**Torbay Retail Study Update 2013 (GVA)**

**Summary**

**Purpose of the Study**

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) contains the government’s policies on planning for retail.  It requires planning policies to promote competitive town centres that provide choice and meet the need for retail, leisure, offices and other town centre uses.  Retail proposals should be subject to a “sequential test” to ensure they are located within town centres or as close to town centres as possible.  Applications for major retail proposals not within town centres should also show that there is no unacceptable impact on town, district or local centres through an “impact test”.

In order to plan for town centres, it is necessary to assess their health and carry out an assessment of the need (or “capacity”) for new retail floorspace.  The Retail Study Update was commissioned by the Council and prepared by GVA to give up to date advice on:

* The health of Torbay's town centres.
* The relationship between the towns.
* Whether there are any gaps in provision (i.e. areas that are poorly served by shops).
* The need for new retail floor space (an important aspect of retail planning).
* Regeneration opportunities and suitable sites in the town centres.
* Spatial planning policy towards out of town retail (e.g. what size proposals should trigger an impact test?).
* The role of Torbay in the Sub Region.

This report is an update of the 2011 Retail Update (also prepared by GVA).

**Torbay in the Sub Region**

Torbay lies somewhat behind Exeter and Plymouth as a retail location, due to smaller catchment area, division of retail spend into three town centres, and poor road network. The viability of town centres remains constrained by lower expenditure growth and the continued rise of internet shopping.

However, the completion of the South Devon Link Road in 2015 will provide an opportunity for increased expenditure in town centres.

Torquay is the largest town centre in the Bay, and the main focus for comparison (non food) goods stores (ranked 133rd in the UK).   Torquay is well provided for bulky retail and the Willows is a popular destination.  But the town is only 60% of the size of Exeter town centre (in terms of retail floorspace) and has suffered from vacancies.

Paignton is about half the size of Torquay town centre and has also suffered from high level of vacancies. (It is ranked 507th in the UK).

Brixham is the smallest town centre (ranked 1,246th in the UK), with significant trade leaking to Paignton and the Willows. The approved town centre Tesco should reduce this leakage significantly and help to regenerate the town.

**Sub Regional Retail Hierarchy**

|  | **2011 Rank** | **2007 Rank**  | **Retail floorspace (Sqm)**  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Plymouth  |     28 |   18 | 143,400 |
| Exeter |     27 |   37 | 121,100 |
| **Torquay**  | **133** | **108** | **75,600** |
| Newton Abbot  |   270 | 256 |  59,100 |
| **Paignton** | **507** | **407** | **43,800** |
| **Brixham**  | **1496** | **953** | **20,900** |

Source: Experian GOAD (floorspace) and Venuescore.

**Assessment of Capacity for New Floorspace**

Assessment of retail capacity is central to planning because the NPPF requires local planning authorities to meet the needs for retail (etc) development, in town centres where possible.   Need is calculated by assessing likely growth in retail spending based on a wide range of factors such as population and growth levels, shopping habits and the effects of shops that have recently opened or will open soon.

Although proposals for out of town centre retail do not have to show that there is a “need” for the store; assessment of need is relevant because it is a pointer to the impact that such proposals may have on town centres.

The 2013 Retail Update shows that there has been a quantitative fall in need since the 2011 Study, due to falling expenditure and additional stores opening or receiving planning permission.   So, for example, permission for a new store in Brixham has satisfied Brixham’s need for food retail provision and reduced the “leakage” of expenditure to Paignton.  The opening of ASDA stores in Paignton and Torquay and a number of smaller food stores have reduced spare capacity, particularly for Paignton.

**Convenience Stores (foodstores):** Need is confined toTorquay town centre.  A very small existing need for is identified in Torquay. This is projected to rise to about 1,000 sq m by 2021 and 2,700 by 2031.   No significant need for additional foodstores is identified in Paignton or Brixham.   However, new local centres (e.g. at Edginswell Torquay, Great Parks and Yannons Farm, Paignton) may be required to provide some small scale provision to satisfy very local demand arising from planned growth.

**Comparison Stores (non-food):** Need is confined to Torquay town centre in the longer term (post 2021).  At 2021 this is projected to be for 1,800 sq m of non food floorspace, rising to 11,000 sq m by 2031.  There is only a very small longer term need for additional non-food floorspace in Paignton and Brixham (of about 600 sq m in each town by 2031).   More significant effort should be made to improving the quality of existing floorspace in all three towns.

**Bulky Comparison Goods** (i.e. products that would not normally be sold in the High Street, such as washing machines and furniture): There is some capacity for bulky goods floorspace, at about 1,500 sq m  by 2021 rising to 6,300  sq m  by 2031.

**GVA’s  Policy Recommendations**

* A town centre first policy is supported - especially for Torquay town centre.  In addition, GVA recommend that the Council should undertake proactive masterplanning of town centres to overcome site assembly etc issues and help town centres maintain their market share.   A mix of leisure, eating and retail uses should be considered, not just retail.
* There is scope for some bulky goods retail in the north of Torbay. The Local Plan or Masterplans should identify an area in Torquay (e.g. in the Torquay Gateway area) that can accommodate bulky items retail.
* The Council should resist proposals for major retail or leisure outside of the town centre areas.  Torquay should be the focus as the main town centre.
* Proposals for more than 500 sq m of retail floorspace in an out of centre location should require an assessment of their impact (N.B. this is less than the default 2,500 sq m threshold in the NPPF).
* The Willows, Torquay should retain its formal status as a District Centre, but its growth should be controlled to prevent adverse impacts on town centres.
* The Retail Update was not supportive of “ factory outlet centre” type retail (i.e. a retail hub focusing on end of line or other discounted items), as this could detract from existing town centres and divert trade from the non discounted retail sector.
* **Torquay** has the best opportunities for new floorspace**.**The Town Hall car park is the best location for a new supermarket. But the focus should also be on improving existing floorspace (due to little capacity for comparison floorspace in the short term).The north western side of Union Street is the biggest single mixed use regeneration opportunity.  Other opportunities exist in the harbour e.g. Pavilion, Marina Car Park.  GVA recommend a mixed use approach incorporating leisure uses, restaurants etc. as well as retail.
* **Paignton** has limited capacity for new floorspace, but there are opportunities to improve existing provision as part of the regeneration of the town centre. Investigation of Victoria Square should take place as part of proactive masterplanning. There should be a focus on improving quality of provision and mix of uses.

* **Brixham.** The delivery of a foodstore on the former multi-storey car park will improve town centre provision and reduce the leakage of expenditure out of Brixham. GVA continue to support the foodstore led development in the town centre.

**GVA’s Floorspace Capacity Projections 2013- For Information**

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| **Convenience (food) Floorspace Capacity Forecasts 2013-31 (sqm net)** |
|  | **2013** | **2016** | **2021** | **2026** | **2031** |
| **Torquay** |    158 |   338 | 1,034 | 1,846 | 2,701 |
| **Paignton** | -2,474 | -2919 | -2,248 | -1516 | -734 |
| **Brixham** | -1,798 | -280 |   -132 |      35 | 205 |
| **Torbay** | -4,114 | -2,852 | -1,346 |    374 | 2,182 |

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| **Comparison (non food) Floorspace Capacity Forecasts 2013-31 (sqm net)** |
|  | **2013** | **2016** | **2021** | **2026** | **2031** |
| **Torquay** |    -235 |    -740 | 1,770 | 6,201 | 11,063 |
| **Paignton** | -2,316 | -2,019 | -1,408 | -435 | 644 |
| **Brixham** | -1,220 |     -61 |      70 | 339 | 621 |
| **Torbay** | -3,064 | -2,404 |    700 | 6,124 | 12,068 |

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| **Bulky Comparison (non food) Floorspace Capacity Forecasts 2013-31 (sqm net)** |
|  | **2013** | **2016** | **2021** | **2026** | **2031** |
| **Torbay** | 0 | 273 | 1,564 | 3,832 | 6,310 |