

Convenience Retail Floorspace

An Assessment of how to meet Additional Floorspace recommended by Inspector

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At Paragraph 10.5.20 (ii) of his report, the Inspector who held the Public Inquiry into the CDLP Review recommended the following:

“The Council should give urgent reconsideration to its strategy on how to meet future need for convenience retail development”.

- 1.2 This recommendation followed representations on the Local Plan Review which argued that there was capacity in the City for additional convenience retail floorspace and, that as a result, an allocation for such floorspace should be made at the northern end of the Derbyshire Royal Infirmary (DRI). This paper has been prepared to re-consider the Council’s retail strategy in the context of these issues.

- 1.3 Of relevance to this review are two other recommendations made by the Inspector. Firstly, 3.3.26 (ii) to provide for retail use on the ground floor of the Bonded Warehouse at the former Friar Gate Goods Yard site, related in scale and nature to the needs of the locality. Secondly, 5.23.36 (i) to provide for the expansion of Heatherton Neighbourhood Centre for extended shopping/service/community facilities.

2. Overview of Relevant Inspector Recommendations

- 2.1 The main points emerging from the Inspector’s report regarding these issues and his recommendation are:

- there should be additional provision for retail at Heatherton Neighbourhood Centre;
- there is capacity for an additional 2,800 m² (net) of convenience retail floorspace in the city;
- the Council should urgently re-visit its strategy for convenience retail development;
- certain sites promoted in the Local Plan Review by objectors need not be considered further; but other sites, including the DRI site was not ruled out as being unacceptable in principle.

2.2 The Council sought clarification of the Inspector's recommendation 10.5.20 (ii). His Addendum report has clarified a number of relevant points:

- it is for the Council to take a view on how best to meet the need for the additional 2,800 m² of convenience floorspace;
- the site or sites identified to meet the additional floorspace do not need to serve a city-wide catchment;
- the review of the strategy should have no pre-conditions as to locations and formats to meet the need. It would be legitimate for the review to consider a range of possible locations and retail formats;
- if his recommendations on Policy R2 and H13 are accepted, he considers that a substantial part of the identified need will be capable of being met.

3. Need for additional Floorspace

3.1 The Inspector's conclusion that an additional 2,800 m² (net) of convenience retail floorspace is required is accepted. This is the starting point of a review of the strategy. The next question is where this should be located.

4. Scale of Development

4.1 The additional 2,800 m² floorspace is needed to meet additional capacity identified throughout a catchment defined by retail consultants, Donaldsons. This includes the whole of the City and extends beyond its administrative boundaries. No specific area of deficiency was identified within this catchment to which priority should be given in making allocations.

4.2 Agent's for the NHS Trust argued that the additional floorspace should be provided in a single format to serve the City as a whole. However, there is no particular reason why it should do this or why a City Centre location is particularly needed. Indeed, the additional capacity identified is relatively small and it may more realistically and usefully serve a more local area or areas rather than the City as a whole. In considering this, weight is given to the two emerging residential allocations at Friar Gate and Heatherton where new communities in effect will create a need for additional retail floorspace. This is recognised by the Inspector in his recommendations to make provision at these two locations. The Inspector's Addendum letter also makes clear that, "it would be legitimate for the review to consider a range of possible locations and retail formats".

4.3 The Inspector considered that the former Mackworth College site is not realistically available. However, evidence suggests that retail use on

this site remains a possibility. If retail development does go ahead, the floorspace would contribute to meeting the 2,800 m². Whilst this site is not being relied on because of the Inspector's remarks, it is noted that if the 2,800 m² is met elsewhere an oversupply would result if this site were to come forward for retail use.

5. Additional Floorspace Recommended by the Inspector

Former Friar Gate Goods Yard

- 5.1 The Inspector has recommended that Policy R2 is modified to provide for retail floorspace on the groundfloor of the Bonded Warehouse related in scale and nature to the needs of the locality. We feel that convenience retail uses would be the best way of achieving this and are recommending accordingly. If the whole of the groundfloor is used, some 2,290 m² (gross) of convenience retail floorspace can be accommodated. Derby Cityscape's Masterplan includes an option for just this and retail use on the ground floor would maintain the original 'openness' of this part of the building.
- 5.2 The Bonded Warehouse does not lie within or adjacent to a Centre of the shopping hierarchy as defined in the Local Plan. It is some 450m from the City Centre Shopping Area and about another 50m from the nearest Primary Frontages. It cannot therefore be classed as 'Edge of City Centre'. Nevertheless, the amount of retail floorspace proposed is not significant. It is not sufficient to provide a superstore (as defined by PPS6). It is unlikely to provide a format to serve the city as a whole, so a City Centre location is not essential. Indeed, it is more likely to provide a smaller format store, to serve a smaller, more local catchment, as recommended by the Inspector. It would, however, contribute to meeting the additional capacity identified by the Inspector.
- 5.3 Policy R2 of the CDLP Review also proposes 500 dwellings at the Friar Gate site as part of a mixed use development. This will lead to the creation of a significant new community. New convenience retail floorspace at this location will help to encourage people to walk or cycle to make shopping trips. Thus, whilst it is not within or on the edge of a defined Centre, the location does offer significant sustainability advantages, will contribute to the regeneration of the area and will help secure the retention and use of the listed building.
- 5.4 Convenience retail use of the ground floor of the Bonded Warehouse would provide about 1800 m² (net) floorspace, leaving some 1,000 m² remaining to be identified.

Heatherton Neighbourhood Centre

- 5.5 In considering objections to proposed housing to the south of Heatherton, the Inspector accepted the Council's arguments that additional housing here could help to create a larger, more sustainable

community. His recommended modified wording includes provision for an expanded Heatherton Neighbourhood Centre to allow additional shopping/service/ community facilities. This will help to encourage more shopping and similar trips to be made locally and increase the number of trips made by walking and cycling.

- 5.5 Heatherton Neighbourhood Centre is a defined Centre in the Plan's shopping hierarchy and so new retail provision and related services here perform well in terms of the sequential approach. A new convenience retail store or extension to an existing outlet would help meet the objectives of creating a more sustainable community. Taking account of the additional provision at the former Friar Gate Goods Yard, a further 1000 m² capacity remains of the 2,800 m² identified by the Inspector. Whilst it does not automatically follow that this should be met at Heatherton, this approach would help meet the above sustainability objectives. More floorspace than this may also be permitted at the Heatherton Centre if it can be justified in terms of Policy S2 and would further strengthen local retail provision. This may require the physical extension of the Centre into the H13 designation.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The Inspector has identified a requirement of an additional 2,800 m² of convenience retail floorspace throughout the City. This does not have to be provided in a single format to serve a city wide location. As such, a City Centre or Edge - of Centre location is not essential. Indeed, other locations may offer greater overall sustainability advantages given the relatively small scale nature of the additional floorspace identified.
- 6.2 The Inspector also recommended additional retail provision at two sites associated with major residential allocations. There are clear sustainability advantages in accepting these recommendations. Indeed, the Council would need to have compelling reasons *not* to accept these recommendations.
- 6.3 His addendum letter of 7 February 2005 states that "if the Council endorses my recommendations on Policy R2 and H13, retail allocation in those locations would be material to assessing City-wide need". Allocations at these two locations can, between them, provide the 2,800m² convenience retail floorspace. If the Local Plan Review is modified to make such allocations, other allocations elsewhere including the DRI site are unnecessary.
- 6.4 In light of comments made above regarding Mackworth College, it would be imprudent to make further retail allocations beyond those at the two locations identified.