

Shopping and Central Areas

Background

- 7.1** Shopping is an activity that affects all households in the Plan Area and many of those visiting the area. Shopping centres are important to the economic, social and cultural life of the Plan Area providing not only retail outlets, offices, leisure facilities and other central area activities but often also provide a community focus and identity.
- 7.2** Retail trends show that nationally there is a contraction in the number of retail outlets, a slow-down in the growth of non-food retail sales and limited growth in the convenience (food) sector. Since national planning policy strengthened the role of town centres in the mid-1990s, there has been a slow down in the development of retail floorspace in out-of-centre locations and an increase in retail development and redevelopment in and on the edge of town centres. There has also been a trend towards larger centres getting larger at the expense of smaller centres.
- 7.3** Significant changes are also occurring in retailing with the advent of new technology such as internet or digital television home shopping. Such retailing, often referred to as e-tailing, tends to affect different retail goods sectors in different ways and affects centres differently as well. Many retail operators have established internet/home shopping capabilities for customers or have call and collect facilities.
- 7.4** Store formats have also been changing and are likely to continue to change as retailers adjust to continual changes in consumer preferences. Retail operators have merged and others have sought larger store formats, particularly out-of-centre retailers such as B&Q and Homebase. In contrast, certain large food store operators such as Tesco are opening smaller stores in in-centre locations. With the small growth in retail expenditure per head on food products, the large food superstore operators have been selling more non-food items.
- 7.5** Particularly in the larger centres in the Plan Area, there has been a significant increase in the number of ancillary food and drink outlets in the centres and this in turn increases the length of stay of the average trip to those shopping centres.
- 7.6** These trends have affected the retail patterns in the Plan Area and the relative importance of particular centres and retail outlets.

National and Regional Planning Advice on Retailing

7.7 Planning Policy Guidance Note 6 'Town Centres and Retail Developments' (PPG 6) along with Ministerial Statements set out the national policy framework for this topic, a framework that has now been in place since mid-1996.

7.8 The objectives of PPG 6 are:

- to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres;
- to focus development, especially retail development, in locations where the proximity of business facilitates competition from which all consumers are able to benefit and maximises the opportunity to use the means of transport other than the car;
- to maintain an efficient, competitive and innovative retail sector; and
- to ensure the availability of a wide range of shops, employment, services and facilities to which people have easy access by a choice of means of transport.

7.9 These objectives are to be met by:

- ensuring that the planning system does not restrict competition;
- enshrining the principle of the plan-led system;
- identifying retail hierarchies;
- assessing need;
- applying a sequential approach to the selection of sites; and
- identifying sites and assisting in bringing them forward.

7.10 The sequential approach in PPG 6 for town centre uses is as follows – first priority within town centres, second priority edge-of-town centres, third priority district and local centres and fourth priority in out-of-centre locations that are accessible by a choice of means of transport. The Government expects that developers and local authorities will take a flexible approach when considering the need for new development, the format of developments and the availability and suitability of sites in the four tiers of the hierarchy.

7.11 The Government has published clarification statements regarding the test of need to developments on the edge-of-centres or in out-of-centre locations (February 1999) and the greater weight to be attached to defining quantitative need for development in terms of additional floorspace (April 2003).

7.12 There are three key tests:

- i) impact on the vitality and viability of town centres;
- ii) accessibility by a choice of means of transport; and
- iii) impact on overall travel and car use.

7.13 PPG 6 also sets out guidance for local and village shops/services, for assessing the health of town centres, for town centre strategies and town centre management, and for specific types of retail and related uses such as discount stores and amusement centres.

- 7.14** The Government is proposing to revise and issue new national planning advice and the revision to PPG 6 is proposed early in this sequence.
- 7.15** Regional Planning Guidance for the East Midlands (RPG8) reflects the national guidance set out above. The Guidance states that developments of regional or sub-regional importance should be located within the city and town centres of the region as a first priority, and resists any approach to reclassify existing out-of-centre developments as town or district centres.
- 7.16** A partial draft revision to RPG8 has been placed on deposit and follows a retail study undertaken by consultants. For the 'Three Cities' Sub-Area part of the region there is potential for up to 100,000 square metres (sq m) gross of new floorspace by 2012 in addition to existing commitments.

The 2002 CB Hillier Parker Shopping Study for the Plan Area

- 7.17** In 2001, the two Councils commissioned consultants to undertake shopping studies for the Plan Area to assist the Councils in preparing relevant aspects of the Joint Structure Plan, and for more detailed purposes within the Unitary Authority area of Nottingham. The Studies, covering South Nottinghamshire and the rest of the Plan Area, were published in the summer of 2002.
- 7.18** The key objectives of the Studies were:
- to assess the need and capacity for additional retail floorspace up to 2011;
 - to recommend how and where any capacity should be accommodated and the form any provision should take;
 - to advise more generally on the likely longer term retail needs beyond 2011;
 - to review critically the current hierarchy of centres;
 - to recommend a monitoring approach to measure retail and central area trends; and
 - to recommend a strategic approach for developing the roles of each centre.
- 7.19** The consultants have made recommendations on these matters and the policies in this chapter reflect the advice that has been given. The consultants undertook a PPG 6 health check of the major centres in the Plan Area and the County and City Councils together with the District Councils in the Plan Area will be setting up future monitoring arrangements.
- 7.20** In terms of additional capacity, the consultants concluded that only Nottingham City Centre and Mansfield Town Centre could plan for an increase in their market share arising out of new development and elsewhere there was only limited capacity for an increase in comparison goods floorspace. Capacity existed for new convenience goods floorspace in Sutton-in-Ashfield/Kirkby-in-Ashfield and in Newark.
- 7.21** The recommendations of the consultants regarding the Joint Structure Plan elements of the Studies have been accepted in principle by both Councils.

Objectives of the Plan

7.22 The national objectives set out in paragraph 7.8 are accepted and the following additional objectives are set out:

- to sustain suitable local shopping provision in rural areas;
- to link transport measures for acceptable out-of-centre retail developments to the overall transport strategy for the Plan Area.

Strategy for Shopping

7.23 The County and City Councils have considered the policy guidance set out in national and regional planning guidance and the findings of the consultants Studies and the following policies have been formulated. Both Councils are committed to sustaining and enhancing centres in their respective areas and, in the case of the County, with the District Councils.

7.24 In this consideration, the County and City Councils consider that there is no requirement arising from within the Plan Area to justify the further provision of regional/sub-regional out-of-centre shopping centres (centres such as Meadowhall in South Yorkshire) and that the major centres in the Plan Area are able to meet the anticipated demand for new floorspace to 2011.

7.25 The County and City Councils, along with the District Councils and the private sector, will actively pursue measures to improve the attractiveness and accessibility to town and local centres.

POLICY 7/1 SHOPPING AND CENTRAL AREA HIERARCHY

New retail development and other appropriate central area uses will sustain and enhance the role of centres within the following hierarchy:

- a) Regional Centre - Nottingham;**
- b) Major Sub-Regional Centre - Mansfield;**
- c) Sub-Regional Centres - Retford, Newark, Sutton-in-Ashfield and Worksop;**
- d) Major District Centres - Arnold, Beeston, Bulwell and Hucknall;**
- e) District Centres - Carlton Square, Clifton, Eastwood, Hyson Green, Kimberley, Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Mansfield Woodhouse, Mapperley Plains, Netherfield, Oak Tree, Sherwood, Stapleford, Warsop and West Bridgford;**
- f) Local Centres.**

Centres in categories a)-e) above are 'town centres' for the purposes of national planning guidance. Local plans will define the boundaries of town centres and identify local centres.

- 7.26** National planning guidance in PPG 6 states that the hierarchy should be set out in structure plans. The hierarchy set out above reflects the role and function of the various centres and differs from the list given in the 1996 Structure Plan in two respects – the placing of Mansfield in a new category to reflect its status as the second largest centre in the Plan Area and the inclusion of Sutton-in-Ashfield as a sub-regional centre. Both changes were recommended by CB Hillier Parker in their report of 2002 to both Councils.
- 7.27** The hierarchy is not intended to be a prescriptive planning policy instrument. It is not the intention of the County and City Councils that new retail and other town centre development should be concentrated first into the City Centre, then into Mansfield and so on. Rather the hierarchy explains the relative sizes and functions of centres. The City Centre is nationally ranked in the top 4 or 5 centres and has an extensive comparison goods catchment area covering most of the Plan Area except for the Bassetlaw area, and extending into parts of neighbouring counties, particularly Lincolnshire.
- 7.28** Mansfield has a more limited catchment area that extends into neighbouring Districts. The CB Hillier Parker Study of 2002 recommended that special status be given to Mansfield Town Centre as it has a much larger retail floorspace and comparison goods function than the other sub-regional centres, which apart from Sutton-in-Ashfield all serve comparison goods functions for a wide catchment area. Sutton-in-Ashfield Town Centre is larger than Retford Town Centre in terms of floorspace but its catchment area and comparison goods floorspace are more limited reflecting the nearness of Mansfield Town Centre.
- 7.29** In the urban area around Nottingham, the centres of Arnold, Beeston, Bulwell and Hucknall are very much larger than the other District Centres in terms of floorspace and function and have been given a separate section in the hierarchy.
- 7.30** All the centres named in the policy are town centres for the purposes of PPG 6. Local centres, as referred to in Policy 7/1 f), will be defined in local plans. Included in the definition of local centres are small shopping parades, and local shops in urban and rural settlements.

POLICY 7/2 SEQUENTIAL APPROACH TO RETAIL AND OTHER CENTRAL AREA DEVELOPMENT

Proposals for retail development (other than that to meet purely local needs) and for other central area uses such as offices and leisure uses will be located under the following sequence:

- a) first, within the town centres as defined in Policy 7/1; then
- b) on the edge of the town centres; then
- c) in local centres; then
- d) in out-of-centre locations that are, or can be made, readily accessible by a choice of means of transport.

Proposals for retail and other development in locations other than a) will only be permitted where:

- i) a need for the development has been established;
- ii) the sequential approach has been followed and there are no suitable sites available in a higher category of the approach;
- iii) the development would not harm the vitality and viability of any nearby town centre either directly or cumulatively with any other scheme likely to be developed in the short term;
- iv) development proposed in a local centre is appropriate in nature and scale to that centre;
- v) the impact upon overall travel and car use is acceptable; and
- vi) the proposals would not give rise to unacceptable vehicular and/or pedestrian traffic conditions, and car parking provision is adequate.

7.31 The sequential approach is a fundamental part of national, regional and local planning policy concentrating retail and other land uses in accessible locations to all sections of the community and by most transport modes. Household shopping surveys conducted by the local planning authorities in the Plan Area show for example that superstores located within or on the edge of town centres have more customers arriving by means other than the private motor vehicle than out-of-centre superstores. The success in implementing this policy is vital to the aim of promoting sustainable development and in keeping down carbon dioxide and other polluting emissions.

7.32 PPG 6 defines edge-of-centre for shopping purposes as being "a location within easy walking distance (i.e. 200-300 metres) of the primary shopping area, often providing parking facilities that serve the centre as well as the store, thus enabling one trip to serve several purposes. For other uses such as offices or leisure, edge-of-centre may be more extensive, based on how far people would be prepared to walk. For offices, this is likely to be in the region of 500 metres of the station or other public transport interchange". The County and City Councils generally accept this advice but stress that local circumstances are important and the advice of up to 300 metres should not be interpreted in a deterministic manner. The distances used should not be applied without assessing factors such as gradient and barriers to movement such as busy roads where pedestrian crossing points are few and controlled. The important issue is that any edge-of-centre site can be functionally linked to the town centre.

- 7.33** Assessments of need are required as part of national planning policy but the nature and extent of the assessment will depend upon the type and scale of development proposed. Retail quantitative analysis is not precise and it is important for applicants to discuss any requirements for assessments with the local planning authority prior to submitting a planning application. The vitality and viability of a centre covers all aspects that enable that centre to be sustained and enhanced over a period of time. In addition PPG 6 also advises that the degree of impact upon the policy thrust underpinning the sequential approach will also need to be assessed.
- 7.34** Criterion iv) of Policy 7/2 reflects national planning advice and ensures that local centres meet local needs. This issue is further addressed through Policy 7/3.
- 7.35** For out-of-centre development proposals, assessments of impact must take into account not only the impact upon the vitality and viability of a centre but also on sections of the community using the centre that do not have the use of a private motor vehicle and would not be able to visit the proposed facility. PPG 6 sets out 10 factors assessing the health of town centres and these factors need to be taken into account in an assessment of impact. Health checks were carried out in 2002 on all the major centres in the Plan Area as part of the CB Hillier Parker Studies.
- 7.36** Certain types of retail activity (particularly those associated with the sale of non-food bulky goods) may, subject to appropriate conditions, be satisfactorily located in out-of-centre locations without detriment to the vitality and viability of a nearby town centre taken as a whole. PPG 6 advises that developers and local planning authorities should show flexibility and realism when considering the need for out-of-centre development – for example the format of development could be altered. In this regard, there are examples of the major food retailers operating smaller stores with reduced lines in town centres e.g. Tesco Metro.
- 7.37** PPG 6 provides guidance on freestanding regional/sub-regional shopping. The guidance states that the need for such facilities should be promoted through regional planning guidance and the development plan system in certain limiting circumstances. RPG 8 does not promote this type of retail facility and in the light of the CB Hillier Parker Studies' findings the two Councils consider that there is no need for the Plan to make provision for such centres. This assessment will be kept under review.

POLICY 7/3 LOCAL NEEDS

Provision will be made in local plans for the retention and enhancement of shopping and related facilities, to meet local needs in both urban and rural settlements.

7.38 It is very important that the day to day needs of residents are met in the locality. Some existing parts of urban and rural areas of the Plan Area have a poor provision of local shops and services and this is a matter that should be addressed in local plans. New major housing developments also need to have adequate provision for local shopping and related services. The situation in rural areas is that many smaller villages have lost a village shop and other services such as a post office. The trend over the last twenty years has been that village shops and rural post offices have been closing despite efforts by local authorities, the Countryside Agency, parish councils, rural interest groups and rural dwellers.

7.39 The Countryside Agency and emda, working with local government, have introduced initiatives aimed at improving selected market towns and other rural settlements to improve their service functions both for the local residents of those settlements and for neighbouring smaller rural settlements. Within the Plan Area, Retford, Tuxford, Newark and Southwell have been selected by the two bodies for a variety of measures aimed at improving rural service provision and accessibility to such provision. There is potential in the rural areas for local plans to identify rural service centres for the provision of a wider range of facilities to rural communities than would otherwise be found.

POLICY 7/4 SHOPPING OUTLETS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

Outside villages, retail development will only be permitted in the countryside where:

- a) it is ancillary to a leisure or tourist development; or
- b) it is ancillary to an existing agricultural or horticultural enterprise and sells produce predominantly grown or raised on site; and
- c) it is of an appropriate scale that will not have a potentially adverse impact upon nearby village shops; and
- d) it will not lead to unacceptable traffic conditions, access and parking arrangements.

7.40 The purpose of this policy is to set the strategic planning framework to discourage inappropriate forms of retail activity in the countryside. In keeping with national planning guidance, the two Councils will strongly oppose proposals for inappropriate retail development in the countryside, and in particular within the Green Belt. Many major visitor attractions in the countryside include a small shop, but these outlets should be seen as being ancillary to the main use and not competing with nearby village shops. The ancillary nature of the use means that if the main use ceases, the site does not acquire any existing retail user rights.