

Overview of the Retail and Main Town Centre Uses Evidence Base

The Rother Retail and Main Town Centre Uses Study (RMTUS) comprises a series of documents. It is the purpose of this note to briefly map out the relationship between these documents.

Rother Retail and Town Centre Uses Study 2023 (the ‘Study’)

The Retail & Town Centre Uses Study updates the Council’s evidence base and recommendations that will inform policy directions for the new Local Plan. This evidence document sets out the need for retail and leisure throughout the District over the plan period, and considers any possible allocations or locations required to meet these needs. The Study also identifies areas to be designated as Town Centres, District Centres and Primary Shopping Areas. Finally, the Study provides the evidence base for setting floorspace requirements above which Retail and Leisure Impact Assessments are required.

The Rother Retail & Town Centre Uses Study forms Volume A of the Study, while Volumes B – E constitute the appendices of the Study. Volume E maps the recommended Town Centre and Primary Shopping areas in comparison with the existing boundaries.

Rother Retail and Main Town Centre Uses Study 2026 Refresh (the ‘2026 Refresh Study’)

The 2026 ‘Refresh’ Study was subsequently prepared to update the 2023 Study using more recent population, expenditure and economic data. It provides updated retail capacity forecasts and policy recommendations while reaffirming the principal conclusions of the 2023 Study.

The Refresh Study comprises two volumes. Volume 1 is the principal evidence report supporting the emerging Rother District Council Local Plan. It updates the findings of the 2023 Retail and Town Centre Uses Study using the latest population, expenditure and economic forecasts, reviews the health of Bexhill, Rye and Battle town centres, assesses retail and leisure needs to 2042, and provides policy recommendations. Volume 2 is the supporting technical evidence document that underpins the conclusions in Volume 1. This data is set out in 10 Appendices within Volume 2. Updated convenience and comparison goods capacity projections are set out in Appendices 8 and 9 respectively.

The 2026 Refresh Study confirms the main findings of the 2023 Study, namely that there is no district-wide need for additional retail floorspace, and that the Council should continue to plan for less rather than more retail floorspace. It continues to recommend that Retail and leisure investment should be directed towards existing centres, with continued application of the sequential and impact tests to edge and out-of-centre proposals, while no changes are recommended to the centre hierarchy or to Policy EC04 impact threshold. One notable change in recommendation is that the full length of St Leonards Road should be included within the Bexhill Primary Shopping Area.

Retail Capacity Addendum (Part 1 and Part 2) (2026)

An Addendum was necessary to review the implications of updated dwelling-led population projections arising from the Council's Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) (2026) for the retail capacity assessment contained within the 2026 Refresh Study. The revised modelling uses the higher population forecasts associated with planned housing growth but finds that retail capacity remains negative across the study period, meaning there is still no identified quantitative need for additional retail floorspace at a district-wide level. The Addendum therefore concludes that the principal findings of the 2026 Refresh Study remain valid, although opportunities for new retail development may still be supported where they strengthen existing centres and satisfy relevant retail planning policy tests.

- Addendum Part 1

Part 1 explains the function of the Addendum, to review the retail capacity assessment of the 2026 Refresh Study according to newer dwelling-based population projections that informed the HEDNA.

- Addendum Part 2

Part 2 presents revised convenience and comparison goods capacity forecasts (Tables 2B and 3B respectively). These figures update and effectively supersede the capacity forecasts previously contained in Table 13 of Appendix 8 (Convenience Goods) and Table 13 of Appendix 9 (Comparison Goods) within Volume 2 of the 2026 Refresh Study.

For clarity, the final retail floorspace capacity figures are:

Addendum Convenience Goods Floorspace Capacity (net sqm):

	2030	2035	2040	2042
Bexhill Town Centre	41	125	193	211
Rye Town Centre	-1	6	12	12
Battle Town Centre	9	29	51	59
Little Common District Centre	3	10	15	17
Sidley District Centre (inc Lidl, Ninfield Road)	16	38	58	63
Villages and Local Shops	-6	-6	-7	-7
Edge and Out of Centre	-1,980	-1,980	-1,979	-1,979
Total Convenience Goods Floorspace Capacity	-1,918	-1,778	-1,657	-1,624

Table 2B in the Addendum, which replaces Table 13 in Appendix 8 of Volume 2

Addendum Comparison Goods Floorspace Capacity (net sqm):

	2030	2035	2040	2042
Bexhill Town Centre	17	105	176	187
Rye Town Centre	-8	5	18	14
Battle Town Centre	9	32	58	66
Little Common District Centre	1	5	8	9
Sidley District Centre (inc Lidl, Ninfield Road)	1	3	6	6
Villages and Local Shops	9	34	61	69
Edge and Out of Centre	-748	-634	-535	-546
Total Comparison Goods Floorspace Capacity	-719	-448	-208	-194

Table 3B in the Addendum, which replaces Table 13 in Appendix 9 of Volume 2

Summary

- The 2023 Retail and Main Town Centre Uses Study established the Council's retail evidence base.
- The 2026 Refresh Study subsequently updated that evidence using more recent data and now represents the principal evidence document supporting the emerging Local Plan.
- Appendix 9 of the Refresh Study is corrected through the "Appendix 9 (Comparison Goods Retail Capacity Forecast Tables) – Correction".
- The 2026 Retail Capacity Addendum (Part 1 and Part 2) subsequently updates the retail capacity forecasts to reflect dwelling-led population projections arising from the HEDNA.
- Accordingly, the most recent retail floorspace capacity forecasts are those contained within the Addendum (Tables 2B and 3B), which should be read in place of the corresponding capacity projections contained in Appendices 8 and 9 of the 2026 Refresh Study.
- The wider analysis, conclusions and policy recommendations of the 2026 Refresh Study remain applicable unless specifically updated by the Addendum.