

Chapter 10

Sudbury Town

Introduction

- 10.1 Sudbury's shopping centre provides for the Town, Great Cornard and a dispersed rural population. Its catchment area comprises the immediate parishes of Sudbury, Great Cornard and Chilton (total population: 20,306 2001 Census).
- 10.2 The wider catchment area stretches as far as Boxford, Bures, Cavendish, Lavenham, Long Melford and Monks Eleigh in Suffolk and Belchamp St. Paul and Wickham St. Paul in Essex (total population 78,420 estimate at 2002, Source: Babergh Retail Capacity Study, September 2002). This area represents approximately a 15 minute driving distance from the Town centre. At the edges and beyond this catchment area, Sudbury competes with other centres.
- 10.3 Centres which are equal or lower in the shopping order include Stowmarket, Haverhill, Halstead and Braintree. Bury St. Edmunds, Colchester and Ipswich are higher order retail centres with a good range of national multiples. Although Sudbury could never be expected to compete on equal terms with the higher order centres, it could 'claw back' shoppers from the equal or lower order centres referred to.
- 10.4 Some retail warehouses have been developed on the edge of the town, including a food supermarket. Any future proposals for a food supermarket or retail warehousing will be carefully assessed in relation to Government guidance contained in PPS6: Planning for Town Centres.
- 10.5 Sudbury is also an important social and cultural centre. The town's setting, heritage and wealth of historic buildings make it a popular tourist attraction, and this aspect needs to be further developed. In turn, the maintenance of this heritage and its buildings requires a healthy retail and commercial sector to support it.

Objectives

1. To promote and enhance the role of Sudbury as an important commercial, tourist and social centre.
2. To identify suitable sites for residential development in order to introduce more housing into the town centre.
3. To find suitable uses for several strategic sites in the town centre which are to be vacated by their present users during the Plan period.

4. To preserve and enhance the town centre's exceptional built environment.
5. To introduce further improvement schemes and measures, thereby maintaining a pleasant environment for residents, shoppers and visitors, and encouraging economic generation.
6. To actively seek solutions to alleviate traffic problems in the town.

Policy Context

- 10.6 Government advice in the following PPSs and PPGs is of particular relevance to Sudbury Town centre:
- PPG12: Development Plans
 - PPS12: Local Development Frameworks
 - PPG3: Housing
 - PPS6: Planning for Town Centres
 - PPG13: Transport
 - PPG15: Planning and the Historic Environment
- 10.7 Regional Planning Guidance for East Anglia (RPG6) recognises the growing need to conserve and enhance the environment by achieving sustainable growth and respecting the character of towns.
- 10.8 The Suffolk Structure Plan 2001 outlines a number of broad aims and policies concerned with the protection and enhancement of the built environment. Particular reference is made to conservation areas, listed buildings and archaeology.
- 10.9 The policies and proposals for Sudbury town centre are generally inter-related and involve a number of authorities and agencies. Continued close co-operation with these bodies will be essential if the Plan is to be implemented and receives wide public support.

Land Use Policies

Land Use Policy Areas

- 10.10 The character of the town centre owes much to the variety and juxtaposition of land uses. Some parts of the town centre are dominated by one land use whilst others support, often very successfully, a number of different land uses. In order to retain these land uses and the character of the town centre, it has been divided into a number of Land Use Policy Areas, as shown on the Proposals Map.
- 10.11 These areas have been, in some cases, drawn to reflect changes, which may occur through other proposals in the Plan. It is intended that these land use policy areas should provide a framework against which to consider planning applications for new development or for changes in the area.

Principal Shopping Area

- 10.12 The Principal Shopping Area is in the north-eastern part of the Sudbury town centre and consists of primary and secondary shopping frontages. The primary shopping frontage is centred on Market Hill and part of North Street and is the focus of retailing activity. There are a number of business uses other than shops where there is a substantial element of direct service to the public justifying a shopping street location. Particularly on primary shopping sites, such uses can lead to deterioration in the overall standard and range of shopping facilities in the primary shopping frontage.
- 10.13 So, the District Council proposes that these non-shopping uses be minimised on the primary shopping frontages by allowing them to establish on the secondary shopping frontages and in the Mixed Use Areas.

SD01 At ground floor level in the primary shopping frontages in Sudbury the introduction of, or change of use to, shops will be permitted. The introduction of, or change of use to, non-shopping uses will not be permitted except where:

- it can be demonstrated that a unit has remained vacant for a considerable time;
- the unit has proved consistently unattractive to retail interest; and
- documentary evidence is submitted in support of the application to confirm the above conditions.

- 10.14 The principal shopping area is fringed with areas of mixed land uses, including shops, small businesses, housing and community facilities. It is intended that the very mixed nature of these areas, which is an essential and particular feature of the town centre, should continue. However, it will be important to ensure that different uses can exist side by side and remain. Development proposals will therefore be assessed against Policy SD02.

Mixed Use Areas

- 10.15 In the prime shopping streets, the change of use of ground floor retail floorspace will be restricted (see Policy SD01). However, in the Mixed Use Areas, business and service activities may be encouraged.

Business and Service Uses

SD02 In the Mixed Use Areas of Sudbury, uses in Class B2 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) will not be permitted.

Shopping and Commerce

- 10.16 In general, the introduction of individual shops and small-scale shopping developments are appropriate in Mixed Use Areas.

SD03 Change of use of premises to retailing and the introduction of small-scale retail developments in the Mixed Use Areas of Sudbury town centre will be permitted, provided there is no adverse effect on the environment, residential amenity and the highway network, and the scale is compatible with the surroundings.

Housing

- 10.17 The Mixed Use Areas provide opportunities for the introduction of new small-scale housing schemes. Such developments will be encouraged, particularly where they make provision for small households and the elderly to live in the town centre.

SD04 In the Mixed Use Areas of Sudbury town centre, residential development will be permitted, particularly where:

- use is made of vacant or under-used buildings, or
- residential development would result in a more appropriate use of land, provided it has no adverse effect on the vitality and viability of the town centre.

Redevelopment Opportunities

- 10.18 There are significant opportunities for redevelopment and enhancement of Sudbury's role as an important commercial centre, on sites in and around the town centre.
- 10.19 The District Council encourages closer working between the town centre stakeholders such as the retailers, local authorities, interest groups, etc. to develop a package of sustainable measures to improve the town centre environment, the range of shops and the management of the area.
- 10.20 Such redevelopments would particularly boost the shopping facilities in the town and could also create major environmental improvements. The District Council will encourage their implementation.

10.21 Redevelopment of selected sites in or adjacent to Sudbury town centre will be encouraged. The areas in question are:

- behind the railway station;
- around the existing bus station;
- to the rear of Market Hill and Gaol Lane; and
- at the top of North Street.

However, outside these areas redevelopment opportunities will not normally be permitted.

10.22 The District Council, together with Suffolk County Council, is currently working towards integration of public transport in Sudbury town centre. The site adjacent to the railway station is proposed for a bus-rail interchange.

Bus/Rail Interchange

10.23 Development on the site will include improved access from Station Road, a roundabout and bus shelters where passengers can be dropped off to catch the train and vice versa. The possibility of a bus gate between Bures Road and the interchange, to enable buses from the south to serve the station with relative ease, will be considered in the LTAP. Development of this kind is in accordance with central Government planning guidance PPG13. It will reduce the demand for car parking provision, encourage people to use public transport and reduce reliance on the private car.

10.24 The District Council will pursue funding options in partnership with Suffolk County Council to increase the likelihood of the proposal being implemented.

SD05 The land adjacent to the railway station, Sudbury, is proposed for a bus-rail interchange. Development will include improved access to the site, bus shelters and a roundabout.

10.25 A number of developments have occurred in the south-east of the town centre, notably:

- Former supermarket, Great Eastern Road (now Roys of Wroxham);
- Supermarket, Station Road (currently Waitrose); and
- Kingfisher Leisure Centre.

Land Around the Bus Station and Borehamgate Precinct

In addition, the majority of the town's public parking provision is located here:

- 300 spaces, Great Eastern Road (Roys of Wroxham);
- 275 spaces, Station Road;
- 130 spaces (private), supermarket (Waitrose); and
- 126 spaces adjacent to the Station.

The Railway and Bus Stations are also in this part of the town centre.

- 10.26 These developments and car parks are not as well related to the Principal Shopping Area as is desirable. The best opportunity to considerably enhance the town's retail and commercial sectors, integrate the existing developments into the town centre and generally up-grade the area is available by seeking a major commercial redevelopment of the land around the Bus Station.
- 10.27 This area of the town centre has consistently been promoted for retail and commercial redevelopment over a number of years, but without success. However, it still represents a key town centre redevelopment opportunity, since it occupies a focal point between the traditional retail core and an area occupied by the two main supermarkets, public transport nodes, the leisure centre and much of the off-street town centre parking. The District Council prepared a development brief in 1989 which promoted an essentially retail redevelopment solution for the area. The District Council plans to update this development brief in order to ensure integrated, viable and sustainable future development in this area.
- 10.28 In the past the Plan has emphasised the need to attract retail redevelopment investment. This remains a valid objective, but the District Council is prepared to consider a more mixed form of redevelopment. This could include leisure uses such as a cinema and B1 business use as well as retail. Such an approach is consistent with current Government guidance. The District Council will also consider limited residential development, as part of a mixed scheme, to bring proposals forward.

SD06 Land around the Bus Station, Sudbury, is proposed for a mixed-use redevelopment featuring retail, leisure or other commercial uses. Residential development forming an integral part of a mixed-use scheme will be acceptable. The main principles will be:

- the creation of a safe continuous and attractive pedestrian route between Great Eastern Road and Market Hill, which respects the historic frontage;
- when redeveloping the surrounding area to allow for extension of the library;
- the retention and improvement of the Bus Station into the scheme, or alternatively relocating to a different but equally suitable site in the town centre;
- provision of fewer car parking spaces than the maximum permissible under the standards;
- the provision of adequate cycle parking facilities;
- the implementation of associated highway improvements, as required by the Transport Authority, including the reconstruction of Francis Road, if necessary, to an adoptable standard, with the cost of such work to be borne by the developer; and
- proposals to be of a scale and design that are of high environmental quality and that respect the residential amenity of nearby dwellings.

10.29 To the rear of Market Hill and Gaol Lane are untidy yards, underused buildings and the North Street car park. Although not the preferred site for major retail development at the present time there may be some potential in the future, either to complement development around the Bus Station or to replace it, should the District Council be dissatisfied with the development that will take place there.

Land to the Rear of Market Hill and Gaol Lane

10.30 In the meantime, any proposals for smaller, more modest schemes will generally be encouraged in accordance with Policy SD03, will be given careful consideration and also the need to rationalise unsatisfactory servicing arrangements which are a hazard to pedestrians.

10.31 In view of this possibility, the area adjacent to Siam Gardens should not be proposed for development at the present time. Its resurfacing, however, will contribute to the continued environmental improvement of the Gaol Lane area pending any long-term decision as to its future use. If it is not required for such redevelopment, it is considered suitable for housing purposes.

SD07 In the area between Gaol Lane and North Street, south of North Street car park and to the rear of shops on the north side of Market Hill, Sudbury, small-scale proposals for new shop units or extensions and/or alterations at the rear of existing shop units will be permitted. Adequate provision should be made for rear servicing and the improvement of rear servicing to existing shops in the area.

Land at the Junction of North Street and Gainsborough Road

- 10.32 At the junction of North Street and Gainsborough Road, Sudbury, is an area of secondary shops and a wood yard. Also situated on the site is the New Hall building which is a Victorian factory building that is included in the Sudbury Local List. The site is prominent from the northern approach to the town centre. Whilst the site may be too far from the Principal Shopping Area to be attractive for integrated development with the Principal Shopping Area, commercial use would be permitted. Alternatively, the site could be developed for housing, preferably in 'block' form e.g. sheltered housing or flats. Redevelopment of the site should however be sensitive to the history of the New Hall building on the site.

SD08 Land at the junction of North Street and Gainsborough Road, Sudbury, is proposed for one or a combination of the following:

- retail development;
- office development;
- residential development; or
- hotel development.

Areas for Parking and Transport

Car Parking Provision

- 10.33 The continued provision of adequate and easily accessible car parking is essential to the continuing role of Sudbury as a shopping and commercial centre. The District Council will achieve this by appropriate management of its car parks, details of which are set out in Chapter 9: Transport (Paragraphs 9.65 – 9.69). The provision of additional car parking on new sites will only be considered where there is an identified need that cannot be met by the management of existing facilities.
- 10.34 The District Council will adopt a flexible approach to car parking for new development in the town centre, with the emphasis on a maximum rather than minimum level of provision (see Policy TP15 in Chapter 9).

- 10.35 Further provision of parking spaces at Station Road will require decking, which must be handled sensitively in view of its important location. A development brief will be prepared for a decked car park scheme, and all the relevant parties involved will be consulted.
- 10.36 The need for additional car parking in the town centre will be monitored and, should the provision need to be increased, it will be met by managing the car parks to create more space. Additional car parks will only be provided where the management of existing facilities cannot meet this identified need.
- 10.37 As mentioned in paragraph 10.35, additional car parking will be provided at Station Road car park. In this same area, north of the Station Road car park, the District Council will provide a site for the relocation of the bus station, if it cannot be accommodated in the mixed use scheme proposed in Policy SD06. Enough space should be provided on this site for stabling of buses between journeys. Before both these developments are implemented the District Council requires improvement of the access to the Station Road and Great Eastern Road junction, as well as traffic calming and management measures, that may be appropriate in these roads.

SD09 Additional car parking spaces, are proposed at the Station Road car park by providing surface level spaces and by constructing decks. The car park design must:

- be to a high quality;
- only provide a maximum of three decks above ground level; and
- ensure that open views of the meadows are retained from the area west of the Kingfisher Leisure Centre.

Implementation will be subject to the conditions set out in paragraph 10.37.

SD10 An alternative site on the northern part of Station Road car park, Sudbury, will be provided for the bus station (if a bus station is not accommodated in a mixed use scheme). Appropriate pedestrian and cycle links between the new bus station and the surrounding area and to the town centre will be required as well as providing additional bus stops in the town centre if necessary. Implementation will be subject to the conditions set out in paragraph 10.37.

Areas for Open Space and Recreation

10.38 These areas are situated on the periphery of the town centre and will remain unchanged.

Industrial Areas

10.39 In the town centre there are a number of long-established industries whose continued presence is important to the vitality and economic well-being of the town. The expansion of existing industries will normally be permitted. Where this is not possible due to restricted sites, poor access etc., firms will be able to look to new serviced industrial land being provided on the edge of the town.

SD11 Commercial and industrial sites and premises, in or adjacent to Sudbury town centre, will be retained for employment use and proposals for their expansion will be permitted subject to no adverse effects in relation to:

- town centre vitality and viability;
- access, traffic or highway safety;
- adequacy of space;
- residential amenity;
- any conservation area or listed buildings; and
- biodiversity.

Residential Areas

10.40 The remainder of the town centre, outside of the Land Use Policy Areas outlined above, is considered to be predominantly residential. These areas consist primarily of housing and should remain so in order to avoid the gradual erosion of character and amenity.

SD12 Change of use of residential properties to non-residential use in predominantly residential areas in Sudbury town centre will not be permitted.

10.41 Walnuttree Hospital is to be vacated when a new hospital is constructed. A suitable alternative use for the site is predominantly housing, but it could accommodate other uses, for example, social/community or office uses. Access will be via Walnuttree Lane.

10.42 The hospital is on the site of the former St Gregory's College, founded by Simon of Sudbury in 1374. Any surviving remains of this college merit preservation within any redevelopment of the site. The remainder will require total archaeological excavation prior to any redevelopment.

- 10.43 The hospital buildings comprise a former workhouse complex built in 1837 with more recent additions of lesser quality. These buildings are included in Sudbury's Local List.
- 10.44 The site, the majority of which is occupied by buildings, will probably be available by the end of the Plan period. Development will consist of primarily the conversion of those buildings, which are of architectural merit. This is a critical site in a key location in the conservation area and securing a high quality development is paramount. This aspect will be covered in a development brief.

SD13 Walnuttree Hospital, Sudbury, is proposed for housing purposes. Future development and changes to the site must be sensitive to its history and existing buildings in terms of scale, design and roofscape, especially when viewed against the backdrop of the town from the adjacent Sudbury Meadows.

Roads and Traffic

Traffic Circulation and Management

- 10.45 The existing traffic circulation system in the town centre was introduced in the early 1970s. Little or no changes have occurred to that system since its introduction.
- 10.46 Development has occurred in various parts of the town centre, resulting in pressure on specific locations in the road system. A Western Bypass and other highway improvements are proposed (see Chapter 9: Transport).
- 10.47 The District Council will urge the County Council to carry out necessary road and traffic management improvements in Sudbury, to deal with anticipated traffic growth. Details of the schemes to be carried out will be set out in the Local Transport Action Plan for Sudbury and Cornard.
- 10.48 In considering proposals for the town centre, particularly in respect of introducing traffic-free streets, consideration should be given to the servicing of shops. Some provision for rear servicing already exists. Other opportunities should be encouraged or pursued by:
- requiring the retention of existing rear servicing facilities and ensuring that further opportunities for these are not lost;
 - requiring the provision of rear servicing facilities in new developments; and
 - resisting the change of retail uses with rear servicing facilities to non-retail use.

- 10.49 On the north side of the Market Hill, most of the retailers have rear access, but this is narrow and sometimes cannot be used. The Traffic Order for the Market Hill phase of the pedestrian priority programme will have to provide for the access of service vehicles to the fronts of the properties. It would be preferable to avoid this where possible, which could be achieved with good rear service.
- 10.50 A small number of properties fronting Market Hill have no opportunity for rear access, because of existing development to the rear. Commercial redevelopment at the rear of these properties could overcome this problem and will be encouraged.

SD14 A new service road to the rear of properties on the north side of Market Hill, Sudbury, is proposed and an area will be safeguarded from development. Proposals for redevelopment or extension at the rear of these properties and the proposed service road for shopping purposes will be permitted.

Pedestrian and Cycle Movement

- 10.51 Walking plays an indispensable role in the transport system of the town. Pedestrians should be able to move around in comfort and safety. Studies have shown that this is not the case in the Principal Shopping Area – this must be redressed if Sudbury is to compete successfully with other shopping centres.
- 10.52 Conflicts occur between pedestrians and cars when the latter need not necessarily be there. Traffic-free areas have other advantages, namely:
- economic: there is an increase in shop trade;
 - physical: pleasant, attractive surroundings can be created and the town becomes more attractive to the tourist;
 - social: opportunities for social contact are increased and seating/meeting areas can be established;
 - health: noise and fumes are eliminated; and
 - safety: vehicle and pedestrian conflicts are minimised.
- 10.53 The implementation of such schemes, their nature and priorities will depend on practical considerations. In consultation with Suffolk County Council and interested parties, the District Council will investigate and, where feasible, introduce traffic-free streets or schemes giving priority to pedestrians and cyclists in the town centre. Details of the schemes will be set out in the Local Transport Action Plan for Sudbury and Great Cornard.

10.54 The effect of such schemes will be greatly enhanced when the Western Bypass and related measures are completed and remove considerable volumes of traffic from the town centre one-way system.

10.55 Notwithstanding the uncertainty over whether the Western Bypass will be built and the detail of the schemes that will be contained within the LTAP there are a number of traffic management measures that will contribute to the vitality and viability of the town through townscape improvements. The District Council will continue to promote these schemes which are listed below:

- traffic calming, traffic management measures and an improvement scheme for the north side of Market Hill, Sudbury;
- traffic calming and traffic management measures for Old Market Place and East Street;
- traffic calming for Gainsborough Street and King Street; and
- traffic calming and footway improvements for Burkitts Lane and Weavers Lane.

10.56 Sudbury has previously benefited from external conservation funding, through both a former Town Scheme and Conservation Area Partnership Scheme. This has brought about considerable improvements to the buildings and the spaces between them, which otherwise may not have been achieved. The Council continues to seek such funding for similar future improvements.

Environmental Improvements

10.57 The District Council will seek to secure conservation and regeneration funding from external sources to make improvements to buildings and enhance the space between buildings in the Sudbury Conservation Area.

10.58 As resources permit and opportunities arise, the District Council intends to implement environmental improvement schemes in and around Sudbury town centre.

10.59 The District Council strongly supports the provision of a new community hospital for Sudbury. A site at Waldingfield Road and Churchfield Road was identified for a new hospital. If this site is rendered unavailable for the proposed development the District Council will work in partnership with the West Suffolk Hospitals NHS Trust and other stakeholders to try to identify an appropriate alternative.

Sudbury Hospital

SD15 Alternative sites for a new hospital and health care uses directly related to the hospital will be judged against the following criteria:

- proximity to the communities it is intended to serve;
- good transport links and accessibility by non-car methods of transport (including walking and cycling) and the ability to promote access of this kind;
- there being no significant adverse impact on landscape characteristics, cultural heritage, biodiversity or residential amenity; and
- the ability of the local highway network to safely accommodate traffic likely to be generated by the development.

**Residents Parking,
Ballington Street,
Sudbury**

10.60 The District Council is aware of car parking problems in the Ballington Street and Middleton Road area. These problems have proved difficult to resolve to date. However, the District Council and other relevant authorities are currently investigating solutions to this localised problem.