

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT SHACKLETONS HOME AND GARDEN CENTRE

CLITHEROE ROAD, CHATBURN BB7 4JY

APPLICATION REFERENCE 3/2020/0911

RESPONSE TO COMMENTS ARISING FROM THE RETAIL ASSESSMENT

Background

1. This note provides a response to matters raised by the Council's Head of Policy and Regeneration in respect of the Retail Impact Assessment which supports the planning application for development at Shackleton's Home and Garden Centre. These are set out in an email dated 13 April from Adam Birkett of the Council to Charles Stanton, agent for the application. In summary the points are as follows:
 - Clarification about town centre outlets selling gardening goods and equipment
 - Town centre vacancy rates
 - Restriction on goods that may be sold
 - Catchment area
2. This Note addresses each in turn.

Town Centre Outlets Selling Gardening Goods and Equipment

3. Reference is made to paragraph 3.4 of the Retail Impact assessment which states that there is no outlet in the town centre selling gardening goods and equipment. The question is raised that outlets such as Homebase, which includes a garden centre, and Dawson's, which has an extensive tools and equipment service are present in the town and there is a request for clarification on how the Impact Assessment considers them.
4. Dealing with Homebase, the location of the store on Queensway is outside the town centre main shopping area as defined in the Ribble Valley Districtwide Local Plan 1998. In policy terms Homebase is therefore outside Clitheroe Town Centre. This is relevant in terms of the impact tests arising from development plan policy and the National Planning policy Framework.
5. However, Homebase is included within the Experian Goad analysis of retail provision in the town. Experian categorise units by type of business. Homebase is classified as a DIY and home improvement business. That is not to say that garden centre goods are not sold within Homebase. The point of paragraph 3.4 is to summarise the GOAD categorisation of business within Clitheroe. As a matter of fact, the Goad Centre Report for Clitheroe indicates that there are no units categorised as garden and equipment businesses and the representation of hardware and household goods in the town is lower than average.

6. Regarding the question of how the Retail Impact Assessment treats Homebase and Dawson's, the first point to note is that the Impact Assessment is concerned with impact on Clitheroe Town Centre. Dawson's is included within the Town Centre, but Homebase is not. The impact of the application on Homebase is not directly relevant to the impact test arising from the development plan and the NPPF. The estimates of trade diversion from the town centre (and elsewhere), is based on the shopping survey information in the Ribble Valley Retail Study Update. Table 13 of the Retail Study Update shows the comparison shopping patterns by survey zone. This table is based on the household shopper survey data contained in Appendix 2 of the Study Update. The survey data provides information on expenditure on different categories of goods which are aggregated to provide an indication of expenditure in different locations such as Clitheroe Town Centre. Dawson's is considered as a component of the town centre shopping offer. On the other hand, Homebase is an "other" because it is outside the Town Centre.
7. The estimates of trade diversion are based on the existing pattern of shopping as evidenced by the survey data. This takes account of the fact that some shops in the Town Centre will sell the same ranges of goods as would be sold from the application. Trade diversion from Dawson's is therefore addressed and included in the assessment.
8. It is important to note that an impact assessment is concerned with the effects of an application on a centre as a whole: not individual traders within a centre. It is not the purpose of the planning system to protect existing commercial interests. In addition, the Planning Practice Guidance indicates that retail impact assessments should be proportionate and based on existing information where available¹. The Retail Impact Assessment submitted in support of this application does not indicate that there might be a potential issue about the future vitality and viability of the Town Centre. It indicates the opposite. In this context, adopting a proportionate approach there is no reason to require a greater degree of disaggregation of the impact of the application on different retail sectors within the Town Centre.

Town Centre Vacancy Rates

9. Reference is made to vacancy data which is referred to in paragraph 3.10 of the Retail Impact Assessment. The Head of Policy and Regeneration confirms the position regarding vacancies, but it is noted that the Experian data used is quite old. It is suggested that the vacancy level is probably less than indicated in paragraph 3.10. Vacancy rates are an indicator of the health of a centre. The fact that vacancy rates may have reduced is an indication of the strength of Clitheroe Town Centre.

Restriction on Goods That May Be Sold

10. In Paragraph 5.3 of the Retail Impact Assessment reference is made to planning obligations that restrict goods that may be sold from the site. The restrictions apply to plants, garden products and equipment but it is noted in the response from the Head of Policy and Regeneration that that within the buildings, a wide range of non-food goods may be sold, although it acknowledges that fashion clothing and footwear are prohibited. The response refers to the appendix to the Retail Impact Assessment which

¹ PPG paragraph 017 Reference ID: 2b-017-20190722

comprises a schedule of goods that is allowed under the existing approvals, and it is noted that it is quite extensive and that most are town centre related goods. Concern is expressed as to whether sufficient consideration has been given to the potential of the wider impact of this on the Town Centre with such an increase in store size if it were to trade with more general goods rather than furniture. Comments are invited from the applicant on this issue in terms of impact and viability.

11. The Retail Impact Assessment reflects the existing ranges of goods which can be sold from Shackleton's, particularly in respect of the anticipated turnover of the proposal, the trade draw and trade diversions² and in the considerations of the impact on Clitheroe Town Centre. It also has regard to the principle that "like will impact on like", as advised by the Planning Practice Guidance³, in the judgements about the centres and retail locations from which the application will divert trade.
12. There is no evidence to suggest that Clitheroe Town Centre is in difficulty because of the presence of Shackleton's and the current ranges of goods which are sold. In fact, the evidence is to the contrary. Paragraph 3.27 of the Retail Impact Assessment describes Clitheroe Town Centre as healthy, with a high level of shopping activity within the Town Centre and a low level of vacancies and that the Town Centre provides a unique combination of local service provision, a good choice and quality of convenience shopping, augmented by a strong comparison sector comprising a very strong independent sector. All of this is notwithstanding Shackleton's trading successfully. The comment by the Head of Policy and Regeneration about vacancy rates being lower than indicated by the Retail Impact Assessment confirms what was anticipated in paragraph 3.29 of the Retail Impact Assessment that the Town Centre would continue to perform very well overall notwithstanding the pandemic.
13. The policy test is not whether the application would sell the same or similar goods as shops in the Town Centre. It is whether the application would result in significant adverse impact on the Town Centre as a whole⁴. There is no evidence to suggest that the application which involves selling the same ranges of goods as presently sold, would harm the vitality or viability of the Town Centre and consequently a restriction on the ranges of goods that may be sold, beyond the current restrictions, cannot be justified. Any further restriction on the ranges of goods sold would not pass the test of necessity⁵.

Catchment Area

14. Paragraph 5.11 of the Impact assessment indicates that approximately 80% of turnover is drawn from the Blackburn, Preston and Bradford postcode areas based upon data provided by Shackleton's. The response of the Head of Planning and Regeneration refers to this as Shackleton's being a shopping destination that draws people into the Clitheroe area. It accepts the possibility of linked trips between the development and the town centre. The response goes on to say that whilst it will be true that trade draw is from

² Trade draw is the area from which the development will draw trade and therefore reflects the catchment whilst trade diversion is the centres/other retail locations from which the development divert business.

³ PPG paragraph 015 Reference ID: 2b-015-20190722

⁴ NPPF paragraphs 89 and 90 and Core Strategy Policy DMR1

⁵ See NPPF paragraph 55 and PPG paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 21a-003-20190723

those postcode areas, all those postcode areas include extensive areas in Ribble Valley itself and catchment from those areas could be diverted from Clitheroe Town Centre. Comment is invited from the applicant about the extent to which they feel there is true additional shopping draw from Shackleton's from outside the Ribble Valley area even if it is based on the survey data available through our own 2013 study.

15. The data from Shackleton's shows unequivocally that it has a very wide catchment. The areas from which it draws trade would naturally look to other centres and retail locations to purchase goods if people were not coming to Shackleton's to visit. The current catchment includes the whole of Lancashire and extends into Greater Manchester and Yorkshire. The Retail Impact Assessment assumes that 50% of the turnover of the Application is drawn from Zone 1 (Forest of Bowland), Zone 2 (Clitheroe Area) and Zone 3 (Whalley Area), as defined in the South Ribble Retail Study Update. These three zones represent the core catchment of Clitheroe with 85% of business in non-food shopping derived from this area, based on the survey evidence of the Retail Study Update. The footnote to Table 11 of the Retail Impact Assessment states that the trade draw has regard to the existing pattern of shopping at Shackleton's. It goes on to state that however, the actual trade draw is likely to be more diffuse with lower percentages from each zone comprising the Study Area and a greater proportion from outside. Consequently, the impact assessment adopts a worst-case position.
16. The Head of Policy and Regeneration raises the question of whether there is true additional shopping draw from Shackleton's from outside the Ribble Valley area and reference is made to the Retail Study Update. Shackleton's has a wide catchment, but because of the nature of the goods sold, it has a low market penetration within the catchment. Consequently, it is not identified as a shopping destination in the household shopping survey which provides the evidence base for the Retail Study Update. The Retail Study Update is of no assistance in this context. The only information about trading patterns is that from Shackleton's which is incorporated in the Retail Impact assessment.

Summary

17. The Council's Head of Policy and Regeneration has raised four matters arising from the Retail Impact Assessment supporting the planning application. The first point seeks clarification about town centre outlets selling gardening goods and equipment. Homebase and Dawson's are mentioned specifically in this context. Homebase is not within the Town Centre. The Retail Impact Assessment takes account of the fact that some shops in the town centre will sell the same ranges of goods as would be sold from the application. Trade diversion from Dawson's is therefore addressed and included in the assessment.
18. The second matter on which a comment is invited is Town Centre vacancy rates. Vacancy rates are an indicator of the health of a centre and the fact that vacancy rates may have reduced is an indication of the strength of Clitheroe Town Centre.
19. The third matter is the restriction on goods that may be sold. The Retail Impact Assessment reflects the existing ranges of goods which can be sold from Shackleton's. Clitheroe Town Centre continues to thrive notwithstanding Shackleton's and the current

ranges of goods which are sold. There is no evidence to suggest that the application which involves selling the same ranges of goods as presently sold, would harm the vitality or viability of the Town Centre and consequently a restriction on the ranges of goods that may be sold, beyond the current restrictions, cannot be justified. Any further restriction on the ranges of goods sold would not pass the test of necessity.

20. The fourth matter questions the catchment area and the roll of Clitheroe Town Centre within the area from which Shackleton's draws trade. Shackleton's has a very wide catchment which, on the basis of available survey data, is significantly greater than the area from which Clitheroe Town Centre draws trade. The Retail Impact Assessment adopts a worst-case scenario with regard to trade draw and consequently impact on Clitheroe Town Centre.

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