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## Consultation Document

### Draft Technical Advice Note 4: Retail Centre Development

Date of issue: **3 September 2015**

Action required: Responses by **26 November 2015**

## Overview

This consultation seeks your views on the Welsh Government's proposed revision of national planning policy in relation to retailing and retail centres.

The draft policy documents are a result of research work undertaken by Genecon in 2014 which made 15 recommendations for the revision of planning policy in Wales on retail and town centres.

Chapter 10 of Planning Policy Wales (PPW) has been revised. TAN4 has been rewritten to reflect the changes that have occurred to the retail sector since the first document was published in 1996.

## How to respond

The closing date for the consultation is 26 November 2015. You can reply in any of the following ways.

### Email:

Please complete the consultation response form at Annex 3 and send it to:  
[planconsultations-c@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:planconsultations-c@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

### Post:

Please complete the consultation response form at Annex 3 and send it to the address below:

PPW Chapter 10 and TAN4 consultation  
Planning Policy Branch  
Planning Directorate  
Welsh Government  
Cathays Park  
Cardiff  
CF10 3NQ

## Further information and related documents

Large print, Braille and alternative language versions of this document are available on request.

Planning Policy Wales 2014  
[www.gov.wales/topics/planning/policy/ppw/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/planning/policy/ppw/?lang=en)

Technical Advice Note 4: Retailing and Town Centres  
[www.gov.wales/topics/planning/policy/tans/tan4/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/planning/policy/tans/tan4/?lang=en)

Town Centres and Retail Dynamics - Towards a Revised Retail Planning Policy for Wales  
[www.gov.wales/topics/planning/planningresearch/publishedresearch/town-centres-and-retail-dynamics/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/planning/planningresearch/publishedresearch/town-centres-and-retail-dynamics/?lang=en)

## Contact details

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## Data protection

How the views and information you give us will be used

Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about. It may also be seen by other Welsh Government staff to help them plan future consultations.

The Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. This helps to show that the consultation was carried out properly. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then blank them out.

Names or addresses we blank out might still get published later, though we do not think this would happen very often. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 allow the public to ask to see information held by many public bodies, including the Welsh Government. This includes information which has not been published. However, the law also allows us to withhold information in some circumstances. If anyone asks to see information we have withheld, we will have to decide whether to release it or not. If someone has asked for their name and address not to be published, that is

an important fact we would take into account. However, there might sometimes be important reasons why we would have to reveal someone's name and address, even though they have asked for them not to be published. We would get in touch with the person and ask their views before we finally decided to reveal the information.

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## **Draft Technical Advice Note 4- Planning for Retail Centre Development**

### **1. Introduction**

1.1 This Technical Advice Note (TAN) should be read in conjunction with Planning Policy Wales (PPW) which sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government. PPW, TANs and Circulars should be taken into account by local planning authorities in Wales in the preparation of Local Development Plans (LDPs). They may be material to decisions on individual planning applications and will be taken into account by Inspectors and the Welsh Government in the determination of appeals and called-in planning applications.

1.2 Technical Advice Note (TAN) 4 – Retailing and Town Centres (1996) is hereby cancelled.

### **2. Objectives**

- **Promote centres identified in a local retail hierarchy, which are responsive to change, as the most sustainable locations to live, shop, socialise and conduct business.**

2.1 Planning Policy Wales recognises that retail centres are the focal point for shopping, leisure and tourism, local services and business / employment opportunities. This ‘town centres first’ approach ensures, through policy and decision making, that retail centres are the first choice location in assessing the most appropriate places for a wide variety of developments. The co-location of these uses and their high levels of accessibility by a range of transport options make them sustainable locations.

2.2 In order for these centres to be sustainable in the longer term they need to react to changes in the retail and commercial market place and adapt to the changing needs of society. Planning policies and development management decisions also need to take account of these changes, whilst ensuring that retail centres remain sustainable in the longer term.

- **Sustain and enhance the vibrancy, viability and attractiveness of retail centres**

2.3 Not all retail centres have been able to respond to changes in the sector as quickly or as effectively as others to ensure their vibrancy in the longer term. Welsh Government policy objectives, through planning and other initiatives seek to ensure that retail centres have a positive future; through flexible planning policies and targeted investment in physical regeneration which form part of a comprehensive strategy or plan for their area.

- **Improving access to, and within, these centres by all modes of transport, especially walking, cycling and public transport.**

2.4 Good access to, and within, retail centres is key, both to the vibrancy of those places and to ensure that everyone in society has access to the wide variety of goods and services. The ability to walk, cycle or use public transport to get to retail centres is important in this regard and ensuring that this access is sustainable in nature.

2.5 Once at a centre, it should be easy for people to access services through sensitively designed public realm schemes and access to buildings which meet statutory requirements. Consultation with relevant stakeholders in the design of new public areas is therefore essential.

### **3. Development Plans**

3.1 Through development plan policies and supplementary guidance, local planning authorities should develop their retail evidence base and plan positively to protect and enhance the vitality, viability and attractiveness of their retail centres.

3.2 Local planning authorities should also work together when establishing their retail evidence bases and strategies, not only to identify cross boundary issues but also to better understand how their retail hierarchies fit in to the larger than local area (defined as larger than a single local authority). Retail catchment areas of established retail centres do not necessarily reflect local authority boundaries. Local planning authorities should consider the role and functions of such centres in relation to development plan allocations, policies and strategies.

### **4. Defining centre hierarchies**

4.1 In guiding development to the most appropriate location, local planning authorities, in their development plans, should develop a local hierarchy to classify their various retail centres, and apply appropriate policies to those centres based on their characteristics. This locally-driven approach is seen as most appropriate as urban and rural areas will have different scales and types of centre which cannot be defined consistently at the national level.

4.2 In assigning a category to each retail centre, local planning authorities should also take into account the likely future status of that centre. For example, if, as part of the retailing strategy a centre has been identified for growth and new sites allocated, then this should be reflected in the status of that centre. Likewise, if the strategy is to manage the decline of a centre, this should also be reflected in that centre's position in the hierarchy.

4.3 Once the hierarchy has been established, appropriate policies may be developed for different types of centre. These will primarily relate to changes of use of existing buildings and how flexible a local planning authority wishes to be in

dealing with such applications, in accordance with their retail strategy and how they foresee retail centres developing in the future.

4.4 Out of centre or out of town retail parks and factory outlet centres, whose development has been based solely on retailing should not normally be included in the centre hierarchy. However, this should not preclude these destinations being assessed against the locally-set criteria on the range and choice of services and the scale and nature of the retail floorspace, to ascertain if, through time, these centres have matured into retail centres in their own right, offering the same level of service provision and being as accessible as traditional centres.

4.5 This process is intrinsically linked to the sequential approach to allocating new development sites; it should therefore be undertaken in the formulation of development plans and not on a case-by-case basis in relation to specific development proposals which arise outside of this process.

## **5. Retail Strategies, Masterplanning and Place Plans**

5.1 The development plan should include a clear strategy for retail centres which sets out how the local planning authority wishes to see those areas develop over the plan period. This strategy should be developed with colleagues in local authority regeneration, economic development and estates departments, as well as stakeholder involvement from retailers and other complementary businesses. Many factors affecting the quality of retail centres lie outside the planning system but can be important in supporting or complementing the aims of planning strategies set out in development plans. Effective management of established retail centres through strategies, plans and, where relevant, by Town Centre Managers can help to enhance their vitality, attractiveness and viability (examples of town centre management partnerships and strategies are set out in Annex A).

5.2 If a need (see Section 4) for further retail development has been identified the local planning authority will need to express through their retail strategy and development plan allocations how that need should be accommodated. For example: if there is an identified qualitative need of 2,500 sq. m of convenience floorspace; alternative options would be to focus that provision in one large store or several smaller stores. Investigations of current provision levels would be needed to be evidenced together with consultation undertaken with stakeholders and communities to ascertain the most appropriate provision.

5.3 If that need requires new sites to be identified then local planning authorities should seek to identify sites within established higher retail centres depending on the scale of provision. If after investigation suitable sites within established centres are not available local authorities should consider whether a centre's boundaries may logically be extended in order to meet the need identified (see further guidance on the sequential test in section 5). The identification of these sites will need to take into account their availability and deliverability for new development within the plan

period as well as the opportunities to regenerate or support retail centres through new development.

5.4 Similarly, if a centre has been identified as being in decline to the point of no longer being viable, this change should be managed as part of the retail strategy. This management, which will take a holistic approach in the planning for retail and commercial provision, should ensure that communities retain access to the goods and services which they require.

5.5 As part of the wider development plan vision, the local planning authority will also need to consider if new areas of growth will be adequately provided for in land use terms, and make appropriate provision within their retail strategy to accommodate this to ensure this strategic growth is focused on the most suitable locations.

5.6 In developing area-wide strategies, Place Plans, masterplans or strategies should be brought forward for individual retail centres, particularly the higher order centres. These plans or strategies should outline a vision for the centre setting out in detail the initiatives needed to achieve this, and any land-use implications. Masterplans and strategies should be developed by local planning authorities in partnership with relevant stakeholders. Place Plans may also be an appropriate mechanism for outlining a strategic approach for a particular centre; these are prepared by Town and Community Councils, in collaboration with local planning authorities.

5.7 Once developed, strategies, masterplans and Place Plans will have a dual role. Firstly they can be used to inform the evidence base behind policies within the development plan; this includes justification for new site allocations. Secondly, following the adoption of the development plan, they can be adopted as supplementary guidance to aid the implementation of policies and to resist inappropriate proposals, to help ensure that the vision for the centre is realised.

## **6. Tests of Retail Need**

6.1 The tests of retail need are the fundamental starting point for planning for new retail development in both development plans and development management. The quantitative needs test is based on forecasting of expenditure on a certain type of retail good (comparison or convenience for example) over a period of time, which is then assessed against the current level of provision. Any shortfall in the provision is then expressed, using expenditure per square metre calculations, as the level of new retail provision required.

6.2 Need for a development will not need to be demonstrated for retail proposals within a defined retail centre in a development plan. However it should be demonstrated for any application in an edge-of-centre or out-of-centre location which is not in accordance with an adopted development plan.



6.3 The quantitative retail needs tests is a consistent way of calculating future retail provision. However the data used in these needs assessments can be sensitive to small changes, potentially altering the result. Local planning authorities and developers should therefore ensure assessments are prepared in a clear logical and transparent way with the use of robust and realistic evidence. Such assessments will usually include:

- Existing and forecasted population levels and distribution;
- Forecast expenditure for specific classes of goods to be sold, within the broad categories of comparison and convenience goods, which are provided at the lowest geographical area possible to reflect local circumstances;
- Sales density data for both existing and future retail provision which is realistic and benchmarked against similar retail developments in the area; and
- Catchment areas for centres and individual stores which reflect the size and scale of the development and the likely draw of a particular scheme.

6.4 Quantitative retail needs assessments can then feed into the retail strategy for the development plan where the local planning authorities should make decisions on the future type, location and scale of new retail development which best supports the delivery of the overall development plan vision and the needs of the communities involved.

6.5 Planning Policy Wales is clear in the requirement to establish a quantitative retail need before other, qualitative aspects of need are considered. Where the current provision is sufficient, the need for further allocations must be fully justified in the development plan and supporting evidence.

6.6 Qualitative need is harder to justify and proposals based on this approach should be closely scrutinised to ensure that their development does not have unintended consequences and detrimental impact on existing retail activity within retail centres. The overall objective of applying the qualitative need approach would be to achieve an appropriate distribution and range of sites for retail stores which meets the needs all communities, particularly of those in rural or deprived areas where access to existing provision is challenging.

6.7 Planning Policy Wales highlights cases where qualitative need may be justified. It is unlikely that any of these aspects on their own could justify new retail development; rather a combination of several of these issues would make the case for further provision. These are highlighted and expanded on below.

- supports the objectives and strategy of an up-to-date development plan or the policies in this guidance;

This may be where a store is linked to a large area of growth which is not currently served by any form of retail development.

- is highly accessible by walking, cycling or public transport and / or contributes to a substantial reduction in car journeys, traffic congestion or over-trading;

Current travel patterns for communities to access existing retail provision may be problematic or result in extended and unreasonable travel times. This may be as a result of the store over-trading which is defined as the expenditure in store significantly exceeding expected levels. Proposals which are well-located within existing communities may be able to assist to alleviate some of these issues.

- contributes to the co-location of facilities in retail centres identified in the retail hierarchy; and / or significantly contributes to the vitality, attractiveness and viability of such a centre.

Existing provision in a retail centre may lack a certain type of development which is impacting on its ability to draw people from its catchment and live up to its potential. Proposals for additional types of development could therefore be justified although would need careful management by conditions to ensure those uses which will strengthen the retail centres offer are delivered.

- addresses locally defined deficiencies and alleviates a lack of convenience provision in a disadvantaged area.

This relates to the ability of all communities and disadvantaged areas in particular to access the goods and services which they need on a day to day basis. Current provision may not meet these requirements resulting in expensive, unnecessary trips further afield. Local provision to meet this need would therefore be a positive step for these communities. Localised deficiencies may also arise when new residential development is constructed.

6.8 Planning Policy Wales also advises that regeneration and additional employment benefits are not considered qualitative need factors in retail policy terms, though they may be material considerations in making a decision on a planning application. If there is no quantitative retail need for a proposal the net impact on employment may be negligible as there may be economic impacts on existing stores in the area which would require them to reduce their staff numbers as a result. A local planning authority would need to investigate these claims, taking a holistic approach, before considering whether to approve such schemes.

## **7. The Sequential Test**

7.1 The sequential test is designed to support the Welsh Governments policy objective of promoting centres identified in the retail hierarchy, as the most sustainable locations to live, shop, socialise and conduct business. LDP Site allocations or planning applications for retail, leisure and other complementary uses

should be subject to the sequential test. The sequential location of development plan allocations or planning applications should be considered in the following order:

- Firstly, within retail centres identified in the retail hierarchy where suitable sites, or buildings for conversion are available. Where this relates to a development plan allocation, they must become available within the plan period. Local Planning Authorities should ensure that any development plan allocation or planning application is of an appropriate scale in relation to the role and function of the centre.
- If no suitable sites are available in retail centres then edge-of-centre locations should be considered, with preference given to sites that are or will be well-connected to the existing centre.
- Only when retail centres and edge of centre locations have been considered and found to be unsuitable can out-of-centre options within, and then outside, the urban area be considered. In these cases preference should be given to sites which are or will be well served by a choice of means of transport and are close to an established retail centre.

## **Suitability**

7.2 Suitability refers to a sites attributes and whether it is considered sufficient to meet the development requirements the proposal. Developers will need to provide evidence to explain why a particular site is unable to accommodate the format, scale and design of a proposed development.

7.3 When a need for further convenience or comparison shopping provision is established as part of the LDP preparation process the LPA should consider how different forms of retail business, with their different requirements, could be accommodated on a site, together with consideration of the consequences of any subdivision of units that may be proposed in the future. Developers seeking to include sites in LDPs should be flexible and innovative, and should examine carefully how sites in established centres may be able to accommodate their requirements.

7.4 For edge of centre proposals local planning authorities should consider the distance that a proposed site allocation or planning application is from the edge of an established centre should be in order to remain accessible to that centre by foot. Whilst a proposal for an edge of centre site or planning application should wherever possible be located adjacent to any designated retail centre boundary, it should not normally be more than 200 to 300 metres from the retail centre shops. Factors such as the size of the retail centre and local topography may influence any assessment. It may be appropriate to reduce the distance that an acceptable edge of centre site or application should be if the retail centre is small. Local planning authorities should consider whether to specify advice in their LDP about accessible distances by foot.

## **Availability**

7.5 Local planning authorities should identify, in consultation with stakeholders and the community, an appropriate range of sites to allow for the accommodation of identified need in the Local Development Plan. Identified sites should be capable of being brought forward for development during the development plan period. Consideration should be given to the needs of the community where the demand for retail and leisure provision (and other complementary uses) has been identified. Where phasing is a consideration priority should be given to sites in established centres and sites in areas of poor provision.

## **8. Retail Impact Assessments**

8.1 Planning Policy Wales identifies the issues local planning authorities should take in to account when allocating new sites or determining planning applications for retail or other complementary uses (including redevelopment, extensions or the variation of conditions).

8.2 All retail applications of 2,500 sq metres or more gross floorspace should be supported by a retail impact assessment. Local planning authorities should also undertake impact assessments if they allocate sites in the development plan where it is clear the site has been identified to meet a need of 2,500 sq. metres or more. For smaller retail applications or site allocations local planning authorities will need to determine whether an assessment is necessary, for example when a smaller proposal may have a significant impact on a retail centre. Requests for retail impact assessments by local planning authorities on smaller developments should be proportionate to potential impacts.

## **9. Primary and Secondary Frontages and Change of Use**

9.1 Vibrant and viable centres are characterised by a diversity of uses and activities. Where primary and secondary frontages have been designated in established retail centres they can help maintain the most effective distribution and balance of uses and activities.

9.2 A primary frontage is generally characterised by a high proportion of A1 shopping uses, whilst a secondary frontage often incorporates a broader mix of uses such as A2 (banking and finance), A3 (food and drink), and other complementary uses. However, local planning authorities should determine whether restrictions on change of use from A1 to other non retail uses is always the most effective strategy. When the retail industry is buoyant and a centre's economic performance is strong such a distribution of uses will often be the most appropriate. However, when a centre's performance is poor, perhaps due to prevailing local or national economic

conditions, and frontages become characterised by persistently high vacancy rates or churn, local planning authorities should consider applying an alternative more flexible strategy to manage the situation. In such circumstances over emphasis on A1 retail uses alone in primary areas may undermine the centre's prospects of remaining vibrant and viable; making it more vulnerable to further decline. In seeking vibrant and viable centres which are more resilient to challenging economic circumstances and change, the positive role that non A1 uses such as food and drink, financial and professional services and residential uses should be considered.

9.3 In larger more diverse centres that are more likely to recover from downturns in the economy a more restrictive approach to change of use may still be the most appropriate. In smaller centres however this may not be the case and a restrictive approach could act against opportunities to strengthen a centre through greater diversity. In such cases local planning authorities may choose not to define a primary and secondary frontage. The local planning authority will need to identify the most appropriate strategy for retail centres in their local development plan retail hierarchy.

9.4 Flexibility to expand or contract secondary and primary retail areas and to allow changes of use to attract investment and diversify the business base is critical within vulnerable or declining centres. Local planning authorities should recognise the role that a centre plays locally and within the retail hierarchy, and where structural change may be occurring, include this in their local development plan retail strategy.

9.5 Restaurants together with some cafes/coffee shops can provide diversity and vibrancy in centres, increasing the period of time a shopper spends in a centre as well as providing opportunities for various types of social and business activity. In recognising that individual use classes may contain both desirable and undesirable forms of activity planning conditions may be used to ensure the most appropriate development within a use class is permitted. The use of Local Development Orders by local planning authorities may help facilitate more positive approaches to diversification in established centres.

9.6 Long term vacant property can have a detrimental affect on the appearance and economic performance of a centre. Temporary or 'pop-up' units may be a positive short term option. A pop-up-unit is established on a short term lease through agreement with the landlord however, where successful could lead to long term tenancy. Whilst pop-up-unit's are typically used for shops they can be used for a variety of other purposes such as art galleries and community projects. Local planning authorities should consider setting out in supplementary planning guidance the types of pop-up uses likely to be acceptable in an area on a short-term basis and how they may be controlled through the planning system. Pop-up-units can assist new businesses, often providing opportunities for creativity and innovation, where concepts can be tested with a minimal outlay, or provide a 'shop window' to

other organisations to reach a wider audience. The landlord can benefit through rental income (although normally at a reduced rate), improved security and deterrence of vandalism, and improved appearance of the property. In terms of the high street pop up units can improve the vibrancy and visual appearance of a centre, potentially improving footfall, as well as providing authorities with additional business rate revenue.

## **Changes of Use**

9.7 The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order, sets out where changes of use between use classes are or are not permitted and may not require planning permission.

9.8 Changes of use can create new concentrations of single uses, such as take away food outlets, where the cumulative effects can cause local problems. Such proposals should be assessed against the development plan policies, on their contribution to diversification and on the cumulative effects on matters such as parking and local residential amenity.

## **10. Retail Planning Conditions**

10.1 Local planning authorities should use planning conditions to ensure that the character of a development cannot subsequently be changed to create a form of development that would be unacceptable. For example, retail parks can change their composition over time and could in some circumstances create a development that the local planning authority would have refused due to its impact on vitality and viability of an existing centre. Local planning authorities may consider the use of planning conditions to ensure that these developments do not subsequently change their character unacceptably.

10.3 Planning conditions are normally applied to goods sold, changes of use, division of units, internal increases in floorspace (Mezzanines) and ancillary uses. Welsh Government Circular WGC 016/2014 - The Use of Planning Conditions for Development Management (2014) sets out circumstances how and when conditions should be used and includes model wording.

10.4 When considering applying conditions to restrict the sale of goods in out of town developments local planning authorities should consider what items if sold would have an adverse impact upon any established centre and apply an appropriate term, for instance food and drink, or limit the use to the sale of particular items. Any conditions imposed on the types of products sold should only refer to the main categories of goods for example, food and convenience goods, hardware, electrical goods, furniture and carpets) and should not seek to control details of particular products to be sold.

10.5 In terms of restricting changes of use, a condition may prevent the change of

use of a large retail premises to a food or convenience goods supermarket, where such use might generate an unacceptable level of additional traffic or have a damaging effect on the vitality of a nearby retail centre. Alternatively a percentage might be applied, for example limiting non-food retail to 30% of the gross retail floor space in a supermarket.

10.6 It may also be appropriate to impose conditions to control the number or size of units to prevent the development being subdivided into a large number of outlets (or vice versa), if the effect of such a change would be to change significantly the nature of the retail development to one that would not have been given permission.

10.7 Shops may be proposed as ancillary to other development such as, petrol stations, motorway service areas, airport terminals, industrial/employment areas, railway stations, sports stadia or other leisure, tourist and recreational facilities. Local planning authorities should ensure that in such cases the retail element is limited in scale and genuinely ancillary to the main development, and should seek to control this through the use of conditions.

10.8 Conditions can also be used by local authorities to resolve issues relating to the impact of the development on traffic and the amenity of neighbouring residents, such as the timing of the delivery of goods to shops. In considering restrictions on deliveries, local authorities should take account of all relevant factors, including impact on congestion, especially in peak periods. In considering how to mitigate night-time noise, local authorities should consider alternatives to a complete ban, such as embodying codes of practice into planning agreements relating to the number of vehicles and noise standards.

## **11. Mezzanine Floors in Retail Development**

11.1 Mezzanines are a way of increasing floor space within a building. Whilst mezzanines can enable more efficient use of land, help generate increased turnover for a business, and in cases negate the requirement to develop elsewhere, they may in some cases also undermine retail centres, generate additional traffic and increase parking requirements. The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) (Amendment) Order 2015) allow local planning authorities to control increases in internal floorspace. Developers are required to submit a planning application for mezzanine proposals greater than 200 square metres. The provision also ensures mezzanines do not undermine local development plan retail strategies.

## **12. Local Development Orders**

12.1 Local Planning authorities can make a Local Development Order which grants planning permission for certain types of development within a specific area. Their purpose is to simplify the planning process by removing the need for developers to make a planning application. A Local Development Order can cover a geographical area of any size within an authority area.

12.2 LDOs can be a means of facilitating regeneration within a town or district centre or be a catalyst for change. They can incentivise development and where successful help reduce vacancy rates leading to a more vibrant and viable future for established centres.

12.3 An LDO can make decisions on what is and is not acceptable in a designated area, for example:

- acceptable changes of use of ground or upper floors,
- the number of days that a temporary building or use may operate each year,
- the requirement for advertisement consent,
- whether physical or structural alteration to a building within the area is allowed,
- requirement for Conservation Area consent,
- requirement for listed building consent for physical or structural works/alterations affecting any of the listed buildings.

12.4 Removing the requirement to submit a planning application has benefits for both the local planning authority and planning applicant. The local planning authority has the reassurance of predetermining acceptable uses and as a consequence may be able to direct resources to other schemes or priorities potentially reducing service costs. The planning applicant has greater certainty in terms of what development or changes of use are acceptable, has minimal engagement with the local authority leading thus reducing costs and delays.

### **13. Indicators of vitality and viability**

13.1 Regular assessments or 'health checks' of centres provides one means of forming judgements about the impact of policies and developments.

13.2 The use of regular health checks provides a means of monitoring changes over time, and provides the local planning authority with a good understanding of the resilience of its retail centres to change, and to gauge the significance of the impact of new developments. Regular health checks can also help to inform plan making and development management decisions about the extent of the primary shopping and primary/secondary frontages area, for example, recognising where the role and function of different parts of the centre have changed over time.

13.3 Information of value in measuring vitality, attractiveness and viability of established centres includes:

- turnover in relation to floorspace: turnover figures vary greatly and can be of assistance as an indication of the relative activity of different shopping areas and centres;



- commercial yield on non-domestic property: (i.e. the capital value in relation to the expected market rental) may be of assistance in demonstrating the confidence of investors in the long-term profitability of the centre;
- shopping rents: pattern of movement in primary shopping area rents (i.e. the frontage which attracts the highest rental value);
- retailer representation and change: present representation and demand from retailers wanting to come into the town, or to change their representation in the town, or to contract or close their representation;
- the diversity of uses: how much space is in use for different functions, such as: offices; shopping; other commercial; cultural and entertainment activities; restaurants; hotels; educational uses; housing, and how that balance has been changing;
- accessibility: the ease and convenience of access by a choice of means of travel, including the quality, quantity and type of car parking. The availability of public transport services and the quality of provision for pedestrians and cyclists;
- pedestrian flow: the numbers and movement of people on the streets, in different parts of the centre at different times of the day and evening, and changes over time;
- the proportion of vacant street level property: vacancies can arise even in the strongest town centres, and this indicator must be used with care;
- customer views: regular surveys of customer views will assist authorities in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of town centre improvements and of town centre management;
- environmental quality: this should include information on air quality, noise, trees, landscaping, open spaces, litter and graffiti;
- perception of safety/occurrence of crime: this should include information on safety and security;

13.4 In addition to the data categories listed above information can also be collected through other monitoring processes. The Local Development Plan Annual Monitoring Report can be used to assess whether the policies contained within the plan are being implemented successfully and whether change is required. Also, where Local Development Orders have been adopted local planning authorities should seek to include targets that allow them to monitor the order's success.

## **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

New retail development takes different forms, each with its own operating characteristics, for example:

### **Types of Shop: food stores:**

Convenience Store –self-service store mainly selling food with a trading floorspace up to 1,000 square metres, usually within a residential or retail centre setting.

Supermarkets - self-service stores selling mainly food, with a trading floorspace less than 2,500 square metres, often with their own car parks.

Superstores - self-service stores selling mainly food, or food with some non-food goods, usually with at least 2,500 square metres trading floorspace with their own car parks.

### **Types of Shop: comparison goods:**

Town centre malls - purpose-built centres incorporating many individual shop units, usually concentrating on comparison goods, and sometimes leisure, residential and other uses.

Retail warehouse - large stores specialising in the sale of household goods (such as carpets, furniture and electrical goods) and bulky DIY items, catering mainly for car-borne customers and often in out-of-centre locations.

Retail parks - an agglomeration of several large retail units typically located on edge of centre or out of centre sites incorporating large car parks.

Warehouse clubs – edge of centre or out-of-centre businesses specialising in bulk sales of reduced priced goods in typically in warehouse style buildings with large car parks. The operator may limit access to businesses, organisations or individuals, and may agree to limit the number of lines sold.

Factory outlet centres - groups of shops, usually away from the retail centre, specialising in selling seconds and end-of-line goods at discounted prices.

Regional shopping centres - out-of-town centres generally over 50,000 square metres gross retail area, typically enclosing a wide range of comparison goods.

### **Terminology for Retail Locations**

Retail centre: established city, town, district, local and village centres as defined by local planning authorities in their development plan retail hierarchy.

'Suitable' retail centre site: a 'suitable' retail centre site is one acceptable for a proposed form of retail centre development in terms of its location, size, access, relationship to adjoining uses and any other factors pertaining to a particular site.

Edge-of-centre: a location within easy walking distance of the centre normally not more than 200-300 metres from existing retail centre shops, providing parking facilities that serve the centre as well as the store, thus enabling one trip to serve several purposes. Lesser distances may be appropriate for smaller centres and local circumstances such as topography will also determine appropriate distances.

Out-of-centre: a location that is clearly separate from a retail centre, but not necessarily outside the urban area.

Out-of-town: an out-of-centre development on a green-field site, or on land not clearly within the current urban boundary.

Primary and secondary frontages: the definition of primary and secondary frontages depends crucially on local circumstances. Prevailing commercial rental values can give a good indication of the boundary between primary and secondary areas; the existence of retail uses is not in itself a good indicator.

### Retail Centre Management Partnerships and Strategies

Retail centre management partnerships and strategies can facilitate:

- better communications between private and public sectors including retailers, investors, residents and the public agencies. Such links can contribute to the preparation of the strategy for retail development and the future of town centres set out in the development plan;
- research into retail trends;
- improved identification and use of resources;
- better promotion of the town centre; and
- more effective achievement of development plan objectives.

Detailed non-statutory retail centre management strategies including Business Improvement Districts, drawn up within the broad framework of the development plan, may bring forward initiatives such as:

- environmental improvements and the enhancement of retail centre approaches, open spaces and the pedestrian environment. Covered spaces and links may be appropriate in some areas;
- street cleaning and refuse services that meet the needs of the businesses that contribute to the town centre economy;
- provision of well located bus stops and shelters, co-ordinated information on public transport services and convenient taxi facilities;
- provision of accessible, safe and secure car parks with high standards of maintenance including parking for disabled people and cycle parking provision;
- recreation and entertainment activities;
- crime prevention and safety improvements;
- provision for the needs of the emergency services;
- provision for goods delivery;
- provision for disabled and elderly people, and those with young children, for example, ramps, handrails, seating and other facilities, appropriate pavement design and surfacing materials, dropped kerbs, etc.;
- setting clear standards for town centre services, publicising them and reporting on performance including customer surveys;
- improved signing and information;
- works of art in public spaces;
- recycling facilities;
- toilet facilities.