

Participant	Mr Matthew Kendrick (Grass Roots Planning Ltd)	Rep ID	2920
		Date response received	08/05/2015
Representing	Hopkins Developments Ltd	Response reference number	MHD029
MHD / Change reference commented on	Comments Gillingham SSA Local Centre		
Summary of comment	<p>The current reference to a cap on potential retail floor space (see para 9.76) that could be accommodated within the new neighbourhood centre that will be located in the southern extension to Gillingham was questioned. It was accepted by the council that the proposed cap had no evidential basis and the Inspector asked the council to look at this issue further. Having reviewed the council's amendments to the Local plan it is clear that no change is proposed nor is any evidence put forward to justify the 500 sqm cap referred to at paragraph 9.76. Accordingly the reference to the cap is unjustified and unreasonable. Retaining it will reduce the plans flexibility to react to rapid change and will undermine the potential viability of the neighbourhood centre.</p>		
Council's response	<p>This specific query was not one of the points agreed by the Inspector for officers to respond to. At the Hearing officers described how they had sought advice from ATLAS on the likely components of a local centre to serve the day-to-day needs of residents and employees arising from the scale of development as proposed for the southern extension to Gillingham. Anthony Keown from ATLAS clarified for the Inspector that the retail floor space figure felt about right for a local centre intended to meet the day-to-day needs of residents and employees on a development of this scale and, went on to say, that ATLAS's advice to NDDC was on the typical components of such a centre in the round, and was not based on specific evidence relating to appropriate levels of retail floor space provision.</p> <p>The Inspector asked officers to clarify whether the intention was for the policy to allow a size of retail element that would fall below Sunday trading restrictions, to which officers confirmed that was the intention. Hence, given the Council's objective to promote a local centre that serves day-to-day needs, pitching the retail floor space around the 'small shops' definition (in terms of Sunday trading restrictions) feels about right, given that this level of provision can be observed on other new developments of a similar scale.</p>		
Conclusions	<p>The issue raised by Mr Kendrick highlights concerns about clarity and flexibility of the policy wording. The Council feels that these concerns</p>		

	<p>can be accommodated in a minor change to the wording of paragraph 9.76 of the supporting text to Policy 21 to clarify and confirm the Council's objective to promote a local centre that serves the day-to-day needs of residents and employees arising from the scale of development as proposed for the southern extension to Gillingham.</p>
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