GBC 3.2

Gosport Borough Local Plan 2011-2029

Statement on Issues and Questions

Issue 3.2

Should there be more clarity within the policy of the type of retail space being referred to?

Date: 6th February 2015

GOSPORT
Borough Council

Introduction

1.1 The Borough's network of retail centres provides a key community focus for local residents and businesses in Gosport. It is important that they remain vibrant and viable. Evidence provided by the Gosport Retail Capacity Study 2014 (Submission Library document LP/E10/0), shows there are signs of vulnerability to competition from retailing destinations outside the Borough. The Council's retail planning strategy is to direct retail development towards the Borough's hierarchy of centres in order to improve its market share. However the Council consider it important that the GBLP remains flexible and capable of responding to changing circumstances over the plan period. The Council feel a more flexible approach to retailing can help to deliver the following strategic objectives:

- improving the retail offer to the consumer;
- assist in clawing back trade from out of centre locations;
- help retain the Gosport Town Centre's market share which is likely to benefit other stores in the Town Centre; and
- aid longer term regeneration of strategic sites identified in the GBLP.

1.2 Further explanation behind this approach is provided in the paragraphs below.

The Council's Retail Strategy

2.1 Policy LP3 in the GBLP sets out that 10,500 m² of net additional retail floorspace is required for the plan period up to 2029. Paragraph 6.23 of the reasoned justification text in the plan explains this new additional floorspace is expected to be taken up by largely through comparison floorspace provision as this is based on contemporary evidence.

2.2 The Council's Retail Background Paper (June 2014) (Submission Library document LP/E1/9, paragraph 3.32), sets out the reasoning behind the type of retail space envisaged. The Retail Background Paper was prepared using the Council's retail evidence and updated to take account the findings of the latest evidence base set out in the Gosport Retail Study 2014. The 2014 study also updates the information provided by the original Household Telephone Survey carried out in 2007 with information from a new Household Telephone Survey carried out in February 2014 (the methodology details of this new household telephone survey can be found on page 49 of the GRCS 2014). The study also took into account current economic trends including the effects of the recession.

2.3 The 10,500m² is made up in the following way:

Table 1: Proposed retail floorspace figure for Gosport Borough 2011-2029

	m² (net sales area)
Completions	3,675
+ Comparison floorspace – aspirational capacity to 2029	5,365
+ Outstanding convenience floorspace permissions	1,654
Total	**10,654**

2.4 It is expected based on current evidence from the study that most of the take-up of this new additional floorspace will be through comparison shopping and this is stated in paragraph 6.23 of the GBLP. The plan does not seek to differentiate between convenience and comparison floorspace as there is no requirement in the NPPF to do so. The plan aims to provide a degree of flexibility for retailers to develop sufficient and suitable retail floorspace in order to support and regenerate existing centres.

2.5 The Council consider this approach accords with the policy direction of paragraph 23 of the NPPF which states that local planning authorities should promote competitive town centres that provide customer choice and a diverse retail offer.

2.6 The Council monitors the take-up of retail floorspace in the Borough. Monitoring information shows that at April 2014, just under 6,400 sq.m. of retail floorspace had either been completed or granted planning permission. This has included some significant convenience retail floorspace and will make a key contribution to supporting the retention of convenience expenditure within the Borough (as shown by Table 6.1 and paragraph 6.32, GRCS 2014) as a key part of delivering the Council's retail strategy over the plan period. Table 1 of the Retail Background Paper (June 2014) shows the retail floorspace completions and permissions at 2011onwards. For ease of reference the contents of the table is repeated below in table 2 of this statement.

Table 2: Retail floorspace supply (as 1st April 2014)[1] estimated net sales retail floorspace m²)

	Retail floorspace (net sales) (m^2.)
Completions (1/4/11-31/3/14)	**3,675[2]**
Existing permissions:	
Aldi[3], Gosport Waterfront	1,181
ASDA extension, Dock Road	788
Daedalus[4]	200
Other permissions[5]	197
Haslar[6]	340
Sub Total	**2,706**
Total currently identified	**6,381[7]**

Source: Retail Background Paper (LP/E1/9)

2.7 The evidence from the Council's recent retail study suggests that if the Borough is to increase its market share (whilst reflecting its position in the sub-retail hierarchy) and increase expenditure within the Borough, there is scope to provide approximately 10,500 sq. metres of additional retail floorspace (as set out in paragraph 2.3 above and table 1 of this statement). It is acknowledged that this would be predominantly comparison floorspace. However drawing on information from the study, there is clearly still some scope to support convenience floorspace provision where this could make a positive qualitative contribution towards retaining expenditure in the Borough, delivering greater improvements in consumer choice and providing clear regeneration benefits to existing centres. Table 1 of this statement shows, since 2011, a significant amount of this retail floorspace has already come forward in the form of convenience provision.

[1] But also includes major retail planning approvals between 1st April 2014- 1st June 2014
[2] Include 1,397 m^2 net retail sales area at Royal Clarence Yard which has consent for unspecified A1-A5
[3] Planning consent granted in principle after April 2014 subject to S106 Agreement.
[4] A maximum of 200 m^2 would be A1.
[5] 113-117 Elson Road
[6] The Local Plan allocates the Haslar site as a care-led mixed use site which could include a small element of supporting retail. The latest planning application (to be determined) has a proposal for 340 m^2

[7] This could be viewed as a range of 4,984-6,381s $m^2$when taking account of the RCY completions

2.8 Table 2 above shows the number of schemes which have either been completed or permitted since 2011. This includes the completed Tesco and other A1-A5 units at Alver Village making up a total of 2,046sq.m. net sales area (The Tesco store accounts for 1,858 sq.m net sales area). These units formed part of the wider regeneration proposals for this area of significant change. Similarly the proposals for the Aldi store permitted at Gosport Waterfront comprised of 1,181 sq.m net sales area. Both of these schemes were considered necessary to assist with the regeneration of Alver Village and Gosport Waterfront and the Town Centre. This is explained in more detail below.

Tesco - Alver Village

2.9 In the case of Alver Village (Tesco). Part of the proposals set out in policy LP7 (2) for that part of the Rowner Regeneration Area known as Alver Village, was to provide 2,250 sq.m. (net) retail floorspace with an enhanced local centre with improved facilities. The locality had previously been served by a neighbourhood centre which experienced high levels of vacancies and a poor environmental quality. A proactive approach from the Council and its partners to support regeneration in this area has provided the opportunity to re-provide a high quality local centre to support the local community in this part of the Borough.

2.10 As part of the Council's evidence gathering process, a study was undertaken by GVA Grimley which looked at the impact of three scenarios for a food store in Alver Village (Rowner) with a floor space of 2,787 sq m, 2,323 sq m and 1,858 sq m respectively. It concluded that the two larger stores whilst clawing back lost trade to out of town stores, particularly the ASDA store in Newgate Lane, would also have an impact on Gosport Town Centre. The smaller store size tested would have impact on existing food retail floor space (principally a 9% impact on Morrisons in Gosport Town Centre) but would still claw back trade from the out of town food stores. The study concluded that a food store of between 1,500 sq m and 1,858 sq m could be supported without significant detrimental impact on the Borough's retail strategy and any impact should be balanced against the wider regeneration benefits that a proposed food store would bring. However the Study indicated the amount of comparison floor space should be limited to prevent an unacceptable impact on Gosport Town Centre. This was secured through a planning condition limiting this to a percentage of no more than 20% of the floor space within the food store to be used for comparison goods.

Aldi proposal – Gosport Waterfront

2.11 In relation to the Aldi proposal at the Gosport Waterfront, the proposed site formed part of an existing allocation for mixed-use development in policy

R/DP4 of the adopted Gosport Borough Local Plan (2006) (Submission Library document LP/A5/1) as well as LP4 in the GBLP.

2.12 The GBLP identifies the Gosport Town Centre and Gosport Waterfront Regeneration Area as the key focus for additional retail floorspace, outside of other defined centres. Evidence suggests there may be qualitative reasons to support improvements to local town centre provision. in order to increase choice and competition (paragraph 6.53 and the Convenience Capacity Summary section, page 64 of the GRCS 2014).

2.13 Therefore it was considered that the provision of a 1550 sq. m convenience food store, adjacent to the Town Centre and Gosport Waterfront would provide more consumer choice, contribute towards supporting linked trips to other retail providers, services and facilities thereby enhancing Gosport Town Centre's role as a convenience retailing destination. The improvement of the retail offer in this location would help to strengthen Gosport Town Centre against signs of vulnerability and competition to Gosport from other competing centres as well as making a significant contribution towards the implementation of the regeneration policies of the GBLP for the Gosport Waterfront.

2.14 As already referred to the residual floorspace is expected to be in the form of comparison floorspace. However, evidence concludes there may be circumstances where a small amount of localised convenience floorpspace may be appropriate. For example the study concluded there may be qualitative reasons to support a new convenience retailer in the Lee-on-the Solent District Centre in order to increase consumer choice and help retain convenience expenditure in this location (paragraph 7.3, GRCS 2014).

2.15 Although the study concluded that its capacity projections showed that in adopting a 'constant market share approach', no new additional capacity for convenience floorspace was identified. There may still be qualitative reasons to support improvements to local provision to increase choice and competition as long as this was at preferred town centre locations as it is considered this would contribute towards supporting linked trips to other trades and services within the centre, paragraph 7.3, GRCS 2014.

Conclusion

3.1 In conclusion, the figure of 10,500 sq.m. does not distinguish between comparison and convenience floorspace. As supported by the evidence base, it is acknowledged that new floorspace is expected to be provided predominantly through comparison shopping and this is clearly set out in paragraph 6.23 of the GBLP. However, it is the Council's objective to try to increase Gosport's market share and retain more expenditure within the

Borough. The evidence set out in the GRCS 2014 suggests that if the Borough were to retain its current market share there would be in effect no requirement for additional convenience retail floorspace. However, the study indicates there are signs of vulnerability and competition to Gosport from other centres. Therefore the Council wishes to provide the flexibility for retailers to develop sufficient and suitable retail floorspace to support and regenerate existing centres.