

Preventing Over Proliferation of Hot Food Takeaways in Hull

What is it?

As part of a whole-system approach to childhood healthy weight Hull City Council included the following policies in its Local Plan to restrict the number of new takeaways:

- Development to accommodate hot food takeaway (A5) use will not be supported in local or neighbourhood centres where a threshold of 20% of all units would be or has already been reached, to prevent over-proliferation where this could undermine objectives to promote healthy eating in the city.
- Development to accommodate hot food takeaway (A5) use will not normally be supported within 400m of a secondary school or sixth form college or playing fields.

How did it happen?

For a few years Hull has been working on a whole-system approach to healthy weight recognising that overweight and obesity is multifactorial and systemic in nature and so needs a response that addresses the causes at many levels. This policy is one lever that can help to address the obesogenic food environment by controlling the proliferation of takeaways in the city. The policy received support from the Healthy and Wellbeing Board and other organisations as part of the Local Plan consultation.

Local evidence was used to make a case for the policy change including the National Childhood Measurement Programme trend data, Adult Lifestyle Survey data and information from the JSNA. Information from the FEAT National Takeaway database was also used to identify the local takeaway rates. The policy was implemented as part of the Local Plan and part of the whole-system approach to healthy weight in Hull. Support was provided for Planning and Public Health to work more closely together to explore how planning can improve health.

Who was involved?

As food issues are so wide ranging, extensive consultation and engagement was essential to ensure the strategy was relevant for residents, businesses, public sector bodies and voluntary and community sector organisations, and most importantly, that it reflected the needs and aspirations of Hull.

Building on stakeholder relationships built up throughout the consultation period, the strategy will be regularly revisited with a wide range of stakeholders for review and feedback, via mechanisms such as the multi sector Task and Finish Groups, relevant partnership boards and committees, and VCSE events such as the regular VCSE Assembly meetings.

What were the challenges and how were they overcome?

The way we measure whether an application is within 400m of a school, playing field, etc., has been quite complicated to explain to applicants and their agents so we have expanded on this methodology in a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). In this SPD we have explained it in this way: 'For those submitting a planning application for a A5 use anywhere in the city, a 400m buffer will be applied around the property in question to determine whether a secondary school, sixth-form college or playing field lies within it.

In the case of a playing field, there is no exact definition of what a playing field is but in terms of this the LPA will consider them to include all outdoor sports facilities and young people's facilities (as defined in Table 12.4 - 'Schedule of existing open space sites' in the Hull Local Plan 2016 to 2032). This definition will include football and rugby pitches, cricket grounds, baseball and rounder's pitches, MUGA's and skateboard parks. It should be noted that this definition of playing fields also includes playing fields at education sites (as defined in Table 12.4) although playing fields at primary schools will only be included if they are available for community use'.

It was really important to build a relationship between Planning and Public Health, we found that while Planning Policy Officers had common ground and similar thinking to Public Health sometimes the language used between the two disciplines differed. However, by working together on policies and levers within the Planning system we found ways to work together to make the environment a healthier place.

What have you learnt?

The process of adopting and implementing these policies has resulted in a more formal collaboration between Planning and Public Health Teams in Hull, Policy and Development Management Planners now meet regularly and planners now consult with Public Health teams on certain significant development proposals.

Analysis of the Council's four last published Authority Monitoring Reports (2018 – 2019, 2019 – 2020, 2020 – 2021, 2021 – 2022) shows that 47 Hot Food Takeaway applications had been decided since November 2017 (adoption of the Local Plan).

Out of these:

- 22 (47%) were permitted (with approx. 77% of decisions in line with Policy 12, point 14)
- 25 (53%) were refused (with 100% of decisions in line with the policy requirements). 5 of these (11% of all applications were decided against policy advice, all permitted).

- In 2016, when the Local Plan was adopted, there were 302 recorded HFT in the city. In 2023 there were 259 HFT, 43 less, a measured success of this initiative.

In the last year there seems to have been fewer overall planning applications for HFTA's (although this is yet to be proven until Hull's next AMR is produced later this year) but this strongly worded policy is considered to be influencing the local appetite for such development near schools and playing fields.