GBC 3.1

Gosport Borough Local Plan 2011-2029

Statement on Issues and Questions

Issue

Is the figure of 10,500sqm of net retail floorspace given in policy LP3 in line with the findings of the Gosport Retail Capacity Study and is that study based on sound evidence?

Date: 6th February 2015

GOSPORT
Borough Council

Introduction

1.1 The Gosport Retail Capacity Study 2014 (GRCS 2014) (LP/E10/0) provides the most up to date source of evidence for retail planning in the Borough. The Council considers the GRCS 2014 is based on sound evidence which makes effective use of current local information and recognised industry data sources. It has been prepared taking into account the requirements of the NPPF. Therefore the Council considers the policies and proposals in the GBLP are supported by the best available evidence. This evidence has been used to inform the retail figure proposed in policy LP3. Based on the findings of the evidence and reflecting Gosport's position in the wider south Hampshire retail hierarchy; the Council consider the figure of 10,500m² to be aspirational but realistic. The Council's approach is explained further in the Retail Background Paper (June 2014) (Submission Library document LP/E1/9).

1.2 There were a number of important issues arising from the evidence which the GBLP seeks to address notably:

- To improve the retail offer thereby helping to reduce expenditure leakage to other competing destinations; and
- Attract investment to the Borough support the wider regeneration objectives of the GBLP.

1.3 The Council appointed GVA Grimley Ltd a leading specialist consultant in retail and town centre planning. They provide a wide variety of services to a diverse range of clients including retailers, property companies and investors, developers and local authorities. They were appointed by the Council to prepare an up to date evidence base to inform the overall quantum and focus for the Council's retail policies in the GBLP. Accordingly the Council have taken on board the study's recommendations in preparing the final figure for retail floorspace proposed in policy LP3.

Is the figure of 10,500sqm of net retail floorspace given in policy LP3 in line with the findings of the Gosport Retail Capacity Study?

2.1 The figure of 10,500 m² includes the recommended figure from the GRCS 2014 for additional comparison floorspace a figure of 5,365m² (net) but it also includes current retail commitments (including convenience floorspace) and completions since 2011. This information is set out in the tables overleaf:

Table 1: Outstanding Permitted Convenience Floorspace

Scheme	Floorspace (net sales area) m²
Aldi, Harbour Road (new store)	1,181
Asda, Dock Road (extension)	473 (a total of 788 m² was granted permission. However to avoid any adverse impact on the Gosport Town Centre, a planning condition was attached restricting the amount of comparison goods that could be sold to 40% therefore the remaining 60% is convenience hence the difference in the figure.)
Total estimated convenience	**1,654**

(Source: Information taken from Table 9, page 18, Retail Background Paper June 2014)

Table 2: Proposed retail floorspace figure for Gosport Borough Local Plan 2011-2029

	Floorspace (net sales area) m²
Completions (201-2014)	3,675
+ Outstanding convenience floorspace	1,654
+ Comparison floorspace (aspirational capacity to 2029)	5,365
Total	**10,694**

(The 10,694 has been rounded to the nearest 500m²).
(Source: Information taken from Table 10, page 18, Retail Background Paper June 2014. Table 2 in this statement also corrects the typographical error in Table 10 of the Retail Background Paper which says 'Outstanding comparison floorspace 1654m²'. It should read 'Outstanding convenience floorspace 1,654m²'.)

2.2 The GRCS 2014 concluded that the Borough could support a figure of 5,365m² of floorspace for comparison goods over the plan period. Although the study does not provide a specific figure for additional convenience floorspace, it recognises the role this type of shopping can play to improve the quality, choice and competitiveness of the Gosport's centres.

2.3 The study using information on current market shares and forecasts in population growth and expenditure as well as taking into account the performance of a number of convenience stores are under trading does not identify any capacity for the provision of new additional convenience floorspace. However the study did find that whilst the retention in convenience spending has increased since the previous study in 2007 (Town Centres: Retail, Leisure and Office Study, September 2007 (LP/E10/1)) there is still some leakage in convenience expenditure to outside of the Borough. Advice from the study (GRCS 2014) suggests there may still be a qualitative need to support some new convenience floorspace both at Lee-on-the-Solent District Centre in particular and in other centres in the Borough to help retain convenience expenditure by increase consumer choice and competition. (Table 6.1, paragraphs 6.40 and 6.50-6.54 GRCS 2014). The Council has taken steps to address some of the issues relating to improving the retail offer for convenience through planning permissions for Tesco at Alver Village (now open) and recently Aldi at Gosport Waterfront.

2.4 The baseline capacity assessment for comparison goods in the GRCS 2014 is set out on pages 60-66. The assessment assumes the Borough's network of centres is capable of maintaining its current comparison goods market share. However, the study recognises that it is unlikely that the current retail offer would improve without significant investment and that Gosport will continue to lose a degree of trade to competing, higher order centres.

2.5 Therefore in order to help Gosport's competitiveness and attract investment to the Borough, the study considers that it is reasonable to promote a level of aspirational growth to help retain expenditure within the Borough and enhance its market share (paragraph 6.73, GRCS 2014).

2.6 Advice from the study indicates that it is feasible (depending upon the nature of proposals coming forward), to increase the retention of comparison goods expenditure in the Borough from 37% - 45% (paragraph 6.73). In terms of floorspace, the study recommends that upto 5,365 sq.m.(net) additional floorspace could be supported in the Borough by 2029 (paragraph 6.74 and Table 24 in Appendix 2, GRCS 2014). Furthermore, the study advises that main focus of new retail floorspace should be directed to Gosport Town Centre as a priority as this will make a significant contribution towards delivering regeneration benefits to the Gosport Waterfront and Town Centre Regeneration Area.

2.7 Therefore for the Council a 'do nothing approach' is not considered an appropriate response to meeting the long term planning needs of the Borough, nor would it be compatible with the policy intentions of the NPPF to deliver local plans which are aspirational but realistic in addressing the challenges and opportunities of the 21st Century (paragraph 154, NPPF).

Is that study based on sound evidence?

3.1 The GRCS 2014 study takes into account changes in national, regional and local economic trends, strategies and planning policies. It also updated previous retail capacity forecasts to take account of the plan period up to 2029. The methodology for the study draws on published industry data sources including research by Experian, Verdict and Co-Star Focus in order to provide the basis for assessing the future retail capacity requirements for Gosport. This information is set out in paragraph 4.2, GRCS 2014). A bespoke household telephone survey was also carried out to provide an up to date picture of residents shopping patterns (paragraphs 6.6-6.11, GRCS 2014). The study also uses the latest household projections used in the GBLP. The study also provided analysis on internet growth and multichannel retailing, Special Forms of Trading and changing retailer requirements. The Council provided GVA Grimley with the latest information held on vacancies, footfall and retail centre audits for 2014 taken form the Council's annual audit of retail centres to supplement industry standard data sources.

Conclusion

3.2 In conclusion, the Council considers the figure of 10,500 sq.m retail floorspace is in line with the findings of the GRCS 2014 having regard to existing commitments. The Council considers this study is based on sound evidence.