

Scrutiny Recommendation – Local Centres

Scrutiny Committee recommended a review the defined local centres. District centres, local centres and the city centre, once defined, are treated as town centres in accordance with the NPPF. The intention of Policy C1 is to identify centres that meet the NPPF definition of a town centre, and which are therefore the centres to which new town centre uses are directed first. Town centre uses are also defined by the NPPF and are wide ranging. They include bars and pubs, nightclubs, health and fitness centres, offices, and visitor attractions. This is the main reason for designating centres. In addition, active frontages are defined within all centres. Within these active frontages, a proportion of Use Class E should be retained at ground floor level as set out in Policy C2. Therefore, local centres need to be considered suitable for a range of town centre uses and they need to have existing active frontage.

The NPPF is very clear that local centres must have more than neighbourhood significance, and must be more than a small parade of shops. In considering whether a centre has wider than neighbourhood significance, an important factor is whether there is a nearby larger centre that will serve the wider area. Also important is the variety and range of what is available.

Having reviewed our defined centres, officers do not consider that any should be removed from the list. However, there is a case to make for defining a Greater Leys local centre. Whilst there are few shops here, and it is also close to Blackbird Leys, there is a wide range of other facilities well on a par with other local centres that are defined. This shows that the centre is suitable for and can support a range of town centre uses.

Proposed additional local centre at Greater Leys:



However, officers are unable to see that there is enough of a cluster of uses in Littlemore where a local centre (suitable for town centre uses) or active frontage could be defined, and certainly not that have more than a neighbourhood significance. However, as noted, existing facilities would be protected and supported by other policies of the Plan.