

**BASILDON BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REVIEW OF THE CLUSTERING OF  
BETTING OFFICES**

**DECEMBER 2015**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Betting (general) is defined by section 9(1) of the Gambling Act 2005 as the 'making or accepting of a bet on the outcome of a race, competition or other event or process; the likelihood of anything occurring or not occurring; or whether anything is or is not true'. Betting shops are required to hold a general betting operating licence and a betting premises licence. Under their license terms, the definition of a betting shop is that the primary activity occurring at the premises must be betting services. Once issued, an operating licence is valid for an indefinite period, and can only be revoked if the proprietor breaks the terms and conditions of their license, or fails to pay their annual fee<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.2 There has been widespread concern among Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) regarding their ability to control the location and quantity of gambling premises and higher stake machines in their areas, in particular betting offices<sup>2</sup>. Specifically, the clustering of any retail, business or service use (including betting shops) may limit the retail appeal and affect the vitality and viability of shopping areas in which these clusters occur.
- 1.3 In addition to the impacts on retail vitality, the prevalence of betting offices is closely linked with the incidence of problem gambling within a community<sup>3</sup>. Problem gambling is considered as a health disorder, and is defined as 'gambling that compromises, disrupts or damages family, employment, personal or recreational pursuits'. As well as negatively affecting health, the British Medical Journal (BMJ, 2012) also found that problem gambling can lead to debt and possibly crime to fund further gambling activities. It therefore becomes important to limit the clusters of betting offices in any given area, in order to reduce the negative impacts associated with betting offices.
- 1.4 It is perceived that the liberalisation of gambling laws, as enacted through the Gambling Act 2005, has allowed for the clustering of betting shops which may have an adverse impact on the communities and areas in which they are clustered. Since the new Act came into operation in September 2007, the issue of betting shops has received much attention by local authorities often prompted by residents' objections to an application for a betting premises licence in their neighbourhood. In response to community concerns, some authorities have instituted enquiries and reports exploring the range of policy and regulatory tools to respond to community concerns about betting shops.
- 1.5 While issues in each borough may vary slightly, some common concerns that tend to emerge from inquiries into betting shops include:

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<sup>1</sup> House of Commons Library, Betting Shops: Licensing Requirements, November 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Department for Culture, Media and Sport - Gambling Protections and Controls (2014).

<sup>3</sup> British Medical Association Board of Science (2007).

- Proliferation of betting shops since the Gambling Act 2005 came into force;
  - Clustering of betting shops in the most deprived areas, and the impact on the vulnerable;
  - Anti-social behaviour in and around betting shops; and
  - Longer term sustainability of the high street.
- 1.6 The purpose of this report is to provide an evidence base that will inform the Council's town centre policies in the emerging Local Plan. The review aims to establish whether there is enough evidence to support a new planning policy in restricting the development of betting shops in Basildon by identifying and exploring the number, location, and change over time of betting shops within the Borough.

## **2. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT**

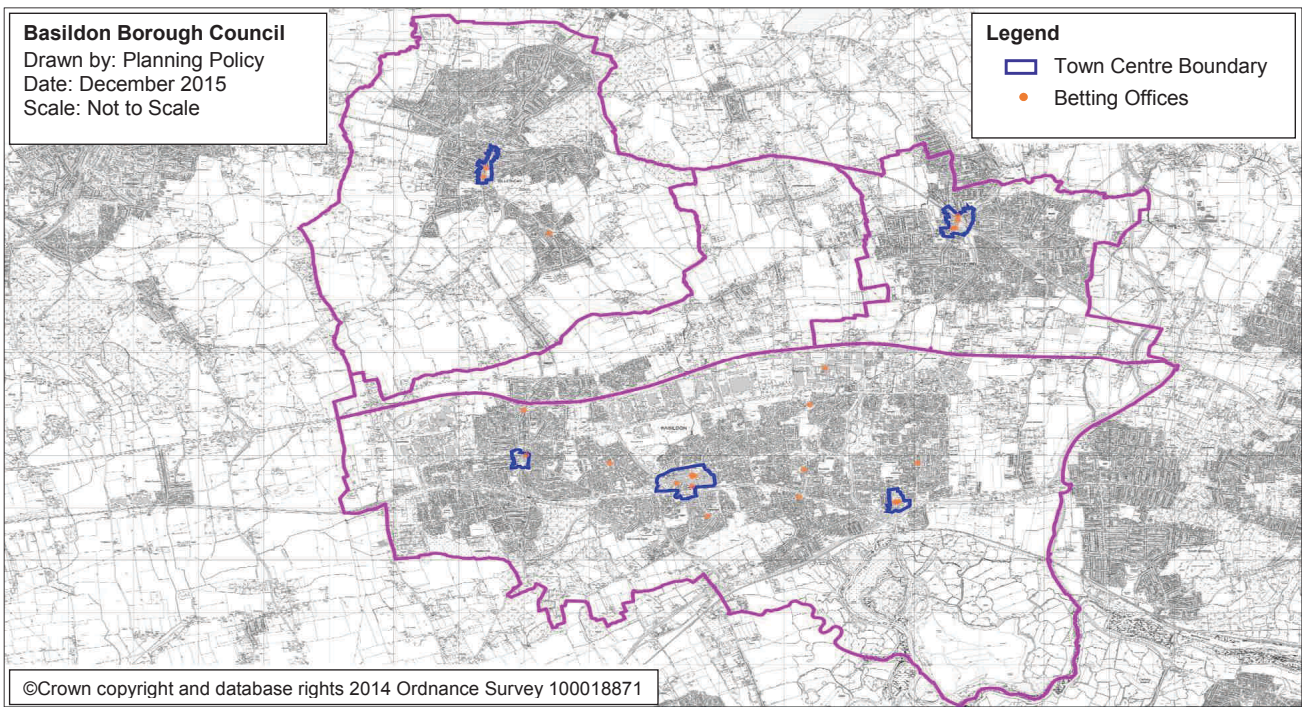
- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) emphasises that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute towards sustainable development. One of the three dimensions in achieving sustainable development is for the planning system to perform a social role by supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities. As a result, LPAs should take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.
- 2.2 The NPPF also states that LPAs should recognise town centres as the heart of their communities, and pursue policies to support their viability and vitality by making clear which uses will be permitted in such locations. Paragraph 157 of the NPPF further requires Local Plans to identify areas where it may be necessary to limit freedom to change the uses of buildings, and support such restrictions with clear explanation. Thus, the policy context supports limiting the freedom to change use where this is necessary to ensure town centres provide a diverse offer, which meets community needs, and are therefore more viable.
- 2.3 As a consequence of changes to the Use Classes Order in 2015, betting offices are classified as 'Sui Generis', therefore not falling within any given use class. Planning permission is therefore required for change of use of a premises to a betting office unless the premises is already in that use. This change in legislation stemmed from the Mary Portas High Street Review (2011) which recommended putting betting offices into a separate use class under the planning system. This change received overwhelming support when subject to consultation in 2014. The Government has made it clear that this change is intended to provide Local Authorities with an opportunity to consider and, if appropriate refuse, any application for a new betting office where the proliferation of betting offices in town centres has arisen.

### **3. BETTING OFFICES IN BASILDON**

#### **Location**

- 3.1 A shopping survey was conducted in June/July 2015 to record changes in the location and number of shops, restaurants, cafes, pubs and bars, hot food takeaways, financial and business services (including betting shops) throughout the Borough's town centres. Betting offices also require licenses from the Council's Licensing Authority to operate. These licensing records were thus compared against the shopping survey data to create a register of gambling premises operating in the Borough. *Figure 1* below shows the locations of all betting offices in Basildon as at December, 2015.

Figure 1: Map of Betting Offices in Basildon Borough as at 2015



3.2 There are 24 betting shops located throughout Basildon Borough, and these are not overly concentrated in any one town centre. Out of these 24 betting shops, 15 are distributed within the town centres, while the remaining 9 are located outside the town centres. Table 1 below is a list of all the betting offices in Basildon Borough.

**Table 1: Distribution of Betting Offices in Basildon Borough as at 2015**

Name	Address	Settlement Area
Betfred	13a East Walk	Basildon
Coral	126 High Street	Billericay
Coral	1 Broadway North	Pitsea
Coral	7-9 Station Avenue	Wickford
Coral	21 East Square	Basildon
Coral	37 Eastgate	Basildon
Coral	59 High Street	Wickford
Global Betting	24 Laindon Centre	Laindon
Joe Jennings Bookmakers	92 High Street	Billericay
Ladbrokes	96 Whitmore Way	Basildon
Ladbrokes	17-19 Market Square	Basildon
Ladbrokes	142a Clay Hill Road	Basildon
Ladbrokes	223 Timberlog Lane	Basildon
Ladbrokes	5 The Broadway	Pitsea
Ladbrokes	457 Clay Hill Road	Basildon
Ladbrokes	4 Nevendon Centre, Paycocke Road	Basildon
Ladbrokes	Unit 2, Gibraltar House, 4 High Street	Wickford
Paddy Power	5 Anne Boleyn Mansions, Northlands Pavement	Pitsea
Paddy Power	Unit C, The Ladygate Centre, High Street	Wickford
William Hill	3 Grange Road	Billericay
William Hill	41 Ballards Walk	Basildon
William Hill	2 Hemmells	Laindon
William Hill	102 Rectory Road	Pitsea
William Hill	9 East Square	Basildon

3.3 The Basildon Borough Shopping Frontage Review 2015 further indicates that 2.05% of Basildon town centre's frontage; 1.18% of Billericay's frontage; 2.85% of Wickford's frontage; 5.7% of Pitsea's frontage; and 2.9% of Laindon centre comprises of betting shops. Although betting shops represent only a small proportion of the total number of shops in each centre, there is some evidence of clustering, especially within the town centres as illustrated in *Figure 2* below.

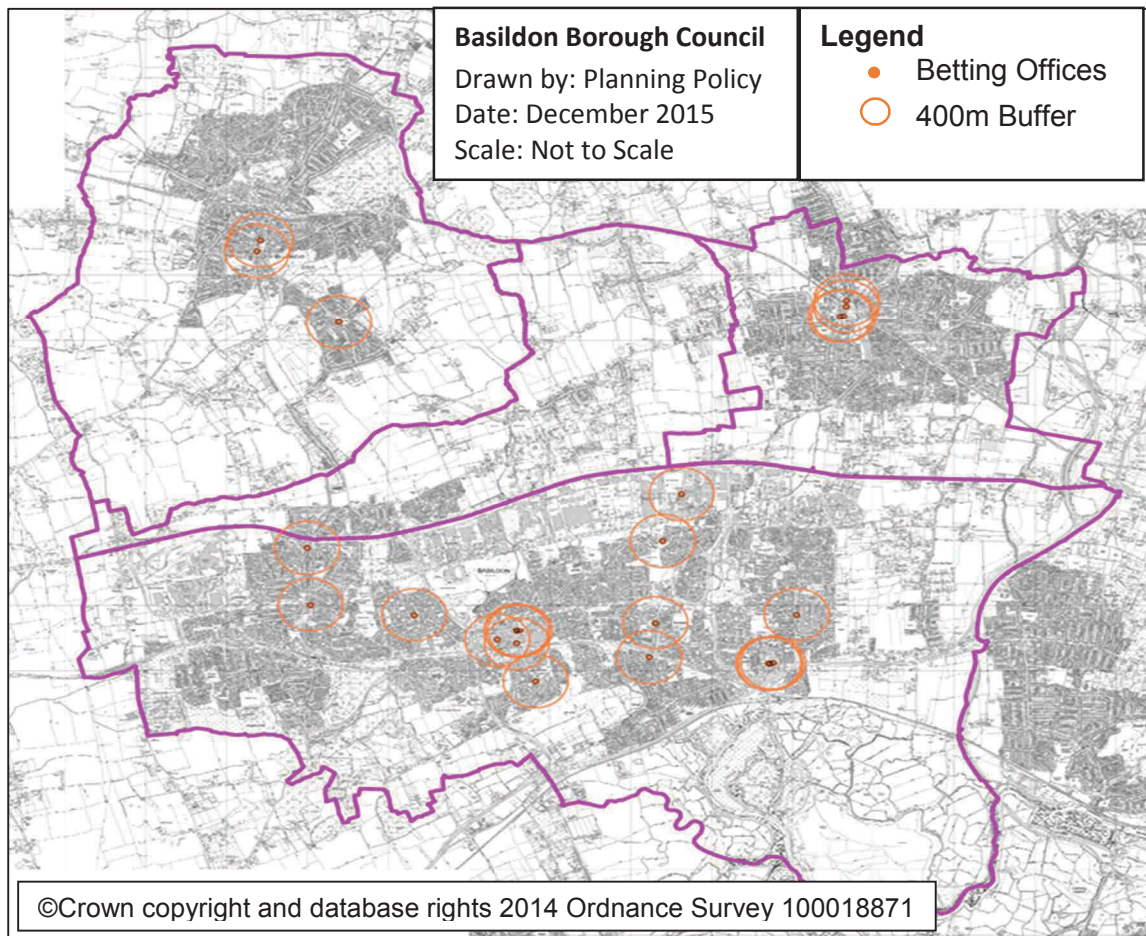
**Table 2: Proportion of Betting Offices in Town Centres' Primary Shopping Areas**

Settlement Area	No. of Frontage Units*	No. of Betting Offices	% of Frontage Units
Basildon	244	5	2.05%
Billericay	169	2	1.18%
Wickford	141	4	2.85%
Pitsea	53	3	5.7%
Laindon	34	1	2.9%

\* Basildon Borough Shopping Frontage Review, 2015



**Figure 2: Map showing a 400m Buffer around the Betting Offices in Basildon Borough**



## Measuring Change in Town Centres

3.4 Table 3 provides an analysis of the total number of betting shops in each town centre, and how this has changed since 2001.

**Table 3: Change in the Distribution of Betting Offices in the Borough's Town Centres, 2001-2015**

Town Centre	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2015	Change 2005-2015
Basildon	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	-1
Billericay	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
Wickford	3	3	3	4	3	3	4	+1
Pitsea	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	-1
Laindon	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0

Source: Basildon Retail and Leisure Monitoring Report, December 2006

3.5 As Table 3 shows, there have been only minor changes in the distribution of betting shops across the Borough's town centres. It is evident that the situation in Billericay and Laindon has remained constant over the last ten years. Since 2005, there has been an increase of one unit in Wickford, while Basildon and Pitsea town centres have recorded a decrease by one unit respectively.

## Relationship with Deprivation

3.6 There is further evidence to suggest that the growth of gambling establishments such as betting shops, is particularly prominent in areas with high levels of social and economic deprivation. The British Gambling Prevalence Survey (2010) identified a number of vulnerable groups in relation to gambling. These are:

- 16-24 year olds;
- Asian and Black British;
- The unemployed;
- Heavily engaged gamblers;
- Those whose parents were regular gamblers and who had gambling problems;
- Current smokers; and
- Those who rated their general health as bad or very bad.

- 3.7 While this data is only available at a national level, it is consistent with the findings from prevalence surveys conducted in other jurisdictions, and therefore likely to be applicable in local populations<sup>4</sup>.
- 3.8 *Figure 3* below compares levels of deprivation, as measured by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (1 being the lowest), to the concentration of betting shops in the Borough. As shown in *Figure 2* below, the greatest concentration of betting shops can be found in Basildon's most deprived areas, where residents are on the lowest incomes. This is of particular concern as the profile of Basildon suggests a likelihood of vulnerable residents/groups being at risk of problem gambling.
- 3.9 The Borough is ranked 141 out of 326 local authorities on average deprivation score (1 being the most deprived)<sup>5</sup>. Basildon borough as a whole has significantly worse outcomes for wider health deterrents than the England and Essex averages. Smoking prevalence in Basildon is significantly greater than regional and national rates, with 21% of Basildon Borough adults (this is just over 1 in 5 residents) being smokers<sup>6</sup>. In terms of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), Basildon has a higher than average percentage of young people NEET.

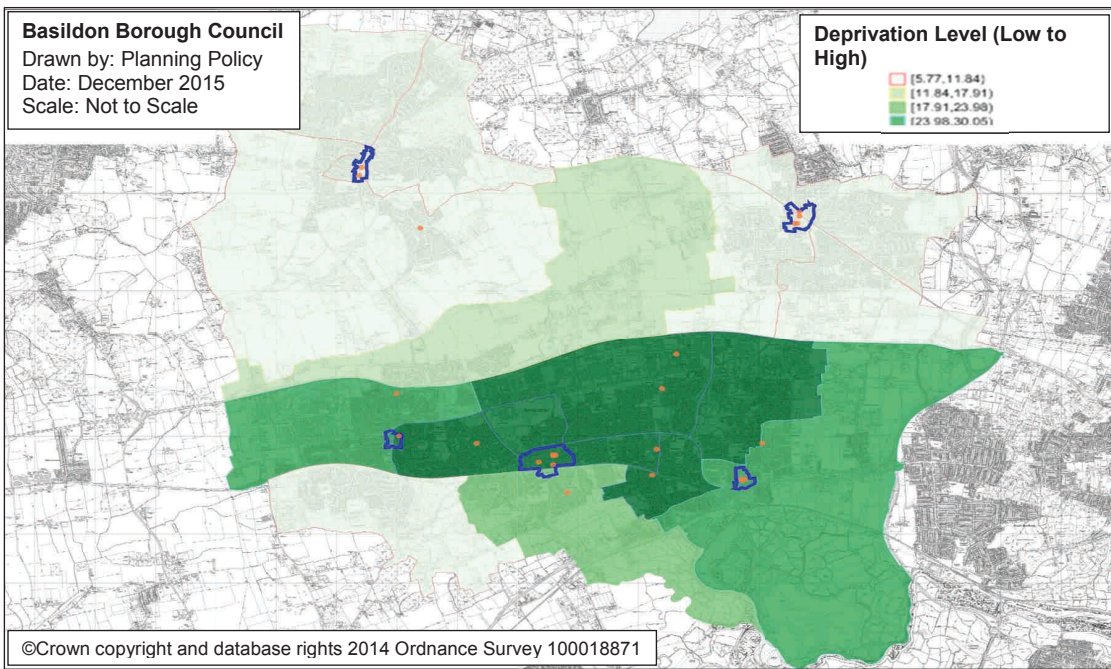
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<sup>4</sup> London Health Inequalities Network, Responding to the cumulative impact of betting shops, June 2013.

<sup>5</sup> DCLG Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 at local authority district level.

<sup>6</sup> Basildon CCG JSNA, 2012.

Figure 3: Deprivation and Concentration of Uses



## **4. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

- 4.1 This review demonstrates that there is no significant proliferation of betting shops in the Basildon Borough. Betting shops represent only a small proportion of the total number of shops in each centre. There also hasn't been a significant change in the number or concentration of betting shops over the past 10 years, particularly within the town centres.
- 4.2 In terms of concentration, the most deprived neighbourhoods experience the greatest concentration of betting offices. 17 out of 24 (70.8%) betting offices in the Basildon Borough are located to the south of the Borough, which comprises some of the most deprived areas in England. The largest cluster of betting shops are also found within town centres, where several betting shops fall within less than a 400m of each other.
- 4.3 In conclusion, this review recommends a 400m exclusion zone around existing and proposed betting offices, within which additional betting offices should not be located. The Urban Design Compendium (2000), a recognised and well referenced guide, advises that the 400m radius is a widely used benchmark for mixed development neighbourhoods, equating to about five minutes' walk. The 400m exclusion zone will help to prevent future clustering of betting offices, hence mitigating the impacts of such clusters, including problem gambling and its associated impacts on health and well-being. In line with the NPPF, the restriction of betting offices in Basildon Borough via planning policy will help to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities throughout the Borough.