

FAREHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Development Sites and Policies Plan

Statement on Issues and Questions

Issue 5– Locks Heath and Portchester District Centres and
other Retail Policies (DSP34 – DSP39)

October 2014

DCD-09

- 5.1 *Is the provision of additional retail floorspace in Portchester justified and if so is the extension of the Portchester District Centre the most appropriate strategy?***
- 5.1.1 The Council undertook additional evidence in order to understand retail needs for the Borough over the Plan period. The 2012 GVA Retail Study (DED04) looked at the largest centres in the Borough, including Fareham, Locks Heath, Portchester and Stubbington.
- 5.1.2 For Portchester, the Study (DED04) reported that Portchester District Centre has a limited market share for comparison goods (1%), but a market share of 16% for convenience goods. However, whilst the convenience goods market share was higher than the comparison share, it was less than the other comparable Centres in the Borough. The Study noted that Portchester suffers from significant trade leakage to neighbouring foodstores, most notably Sainsbury's in Broadcut (adjacent to Fareham Town Centre) and Tesco in North Harbour (within Portsmouth City Council boundary).
- 5.1.3 In terms of future need for Portchester District Centre the Study (DED04) concluded that no additional comparison floorspace would be required over the Plan period, but for convenience floorspace it stated (page 79): *“Portchester could accommodate a foodstore of around 800-900sq.m net through an increase in market share. The Council should ensure sites are well integrated to the town centre in order to contribute to its vitality and viability.”*
- 5.1.4 It should be noted that this recommendation is based on Portchester Centre re-claiming some of the market share it currently loses to other areas. Whilst Table 13 in Appendix 1 of the Study (DED04) demonstrates that there is no “overriding” need for new floorspace based on existing patterns of trade, the Council supports the notion of Portchester clawing back market share from other areas, and supports the conclusion that additional convenience floorspace would be appropriate, if well integrated with the Centre.
- 5.1.5 Paragraph 23 of the National Planning Policy Framework is clear that in drawing up Local Plans, Local Planning Authorities should define the extent of each centre, but also seek to meet the scale and type of retail development needed. Bullet point six of paragraph 23 concludes with: *“local planning authorities should therefore undertake an assessment of the need to expand town centres to ensure a sufficient supply of suitable sites.”* With the Council's evidence (DED04) showing a need for additional retail facilities in Portchester District Centre, the Council carefully considered the need for an extension of the District Centre boundary. The boundary in the previous Local Plan Review (2000) was tightly defined around the existing retail facilities and gave little room for expansion and also omitted a number of facilities that are inextricably linked to the function of the existing Centre, such as a number of retail units, community facilities and the car park. To

rectify this situation, the Council reviewed the boundary of the Centre, considering both the need for additional retail facilities but also the need to incorporate all the facilities that contribute to the make-up of the Centre.

- 5.1.6 Without addressing the boundary of the Centre, and allocating an extension of the boundary in the DSP Plan, the Council could not show that it was planning to meet the defined needs of the Centre as set out in the Retail Study. This would be contrary to the NPPF and paragraph 23, and could serve to stifle the long term vitality and viability of the Centre. The Council considers that the revised boundary better reflects the uses and facilities that contribute towards the overall success of the Centre, whilst also allowing space for additional facilities, where they can suitably satisfy the caveats of DSP36. There are no other potential expansion options for the Centre, given the physical restriction of the A27 to the north and residential properties to the east and west. For these reasons, the option to extend the boundary as shown on the Policies Map is considered the most appropriate strategy for the Centre.

5.2 *Is policy DSP36 sufficiently clear with regard to car parking provision and the scale of retail development that might be appropriate? Are there any impediments to the delivery of policy DSP36?*

- 5.2.1 The Council is aware of the importance of Portchester car park to the continued vitality and viability of Centre. The first caveat to Policy DSP36 is very clear that any expansion of the retail offer will need to provide sufficient parking for both the existing and expanded uses. The Council would expect any proposal for development to be accompanied by evidence to show what the current demands of the Centre are, looking specifically at the capacity and usage of the current Centre car parks. Any proposals would then also need to assess demands arising from the new uses and would need to satisfactorily demonstrate that parking levels proposed would be sufficient.

- 5.2.2 Whilst it is highly unlikely that the current wording of the Policy would result in any reduction in car parking the Council concedes that the wording could be made clearer by stating that no reduction in parking would be allowed. The Council recommends the following minor modification to the first bullet point in Policy DSP36:

Proposals for the expansion of the retail offer in Portchester District Centre will be permitted provided that:

- **There is no overall reduction in car parking levels, and the proposed level of car parking meets the needs of both the existing retail offer and the proposed expansion.**

- 5.2.3 In terms of scale of retail allowed at the Centre, the Council recommends that the 2012 GVA Retail Study (DED04) figure of 800-900sq.m of convenience floorspace should be reflected in the supporting text. However in order to allow flexibility it is not recommended that this is repeated in

Policy DSP36. Proposals for additional retail floorspace could come through slightly under, or over, this figure. The current wording of the Policy allows the Council to make a judgement on the acceptability of individual schemes on their merits, taking into account the relationship to the existing Centre and any potential retail impacts.

- 5.2.4 To clarify the issue of scale the Council recommends a minor modification to paragraph 5.163 to include reference to the floorspace targets recommended in the 2012 Retail Study (DED04). Paragraph 5.163 amended as follows:

The 2012 Retail Study concludes that ~~Portchester District Centre requires some additional retail floorspace during the plan period.~~ “Portchester could accommodate a foodstore of around 800-900sq.m net through an increase in market share. The Council should ensure sites are well integrated to the town centre in order to contribute to its vitality and viability.” (GVA Retail Study 2012) Given the physical restrictions to the north any future expansion of the Centre, or any new stores, are likely to be either through redevelopment within the West Street frontage, or south of West Street, to the area currently given over to surface car parking. There are two key elements that need to be considered as part of any redevelopment or extension to the Centre. Firstly the levels of parking to be provided will need to reflect the current parking levels, but also the increase in demand that may come through the extension. Secondly, any new retail units will need to be sited in a way that relates, and links to, the existing pedestrianised area to ensure that they become an integrated part of the Centre, as recommended in the 2012 Retail Study. Also, new development will need to take account of flood risk issues in accordance with the Technical Guidance to the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 5.2.5 The Policy is considered to be flexible enough to allow for changes in the market but also flexible enough to support a range of possible redevelopment options. Whilst the provision of parking is likely to be a major concern for local residents, the Council considers that additional retail facilities can be delivered on the site as well as retaining, or improving car parking levels. The Council owns the southern car park, which could be more efficiently configured (including the access roads), Assheton Court and the lorry park meaning there are no concerns over land assembly. Whilst there are currently no plans or funding arrangements in place for any proposed redevelopments at the Centre, innovative proposals that would make a more effective use of the land in and around the Centre, including uses such as Assheton Court and/or reworking the car and lorry parks, are considered possible and deliverable over the Plan period, subject to market demand.

5.3 *Is there any evidence that development at Locks Heath District Centre would prejudice development at Heath Road (housing site H11)?*

- 5.3.1 The Council does not consider that development at Locks Heath District

Centre should, in any way, prejudice development of the housing site at Heath Road. Core Strategy Policy CS17 (High Quality Design) requires all new development to be permeable and provide continuity of built form. This is applicable to all development in the Borough and would, therefore, serve to ensure that development at the District Centre takes due account of any proposed development at the Heath Road site.

5.4 *Should policy DSP37 include a reference to the Council’s approach to development at existing garden centres?*

- 5.4.1 The Council considers Policy DSP37, alongside Policy DSP9, adequately covers the Council’s approach to development at existing garden centres. The NPPF does not define garden centres as a separate retail use, but rather encapsulates all “retail development” within main town centre uses. Whilst the Council acknowledges that some stores prefer an “out-of-centre” location, there is no national guidance that suggests garden centres need to be located outside of urban area boundaries, or that the goods they sell could not be located in stores within the Borough’s centres.
- 5.4.2 Garden Centres are considered to be in a similar situation to “bulky goods” stores, which prefer larger format stores that sometimes cannot be accommodated in existing Centres. The Council acknowledges the specific needs of certain stores, and where it can be adequately demonstrated through a sequential test that specific requirements cannot be met in existing centres new out-of-centre units, or expansions/change of use of existing units may be permitted. Where necessary, the Council will utilise conditions to restrict the range of goods sold, as explained in the last part of Policy DSP37.
- 5.4.3 The premise of Policy DSP37 is to protect the Borough’s existing centres from retail development that would have an adverse impact. Given that there is no national guidance to consider garden centres as a separate type of retail development, the Council considers it appropriate to manage their growth, in out-of-centre locations, in a similar way to other retail uses.
- 5.4.4 The Council also considers that Policy DSP9 (Economic Development Outside of the Defined Urban Settlement Boundaries) could also be applicable for certain garden centre proposals, dependent on their location. This policy allows for expansion and intensification of economic development uses (which include main town centre uses) outside of settlement boundaries subject to the relevant sequential and impact assessments as set out in National Planning Policy.