

#### 4.9 TOWN CENTRE COMMERCIAL AREAS (ECON. 5)

4.9.1 Newbury is identified as a major town centre in the revised Berkshire Structure Plan. However, it is not only the focus for shopping development in West Berkshire but also for employment provision. Given the range of factors which impinge upon Newbury, namely issues of conservation, shopping, employment, access and recreation, it is considered appropriate to define a commercial core area for the town centre. Within this core area, major new office schemes (defined as having a gross floorspace of 500m<sup>2</sup> or more) may be favourably considered, subject to the criteria set out in policy ECON.5. Outside, such development will be resisted except where in accordance with Structure Plan policies BU1 and BU2 and policy ECON.1 of this Plan. This will assist in protecting those areas outside the commercial core from unacceptable impact of large office schemes.

4.9.2 Similarly, there are four other settlements in West Berkshire, which, in the Council's view, require the identification of a commercial core area; namely, Hungerford, Thatcham, Theale and Pangbourne. Whilst these four towns have smaller commercial core areas than Newbury, there is still a need for identification; since these are where the primary commercial uses are concentrated which are immediately available to the public. For this reason the core areas exclude the major employment areas associated with the towns concerned. However, there is likely to be continuing pressure for new business development in the centres noted, over the Plan period and it is considered correct to direct these pressures to the core areas concerned, for reasons of sustainability. Therefore policy ECON.5 will apply to these centres.

4.9.3 It should be recognised that the Council will examine closely the traffic generation arising from new employment schemes within the Newbury town area in order to minimise the impact of such traffic on its historic fabric, general environment and commercial attractiveness.

**POLICY ECON.5** The Council will permit proposals for business development within the 'commercial areas' of Newbury, Thatcham, Hungerford, Pangbourne and Theale (as defined in inset maps 4, 33, 5, 31 and 34) provided:

- (a) it does not give rise to transport, parking or infrastructure problems; and
- (b) it does not harm the physical or visual character of the area, the amenities of adjoining land uses especially residential uses or the relationship between existing development and the surrounding or adjoining landscape/open space areas; and
- (c) it does not unduly prejudice the prime shopping frontages (Policy SHOP.1); and
- (d) it makes provision for a reasonable variety and scale of business development appropriate to the nature and character of the centre concerned; and
- (e) the development does not give rise to pressures for housing development additional to the provision made in this Plan. Proposals for business development will also be expected to provide planning benefits appropriate to the scale and nature of the scheme as set out in policy OVS.3.