

Position Statement

Non Town Centre Retail Centres in the borough, Neighbourhood & Local Centres as identified by the Stockton-on-Tees Local Plan March 2006

Summary

A request was made to assess the boroughs 38no neighbourhood and district centres with regards to retail offer, activity and condition and report back with the findings. Over a four week period between 22nd May 2012 and 25th June 2012 all the centres were visited and pre-defined set of data values gathered.

Methodology

The locations to be assessed were based on the centres as defined as neighbourhood or local by the Stockton-on-Tees Local Plan March 2006. As a baseline for the assessment, initial details for comparison / update / assessment were taken from those held by SBC Property Services and Planning Department through planning maps and records. For the purpose of this assessment, ownership has been taken as recorded in these records. SBC ownership (totally or partly) only extends to approximately 7 centres (18%). Further confirmation on ownership can be secured through land registry searches, if required. This would incur a charge for each request.

The data capture values to be assessed fall into two categories – the units and the locality.

◆ The units – the number

- Occupied
- Vacant
- Retail
- Non retail
- Fast food

◆ Locality

- Activity level
- Condition – décor & repair
- Parking
- Landscape
- General area

Photographic records of each location were also taken to accompany the data collected. All information has been input into a detail assessment log and summary, both of which accompany this statement.

Observations – The Units

For the purposes of this assessment, levels of occupancy etc for Billingham Green and Norton High Street have not been recorded due to the extent of those particular locations. The summary data for the remaining areas is shown in the table below.

Approx. Number of Units	Occupied Units	Empty units	Retail	Non retail	Fast Food
335	301	34	113	112	76

Observations – The Locality

Activity:

As the time spent at each location was limited, activity levels were based on the volume of actual users in and around each facility as well as taking account of the quantity of vehicles in the associated parking areas. Generally observed as good, though there were locations that should little use.

Décor / repair:

Generally good and in-keeping with the location, though some appeared “dated” / tired. The choice of security shuttering to unoccupied units does, however, impact of the visual appearance in some locations eg plywood to windows and doors.

Parking:

Generally adequate for the location, though some centres rely on side streets.

Landscape:

In the main hard landscape areas and streetscape are the norm. Some areas do incorporate elements of soft landscape such as grass edgings, hedging, shrubbery etc. This was largely tidy though there were some that required seasonal maintenance attention.

Area:

Generally the surrounding areas are tidy. Some are in areas of ongoing redevelopment and regeneration, which on completion should improve the visual appearance. Others are in areas that need further investment.

Overall Assessment

Consideration has been given to all data collected for each centre and a grade given from a range of three levels. The summary of this grading is as follows:

Grade	Qty
Good	30
Good to reasonable	4
DS07 – Norton Road, Central	Private
DS11 – Redhill Road	SBC
DS13 – Surrey Road	SBC
DT02 – Thorntree Road	Private
Poor	4
High Newham Court, Hardwick	Private
DS01 – Durham Road	Private
DE01 – Orchard Parade (fire damage)	Private
DPC1 – Port Clarence	SBC

Conclusion

The level and quality of local retail provision across the borough is considered to be generally good and serves the locality well. However, four of the centres, whilst serving the needs of the local residents to a larger or lesser degree, are in need of direct and indirect fiscal investment to improve centre and area desirability, thus potentially stimulating retail investors and users alike. Only one of these, Port Clarence, is within SBC ownership. Alternative management options that will improve the offer and investment for this facility are currently being explored. The other three are in various private ownerships. Due to fire damage Orchard Parade is subject to an ongoing insurance investigation process, after which it is understood a replacement facility will be provided. High Newham Court at Hardwick and Durham Road are both subject to the capacity of the relevant private landlords accessing / providing investment capital to attract potential retailers.