

Guidance Note

Sequential Test: Offices



What is a sequential test in terms of offices?

Our town centres are the best locations for new office developments. They are well served by public transport and locating offices here helps support existing shops and services.

A Sequential Test is required alongside planning applications for new office developments outside of a town centre.

The purpose of a sequential test is to show that sites within sequentially preferable locations have been considered before less preferable Edge of Centre and Out of Centre sites.

The sequential test will only be passed if the evidence submitted shows that:

- no sites are available (now or within a reasonable timescale) within sequentially preferable locations; or
- any available sites/units within such locations would be unsuitable and/or unviable.

What is a “sequentially preferable location”?

Locations for office developments are listed here in order of preference:

- Town Centre
- Edge of Centre (within 300m of town centre) or a location within 500m of a public transport interchange
- Allocated employment site or other areas acceptable for employment or non-town centre retailing, as identified by other planning policy criteria for such uses.

How to carry out the Sequential Test

Step 1: Help us to understand the needs of your business

- Explain the type of unit you require in terms of floorspace, access, parking etc.

Step 2: Identify any suitable sites within the Town Centre

- Provide a list of any sites you have considered in the town centre. If you need help identifying available sites please contact our Policy & Regeneration Team.
- If available sites do not meet your requirements please explain why. We understand that not all sites within the town centre will be viable or suitable (either due to physical or other constraints). The applicant should however demonstrate flexibility, particularly in terms of format and/or scale.
- Remember to consider sites which may become available within a reasonable timescale as well as those which are available now.

Step 3: Consider whether there are any additional sites within the town centre which could be made suitable.

- Make a list of any changes which would be needed to enable your business to occupy such sites.
- Calculate what costs and timescales would be involved and consider the impact upon viability.
- If the necessary changes would be unviable tell us so.
- Find out whether there are any funding streams available to help cover the costs.

Step 4: If steps 1-3 identify that there are no suitable sites within the town centre consideration should be given to accessible sites in an edge of centre location or those located within 500m of a public transport interchange.

- Edge of centre sites are less preferable than those within the town centre.
- When considering accessibility take into account whether there is pavement access, number of crossings and ease of crossing etc.
- Carry out steps 2 and 3 in relation to edge of centre sites to determine suitability and viability.

Step 5: If step 4 identifies that there are no suitable sites within the town centre, edge of centre or consideration can be given to sites in out of centre locations.

- This is the least preferable location for office uses, however such a location would be acceptable if there are no sites available in sequentially preferable locations or evidence shows that sites in those sites are unsuitable or unviable. Reasons for discounting sequentially preferable sites should be set out clearly.

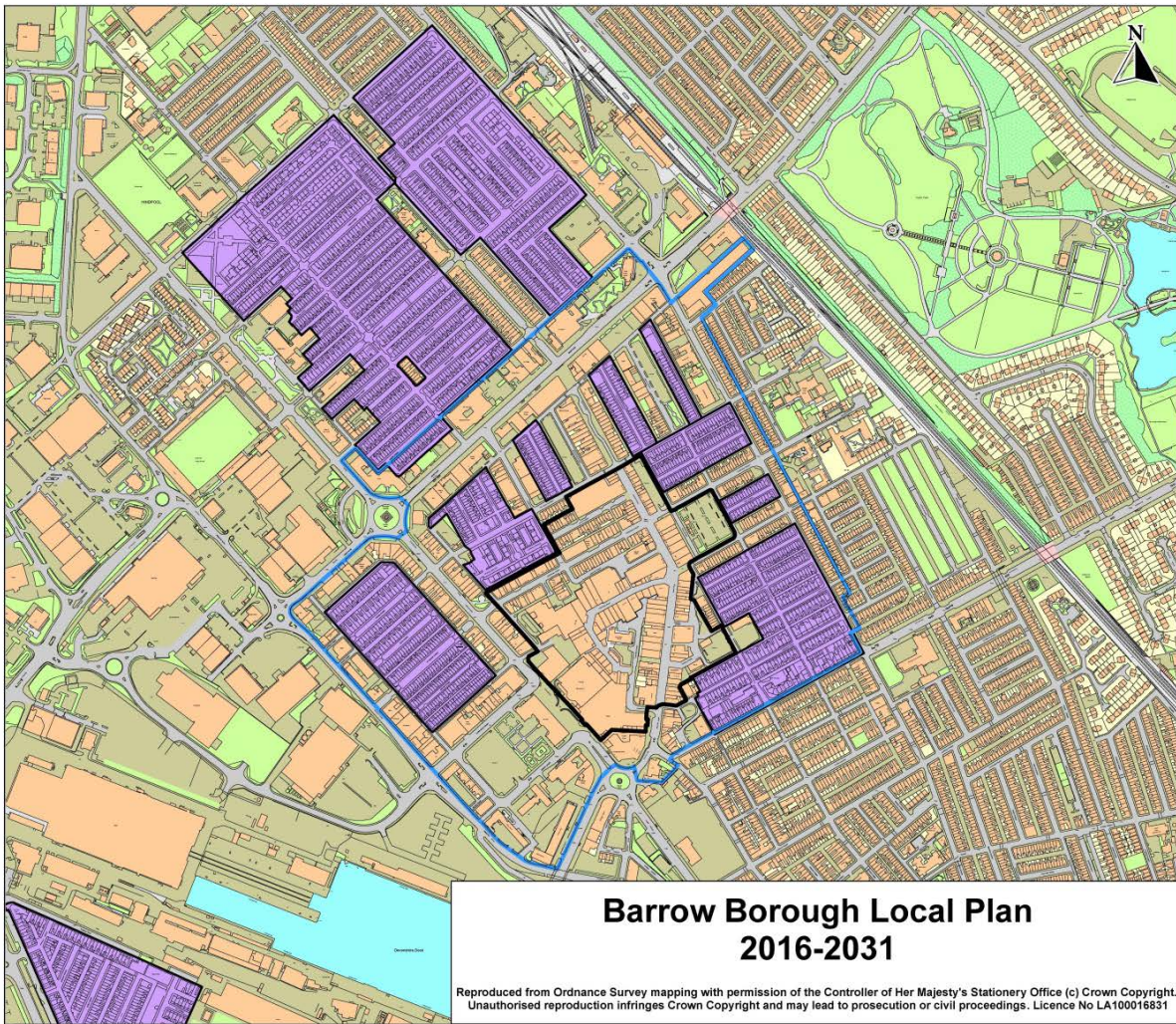
Points to Remember

- If no sequential test is submitted, the application can be refused under national planning policy.
- It is for the applicant to demonstrate compliance with the sequential test by providing evidence to show that steps 1-5 above have been followed.
- Land ownership does is not a justification for discounting sequentially preferable sites.
- We recommend discussing proposals for office uses outside of town centres with the Council at the earliest convenience prior to the submission of a planning application.

Policy & Guidance

- National Planning Policy Framework 2019: “Ensuring the Vitality of Town Centres” chapter
- National Planning Practice Guidance: “Town Centres & Retail” chapter
- Barrow Borough Local Plan 2016-2031, Retail chapter
- Location Map

Barrow Town Centre Map



Barrow Town Centre



KEY

-  Residential protection areas
-  Town centre
-  Barrow primary shopping area

This map must be viewed in conjunction with the Green Infrastructure maps.

Electronic copies of this map in PDF format can be found at <https://data.barrowbc.gov.uk>

The maps can also be viewed online along with other council information at <https://webgis1.barrowbc.gov.uk/webgis>

Scale 1:5,000



See: <https://www.barrowbc.gov.uk/residents/planning/mapping/>