

Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk Local Plan Reconvened Examination

Additional "Matter 3" Statement – Economy

Response to the Inspectors "Additional Matters, Issues and Questions"

12 March 2024

Introduction

1. This statement is a response from the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk Council (BCKLWN) to the following issues and questions raised by the Inspectors relating to Matter 3 of the examination into the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Local Plan relating to Monitoring and Implementation.
2. References used in this statement (e.g.[F10],[D10]) relate to documents held in the examination library as either a submission document or as part of the wider evidence base.

Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk Responses to Matter 3 Additional Questions

Issue 3: Has the Plan been positively prepared and is it justified, effective and consistent with national policy in respect of its policies and proposals for the economy of King's Lynn and West Norfolk?

Retail Development (Policy LP08)

AQ12. With reference to the further evidence contained in the Note on the Retail Impact Threshold for Hardwick Road Area [F49], are the following proposed changes to Policy LP08 and its supporting text, justified based on proportionate evidence and consistent with national policy:

a). The requirement for impact tests for proposals for town centre uses of 500 sqm and over at the Hardwick Road Area?

The proposed local threshold requirement for impact tests for proposals for town centre uses (500 sqm) is considered justified and proportionate. It was accepted that Policy LP08(3), as submitted, was not justified based on proportionate evidence. Therefore, Alder King (retail planning specialists) was commissioned to undertake a review of the 'nil' threshold [F47, para 3/ F49a and F49b].

The Alder King review recognised that national policy (2021 NPPF para 90) sets a default impact assessment threshold of 2,500sqm gross floorspace. However, this specifically allows for a "proportionate, locally set floorspace threshold" to be set.

The Council's previous MIQ response [H16, Q65(a)] highlighted the acute challenges that King's Lynn town centre faces in attracting and/ or retaining its retail offer (see also Retail Overview [D19b]). These previous documents, together with F49, represent a proportionate evidence base, recommending an alternative and proportionate local impact threshold (500sqm), as permitted by the NPPF.

b). The application of the impact test thresholds, as proposed to be modified, to changes of use and variations of condition, that would increase the amount floorspace within existing buildings in town centres uses?

F49 recommends changes to LP08(3) and its supporting text, to explain how the 500sqm impact test threshold should be applied in decision making (Additional paragraph to follow 5.2.8). This additional supporting/ explanatory text is considered necessary justified and proportionate, recognising the acute challenges that King's Lynn town centre faces in attracting and/ or retaining its retail offer (see also Retail Overview [D19b]).

It is emphasised that the revised threshold has been proposed as a rear-guard, given that the current 'nil' threshold (as set in the current Local Plan – Policy DM 10) cannot be justified, with reference to national policy. The inclusion of existing buildings within the scope of the modified LP08(3) is justified as a means of maximising the reach (and therefore effectiveness) of the policy and thereby protect the retail offer of King's Lynn Town Centre. This accords with the 2021 NPPF, section 7, that: "*Planning policies...should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities...*" (para 86).