



Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5)

Retailing and Town Centres



An Agency within the
Department of the Environment
for Northern Ireland



The Planning Service

An Agency of the Department of the Environment (NI)

Planning Policy Statement 5

Retailing and Town Centres

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INTRODUCTION

- 1** The Department has prepared this Planning Policy Statement (PPS) in accordance with its statutory general function, described in Article 3 of the Planning (NI) Order 1991, " to formulate and co-ordinate policy for securing the orderly and consistent development of land and the planning of that development "
- 2** The Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) administers the planning system in Northern Ireland through the Planning Service Agency and is responsible for regulating development and land use in the interests of the community.
- 3** Planning Policy Statements set out the policies of the Department of the Environment on different aspects of land use planning. Their contents will be taken into account in preparing development plans and may also be material to decisions on individual planning applications and appeals.
- 4** This Planning Policy Statement sets out the Department's policy for town centres and retail developments for all of Northern Ireland.

OBJECTIVES AND APPROACH

- 5 The Government's policy objectives for town centres and retail developments are:
- to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres;
 - to focus development, especially retail development, in locations where the proximity of businesses facilitates competition from which all consumers are able to benefit and maximises the opportunity to use means of transport other than the car;
 - to maintain an efficient, competitive and innovative retail sector; and
 - to ensure the availability of a wide range of shops, employment services and facilities to which people have easy access by a choice of means of transport.
- 6 The Department is committed to allowing freedom of choice and flexibility in terms of retail development throughout Northern Ireland and to assist the provision of a wide range of shopping opportunities to which the whole community has access. It is not the function of land use planning to prevent competition among retailers or between methods of retailing, nor to preserve existing commercial interests. However, the Department recognises the value and importance of established shopping areas in town, district and local centres, and is therefore committed to protecting their vitality and viability.

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- 7 The Transportation Principles announced by the Minister for the Environment in January 1995 and the document 'Transportation in Northern Ireland - The Way Forward' launched in October 1995 have set a new direction for transportation planning in Northern Ireland. This new policy direction will seek to balance aspirations for mobility and the need for economic growth against responsibility for conserving the built and natural environment for future generations. The overall aims of policy will be to reduce, where possible, the need for travel; encourage the use of alternatives to the private car and provide an efficient, safe and accessible transportation system that offers better choice and mobility for all its users. The Department is committed to these policy aims and will determine applications for major retail development in accordance with the achievement of these aims. In pursuit of these aims, the Department will place particular emphasis on public transport provision and on ensuring good access for pedestrians and cyclists.

PLANNING STRATEGY FOR RURAL NORTHERN IRELAND

- 8 The Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland (the Rural Strategy), published in September 1993, covers all the towns, villages and countryside outside the Belfast Urban Area, the adjoining towns of Carrickfergus and Bangor, and Londonderry. It provides a comprehensive framework for the preparation of development plans and establishes the objectives and policies, including those which are related to retail development, which are appropriate to the particular circumstances of those parts of Northern Ireland. Many of the policies relating to retail development in the Rural Strategy are incorporated into this Planning Policy Statement, which applies to Northern Ireland as a whole.

The retail development policies in this Statement do, however, add to or amend those stated within the Rural Strategy, and in particular, this Planning Policy Statement: Retailing and Town Centres will supersede the following policies in the Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland:

- Policy IC 9 Town Centres
- Policy IC 10 Major Retail Developments
- Policy IC 11 Retail Warehouses
- Policy IC 12 Neighbourhood Shopping
- Policy IC 13 Local and Village Shops
- Policy IC 14 Rural Shops

DEVELOPMENT PLANS

- 9** This Planning Policy Statement will take precedence over existing development plans, in relation to retail planning policy and policies for town, district and local centres. Future development plans will take account of and be consistent with the policies contained within this Statement. The Planning Policy Statement and development plans provide an important basis for deciding planning applications.
- 10** Development plans cater for the development needs of retailing alongside demands from other forms of development, and for the protection of the environment. They give retail developers and local communities greater certainty about the types of development that will or will not be permitted in a given location. The Department consults widely in the course of plan preparation.

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- 11** Development plans will identify policies for retailing in a specific area and may indicate where new retail development is to be focused and existing provision is to be enhanced. Development plans may, where appropriate, identify a primary retail core within town centres. Plans may also identify retail development opportunity sites and the nature and scale of acceptable retail developments in appropriate locations may be indicated.
 - 12** Development Plans may identify locations for different types of retail development. Applications for retail development will not normally be permitted on land zoned for other uses. However, where substantial areas of land are zoned for residential purposes, a suitable site may be identified in the development plan for local shopping facilities in such zoned areas.
 - 13** In the course of preparation of development plans an assessment of the health of town centres may be made (see paragraph 18). This will assist in informing local policies and proposals and may be useful in assessing the impact of out-of-centre retail proposals. Health checks will also provide the basis for future monitoring of town centre vitality and viability.

TOWN CENTRES

- 14** Town centres consist of a mixture of land uses, often interdependent and with a variety of roles. They provide shopping, employment, services and facilities for all the community. An attractive and flourishing town centre can enhance the quality of life of its visitors, stimulate economic investment and support and encourage a whole range of cultural, leisure, social and commercial activity. The location of such uses in town centres, which are normally also the focus of transportation networks, promotes accessibility for a large section of the population. Shopping largely underpins the use and value of town centres and makes a major contribution to their vitality and viability. Accordingly, town centres should normally be the first choice for major new retail developments.
- 15** The Department is committed to protecting the vitality and viability of existing town centres. The Department will seek to ensure adequate provision of retailing and related facilities, accessible to the whole community, through support for and enhancement of established town centres.
- 16** The Government has recognised the special difficulties that have faced Northern Ireland's town centres and has responded by facilitating and implementing regeneration measures. Many town centres are showing signs of revitalisation and the Department aims to encourage and maintain this trend.
- 17** The Department also recognises that the centres of smaller towns in Northern Ireland may be particularly vulnerable, because of their size, to the impact of out-of-centre retail development. The potential impact of proposed retail development on these centres will, therefore, be a material planning consideration.

Vitality and Viability of Town Centres

18 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 needs. Although no single indicator can effectively measure the health of a town centre, the use of a series of them can provide a view of performance and offer a framework for assessing vitality and viability. Some or all of the indicators below can be used to carry out a 'health check' of the town centre and the Department will undertake such health checks, where feasible, as part of the preparation of development plans. These health checks also provide information which the Department will take into account in assessing the impact of out-of-centre developments:

- accessibility: the ease and convenience of means of travel, including the frequency, penetration and quality of public transport services, the quality, quantity, location and type of car parking, and the quality of provision for people with a mobility handicap, pedestrians and cyclists;
- customer views: surveys of customers' views;
- diversity of uses: amount and location of floorspace for different uses and how this is changing;
- environmental quality of the centre;
- pedestrian flow: the number and movement of people on the streets, in different locations, at different times of the day or evening and over a period of time;
- retailer profile: the existing composition, retailer demand and other potential changes;
- retailers' views: surveys of the views of existing town centre retailers;
- shop rents: pattern of movement in that part of the town centre with the highest rents; and

- vacancy rates: particularly the proportion of vacant street level floorspace in primary shopping areas;
- 19** The carrying out of town centre health checks should assist the Department in identifying any early signs of decline in the centre. The Department may, where appropriate, develop policies for the centre to address the problem of decline and provide a basis for enhancement of the centre's potential as a location for other suitable town centre uses.
- 20** The Department recognises that town centre management can contribute to the vitality and viability of town centres by generating civic pride and giving confidence to investors and retailers. Whilst many factors affecting the quality of a town centre lie outside the planning system, town centre management initiatives may be developed by local authorities in partnership with the private sector and the local community.
- 21** The Department provides funding through programmes such as the Urban Development Grant in Belfast and Londonderry, Environmental Improvement, Pedestrianisation, Comprehensive Development, Making Belfast Work and the Londonderry Initiative for urban regeneration. The Department, jointly with the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) funds, also provides funding for town centre regeneration outside Belfast and Londonderry through the Urban Development Programme and the Community Property Development Scheme. These programmes all make a significant contribution to the regeneration of town centres and urban areas generally.

Diversity of Use in Town Centres

- 22** The diversity of uses in town centres makes an important contribution to their vitality and viability. This, combined with their accessibility, means that they are often the most appropriate location for activities that attract many people. The appropriate mix of uses will depend on the nature and size of the town, however there will be a presumption in favour of development that would make a positive contribution to ensuring that existing town centres continue to provide a focus for shopping.
- 23** A compact and attractive shopping environment is important in that it promotes choice and convenience. Within primary retail core areas, the Department will control non-retail uses at ground floor level. Applications for change of use from shop to local services, such as building society offices, banks and estate agents, restaurants or hot-food take-away premises may be acceptable except where:
- there would be a significant loss of retail floorspace at ground level;
 - a clustering of non-retail uses is created; or
 - the area overall is tending to be dominated by non-retail uses.

Within town centres, but outside the primary retail core, proposals for local services' offices and food uses will be determined on their merits. In smaller towns, where retailing and services are grouped together in the town centre, each case will be determined on the potential impact on the centre itself.

- 24** In order to ensure a compact and vital retail core the increase of retail floorspace through the refurbishment of existing units and sympathetic redevelopment will be encouraged.
- 25** Town centres will be promoted as the principal locations for office, leisure, entertainment, cultural and service uses. Proposals for such development will be encouraged where they contribute to the diversity and vitality of each centre, without encroaching on the primary retail core, where defined, at ground floor level.
- 26** The Department will encourage major office, leisure, entertainment, cultural and service uses to locate in town centres. Where such uses cannot be accommodated within the town centre the Department will favour locations which are on the edge of the town centre.
- 27** Residential development within town centres can contribute to its vitality. The Living over the Shop scheme could also make a significant contribution to the enhancement of town centres and offer opportunities for supporting urban regeneration policies. Planning permission may be granted for residential use above shops and other business premises, within town centres, provided that the primary retail core and commercial functions are not prejudiced and that they comply with normal planning and environmental considerations. The level of car parking provision which would be appropriate, for such residential development, will be considered in the circumstances of each particular case.

Physical Environment of Town Centres

- 28 The quality of the environment in town centres is of great importance. A high quality public realm can increase business confidence, foster civic pride and emphasise local identity. The Department will, where appropriate and within financial constraints, support proposals for:
- further pedestrianisation;
 - environmental improvements, in particular to make the pedestrian environment more welcoming while reducing the priority given to the motor vehicle;
 - rear servicing of premises to reduce on-street congestion and conflict between pedestrians and vehicles;
 - enhancement of open spaces;
 - making better use of derelict, underused or unused land;
 - conserving and enhancing historic buildings and townscape;
 - provision of an appropriate level of car parking; and
 - provision for cycle parking.

- 29** The Department wishes to emphasise the importance of urban design within town centres and will require development proposals in town centres to make a positive contribution to townscape and be sensitive to the character of the area surrounding the site in terms of design, scale and use of materials of both the buildings and the space around the buildings. New development within town centres should minimise visual, functional and physical disruption and enhance or create interest, vitality and variety. Insensitive development which disrupts the scale and rhythm of townscape will be resisted. Building design will need to be architecturally sympathetic to the important townscape elements of sensitive locations, such as Conservation Areas or the settings of listed buildings. The Department may prepare development briefs for development opportunity sites which would set out the appropriate design guidance.
- 30** Careful design of the pedestrian environment is particularly important for people with disabilities. The needs of people with disabilities will be taken into consideration by measures to help create an accessible environment and in the determination of planning applications for the development of buildings to which the public have access. The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (NI) Act 1978 requires developers of specified types of buildings to provide suitable means of access, parking and toilet facilities to meet the needs of people with disabilities, where practical and reasonable. The types of building to which the Act applies are those open to the public (such as shops, restaurants, hotels, places of entertainment, leisure and community buildings), places of employment and education buildings.

Access to Town Centres

- 31** Town centres are major generators of journeys for employment, shopping, services, and entertainment. They are the focus for a large number of trips and typically act as the hub of public transport networks. New development in town centres can encourage the use of public transport or enable one car journey to serve several purposes and thus help reduce the number and length of car journeys. Town centres can therefore play an important role in reducing the need to travel and reliance on the car.
- 32** The Department issued 'Transportation in Northern Ireland: The Way Forward' in October 1995. This document:
- highlights the transportation issues which need to be addressed;
 - identifies the choices which will have to be made;
 - explains what the Department proposes to do in the short-term; and
 - seeks to encourage debate and comment on the matters raised.
- 33** The document sets out the Department's position with regard to the accessibility of town centres. The Department now considers that it will be neither possible nor desirable to meet the predicted demand for parking in larger urban centres. However it is recognised that this could conflict with other objectives. A balance must be struck between :
- strategic objectives of reducing travel by car;
 - the mobility requirements of people who have no alternatives to private car travel;
 - the need to ensure the commercial viability of town and city centres; and
 - traffic management and safety.

- 34 The Department's current car parking policy is being reviewed and it will be revised to reflect its role as a major component of transportation strategy. In order to discourage all day parking in urban centres, where public transport provides an alternative, the Department will consider:
- a more restrictive development control policy for sites to be used for non-operational all day parking;
 - widening the scope for using pricing mechanisms in appropriate circumstances to discourage long-stay parking; and
 - the control of parking in residential areas.

PLANNING FOR RETAIL DEVELOPMENTS

Regional Shopping Centres

- 35 Northern Ireland is a comparatively small region with a population of 1.6 million and a settlement pattern of a number of towns and villages scattered throughout its countryside. Belfast City Centre performs an important role in servicing a regional shopping requirement, while retailing in the City Centre of Londonderry serves the north-west region. Northern Ireland has one purpose-built, out-of-town regional shopping centre at Sprucefield. This occupies a unique geographical location and serves a wide catchment area. In view of the nature, size and distribution of Northern Ireland's towns and the role of existing regional centres the Department considers that there is no justifiable need for any new regional out-of-town shopping centres in Northern Ireland. The Department will also continue to control the scale and nature of the Sprucefield Centre taking into account all the relevant policies in this Planning Policy Statement and in particular the impact, of any proposed development at Sprucefield, on the environment generally; existing centres and traffic.

Major Retail Development

36 Major retail development comprises retail development with over 1000 square metres of gross retail floorspace. The Department's policies for types of major retail development are set out at paragraphs 38 to 48 (inclusive). Proposals for major retail development in the countryside, outside the development limits of settlements, will not be acceptable.

37 Conditions restricting the scale and nature of major out-of-centre retail developments may be imposed on permissions to protect the shopping role of existing centres. Such conditions may specify minimum or maximum store sizes and types of goods to be sold. Where appropriate, a planning agreement (under Article 40 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991) may be used to secure developer contributions to new or improved public transport provision or road improvements or to facilitate, regulate or restrict developments.

38 Town centres will be the preferred location for major comparison shopping and mixed retailing development proposals. The availability of suitable sites within the town centre, in particular those which have been identified in the development plan, will be an important consideration where development is proposed outside the town centre. Applicants should be able to demonstrate that all potential town centre sites have been thoroughly assessed.

39 Major proposals for comparison shopping or mixed retailing will only be permitted in out-of centre locations where the Department is satisfied that suitable town centre sites are not available and where the development satisfies all the following criteria:

- complements or meets existing deficiencies in the overall shopping provision;
- is unlikely to lead to a significant loss of investment in existing centres;

Comparison Shopping and Mixed Retailing

- is unlikely to have an adverse impact on the vitality or viability of an existing centre or undermine its convenience or comparison shopping function;
- will not lead to an unreasonable or detrimental impact on amenity, traffic movements or road safety;
- will be accessible by a choice of means of transport;
- will provide adequate car parking, cycle parking and facilities for other transport modes, where appropriate;
- is to a standard of design, of both the buildings and the spaces around the buildings, which contributes positively to townscape and is sensitive to the surrounding area;
- provides suitable access for the disabled;
- will be unlikely to add to the overall number and length of car trips and should, preferably, contribute to a decrease; and
- will be unlikely to prejudice the implementation of development plan policies and proposals.

Where a proposed out-of-centre development satisfies the above criteria the Department will favour an edge-of-centre location over a location elsewhere out-of-centre.

- 40** Where a primary retail core has been identified, in a development plan, as the preferred location for major retail development, the availability of suitable sites within the primary retail core, in particular those which have been identified in the development plan, will be an important consideration in cases where development is proposed outside the core. Applicants should be able to demonstrate that all potential primary retail core sites have been thoroughly assessed. Major proposals for comparison shopping or mixed retailing will only be permitted within a town centre, but outside the primary core, where the Department is satisfied that suitable core sites are not available and where the development satisfies all the criteria set out at paragraph 39.

Food Supermarkets and Food Superstores

41 Food supermarkets and food superstores often play a vital role as an anchor store in maintaining the quality and range of shopping in existing centres. In these locations they also provide an essential service for less mobile members of the community. Food superstores however, rely on the close proximity of adequate car parking and for this reason locations within existing town centres may be inappropriate. Edge-of-centre sites may provide a preferred alternative in many towns and in the interest of maintaining and strengthening the adjoining town centre this may require the re-use of derelict land or the redevelopment of suitable sites. Proposals for food supermarkets and food superstores on sites outside town centres, including edge-of-centre sites, may be acceptable provided that the proposal satisfies all the criteria set out at paragraph 39. In addition, the availability of suitable sites, for the proposed development, within the town centre, in particular those which have been identified in a development plan, will be an important consideration.

Retail Warehouses

42 Proposals for retail warehouses selling bulky electrical, furnishing and DIY goods, may be acceptable within town centres, however such developments are often difficult to accommodate in town centres given their space requirements for large showrooms, parking and servicing.

43 Favourable consideration will, therefore, be given to proposals for retail warehouses of an appropriate scale on suitable sites in edge-of-centre locations. In exceptional circumstances, a retail warehouse proposal elsewhere in an out-of-centre location may be acceptable, where it cannot be practically or appropriately accommodated in either the town centre or on the edge of a town centre, provided that the proposal satisfies all the criteria set out at paragraph 39. In addition, the proposal must be of an appropriate scale for the location.

44 Permission for retail warehouses may be subject to conditions specifying a minimum or maximum floorspace, preventing sub-division into smaller units and restricting the type of goods to be sold.

Factory Outlets

- 45** Individual retail outlets adjacent to factories are an established part of the retail scene. Favourable consideration will be given to such new proposals, provided that:
- the retail outlet sells only the products of the factory itself;
 - the scale of the outlet would not adversely affect the vitality and viability of existing centres;
 - the retail outlet remains clearly secondary to the manufacturing use;
 - it would not lead to a detrimental impact on amenity, traffic movements or road safety; and
 - it is satisfactory in terms of car parking, design and landscaping.
- 46** Factory outlet centres proposals will be acceptable in town centres and the Department will encourage such proposals. Proposals for factory outlet centres, of an appropriate scale, in out-of-centre locations may be acceptable provided that the proposal satisfies all the criteria set out at paragraph 39.

Warehouse Clubs

- 47** Despite restrictions on those who may shop in warehouse clubs, these outlets often share many of the characteristics of large retail outlets. Favourable consideration will, therefore, be given to proposals for warehouse clubs of an appropriate scale on suitable sites in edge-of-centre locations. In exceptional circumstances, a warehouse club proposal elsewhere in an out-of-centre location may be acceptable, where it cannot be practically or appropriately accommodated in either a town centre or on the edge of a town centre, provided that the proposal:
- is of appropriate scale for the location;
 - is unlikely to have an adverse impact on the vitality and viability of an existing centre;
 - will not lead to an unreasonable or detrimental impact on amenity, traffic movements or road safety;
 - is satisfactory in terms of car parking, design and landscaping; and
 - is unlikely to add to the overall number and length of car trips and should, preferably, contribute to a decrease; and
 - is unlikely to prejudice the implementation of development plan policies and proposals.
- 48** Permissions for warehouse clubs may be subject to conditions specifying maximum or minimum floorspace, preventing sub-division and restricting the range and type of goods to be sold.

PLANNING FOR LOCAL SHOPPING

District and Local Centres

- 49 The primary role of this level of retailing is the provision of locally accessible convenience goods. District and local shopping centres will be retained and where possible enhanced. Proposals for the development of convenience retailing and shops whose primary function is to meet a local need, which are located in or adjoining existing district or local centres will be encouraged provided that:
- the proposal meets existing deficiencies in local shopping provision;
 - the proposal would be unlikely to have an adverse impact on the vitality and viability of existing centres;
 - the development can be successfully integrated into the centre; and
 - the development would not lead to a detrimental impact on amenity, traffic movements and road safety.

50 Proposals for new district centres, over 1000 square metres gross retail floorspace, will be considered within the appropriate policies for major retail developments contained in paragraphs 38 to 41 (inclusive). New local centres, of an appropriate scale, within established residential areas may be acceptable where there is a clear deficiency in local provision and where the proposed site is acceptable in terms of environmental and traffic considerations. The provision of facilities for pedestrians and cyclists will be encouraged and environmental improvements and car parking facilities within local centres will be encouraged where appropriate.

51 District and local centres often provide, in addition to retailing, services to the local community. Associated service and community uses such as libraries, clinics and local offices are often appropriate and desirable and will normally be acceptable within or adjoining district and local centres. Where they predominate, however, they can erode the level of retailing provided. Consideration may be given to the change of use of retail premises to non-retail use, within a district and local centre, dependent on:

- the need to retain local retailing;
- the likely impact of the development on the vitality and viability of the centre;
- the clustering or dominance of non-retail uses;
- the level of vacancy within the centre;
- the likely contribution of the proposed use to meeting a legitimate local need; and
- the demand for car parking and traffic generation.

Local Shops

- 52 Local shops have an important role to play in supplying the needs of the local population. Proposals for small-scale retail development will normally be directed to existing centres, however favourable consideration may be given to proposals for new local shops in neighbourhoods currently deficient in shopping provision and in new housing developments where:
- there is a defined local need that cannot be met by existing shopping facilities in the area;
 - there would be likely to be no significant adverse impact on the vitality and viability of existing centres;
 - there are no existing vacant and suitable premises in the area; and
 - the proposal is of appropriate scale and is acceptable in terms of design, impact on residential amenity, servicing and parking arrangements.

Village Shops

- 53 Village shops play an important role in supplying the day-to-day needs of the rural community and such shops supply a service to local residents. The provision of village shops in appropriate locations will be facilitated and the Department will encourage the development of local retailing in villages provided the scale of provision and the type of goods sold clearly indicate that the shop is primarily designed to cater for the needs of the village and its catchment population. Conditions may be imposed on the scale of development and the type of goods sold. Road safety, car parking, design and impact on adjacent residential properties will be important factors in the determination of applications for village shops. The design of village shops, and in particular the shopfronts, should be in keeping with the character and architecture of the settlement. Particular emphasis will be placed on design where the proposal lies within an existing or proposed Conservation Area.

Rural Shops

- 54** Retailing will generally be directed to existing settlements of appropriate size and the development of inappropriate retail facilities in the open countryside will be resisted. However, those retail facilities which may be considered appropriate outside the development limits of settlements include:
- farm shops, clearly tied to an existing farm holding or occupant;
 - shops designed to serve tourist or recreational facilities and clearly secondary to the main use;
 - small-scale shops attached to existing or approved craft workshops in order to permit direct retailing of the product to the public; and
 - a small-scale shop designed to serve a designated dispersed rural community.
- 55** Such retail facilities will normally be required to be located within existing buildings. Outside Green Belts and Countryside Policy Areas, new buildings or extensions may be acceptable provided they are small in scale and can be satisfactorily integrated into the landscape and preferably into an existing group of buildings.

Petrol Filling Stations

56 Most petrol filling stations now provide a wide range of retail goods in the associated shop. Many function as the local shop or small supermarket serving the surrounding population. Whilst the important role of such retail provision is recognised, such shops should, however, clearly remain secondary to the use as a petrol filling station. Proposals for shops, associated with petrol filling stations, having over 250 square metres net retail floorspace will be assessed with regard to their potential impact on existing shopping facilities and the acceptability of the proposed location for a retail use. Along major road corridors, outside urban areas, the Department will control the scale of associated retail units to prevent significant retail attractions being created contrary to the general policy of protecting the vitality and viability of existing centres.

ASSESSMENT OF RETAIL DEVELOPMENTS

Assessment of Major Retail Proposals

57 The Department will have regard to the following key considerations in assessing proposals for major retail development (over 1000 square metres gross retail floorspace) in locations outside a town centre, or where appropriate, outside the defined primary retail core:

- the extent to which the proposal complements existing facilities or meets existing deficiencies in shopping provision;
- the extent to which the development would complement or undermine the strategy for existing centres set out in the Area or Local Plan, taking into account progress being made on its implementation, in particular through public investment;
- its accessibility by a choice of means of transport;

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- its likely effect on overall travel patterns and overall number and length of car trips;
 - the likely implications for the continuing vitality and viability of existing centres if the proposed development does not take place; and
 - the likely impact on the vitality and viability of existing centres.

In assessing the likely impact on the vitality and viability of a centre, the following will be taken into consideration:

- the potential effects on future private investment needed to safeguard the vitality and viability of that centre (taking account of the likely growth in population and expenditure);
- the potential changes to the quality, attractiveness and character of the centre;
- the potential changes to the role of the centre in the economic and social life of the community;
- the potential changes to the range of services that the centre will continue to provide; and
- the potential increase in the number of vacant properties in the primary retail core.

58 In considering impact of major retail development proposals on the vitality and viability of existing centres, the Department will consider the incremental effects of the new development on existing centres, where appropriate. The Department will also take into account the likely cumulative effects of recently completed retail developments and outstanding planning permissions for retail development, where appropriate.

- 59** In addition all proposals for major shopping development will be subject to assessment against criteria relating to impact on local amenity, traffic generation and access, car parking, public transport provision, design and landscaping. In order to properly evaluate the traffic impact of development proposals and to determine what infrastructure improvements may be necessary, a Traffic Impact Assessment may be required in support of the planning application.
- 60** The Department will normally require that all applications for out-of-centre or out-of-town retail development over 1000 square metres gross retail floorspace should be accompanied by information on:
- the applicant's approach to site selection and the availability of suitable alternative town centre sites;
 - its likely trading impact on existing centres, including consideration of the cumulative effects of the proposal, recently completed retail developments and outstanding planning permissions for retail development, where appropriate;
 - its accessibility by a choice of means of transport giving an assessment of the proportion of customers likely to arrive by different modes of transport;
 - the contribution that the proposal may make to meeting existing deficiencies in shopping provision or complementing existing facilities;
 - the likely changes in travel patterns over the catchment area and, where appropriate
 - any significant environmental impacts.

Environmental Assessment

61 Where a primary retail core has been identified in a development plan the Department may require such assessments to be submitted for proposals located outside the core but inside the town centre. Such assessments may also be necessary for smaller proposals, depending on their location.

62 Some major retail developments may be subject to environmental assessment under the provisions of the Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations (NI) 1989. Environmental Assessment is mandatory for projects listed in Schedule 1 to the Regulations, whereas those listed in Schedule 2 require assessment if they are likely to have significant environmental effect because of factors such as their nature, size or location.

63 The Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) Development Control Advice Note 10 advises on the criteria to be applied when a form of development may require preparation of an environmental statement as a prerequisite to consideration of an application for planning permission.

Planning Policy Statements

64 The following Planning Policy Statement is also of relevance to retailing and town centres:

Planning Policy Statement 3 *Development Control: Roads Considerations*

Development Control Advice Notes

65 Development Control Advice Notes are prepared by the Department to provide advice on the planning criteria to be applied when an application for a certain form of development is being considered. The following advice notes are of particular relevance to retailing and town centres:

Development Control Advice Note 1 *Amusement Centres*

Development Control Advice Note 3 *Bookmaking Offices*

Development Control Advice Note 4 *Hot Food Bars*

Development Control Advice Note 5 *Taxi Offices*

Development Control Advice Note 11 *Access for People with Disabilities*

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Edge-of-centre -	for shopping purposes, a location within easy walking distance (ie. 200 - 300 metres) of the town centre.
Out-of-centre -	A location outside a town centre boundary but within defined development limits.
Out-of-town -	A location outside defined development limits of settlements.
Centres -	For the purpose of this PPS centres refers to city centre, town centre, district centre and local centre.
Town centre -	for the purposes of this PPS town centre refers to city centres and town centres which provide a broad range of facilities and services and which fulfil a function as a focus both for the community and for public transport.
District centre -	Groups of shops, separate from the town centre, usually containing at least one food supermarket or superstore and non-retail service uses such as banks, building societies and restaurants.
Local centre -	Small groupings of shops, typically comprising a general grocery store, a sub-post office, occasionally a pharmacy and other small shops of a local nature.
Supermarket -	Self-service store selling mainly food, with a gross retail floorspace of less than 2500 square metres, often with its own car parking.
Superstore -	Self-service store selling mainly food, or food and non-food goods, usually with more than 2500 square metres gross retail floorspace with car parking.
Retail warehouses -	Large single-level individual store with a minimum of 1000 square metres gross retail floorspace normally selling goods such as DIY goods, furniture, electrical goods, carpets and gardening goods, with car parking provision.

Retail warehouse parks -	An agglomeration of at least three retail warehouses.
Warehouse clubs -	Out-of-centre businesses specialising in bulk sales of reduced priced goods. The operator may limit access to businesses, organisations or classes of individual through membership restrictions.
Factory outlets -	Retail businesses specialising in the sale of manufacturer's products direct to the public.
Factory outlet centres -	Groups of shops specialising in selling seconds and end-of-line goods at discounted prices.
Convenience goods -	Broadly defined as food, drinks, tobacco, newspapers, magazines, cleaning materials, toilet articles.
Comparison goods -	Other goods not classified as convenience goods.
Comparison shopping -	For the purposes of this PPS comparison shopping refers to shops selling comparison goods, but excludes retail warehouses.
Mixed retailing -	For the purposes of this PPS mixed retailing refers to a shop or groups of shops selling convenience and comparison goods, but excludes retail warehouses, warehouse clubs and free-standing food supermarkets and food superstores.

Retailing is a dynamic industry and new forms of retailing may rapidly evolve which are inadequately described by current conventional technology.