

Committee: Local Plan Leadership Group
Title: Retail Capacity Study - Interim Draft Findings
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Date:
Thursday, 30
September 2021

Summary

1. This report sets out the initial draft findings from the Retail Capacity Study.

Recommendations

2. To note the progress made on the retail evidence base and the initial draft findings.

Financial Implications

3. The approved budget for the Local Plan in 2021-22 includes sufficient provision for the work needed through to the end of March 2022.

Background Papers

4. N/a.

Impact

- 5.

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|---------------------------------|---|
| Communication/Consultation | N/a |
| Community Safety | N/a |
| Equalities | Forthcoming policies will be subject to an Equalities and Healthy Impact Assessment (EqHIA). |
| Health and Safety | N/a |
| Human Rights/Legal Implications | Preparation of a local plan is a statutory duty. It needs to meet legal tests and comply with regulations. |
| Sustainability | Forthcoming policies will need to meet the sustainability objectives of the Council and the Local Plan will be subject to a |

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| | Sustainability Appraisal. |
| Ward-specific impacts | All |
| Workforce/Workplace | N/a |

Situation

6. Consultants Nexus Planning, were appointed in the summer to prepare evidence on retail in the district. The draft initial findings of this work were presented to officers in September 2021 and are being brought to LPLG to update members on this workstream. It should be noted that these findings are subject to change as the work is finalised.
7. The draft initial findings are informed by a household survey to understand shopping habits, and the findings focus on market share as well as the health of centres in the district. The findings tend to be factual in nature, although some policy recommendations are starting to appear alongside the health checks.
8. The draft initial findings appear to indicate relatively good news, the market share of shops within the district has generally held up when compared with the last survey in 2016, particularly for convenience shopping. There have been some fluctuation in market share in comparison shops since 2016, and the main study report will examine the reasons for this in more detail.
9. The health of the four centres in the district have held up well, three of the four centres have a lower vacancy rate than the national average. The consultants considered that a potential reason for Saffron Walden having the highest vacancy rate was that being the largest centre in the district, it had attracted more large-scale national retailers, and these companies had been hit worse during the pandemic.
10. The next phase of this work will address retail capacity in the future and policy recommendations for the emerging Local Plan. The first draft is anticipated to be with the council next month, and as soon as it is ready, it will be brought before LPLG.

Risk Analysis

11.

| Risk | Likelihood | Impact | Mitigating actions |
|--|------------|--|--|
| That the retail evidence is not ready to inform the Local Plan | 1 | A potential delay to the timetable for the Local Plan production | The consultants have a well-managed project plan and are on track. |

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| That the uncertainty around the pandemic impacts on the quality of the evidence. | 2 | This will impact the ability of the Local Plan to implement the right policies. | Up to date surveys are being used to inform the work. |
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1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.