FAO: Jason Hawkes
Planning Department
Horsham District Council
Albery House
Springfield Road
Horsham
RH12 2GB

04 September 2025

Dear Mr Hawkes,

MOWBRAY LAND NORTH OF HORSHAM OLD HOLBROOK HORSHAM WEST SUSSEX

RE: OBJECTION TO PLANNING APPLICATION REF: S106/25/0013 FOR AMENDMENT TO THE WORDING OF SCHEDULE 14 OF THE LEGAL AGREEMENT UNDER DC/16/1677 IN RELATION TO THE DEFINITION OF RETAIL FLOORSPACE FOR THE MOWBRAY DEVELOPMENT SITE.

Cube RE, as asset manager of Swan Walk Shopping Centre, Horsham, hereby submit this formal **OBJECTION** to application Ref. No: S106/25/0013 for Mowbray, Land North of Horsham, Old Holbrook, Horsham, West Sussex.

The application seeks to vary Schedule 14 of the Section 106 Agreement for the Land North of Horsham development, to allow up to 6,400 sqm Net Saleable Area ('NSA') of Class E(a) retail floorspace in an out-of-centre location at Mowbray. This is a change from the consented position, which permits no more than 6,400 sqm Gross Internal Area ('GIA') of retail floorspace within the Development as Retail Uses. Retail Uses are defined within the Agreement as uses within Classes A1, A2, A3, A4 or A5 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987. The Section 106 Agreement also noted that no Retail Unit shall be greater than 6,000 sqm GIA in retail floorspace. The proposed application seeks to change the 6,000 sqm restriction from GIA to NSA.

We have no objection to the proposed changes to the definition of Retail Uses, i.e changing from uses within Classes A1, A2, A3, A4 or A5 of the Town and Country Planning (Uses Classes)) Order 1987 to Class E(a) (Display or retail sale of goods, other than hot food). We do however raise serious concerns in respect of the other proposed changes, specifically the change from GIA to NSA, which could result in the retail offering potentially doubling in size with 6,000 sqm (NSA) and 6,000 sqm (GIA) (or more) of common areas such as tenant storage, tenant welfare areas and ancillary space, servicing and plant areas, exterior walls, and utility shafts. This would result in a fundamental change which would have catastrophic impacts to the town centre.

We have reviewed the applicant's submission, including the Retail Impact Assessment ('RIA') (Montagu Evans, June 2025) and hereby submit our objection which is based on our knowledge of managing the Swan Walk Shopping Centre, other similar shopping centres, evidence from our retained local and national commercial agents, planning and retail agents and up to date spend data from Swan Walk and the wider area, which demonstrates that the proposals would cause significant adverse impacts to Horsham town centre in the short and long term which conflict with both local and national planning policy.

This letter of objection covers the following key points:

1. Conflict with Development Plan Policies
2. Commercial impacts of the proposals on the Town Centre
3. Critical review of the Retail Impact Assessment
4. Conclusion

CONFLICT WITH DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES

The Horsham District Planning Framework ('HDPF', adopted 2015) establishes a clear retail hierarchy, identifying Horsham as the Primary Centre to be supported and enhanced through a town-centre-first approach (Policy 12 – Vitality and Viability of Existing Retail Centres).

Policy 13 (Town Centre Uses) requires that main town centre uses, including retail, be located within defined centres and be subject to the sequential test when proposed elsewhere. Policy SD3 allocates the Land North of Horsham site for a local centre to meet the needs of the new community, allowing up to 6,000 sqm sales floorspace where it does not undermine the vitality and viability of the town centre.

We acknowledge that outline consent has already been granted for a retail offering outside of the town centre. However, the proposed change from a GIA to NSA based approach materially changes the development parameters, enabling greater ambiguity on the proposed and future format and layout of the units. Currently the Section 106 Agreement is clear that no more than 6,400 sqm of Retail Uses can be provided; with no one store being greater than 6,000 sqm GIA. This is clear and measurable. However, the proposals seek to switch from GIA to NSA. Although this may seem a small amendment to the wording, the implications of this change are considerable.

Net Saleable Area (NSA) is not a clearly defined term and as such poses the potential for ambiguity and confusion when it comes to its definition and application. As such, we request confirmation from the applicant as to why this term is proposed and we strongly recommend that the existing GIA measurement is retained, or a clearly defined term is used within the RICS Professional Standards and Guidance, Global Code of Measuring Practice document, such as Net Internal Area (NIA).

Net Internal Area (NIA) is defined within the RICS Code of Measuring Practice as:

> *"Net Internal Area is the usable area within a building measured to the internal face of the perimeter walls at each floor level."*

Gross Internal Area (GIA) is defined within the RICS Code of Measuring Practice as:

> *"Gross Internal Area is the area of a building measured to the internal face of the perimeter walls at each floor level."*

Both are clearly defined terms which clearly specify within the document the areas which are included and excluded from the measurement.

NSA is not a defined term within the RICS Code of Measuring Practice, however our understanding is that NSA refers to the revenue-generating or occupiable floor space within a building (i.e the shop floor) or property, including the net rentable area and internal partitions but excludes common areas such as tenant storage, tenant welfare areas and ancillary space, servicing and plant areas, exterior walls, and utility shafts.

The primary difference is that NSA is the usable, revenue-generating part, whereas GIA encompasses the entire internal volume of the building. Therefore, the proposals do not seek to control the total floorspace which could be delivered on the site as the common, ancillary and plant and service areas of the building appear to fall outside of the NSA area calculation.

A significantly larger retail offering could therefore be proposed which has a 6,000 sqm NSA (sales area) with an additional larger ancillary area which includes storage, plant and machinery, servicing, refrigeration, ancillary space and common areas. This could result in a retail offering of circa 12,000 sqm (GIA) or more being delivered on the site.

Furthermore, there is no planning control that would stop the tenant in the future from converting the communal areas into part of the lettable retail space as these changes would not necessarily require planning permission as they may be entirely internal. This uplift in NSA would be contrary to the S106 Agreement and would have a greater impact on the sequential test than is currently being considered as part of this application.

With the overall sqm GIA area removed, the applicant could attract a much larger national tenant / multiple national operators from the town centre, such as John Lewis, Marks & Spencer, H&M or Next to name a few, which would have a far greater impact on the vibrancy and vitality of Horsham town centre, than is currently being considered within the submitted RIA.

This negative draw away from the town centre would be catastrophic to the vibrancy and vitality of the town centre and would be in direct contradiction to the policies within the HDPF which seek a clear "Town Centre First" approach. This is contrary to the intent of SD3 and fails to protect the primacy of the town centre as required by Policies 12 and 13.

COMMERCIAL IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSALS ON THE TOWN CENTRE

Crickmay Chartered Surveyors have been appointed as the commercial agents on Swan Walk since December 2022 and are a regional firm of commercial property agents and Chartered Surveyors who have been established in Horsham since 1984. As such, it is with confidence that they have the most up to date understanding of the Horsham retail market.

Overview of Horsham's Retail Market

The prime retailing areas of Horsham are focused within the Swan Walk Shopping Centre, together with West Street and Sterling Buildings within Carfax. The anchor tenants within Swan Walk include Marks & Spencer, H&M, NEXT and Boots, while the main national occupiers in West Street include Oliver Bonas, Hotel Chocolat, Mint Velvet, Jigsaw and Robert Dyas to name a few. Notable anchor occupiers within the wider town centre include John Lewis, Waitrose, Dunelm Mill, TK Maxx, Sainsbury's and Aldi Supermarket.

Horsham's Retail Attraction

The retail market within Horsham has always remained strong, being a picturesque, affluent, desirable and aspirational market town with excellent transport communications north to London and beyond and south to Worthing, Brighton and the South Coast generally. Horsham draws upon a large catchment area with a vast number of residents living within surrounding villages and towns that choose Horsham, over many other competing towns to be their shopping centre of choice to visit.

Horsham's town centre thrives because of its unique layout, strong retail mix and the powerful draw of its anchor tenants. It is, as a result of Horsham's anchor and principal tenants, along with the lack of competing retail schemes outside of the town centre that have led to Horsham benefitting from low vacancy rates.

Horsham benefits significantly from the 'retail cluster effect' – the powerful draw created when leading anchor brands are established in a location who generate exceptional footfall, elevating the town's profile and ultimately attracting other national, regional, and local retailers and service providers.

Examples of this include:

- Hotter Shoes recently took Unit 15 in Swan Walk Shopping Centre, citing the presence of Marks & Spencer as a key factor in their decision.
- Mint Velvet and Joules both chose to locate to Horsham following the recent (at the time) opening of John Lewis in the town.
- Gail's Bakery are cited to have selected Horsham principally due to the recent arrival of Hotel Chocolat.
- Two principal retail units within West Street are presently under offer to national retailers who have specifically targeted the town due to its anchor tenants and present retail offering.

The Former Wilko Premises (Unit 55 Swan Walk)

Whilst the premises presently has a temporary trader contributing towards just some of the Landlord's holding costs, regretfully the unit remains available and has been on the market, since Wilko ceased trading in October 2023.

It has been very difficult to find a suitable tenant for the 2,800 sqm (GIA) Wilko unit, with requirements for larger units in Horsham minimal and any expressions of interest generally being on terms that are not considered commercially viable.

It has become evident from the feedback received as a result of Crickmay's marketing, that there is a significant lack of interest in premises of this size within Horsham town centre. We have been proactively trying to secure an anchor tenant for this end of Swan Walk to help drive much needed footfall to support the adjacent retailers, but for the reasons outlined above we have been unable to secure a retailer to date.

Considerations of the Application

The proposed variation to increase the maximum sales area for a single retail unit at the Mowbray development poses a substantial and demonstrable risk to the health and vitality of Horsham town centre. The current experience with the former Wilko premises which has been on the market since Wilko ceased trading in October 2023, shows that once a large anchor store becomes vacant in a provincial town, the likelihood of securing a suitable replacement tenant can be extremely difficult, particularly for floor areas exceeding 1,000 sqm (GIA). Further, consideration also needs to be given to the potential knock-on impacts on the surrounding smaller retail units which rely on the footfall and activity generated by these larger anchor tenants. The loss of the anchor tenants could have a lasting detrimental impact on the success of the smaller retailers and as such, the vibrancy and vitality of the town centre. This has been borne out not only locally but across the UK, where many former departments store premises remain unlet for years and often require costly redevelopment.

Allowing larger-format retail units at Mowbray would create a direct opportunity for existing anchor tenants such as John Lewis, Marks & Spencer, NEXT, or H&M to relocate out of the town centre. The loss of even one such occupier would cause an immediate and pronounced drop in footfall, diminishing retail mix, and reducing the attractiveness of the town to both shoppers and investors. Resulting in an increase in vacancy rates and erosion of the 'retail cluster effect' that Horsham relies on and currently enjoys.

Given our experience to date managing Swan Walk Shopping Centre and following the Wilko's closure, the proposals put forward at Mowbray represent, in our opinion, a significant threat to the vitality and success of Horsham town centre.

There are other examples of similar Market Towns, such as Banbury, where large out of town retail offerings such as the Banbury Gateway development have devastated the vibrancy and vitality of the historic town centre, drawing large national retailers away from the centre resulting in huge vacancies which are unrecoverable. This has led to boarded-up shop fronts, creating inactive areas which attract antisocial behaviours and an uninviting town centre which has a limited offering. It is important that other towns, such as Horsham, do not make the same mistake which will have a lasting detrimental impact on the town centre.

A Review of Horsham Town Centre Retail Data

The data used in the Retail Impact Assessment (RIA) dates back to 2014 and is therefore considered outdated. To ensure a more accurate and current understanding of the potential impacts of the Mowbray proposals, we have commissioned CACI to undertake a new retail data assessment.

This updated analysis evaluates the catchment potential of Swan Walk and Horsham Town Centre, using the Acorn consumer classification to profile the demographics of the area. It also incorporates real-time consumer spending data, including credit and debit card transactions down to brand level to for granularity. This approach provides a robust and realistic view of current consumer engagement with Swan Walk and Horsham.

A summary of the key findings is set out below:

<u>Horsham Town Centre & Swan Walk Stats:</u>

- Horsham town centre has the following key catchment statistics:
    - Total population catchment: 320K
    - Total retail & F&B spend: £1.3bn
    - Total market share: 19.2%
    - Core catchment market: 79%

- The shopper profile at Swan Walk and Horsham town centre is affluent with over 75% of shoppers coming from the top 3 Acorn categories (vs 54% across the Southeast). Brands such as Marks & Spencer and John Lewis are key draws for these high-income consumers.
- These affluent shoppers currently visit frequently and have a high annual spend, which reflects the brands they engage with. Encouraging repeat visits to Swan Walk is essential to sustaining the vitality and economic health of Horsham town centre.
- The strength of Swan Walk's retail offer and its alignment with the local demographic profile means it outperforms Horsham's expected catchment area, drawing consumers from a wider geographic range, as evidenced by transaction data.
- Marks & Spencer is the biggest driver of sales in Swan Walk with over 50% of sales in Swan Walk coming from M&S and Boots.
- Swan Walk is heavily cross shopped with 76% of shoppers at Swan Walk shopping in more than one store during their visit. The most cross-shopped brand is Marks & Spencer.

Potential impact from the Mowbray development:

- The new Mowbray out of town development is located just a 10-minute drive from Horsham town centre and would reduce the size of the Swan Walk and Horsham town centre catchment market that is heavily reliant on local shoppers.
- Retail Parks such as Mowbray typically pull from a 15 minutes drivetime catchment. 66% of Swan Walks turnover comes from within this area, making it vulnerable to the Mowbray offering.
- The Mowbray development would have a direct impact on the spend being captured in the north of the catchment area, resulting in a reduced spend in Swan Walk and Horsham town centre.
- It was found that if the Mowbray out of town development has a significant non-grocery offering, it will dilute the size of the market available to Horsham and Swan Walk and could harm town centre retail.

It is clear from the CACI data that the Mowbray out of town retail offer will have a detrimental impact on the catchment and spend within Horsham town centre. In addition, there is a risk of national anchor tenants leaving the centre to Mowbray, reducing the offer in Horsham town centre which would have a direct impact on footfall numbers and cross-shopping which will impact smaller retailers who are heavily reliant on the draw of existing anchor tenants.

CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE RETAIL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (RIA)

An RIA has been undertaken on behalf of the applicant by Montagu Evans (dated 16th June 2025). We set out below a review of the RIA and the implications of the changes proposed in respect of addressing relevant retail planning policy.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024) reconfirms the well-established principle of focusing retail development within established centres. For development outside existing centres (such as that proposed at North Horsham), retail proposals need to satisfy the sequential approach to site selection and retail impact.

In terms of retail impact, this includes an assessment of:

- the impact of the proposal on existing, committed and planned public and private investment in a centre or centres in the catchment area of the proposal; and

- the impact of the proposal on town centre vitality and viability, including local consumer choice and trade in the town centre and the wider retail catchment (as applicable to the scale and nature of the scheme).

Paragraph 95 of the NPPF is clear in stating that:

"Where an application fails to satisfy the sequential test or is likely to have a significant adverse impact on one or more of the considerations in paragraph 94 it should be refused."

This position is reflected by local planning policy. Policy 13 of the adopted Development Plan requires out-of-centre proposals to satisfy the requirements of the sequential approach to site selection and the impact test.

It is within this context that the current application needs to be assessed.

Review of Submitted RIA

In reviewing the submitted RIA we have a number of significant concerns regarding its robustness. These concerns are summarised below.

Population & Expenditure Estimates

The RIA has assessed impact over the period from 2025 to 2030. Such an approach is consistent with best practice, including the Planning Practice Guidance ('PPG') that supports the NPPF.

However, in identifying population and expenditure estimates this has been derived directly from the Horsham District Council Retail and Leisure Study 2017, which was completed in March 2017. These are based on 2014 data published by Experian. This does not represent up-to-date estimates of population or retail expenditure in the

local area. Population and expenditure estimates are published on an annual basis by Experian[1] (the latest being 2024 data for population and 2023 data for retail estimates).

We question why the RIA relies on such dated information and has not utilised the latest data now available. Whilst the RIA has applied the latest expenditure forecasts post 2025, the starting position does not provide an up-to-date estimate of the available retail expenditure within the Study Area. This represents a significant weakness in the assessment undertaken and undermines its robustness.

In addition, the RIA includes the new resident population of the North Horsham scheme in estimating the population of the Study Area and assumes that the residential units to be delivered at North Horsham scheme is substantially complete. It is our understanding that this is not the case. Second, this approach assumes that all the resident population at North Horsham will be new to the local area. This is highly unlikely. There will be existing residents within the Study Area (including within Zone 1) who will have already been accounted for and may simply be moving to a new property in Horsham rather than being new people to the area. The approach undertaken by the RIA has the effect of double counting and overstating the resident population and subsequent available retail expenditure in the Study Area.

By applying the latest estimates now available from Experian, the population within the Study Area (excluding the new residential population created at North Horsham) substantially reduces to that identified in the RIA – as set out at Table 1.

Table 1 – Population within Study Area

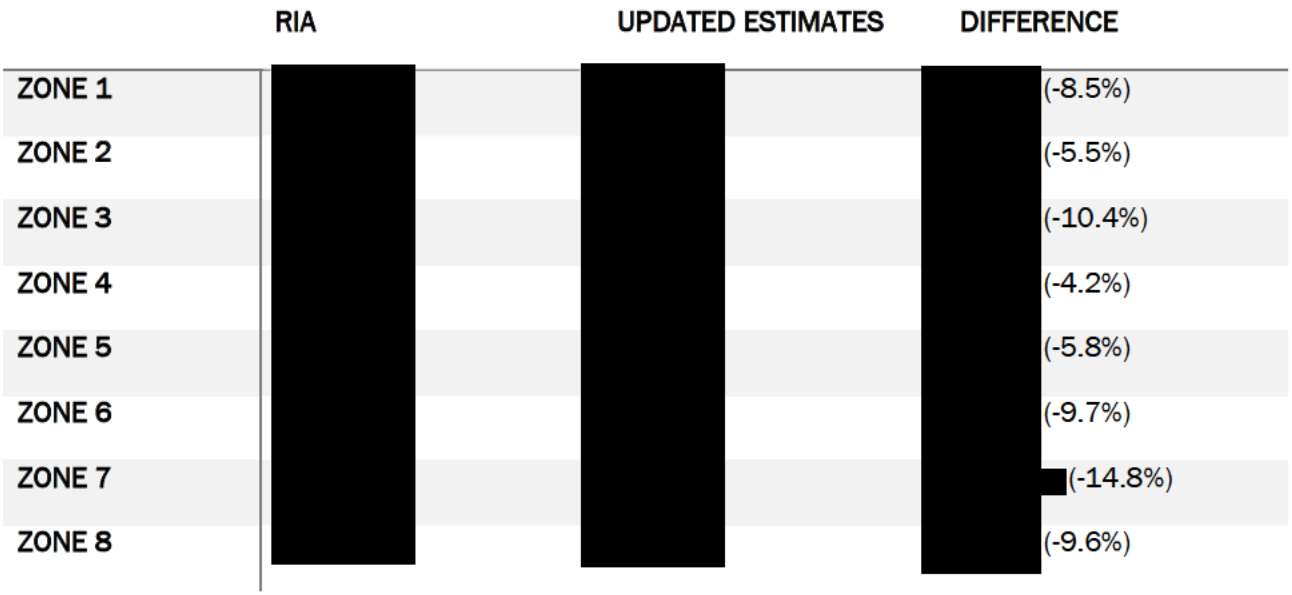
	2025	2028	2030
RIA	557,491	568,424	575,327
LATEST ESTIMATES	518,621	525,347	529,299
DIFFERENCE	-38,870 (-7.0%)	-43,077 (-7.6%)	-46,028 (-8.0%)

By applying the latest estimates, the population reduces by more than 46,000 (or 8%) by 2030. Likewise, in terms of retail expenditure per capita, by applying the latest estimates these also reduce from those utilised in the RIA

[1] The source utilised in the Horsham District Council Retail and Leisure Study 2017 and the RIA

(which have been based on 2014 data). A summary of the effect of applying the latest estimates on the overall retail expenditure generated in the Study Area is provided at Table 2.

Table 2 – Retail Expenditure per Capita (2025)



Notes: At 2024 prices (convenience and comparison combined)

If the latest population and retail expenditure estimates the overall level of retail 'spend' available within the Study Area reduces substantially to that applied in the RIA. This has implications on the trading performance of existing retail destinations. Given the implications applying the latest data now available has, the RIA must be updated. Otherwise, the RIA fails to provide a robust and sound basis for the Council to determine the planning application.

Turnover of Proposed Development

The RIA has based the potential turnover of the proposal on the development comprising a food store (with a net sales area of 6,000 square metres) together with 400 square metres of non-food floorspace.

Based on this approach, the RIA identifies that the scheme could achieve a retail turnover [redacted] in 2025. This turnover is notably higher than that which was 'tested' under the permitted scheme – by around 19% [redacted]

[2] Derived Retail Statement prepared by PBA (June 2016)

Furthermore, this potential turnover of the proposal has been substantially underestimated. The sales density applied has been based on the average sales density of Tesco, Asda, Morrisons, Sainsbury's, M&S Food, Aldi and Lidl. Whilst it is a reasonable approach to utilise published data to estimate likely turnover, we would question the appropriateness of using some of the sales densities that have been applied. The proposal tested is for a large-format supermarket with a sales area of 6,000 square metres. Retailers such as Lidl and Aldi do not trade from such large-format stores (instead typically having a sales area of less than 1,400 square metres) – more than four times lower than that proposed.

The significance of this is that Lidl is identified to achieve a sale density [redacted] per square metre, the lowest of all the retailers included in the RIA in identifying the likely turnover of the proposal. However, given that such retailers would not realistically occupy a store of this size, we would question the appropriateness of including these retailers in seeking to estimate the likely turnover of the proposal. The effect of including the sales densities of these retailers is that the turnover of the proposal is underestimated.

Instead, a more appropriate approach would be to apply the sales density for retailers that could realistically occupy the floorspace (e.g. Tesco, Asda, Morrisons or Sainsbury's). Furthermore, in the absence of any retailer being linked to the application, the highest sales density of these operators should be applied (i.e. Tesco) to provide a robust assessment. Based on this approach the turnover of the proposal will increase – as summarised at Table 3 below.

Table 3 – Revised Estimate of the Turnover of the Proposal

UNIT	TOTAL SALES FLOORSPACE (SQM)	NET SALES AREA (SQM)	SALES DENSITY AT 2025 (£ PER SQM)	TURNOVER (£M) 2025
CONVENIENCE				
FOODSTORE	6,000	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
LOCAL FACILITIES	400	[redacted]	-	-
TOTAL	6,400	[redacted]	-	[redacted]
COMPARISON				
FOODSTORE	6,000	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
LOCAL FACILITIES	400	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
TOTAL	6,400	[redacted]	-	[redacted]
TOTAL TURNOVER				[redacted]

Notes: Sales density for food store based on company average for Tesco as identified by Global Data (2024)

The potential turnover of the proposal will increase [redacted]. This represents an increase of [redacted] more than 30%) to that which has been 'tested' as part of the RIA. This underestimate of the likely turnover of the proposal further demonstrates that the assessment of the likely trading effects of the proposal is not robust.

In addition, in assessing the likely trading effects of the proposal this has been based on the scheme comprising a food store with a sales area of 6,000 square metres plus local shops of 400 square metres. This is not certain. There are no controls within either the existing permission or that being proposed as part of the pending application to control the configuration of this floorspace. Indeed, the proposed development could comprise a mix of retail uses. The retail evidence submitted in support of the permitted scheme tested a different floorspace configuration to that now being considered.

Significantly, this could include non-food led development or a range of medium sized units. For example, the scheme could include a large-format non-food / variety stores (such as M&S, Waitrose/John Lewis, Next etc), a food store and a range of other retail units, many of which are already represented in Horsham town centre. The trading effects of such a development will be significantly different to that which has been considered in the submitted RIA. It is essential that such a scenario should therefore be tested unless the applicant is agreeable to controls on the future use of the floorspace.

Existing Shopping Patterns

To understand the trading performance of existing facilities and the likely impact on existing centres, the RIA relies on the household survey that underpins the Council's 2017 Retail Study. This was completed in March 2016. It is therefore almost 10 years old.

This does not provide a robust basis to understand likely shopping patterns in the local area. Since the completion of the household survey the Covid-19 pandemic has occurred, which has had a significant impact on shopping patterns. There have also been other changes in the retail offer in the local area since the completion of the household survey underpinning the RIA.

Whilst the RIA has taken into account some of these changes, the opening of Aldi at Tanbridge Retail Park and Lidl at Foundry Lane, there has been other changes in the retail offer both within Horsham (such as the closure if Wilko in Swan Walk) and at competing retail destinations elsewhere that will have an impact on shopping patterns.

Given the age of the household survey, very little (if any) weight can be given to the market shares identified in understanding existing shopping patterns and the trading performance of existing destinations. Shopping patterns in 2016 are highly unlikely to be the same today. Indeed, some additional analysis commissioned by Cube RE regarding the trading performance of a number of existing retail destinations in Horsham town centre (derived from CACI) has illustrated that their trading performance is significantly different to that assumed by the RIA. This underlines our concerns regarding utilising a household survey that is almost 10 years old.

Retail evidence underpinned by the findings of the household survey completed in 2016 further demonstrates the weakness of the assessment that has been undertaken.

Impact

The RIA assesses the potential impact of the proposal on the convenience and comparison sectors separately and on Horsham town centre overall. This is considered an appropriate approach. However, for all the reasons identified the impact assessment that has been undertaken does not provide a robust basis for the local planning authority to understand the likely trading effects of uplift in retail floorspace now being proposed. Furthermore, in reviewing the impact assessment that has been undertaken, notwithstanding our significant concerns with the baseline assumptions and inputs applied, we also have concerns with the anticipated trade draw assumptions applied in the RIA. These include the following:

- The RIA assumes that less than 28% of the proposal's convenience turnover will be derived from Horsham town centre. In contrast it is assumed that 45% will be derived from edge-of-centre / out-of-centre destinations (most notably Tesco at Broadbridge Heath). We would question whether such a low level of diversion will be derived from Horsham town centre. The RIA identifies that Horsham town centre achieves a greater convenience retail turnover than existing out-of-centre destinations in Horsham. We therefore question whether it is realistic to assume that the proposal will draw almost twice as much from out-of-centre destinations than from Horsham town centre.
- The RIA also assumes that approximately 27% of the proposal's convenience turnover will be derived from 'elsewhere'. These destinations are not identified, and we would question whether it is realistic to assume a comparable proportion of trade will be derived from these destinations as Horsham town centre. Without understanding what these destinations area, and more importantly and up-to-date understanding of current shopping patterns, an assumption that such a high proportion of trade is derived from elsewhere is questionable.
- For comparison goods, the RIA assumes that approximately 38% of the proposal's turnover will be derived from Horsham town centre. Again, this is comparable with that assumed from destinations elsewhere (36%) and compares to 26% of the proposal's turnover being derived from Broadbridge Heath Retail Park. Again, we would question the robustness of this approach. The RIA assumes that the bulk (70%) of the proposal's turnover will be derived from Zone 1 of the wider Study Area. Within Zone 1, the RIA also identifies Horsham town centre to be the dominant destination for comparison shopping achieving a market share of 59%. This compares to 13% to Broadbridge Health Retail Park and 25% to destinations elsewhere. In light of the shopping patterns that have been utilised as part of the RIA, notwithstanding the concern with the age of the household survey, we would again question why such a low level of diversion will be derived from Horsham town centre. The approach undertaken has the effect of underestimating the likely impact on Horsham town centre.

These represent further concerns with regard to the robustness of the assessment undertaken.

The RIA identifies an overall impact of -3.5% on Horsham town centre by 2030, which the RIA notes is comparable to that identified for the permitted scheme (-3.1%). The fact that a substantial uplift in floorspace results in comparable levels of impact further suggests that the assessment undertaken is unrealistic. As outlined above, the approach undertaken does not provide a robust basis to understand the likely trading effects of the revised scheme. The RIA relies on out-of-date population and expenditure data and household survey evidence and applies unrealistic assumptions to minimise the likely impacts in an attempt to keep retail impact as close to that previously deemed acceptable by the Council. The current RIA does not provide a robust and realistic assessment of the likely trading effects of the proposed uplift in net sales area.

Failure to take into account Cumulative Impact of Recent Permissions

In considering the potential impact on Horsham town centre no consideration has been undertaken of the potential cumulative impact of the proposal and recent permissions. This includes planning permission being granted in March 2025 (ref. DC/23/1133) for a retail scheme at Broadbridge Heath. This scheme includes a discount food store together with additional retailing and drive-thru units.

The likely cumulative impact of these developments and the uplift in floorspace now proposed should be undertaken for the local planning authority to be able to fully understand the likely impacts on Horsham town centre. This failure to consider cumulative impact represents a further shortfall in the applicant's retail evidence, and a cumulative impact assessment should be completed.

Summary & Conclusions

Based on our review of the RIA, the assessment undertaken to date is not robust and needs to be updated. At the very least this should include the following:

- Updated to utilise the latest population and expenditure estimates published by Experian for the study area;

- Not rely on a household survey completed in 2016 to understand existing shopping patterns / trading performance of existing retail facilities;

- Apply a more realistic estimate of the likely turnover of the proposal, including additional scenarios based on different floorspace configurations in the absence of any controls on the future use; and

- Provide further justification / revisions to the anticipated trade diversion to the proposed development.

An update of the RIA is essential to enable the Council to fully understand the likely impacts on the proposed uplift and the implications on the long-term success of Horsham town centre. At the moment it is not possible for the Council to conclude that the proposals will not lead to a significant adverse impact – the policy test.

A robust RIA is essential. Whilst Horsham town centre has historically been a relatively strongly performing centre, it is showing signs of vulnerability and is particularly vulnerable should a further anchor tenant be lost from the town centre. This is an increased possibility given the uplift in retail floorspace now proposed.

The loss of a previous anchor tenant (Wilko) has had a notable adverse impact on footfall and vacancies within the town centre.

Consequently, the potential for the loss of further anchor tenants from Horsham town centre is significant. There are a number of existing retailers whose lease is to expire in the next five years, coinciding with the potential opening of substantial retail development at North Horsham. This includes the anchor tenants of M&S, Next, H&M. Given our extensive experience in trying to let the former Wilko unit, it is evident that there are no new tenant/occupiers who are seeking to take larger spaces (circa 2,8000 sqm GIA plus) in Horsham. Therefore, it is clear that the proposed retail offering at Mowbray will seek to draw upon the existing, established tenants from Horsham town centre. This would in turn have a catastrophic impact on the vitality and vibrancy of the town centre, leading to a greater number of vacancies and a pull away from the centre. This would further impact footfall and the operational activity of smaller, independent stores and F&B offering which rely so heavily on the anchor tenants,

There is a real risk by allowing an increase in retail floorspace at North Horsham (as proposed) that an existing anchor tenant(s) is more likely to be lost from the town centre. This would lead to a significant adverse impact on the long-term vitality and viability of Horsham town centre – particularly given the lack of demand from retailers to occupy larger-format units. The proposals at North Horsham have the real potential to lead to increased vacancies and a notable decline in footfall.

One of the reasons for Horsham town centre's historical success as a retail destination has been the lack of out-of-town competition. However, planning permission has recently been granted for further retailing at Broadbridge Heath, and the proposed amendments at North Horsham have the clear potential to undermine the long-term success of the town centre.

For all these reasons, it is critical that the proposed changes in retail floorspace at North Horsham is supported by robust retail evidence – this is however not the case. Based on the retail evidence submitted in support of the application to date the application should be refused.

The proposals conflict with HDPF Policies 12, 13, and SD3, fail the sequential test under the NPPF, and would likely have significant adverse impacts on the vitality, viability, and investment in Horsham town centre. In accordance with NPPF §11, permission should be refused unless material considerations strongly indicate otherwise, which they do not in this case.

CONCLUSION

We respectfully request that the Council refuses the application to vary Schedule 14 as proposed. However, should the Council be minded to approve the application, we strongly encourage that appropriate controls are put in place to minimise the potential impact on Horsham town centre. This should include a 'non poaching' clause preventing existing retailers represented in the town centre to close and relocate to the North Horsham, and an obligation which restricts the use of the unit as a food supermarket only. This could be included within Schedule 14 of the Section 106 Agreement.

Yours sincerely,

Cube RE