

Core Strategy Issues and Options

**Retail and Town Centres Section
March 2009**



9. Retail and Town Centres

9.1. Retailing is an important component of national and local economies and provides jobs and services to communities. Traditionally retailing was focussed around town centres but there have been some economic and social changes that have impacted on this. These changes have led to more focus being placed on the vitality and viability of town centres and subsequently this is one of the key objectives of national planning policy in PPS6.

9.2. On a regional level the East of England Plan states that city and town centres should continue to be the focus for investment, environmental enhancement and regeneration. The East of England Plan defines a regional structure of retail centres, but none of the towns within Babergh are large enough to rank as major regional town centres. Below this level the regional plan identify centres of regional strategic importance that would apply to towns within the Babergh District.

Key research studies for this theme are:

- Babergh District Retail Study July 2008
- Sudbury and Hadleigh Town Centre Health Checks 2008

9.3. Local community priorities established through Sustainable Community Strategies and the Babergh District Council Strategic Plan, such as developing a prosperous, vibrant and sustainable economy, have the following linkages to this section as shown in the table below.

Suffolk LSP	Western Suffolk LSP	Babergh East LSP	BDC Strategic Plan
<p>A prosperous and vibrant economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use Suffolk's unique selling points to capture emerging markets - Reduce economic inequalities across the county - Improve transport and the infrastructure to support sustainable economic growth. 	<p>Develop a prosperous and sustainable economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Enable a prosperous, sustainable economy -Encourage sustainable tourism - Alleviate poverty and reduce health inequalities 	<p>Access to services, jobs and training</p> <p>Provision and retention of employment sites to encourage economic development (including tourism)</p>	<p>A strong and sustainable Babergh economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustainable growth, with more small and medium sized enterprises situated here -More skilled and higher paid jobs with a higher proportion being taken up by Babergh residents -Improved infrastructure in our market towns to increase vitality and viability

9.4. The adopted Local Plan identifies objectives in relation to retail/ town centres within the District and these may provide some elements that could remain within the Core Strategy. One of the objectives however relate to Development Control issues which will be addressed in a separate Development Plan Document and not the Core Strategy. Another objective is not a spatial objective and can therefore not be included as such in the Core Strategy. The remaining objectives include:

1. To protect or enhance the vitality and viability of the market towns of Sudbury and Hadleigh and to promote new retail investment in their defined town centres, in order to maintain and enhance their role as the main shopping centres in the Babergh District.
2. To support the retention of existing shopping facilities in rural areas and local centres and to encourage the provision of new facilities where this is consistent with Local Plan Policies.

Question R1: Do you agree that the Core Strategy needs to address how to best protect and enhance the viability and vitality of town centres in the district, as well as to address retaining existing shopping facilities in rural areas and local centres?

Background

9.5. Babergh District's retail facilities and services are mainly focussed at Sudbury and Hadleigh, the district's two principal towns. The retail facilities and services in these towns are supported by a network of smaller local and village centres, notably those of Long Melford, Lavenham and Great Cornard. The district as a whole faces significant retail competition from the nearby towns of Ipswich, Colchester and Bury St Edmunds, which all influence shopping patterns on a subregional level and contribute to a significant amount of retail expenditure leakage from the Babergh District.

9.6. Sudbury is the largest town within the district and generally performing well in retail and economic terms. There is strong potential for Sudbury to expand its retail economy and a requirement is to provide larger and better configured units in the town centre and enable Sudbury to maintain its national rank without materially changing its overall role and status in the regional shopping hierarchy. Additional floorspace requirements for Sudbury up to 2021 is 17 300 m², identified in the



Retail Study of 2008. The Local Plan identified a number of opportunities for redevelopment (expansion) and improvement to enhance Sudbury's role as a retail destination although this will not make provision for all of the additional 17, 300 m² of floorspace identified up to 2021. Additional retail space will therefore have to be allocated in Sudbury.

Issues and Options

- 9.7. Hadleigh is an attractive market town which serves both the convenience, and to a lesser degree the comparison goods, shopping needs of its catchment. The town is performing reasonably well, although average sales densities in the comparison goods sector appear low. The retail offer is unlikely to get materially larger in terms of floorspace, since the town is too small and located too close to Ipswich and Copdock Mill to attract the multiples. Priorities would be the enhancement of retail quality and consumer choice and encouraging small scale refurbishments and developments, while having regard to the many listed buildings and the conservation area. An allocation making provision for a new supermarket in Hadleigh covering the additional floorspace requirements identified up to 2021 in the Retail Study of 2008 is included in the adopted Local Plan. It is not envisaged that any new allocations will be made.

Question R2: Which of the following options do you think would promote the vitality and viability of town centres and local centres best?

Option 1: Business as usual – Define a retail hierarchy for the district and make provision for additional retail space to be provided at Sudbury up to 2021

Option 2: Setting out particular aspects to promote and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres and local centres

Option 3: Complete a Retail Strategy for Sudbury and Hadleigh to set out the framework for management of change and growth in these centres

Option 4: A combination of these options or alternative option?

Please give details and reasons.

Question R3: If you agree that the Core Strategy should set out particular aspects to promote the vitality and viability of town centres and local centres in the district (Option 2) which aspects should be included?