



Central Areas and Shopping

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 providing 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7.7 Planning Policy Guidance Note 6 'Town Centres and Retail Developments' (PPG6) was superseded by Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS6) 'Planning for Town Centres' in March 2005 and this sets out the national policy framework for this topic.

7.8 PPS6 establishes that the role and function of city, town and other centres is wider than just retailing. Aside from retailing the main town centre uses to which policy applies are:

- leisure, entertainment facilities, and the more intrusive sport and recreation uses;
- offices, both commercial and those of public bodies; and
- arts, culture and tourism.

7.9 The objectives of PPS6 are to promote the vitality and viability of town centres by:

- planning for growth and development of existing centres; and
- promoting and enhancing existing town centres, by focussing development in such centres and encouraging a wide range of services in a good environment, accessible to all.

7.10 In order to deliver the Government's objective of promoting vital and viable town centres, development should be focussed in existing centres in order to strengthen and, where appropriate, regenerate them by:

- actively promoting growth and managing change in town centres;
- defining a network and a hierarchy of centres each performing their appropriate role to meet the needs of their catchments; and
- adopting a proactive, plan-led approach to planning for town centres, through regional and local planning.

7.11 The sequential approach in PPS6 for site selection is as follows: - first priority within existing centres where suitable sites or buildings for conversion are likely to become available, second priority edge of centre locations with preference given to sites that are or will be well connected to the centre and third priority out-of-centre locations which are or will be well served by a choice of means of transport and have a high likelihood of forming links with the city centre. 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 three tiers of the hierarchy.

7.12 In selecting sites for development, local planning authorities should:

- assess the need for development;
- identify the appropriate scale of development;
- apply the sequential approach to site selection ;
- assess the impact of development on existing centres; and
- ensure that locations are accessible and well served by a choice of means of transport.

7.13 Market towns and villages should be the main service centres in rural areas, providing a range of facilities, shops and services at a scale appropriate to the needs and size of their catchment areas. In planning for village shops and services, local planning authorities should adopt policies which:

- ensure that the importance of shops and services to the local community is taken into account in assessing proposals which would result in their loss or change of use; and
- respond positively to proposals for the conversion and extension of shops which are designed to improve their viability.

7.14 The Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands (RSS8), reflects the national policy set out above. RSS8 requires the promotion of the vitality and viability of existing town centres, including those in market towns, through the development and implementation of town centre strategies. Policy 23 of the RSS requires development plans in the region to include policies and proposals to:

- a) bring forward retail and leisure development opportunities within town centres to meet identified needs;
- b) prevent the development of additional regional scale out-of-town retail and leisure floorspace; and
- c) monitor changes in retail floorspace on a regular basis.

7.15 The Regional Retail Study (2005), undertaken by consultants, indicates that in the 'Three Cities' Sub-Area part of the region (covering the Joint Structure Plans South Nottinghamshire Sub-Area) there is potential for up to 160,000 sq m net of new comparison goods floorspace by 2016 in addition to existing commitments. This net total has not been disaggregated to specific city and town centres.

The 2002 CB Hillier Parker Shopping Study for the Plan Area

7.16 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.

7.17 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.

7.18 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 PPG6 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.

7.19 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.

7.20 The recommendations of the consultants regarding the JSP elements of the Studies have been accepted in principle by both Councils.

Objectives of the Plan

7.21 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

7.22 The County and City Councils have considered the policy guidance set out in national and regional planning guidance and the findings of the consultants study 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.

7.23 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.

7.24 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 other than those to meet purely local needs will be located in or on the edge of the following centres, defined as 'Town Centres' for the purposes of national planning guidance, to sustain and enhance the role of those centres within the following hierarchy:

- a) Regional Centre - Nottingham;
- b) Major Sub-Regional Centre - Mansfield;
- c) Sub-Regional Centres - Newark, Retford, 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.

The boundaries of these Town Centres will be defined in local plans/development plan documents. Developments proposed for these Town Centres must be appropriate in scale and nature to the role and function of that centre and of the area served by that centre.

- 7.25** PPS6 states that in promoting and enhancing existing centres, regional planning bodies and local planning authorities should consider the network of centres (i.e. the pattern of provision of different centres) and their relationship in the hierarchy. The hierarchy set out in Policy 7/1 reflects the role and function of the various centres and differs from the list given in the last 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 as a sub-regional centre. Both changes were recommended by CB Hillier Parker in their report of 2002 to both Councils. PPS6 recognises that retail networks and hierarchies are dynamic and will change over time, but any change in role and function of centres, upward or downward should come through the development plan process. The two Councils support this advice.
- 7.26** 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.
- 7.27** 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 all serve comparison goods functions for a wide catchment area. Sutton 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.

- 7.28** 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.
- 7.29** The sequential approach, as set out in PPS6, 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.
- 7.30** PPS6 defines edge of centre for retail purposes as being 'a location that is well connected to and within easy walking distance (i.e. up to 300 metres) of the primary shopping area'. 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.
- 7.31** 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 and be informed by regional needs assessments. 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.
- 7.32** 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. PPS6 requires that the impact on centres within the catchment of the proposal will be assessed. Health checks were carried out in 2002 on all the major centres in the Plan Area as part of the CB Hillier Parker Study.
- 7.33** 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. PPS6 advises that developers and local planning authorities should show flexibility and realism in discussing the identification of sites for inclusion in development plan documents. In this regard, there are examples of the major food retailers operating smaller stores with reduced lines in town centres e.g. Tesco Metro.

- 7.34** PPS6 directs that new or expanded out of centre regional or sub-regional shopping centres should be addressed through the Regional Spatial Strategy. Having regard to the key objective of the Government's town centre policy such a centre is unlikely to meet the requirements of that policy. RSS8 requires development plans and future local development frameworks to include policies to prevent the development of additional regional scale out of town retail and leisure floorspace. In the light of the CB Hillier Parker Study 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 7/2 LOCAL NEEDS

Local plans/development plan documents will define local service centres in the urban areas and in the countryside and make provision for the retention and enhancement of local shopping and related facilities to meet local needs.

- 7.35** 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, and the trend over the last twenty years has been 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.
- 7.36** 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 7/3 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.

7.37 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.