



## **Planning Policy Statements**

### Transfer of Responsibilities

The Department of the Environment has assumed responsibility for the following Planning Policy Statements from the Department for Regional Development on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2008 and will therefore take forward future work on these documents:-

- PPS 5: Retailing, Town Centres and Commercial Leisure Developments;
- PPS 12: Housing in Settlements;
- PPS 13: Transportation and Land Use; and
- PPS 20: The Coast.

As part of this transfer of responsibility those PPSs already published by the Department for Regional Development are hereby adopted by the Department of the Environment under the powers conferred by Article 3 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991.

**Maggie Smith**

Director of Planning and Natural Resources Division  
Planning and Environmental Policy Group

# **REGIONAL PLANNING & TRANSPORTATION DIVISION**



***PUBLIC CONSULTATION***

**DRAFT PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT 5**

**RETAILING, TOWN CENTRES &  
COMMERCIAL LEISURE DEVELOPMENTS**

**July 2006**



## **HOW TO GIVE YOUR VIEWS**

You are invited to send your views on the Draft Planning Policy Statement 5 – **RETAILING, TOWN CENTRES AND COMMERCIAL LEISURE DEVELOPMENTS** to DRD by 3 November 2006. Please note that your response may be made publicly available (see appendix 1).

Please send your response to:

**Kathleen O'Neill**  
**Department for Regional Development**  
**Regional Planning and Transportation Division**  
**Room 3-01**  
**Clarence Court**  
**10-18 Adelaide Street**  
**Belfast**  
**BT2 8GB**

*Tel:* (028) 9054 0610  
*Fax:* (028) 9054 0604  
*E-mail:* [shapingourfuture@drdni.gov.uk](mailto:shapingourfuture@drdni.gov.uk)  
*Textphone:* (028) 90540642

This document is available on the Internet at [www.drdni.gov.uk/shapingourfuture](http://www.drdni.gov.uk/shapingourfuture). Should you require this document in an alternative format please contact the above address.



## **CONTENTS**

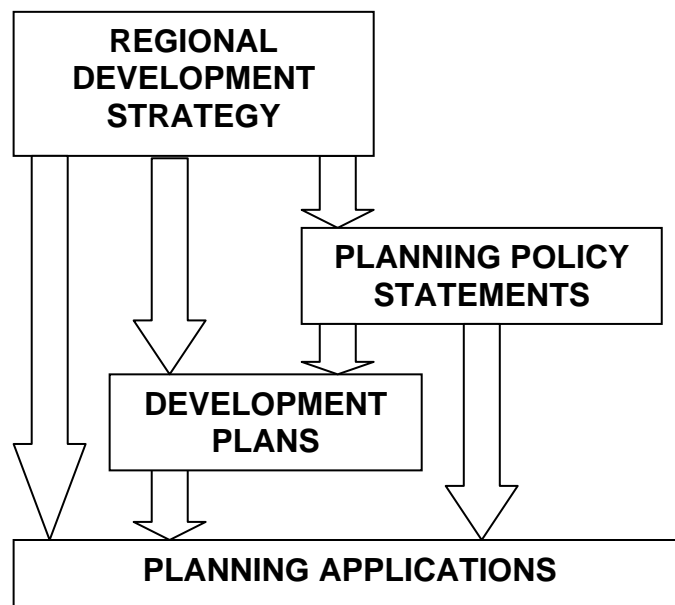
HOW TO GIVE YOUR VIEWS .....	1
PREAMBLE .....	5
POLICY CONTEXT .....	9
POLICY OBJECTIVES .....	11
ROLE OF DEVELOPMENT PLANS .....	12
MONITORING OF RETAIL DEVELOPMENTS .....	18
PROMOTING THE TOWN CENTRE .....	19
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL CONSIDERATIONS .....	21
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL POLICIES .....	26
GLOSSARY .....	53
APPENDIX 1 .....	56
APPENDIX 2 .....	57
APPENDIX 3 .....	60
APPENDIX 4 .....	62
APPENDIX 5 .....	66
APPENDIX 6 .....	70



## **PREAMBLE**

1. The Department for Regional Development (DRD) formulated Shaping Our Future: Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025 (RDS) in September 2001. The RDS will guide the future development of the Region up until 2025. Planning policies and development plans prepared by the Department of the Environment (DOE) Planning Service and development schemes prepared by the Department for Social Development (DSD) must be in general conformity with the RDS<sup>1</sup>.
2. This draft Planning Policy Statement (PPS) has been prepared in accordance with DRD's statutory function of providing policy guidance and advice under The Strategic Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1999. It is one of the key mechanisms for the implementation of the RDS (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1 Strategic Policy Framework**



---

<sup>1</sup> The Planning (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order, 2003, states that policies, plans and schemes must be in general conformity with the RDS.

3. This draft PPS will ultimately replace PPS 5 'Retailing and Town Centres'<sup>2</sup>. Throughout this draft PPS the term 'town centre' is used to refer to city and town centres, but excludes Sprucefield Regional Shopping Centre, district and local centres (see glossary). The purpose of draft PPS 5 is to set out the Department's planning policy for retail and commercial leisure developments in cities, towns, other centres and settlements throughout Northern Ireland. It also deals with policy relating to retail development in the countryside.
4. Planning policy for other town centre uses are dealt with in other PPSs, such as offices in draft PPS 4, residential development in PPS 12, access, movement and parking in PPS 3 and transportation in PPS 13<sup>3</sup>.
5. For the purpose of this draft PPS, commercial leisure uses relate to amusement arcades and centres, restaurants, cafes, hot food bars and those uses listed under Class 16 of the Planning (Use Classes) Order (Northern Ireland) 1989; except for those uses covered by Planning Policy Statement 8, Open Space Sport and Outdoor Recreation<sup>4</sup>.
6. This draft PPS embodies the Government's commitment to sustainable development. The guidance translates the Strategic Planning Guidelines (SPGs) contained in the RDS into specific policies. To assist the Department in preparing this draft PPS, consultants carried out research of retailing patterns within Northern Ireland<sup>5</sup> which can be accessed on the Departmental website at [www.drdni.gov/shapingourfuture/](http://www.drdni.gov/shapingourfuture/). A summary is provided in Appendix 2.
7. This draft PPS will be taken into account in preparing development plans and is also a material consideration for the determination of planning applications and appeals. It is of direct relevance to the public and those whose actions

---

<sup>2</sup> Planning Policy Statement 5, Retailing and Town Centres, DOE, 1996.

<sup>3</sup> Planning Policy Statement 4 (revised) draft Industry, Business & Distribution, DOE, to be published; Planning Policy Statement 12 Housing in Settlements, DRD, 2005; Planning Policy Statement 3 Access, Movement & Parking, DOE, 2005; Planning Policy Statement 13 Transportation & Land Use, DRD, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Planning Policy Statement 8, Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation, DOE, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Northern Ireland Retail Research, Roger Tym & Partners, 2003.

have a physical impact upon the natural or man-made environment, including landowners, developers, government departments and agencies, district councils, other statutory undertakers, voluntary and community organisations.

8. Nothing contained in this document should be read as a commitment that public resources would be provided for any specific project. All proposals for expenditure will be subject to economic, social, financial and environmental assessment and will also have to be considered having regard to the overall availability of resources.
9. This draft PPS is one of a series of PPSs produced by DRD and the DOE and should be read in conjunction with the relevant sections of other prevailing PPSs.

### **Equality Impact**

10. This draft PPS has been subject to a draft equality impact screening exercise in line with the statutory obligation contained in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The outcome of this exercise indicates that this draft PPS is unlikely to have any significant adverse implications for equality of opportunity or community relations. A copy of the draft Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) is available at [www.drdni.gov.uk/shapingourfuture/](http://www.drdni.gov.uk/shapingourfuture/) or [www.consultationni.gov.uk](http://www.consultationni.gov.uk).

### **Human Rights**

11. The Department is committed to ensuring that its policies, legislation and procedures comply with the Human Rights Act 1998. It is considered that the policies contained in this draft PPS have no implications for Human Rights.

### **New Targeting Social Need**

12. This document is consistent with the strategic approach of New Targeting Social Need (New TSN) and includes provisions to complement and reinforce actions directly aimed at promoting equality of opportunity.

13. Those on lower incomes should benefit from the policies contained in this draft PPS in a number of ways:
- the encouragement of competition between retailers and greater consumer choice, provides the opportunity for a wide range of goods at a more competitive price;
  - the promotion of the town centre, which provides greater transport alternatives, benefiting those without a car; and
  - the promotion of local shopping, to sustain local communities and meet local needs should reduce the need to travel.

### **Rural Proofing**

14. This draft PPS has been prepared in line with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's "A Guide to Rural Proofing – considering the needs of rural communities"<sup>6</sup>. Rural proofing ensures that the needs and special considerations of rural communities are routinely and objectively considered as part of the policy development process. The guidance within this draft PPS acknowledges and aims to address the needs of the rural community.

### **Environmental Assessment**

15. This draft PPS has been subject to a draft Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) under European Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment. The purpose of Environmental Assessment is to ensure that the PPS has been systematically assessed and revised during its preparation in the light of potential impacts on the environment and quality of life. It ensures that the policy contributes to the globally accepted objectives of sustainable development.
16. The effects of PPS 5 on the environment were found to be largely positive overall. Comments are invited on the findings of the draft Environmental Report which is available at <http://www.drdni.gov.uk/shapingourfuture/> or [www.consultationni.gov.uk](http://www.consultationni.gov.uk).

---

<sup>6</sup> "A Guide to Rural Proofing – considering the needs of rural communities", DARD, 2003.

## **POLICY CONTEXT**

### **Introduction**

17. The Government is committed to sustainable policies, which ensure that retailing and commercial leisure developments are suitably located and designed to provide a catalyst for economic, social and environmental benefits for the community at large. These policies are designed to contribute to overcoming social exclusion and to ensure that as much of the public can experience a revitalised retail and commercial leisure environment.
18. The Belfast Agreement committed the Executive to devise an annual “Programme for Government” incorporating an agreed Budget. The Secretary of State continues to act on that commitment. Draft PPS 5 has been prepared within the context of the Priorities and Budget 2005 – 2008<sup>7</sup> that continues in the policy direction established by the Programme for Government. A stated target is to work in co-ordination with other Departments and external stakeholders to achieve more sustainable patterns of development.

### **Regional Development Strategy**

19. The RDS has a number of guiding principles, which have been taken into consideration in the preparation of this draft PPS. These are:
  - a people and community focused approach;
  - achieving a more cohesive society;
  - achieving competitiveness; and
  - an integrated approach to the future development of the Region.

The importance of the RDS is recognised in the Priorities and Budget 2005-2008. It provides an overarching strategic framework for development plans and policies, guiding public and private investment decisions relating to land use.

---

<sup>7</sup> Northern Ireland Priorities and Budget 2005-2008 (December 2004), <http://www.pfgbudgetni.gov.uk/>.

20. The RDS promotes a number of SPGs in relation to the future of retailing in Northern Ireland:
- **to create a thriving Metropolitan Area centred on a revitalised city of Belfast (SPG-BMA 1);**
  - **to adopt the precautionary approach in relation to future out of centre retail development where it might have an adverse impact on the city centre or other existing shopping centres in the Belfast Metropolitan Area (SPG-BMA 1);**
  - **to promote an urban renaissance throughout the Belfast Metropolitan Area (SPG-BMA 2);**
  - **to develop a strong North-West centred on Londonderry (SPG-LNW 1) and to strengthen the role of Londonderry as the regional city and hub for the North West (SPG-LNW 2); and**
  - **to support the network of service centres based on main towns, small towns and villages in Rural Northern Ireland (SPG-RNI 3).**
21. DOE Planning Service, DRD and DSD are involved in the implementation of these SPGs. This will be expanded on further in the Promotion of Town Centres (paragraphs 45-51). Sustaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of town centres is a key objective of the RDS. DSD uses statutory powers, where appropriate, and other regeneration measures to support town centre reinvigoration. DOE Planning Service, through the preparation of development plans, formulates a town centre strategy and retail and commercial leisure strategy for the plan area and; identifies the zonings and designations set out in para. 33. These three roles come together in the promotion of town centres.

## POLICY OBJECTIVES

22. The key objective of this draft PPS is:

- **to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres in a manner consistent with achieving the strategic objectives of the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025.**

There are other objectives which also need to be taken into consideration:

- to promote more sustainable development ensuring that new developments are located where there are good public transport services, and better access for those walking and cycling and less dependence on access by car;
- to promote quality of design, of both the buildings and the spaces around the buildings, which contributes positively to townscape and is sensitive to the surrounding area;
- to encourage an efficient, competitive and innovative retail and commercial leisure sector offering consumer choice, consistent with the overall commitment to town centres; and
- to maintain a hierarchy and network of centres consistent with the overall commitment to town centres.

23. The key objective is the overriding consideration and where conflict arises, it will take precedence over the other considerations, as set out in paragraph 22.

## **ROLE OF DEVELOPMENT PLANS**

24. The preparation of a development plan provides the opportunity to assess existing and future retail and commercial leisure provision within the plan area and to examine the existing and future role of town centres. It may also indicate where new development is to be focused.

### **Development Plan Processes**

25. In the process of preparing a development plan it will be necessary to undertake the following:
- assessment of existing retail patterns and floorspace provision;
  - town centre health checks; and
  - examination of future retail need.

### **Assessing Existing Retail Patterns and Floorspace Provision**

26. The assessment of the existing retail provision involves the following steps (see Appendix 3)
- compile floorspace data on existing retail provision across the entire plan area. This will include disaggregation of the existing retail provision into the broad categories of convenience and comparison goods; and
  - examining the existing shopping patterns of the plan population and the overall catchments of the existing retail hierarchy for the plan area.

### **Town Centre Health Checks**

27. Town Centre Health Checks assess the vitality and viability of a town centre. Vitality is a measure of how busy a town centre is and viability is a measure of its capacity to attract ongoing investment for maintenance, improvement and adaptation to changing retail needs. The main purpose of Town Centre Health Checks is to provide a baseline position, against which future measurement and regular monitoring can be carried out over the plan period. It should be noted that Town Centre Health Checks will only be carried out for town centres.

28. The following indicators can be used to provide an overall 'health check' of the town centre. Appendix 4 sets out a best practice approach to carrying out a town centre health check:

- accessibility: the ease and convenience of means of travel, including the level of public transport services, the availability of car parking, and the provision for disabled people, pedestrians and cyclists;
- shopper/customer views;
- retailer views: this is optional depending on time and resources;
- a comprehensive town centre land use survey including the retail and commercial leisure land use profile;
- vacancy rates: including the proportion of vacant street level floor-space in the primary retail core;
- pedestrian flow (footfall): the numbers and movement of people on the streets;
- prime rental values: an indication of retailer desire to locate within an area. This is optional depending on data availability;
- environmental quality: physical condition of a town (clutter, litter and graffiti) and the environmental attributes (quality of shop fronts, landscaping and open spaces) and the quality of the built and natural environment; and
- physical structure of the centre, including opportunities and constraints.

29. The results of the Town Centre Health Check will be important in the consideration of the town centre strategy, the retail and leisure strategy for the plan area and the role of each town centre. It will inform the plan of the overall strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities relating to town centres and of any key constraints affecting them.

### **Examination of Future Retail Need**

30. This will provide an indicative assessment of the possible need for additional retail floorspace within the plan area and over the plan period. Development plans will seek to address the dynamic changes which may take place in the retail trade over the plan period by estimating future retail

need. More detailed guidance on assessing the need for retail development is contained in Appendix 5.

31. The assessment of likely future need for floor space, should be based on existing and forecast population levels and expenditure in relation to the classes of goods to be sold, within the categories of convenience and comparison goods.
32. When carrying out an assessment of future retail need it is necessary to examine and take account of:
  - existing retail floorspace;
  - existing and projected expenditure levels for the plan period;
  - likely future turnover levels for the two broad categories of goods; and
  - any existing approved and committed floorspace figures in relation to estimated future floorspace need.

This assessment will provide information on the following:

- incidence of over or under provision in the broad categories of retail floorspace including existing trade leakage from or trade draw to the plan area; and
- the capacity of the existing floorspace to meet the estimated expenditure needs of the plan population over the plan period and the implications for additional floorspace provision.

### **Development Plan Measures**

33. The assessment of existing retail patterns and floorspace provision, town centre health checks and the examination of future retail need, as set out above, will enable development plans to carryout the following key tasks:
  - development of town centre strategy for the plan area;
  - development of the retail and commercial leisure strategy for the plan area, including the hierarchy of centres;
  - locational designations (see paragraph 36);
  - retail and leisure policies;
  - opportunity site designations (see paragraph 38);

- housing protection area designations (see paragraph 39);
- town centre design criteria; and
- town centre designations, zonings and policies.

### **Formulation of Town Centre Strategy for the Plan Area**

34. The plan will set out a town centre strategy for the main towns of the plan area in light of the strategic guidance contained in the RDS and taking account of the processes undertaken above. The town centre strategy will deal with the following issues:

- encouraging greater accessibility, particularly for non-car modes;
- accommodation of an appropriate level of additional retail and commercial leisure opportunities;
- protection, if required, of the existing retail provision in town centres;
- protection and promotion, as appropriate, of other key town centre landuses;
- promotion of urban renewal and regeneration, while protecting environmental assets;
- promotion of environmental improvement and safe town centre environments; and
- promotion, as appropriate, of tourism and cultural development.

### **Formulation of the Retail & Commercial Leisure Strategy for the Plan Area.**

35. The plan will set out a retail and commercial leisure strategy for the plan area, in light of the strategic guidance contained in the RDS and taking account of the processes undertaken above. It will deal with the following issues:

- identification of the retail hierarchy of centres within the plan area by considering the role, function and range of facilities of each centre. The hierarchy provides an indicator of the comparative roles of centres within the plan area. The position of centres within the hierarchy will reflect the results of the Town Centre Health Checks;

- protection, as appropriate, of existing retail provision across the retail hierarchy of the plan area; and
- accommodation and preferred location of the appropriate levels of additional retail and commercial leisure opportunities across each retail type within the whole plan area.

### **Locational Designations**

36. In order to align with prevailing operational policy, where appropriate development plans will designate by means of a boundary on plan maps:
- the primary retail core;
  - the town centre;
  - primary retail frontage areas;
  - regional centres;
  - district centres; and
  - local centres.

### **Retail and Commercial Leisure Policies**

37. Development plans may stipulate retail and commercial leisure policies which supplement the provisions of operational regional planning policy criteria relating to the control of the scale or nature of retail activity. These policies must reflect local circumstances within the plan area.

### **Opportunity Site Zonings**

38. Development plans may zone town centre opportunity sites and stipulate, as appropriate, acceptable land uses and any other relevant key site requirement.

### **Housing Protection Area Designation**

39. Development plans may designate areas of existing housing within town centres worthy of protection.

### **Town Centre Design Criteria**

40. Development plans may stipulate design criteria within town centres, as appropriate.

### **Other Town Centre Designations, Zonings and Policies**

41. Development plans may designate, zone and provide policies as appropriate to meet town centre related requirements contained in prevailing regional planning policy. This will include environmental designations required to protect the natural and built heritage.

### **Sprucefield Regional Shopping Centre**

42. Planning policy for Sprucefield Regional Shopping Centre will be set through the development plan process.

## **MONITORING OF RETAIL DEVELOPMENTS**

43. In order for any policy to remain appropriate over time, it is essential to record and measure changes as well as the overall performance of the policy. This tracking and monitoring can be achieved by setting appropriate indicators and targets. As this PPS provides policy guidance and advice in relation to the RDS, DRD will monitor PPS 5 through the procedures and mechanisms set up to implement, monitor and review the RDS.
44. Monitoring will provide an early warning of where policies are not implemented, not meeting objectives or are being overtaken by events. There are no single data sets which can measure progress towards achieving more sustainable patterns of development. Rather progress has to be measured across a range of data.
45. In relation to this PPS the recommended indicators to be monitored will be those which are used to monitor the strategic planning guidelines of the RDS. These indicators have been selected to provide a cross cutting view of regional development. They provide a benchmark against which progress can be measured towards achieving the objectives of the PPS. Monitoring reports on indicators are published on the Departments website <http://www.drdni.gov.uk/shapingourfuture> annually while reports on progress are published biennially.

## PROMOTING THE TOWN CENTRE

46. Promotion of the town centre involves DOE Planning Service, DRD, and DSD together with retailers, local councils, town centre managers, private investors, infrastructure providers and the community. DSD uses a range of regeneration measures including statutory powers, where appropriate, to assist the regeneration of town centres together with direct investment in, e.g. public realm. Measures include regeneration strategies, masterplans, development schemes, development briefs, design guidance and direct investment in public realm. DOE Planning Service identify and facilitate opportunity sites through their development plans. These three roles come together in the promotion of town centres.
47. Town centre strategies play an important role in the promotion of town centres and are usually prepared by local councils in liaison with other town centre stakeholders and with input by DSD. This co-operation will continue through the various stages of implementation of the town centre strategy.
48. The main elements in a town centre strategy are the scope for improvement and change, renewal, and diversification. The strategy will consider for inclusion such issues as:
  - articulation of the future role for the town centre;
  - identification of sites requiring land assembly;
  - opportunities for renewal where property is under utilised or vacant;
  - environmental improvement schemes to improve the appearance of public open spaces;
  - safety in the town centre environment; and
  - promotion of tourism in the town centre.
49. The town centre strategy will generally operate alongside the development plan. The following elements of the development plan will normally be incorporated into the town centre strategy:

- the identification of development opportunity sites;
- improved access for public transport, cyclists and pedestrians in line with the objectives of PPS 13 - Transportation and Landuse<sup>8</sup> and PPS 3 - Access, Movement and Parking<sup>9</sup>;
- the key elements of a local transport plan.

In instances whereby the development plan is amended to incorporate an adopted development scheme, the town centre strategy will reflect the general provisions of the scheme.

50. Comparison shopping, specialist shops, residential development, leisure, recreational and tourist uses bring life into the town centre. In particular, town centre residential development located above commercial premises should be promoted as this brings life to the town centres in the evening, as outlined within PPS 12 – Housing in Settlements<sup>10</sup>.
51. Town centre initiatives should acknowledge the contribution that local markets can make to the vitality of town centres and where appropriate markets should be retained and enhanced. These markets tend to be a traditional feature of many towns and add to the sense of place and community.
52. A vital and vibrant town centre will offer public spaces suited to a wide range of social and recreational activities. Environmental improvements and public realm strategies, can put the pedestrian first and offer a safer, more attractive and dynamic town centre. Town centre enhancement should seek where possible, to facilitate improved connections between car parks, transport interchanges and the town centre in the interests of pedestrian movement.

---

<sup>8</sup> Planning Policy Statement 13 – Transportation and Landuse, DRD, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> Planning Policy Statement 3 - Access, Movement and Parking, DOE Planning Service, 2005.

<sup>10</sup> Planning Policy Statement 12 – Housing in Settlements, DRD, 2005

## **DEVELOPMENT CONTROL CONSIDERATIONS**

53. The purpose of this section is to outline the approach that DOE Planning Service will adopt in the determination of retail planning applications and also to inform those who may be submitting retail applications.
54. In the assessment of retailing applications DOE Planning Service will consider the vitality and viability of town centres. Town centres are made up of a mixture of land uses that are often interdependent and fulfil a variety of roles. They provide shopping, employment, services and community facilities. Attractive and flourishing town centres enhance the quality of life of their visitors, stimulate economic investment and support and encourage a wide range of cultural, leisure, social and commercial activities.
55. The location of these uses in town centres promotes accessibility by a choice of means of transport, including public transport. In Northern Ireland shopping continues to underpin the vitality and viability of town centres, while commercial leisure uses contribute to their economic health, and social and cultural well-being.
56. In order to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres, this statement requires that the focus of future shopping and commercial leisure development shall be within the hierarchy of existing town centres (exceptions to this requirement will be local shops, factory shops, petrol filling stations, garden centres, farm shops, craft shops and shops serving tourist facilities). This approach requires that the scale of proposals should directly relate to the role and function of the centre and catchment they seek to serve.
57. Shopping and commercial leisure development of regional significance will be directed to Belfast, as regional capital or to Londonderry as the regional city and hub for the northwest. The policy to be applied in such cases is set out in policy RRP1. The role of Sprucefield regional shopping centre is set out in policy RRP 2.
58. All other major retail development proposals will be expected to locate in town centres. At a local level, district and local

centres perform a valuable supporting function within the hierarchy of existing centres. The primary function of centres at this level is to provide locally accessible shopping, services and commercial leisure facilities. In some district centres there will be a quantum of comparison shopping which has been established over many years. While this may in some cases be integral to the centres' function, the Department requires that the primary role of both district and local centres should be the provision of convenience goods.

59. Accordingly, the Department wishes to sustain district and local centres, or where development plans indicate that it is appropriate, enhance their function of meeting local need.
60. Changes to the roles of existing centres or the creation of new centres at a local level will only be brought forward through the development plan process. Development plans may also introduce policies and/or proposals to control the scale and nature of retailing and commercial leisure development which vary or supplement the provisions of this statement. When such circumstances arise, the development plan will provide clear justification of why variation or supplementary provision is necessary. **However, new retail or commercial leisure development will not be permitted outside the development limits of existing settlements nor will development plans make provision for such development.**
61. In order to ensure that the hierarchy of existing centres provides the focus for retail and commercial leisure development, developers will be required to demonstrate that a **sequential approach** has been applied to the site selection. This approach to site selection means that existing centres will be the starting point in the search for a suitable location for a development.
62. The specific search sequence to be adopted will vary depending on the type of proposal and its size. For example, the preferred location for a major comparison shop will be within the primary retail core of a town centre while a first choice for a small convenience supermarket could be location within a local centre.

63. The policies that are set out in the following section of this draft PPS indicate the specific nature of the sequential approach to be adopted by developers, depending on the type and size of the proposal. Where DOE Planning Service identifies individual circumstances particular to a locality, development plans may impose specific additional requirements, or may vary the precise nature of the sequential approach to be adopted. Where a development plan does not provide specific guidance on these matters, the provisions of this draft PPS will apply. Adoption of a sequential approach in selecting a suitable site does not preclude the necessity of meeting the individual policy criteria set out in the following pages of this draft PPS.
64. Where the application of the sequential approach to site selection for retail proposals results in their location outside a town centre boundary, or where they are not in accordance with development plan proposals, it will be necessary to demonstrate that there is a clearly defined need for the development.
65. In assessing applications it may be necessary to provide information on likely future need, but only in exceptional circumstances will it be appropriate for such forecasts to go beyond the next 5-year period.
66. Retail need assessments should identify the quantitative need for the class of retailing proposed based on existing and forecast population levels and expenditure in relation to the class of goods to be sold.
67. Qualitative need, where it is demonstrated to meet a genuine need for the whole community, particularly for socially excluded groups, is a material planning consideration. However, it in itself will not be sufficient to secure planning approval where applicants have been unable to demonstrate that a quantitative need for a proposal exists.
68. Proposals in locations outside primary retail cores and town centres shall be accompanied by an explicit **assessment of the proposed development** which addresses all likely positive *and* negative impacts on the centre or centres affected.

69. DOE Planning Service will require all major applications outside town centres to be accompanied by impact assessment information. Where a primary retail core is designated, it may also require impact assessment information to accompany proposals in the remainder of the town centre.
70. The extent of the information required to determine the impact of a proposal will vary with the characteristics of the individual development. However, the assessment will normally include:
- a. evidence of the adoption of a sequential approach to site selection;
  - b. the extent to which the development will meet an existing deficiency in provision in the catchment of the proposal;
  - c. details of the potential effects of the proposal on the function and character of the existing centre(s), (including, for retail proposals, the likely impact upon the ability of the existing centre(s) to attract future investment). Assessment should take account of the proposal, both on its own and its cumulative impact when assessed in association with other recently completed developments and extant approvals for the same or similar uses but, as with need, should not seek to assess impact beyond the next 5 years;
  - d. information on the accessibility of the proposal by a choice of means of transport, including public transport, walking, cycling and the car;
  - e. details of potential traffic generation and congestion arising from the proposal; and
  - f. the extent to which the development will contribute to the overall environmental quality and attractiveness of the urban form of the locality.

Where a development plan provides information on future retail need, individual impact assessments must take account of the plan's finding in this respect.

71. In the absence of a retail strategy in the relevant development plan the assessment of retailing impact may

involve calculations or forecasts of retail growth or of changes in the geographical distribution of retailing.

72. DOE Planning Service will condition planning approval for retail development. In all cases conditions will specify the gross retail floorspace to be permitted and the type of goods that may be sold from the premises.
73. Where it is deemed appropriate, DOE Planning Service will also use conditions to prevent developments from being subdivided into a number of smaller shops. DOE Planning Service may also impose conditions to ensure that ancillary elements remain secondary to the main development.
74. The extension of existing retail and commercial leisure premises will be subject to the same requirements as new proposals with the exception that the sequential approach to site selection will not be a consideration where proposals are small scale<sup>11</sup>. Where proposals for the extension of existing retail and commercial leisure developments seek to increase the number of individual premises, DOE Planning Service will normally require a sequential approach to be adopted.

---

<sup>11</sup> Where proposals are no greater than 50% of the net retail floorspace of the existing premises.

## **DEVELOPMENT CONTROL POLICIES**

- 75. In exercise of its responsibility for planning control in Northern Ireland, DOE Planning Service assesses development proposals against all planning policies and other material considerations that are relevant to it.**
- 76. The planning policies of this draft statement must therefore be read together and in conjunction with the relevant contents of development plans and other planning policy publications, including the Regional Development Strategy. DOE Planning Service will also have regard to the contents of published supplementary planning guidance documents.**
- 77. The following policies set out the main planning considerations for the control of development in town centres. The provisions of these policies will prevail unless there are other overriding policy or material considerations that outweigh them and justify a contrary decision.**

## **Policy RRP 1**

### **REGIONAL SHOPPING FACILITIES THE ROLE OF BELFAST & LONDONDERRY**

**Proposals for comparison shopping, mixed retailing and retail led mixed-use development will be approved within the primary retail cores of Belfast and Londonderry.**

**Exceptionally, comparison shopping, mixed retailing and retail led mixed-use development of regional significance, may be permitted in the remainder of the designated city centres of Belfast and Londonderry, where it is demonstrated that no suitable sites exist within their respective primary retail cores.**

**DOE Planning Service will not permit proposals for comparison shopping, mixed retailing, or retail led mixed use development of regional significance, in locations beyond the designated city centres of Belfast and Londonderry where they would be likely to have an adverse affect on their distinctive role as regional shopping destinations.**

### **Justification and Amplification**

78. Belfast and Londonderry make important contributions to the quality of life, wealth and well-being of the people of the whole of Northern Ireland. Both city centres provide distinctive regional shopping facilities, key administrative and commercial functions, and a wide range of cultural facilities established over many years, and enhanced by the accessibility afforded by location as a focus in the Regional Strategic Transport Network.
79. Sustaining and enhancing shopping in these city centres can make an important contribution to achieving the high quality community services and facilities which are fundamental to strengthening Belfast's role as capital of the Region and reinforcing the ongoing revival of the city of Londonderry. It can also make a key contribution in the drive to revitalise the Belfast Metropolitan Area.

80. In the past, competition from retailing facilities that have located outside the city centres of Belfast and Londonderry have constrained their ability to maximise their roles as regional shopping centres. To continue this trend is contrary to the objectives for Belfast and Londonderry set out in the RDS and an obstacle to realising the social and economic benefits that the interaction of a full range of vibrant regional functions and facilities can provide.
81. In order to sustain and enhance their regional functions, the Department requires that the primary retail cores of Belfast and Londonderry shall be the first choice location for retail development of regional significance.
82. **RRP 1** seeks to take advantage of opportunities offered by the growing populations and expanding economies of Belfast and Londonderry and to promote sustainable forms of development that are accessible to the whole community. It also reflects the importance which the Department attaches to achieving retail developments that are compatible with the role and function of the centre in which they are located.
83. In terms of scale the Department considers that single comparison stores, or multiple unit mixed shopping proposals, in the order of 15,000 m<sup>2</sup> net retail floorspace, and above will be likely to have a regionally significant impact. However, because scale is not always the sole indicator of the significance of a retail proposal, DOE Planning Service will also take into account the specific nature of the proposal in assessing whether or not it may be of regional significance.
84. While primary retail cores of Belfast and Londonderry will be the first choice for such development proposals, the Department recognises that it may in certain circumstances be appropriate to consider a location beyond the confines of the retail core. **RRP 1** therefore identifies the circumstances in which retail proposals may be permitted within the wider (designated) city centres. However, proposals which may impact upon the regional shopping functions of Belfast or Londonderry will not be permitted outside either designated city centres.

85. Where proposals for mixed-use developments include retail proposals of regional significance, the retail element of the proposal must satisfy the requirements of **RRP 1**. In such circumstances the acceptability of non-retail uses will not justify the approval of retail development which may adversely impact upon the vitality and viability of the regional shopping centres.
  
86. Where proposals for comparison shopping, mixed retailing and retail led mixed use development are not of regional significance, and for proposals for convenience shopping, **RRP 3** will apply within the settlement limits of Belfast and Londonderry. Policy for Sprucefield Regional Shopping Centre is set out in **RRP2**.

## **Policy RRP 2**

### **SPRUCEFIELD REGIONAL SHOPPING CENTRE**

**Individual planning applications within the designated Sprucefield Regional Shopping Centre will be judged on their own merits. This will include:**

- **their contribution to Sprucefield's regional role;**
- **consideration of their impact on Belfast City Centre and other retail centres and the provisions of policy RRP 1;**  
**and**
- **detailed policy in the prevailing development plan.**

#### **Justification and Amplification**

87. Sprucefield is, and will remain, the only out of town regional shopping centre in Northern Ireland. However, recent research suggests that it is performing below the level necessary to realise its appropriate position within the regional hierarchy.
88. The Department wishes to ensure that Sprucefield can perform at the level appropriate to its regional role and in a manner that is consistent with the objectives of sustaining and enhancing existing town centres in the Region. The Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan, presently in draft form, sets out detailed policy for the Sprucefield Regional Shopping Centre.

## **Policy RRP 3**

### **RETAIL DEVELOPMENT**

#### **THE ROLE OF NON REGIONAL TOWN CENTRES**

##### **COMPARISON SHOPPING & MIXED RETAILING**

The primary retail core of town centres will be the first choice location for proposals for comparison shopping and mixed retailing which are (*demonstrably*) not of regional significance (see RRP1 amplification).

Planning permission will also be granted for comparison shopping and mixed retailing within the remainder of the town centre where:

- it is demonstrated that no suitable sites exist within the primary retail core;
- it is demonstrated that proposals (either individually or in combination with other recently completed development and extant planning approvals) will not adversely affect the vitality and viability of the core, or be likely to have an adverse impact on the distinctive shopping roles of Belfast and Londonderry;
- the proposal provides a high standard of access for people with disabilities and other groups with impaired mobility;
- the proposal will result in a high standard of design, ensuring the built form, scale, massing and materials to be used contribute positively to the overall environmental quality and character of the town centre; and
- the proposal will not prejudice the implementation of development plan or development scheme policies and proposals.

**Proposals for comparison shopping and/or mixed retailing which exceed 100 m<sup>2</sup> gross retail floorspace will not be**

permitted outside designated town centres.

### **CONVENIENCE SHOPPING**

Town centres will be the first choice location for (major<sup>12</sup>) convenience retailing proposals. Planning permission will be granted for such proposals within town centres where:

- a high standard of access for people with disabilities and other groups with impaired mobility is provided;
- a high standard of design, ensuring the built form, scale, massing and materials to be used contribute positively to the overall environmental quality and character of the town centre is provided; and
- implementation of development plan or development scheme policies and proposals will not be prejudiced.

Proposals for major convenience retailing may also be granted:

- in edge of town centre locations when it is demonstrated that no suitable town centre site exists;
- in a district centre when it is demonstrated that no suitable town centre or edge of town centre sites exist; and
- in an out of centre location when it is demonstrated that no suitable town centre, edge of town centre or district centre site exists.

Where the adoption of this sequential approach to site selection results in a proposal for convenience shopping of 1000 m<sup>2</sup> gross retail floorspace or greater outside a town centre, permission will only be granted where the applicant demonstrates that the proposal:

- will satisfy a defined retail need;

---

<sup>12</sup> Proposals for convenience shopping in excess of 1000 m<sup>2</sup> gross retail floorspace

- **will not have an adverse effect on the vitality and viability of an existing centre or undermine its convenience or comparison function either when considered individually or in combination with recently completed retail developments and extant planning approvals;**
- **provides for attractive, safe and secure access by a choice of means of transport, including public transport, walking, cycling and the car;**
- **will support sustainable transport choices by helping to reduce reliance on the private car and facilitating multi purpose journeys;**
- **will not result in adverse traffic impacts such as congestion, or be likely to have a detrimental impact upon road safety;**
- **provides a high standard of access for people with disabilities and other groups with impaired mobility;**
- **will result in a high standard of design, ensuring the built form, scale, massing and materials to be used contribute positively to the overall environmental quality and character of the urban area;**
- **if located within a district centre it will not alter the role and function of that district centre; and**
- **will not prejudice the implementation of development plan or development scheme policies and proposals.**

### **Justification and Amplification**

89. Established town centres provide locations for shopping, employment, services and social and cultural facilities where the focus of development, especially retail development maximises business opportunities and promotes competition and innovation from which all consumers can benefit.

90. An attractive and flourishing town centre can enhance quality of life by stimulating economic investment and encouraging a wide range of services and activities which are accessible to the whole community.
91. The Department therefore requires, in order to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of established town centres and their functions, that town centres (or where appropriate their primary retail cores) will be the first choice location for all major<sup>13</sup> retail development.
92. Achieving sustainable forms of retail development requires that the scale and nature of new facilities is consistent with the role and function of the location proposed. Major new comparison or mixed retailing facilities are therefore not permitted beyond designated town centres.
93. The Department considers that the bulky nature of some comparison shopping goods cannot be regarded as justification for their location in out of centre locations. DOE Planning Service will therefore apply the policy set out above to all applications for comparison and mixed retailing including the retailing of bulky electrical, furnishing and DIY goods and to warehouse clubs and other discount warehouse facilities.
94. It is also important to protect those established centres that provide valuable everyday services and facilities for local communities. Where major convenience shopping is proposed outside town centres, applicants will have to demonstrate that the vitality and viability of other locally important centres within the catchment of the proposal will not be adversely affected. (It will be necessary to assess the potential impacts of such proposals individually or where appropriate in combination with other recently completed retail developments and extant planning approvals.)

---

<sup>13</sup> Proposals for comparison retailing in excess of 100m<sup>2</sup> GRFS & proposals for convenience retailing in excess of 1000 m<sup>2</sup> GRFS.

## **Policy RRP 4**

### **PRIMARY RETAIL CORES & PRIME SHOPPING FRONTAGES**

**Proposals for non-retail uses at ground floor level within primary retail cores will only be permitted where they do not:**

- **result in a significant loss of retail floorspace; or**
- **undermine the shopping function of the core as a result of the accumulation of non retail uses.**

**Where a development plan has designated a prime shopping frontage within a town centre, DOE Planning Service will not permit changes of use which fall outside Class A1 of the Planning (Use Classes) Order (Northern Ireland) 2004 on the ground floors of premises within such frontages.**

### **Justification and Amplification**

95. While attractive and flourishing town centres are a function of the interaction of a variety of often interdependent uses, shopping still underpins their vitality and viability. Development plans may therefore identify primary retail cores and/or prime retail frontages within town centres, where there is a need to focus new retail development and enhance existing provision. The Department wishes to ensure that these designations are protected from non-retail development that could undermine their capacity to sustain and enhance the town centre in question.

## **Policy RRP 5**

### **DISTRICT CENTRE SHOPPING**

#### **CONVENIENCE SHOPPING**

**Planning permission will be granted for convenience retail development within district shopping centres where proposals do not exceed 500 m<sup>2</sup> of gross retail floorspace.**

**Proposals for convenience shopping with a gross retail floorspace greater than 500 m<sup>2</sup>, including those for major convenience shopping, will only be permitted within District Centres where it is demonstrated that the proposal:**

- will satisfy a defined retail need within the catchment areas of the district centre;**
- will not alter the role and function of the district centre, or adversely affect the vitality and viability of other existing centres within the catchment of the proposal (when considered individually or in combination with recently completed retail developments and extant planning approvals);**
- can be successfully integrated into the built fabric of the centre and provide a high standard of access for people with disabilities and groups with impaired mobility;**
- would not lead to an adverse impact upon the amenity of the area, traffic movement and road safety; and**
- will not prejudice the implementation of development plan policies and proposals.**

**For proposals in excess of 200 m<sup>2</sup> gross retail floor space, applicants may be required to demonstrate that the development will not adversely affect the vitality and viability of other locally important centres within the catchment of the proposal (when considered individually or in combination with recently completed retail developments and extant**

planning approvals).

**COMPARISON SHOPPING, MIXED RETAILING AND FINANCIAL, PROFESSIONAL & OTHER SERVICES**

**Proposals for small-scale comparison retailing which does not exceed 100 m<sup>2</sup> gross retail floorspace and for financial, professional and other service provision falling within Class A2 of the Planning (Use Classes) Order (Northern Ireland) 2004, may be permitted where it is demonstrated that they are designed to meet defined local need within the district and meet the criteria set out above.**

**Proposals to change the use of retail premises to non retail uses in district centres will only be granted planning permission where it is demonstrated that:**

- **they will not adversely impact on the vitality and viability of the centre; and**
- **the proposed use is to meet a defined local need.**

**Proposals to convert existing convenience floorspace to comparison sales will not be permitted.**

**Justification and Amplification**

96. District centres provide a valuable function within local communities, affording ready access to a range of shops and other services that meet day to day needs. The provision of highly accessible convenience shopping is of key importance at this level of retailing as it reduces the need to travel to town centres, promotes social inclusion and sense of place and can help sustain local economies. Some district centres may also have comparison retailing facilities that, although limited in scale, contribute to their vitality and the role they perform in the locality.

97. In order to maintain, and where appropriate enhance existing district centres, the Department requires that their role in complementing the functions of the town centre, as a focus for local everyday shopping is protected.

98. New comparison facilities will not be permitted where they could undermine the key function of accessible convenience shopping. As **RRP 3 and 5** stipulates, the sequential test to be applied to proposals for major convenience retailing, states that it may be appropriate to consider a district centre location for such development. Such proposals can alter the role and function of the centre in question. Accordingly, DOE Planning Service will seek to ensure that in granting permission the development proposed is of a scale that is appropriate to the district centre, and where appropriate, accord with the objectives set out for that district centre by the development plan.

## **Policy RRP 6**

### **LOCAL CENTRE SHOPPING**

**Planning permission will only be granted for convenience retail proposals that do not exceed 500 m<sup>2</sup> in local shopping centres (gross retail floorspace) where it is demonstrated that the proposal:**

- **will satisfy a defined local need;**
- **will not alter the role and function of the local centre, or adversely affect the vitality and viability of other existing centres within the catchment of the proposal, cumulatively;**
- **provides a high standard of access for people with disabilities and groups with impaired mobility;**
- **would not lead to an adverse impact upon the amenity of the area, traffic movement and road safety; and**
- **will not prejudice the implementation of development plan policies and proposals.**

**Proposals for convenience shopping in excess of 500m<sup>2</sup> gross retail floorspace will not be permitted in local centres.**

**Proposals for comparison shopping will not be permitted within local centres**

### **FINANCIAL, PROFESSIONAL AND OTHER SERVICES**

**Planning permission will be granted for financial, professional and other services<sup>14</sup> where it is demonstrated that they are designed to serve local every day needs and where:**

- **proposals do not exceed 100 m<sup>2</sup> gross floorspace; and**
- **will be unlikely to adversely affect the centres**

<sup>14</sup> Class A2 of the Planning (Use Classes) Order (NI) 2004.

**convenience shopping function either individually or when considered in combination with recently completed developments and extant planning permission.**

**Proposals for comparison shopping will not be permitted within local centres.**

### **Justification and Amplification**

99. Local centres have a very specific role within settlements. They are the lowest tier within the hierarchy of existing centres providing shopping, and frequently, other community facilities and services. Their key function is essentially similar to that of a district centre, i.e. the provision of readily accessible convenience shopping which meets people's everyday needs. However, they operate on a smaller scale providing facilities at local neighbourhood level where good pedestrian accessibility is important.
100. Local centres make a significant contribution to the flexibility and choice within the Region's shopping hierarchy, reducing the need to travel and promoting social inclusion.
101. DOE Planning Service will therefore control the scale and nature of shopping proposals and service provision in local centres in order to sustain, and where appropriate, enhance their facilities and to maintain their role within the wider retail hierarchy.
102. Where local centres are identified by a development plan, DOE Planning Service will give careful consideration to the location of new shops and service proposals to protect the amenity of adjoining residential areas and to maintain compact and vital centres.

## **Policy RRP 7**

### **LOCAL SHOPS**

**Planning permission will only be granted for small scale convenience shops<sup>15</sup> in locations outside existing centres<sup>16</sup> where it is demonstrated that the proposal:**

- **will satisfy a defined local need that cannot be met by locating the development within an existing shopping centre;**
- **will not adversely affect the vitality and viability of existing locally important shopping centres within its catchment;**
- **provides a high standard of access for people with disabilities and groups with impaired mobility;**
- **would not lead to an adverse impact upon the amenity of the area, traffic movement and road safety; and**
- **will not prejudice the implementation of development plan policies and proposals.**

**The development of new buildings will not be permitted where there are existing vacant and suitable premises in the area to accommodate the proposal.**

**Where the grant of permission for a shop in a small settlement involves new buildings, DOE Planning Service will require the design, and in particular the shop front, be in keeping with the character and architecture of the settlement.**

**Where permission is granted for a local shop, DOE Planning Service will impose conditions controlling the amount of floorspace to be used for retailing and type of goods to be sold.**

<sup>15</sup> Which do not exceed 200 m<sup>2</sup> gross retail floorspace

<sup>16</sup> town, district and local centres.

**Planning permission will not be granted for new local shops in the open countryside.**

### **Justification and Amplification**

103. Local shops can deliver an important service for the community by providing locally accessible every day shopping needs. This is particularly important for less mobile members of the community.
104. It may be necessary to consider the attachment of a planning condition limiting the scale of provision and the type of goods sold in a local shop to ensure that the proposal fulfils its need to provide for the local population without adversely affecting existing centres.
105. The design of local shops should be in keeping with the area and be of a scale not to cause a detrimental impact upon the amenity of the area, including traffic flow.

## **Policy RRP 8**

### **FACTORY SHOP**

**Planning permission will be granted for a factory shop within or adjoining a factory, where the shop:**

- **sells only products manufactured by the factory;**
- **will not adversely affect the vitality and viability of an existing centre within its catchment;**
- **will not lead to an adverse impact upon the amenity of the area, traffic movement and road safety;**
- **is accessible to people with disabilities and groups with impaired mobility; and**
- **is satisfactory in terms of car parking provision and the design of buildings.**

**The use of temporary structures such as portacabins will not be acceptable.**

**Where a factory shop is granted permission DOE Planning Service will attach a condition requiring the shop to stop trading within 6 months of the cessation of manufacturing at the factory.**

**Proposals for factory outlets, or groups of factory outlets, in locations that do not adjoin the factory(ies) manufacturing the goods to be offered for sale or which cannot satisfy the appropriate requirements set out in RRP 3, will not be approved.**

## **Justification and Amplification**

106. In order to ensure that industrial premises are retained for future manufacturing use and that there are no negative impacts on the viability and vitality of nearby centres, factory shops are required to be located on-site and for their use to be ancillary to the main function of the factory.
107. Proposals for factory shops should sustain and enhance existing shopping centres. Those that are considered to be of such a scale and nature as to cause a negative impact on near by centres will be refused.
108. The design of new buildings should be in keeping with the surrounding area. As factory shops are likely to draw customers from a wide catchment area, the impact of a proposal on the amenity of an area, including traffic movement and road safety, will also be considered.

## **Policy RRP 9**

### **PETROL FILLING STATIONS**

**Proposals for convenience retail facilities at petrol filling stations which do not exceed 200 m<sup>2</sup> gross retail floorspace will be permitted where:**

- **the gross retail floorspace of the shop does not exceed 200 m<sup>2</sup>;**
- **the purpose of the shop is to provide access to the everyday convenience shopping needs of a local community;**
- **the proposal is acceptable in design and layout, taking into account amenity, car parking, servicing arrangements and road safety; and**
- **the proposal is accessible to people with disabilities and groups with impaired mobility.**

**Proposal for convenience retail facilities at petrol filling stations that exceed 200 m<sup>2</sup> (gross retail floorspace) will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that they meet the above requirements and:**

- **will satisfy a defined local need; and**
- **will not have an adverse affect on the vitality and viability of an existing centre.**

**Where permission is granted for a convenience retail facility at petrol filling stations, DOE Planning Service will also impose conditions controlling the types of goods to be sold. Proposals for comparison or mixed retailing facilities at petrol filling stations will not be permitted.**

**Proposals for temporary structures such as portacabins will not be acceptable.**

## **Justification and Amplification**

109. The location of convenience retail facilities at petrol filling stations can facilitate the needs of the local community. In addition they can also enhance the viability of the station and contribute to the local economy. The Department considers that proposals under 200m<sup>2</sup> gross retail floorspace at petrol stations are of such a scale and nature so as not to cause a significant impact on other centres providing that all of the requirements set out above are met.
110. Due to the potential impact of large scale proposals on the vitality and viability of other centres, proposals for shops associated with petrol filling stations over 200m<sup>2</sup> gross retail floorspace will also be assessed on whether there is a clearly defined need for the facility and on the potential impact on existing shopping centres.
111. Restrictions may also be placed on the types of goods to be sold in order to ensure that the petrol filling station remains a local facility while the town centre remains the main focus for a wider range of goods to be sold.
112. The design of new buildings should be in keeping with the surrounding area. The impact of a proposal on the amenity of an area, including traffic movement and road safety, will also be considered.

## **Policy RRP 10**

### **GARDEN CENTRES**

**Proposals for garden centres will only be permitted where:**

- **the goods offered for sale are restricted to trees, shrubs and plants grown on site or on an attached holding;**
- **complementary uses such as coffee shops remain ancillary to the main use; and**
- **an adequate standard of access and parking provision can be provided which caters for people with disabilities and other groups with limited mobility.**

**Proposals for garden centres that are outside the limits of existing settlements will be expected to utilise existing buildings. Where new buildings are necessary their scale and design must be in keeping with the character of the area (whether they are inside or outside a settlement limit).**

**Proposals for garden centres in the countryside that involve new buildings will not be permitted.**

### **Justification and Amplification**

113. Garden centres can contribute to the local economy and support local enterprise by attracting a wide geographical customer base to an area and by creating employment.
114. To ensure that the main function of the proposal is related to gardening, the range of uses and products sold from garden centres will be controlled. Furthermore, proposals for associated uses, such as coffee shops, will only be permitted where they remain ancillary to the main function of selling plants.

115. Development of garden centres in the countryside will be restricted to use of existing buildings only in order to protect the visual amenity and character of the area.

**Policy RRP 11**

**RETAILING IN THE COUNTRYSIDE**

**FARM SHOPS, CRAFT SHOPS & SHOPS SERVING TOURIST FACILITIES**

**Proposals for retail facilities located outside existing settlements will only be permitted where the development is:**

- **a farm shop in which the goods offered for sale are produced on the farm holding; or**
- **a shop whose purpose is to support or complement tourist or outdoor recreational facilities; or**
- **a shop attached to an existing or approved craft workshop for the purpose of retailing the goods produced onsite to the public.**

**An adequate standard of access and parking provision which caters for people with disabilities and other groups with limited mobility will be required.**

**Where permission is granted, DOE Planning Service will also impose conditions controlling the type of goods to be sold.**

**Proposals for such facilities outside settlement limits will be required to utilise existing buildings. Proposals for farm shops, craft shops and shops serving tourist facilities will normally only be acceptable where they involve the reuse or adaptation of existing farm buildings. Exceptionally where a new building is justified this should be small-scale and satisfactorily integrated with an existing group of buildings. Temporary structures such as portacabins will not be acceptable.**

## **Justification and Amplification**

116. The Department recognises that retail facilities such as farm shops, craft shops and shops serving tourist facilities, located outside settlement limits, can contribute to the local rural economy and therefore have an important function. For example, farm shops can meet a need for local produce and promote farm viability. Craft shops and tourist shops linked to tourist facilities can also service a useful role by providing new sources of jobs and attracting visitors.

117. In order to protect the main function of the business/facility and to protect the vitality and viability of other shopping centres such as village shops, proposals for farm shops, craft shops and shops serving tourist facilities will be required to be ancillary to the existing business/facility. DOE Planning Service may impose conditions controlling the types of goods to be sold and the amount of gross retail floor space.
118. Development of farm shops, craft shops and shops serving tourist facilities in the countryside will be restricted to use of existing buildings in order to protect the visual amenity and character of the area. A new building will only be permitted where existing buildings are not available to accommodate the proposed use, either because they are essential for the maintenance of the existing farm enterprise or are clearly unsuitable for adaptation and re-use. The applicant will be required to satisfactorily demonstrate why existing buildings cannot be used.

## **Policy RRP 12**

### **COMMERCIAL LEISURE DEVELOPMENT**

**Proposals for commercial leisure development may be permitted within existing town and district centres where it is demonstrated that the proposal:**

- will not adversely affect the vitality and viability of the centre, or be likely to undermine its retailing function when considered individually or in combination with other recently completed commercial leisure facilities or extant planning approvals for such facilities;**
- will result in a high standard of design, ensuring the built form, scale, massing and materials to be used contribute positively to the overall environmental quality and character of the centre;**
- provides for attractive, safe and secure access by a choice of means of transport, including public transport, walking, cycling and the car;**
- will not result in adverse traffic impacts such as congestion, or be likely to have a detrimental impact upon road safety;**
- provide adequate car parking facilities;**
- provides a high standard of access for people with disabilities and other groups with impaired mobility; and**
- will not prejudice the implementation of development plans or development scheme policies and proposals.**

**Proposals for commercial leisure development will not be permitted in ground floor locations within primary retail cores except where the commercial leisure development is an element of a mixed-use retail led development scheme.**

**Proposals for commercial leisure development will not be permitted outside existing centres or beyond the limits of settlements.**

### **Justification and Amplification**

119. Commercial leisure development adds to the diversity of uses within centres, contributing to their vitality and viability. Different but complementary uses, during the day and in the evening, can reinforce each other, making the centres more attractive to local residents, shoppers and visitors.
120. The Department wishes to sustain the vitality and viability of town centres however the location of new commercial leisure developments within the primary retail core may occupy prime retail sites. Outside of existing centres or settlements, commercial leisure developments may not only affect the vitality and viability of town centres, but sites will not benefit from the existing infrastructure and transport choices which have developed around existing centres.

## **GLOSSARY**

### **Centre:**

For the purpose of this document the term centre refers only to a town, regional, district, or local centre.

### **Commercial Leisure Development:**

Indoor or covered recreation and leisure facilities including swimming baths, skating rinks, gymnasium and other sport halls; cinemas, concert and dance halls, theatres, amusement arcades and centres, restaurants, cafes and licensed premises.

### **Comparison Goods:**

A broad definition used in this document to describe goods which are not convenience goods and which include furniture, electrical goods, clothing and footwear, toys, hardware, textiles, etc.

### **Convenience Goods:**

A broad definition used in this document to describe goods including food, drinks, tobacco, newspapers, magazines, cleaning materials, toiletries, etc.

### **District Centre:**

A grouping of shops and associated commercial uses within a settlement but separate from and subordinate to the town centre. A District centre may comprise at least one large convenience store and a range of non-retail service uses such as banks and building societies, and leisure uses such as restaurants. Comparison shopping may be present in some district centres but their primary purpose is the provision of convenience retailing which meets peoples everyday needs at the local level.

### **Edge of centre:**

For the purpose of this document an edge of centre location is one which is, outside the town centre but is easily accessible on foot

from the centre. That is, the walking distance does not exceed 200 metres. The pedestrian environment should be generally flat and without steps or other potential obstructions and should not involve crossing a busy road or otherwise coming into conflict with vehicular traffic.

The term edge of centre refers only to locations at the edge of *town* centres.

### **Local Centre:**

A small group or stand of convenience shops which might for example comprise a small supermarket, bakery and pharmacy and sub-post office. Facilities may include small-scale non-retail service uses but the primary purpose of a local centre is the highly accessible provision of every day shopping needs for communities at a neighbourhood level.

### **Mixed Retailing:**

For the purpose of this document mixed retailing refers to a shop or group of shops selling both convenience and comparison goods.

### **Mixed Use Development:**

A development that combines a number of discreet land uses such as residential, retail, office and leisure.

Where the development has a predominant use, for e.g. retailing, it may be described as *retail led*.

### **Out of Centre:**

A location outside the town centre which is not edge of centre but is within the development limits of a settlement.

### **Out of Town:**

A location outside the development limits of a settlement.

### **Town Centre:**

Town centres consist of a mixture of land uses which provide a variety of cultural, leisure, social, retail and other commercial

activities. At the focus of a transport network they promote ready access to a wide range of services for a large section of the population. The term town centre is used in this document when referring to city and town centres.

**Primary Retail Core:**

Development plans may, where appropriate identify a *primary retail core* within a town centre. This designation will indicate where new retail development is to be focused and existing provision is to be enhanced.

**Prime Retail Frontage:**

Development plans may identify a *prime retail frontage* within a town centre or primary retail core. Designation indicates an existing stand or group of shops where conversion to non-retail uses will not be permitted at ground floor level.

**Regional Centre:**

For the purposes of this document the term regional centre is used to refer to the regional shopping centres of Belfast, Londonderry and Sprucefield.

## APPENDIX 1

### Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Confidentiality of Consultations

The Department will publish a summary of responses following completion of the consultation process. Your response, and all other responses to the consultation, may be disclosed on request. The Department can only refuse to disclose information in exceptional circumstances. **Before** you submit your response, please read the paragraphs below on the confidentiality of consultations and they will give you guidance on the legal position about any information given by you in response to this consultation.

The Freedom of Information Act gives the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority, namely, the Department in this case. This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. The Department cannot automatically consider as confidential information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided by you in response to this consultation, including information about your identify, should be made public or treated as confidential.

This means that information provided by you in response to the consultation is unlikely to be treated as confidential, except in very particular circumstances. The Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that:

- the Department should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Department's functions and it would not otherwise be provided;
- the Department should not agree to hold information received from third parties 'in confidence' which is not confidential in nature; and
- acceptance by the Department of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.

For further information about confidentiality of responses please contact the Information Commissioner's Office (or see website at: <http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk> ).

## APPENDIX 2

### Northern Ireland Retail Research

#### Assessment

Roger Tym & Partners were commissioned by DRD to undertake research into retailing within Northern Ireland. This research has assisted the Department in preparing the replacement of the original PPS 5, which was first published in 1996. Part of the research brief included a review of the existing PPS 5. The original PPS 5 has been successful to the extent that it has provided Northern Ireland with a considerable quantity of modern retail floorspace. The consultant's report identified a number of weaknesses within the existing PPS 5, which need to be addressed in the new retail policy. These include:

- *the lack of development plan coverage, which is not anticipated until 2006;*
- *the incomplete base data, which prevents a comprehensive approach;*
- *a lack of clarity and inclusion of too many caveats, which can be exploited;*
- *the unclear tests against which town centres sites should be assessed;*
- *the difficulty of defining edge-of-centre sites by reference to town centres;*
- *out-of-town development has become the norm rather than the exception;*
- *the lack of a requirement to demonstrate a need within an established town centre;*
- *the amount of out-of-centre retail development approved and in the pipeline;*

- *lack of justification for singling out factory outlet centres as a special form of retailing;*
- *the lack of requirement for proposals to reduce the need to travel;*
- *the application of criteria in different ways to different types of retailing has created confusion.*

## Recommendations

The report makes the following key recommendations.

- *The new PPS 5 should give guidance on matters to be taken into account in the preparation of development plans, such as assessment of need, the sequential approach, definition of primary retail areas and town centre health checks.*
- *The need for retail planning policies which will allow the retail industry to continue to prosper while assisting wider policy aims, particularly in terms of sustainability and urban regeneration/renewal.*
- *Policy guidance is required which gives a much firmer indication of the circumstances in which new retail development will or will not be considered acceptable.*
- *Policy guidance requires a more holistic approach to overall retail provision which assesses all types of retail developments equally against a clearly defined set of criteria.*
- *Comprehensive development plan coverage will assist in providing an up to date baseline against which further applications should be assessed.*
- *Development plans should adopt the sequential approach to the location of new retail development thereby reducing the volume of out-of-centre retail development and providing a step in the revitalisation of existing town centres.*
- *The use of the class-of-goods approach rather than the format-driven approach.*

- *The matters which constitute need in both quantitative and qualitative terms should be clearly set out.*
- *A requirement for new retail development on edge-of-centre locations to demonstrate need for the retail development and that a sequential approach has been adopted in selecting the site.*
- *Town centres should be referred to as primary shopping areas as such centres are easier to identify both physically and by reference to rental values, etc.*
- *In the absence of a development plan the developer should demonstrate a need for the retail development.*
- *A consistent approach is required in assessing impact.*
- *Primary shopping areas should be defined in the emerging development plans.*
- *The commitment to town centres needs strengthening in similar ways to that contained within the Scottish guidance.*
- *Both edge-of-centre and out-of-centre developments can have harmful effects on the town centre and there are strong grounds for requiring developments of both types to be considered in similar terms.*
- *Retail warehouse permissions ought to be conditioned to the classic range of truly bulky goods.*
- *Factory outlet centres should be subject to the same tests as other proposals for major retail developments.*
- *There should be a requirement for all major retail development proposed on edge-of-centre or out-of-centre sites to be assessed against a set of relevant criteria.*
- *'Major retail development' should be defined as being over 2,500 square metres as opposed to 1,000 square metres.*

## APPENDIX 3

### Assessing Existing Retail and Leisure Provision

**1. Examine the overall retail catchment area of the centres within the plan area taking into account any significant leakage to centres outside of the plan area.**

- The study area needs to be drawn sufficiently wide to enable the interrelationship between facilities within the plan area and neighbouring centres to be properly examined.
- To define the catchment area it will be necessary to conduct a household survey to establish the existing patterns of shopping behaviour and retail consumer expenditure flows within the plan area. The surveys carried out (face-to-face interviews and/or telephone) should quantify shoppers' behaviour separately for the main goods categories: convenience, comparison and bulky comparison. This data must be analysed carefully to rule out any anomalies, for example, where local knowledge and experience highlights that surveyed trade draw is incorrect, the catchment area must be re-assessed.
- The defined catchment area should now be plotted on a map. The resulting catchment may extend outside of the plan area, reflecting that customers from outside the plan area are there to shop. In other cases the catchment area of the plan may overlap with other catchments indicating that customers from within the plan area are shopping elsewhere.

**2. Dissaggregation of the existing retail provision into the following broad classes of goods (convenience, comparison and bulky comparison).**

- Assess the existing retail provision in the top two tiers of settlements in the plan area, in terms of convenience, comparison and bulky comparison goods. This information can be gained from a number of sources: site surveys, other government departments, planning histories. When

obtaining information from various sources in should be noted that the classification of goods may differ.

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **Town Centre Health Checks – Best Practice Guidance**

#### **Introduction**

1. The purpose of this appendix is to set out a broad methodology for carrying out town centre health checks as part of development plan preparation in Northern Ireland. It sets out the main issues that should be dealt with when carrying out a health check for a town centre. The guidance is based on the principles outlined in the RDS and this draft PPS.
2. It is important to recognise from the outset that health checks are an integral part of the development plan process and crucial to the assessment of retailing need.

#### **Why introduce town centre health checks?**

3. The concept of vitality and viability is central to maintaining and enhancing town centres. Vitality is a measure of how busy a centre is and viability is a measure of its capacity to attract ongoing investment, for maintenance, improvement and adaptation to changing retail needs. Town centre health checks will provide a baseline position, against which future measurement and regular monitoring can be carried out over the plan period.
4. The town centre health check is an important aid to understanding the town centre and will support the development plan process by increasing awareness of town centre change.

#### **Which settlements should be assessed?**

5. It is recommended that these checks be carried out for the top two tiers of settlements in the plan area. Normally they should not be applied to villages.

## Sequence of Study

6. The town centre health checks for each settlement should follow the broad sequence of steps as shown below.

a) Identify study area (i.e. the town centre boundary)

Identify each town centre boundary in broad outline to encompass the main uses, such as shopping, employment and service provision. It is vital that in terms of retailing that the general use by development plans of the “town centre boundary” is replaced by the more specific primary retail core. The primary retail core shall be defined physically by examining pedestrian flows, multiple retailer representation and reference to rental values, which tail off beyond it. It should be noted that edge-of-centre locations are no more than 300 metres from the primary retail core boundary.

b) Site survey; Compile assets/constraints

The following indicators should be assessed to provide an overall health check of the town centre.

- **Accessibility:** This means the ease and convenience of access to a town centre by a choice of travel modes. It will include the frequency and quality of public transport services, the quality, quantity and type of car parking, and the quality of provision for disabled people, pedestrians and cyclists.
- **Customer and retailer views:** Customer surveys should be carried out to assist in monitoring and to assess the effectiveness of town centre improvements and in setting priorities. Interviews in the town centre and at home should be used to establish views of both user and non-users of the centre. This may establish the degree of linked trips or multi-trips.
- **Retailer and commercial leisure profile:** This will involve recording the existing composition, retailer demand and other potential changes.

- Vacancy rates: A survey of the proportion of vacant street level floorspace within the primary retail core is required.
- Pedestrian flows (footfall): A survey of the numbers and movement of people on the streets.
- Prime rental value: A survey of this will give an indication of retailer desire to locate within an area.
- Commercial yield: A survey should be carried out. It is generally accepted that the lower the yield the more confidence investors have in the long-term profitability of the centre.
- Environmental quality: This indicator should assess the physical condition of a town (clutter, litter and graffiti) and the environment attributes (quality of shop fronts, landscaping and open spaces).
- Physical structure of the centre, including opportunity and constraints.

#### c) Local involvement

By taking a pro-active approach and actively encouraging different stakeholder groups to become more involved in town centre management, DOE Planning Service can provide the important catalyst for the successful regeneration of town centres in Northern Ireland. The following is a small example of those who should be actively encouraged to give input to retailing issues within the development plan.

- Northern Ireland Retail Trade Association.
- Local Councils.
- Local consumer groups etc.

#### d) Information storage

It is vital that an information base is set up in a common format between Divisions if data is to be shared, The indicators must be collected and monitored in order to provide baseline and time-series information on the health of centres and to highlight changes within the town as they occur.

### **Conclusions of town centre health checks**

7. The completion of the health checks will allow an overall assessment to be made of each town centre, whether it is robust and vital, holding its own or in decline. DOE Planning Service should co-operate with the private sector in collecting data. The indicators will also provide the necessary context for considering the implications of retail capacity studies.

## **APPENDIX 5**

### **Carrying out a retail capacity study – Best Practice Guidance**

#### **Introduction**

1. The purpose of this Appendix is to set out a broad methodology for carrying out retail capacity studies as part of development plan preparation in Northern Ireland. It sets out the main issues that should be dealt with when carrying out a study. The guidance is based on the principles outlined in the RDS and this draft PPS. The methodology has been formulated by examination of best practice approaches currently undertaken in the rest of the UK and the work of the consultants Roger Tym & Partners employed by DRD to provide detailed research on retail planning in Northern Ireland.

#### **Why carry out retail capacity studies?**

2. These studies will provide a quantitative assessment of the need for additional retail floorspace within the plan area over the plan period. Roger Tym & Partners have provided an overall assessment of retail need for Northern Ireland over a 10-year period, based on the latest population figures and per capita expenditure figures for convenience and comparison goods. These figures have been converted to total floorspace requirements for the whole of Northern Ireland, for both convenience, comparison and bulky comparison goods, based on a high and a low range requirements. It is therefore necessary that the total Northern Ireland retail need for convenience, comparison and bulky comparison goods are allocated to each development plan area and compared with the retail capacity studies carried out for the plan preparation.

#### **Retail capacity study approach**

3. Retail capacity studies should be carried out for the top two tiers of settlements in the plan area. It is important to

emphasise that this exercise must not be used in isolation as a means of determining future retail floorspace needs, or as a base for determining the appropriate scale and form of development in different centres. It must form part of a broad-based review of the current role and opportunities within each town centre. Other indicators such as retailer demand and availability of development opportunities play an important part in determining future retail needs.

4. It is suggested that the following steps should be followed when carrying out a retail capacity study:
  - a) Define the catchment area of the settlement being assessed.
    - The study area needs to be drawn sufficiently wide to enable the interrelationship between facilities within the settlement and neighbouring centres to be properly examined.
    - To define the catchment area it will be necessary to conduct a household survey to establish the existing patterns of shopping behaviour and retail consumer expenditure flows for the settlement. The surveys (face-to-face interviews and/or telephone) should quantify shoppers' behaviour separately for the main goods categories: convenience, comparison and bulky comparison. This data must be analysed carefully to rule out any anomalies, for example, where local knowledge and experience highlights that surveyed trade draw is incorrect, the catchment area must be re-assessed.
    - Within the catchment area figures for expenditure and turnover should be obtained. Expenditure/turnover should balance, but if the catchment area has been correctly drawn and expenditure is greater than turnover, then there must be leakage (people shopping elsewhere) and the settlement is undertrading. If turnover is greater than expenditure, then there must be expenditure from another source (e.g. tourist spending) and the settlement is overtrading. If care is taken when defining the catchment area and the survey data has been

carefully checked it is unlikely that the catchment has been incorrectly drawn, and tourist spending or general leakage is the most likely explanation.

- b) Obtain details of existing floorspace.
- Assess the existing retail floorspace in terms of convenience, comparison and bulky comparison goods. This information should already have been gathered earlier in the plan process, when assessing the existing retail provision. It can be gained from a number of sources: site surveys, other government departments, planning histories. When obtaining information from various sources it should be noted that the classification of goods may differ.
- c) Calculate the projected retail expenditure figures over the plan period.
- Projected retail expenditure figures should be calculated for convenience, comparison and bulky comparison goods.
  - Make allowance for any leakage due to overlapping catchment areas and other forms of retailing such as mail order or internet shopping.
- d) Convert the resulting expenditure figures into floorspace using the appropriate forecast sales densities. Sales densities measure the relative efficiency with which floorspace is used by retailers to convert sales floorspace into turnover. Figures can vary depending on the location, type of retailer and the hierarchy of centres.
- e) Compare the projected floorspace figures with the corresponding estimated figure in the consultant's report or updated figures. A 'best fit' figure for the estimated future floorspace requirement for the plan area should be reached taking into account the scope for variation in sales densities.
- d) Deduct any existing approved and committed floorspace figures from the estimated future requirement to arrive at the net additional floorspace requirement for convenience, comparison and bulky comparison shopping.

**There are a number of important key issues that must be addressed in determining the validity or otherwise of any retail capacity study.**

- The extent to which there is corroborating evidence to support the approach taken to existing sales levels.
- Whether the resultant capacity forecasts are consistent with other evidence to suggest a need for the floorspace indicated.
- The extent to which the outcome is consistent with the objectives of government's policy and the RDS.

## APPENDIX 6

### RETAIL MEASURES TO BE CONTAINED IN DEVELOPMENT PLANS

1. In order to address the series of processes, checks and tests required to be carried out and achieve the objectives of this draft PPS, a schedule of measures to be contained in development plans are outlined below.
2. Development plans must:
  - a) set out the period for the projected retail needs of the plan. This should coincide with the first phase of the plan and the overall plan period;
  - b) identify the towns to be assessed within the development plan area. This should include at least the top two tiers of settlements in the plan area and should exclude villages and smaller settlements;
  - c) for survey purposes, identify each town centre boundary in broad outline to encompass the main uses, such as shopping, employment and service provision;
  - d) carry out the town centre health checks and overall assessment of vitality and viability for at least the top two tiers of settlements within the development plan area;
  - e) from the results of the town centre health checks, make the overall assessment and categorisation of each town centre, using the categories of “robust and vital” or “at risk” or “tired and in decline”;
  - f) designate the primary retail core for town centres where appropriate, the town centre boundary, regional centres, district centres and if appropriate local centres;
  - g) allocate the total floorspace for Northern Ireland for convenience goods and comparison goods to each development plan area, based upon the overall figures provided by the consultants report or updated figures;
  - h) carry out the retail capacity studies for each town centre already identified as outlined in the Development Plan Processes and Appendix 5. The objective is to assess the need for additional floorspace within the plan area for the first phase of the plan;
  - i) assess the total approved and committed floorspace figures for retail developments for the plan area;

- j) calculate the balance of convenience and comparison floorspace remaining; and
- k) establish a retail strategy for the development plan based on the assessment of existing retail provision, the town centre health checks and the retail capacity study.

In addition to the above requirements, it will also be necessary for plans to take into account other prevailing planning policy documents.