

Blackpool Local Plan Part 2 Evidence Base

Retail Topic Paper – Future capacity

December 2020

Blackpool Council



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1 Purpose of this report

1.1 This Topic Paper provides evidence to support the Local Plan Part 2 with respect to future retail capacity. It summarises the retail recommendations of the Blackpool Retail Hotel and Leisure Study and sets out how the Local Plan Part 2 has responded.

2 Evidence Base – Blackpool Retail, Leisure and Hotel Study (2018)

2.1 The Blackpool Retail, Leisure and Hotel Study (2018) is an important evidence base document which has informed the local planning policy framework, in particular the emerging Blackpool Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies document. The Study also provides additional recommendations in respect of other policy guidance required to help the future growth, improvement and regeneration of the Blackpool Town Centre.

2.2 In summary the 2018 study provides:

- an overview of current and emerging national retail trends that are likely to have an impact on the retail sector in Blackpool
- an assessment of:
 - ⇒ the shopping behaviour of local residents living within and adjacent to Blackpool to identify convenience and comparisons goods shopping patterns
 - ⇒ the vitality and viability of existing town and district centres including health checks
 - ⇒ quantitative and qualitative needs of retail and leisure floorspace across the Local Plan period through to 2027 and longer term to 2032

Recommendations of the Study

Need for Additional Retail Floorspace

2.3 The future available retail expenditure that the study identifies across Blackpool and its wider catchment is used to determine the amount of food and non-food retail floorspace that should be planned for in the future in Blackpool Borough after taking into account any existing commitments. Sequentially preferable sites can then be allocated in the Local Plan to accommodate this additional need.

2.4 The Study provides floorspace capacity figures based on a series of assumptions and estimated forecasts over the short, medium and long term. It should be noted that longer term growth rates and capacity rates should be treated with caution given the inherent uncertainties of predicting the economy in the future.

Quantitative Need - Convenience Goods Sector

2.5 In quantitative terms, taking into account outstanding permissions and existing stores that have opened since the household survey was undertaken (eg Lidl at Squires Gate Lane), there was found to be no overall need for further convenience floorspace in Blackpool over the plan period.

Qualitative Need - Convenience Goods Sector

2.6 In qualitative terms, the Study suggest that there could be the potential to provide an additional proportionate foodstore towards the north periphery of Blackpool Town Centre should a site within or on the edge of the centre become available. Given its location, this would serve the under-provided area to the north of the town centre, the south of Bispham and the deprived areas surrounding the Town Centre.

Quantitative Need - Comparison goods sector

2.7 The Study identifies indicative figures for additional comparison goods floorspace in Blackpool over the plan period (over and above existing commitments) as follows:

	Residual Comparison Goods Expenditure £m	Floorspace Requirement	
		Min (circa £5,000 per sqm)	Max (circa £3000 per sqm)
2017	-17.4	-3,500	-5,800
2022	-10.9	-2,000	-3,300
2027	47.0	7,700	12,800

2.8 The above Table indicates that there is **no requirement in the short term to 2022 for additional comparison retail floorspace** but up to 2027 there is a floorspace requirement of **between 7,700sqm and 12,800sqm**.

Qualitative Need – Comparison Goods

2.9 At the time of the Study Blackpool Town Centre benefitted from representation from the majority of the mainstream high street clothing and footwear retailers. However, whilst there are many lower and middle market retailers, there are few higher quality fashion multiples such as Ted Baker or French Connection. However, this is likely to reflect the wider trend for these types of operators to focus their trading in the higher order centres and locations such as Manchester and Liverpool along with the high levels of deprivation across the borough.

3 Dealing with the Quantitative and Qualitative Requirements

Convenience Goods Qualitative Requirement

3.1 In order to address the need for an additional proportionate food store towards the north periphery of Blackpool Town Centre, the Local Plan Part 2 allocates a site within the Town Centre for a mixed use development including a discount food store (up to 2500 sq m gross) and a multi-storey car park.

3.2 The former Syndicate site located on Church Street is identified as a mixed use site on the policies map. It is a 0.24 ha site for ground floor convenience retail with a multi-storey car park above. The site is currently in council ownership.

3.3 An impact assessment has been undertaken to ensure that this additional retail floorspace complements, rather than competes with the substantial investment made at Talbot Gateway in the delivery of the Sainsbury's, whilst seeking to attract shoppers and residents nearby back into the town centre, instead of travelling to other food stores in the Borough to meet their shopping needs.

3.4 The site allocation policy can be found at Appendix 1 with further site information at Appendix 2.

Comparison Goods Quantitative Requirement

3.5 As discussed earlier, the Study indicates that there is no requirement in the short term to 2022 for additional comparison retail floorspace but up to 2027 there is a floorspace requirement of between 7,700sqm and 12,800sqm. The following paragraphs set out how the Council considers it will be meeting this need over the plan period.

Current Vacancies

3.6 Blackpool continues to experience higher than average vacancy rates in terms of retail floorspace in the town centre which is important when considering the need for new retail space.

3.7 The Retail Study indicated that the Primary Shopping Area comprises 45,373sqm with 7,239 sqm vacant (16%) at the time of the study. The UK average vacancy rate at the time of the Study was 11%. This above average vacancy rate therefore has the ability to absorb some of the comparison retail capacity that is identified in the study.

Town Centre Strategic Sites

3.8 Blackpool Town Centre is the focus for new major retail development in the Borough (Core Strategy Policy CS4: Retail and Other Town Centre Uses). Within the town centre, the primary shopping area will be the main focus for this development. It contains the main shopping streets and the majority of the large multiple retailers, focused on the main pedestrianised core of Church Street, Victoria Street, Bank Hey Street and the Houndshill Shopping Centre. Whilst recent redevelopment of the Houndshill Shopping Centre has helped to strengthen the retail core, future investment is vital to improve the quality and range of offer. This includes the introduction of higher-end retailers and quality eating establishments. Opportunities for future development of the principal retail core include further phased development of the Houndshill Shopping Centre and the introduction of a complementary specialist retail offer within the Winter Gardens. The Winter Gardens is adjacent to the principal retail core and would complement the retail offer and form part of the retail circuit.

3.9 The Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy (adopted 2016) identifies three strategic sites in the Town Centre:

- Winter Gardens
- Central Business District (Talbot Gateway)
- Leisure Quarter (Blackpool Central)

3.10 The policies accompanying these sites (CS18, CS19 and CS20) all allow for new retail uses.

3.11 Cumulatively, these sites have the potential for significant new retail development over the plan period.

3.12 Taking account of the high vacancy rate the Town Centre is experiencing and the ability of existing Town Centre Strategic Sites to accommodate significant levels of retail development, it is not considered necessary to allocate any additional land for comparison retail uses in the Local Plan Part 2.

Appendix 1: Policy MUSA1: Mixed Use Site Allocation

Paragraph 85 of NPPF states that planning policies should allocate a range of suitable sites in town centres to meet the scale and type of development likely to be needed.

The Blackpool Retail, Leisure and Hotel Study (2018) identified the potential to provide an additional foodstore towards the northern periphery of Blackpool Town Centre should a site within or on the edge of the centre become available. The scale of potential foodstore would fit within the 1,500 to 2,500 sq.m (gross) bracket, ensuring that the turnover of which would not untenably impact on the existing Sainsbury's foodstore at Talbot Gateway.

Policy MUSA1: Town Centre Mixed Use Site

Land at Church Street (former Syndicate site) is allocated for a mixed use development including a discount food store (up to 2500 sq m gross) and a multi-storey car park.

The former Syndicate site located on Church Street is identified as a mixed use site on the policies map. It is a 0.24 ha site for ground floor convenience retail with a multi-storey car park above. The site is currently in council ownership.

An impact assessment has been undertaken to ensure that this additional retail floorspace complements, rather than competes with the substantial investment made at Talbot Gateway in the delivery of the Sainsbury's, whilst seeking to attract shoppers and residents nearby back into the town centre, instead of travelling to other foodstores in the Borough to meet their shopping needs.

With respect to the multi-storey car park, the Council has committed to provide additional car parking capacity within Blackpool Town Centre responding to the recommendations of Strategic Parking Review undertaken by AECOM in 2016.

Appendix 2: Mixed Use Site Allocation Site Proforma

Site address	Land at Church Street (former Syndicate site)	
Ward	Talbot	
Site area	0.24 ha	
Allocated Use	Mixed use including discount food retailer and multi storey car park	



Site Description:

The former Syndicate site located on the corner of Church Street and King Street. It is a 0.24 ha brownfield site currently used as a surface car park.

Delivery:

The site will be delivered by the Council, potentially working with private developers/retailers. With respect to the multi-storey car park, the Council has committed to provide additional car parking capacity within Blackpool Town Centre responding to the recommendations of Strategic Parking Review undertaken by AECOM in 2016.

Highways Considerations:

- The Highway Authority consider there to be no issues with the proposed allocation in principle. With regards to access, it is important can ensure that this fits in with the wider town centre masterplan and highway network changes.
- All issues should be addressed in a Transport Assessment in support of any future planning application. A Travel Plan will required for the retail element.
- Pedestrian access/egress to and from the site is good, as is public transport provision due to the town centre location.

Key Considerations:

- The site is in council ownership.
- The site is in Flood Zone 1
- An impact assessment has been undertaken to ensure that this additional retail floorspace complements, rather than competes with the substantial investment made at Talbot Gateway in the delivery of the Sainsbury's, whilst seeking to attract shoppers and residents nearby back into the town centre, instead of travelling to other foodstores in the Borough to meet their shopping needs.
- The scale of potential foodstore would fit within the 1,500 to 2,500 sq.m (gross) bracket, ensuring that the turnover of which would not untenably impact on the existing Sainsbury's foodstore at Talbot Gateway.