



**Maldon District Council
Maldon District Local Development Plan**

Inspector's Matters (April 2016)

Retail

Statement made on behalf of the Local Planning Authority

CONTENTS

MATTER: RETAIL

Maldon Retail Study

1

STATEMENT

MATTER: RETAIL

Inspector's Matter

In response to the previous Inspector's concerns, the Maldon Retail Study (July 2015) [EB103] has been produced. It provides an assessment of needs and capacity for the period to 2029. It also reviews the current performance of Maldon town centre, Heybridge district centre and Burnham town centre. It draws conclusions on the future demand for retail floorspace and makes recommendations in relation to the future strategy for the district's town and district centres in order to help safeguard future vitality and viability.

The study concludes that there is capacity for 3,400 to 4,800 sqm of convenience space and between 2,800 and 5,000 sqm of comparison retail space by 2029. It recommends an amendment to Policy E2 on this basis. It also recommends that the impacts of the Aquila development be closely monitored for two years after its opening and that the Council review the retail evidence, and Policy E2 if necessary, at that time.

I would now welcome from the Council confirmation of whether or not the Council relies on the evidence of the new retail study. Assuming it is to be relied on by the Council, I ask that main modifications be drawn up and fully explained in a concise paper. Clearly, such main modifications should address the previous Inspector's concerns, which I share, and should set out what, if any, proposals for retail development are needed, where they will go, when they will be provided by, and how they will be delivered. If relevant, I will need to know what reasonable alternatives have been considered and why the chosen options have been selected. It is highly likely that further sustainability appraisal work will need to be carried out to inform this process.

Maldon District Council response

Maldon Retail Study

1. The Council has adopted the Maldon Retail Study (WYG, July 2015) [EB103] as the primary source of evidence in relation to retail matters.
2. The *Maldon District Local Development Plan Incorporating Modifications Proposed through Examination-in-Public* (15 December 2015) sets out a main modification to Policy E2 based on the recommendations of the Retail Study at Section 8.6.
3. The Retail Study deals with future provision in Section 8: Opportunities for Accommodating Growth. Paragraph 8.2.4 states:

"The identified global capacity for new convenience and comparison floorspace across the District should be carefully balanced with the actual implications of additional retail space in a District such as Maldon. Unlike its larger, more densely

populated, neighbouring authorities, Maldon lacks a range and depth of retail facilities. This makes the District, and its existing Centres, particularly sensitive to the insertion of new retail floorspace, and means that any significant quantum of retail development needs careful management ... caution needs to be applied to bringing forward too much new retail floorspace, too soon. These were also our recommendations in auditing the Aquila proposals at the Causeway."

4. Paragraph 8.2.5 adds that: *"In terms of the identified convenience and comparison floorspace capacity in the District in the short to medium term, the Aquila proposals will take up a large proportion of this capacity and represent a significant step-change in the level of local provision."*
5. Given this sensitivity and the need for careful management, when the Aquila development has been implemented, the Council is advised to monitor the vitality and viability of nearby town and district centres. While the Aquila development is likely to have a positive impact on Maldon and Heybridge centres, it will inevitably result in some trade diversion away from the existing centres which will need close monitoring (paragraph 8.2.6).
6. The Retail Study therefore concludes that: *"Notwithstanding our capacity analysis, we therefore suggest that any further retail floorspace in the Maldon and Heybridge area should come forward towards the middle to the end of the Plan period, once the Aquila proposals have been built out and open for trade for a reasonable period of time"* (paragraph 8.2.7).
7. With regard to comparison goods, the Retail Study finds that, while there is theoretical capacity for between 2,800 and 5,000 sqm net of comparison goods capacity by the end of the plan period, even the lower level of provision would need scrutinising very carefully for impact on the vitality and viability of existing centres. Any assessment needs to take into account the impact of the Aquila proposals (paragraph 8.2.9).
8. Regarding convenience goods capacity, when taking into account commitments, there would theoretically be capacity for one further medium/large-sized foodstore in the district in the longer term to 2029, or a range of smaller facilities (3,400 to 4,800 sqm net by the end of the plan period). It is therefore suggested that any remaining capacity in the long term therefore should be distributed to existing local centres or the proposed urban extensions (paragraph 8.2.12).

9. Since the completion of the Retail Study in July 2015, planning permission has been granted for a new foodstore at Land At Corner of Station Road, Maldon¹. This will provide gross floorspace of 2,380 sqm and net retail sales floorspace of 1,391 sqm further reducing the need for new convenience floorspace from that identified in the Retail Study. Conditions require that no more than 20% of the floorspace of the foodstore shall be used for the display and sale of comparison goods. This permission is currently under construction.

10. The Council therefore intends to review its retail evidence after the two year period and review Policy E2: Retail Provision if there is evidence to suggest a need to allocate new retail floorspace. As the Retail Study concludes, before this evidence is available, it is not considered appropriate to allocate new retail floorspace given the risk of over-allocation and the Council should only permit major new retail development in exceptional circumstances.

¹ Land at Corner of Station Road, Maldon, Essex (FUL/MAJ/15/00567)