

Guidance Note

Sequential Test: Retail



We recommend discussing proposals for retail uses outside of town centres with the Council at the earliest convenience prior to the submission of a planning application.

What is a retail sequential test?

Our town centres are facing strong competition from other locations such as out of town retail parks and online retailers. The Council is also under pressure to allow retailers to occupy units in out of town business parks or industrial estates which could potentially harm the town centre further.

In order to ensure existing centres remain a focus for retail, a Sequential Test is required alongside planning applications for changes of use to retail 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:

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

What is a “sequentially preferable location”?

Locations for retail uses are listed here in order of preference:

- Primary Shopping Area (PSA)
- Edge of Centre (within 300m of PSA)
- Out of Centre (in excess of 300m of PSA)

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, loading space (e.g. for bulky goods), parking etc.

Step 2: Identify any suitable sites within the Primary Shopping Area.

- Provide a list of any sites you have considered in the PSA. 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 PSA 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 PSA 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 PSA consideration should be given to sites in an edge of centre location. Preference should be given to sites which are well connected to the PSA.

- Edge of centre sites are less preferable than those within the PSA.
- Try to locate sites which are well connected to the PSA, particularly on foot taking 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 PSA or edge of centre consideration can be given to sites in out of centre locations.

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

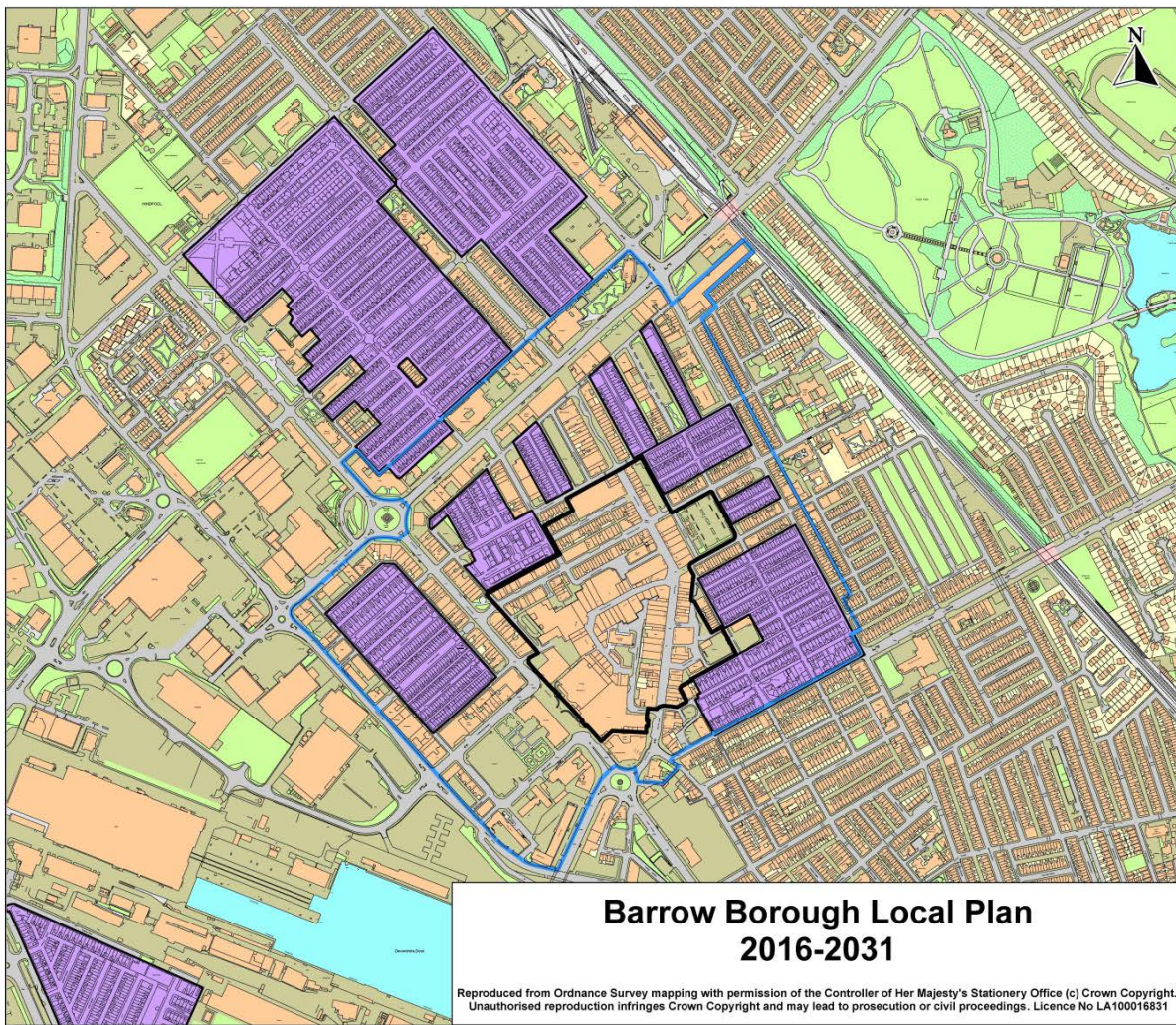
Points to Remember

- 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 is not a justification for discounting sequentially preferable sites.
- Applicants wishing to locate retail uses on sites in Dalton outside the town centre are dealt with slightly differently. Dalton has a defined town centre but no PSA due to its size. Applicants will therefore need to demonstrate that they have considered sequentially preferable sites in Barrow PSA and Edge of Centre before a location outside of Dalton town centre will be accepted.

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

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



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