the precise boundary and range of uses to be defined as proposals progress further.
- 5.55 In addition to the above, the Masterplan SPD references the potential alternative location for a local centre at a location identified as '2' (near Moor Hall Farm, at the East West Link Road near the western end of North West Preston). It is considered that in light of the allocation at Sandy Lane, the existing provision at Eastway Hub and its associated allocation, and the wider existing localised commercial offer within the local area, it is unlikely that an additional centre could also be supported within this part of the Masterplan area. Given this lack of qualitative demand, we therefore do not recommend a further local centre allocation within the North West Preston Masterplan area in addition to Sandy Lane and Eastway Hub.

**Table 5.2: Recommended Centres Hierarchy**

Tier	Centres
City Centre	Preston City Centre
Town Centres	Chorley Town Centre Leyland Town Centre
District Centres	Cottam Station Road, Bamber Bridge Longton Liverpool Road, Penwortham Tardy Gate Buckshaw Village Clayton Green Proposed District Centre Preston West
Local Centres	<p><b>Preston:</b> Blackpool Road / Woodplumpton Road (Lane Ends) Broughton Crossroads Eastway Hub Granton Walk Land at Sandy Lane Langcliffe Road local centre Longsands Lane Miller Road New Hall Lane Plungington Road Ribbleton Avenue Ribbleton Lane Sharoe Green Water Lane/Strand Road Proposed Centre at Preston West Strategic Location</p> <p><b>South Ribble:</b> Earnshaw Bridge; Farington; Gregson Lane Higher Walton Kingsfold Seven Stars Walmer Bridge Walton-le-Dale. Granton Walk, Ingol Water lane/ Strad Road, Ashton Proposed Local Centre within the Pickering’s Farm Strategic site</p> <p><b>Chorley:</b> Balshaw Lane, Euxton Bolton Street, Chorley Bury Lane, Withnell Carrington Centre, Eccleston Chorley Road, Adlington Coppull Croston Eaves Lane North, Chorley Eaves Lane South, Chorley Great Greens Lane, Clayton Brook Hall Gate, Astley Village Harpers Lane, Chorley Lancaster Lane, Clayton-le-Woods Market Place, Adlington Pall Mall, Chorley</p>

Tier	Centres
	Runshaw Lane, Euxton Steeley Lane, Chorley Water Street, Chorley Wheelton

5.56 For completeness, it is worth noting that the following centres have been recommended to be moved to the ‘neighbourhood centre’ definition:

- Collingwood Road – Chorley Council
- Eaves Green Road – Chorley Council
- Eccleston – Chorley Council
- Park Road – Chorley Council
- Pilling Lane – Chorley Council
- School Lane – Chorley Council
- Mawdesley – Chorley Council
- Chorley Old Road – Chorley Council

5.57 The above re-classification of the commercial provision is on the basis of the findings of the local centre matrix provided at Appendix 2. The review of the offer of the centres indicates that these no longer perform the role of a local centre, with limited commercial provision overall.

5.58 As part of the commission, Nexus was also asked to review the offer and context of potential new centres within the Preston authority area. A matrix detailing the offer of the proposed centres and Nexus’ analysis and recommendations is provided at **Appendix 7**.

5.59 Based on the analysis provided at Appendix 7, we recommend that the following centres are moved to local centre status on the basis of their offers, extant consents and the overarching context in terms of local qualitative need:

- Eastway Hub – Preston City Council
- Granton – Preston City Council
- Langcliffe Road – Preston City Council
- Broughton Crossroads – Preston City Council
- Sandy Lane - Preston City Council
- Water Lane/Strand Road – Preston City Council

### Hot Food Takeaways

5.60 National planning policy recognises the role of planning in promoting healthy communities, including how the environment can impact on health and influence healthy lifestyle choices. Rising obesity rates are a nationally recognised problem. Obesity reduces life expectancy, and increases the risk of serious diseases like cancer, heart disease and diabetes. While the causes of obesity are complex, diet and environment are proven to be huge factors.

5.61 Public Health England (PHE) and the Local Government Association have provided a briefing on regulating the growth of hot food takeaway outlets. It acknowledges the complexity of the ways in which the environment promotes obesity and explains that actions can be taken by local authorities to reduce the extent of obesity promotion locally. It identifies that controlling the proliferation of hot food takeaway outlets has a role to play. It is

acknowledged that a causal link between hot food takeaway outlets and obesity cannot be established but identifies that there is evidence of associations between obesity and the availability of fast food.

- 5.62 As well as health impacts, the new guidance recognises that hot food takeaways play a big role in town centres and other key areas across the authority area.
- 5.63 We understand that the proliferation of hot food takeaways is a concern across Central Lancashire but particularly within the larger centres, and although it is noted that such uses have their benefit in providing activity into the evening, there are potential wider negative impacts through closed shutters during the day, anti-social behaviour and other health matters. An important element of any future planning policy is the differentiation between hot food takeaways and other food and beverage uses which function differently, provide alternative offers and often have different opening hours. The plans provided at **Appendix 5** provide details of the existing provision of takeaways within the principal centres of Preston, Chorley and Leyland and the matrix at **Appendix 4** provides the percentage breakdown of hot food takeaways across all centres .
- 5.64 Given the above, the recommended policy approach for hot food takeaways aims to discourage unhealthy eating habits, especially amongst children, by controlling the quantum and location of hot food takeaways.
- 5.65 Achieving an appropriate balance of uses within a centre should continue to be a priority for the local authorities, and ensuring that centres provide a good mix of both daytime and evening economies and create safe and attractive environments for residents and visitors alike.
- 5.66 Should the proportion of takeaways significantly increase within centres, then this balance of mix of uses and provision of amenities to meet the catchments' needs could decrease considerably, and residents could look elsewhere to meet their day-to-day retail, service and leisure needs. As such, future proposals to increase this provision should be monitored carefully.
- 5.67 Given the above, we are of the view that the following control within local planning policy is provided, and the specific criteria provided ensures that the Council retains control over any potential future planning applications for hot food takeaways within defined centres. In particular, we recommend that:
- (1) In Preston City Centre, a Town or District Centre, hot food takeaways will not be permitted where they would result in:
- a) more than 10% of the ground-floor commercial premises in a block being used for hot food takeaways; and/or
  - b) other uses becoming sandwiched between two hot food takeaways.
- (2) Outside of the centres listed in (1), hot food takeaways will not be permitted:
- a) in wards where the most recent National Child Measurement Programme data classifies 10% or more of Reception pupils or more of 15% of Year 6 pupils as obese (including severely obese); and/or
  - b) within 400m of a secondary school entrance, unless opening hours are restricted during school opening times, lunchtimes, and school closing times.

We recommend that the criteria ensures that the Council can assess each application on its own merits, taking account of the current offer and health of the relevant centre and the impacts of allowing an additional takeaway use.

5.68 The policy should also identify possible amenity impacts on an area which will be taken into consideration when assessing a takeaway proposal, including:

- The impact of noise and general disturbance, fumes, smells, litter and late-night activity, including those impacts arising from the use of external areas;
- The impact on highway safety;
- The availability of refuse storage and disposal facilities; and
- The appearance of any associated extensions, flues and installations.

### Review of Draft Central Lancs Policies

5.69 In order to assist the Council in finalising the draft policy position, we have set out below a summary of our policy recommendations against the relevant adopted local planning policy. In doing so, we provide commentary where we consider amendments should be made to policy to reflect the findings of this Study.

**Table 5.3: Policy Recommendations Summary Table**

Policy No.	Current Policy Wording	Nexus Recommendations
Policy EC11: Town Centre Hierarchy	<p>1. Central Lancashire’s Town Centre Hierarchy is identified below. The existing Centres are identified on the policies map and proposed Centres are referred to in site allocation policies for the strategic sites.</p> <p>(see hierarchy provided in policy)</p> <p><b>Primary Shopping Areas</b></p> <p>2. The Primary Shopping Areas for Preston, Chorley Town and Leyland are identified on the policies map. These are specific streets within these Centres, where retail development (Class E(a)) is concentrated.</p> <p><b>Appropriate development in Centres</b></p> <p>3. Retail and other appropriate main town centre uses should be located in the above Centres, proportionate to the size and function of the Centre and its position in the town centre hierarchy.</p> <p>4. Within the Primary Shopping Areas of Preston City Centre, Chorley and Leyland Town Centres and the whole of District Centres, the loss of ground floor retail uses will be supported where:</p> <p>a) following a suitable period of appropriate marketing, there is no realistic prospect of maintaining a retail use at the ground floor; and</p>	<p>Nexus has provided recommendations in respect of the suggested hierarchy above. Overall, we recommend retaining the higher tiers as presented, with some alterations to the lower tiers, principally relating to local centres.</p> <p>In respect of primary shopping areas, we agree with the definitions as provided within Policy EC11, but recommend that the boundaries are altered as set out above.</p> <p>We note the draft policy which seeks to retain ground floor retail uses within the primary shopping areas of the principal centres and across the district centres.</p> <p>Whilst we agree with the overarching aspiration to retain retail uses in these areas, in accordance with the definitions as set out at Annex 2 of the NPPF, there is also a requirement to seek to encourage a wider range of uses across centres.</p> <p>In this regard, it may be difficult to appropriately assess what constitutes ‘a suitable period of appropriate marketing’ and what would comprise an impact on the vitality and viability of the primary shopping area. Calculating both of these could be tricky, particularly in the case that ‘vitality and viability’ of a centre is much more than solely retail uses.</p>

Policy No.	Current Policy Wording	Nexus Recommendations									
	<p>b) the vitality and viability of the Primary Shopping Area or District Centre will be unaffected; and</p> <p>c) an ‘active street frontage’ would be retained where possible; and</p> <p>d) the proposals would not be detrimental to the character of the Centre in other respects.</p> <p>5. Residential and office development will be supported at upper floors within the Centres, subject to compliance with other Plan policies.</p> <p><b>Out of centre development</b></p> <p>6. Retail and leisure proposals for main town centre uses in out-of-centre and edge-of-centre locations should demonstrate their suitability through a sequential site test consistent with the NPPF.</p> <p>7. In addition, the below table sets out local thresholds for Retail and Leisure Impact Assessments:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="435 1032 935 1615"> <thead> <tr> <th>Assessment Type</th> <th>Size Threshold</th> <th>Locations</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Retail</td> <td>Exceeding 1,000 sq.m (gross)</td> <td>Outside of the Primary Shopping Areas of Preston City Centre and Chorley and Leyland Town Centres.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Leisure</td> <td>Exceeding 500 sq.m (gross)</td> <td>Outside of the Preston City Centre and Chorley and Leyland Town Centre boundaries.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>8. Retail and/or Leisure Impact Assessments are also necessary for proposals located within:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 800 metres of the boundary of a District Centre and exceed 300sq.m. (gross)</li> <li>• 800 metres of the boundary of a Local Centre and exceed 200sq.m. (gross)</li> </ul> <p>9. Proposals for extensions, mezzanine floors and to remove restrictions on the range of goods at existing edge of Centre and out of centre units will also be subject to the above criteria.</p>	Assessment Type	Size Threshold	Locations	Retail	Exceeding 1,000 sq.m (gross)	Outside of the Primary Shopping Areas of Preston City Centre and Chorley and Leyland Town Centres.	Leisure	Exceeding 500 sq.m (gross)	Outside of the Preston City Centre and Chorley and Leyland Town Centre boundaries.	<p>We therefore recommend that Part (4) is tweaked to provide better support for the future vitality and viability of the centre. We suggest that in particular:</p> <p>a) Should marketing be requested from an applicant, then ‘suitable period’ needs to be defined.</p> <p>b) ‘unaffected’ should be reconsidered and consideration given to what indicators are of importance in assessing the vitality and viability of the primary shopping area.</p> <p>In terms of out of centre development, we provide our recommendations in terms of retail and leisure impact thresholds above, which broadly comply with the draft policy.</p> <p>The only material difference is for Leyland and Chorley town centres, where we recommend a lower threshold of 300 sq.m is applied.</p>
Assessment Type	Size Threshold	Locations									
Retail	Exceeding 1,000 sq.m (gross)	Outside of the Primary Shopping Areas of Preston City Centre and Chorley and Leyland Town Centres.									
Leisure	Exceeding 500 sq.m (gross)	Outside of the Preston City Centre and Chorley and Leyland Town Centre boundaries.									

Policy No.	Current Policy Wording	Nexus Recommendations
<p>Policy EC12: Preston City Centre</p>	<p><b>Preston City Centre Strategy</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The city centre status of Preston City Centre within Central Lancashire and its role as the principal centre for retail and office development in Central Lancashire and its other multi-functional roles, will be integrated, enhanced and strengthened.</li> <li>2. Development within the City Centre, as defined on the adopted policies map and subject to compliance with other Plan policies, should contribute towards the principles of city living and seek to attract, grow and retain economic investment within in the city centre. Development up to 2041 will include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. new homes with a mix of types, sizes and tenures with a focus on affordable homes within: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. city centre regeneration opportunity areas (Preston Station Quarter and Stoneygate); then</li> <li>ii. all other city centre locations;</li> </ol> </li> <li>b. high quality office, co-working and flexible workspaces with a focus on locations within: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. city centre regeneration opportunity areas (Preston Station Quarter); then</li> <li>ii. all other city centre locations;</li> </ol> </li> <li>c. the provision of infrastructure (including digital connectivity), services, health and community facilities to support city centre homes and economic growth;</li> <li>d. improved transport systems and connectivity, including the provision, integration and improvement of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. public transport facilities;</li> <li>ii. walking and cycling networks;</li> <li>iii. active travel experience;</li> </ol> </li> <li>e. new public open spaces;</li> <li>f. enhancement of the public realm, city centre gateways, pocket parks and green infrastructure;</li> <li>g. provision of additional education facilities from nursery to further and higher education within the city centre;</li> <li>h. purpose-built student accommodation where a need is demonstrably identified within the EC12 defined area ;</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<p>Nexus agrees with the emphasis provided in respect of encouraging a diversity of uses within the city centre.</p> <p>However, although Preston city centre will be at the top of the hierarchy, this does not mean that on a sequential basis, development should be directed to the city centre in the first instance.</p> <p>Instead, the sequential approach should be applied taking account of the intended catchment of the proposed development and the relevant centres identified accordingly.</p> <p>It may be therefore that the sequential and impact policy tests are dealt with solely under Policy EC11 and that the centre-specific guidance in terms of regeneration areas are dealt with under Policies EC12 and EC13.</p>

Policy No.	Current Policy Wording	Nexus Recommendations
	<p>i. redevelopment of surplus surface car parking areas.</p> <p><b>Arts and Cultural Uses and Diversity of Uses</b></p> <p>3. Facilities and services, including those of a small scale, which contribute to the diversity and vitality of the city centre, will be encouraged and retained. Arts and cultural provision across the city centre will be expected to be diverse, with large scale facilities aiming to attract a Lancashire wide to North West catchment.</p> <p>4. Existing arts, cultural (museums, art galleries, theatres and concert halls), health and community facilities (including public houses) will be expected to be retained.</p> <p><b>Preston City Centre Role and Function</b></p> <p>5. As a sub-regional centre with an important comparison goods and foodstores role, Preston City Centre is the sequentially preferred location in Central Lancashire for development and investment in Class E(a) uses including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• shops;</li> <li>• service uses;</li> <li>• leisure uses;</li> <li>• cultural uses;</li> <li>• tourist uses; and</li> <li>• other main town centre uses, including offices and complementary evening and night-time uses.</li> </ul> <p>6. The Primary Shopping Area, followed by the Horrocks Quarter Opportunity Area, as defined on the adopted Policies map, is the sequentially preferred location for Class E(a) Shops within the city centre of up to and including major scale development. Proposals within the Primary Shopping Area should comply with Policy EC11.</p> <p>7. Within the Queens Retail Park and the Horrocks Quarter of the city centre, ancillary customer cafes, ancillary customer restaurants and ancillary concession operators will be appropriate uses within existing Class E(a) retail units.</p> <p>8. Preston Markets will be protected and maintained as heritage assets providing a locally distinctive retail destination with a focus for community interaction, to serve the needs of Preston’s diverse communities.</p> <p>9. Major development will be expected to contribute to environmental enhancement and public realm improvements within the city centre.</p>	

Policy No.	Current Policy Wording	Nexus Recommendations
Policy EC13: Development in Leyland and Chorley Town Centres	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Within Leyland and Chorley Town Centres as defined on the adopted Policies Map, subject to compliance with other Plan policies, development contributing to one or more of the following objectives will be supported:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Strengthening and focusing the retail offer;</li> <li>b) Expanding the role of the town centres to support vitality and viability;</li> <li>c) Protecting and enhancing the leisure offer and developing an evening economy; or</li> <li>d) Establishing a vibrant town centre residential population (except where it would cause unacceptable harm to the operations of existing town centre uses)</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. The transformation of Chorley Town Centre through the creation of a new civic square will be supported as shown on the policies map (EC13.1 Civic Square). This scheme will be expected to deliver:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) A new civic square to the front of Chorley Town Hall;</li> <li>b) A mixed-use development with ground floor commercial units and residential/ offices above;</li> <li>c) Public realm improvements;</li> <li>d) Improved active travel facilities.</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. The Leyland Town deal scheme for the transformation of Leyland Town Centre and the redevelopment of Leyland Market will be supported. This scheme will be expected to deliver:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) A new market square to provide a focal point for the town;</li> <li>b) Public realm improvements;</li> <li>c) Improved active travel facilities;</li> <li>d) New commercial development opportunities.</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Major development proposals within the town centres should (where applicable) demonstrate how the proposal contributes to enhancing the following key attributes of the centre:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The overall attraction of the centre to local communities;</li> <li>b) The accessibility from/to the centre and within it; and</li> <li>c) The amenity of the local environment within the town centre</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<p>Again, nexus considers Policy EC13 to be broadly appropriate and that encouraging main town centre uses to Leyland and Chorley town centres accords with national policy.</p> <p>The policy aspirations support the findings of the healthchecks produced to support this study.</p>

