



# Guidelines for Planning Authorities

# Retail Planning



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# Ministers' Foreword

The retail sector is an essential part of the Irish economy and a strong retail sector is a key element of the vitality and competitiveness of cities, towns and villages throughout the country and indeed the country as a whole.

It is very important that the planning process provides a clear framework for the continued development of the retail sector in a way that provides certainty for retailers and communities in the relevant policy framework, in the assessment of development proposals, in ensuring good vitality of the places retailing activity takes place within and ultimately in ensuring competitiveness, nationally, regionally and locally.

Ireland has undergone profound changes in recent years and faces continued challenges in the years ahead as we rebuild our economy and society. While many of our cities and towns witnessed major investment in and upgrading of key central retail areas, there has also been a proliferation of retailing in some locations where there has been poor demand, unaligned with existing transport links and/or adverse impacts on the vitality of nearby city and town centres.

Experience also indicates that a strong and competitive retail sector demands a proactive approach in planning, listening carefully to the messages from both the retail sector and communities and responding appropriately in managing and reshaping our cities and towns in response.

How we approach the retail sector into the future from a planning perspective must learn from this context. Therefore, planning for the retail sector must now be more focused on:

- the creation of vibrant, quality places, accessible by sustainable transport including for pedestrians and cyclists and within which retailing is an important activity;
- demonstrating clear evidence of need in identifying strategic requirements;
- planning for retail catchments that invariably straddle and transcend administrative boundaries;
- usage of clear and concise definitions and methodologies; and
- a general presumption against large retail centres located adjacent or close to existing, new or planned national roads / motorways.

The Guidelines take into account the recommendations of a Forfás Study Review of the Economic Impact of the Retail Cap (April 2011) prepared for the Departments of Enterprise, Jobs and Innovation, and Environment, Community and Local Government. This Study was undertaken as part of the terms of the EU-IMF programme for Financial Support for Ireland in 2010.

The Forfás report concluded that careful usage of caps on the size of certain retail outlets was appropriate in promoting both competitiveness and vitality in the retail sector and that a substantial increase in, or removal of the retail caps would produce mixed results including:

1. more vigorous competition in the largest population centres which can support a range of large stores; while
2. in smaller population centres, allowing larger superstores could lead to too great a concentration and consequent loss of choice and competition.

Having given very careful consideration to the Forfás report, and to the results of public consultation and general endorsement of the approach taken in the draft guidelines, we have decided to follow the approach outlined in the draft guidelines while making some adjustments to reflect views from the public.

Planning authorities now have a key role in implementing, with retailers and local communities, various elements of these Guidelines, refocusing towards plan-led development, addressing the needs of the retail sector by determining a proper evidence base of the need for retail development and ensuring a proactive approach in facilitating the meeting of those needs.

Such a plan-led approach will also be underpinned and delivered through greater co-operation by planning authorities in the preparation of joint or multi-planning authority retail strategies.

Furthermore we believe that apart from the direct and indirect employment generated by the retail sector, shops play a major role in attracting people to cities, towns and villages, thus contributing to the overall economic vitality of those centres and supporting their role as centres of social and business interaction in the community. Retailing also supports the considerable investment by the public and private sectors in urban renewal, by providing shopping facilities to residents and by adding to the vitality and attractiveness of inner areas of cities and towns. Smaller towns and villages serve their surrounding rural areas by providing a range of facilities and services.

The Guidelines have also been developed with input from the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and we thank the staff of that Department and Minister Jimmy Deenihan for its input, especially in developing the accompanying Retail Design Manual which contains further advice and technical detail on how best to implement the statutory guidelines in this document and has been developed under the Government Policy on Architecture 2009-2015.

Finally, we wish to thank the members of the public and the various stakeholders who made a valuable contribution through extensive and well considered submissions which have been carefully considered in finalising the Guidelines.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Phil Hogan".

Mr Phil Hogan T.D.  
Minister of Environment, Community & Local Government



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jan O'Sullivan".

Ms Jan O'Sullivan, T.D.  
Minister of State for Housing and Planning





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# Introduction

# Introduction

## Key Messages

- These guidelines are aimed at ensuring that the planning system continues to play its role in supporting competitiveness and choice in the retail sector commensurate with promoting the vitality and viability of city and town centres.
- The retail sector is a key element of the national economy in terms of employment, economic activity and the vitality of Ireland's cities and towns.
- The planning system has facilitated a major expansion of retail development and activity; however more work needs to be done to ensure that such development takes place in city and town centres.
- Public consultation carried out as part of the preparation of these guidelines supported the general approach of the consultation draft of these guidelines and the need for a continued focus on and investment in, city and town centres allied to effective interventions to support private sector investment.
- Planning for retail development must also take account of the wider policy context in relation to relevant planning guidelines, smarter travel, climate change and architecture.

## 1.1 Aim of the Guidelines

The aim of the Guidelines is to ensure that the planning system continues to play a key role in supporting competitiveness in the retail sector for the benefit of the consumer in accordance with proper planning and sustainable development. In addition, the planning system must promote and support the vitality and viability of city and town centres thereby contributing to a high standard of urban design and encouraging a greater use of sustainable transport.

Previous iterations of these guidelines in 1998 and 2005 have made a positive contribution to planning and urban development in Ireland by establishing and progressively developing a policy framework that enabled the expansion of the retail sector while also encouraging a new focus on managing city and town centres and driving their proper planning and sustainable development. As a result, many city and town centres have witnessed renewal and investment in their retailing functions in recent years but more needs to be done to consolidate this process.

Therefore, building on previous guidelines now superseded, the purpose of these Retail Planning Guidelines is to provide an updated and comprehensive retail planning and development framework to guide:

- regional authorities in preparing retail policy objectives in regional planning guidelines;
- planning authorities in preparing and implementing development plans;
- planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála in assessing planning applications or planning appeals; and
- retailers and developers in formulating development proposals.

The Guidelines have five key policy objectives:

- Ensuring that retail development is plan-led;

- Promoting city/town centre vitality through a sequential approach to development;
- Securing competitiveness in the retail sector by actively enabling good quality development proposals to come forward in suitable locations;
- Facilitating a shift towards increased access to retailing by public transport, cycling and walking in accordance with the Smarter Travel strategy; and
- Delivering quality urban design outcomes.

## 1.2 Status of the Guidelines

The Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government has issued these guidelines under section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). Planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála are required to have regard to the guidelines in the performance of their functions under the Planning Acts.

## 1.3 Importance of the Retail Sector

Employment in the combined retail and wholesale sector in 2010 was estimated by the Central Statistics Office at almost 270,000 people or about 14.7% of people employed in the State.

Apart from direct and indirect employment, retailing plays a major role in attracting people to the centre of cities, towns and villages, thus contributing to the overall economic vitality of those centres and supporting their role as centres of social and business interaction in the community.

It is important therefore that urban centres, which also tend to be at the hub of public transport services, retain retailing as a core function.

Retailing also supports the considerable investment by the public and private sectors in urban renewal, by providing shopping facilities to residents and by adding to the vitality and attractiveness of inner areas of cities and towns which is important also in the context of the tourism sector. Smaller towns and villages serve their surrounding rural areas by providing a range of facilities and services.

## 1.4 Trends in Retail Development

The nature and scale of retailing in Ireland has also undergone major changes, mainly driven by economic development but also by changes within the industry itself. To inform the preparation of these guidelines, Forfás undertook an analysis of the retail sector which is available at [www.environ.ie](http://www.environ.ie).

Key points from the Forfás analysis include the following:

(1) The planning system has facilitated substantial expansion of the retail sector as evidenced by the facts that:

- The number of grocery units increased by 798 stores between 2004 and 2011 and between 2001 and 2011, there was a total increase of 86 per cent in the number of outlets operated by the largest grocery firms in Ireland;
- A number of new entrants have entered the Irish grocery retail market in recent years and continue to grow their market share (Lidl 5.5 per cent and Aldi 3.6 per cent);
- Over the period 2001 to 2007, floorspace devoted to the retailing of groceries increased from 471,508 M<sup>2</sup> to 835,647 M<sup>2</sup>.

(2) The size of grocery store permissible under previous planning guidelines has not been a major constraint in store development given that:

- The average size of grocery units (including hypermarkets, supermarkets and discount stores) in Ireland was 1,515 M<sup>2</sup> in 2009, a decrease of 2.2 per cent since 2004; and
- The average size of supermarkets in 2009 was 1,701 M<sup>2</sup>; an increase of 3.7 per cent since 2004. The average size of discount stores in 2009 was 718 M<sup>2</sup>, a decrease of 8.4 per cent since 2004;

(3) The retail market for convenience goods in Ireland is marked by the dominance of a small number of companies;

- Tesco has the largest share of the Irish retail market followed by Dunnes Stores and Supervalu. These three retailers account for 70.8 per cent of the Irish retail market;
- Superquinn, Lidl and Aldi had a combined share in 2011 of 15.5 per cent of the grocery market. This is 4.7 per cent less than Supervalu, the third largest retailer's share of the market;
- ASDA and Sainsbury's have a combined share of 1.7 per cent of the Irish market, benefiting from cross-border shopping trade, although neither retailer has a physical presence in the State.

The retail sector has therefore grown markedly in recent years with the emergence of new sectors such as discount stores.

In addition to the above, the Forfás report also recognises that online shopping has become a feature of the Irish retail market. It is accepted that while there is a lack of robust eCommerce data in relation to Ireland, the proportion of sales made over the internet and mobile phones is increasing. Various retailers, trading a variety of convenience and comparison goods, are also increasingly availing of online services to reach a larger consumer market. In Ireland, evidence of this is to be found in both larger grocery stores and in catalogue-based shops, where customers can order online and have the goods delivered to their home or collected at a specific location.

In parallel with the trends above, the consideration of retailing within the planning process has had to be updated recognising that while previous iterations of these Guidelines have facilitated considerable expansion of the retail sector enabling more choice and enhanced competition to the benefit of the consumer, more needs to be achieved in relation to securing such development in city and town centres.

### **1.5 Retail Planning: Public Consultation**

Analysis of retail trends and the publication of a pre consultation draft issues paper preceded the development of these guidelines. Subsequently the public were invited to comment on a consultation draft of the guidelines and 102 submissions were received.

In aggregate terms, the analytical context and the outcomes of the public consultation exercises confirmed that:

- The planning system continues to play a vital role in the management of an economic activity which represents 14.7% of national employment;
- Rapid development of the retail sector in recent years needs to be consolidated with a renewed focus on the maintenance and renewal of attractive, competitive city and town centres;
- The use of retail caps is appropriate;

- Retail planning needs improved co-ordination between local authorities and up to date and accurate information on trends and needs; and
- Clear and understandable definitions and planning criteria are vital.

## **1.6 Policy Context for Retail Planning**

These guidelines update and replace the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities (January 2005) taking account of the recommendations of the Review of the Economic Impact of the Retail Cap - Forfás<sup>2</sup> (April 2011). Consequently, these revised Guidelines contain, in particular, revised policies regarding floorspace caps. (See Chapter 2 for National Policy on Retail Caps). A number of national policies have influenced these guidelines.

### **1.6.1 National Spatial Strategy**

The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) is Ireland's overarching spatial planning framework and through its focus on economic, social and environmental issues and on the inter-linkages between them, is a key policy instrument in the pursuit of proper planning and sustainable development.

The NSS is focused on enabling strategic locations, such as the Gateways and Hub towns, to develop and act as drivers for their catchment areas and wider regions. Co-ordinated development within and around these locations is an essential step in enabling the Gateways and Hubs to perform their national and regional development roles. Retail development can play a key role in supporting the sustainable growth of these strategic locations as well as other key towns such as county towns and other parts of the settlement hierarchies.

### **1.6.2 The National Climate Change Strategy**

This strategy sets out the measures required to enable Ireland to meet its share of the EU's commitments under the Kyoto Protocol in stabilising and reducing man-made greenhouse gas emissions. The Strategy recommends a broad mix of measures aimed at achieving a modal shift to public transport, walking and cycling, as well as increased efficiency in both personal and freight transport. These policy aims correlate closely with the retail policy objective of promoting greater vitality in city and town centres through the sequential approach to retail development.

### **1.6.3 Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future**

This document sets out the transport policy for Ireland for the period 2009-2020 which, in addition to prudent investment in new infrastructure, sets out necessary steps to ensure that people choose more sustainable transport modes such as walking, cycling and public transport. Smarter Travel also recommended a general restriction of the future development of out-of-town retail centres, except in exceptional circumstances.

Both of these key national policies have sustainability at their core and clearly indicate that future population and economic growth will have to take place predominantly in sustainable, compact urban and rural areas which discourage dispersed development and long commuting.

<sup>2</sup> The Forfás Study, on the economic impact of eliminating the cap on the size of retail premises with a view to enhancing competition and lowering prices for consumers, was required under the terms of the EU-IMF programme for financial support for Ireland in 2010. It was prepared for the Departments of Enterprise, Jobs and Innovation, and Environment, Community and Local Government.

#### **1.6.4 Government Policy on Architecture**

The Government policy on architecture “Government Policy on Architecture 2009-2015: Towards a Sustainable Future: Delivering Quality within the Built Environment” is also an important consideration and under Action 21, the preparation of the Retail Design Manual accompanying this document was supported.

#### **1.6.5 Other Policies**

Coherence with wider policy objectives is critical in the integrated delivery of sustainable planning outcomes. Therefore, a range of other key complementary planning and development policies have been taken into account in these guidelines including, inter alia, the Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022, the Planning Guidelines on Development Plans (2007), Development Management (2007), Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (Cities, Towns and Villages)(2009) and on Spatial Planning and National Roads (2012).







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# Retail Policy Context

# Retail Policy Context

## Key Messages

- Retail development must follow the settlement hierarchy of the State and retail development should be appropriate to the scale and function of the settlement or part of the settlement in which it is located as designated by the NSS, relevant regional planning guidelines and development plan core strategies.
- Enhancing the vitality and viability of city and town centres in all their functions through sequential development is an overarching objective in retail planning.
- A range of caps on the size of convenience and retail warehouse stores is required to ensure both competitiveness in the retail sector and strong city and town centres.
- Taking account of the above, five key policy objectives must guide planning authorities in addressing retail development issues in their development planning and development management functions, namely:
  - Ensuring that retail development is plan-led;
  - Promoting city/town centre vitality through a sequential approach to development;
  - Securing competitiveness in the retail sector by actively enabling good quality development proposals to come forward in suitable locations;
  - Facilitating a shift towards increased access to retailing by public transport, cycling and walking in accordance with the Smarter Travel strategy; and
  - Delivering quality urban design outcomes.
- There should be a general presumption against large out-of-town retail centres in particular those located adjacent or close to existing, new or planned national roads/motorways.

## 2.1 Introduction

Taking account of the national policy context for retail planning, this chapter identifies overarching retail policy considerations and objectives (See Section 2.5) to be implemented by planning authorities across their development planning and management functions.

## 2.2 Retailing and the Settlement Hierarchy

To ensure proper planning and sustainable development, retail development and activity must follow the settlement hierarchy of the State, including the various Gateway and Hub town locations identified in the NSS 2002-2020, the Regional Planning Guidelines and the Core Strategies of Development Plans.

Taking account of historical patterns and the impact of previous retail planning policies, retail functions tend to reflect broad tiers of urban development including Metropolitan, Regional, Sub-Regional (including District Centres within larger urban areas) as well as Small Towns and Rural Areas as well. The classification is indicative and the specific retail functions provided by each tier overlap in many respects; below Dublin, there are no clearly defined cut-off points between levels of the hierarchy.

### **2.2.1 Metropolitan**

Dublin City supplies retail functions of a specialist nature not found elsewhere in the State, as well as providing the broadest range of comparison goods shopping. The other large cities of Cork, Limerick/Shannon, Galway and Waterford provide a range of high-order comparison shopping which is largely unmatched in smaller cities and towns.

### **2.2.2 Regional**

Beyond Ireland's five main cities, a tier of other Gateway, Hub Towns and other towns perform important regional retailing functions including:

- The Midlands Gateway towns of Athlone, Tullamore and Mullingar;
- The Border Region Gateways of Sligo, Dundalk and Letterkenny;
- The Hub towns of Ballina/Castlebar, Cavan, Ennis, Kilkenny, Mallow, Monaghan, Tralee/Killarney, Tuam and Wexford; and
- Other large towns such as Clonmel, Drogheda, Naas/Newbridge and Portlaoise.

### **2.2.3 Sub-Regional**

Beyond the Dublin and regional retailing destinations, other important towns such as Arklow, Athy, Carlow, Dungarvan, Enniscorthy, Longford, Middleton, Navan, Nenagh, New Ross, Swords and Thurles perform important sub-regional retailing functions including the major national retailing chains.

### **2.2.4 District Centres**

The core strategies of development plans within the larger urban centres above, including Dublin City, other Gateway cities and towns, hub towns as well as other large towns, (generally in excess of 10,000 population), will provide details of the relevant city and town centre areas as well as any locations designated for significant growth within the environs of the city or town in question. The core strategy will also show the retail areas including district centre(s) (See Annex 1 - Glossary of Terms) which provide essential services, including an appropriate level of retailing and amenities to serve the catchment population within those environs. See also Chapter 3, Section 3.4.

Having designated the relevant city and town centre areas and any district centres in the core strategy, it is the function of the retail strategy of the relevant development plan to specify the level and types of retailing that will be appropriate to those areas.

### **2.2.5 Small Towns and Rural Areas**

The fourth tier of the hierarchy comprises a large number of small towns in the 1,500 to 5,000 population category. There are about 75 in all, most of which provide basic convenience shopping, either in small supermarkets or convenience shops and in some cases, also provide comparison shopping e.g. small-scale hardware, retail pharmacies and clothes shops.

### **2.2.6 Local Shopping**

Shopping at the most local level is provided by a mixture of neighbourhood shops in suburban areas and village stores/post-offices in rural areas. In addition, another sector in the Irish retail market is the casual trading sector, including 'farmers' markets'. They are located throughout Ireland in both small and large towns and are often a tourist

attraction and an alternative to normal retail formats. Farmers' markets also present an opportunity to the local population to sell their produce at good value, directly to customers, thus providing them with access to fresh locally grown, often organic, produce. Such markets can present a welcome addition to the retail options of urban areas and can compliment and augment the existing retail and non-retail uses.

### **2.3 Enhancing Vitality and Viability of City and Town Centres**

City and town centres provide a broad range of facilities and services and act as a focus for their wider regions, including rural areas.

City and town centres have evolved over a considerable period of time as the focus for a range of commercial and community activities, resulting in a mix of often interdependent land uses which contribute to a sense of place and identity. City and town centres derive their strength from a combination of natural and other features: historic buildings, cultural, civic and governmental buildings, as well as public spaces.

This physical form and mix of functions makes a city or town centre different from a shopping centre and provides much of its character. This character can be further enhanced by introducing appropriate new uses into historic buildings. The city and town centres also have a high level of accessibility to employment, services, and facilities for all the community as such centres are key destinations for public transport systems.

The development of major shopping centres within city and town centre areas has contributed very positively to the vitality of these areas and has been a major success of previous planning policy.

Retailing within the environs of major cities and towns can also perform important functions, for example as part of the district centres identified in the relevant development plan and serving social, cultural and retailing needs of their local catchments. However, retailing in district centres should not be promoted to a scale of development such that they begin to act as retailing destinations in their own right or where this would undermine the vitality of the central area of the city or town in the environs of which the district centre is located.

Similarly there is a presumption against out-of-town retail centres which could impact on the viability and vitality of city and town centres and also generate significant additional traffic with potential to impact on the national road network and the performance of junctions and interchanges. The Guidelines on Spatial Planning and National Roads<sup>3</sup> address retail development in the context of policy on national roads.

### **2.4 National Policy on Retail Caps**

In line with the requirements of the EU-IMF Programme for Financial Support for Ireland, the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation commissioned the Forfás report, referred to in Chapter 1, to undertake an evidence-based and focused study to analyse the potential economic impacts of eliminating previous caps on the size of retail premises.

The study recommended some adjustments to the caps in the previous guidelines in relation to regional differentiation regarding the retailing function of Dublin and the

<sup>3</sup> Spatial Planning and National Roads. Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012)

regional cities but otherwise found that a cap on store size would serve to avoid local market dominance and monopolies and thereby promote both competition and city and town centre vitality.

Furthermore, the public consultation responses received on foot of the consultation draft of these guidelines broadly confirmed the acceptance of the findings above. Therefore, taking account of the Forfás study's analysis and findings, having regard to the changed circumstances and market conditions over the past ten years since the last retail economic study<sup>4</sup> and within the context of the broader retail planning policies set out herein, these Guidelines set floorspace caps as follows for convenience retail, retail warehousing and petrol filling station shops:

#### **2.4.1 Convenience retail floorspace caps**

- 4,000 M<sup>2</sup> in the four Dublin local authority areas (i.e. Dublin City, Fingal, South Dublin and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Councils);
- 3,500 M<sup>2</sup> in the four other main cities of Cork, Limerick/Shannon, Galway and Waterford; and
- 3,000 M<sup>2</sup> in the remainder of the State (i.e. those areas outside of the four Dublin local authority areas, and the cities of Cork, Limerick/Shannon, Galway and Waterford).

These floorspace caps apply to new retail stores or extensions to existing stores which will result in an aggregate increase in the net retail floorspace of the convenience element of such retail stores. In this regard, while some stores may retail convenience goods only, in other cases, stores may retail convenience and comparison goods. In these mixed comparison/convenience retailing stores described above, there is therefore no cap on the amount of non-grocery or comparison space delineated for the relevant store, for example on the planning application drawings.

These floorspace caps also supersede caps identified in existing retail strategies such as the retail strategy for the Greater Dublin Area.

It should be noted that all of the above floorspace caps refer to net<sup>5</sup> and not gross retail floorspace as defined in these guidelines.

#### **2.4.2 Retail warehouse floorspace cap**

- 6,000 M<sup>2</sup> gross and with specific criteria (See Chapter 4) to allow for an exemption from this floorspace cap in city and town centre areas in the five NSS Gateway cities.

#### **2.4.3 Petrol filling station shops floorspace cap**

- 100 M<sup>2</sup> net irrespective of location.

It is a matter for the relevant joint or multi-authority retail strategies and development plans to decide how and or where the caps above should apply to particular cities and towns and their environs where these locations are traversed by local authority boundaries.

<sup>4</sup> Goodbody Economic Consultants, The Impact of the Draft Retail Planning Guidelines on the Retail Sector Report submitted to the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment and to the Minister for the Environment and Local Government (December 2000).

<sup>5</sup> See definition of net retail floorspace in Annex 1

In very exceptional circumstances in preparing retail strategies County Councils outside the Greater Dublin Area and the other larger Gateways such as Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford could introduce a small downward revision to the floorspace cap in appropriate circumstances where the size of existing town centres is small in relation to the scale of the cap, and the potential for convenience goods expenditure growth is limited and where accordingly development of convenience stores up to the full extent of the relevant floorspace cap could have a negative impact on the vitality and viability of the town in question. However, if a planning authority wishes to propose a small downward revision to the floorspace cap the justification should be fully substantiated by an expert study, which would demonstrate how effective local competition and consumer choice would be protected.

## 2.5 Policy Objectives

Taking account of the previous sections, these guidelines identify five key policy objectives to be progressed by planning authorities in planning for and addressing the development requirements of the retail sector. These objectives relate to the needs for plan-led development, a focus on city and town centres for the majority of future development, a pro-active approach by local authorities in enabling city and town centre renewal and development to come about and a high quality approach to urban design.

### 2.5.1 Plan-led Development/Retail Strategies

The first national policy objective is to secure plan-led development. Locations that have strong retail functions and a high quality shopping environment in Ireland and abroad tend to represent the historical settlement patterns but also the outcomes of plans and strategies that have:

- anticipated the requirement for retail development in line with regional strategies; and
- facilitated the development required in suitable locations, sometimes enabling the development of those locations through acquisition, assembly and resale of key sites, facilitating infrastructure and bringing the key infrastructure providers together.

Therefore, future retail development should be plan-led following the settlement hierarchy, including the identification of retail requirements and appropriate planning policies and objectives and implementation measures aimed at securing development plan objectives.

Furthermore, a plan-led approach will also be underpinned and delivered through the co-operation by planning authorities in the preparation of joint or multi-authority retail strategies for certain areas. Consequently, these Guidelines **require** the preparation of strategies, by relevant planning authorities, for the gateway cities and towns identified in Chapter 3 (namely Dublin, Cork, Galway, Waterford, Limerick/Shannon and the Midlands).

Beyond these locations, it is a matter for the relevant planning authorities to consider, in addition to the inclusion of policies and objectives in their development plans, the preparation of joint retail strategies for towns and their environs particularly where they straddle planning authority areas and especially other NSS Gateways, Hub towns etc.

### **2.5.2 Sequential Development Approach**

The second national policy objective is to promote greater vitality in city and town centres by promoting a sequential approach to retail development.

Sequential development means that:

1. The overall preferred location for new retail development is within city and town centres. Retail development may also be appropriate within District Centres identified in the settlement hierarchy at a scale appropriate to the needs of the area. See Section 3.4 - District Centres; and
2. Subject to the requirements below, only where the applicant can demonstrate, and the planning authority is satisfied, that there are no sites or potential sites within a city, town centre or designated district centre should an edge-of-centre site be considered. In addition, only in exceptional circumstances where it can be demonstrated that there are no sites or potential sites available either within the centre or on the edge of these centres should an out-of-centre site be considered.

In this regard, these guidelines require development plans and their supporting analyses to adopt a vigorous approach to:

- Assessing the vitality and viability of city and town centres;
- Investigating development opportunities aimed at city and town centres;
- Activating potential development and redevelopment opportunities in city and town centres; (See Annex 2) and
- assisting the private sector in the resolution of impediments to city and town centre redevelopment opportunities that may arise through infrastructural, flood risk, land ownership and built heritage considerations.

Further advice and guidance on the application of the sequential approach in a development management context is outlined in Chapters 3 and 4.

### **2.5.3 Competitiveness in the Retail Sector**

The third national policy objective is to ensure that the planning system continues to play its part in ensuring an effective range of choice for the consumer, thereby promoting a competitive market place.

Strong competition is essential to reduce retail costs and ensure that savings are passed on to retail customers through lower prices. Competition also promotes innovation and productivity.

The planning system should not be used to inhibit competition, preserve existing commercial interests or prevent innovation. In interpreting and implementing these Guidelines, planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála should avoid taking actions which would adversely affect competition in the retail market. In particular, when the issue of trade diversion is being considered in the assessment of a proposed retail development, planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála should assess the likelihood of any adverse impacts on the vitality and viability of the city or town centre as a whole, and not on existing traders.

However, competition is only one factor to be considered in assessing an application for development, and a decision should not be made on grounds of competition alone.

#### ***2.5.4 Encouraging Sustainable Travel***

The fourth national policy objective relates to securing a general shift towards sustainable travel modes through careful location and design of new retail development relative to the catchment area being served.

While the private car tends to be attractive for activities such as more substantial convenience goods shopping or bringing home bulky goods, careful location of retail developments and attention to detail in terms of how they are connected by footpaths and cycle facilities to surrounding areas can substantially boost trips on foot or bicycle for smaller purchases and make a substantial difference in encouraging smarter travel in line with the Smarter Travel strategy.

Moreover, by encouraging appropriate retail development in locations with good public transport facilities such as the centres of cities and larger towns, increased usage of public transport can be encouraged.

#### ***2.5.5 Retail Development and Urban Design***

The fifth national policy objective is to ensure that retail development plays its part in realising quality outcomes in relation to urban design. Quality design aims to create attractive, inclusive, durable, adaptable places for people to work in, to live in, to shop in, or pass through.

Planning authorities should promote quality design in retailing in their development plan and/or retail strategies and then implement this through the development management process. This is of particular importance for retail development because of the dominant visual and use role it plays in a city, town or village streetscape.

More detailed advice in relation to design issues is provided in Chapter 5 and the Retail Design Manual.







# 3

# Retailing and Spatial Planning

# Retailing and Spatial Planning

## Key Messages

- Regional Planning Guidelines should set a strategic context for development plans in addressing retailing.
- The Development Plan must set out clear evidence-based policies and objectives in relation to retailing in a discrete section of the plan titled Retail Development.
  - Joint or multi-authority retail strategies required by these guidelines will broadly identify the quantity and spatial distribution of future retail floorspace requirements for certain NSS Gateways and their catchments to guide the preparation of retail policies and objectives in the relevant development plans.
  - Joint or multi-authority retail strategies may also be prepared by other planning authorities for other towns and their environs straddling administrative boundaries which will also guide the preparation of policies and objectives in the relevant development plans.
- Outside of areas above, development plans should include a discrete section setting out general retail development objectives for other areas including rural areas.
- The need for any additional retail warehousing should be carefully assessed in view of the significant levels of recent provision and potential impacts on vitality and viability of city and town centres.

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines specific retail planning requirements to be met by regional authorities and planning authorities in carrying out their regional planning and development functions respectively.

### 3.2 Regional Planning Guidelines and Retailing

The regional planning guidelines which support the implementation of the NSS should provide the strategic retail context for planning authorities. Through their policies and objectives they should give guidance to the planning authorities on the role and function of the retail sector within the different levels of the regional settlement hierarchy and also on other strategic matters including the importance of good design, connectivity, use of public transport etc.

While it is not considered necessary that a retail strategy be prepared at the regional level, the regional authorities may be useful partners in supporting the delivery of the joint or multi-authority retail strategies to be prepared by relevant planning authorities in accordance with the requirements and advice of these guidelines.

### 3.3 Development Plans and Retailing

The function of the development plan is to establish an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of its area.

Specifically in relation to retailing, the development plan must be:

- Evidence-based through supporting analysis and data to guide decision making;
- Consistent with the approach of these guidelines; and
- Clear and concise with regard to specific objectives and requirements.

At a minimum, City and County Development Plans must therefore:

1. State the elements of their **settlement hierarchy** in line with the relevant regional planning guidelines and their core strategy;
2. Outline **the level and form of retailing activity appropriate** to the various components of the settlement hierarchy in that core strategy; see district centres below;
3. Define, by way of a map, the **boundaries of the core shopping areas** of city and town centres and also location of any district centres (See Section 3.4);
4. Include a broad assessment (square metres) of the **requirement for additional retail floorspace** only for those plans in the areas covered by a joint or multi-authority retail strategy (See Section 3.7 for areas not covered by such strategies);
5. Set out **strategic guidance** on the location and scale of retail development to support the settlement hierarchy, including where appropriate identifying opportunity sites which are suitable and available and which match the future retailing needs of the area;
6. **Identify sites** which can accommodate the needs of modern retail formats in a way that maintains the essential character of the shopping area;
7. Include **objectives to support action initiatives** in city and town centres; such as
  - **Mobility management measures** that both improve accessibility of retail areas while aiming to develop a pedestrian and cyclist friendly urban environment and vibrant street life; and
  - **Public realm interventions** aimed at improving the retailing experience through high quality civic design, provision of attractive street furnishing, lighting and effective street cleaning/business improvement district type initiatives; and
8. Identify relevant **development management criteria** for the assessment of retail developments in accordance with these guidelines.

In preparing policies and objectives relating to the location and scale of future development, planning authorities are reminded that they must disregard the potential benefits of commercial rates which may accrue as a consequence of planned retail development. The effect on local authority financial resources of retail development is not a material land use planning consideration.

### 3.4 Development Plans and District Centres

As referred to in Chapter 2, the core strategy in the development plan for cities and large towns must set out a settlement hierarchy for that city or town and its future development in line with relevant regional planning guidelines and in the cases of town development plans, the county core strategy.

In such cases, the location of retail functions in line with the spatial plan/core strategy for that city or town including where appropriate district centres must be stated and mapped.

The role of a district centre is to provide a range of retail and non-retail service functions (e.g. banks, post office, local offices, restaurants, public houses, community and cultural facilities for the community at a level consistent with the function of

that centre in the core strategy. They should not serve as a retail destination in their own right sufficient to adversely impact on the city/town centre to which they are subservient. (See Annex 1 - Types of Centres) They can be purpose built serving new or expanding suburbs or traditional serving long established communities.

The need for additional retail development in particular district centres to serve future population growth or for any significant extension to an existing district centre should be identified in the development plan and be based on a significant growth in population in the intended location or on a demonstrable level of under-provision of retailing or other services to meet the regular convenience and lower order comparison shopping needs of new communities as provided for and quantified by the relevant core strategy.

### 3.5 Joint or Multi-Authority Retail Strategies

While planning authorities will prepare development plans for their functional areas, the nature of the retail sector is such that, regardless of whether retailing is for convenience and comparison goods, the catchments for such activity frequently transcend local authority boundaries (and in some cases the boundary with Northern Ireland), especially those in the vicinity of the larger urban areas.

Accordingly, certain development plans and local area plans must be informed by joint or multi-authority retail strategies which should assess retail activity and demand needs that transcend planning authority boundaries (See Annex 3 for further guidance on the preparation of joint or multi-authority retail strategies). To give these strategies statutory backing the policies and objectives of the strategy should be adopted into the development plan and local area plan as appropriate or adopted as a variation to a development plan (See also Annex 3). The joint or multi-authority retail strategies for urban areas identified in the guidelines must be prepared or reviewed as appropriate to inform the relevant development plan review process.

Table 1 below identifies locations where joint or multi-authority retail strategies must be prepared. Beyond these locations, it is a matter for the relevant planning authorities to consider, in addition to inclusion of policies and objectives in their development plans, the preparation of such joint retail strategies for towns and their environs particularly where they straddle planning authority areas and especially other NSS Gateways, Hub towns etc.

**Table 1 - Authorities who must prepare joint or multi-authority retail strategies**

Strategy Area	Participating Planning Authorities
Dublin	Dublin City Council and Counties Fingal, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown and South Dublin, Kildare, Meath and Wicklow County Councils
Cork	Cork City and County Councils
Waterford	Waterford City/County Council, Wexford, Kilkenny, Tipperary County Councils
Galway	Galway City and County Councils
Limerick/Shannon	Limerick City and County Council, Clare and Tipperary County Councils
Midlands	Westmeath, Offaly and Roscommon County Councils

In order to plan for future development, the central objectives of joint or multi-authority retail strategies are to identify:

- a. the broad (m2) requirement for additional retail floorspace development over the plan period in the overall area to support the settlement hierarchy;
- b. the retail floorspace requirements both quantity and type by constituent planning authorities; and
- c. broad guidance as to location and function of retail activity, taking account of the policy objectives in Chapter 2 and the relevant settlement hierarchy.

### **3.6 Retail Floorspace Projections**

Assessment of any retail floorspace needs should take account of both emerging trends in the retail market and general estimates of future demand, based on projected changes in the local population and consumer spending. Estimates of future retail requirements are only intended to provide broad guidance as to the additional quantum of convenience and comparison floorspace provision; they should not be treated in an overly prescriptive manner, nor should they serve to inhibit competition (See Annex 4).

Planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála should balance quantitative estimates of future demand for retail floorspace of development plans, when assessing applications for new or expanded retail development with considerations in regard to vibrancy, choice, vitality and other qualitative issues.

It is acknowledged that both the performance of the national economy and local market forces will inevitably change over time. Therefore, current projections of floorspace requirements that are relevant to a given development plan from a corresponding joint or multi-authority retail strategy and/or development plan may not turn out to be completely accurate or relevant in the prevailing circumstances.

Therefore, the groups of planning authorities listed in Table 1 above should regularly monitor trends on a yearly or biennial basis in their area and update their joint or multi-authority retail strategies and/or development plans accordingly.

Annex 3 and Annex 4 provide more technical guidance on the manner in which planning authorities should assess the need and market demand for additional retail development. This methodology will continue to apply for the immediate future.

However, taking account of the observations received by the Department on foot of the public consultation of the Issues Paper (June 2010) and the consultation draft of these guidelines, a simplified methodology is being developed by the Department to ensure a strategic and resource efficient approach in estimating future retail floorspace requirements. In this regard, an outline framework for such an approach is also set out in Annex 4.

Following the publication of these guidelines, the Department will further develop and finalise its research into the data availability to support the new simplified approach for the locations to be covered by joint or multi-authority retail strategies through appropriate stakeholder consultations and will communicate the outcome of its work by way of circular guidance, which, once issued, shall replace Annex 4 to these guidelines.

### 3.7 Development Plans outside Joint or Multi-Authority Retail Strategies

Such development plans should include more general statements of policy and objectives with regard to retail development in line with points 1-3 and 5-8 in Section 3.3.

In relation to the requirement from Section 3.3 concerning the requirement for the development plans to give details of the **level and form of retailing activity appropriate** to the various components of the settlement hierarchy in the core strategy, for plans outside areas covered by joint or multi-authority retail strategies it is sufficient to state the general retail function appropriate to the settlement e.g.:

- Principally convenience retailing;
- Mixed convenience and comparison retailing;
- Higher order comparison retailing and convenience goods; and
- Retail warehousing or other specialist retailing functions. (See Chapter 4).

While there is therefore no specific requirement to estimate detailed floorspace requirements for additional retail development for plans outside the areas covered by joint or multi-authority retail strategies as mentioned in point 4 of Section 3.3, a general statement of additional retail development requirements, reflecting the local evidence of market interest and the need to provide good opportunities for retail provision to serve the main population centres in the county, ought to be sufficient in order to formulate appropriate policies and criteria for dealing with new development proposals. Such a statement might indicate that there is a need for an improvement of the convenience retail offer in a particular town or district centre or that there is a need to enhance the higher order comparison offer of another town.

### 3.8 Development Plans and Retail Warehousing

Planning authorities are recommended to carefully consider the zoning of land for any additional retail warehousing development in their areas, given the level of provision of this category of development in recent years in and around the main centres of population, the levels of vacancy in such centres and thus pressure to entertain uses inappropriate to the edge-of-centre or out-of-centre locations of many of these developments. See Chapter 4, Section 4.11.2.







# 4

# Retailing and Development Management

# Retailing and Development Management

## Key Messages

- The development management process must support applications for retail development which:
  - are in line with the role and function of the city or town in the settlement hierarchy of the relevant development plan; and
  - accord with the scale and type of retailing identified for that location in the development plan and relevant retail strategy.
- For significant retail development proposals, early and comprehensive engagement by applicants and planning authorities at the pre-application stage is essential.
- Development proposals not according with the fundamental objective to support the vitality and viability of city and town centre sites must demonstrate compliance with the sequential approach before they can be approved.
- Retail impact assessment and transport impact assessments may be required for significant retail development which due to their scale and/or location may impact on the vitality and viability of city and town centres.
- There should be a general presumption against large out-of-town retail centres in particular those located adjacent or close to existing, new or planned national roads/motorways.
- Very large single outlet retail warehouses addressing a regional, if not national catchment, may be considered in larger cities including the NSS Gateways of Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick/Shannon and Waterford.

### 4.1 Introduction

The development management process is fundamental to the delivery of an effective retail strategy. Development applications for retail development which comply with the development plan policies and objectives as set out in Section 3.2 and with any relevant retail strategy (if appropriate) and which promote a viable and vital retail sector will benefit the economy as a whole and also individual retailers and consumers. The development management process should proactively support such applications.

The following paragraphs set out the framework within which applications for retail development will be assessed and detail the issues to be addressed at each stage of the process.

### 4.2 Pre-Application Consultations

The role of the development management process at the pre-application stage is to facilitate early and pro-active engagement with the applicant to ensure that any development proposal will contribute positively to the implementation of development plan objectives. This is especially relevant in the context of significant retailing proposals as such early consultation can alert applicants to the strategic context within which their proposal will be evaluated.

Furthermore a pre-application consultation presents the planning authority with the opportunity to advise applicants of the detailed policies and objectives with which they must align including the sequential approach. Best practice suggests that the planning authority should adopt a coordinated approach to such consultations and should arrange that all relevant sections (e.g. planning/transport/water services/heritage) within the authority attend such consultations to ensure that the applicant is aware of all relevant design/infrastructure issues which may be relevant.

### 4.3 Consistency with the Development Plan

Where a development plan has been revised or varied in accordance with these Guidelines and/or where appropriate retail strategies including joint or multi-authority strategies have been adopted, the pre-application consultation should be relatively straightforward as the planning authority can quickly advise whether or not the proposal under consideration is consistent with the role of the city/town/district centre in the settlement hierarchy. Advice can be given on which modifications may be necessary to ensure compliance with the policies and objectives of these plans. If the project is not acceptable in the context of the development plan or related retail strategies, then this should be clearly communicated to the applicant at the earliest possible stage.

If however there are no up-to-date policies or objectives in the development plan and/or no appropriate retail strategies in place, the planning authority may need to specify what further assessments are required in support of the project and the level of detail required in accordance with the advice presented in these Guidelines.

### 4.4 Sequential Approach to the Location of Retail Development

Planning applications for retail development proposals must comply with the criteria on location, suitability of use, size and scale and accessibility set out in the retail guidelines and development plan/joint or multi-authority retail strategy to ensure that the site chosen is the most suitable and best available site for the type of retailing proposed.

Where the location of a proposed retail development submitted on a planning application has demonstrated to the satisfaction of the planning authority that it complies with the policies and objectives of a development plan and/or relevant retail strategy to support city and town centre, additional supporting background studies such as a demonstration of compliance with the sequential approach, below, or additional retail impact studies **are not required**.

However, where the location of a proposed retail development submitted on a planning application is not consistent with the policies and objectives of the development plan and/or relevant retail strategy to support the city and town centre, then that development proposal, must be subject to the **Sequential Approach** and its policy principles and order of priority set out below and any departure from these principles must be justified.

#### 4.4.1: Policy Principles of the Sequential Approach

Proposals being considered under the sequential approach must demonstrate that they have addressed relevant policy principles set out below.

### ***City and Town Centres***

The centres of cities and towns are the most suitable locations for the higher order fashion and comparison goods and are the most accessible locations for the majority of the catchment population. They should be supported in maintaining and expanding their retail offer to serve that population in a sustainable way which will also help to reduce the need to travel.

### ***Critical Mass***

The promotion of critical mass in city and town centres through the location of appropriate retail and other complementary uses including residential, culture leisure, financial, public administration restaurants/bars, within and adjoining their prime shopping areas will contribute significantly to the vibrancy and vitality of such centres.

### ***District Centres***

Within the gateway cities and towns, hub towns and other larger towns (approximately 10,000 population), locations for the provision of essential local services and facilities to serve particular environs of the city or town, known as district centres, will be identified in the settlement strategy. These should also be supported in developing their retail offer to a scale which accords with the retail strategy. The sequential approach should be applied to these district centres.

## **4.4.2: Order of Priority**

### ***City and Town Centre***

The order of priority for the sequential approach is to locate retail development in the city/town centre (and district centre if appropriate), and only to allow retail development in edge-of-centre or out-of-centre locations where all other options have been exhausted.

### ***Edge-of-Centre Sites***

Where retail development in an edge-of-centre site is being proposed, only where the applicant can demonstrate **and** the planning authority is satisfied that there are no sites or potential sites including vacant units within a city or town centre or within a designated district centre that are (a) **suitable** (b) **available** and (c) **viable**, can that edge-of-centre site be considered.

### ***Out-of-Centre Sites***

Where retail development on an out-of-centre site is being proposed, only in exceptional circumstances where the applicant can demonstrate **and** the planning authority is satisfied that there are no sites or potential sites either within the centre of a city, town or designated district centre or on the edge of the city/town/district centre that are (a) **suitable** (b) **available** and (c) **viable**, can that out-of-centre site be considered.

In relation to whether sites can demonstrate suitability, availability and viability, the following should be taken into account in implementing the sequential approach.

**a) Suitability:** Matters to be considered include whether or not the development is consistent with development plan objectives, in particular zoning objectives, current land use activity in the vicinity of the site, size, capacity to accommodate development, traffic and transportation issues; and/or;

**b) Availability:** this criterion relates to site ownership, ease of assembly and timing. Sites must be genuinely available for development at the time that site acquisition/assembly begins or within a reasonable time-frame; and/or;

**c) Viability:** the financial viability of a development is also a key consideration. The cost of site acquisition in the town centre may make a proposal unviable and force investors to look elsewhere in the area. Excessive development costs relative to values are also a consideration. For example, the requirement to deal with remediation for a brownfield site may have the potential to make a proposal unviable.

#### 4.5 Application of the Sequential Approach

The application of the sequential approach requires flexibility and realism on the part of both retail developers and planning authorities, to ensure that the various forms of retailing are developed in the most appropriate locations.

Planning authorities must therefore carefully consider the retailing needs of their cities and towns through the policies and objectives in a development plan and relevant retail strategies if appropriate. They should address matters such as how to broaden the retail offer of the city/town centre and identification of opportunity sites of varying sizes. Planning authorities should establish implementation teams to proactively engage with landlords, tenants' retailers, chambers of commerce etc to bring forward/amalgamate sites for development which have been identified as suitable. In so doing planning authorities must be mindful of their role in deciding on any future application on such sites.

For their part, when making planning applications, retailers should be flexible in appraising potential sites and buildings and should be prepared to make reasonable compromises and, if possible, adapt standard retail formats to accommodate retail schemes on sites which are well located in the context of the sequential approach to retail development.

Retailers also must look at issues such as scale and the possibility of changing core business models and adopting more flexible retail formats in order to blend in with local character. Other options to facilitate utilising town centre locations include disaggregating proposals with large floorspace/footprint requirements onto separate sites or using innovative site or store layouts, e.g. multi-storey developments with smaller footprints to make use of existing vacant and underutilised land or premises. The relaxation of minimum parking requirement is another option where a good choice of public transport links is available.

Only in cases where it is not possible, having examined in detail all the above options, to provide for the form and scale of development that is required on a site within the city/town centre, should consideration be given to a site on the edge of the city/town centre. As part of this proactive approach to facilitate the provision of an adequate supply and variety of retail facilities for the city and town, the planning authority may itself identify potential edge-of-centre sites for consideration. In this way the planning authority can guide development toward the most sequentially preferable of the edge-of-centre sites. Only in exceptional circumstances should out-of-town sites be considered and only after the sequential approach has been applied to these sites also.

#### **4.6 Sequential Approach and Extension – Change of Use Applications**

The sequential approach should also be used to assess proposals for the extension or material change of use of existing development where they are of a scale which could have a significant impact on the role and function of the city/town centre. Such extensions will of course also have to be assessed in the context of the floorspace requirements of the development plan/relevant retail strategy where appropriate.

#### **4.7 Edge-of-Centre Retailing**

Where, following the sequential approach, the consideration of an edge-of-centre site becomes necessary, the applicant and the planning authority must ensure that edge-of-centre sites are within easy walking distance of the identified primary retail area of the city or town. The distance cannot be defined precisely as different centres vary in their size and scale but should generally not be further than 300 to 400 metres.

Generally edge-of-town sites should be adjacent to the boundary of the central area but consideration should also be given to the local context, including the function and the character of the site in relation to the city/town centre as well as the ease of movement between the site and the city/town centre in terms of physical linkages and barriers such as any necessity to cross major roads and car parks. A site will not be well connected to a centre where it is physically separated from it by a barrier such as a major road, railway line or river and there is no existing or proposed pedestrian route which provides safe and convenient connection between the new edge-of-centre site and the original city/town centre.

Also of relevance is the appearance and perceived safety of the connection above and the strength of attraction and size of the city/town centre. As well as existing and proposed physical links between the edge-of-centre site and the city or town centre, the degree of functional linkage between the two will have a major effect on the level of linked trips. People may be more willing to walk between an edge-of-centre site and the city/town centre if they each have strong, complementary attractions and the route itself provides focus and interest. The ability to provide parking facilities on the edge that serve the centre as well as the new development thus enabling one trip to serve several purposes is also an issue to be considered. Thought should also be given to topography, visual integration, the attractiveness of the experience of accessing the site by different modes, and whether transport links allow or deter easy access to the surrounding area.

A development on the edge of an existing centre may be consistent with sustaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of the centre if it is providing for additional choice and competition and diverting potential expenditure from less accessible out-of-centre locations to more accessible edge-of-centre locations. Further guidance on the above is outlined in the accompanying Retail Design Manual.

#### **4.8 Out-of-Centre Retailing**

An out-of-centre site is defined as a location which is clearly not classifiable as a city or town centre location as defined in these Guidelines but which is within the urban area, including planned extensions to the urban area in a development plan. New large-scale out-of-centre developments are likely to have an adverse impact on the vitality and viability of established city/town centres. This is a consequence of the competitive environment in which retailing operates. It is not the purpose of the planning system

to prevent competition or trade diversion in itself, but rather the goal is to promote healthy urban centres, in the public interest. Where proposed new retail developments have the potential to significantly undermine and compromise the goal of maintaining the vitality and viability of established city/town centres, they should be subject to a detailed retail impact assessment where these issues, in particular the issue of significant trade diversion from the city or town centre, are addressed, in detail and mitigation of such impacts considered.

Where, following the sequential approach, the planning authority has determined that no city/town centre or edge-of-centre sites are suitable, viable and available and which can provide the form and scale of development required under the development plan or relevant retail strategies, the planning authority must not approve such development unless it is satisfied that there will be no negative impact on the vitality and viability of the retail core.

In assessing the suitability of an out-of-centre site, both applicants and planning authorities can utilise the headings of retail impact assessments set out in the section below.

#### **4.9 Retail Impact Assessment**

As set out in Chapter 3, the development plan will set out the most appropriate locations for the level of retailing appropriate to any particular city or town and in some cases will include the quantum of floorspace required.

However, where a planning authority considers an application for planning permission to develop a new retail development to be particularly large in scale compared to the existing city/town/district centre, or where a retail strategy or development plan has allocated a specific type and quantum of retail floorspace to a particular settlement and a proposed development absorbs on one site the bulk of that potential retail floorspace, the planning authority may request the applicant, by way of a Retail Impact Assessment (RIA) as set out in Annex 5, to demonstrate compliance with the development plan and that there will not be a material and unacceptable adverse impact on the vitality and viability of any existing centre. This is a matter for careful technical assessment and professional judgement.

The threshold at which an RIA will be required will be determined in the context of the development plan policies and objectives for retailing or may be raised by the planning authority in pre-application discussions or in the course of determining the planning application. Through the RIA, the applicant must address the following criteria and demonstrate whether or not the proposal would:

- support the long-term strategy for city/town centres as established in the retail strategy/development plan, and not materially diminish the prospect of attracting private sector investment into one or more such centres;
- have the potential to increase employment opportunities and promote economic regeneration;
- have the potential to increase competition within the area and thereby attract further consumers to the area;
- respond to consumer demand for its retail offering and not diminish the range of activities and services that an urban centre can support;

- cause an adverse impact on one or more city/town centres, either singly or cumulatively with recent developments or other outstanding planning permissions (which have a realistic prospect of implementation) sufficient to undermine the quality of the centre or its wider function in the promotion and encouragement of the arts, culture, leisure, public realm function of the town centre critical to the economic and social life of the community;
- cause an increase in the number of vacant properties in the primary retail area that is likely to persist in the long term;
- ensure a high standard of access both by public transport, foot and private car so that the proposal is easily accessible by all sections of society; and/or
- link effectively with an existing city/town centre so that there is likely to be commercial synergy.

Planning applications should be formulated in accordance with the framework of the specified criteria outlined above to enable the planning authority make a thorough and balanced assessment of the development proposal.

Where a development proposal fails to satisfy the sequential approach or is likely to have a significant adverse impact as demonstrated by an assessment of the above criteria, planning permission should be refused.

#### **4.10 Transport Impact Assessment**

Impacts on the transport networks serving a proposed retail development proposal are very important to determine in the course of considering planning applications. A Traffic and Transport Assessment (TTA) may be required for retail developments over a particular threshold (1,000 M<sup>2</sup> gross floorspace for retail/leisure) as set out in the Traffic Management Guidelines 2003<sup>6</sup> the Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines 2007<sup>7</sup>. The Planning Guidelines on Spatial Planning and National Roads<sup>8</sup> set out additional advice and requirements in relation to transport matters.

A TTA must examine the transport impacts of a proposed development, incorporating any subsequent measures necessary to ensure roads and junctions and other transport infrastructure in the vicinity of the development are adequate to accommodate the proposed development without causing additional delays to existing and future road based traffic. More importantly, TTA is important in demonstrating how to encourage a shift towards sustainable travel modes by those using the retail development in question.

Applicants for retail development which exceed these thresholds should consult the guidelines above prior to lodging a planning application. Where traffic and transport volumes from proposed retail developments are under the thresholds for TTA outlined above, the guidelines should be consulted in regard to the criteria for sub threshold TTA. The TTA should also address urban design impacts of proposed public and private transport proposals and also deal with delivery and monitoring regimes for the various options. If the proposed development warrants an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), the transport assessment should form part of the EIA.

<sup>6</sup> Traffic Management Guidelines 2003 (DECLG, DoELG, DoT and DTO)

<sup>7</sup> Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines (2007) National Roads Authority

<sup>8</sup> DECLG 2012.

## 4.11 Assessment of Specific Categories of Retail Development

### 4.11.1 Large Convenience Goods Stores

Large convenience stores comprising of supermarkets, superstores and hypermarkets are now an accepted element of retailing in cities and large towns. They provide primarily for the weekly convenience goods shopping of households. They require extensive open areas of floorspace together with adjacent car parking as the majority (but not all) their customers undertake their bulk convenience shopping trips by car.

Large convenience goods stores should be located in city or town centres or in district centres or on the edge of these centres and be of a size which accords with the general floorspace requirements set out in the development plan/retail strategy to support and add variety and vitality to existing shopping areas and also to facilitate access by public transport for shoppers.

In certain limited circumstances however, it may not be possible to bring forward suitable sites in or on the edge of a city or town centre because of the site requirements of large convenience goods stores, heritage constraints in historic towns, or because the road network does not have the capacity to accommodate additional traffic and service vehicles. In these cases, the sequential approach should be used to find the most preferable sites.

Where a proposal for large convenience goods stores development involves the sale of a significant amount of comparison goods (as is common now in many supermarkets, superstores and hypermarkets), the planning application drawings should clearly delineate the floorspace to be devoted primarily for the sale of convenience goods. The balance between the convenience and comparison element of the proposed store drawings is a critical element in the assessment of the suitability of the development proposal. Where a significant element of the store is indicated to be for comparison goods the potential impact of that element of the store on existing comparison goods stores within the catchment must be included in the assessment of the application.

[Note: The distinction between ‘discount stores’ and other convenience goods stores which was contained in the 2005 Retail Planning Guidelines will no longer apply].

### 4.11.2 Retail Parks and Retail Warehouses

A retail park comprises an agglomeration of retail warehouses grouped around a common car park selling mainly bulky household goods, requiring extensive areas of showroom space, often with minimal storage requirements. There is an expectation that most of the goods purchased can be transported off-site by the customer. Home delivery services may also be available.

There are benefits to be gained in grouping retail warehouses in retail parks so that the number of trips by car are minimised. The parks are generally located at out-of-centre locations to facilitate access by car. These locations may also provide relief to congested city or town centres.

However, because the number of retail parks has grown substantially over the past decade, reaching saturation point in some areas, leading to vacancy in some cases, and also because of the blurring of the definition of the goods permitted to be sold in these parks, it is appropriate to reassess the impact of such developments. Due to

the fact that the range of goods being sold from retail warehouse parks often includes non-bulky durables, there is potential for a detrimental impact on city/town centres as indicated by the increasing numbers of vacant units in urban centres where retail parks exist on the periphery. It also needs to be recognised that many bulky goods stores such as furniture retailers can and are accommodated in city and town centres.

For these reasons there should, in general, be a **presumption against further development of out-of-town retail parks**. However, the development plan and any relevant retail strategies should identify whether or not there is a need for the provision of additional retail warehouses in the light of the issues set out above. If a need for additional bulky format retailing is identified by the development plan on the basis of evidence from a relevant retail strategies including joint/multi-authority retail strategies, the size and potential location of the additional units should also be specified. In addition, in the interests of clarity, the development plan should clearly identify the type of bulky household goods which may be sold in these units, taking account of the requirements below.

#### ***Type of goods sold***

To minimise potential adverse impacts on central areas, it is important that the range of goods sold in both existing and any future retail parks is tightly controlled and limited to truly bulky household goods or goods which are not portable by customers travelling by foot, cycle, or bus. See Annex 1 for definitions of bulky goods.

While it is acknowledged that there are ancillary items associated with an otherwise bulky good, e.g. computer software, printing paper, it is recommended that the retail floorspace devoted to such ancillary products should not exceed 20% of the total net retail floorspace of the relevant retail unit and such space to be clearly delineated on the planning application drawings to facilitate future monitoring and enforcement. Planning authorities should also closely monitor compliance with existing permissions for retail warehouses to ensure that the goods being sold are consistent with the definition of non-portable bulky goods in order to promote and protect the vitality and viability of city and town centres. Enforcement action must be taken where retailing is not in compliance with the requirements above.

#### ***Size of units***

Specific planning and competition issues arise in relation to the size range of individual retail warehouse units and it is therefore necessary to address the separate matters of minimum and maximum unit sizes. Generally speaking, units of less than 700 M<sup>2</sup> gross floorspace are more easily capable of being accommodated in urban centres and, in any event, tend to sell a less bulky range of goods. Consequently, planning authorities may consider it appropriate to impose a minimum size condition preventing the construction or subdivision of retail warehouse units into stores less than 700 M<sup>2</sup> in out-of-centre locations.

Conversely, the development of very large single retail warehouse units in excess of 5,000 M<sup>2</sup> (and sometimes of 10,000 M<sup>2</sup> or more) focused upon a specific market segment, can have an unacceptable local monopoly effect on smaller shops in town centres, particularly in a country like Ireland which has few large conurbations. Furthermore, these large-scale development formats attract large volumes of car-borne customers and require a high quality road network with spare capacity. These conditions occur in relatively few locations in the State.

For the foreseeable future, therefore, **the cap on large-scale single retail warehouse units in excess of 6,000 M<sup>2</sup> gross (including any ancillary garden centre) will remain**, due to their potential effect on the surrounding road network and their potential for creating local monopolies which would inhibit competition within local catchment areas.

Where it is considered warranted, local authorities should impose appropriate conditions when permitting retail warehouse developments to prevent the provision of single large units either through new development, coalescence or the linking together of two or more stores. In general, coalescence or linking together of stores would be considered to be development and therefore subject to a requirement for planning permission. The 6,000 M<sup>2</sup> gross threshold should apply in all cases, except in the exceptional circumstance as indicated in below.

***Exceptional provision for certain types of large-scale retail warehouses***

There is evidence of consumer demand in Ireland for innovative types of large-scale retail warehouses which are capable of displaying a very wide range of bulky goods under one roof, together with a range of customer facilities. The scale of such outlets requires a regional, if not a national, population catchment. Accordingly, proposed exceptions to the 6,000 M<sup>2</sup> retail warehouse cap may be considered on the merits of individual development applications in the five NSS Gateway cities of Dublin, Cork, Waterford, Limerick/Shannon and Galway. Planning authorities in those areas may wish to consider designating potential development sites which would satisfy the locational criteria at (b) and (c) below.

In order to be acceptable from a planning perspective, any proposal for an individual large scale retail warehouse with a floorspace in excess of 6,000 M<sup>2</sup> gross in the locations above must demonstrate that the proposal:

- a. will accommodate predominantly bulky goods under one roof, together with a range of customer facilities (e.g. restaurant, crèche), on a scale which requires a regional, if not a national, population catchment;
- b. is in accordance with the Planning Guidelines on Spatial Planning and National Roads in that the proposal can demonstrate that the development will not adversely affect the efficiency of the national road network and key junctions and interchanges and that it can be demonstrated that traffic volumes can be accommodated within the design assumptions for such roads, taking account of the opportunities for encouraging a modal shift towards more sustainable travel modes;
- c. will be served by existing or planned public transport services;
- d. will make adequate provision for those opting for home delivery of goods other than by private car;
- e. will be accompanied by a traffic impact assessment, demonstrating compliance with the above criteria; and
- f. will take account of the vitality/viability criteria in respect of city/town centres set out in these Guidelines and avoid the incorporation of uses and activities, as part of the development, which are more appropriate to city and town centre locations.

### **4.11.3 Factory Shops**

Such units, usually located as part of or adjacent to the production facility, should be restricted by way of condition to the sale of products produced by the relevant factory. Proposals for individual factory shops may be appropriate, provided the scale of the shop is appropriate to its location and raises no issues in relation to the vitality and viability of nearby urban centres.

### **4.11.4 Outlet Centres**

Outlet centres consist of groups of stores retailing end-of-season or discontinued items at discounted prices and are typically located in out-of-centre locations.

The success of these outlet centres depends on attracting customers from a wide catchment area, and from the tourism sector. When they are located out-of-town on greenfield sites, they can divert a significant amount of expenditure on comparison shopping goods away from established city/town centres and tourist centres even some distance away. Nonetheless, outlet centres within or immediately adjacent to a city or town centre can generate commercial synergies with the established retail outlets, thereby raising the profile of the centre and enhancing aggregate turnover on retail goods and leisure activities.

Because of the specific niche that outlet centres operate within, applicants must demonstrate, and planning authorities must ensure that the products sold will not be in competition with those currently on sale in typical city/town centre locations.

Applications for the development of outlet centres should be considered having regard to the provisions of the development plan/relevant retail strategy and assessed in accordance with the sequential test set out in Chapter 4.

It should be recognised, however, that outlet centres are unlikely to succeed commercially in close proximity to the main urban centres in Ireland because retailers do not normally choose to trade at a large discount in direct competition with their high street outlets. However, experience shows that this constraint is unlikely to arise with smaller or secondary town centres, especially those in areas which attract large numbers of tourists. Consequently, the most appropriate location for outlet centres is likely to be where commercial synergy can be achieved between an outlet centre and an urban centre which would lead to economic benefits for the overall area. Outlet centres should not be permitted in more remote out-of-town locations.

### **4.11.5 Retailing in Small Towns and Villages**

The role of small towns and villages in the provision of retail services to their local urban and rural populations should be defined in development plans. Where appropriate, the maximum size of store, consistent with maintaining a variety of shops in the centre of these towns and villages and protecting an appropriate level of retail provision in the rural area, should be identified. In general there should be a clear presumption stated in favour of central or edge-of-centre locations for new developments.

#### **4.11.6 Local Retail Units**

Local retail units such as corner shops or shops located in local or neighbourhood centres serving local residential districts perform an important function in urban areas. Where a planning authority can substantiate the local importance of such units in defined local centres, they should safeguard them in development plans, through appropriate land-use zoning. Development management decisions should support the provision of such units, particularly where they encompass both food-stores and important non-food outlets such as retail pharmacies, and have significant social and economic functions in improving access to local facilities especially for the elderly and persons with mobility impairments, families with small children, and those without access to private transport.

#### **4.11.7 Retailing in Rural Areas**

Retailing in rural areas should generally be directed to existing settlements: development for this purpose in the countryside should be resisted. It is recognised, however, that there may be exceptional circumstances where the development of certain types of retail units in rural areas could be acceptable. The retail units in question could be:

- a retail unit which is ancillary to activities arising from farm diversification;
- a retail unit designed to serve tourist or recreational facilities, and secondary to the main use;
- a small scale retail unit attached to an existing or approved craft workshop retailing the product direct to the public; and/or
- a small scale retail unit designed to serve a dispersed rural community.

#### **4.11.8 Casual Trading**

Casual trading is provided for under the Casual Trading Act 1995 and includes trading markets and the increasingly popular farmers' markets. If properly regulated such casual trading can make a significant contribution to the local economy. Casual trading should be promoted in the retail centres of cities and town where it can create an ambiance which can contribute to the vitality and viability of such centres. To date a number of local authorities have inserted specific policies/objectives into their development plans to facilitate the temporary use and nature of open-air trading, e.g. craft (Christmas) markets, farmers' markets and car boot sales.

#### **4.11.9 Retailing and Motor Fuel Stations**

Convenience shops are part of the normal ancillary services provided within motor fuel stations. In rural areas, they can have a very important function as the local shop or small supermarket. However, such shops should remain on a scale appropriate to the location, and their development should only be permitted where the shopping element of the station would not seriously undermine the approach to retail development in the development plan.

The floorspace of the shop should not exceed 100 M<sup>2</sup> net; where permission is sought for a floorspace in excess of 100 M<sup>2</sup>, the sequential approach to retail development shall apply, i.e. the retail element of the proposal shall be assessed by the planning authority in the same way as would an application for retail development (without petrol/diesel filling facilities) in the same location.

In considering applications for development, attention should also be given to the safety aspects of circulation and parking within the station forecourt.

Motor fuel facilities ancillary to large convenience goods stores located in or adjacent to town centres often provide healthy competition in this sector of the market without adversely affecting town centres. It is not axiomatic, however, that all large convenience goods stores formats should have ancillary fuel facilities, particularly where the objective of planning policy is, wherever possible, to fit large convenience goods stores on sites within or on the edge of town centres. It will often be difficult to find a site at this type of location with acceptable road access which is sufficiently large to allow both a full sized store and a fuel station. Consequently retailers should not seek to claim that they are unable to assemble sites within a town centre or on the edge of one, simply because they face difficulty in assembling a site capable of accommodating a large convenience goods stores and a fuel station.

#### ***4.11.10 Online and Off-Line Motorway Service Areas***

Online and off line motorway service areas are not considered in these guidelines. Guidance in relation to the provisions which apply to these facilities are contained in the Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities DECLG 2012.







# 5

# Retailing and Design Quality

# Retailing and Design Quality

## Key Messages

- A high quality of design in retail development can make an important contribution to the vitality and attractiveness of city and town centres.
- Planning authorities should promote high standards of design and finish through both the forward planning and development management processes.
- The basic approach to design issues set out in this chapter needs to be read in conjunction with the more detailed guidance provided in the companion Retail Design Manual.

### 5.1 Introduction

Quality design ensures attractive, inclusive, durable, adaptable places which contribute positively to making places more pleasant for people to work in, to live in, to shop in, or pass through. Planning authorities should plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all retail development. Design which is inappropriate for its context, or which fails to realise the opportunity of improving the character and quality of an area or a site, should not be accepted.

The Department's statement on housing policy, "Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities", (2007) contains a useful definition of design quality:

*'Design is a creative activity and definitions of quality in design are elusive. It cannot be reduced to codes and prescriptions ... However it is possible to distinguish good design from bad design ... Good design is fit for purpose, sustainable, efficient, coherent, flexible, responsive to context, good looking and a clear expression of the requirements of the brief ... Assessing quality is to a large extent an objective process. Ultimately ... some questions come down to individual taste and preference. What matters is quality not style.'*

### 5.2 Forward Planning and Quality Design

Planning authorities should promote quality design in their policy documents and implement this through the development management process. This is of particular importance for retail development because of the dominant visual and use role it plays in a city, town or village streetscape. Where there are clearly defined design policies and objectives relating to retail use within a development plan or local area plan, this gives greater clarity and certainty to developers and their design teams and provides the framework for discussion at the pre-application stage.

Design needs to be applied by skilled practitioners, and planning authorities are encouraged to provide suitable training opportunities for relevant staff and, in appropriate situations when necessary, use architectural/design consultants to advise them on appropriate plan policies and development management responses in particularly sensitive areas and sites, e.g. heritage towns, architectural conservation areas, protected structures etc. (See also Chapter 3 - Retailing and Spatial Planning)

### **5.2.1 Development Plans**

The Planning Guidelines on Development Plans (2007) recommend that planning authorities should set out a strategic vision for their area in the development plan. For plans relating to cities, towns and villages, this vision will include the creation of sustainable, high quality retail environments – attractive, vibrant and safe places which function effectively. In addition to sustainability objectives, development plans for cities and towns should include a range of design principles and policies which respond to local circumstances and which are capable of being expanded in more detail in local area plans and (where appropriate) in non-statutory guidance documents.

In devising design policies, it is important that the policies are not overly prescriptive to allow for the creativity of skilled designers. Rather, the approach should be to specify the issues to be considered and then assess the response of the developer to those issues.

### **5.2.2 Use of Design Briefs**

Planning authorities should consider including policies and objectives in their development plans or LAPs to either prepare design briefs for particularly important, sensitive or large-scale retail development sites or request applicants to submit design statements for major retail proposals, or retail proposals which are located in a sensitive area.

The design brief should describe the site and its context, summarise relevant development plan or local area plan objectives and policies, identify any planning or development constraints, and give some indication as to the type, design, and layout of development which the authority would wish to see on the site. The design statement from the developer will then address the issues raised in the planning authorities design brief. (See Section 5.3 below)

### **5.2.3 Specific Issues**

To inform and develop their proposed design policies and objectives, planning authorities may wish to consider preparing strategy documents which address specific issues that affect the appearance or functioning of a town or city and its retail areas. Each city or town will be different but the strategy should include devising a vision for the city/town and could include a public realm strategy, a signage/advertisement strategy, or a specific strategy relating to the implications of retail needs within an historic fabric context, e.g. dealing with matters such as access, servicing, floorplate size, difficulties in identifying suitable large sites in historic fine grain centres, and the re-use of historic buildings. This will give guidance to developers, public utilities and the public as to the particular vision for the area on that specific issue and ensure a coherent approach as development takes place.

### **5.2.4 Public Realm**

A public realm strategy for example may be for all or part of an urban area, to give an holistic approach to the development of, for example, a new civic space, or in smaller towns and villages it may be to give an overall perspective on how that particular town or village would like to see its civic spaces develop, or it may be for an existing unwelcoming space, which requires some further thought. The strategy will include issues such as understanding the use and purpose of the public realm area, developing

a shared vision by users for this space, identifying the challenges, and then putting forward an implementation plan which may have both short and long-term actions. To ensure that the plan is implemented, monitored, and reviewed over time, an implementation group of interested parties should be set up. An example of a public realm strategy is the “Draft Dublin City public realm strategy: Your City Your Space. 2011-2017”.

### **5.2.5 Historic Centres**

As indicated in these guidelines, through using the sequential approach the focus for retail development will generally be the centre of cities and towns. In city/town centres, generally, development should be of a scale appropriate to the size of the centre in order to minimise the potential for adverse impact, and as such, retail development should recognise the special character of the area. Where a larger floor plate is essential to respond to the need of the particular retail sector, and this corresponds with the appropriate retail location within the city or town for such a use, a designed solution, using appropriate conservation principles and expertise will be required which will adapt the historic buildings, retaining the building in use and maintaining the essential character of the streetscape.

### **5.2.6 Urban Framework Approach**

Where, however, heritage issues are likely to be a major consideration in the development of a city or town, because of the wealth of protected structures, architectural conservation areas, and archaeology, planning authorities should consider how to enhance and harness these assets to bring economic wellbeing to the city/town. In such circumstances planning authorities will need to make an in-depth examination and undertake a detailed examination of the city/town centre, through an urban framework approach, using either a statutory process such as an LAP or a non-statutory planning framework.

Within this planning context the planning authority can closely and precisely examine the particular issues that relate to the city/town. It may be one where the dominant issue is one of traffic congestion because of a narrow street pattern, or an issue around existing car parking and linkages from the car parks into the historic core; or it may be an issue relating to the appropriate location of different floor plate sizes reflecting the different needs of the different retail formats.

Accordingly, in the situations above, the planning authority should take the opportunity to refine and reassess their Record of Protected Structures (RPS), ensuring that the buildings on the RPS are still existing, that the reasons for their protection including their intrinsic character and value are fully understood. Additionally where appropriate, the planning authority should also ensure that the boundaries for any Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) are reflective of the protection that is required to preserve the character of the place, area, group of structures or city/townscape.

Planning authorities may find it helpful within this context to establish a hierarchy of areas in the city/town centre, indicating:

1. those areas which are particularly sensitive with regard to architectural heritage and for which particular retail uses and unit sizes are suitable and where the focus may be on providing linkages between the different shopping areas (at 2 and 3 below);

2. those areas where, with appropriate conservation expertise, a variety of retail uses and sizes may be accommodated; and
3. those areas where significant retail intervention is possible.

Having established such a hierarchy, the planning authority should then decide the level of conservation protection appropriate to the different areas above, understanding the different requirements of the RPS and the ACA. Both of these designations have their own particular strengths, and the use of one or the other will depend on the particular local situation and its heritage value.

Ultimately, the adaptation and re-use of historic buildings by way of appropriate interventions, stimulating the overall regeneration of an historic urban area, is preferable to allowing such buildings to fall into disuse while developments are relocated to edge-of-centre or out-of-town locations

As previously indicated in Chapter 3, planning authorities should therefore be proactive in identifying opportunity sites, of different sizes and in the different locations of the core retail area, and providing the necessary linkages between the different types of retail areas of a city/town. It is important that these linkages are safe, pleasant, and attractive, particularly for the pedestrian and cyclist.

Planning Authorities may also wish to consider as part of an overall approach to supporting their city and town centres, related issues of, for example, tailoring the contribution scheme to encourage retail development into the appropriate locations, having compatible traffic management and car parking measures to encourage city and town centre usage.

Developers should be flexible in their approach to their floorspace/plate requirements and where possible adapt or develop formats which are suitable for a smaller floorplate through for example disaggregation, using one retail unit for a specific retail use, e.g. convenience goods, and another retail unit for comparison goods, or using multiple levels, or having a particular store format for areas where smaller floorplates are available and a larger format for areas where larger floorplates are available. Developers in sensitive or historically important locations should give some thought to the issues of signage and advertising, recognizing that a revised approach to their normal advertising, logos and symbols might be more appropriate and help enhance the design quality of their development.

Further guidance and assistance including guidance on conservation principles can be found in Guidelines issued by the Department<sup>9</sup> and in the accompanying Retail Design Manual.

### **5.3 Development Management and Quality Design**

While Chapter 4 (Retailing and Development Management) relates to the issues arising around retail development, its location, traffic implications, types of retailing, and early engagement with the planning authority, it is important that design is a critical issue in the consideration of any planning application for retail development.

<sup>9</sup> Architectural Heritage Protection, *Guidelines for Planning Authorities*. Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2004, reissued by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2011

All designers of retail developments should be encouraged to carry out an appraisal of the distinctive character of the area adjoining the site and to consider how the design and layout of the proposed development responds to, and preferably enriches that character. If, however, the appraisal finds that the adjacent area is characterised by poor design, the design approach to the proposed development may have to be based on first principles. Where a design statement is being submitted with the application, it should include or summarise the character appraisal.

### ***5.3.1 Use of Design Statements***

A design statement from the developer or design team would then be required which addresses the specific design brief, and indicates how the brief is fulfilled in design terms. A design statement is a short document which enables the applicant to explain why a particular design solution is considered the most suitable for a particular site, especially for larger or more complex forms of development. The statement will usually consist of both text and graphics, but is not intended to duplicate planning application documents. It may be of special value in explaining why the context requires an exceptional – rather than a conventional design approach.

### ***5.3.2 Pre-application Consultations***

Where there are clearly defined design policies relating to retail use within a development plan or local area plan, this will provide the framework for discussion at the pre-application stage. Such consultation enables conflicts to be resolved at the outset which might otherwise delay – or even derail – a scheme at a later stage.

Where a design brief is in place the applicant can be alerted to the need for the submission of a design statement with the application which addresses the specific design brief, and indicates how the brief is fulfilled in design terms.

It would be useful for pre-application meetings relating to the development of sites where design issues are particularly important, e.g. within heritage towns or conservation areas, or which affect protected structures, to ensure that there is input from the Council's architectural/conservation/design personnel, where available, to advise applicants in the interests of clarity and certainty on the key design parameters which will be applied in the evaluation of projects in such particularly sensitive areas and sites.

### ***5.3.3 Assessment by Planning Authorities***

The Retail Design Manual will provide a robust framework to aid a systematic analysis of most retail developments and should ensure that all key issues are addressed at a formative stage in the design process.

Where proposed development is acceptable in principle from a development plan viewpoint, every effort should be made to resolve any remaining design problems, whether by means of planning conditions (where third party rights would not be affected) or by inviting the applicant to submit modified plans where more significant changes are envisaged.

Where the design is of such poor quality and contravenes the retail design objectives and policies of the development plan giving rise to a sub-standard retail environment, permission should be refused and the reasons for refusal should clearly indicate how

the layout and design would need to be reconsidered.

#### **5.4 Retail Design Manual**

The Guidelines are accompanied by a Retail Design Manual which looks at the practical issues of relating design principles to retail development at a variety of scales and in various settings. It sets out design principles which should be used in formulating development plan policies and objectives, in discussing design quality at pre-application meetings, and in the assessment of planning applications and appeals. The principles range from assessing the site and location aspects of retail development to that of sustainable construction and environmental responsibility. Planning authorities and developers should promote and implement the achievement of these principles in the interests of delivering quality urban.





# Annexes



# Annex 1

## Glossary of Terms

This glossary covers forms of retail development and types of retail location. As retailing is dynamic, it should be noted that new forms of retailing may evolve which are inadequately described by current terminology, and should be assessed on their merits.

### **A 1.1 Types of Retail Floorspace**

- Total Shopping Centre Floorspace – internal space (measured from inside walls) of a covered shopping centre including circulation space toilets, lifts and escalators gross retail area, gross non-retail area floorspace devoted to incidental activities such as foodcourt, administrative offices, walkways, car parking both integrated and surface.
- Gross Retail Floorspace – the total floorspace, as measured from inside the shop walls, which includes sales space, plus storage space, offices, toilets, canteen, and circulation space.
- Net Retail Floorspace – the area within the shop or store which is visible to the public and to which the public has access including fitting rooms, checkouts, the area in front of checkouts, serving counters and the area behind used by serving staff, areas occupied by retail concessionaires, customer service areas, and internal lobbies in which goods are displayed, but excluding storage areas, circulation space to which the public does not have access to, cafes, and customer toilets.

### **A 1.2 Types of Retail Goods**

Although there is a trend for “scrambled merchandising” whereby some retail businesses sell both convenience goods and comparison goods, greater definitional clarity is obtained by adopting a goods-based retail classification. Retail goods categories can be divided into convenience goods and comparison goods as follows:

- Convenience Goods:
  - food;
  - alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages;
  - tobacco;
  - non-durable household goods;

- Comparison Goods:
  - clothing and footwear;
  - furniture, furnishings and household equipment (excluding non-durable household goods);
  - medical and pharmaceutical products, therapeutic appliances and equipment;
  - educational and recreation equipment and accessories;
  - books, newspapers and magazines;
  - goods for personal care;
  - goods not elsewhere classified;
  - bulky goods
    - Goods generally sold from retail warehouses where DIY goods or goods such as flatpack furniture are of such size that they would normally be taken away by car and not be portable by customers travelling by foot, cycle or bus, or that large floorspace would be required to display them e.g.
    - repair and maintenance materials;
    - furniture and furnishings;
    - carpets and other floor coverings;
    - household appliances;
    - tools and equipment for the house and garden;
    - bulky nursery furniture and equipment including perambulators;
    - bulky pet products such as kennels and aquariums;
    - audio-visual, photographic and information processing equipment;
    - catalogue shops and other bulky durables for recreation and leisure.

The list is not exhaustive – bulky goods not mentioned in the list should be dealt with on their merits in the context of the definition of bulky goods

### **A 1.3 Types of Retailing**

#### **Supermarket**

Single level, self service store selling mainly food, with a net retail floorspace of less than 2,500 M<sup>2</sup>.

#### **Superstore**

Generally single level, self service stores selling mainly food, or food and some non-food goods, with at least 2,500 M<sup>2</sup> net retail floorspace but not greater than 5,000 M<sup>2</sup> net retail floorspace and with integrated or shared parking.



## **Hypermarket**

Single or multi-level self service store selling both food and a range of comparison goods, with net retail floorspace area in excess of 5,000 M<sup>2</sup> with integrated or shared parking.

## **Shopping Centre**

Predominantly purpose-built centres comprising a mix of large and small units, typically anchored by a large convenience goods stores

## **Retail Parks**

A single development of a least three retail warehouses with associated car parking.

## **Retail Warehouse**

A large single-level store specialising in the sale of bulky household goods such as carpets, furniture and electrical goods, and bulky DIY items, catering mainly for car-borne customers.

## **Factory Shop**

A shop located as part of or adjacent to the production facility and specialising in the sale of manufacturers' products direct to the public.

## **Outlet Centres**

Groups of retail units in particular focusing on fashion and accessories which are generally associated with designer groups. They specialise in selling surplus stock and end-of-line goods at discounted prices.

## **Forecourt Retailing**

Mini-supermarket linked to petrol filling stations.

## **A 1.5 Types of Centre**

### **City and Town Centres**

Provide a broad range of facilities and services and fulfill a function as a focus for both the community and public transport. The term excludes district centres, retail parks, and local centres.

### **District Centre**

Provides a range of retail and non-retail service functions (e.g. banks, post office, local offices, restaurants, public houses, community and cultural facilities) for the community at a level consistent with the function of that centre in the core strategy. They can be purpose built as in new or expanding suburbs or traditional district centres in large cities or town

### **Local Centre or Neighbourhood Centre**

Comprise a small group of shops, typically comprising newsagent, small supermarket/ general grocery store, sub-post office and other small shops of a local nature serving a small, localised catchment population.



## **A 1.6 Types of Location**

### **Retail Area**

That part of a town centre which is primarily devoted to shopping.

### **Centre**

For the purposes of these guidelines, a centre refers to a city or town centre and can also, refer to the centre of a district or neighbourhood centre which has been identified in the settlement hierarchy of a development plan

### **Edge-of-Centre**

A location within easy walking distance of the primary retail area of a city town centre or district centre.

### **Out-of-Centre**

A location that is clearly separate from a town centre but within the town development boundary, as indicated in a development plan or local area plan.

## **A 1.7 Other Terms**

### **Settlement Hierarchy**

A ranking given by the planning authority to a city or town in the areas of its development plan.

### **Retail Hierarchy**

A ranking given by the planning authority to the range and quantity of retailing appropriate to a settlement as dictated by its role in the settlement hierarchy.

### **Urban Grain**

Pattern (morphology) of streets, buildings and other features within an urban area.



# Annex 2

## Assessing the Vitality and Viability of Town Centres

### A 2.1 Introduction

This appendix outlines some information that may be of use in assessing the viability and vitality of city and town centres in preparing retail strategies, in planning for the retail sector, and in assessing development applications.

### A 2.2 What Viability and Vitality Means

The concept of vitality and viability is central to maintaining and enhancing town centres. It will depend on many factors, including the range and quality of activities in a centre, its mix of uses, its accessibility to people living and working in the area, and its general amenity, appearance and safety. A healthy town centre which is vital and viable balances a number of qualities:

- **Attractions** these underpin a town and comprise the range and diversity of shopping and other activities which draw in customers and visitors.
- **Accessibility** successful centres need both to be accessible to the surrounding catchment area via a good road network and public transport facilities, and to encompass good local linkages between car parks, public transport stops and the various attractions within the centre.
- **Amenity** a healthy town centre should be a pleasant place to be in. It should be attractive in terms of environmental quality and urban design, it should be safe, and it should have a distinct identity or image.
- **Action** to function effectively as a viable commercial centre, actions need to follow: Development and improvement projects should be implemented efficiently; there should be regular and effective cleaning and maintenance and there should be co-ordinated town centre management initiatives to promote the continued improvement of the centre.

Although no single indicator on its own can measure the performance of a town in relation to these four elements of all round “health”, it is possible to gain a good appreciation by undertaking a vitality and viability health check assessment using a variety of indicators. This provides a consistent framework for assessing vitality and viability. In this way the strengths and weaknesses of town centres can be analysed systematically and planning authorities will be able to ascertain how well centres are performing in terms of their attraction, accessibility, amenity, and action programmes. Such health checks should both inform and be undertaken within the framework provided by the development plan or undertaken in the form of a city/town/urban centre strategy (detailed below) which is supplementary to, but which informs the



development plan's key retail policies and objectives. Local authorities, in keeping their area under review, should collect information on key town centre uses, and key sites which may be suitable and may become available for retail and other non-retail uses, with or without rehabilitation or redevelopment

### **A 2.3 Vitality and Viability Health Check Indicators**

Some particularly appropriate health check indicators are summarised below:

- IV. Diversity of uses: how much space is in use for different functions – such as offices, shopping, other commercial, leisure, cultural and entertainment activities, pubs, cafes and restaurants, hotels, educational uses, housing – and how has that balance been changing?

A detailed land use survey will generally be required which should clearly distinguish between retail uses, commercial activities (such as hotel, leisure, cafes) offices uses, residential uses, and vacant uses, etc. Specifically the footprint of retail uses is very helpful in identifying the core retail areas of a city or town, the primary and secondary shopping streets, and useful in distinguishing between city/town centre and edge-of-centre. .

Consideration could be given to an upper floor survey of uses to inform possible future re-development opportunities, e.g. Living Over The Shops schemes (LOTS schemes).

- V. Competitiveness: is the current mix of retail stores offering choice to consumers? Is there a need for more innovative retail offerings and services for the benefit of consumers?
- VI. Retailer representation and intentions to change representations: it may be helpful to look at the existence and changes in representation, including street markets, over the past few years, and at the demand from retailers wanting to come into the centre, or to contract or close their representation.
- VII. Shopping rents: monitoring the pattern of movement in retail rents within primary shopping areas is useful and available from commercial property information sources.
- VIII. Proportion of vacant street level property: vacancies can arise even in the strongest town centres, and this indicator must be used with care. Vacancies in secondary frontages and changes to other uses will also be useful indicators. Details on vacant property can be captured through the land use survey.
- IX. Accessibility: the ease and convenience of access by a choice of means of travel, including the quality, quantity and type of car parking, the frequency and quality of public transport services, the range of customer origins served and the quality of provision for pedestrians and cyclists. In certain circumstances car parking surveys should be considered as the circulation and car parking management strategy of a city/town/urban area can play a pro-active role in contributing to the vitality of a centre.

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- X. Environmental quality: this indicator should assess the physical condition of a town (clutter, litter and graffiti) and the environmental attributes (quality of shopfronts, landscaping and open spaces).
- XI. Public realm: the public realm must be an integrated element in the design of the overall development of a street/area, using quality hard and soft landscaping, street furniture, public signage etc. Concerns of maintenance costs and risk management need not preclude varied and interesting design if the issues are considered and adequate measures put in place at planning stage.
- XII. Customer views and behaviour: regular surveys of customer views will help authorities in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of town centre improvement and in setting further priorities. Interviews in the town centre and at home should be used to establish views of both users and non-users of the centre. This could establish the degree of linked trips.
- XIII. Perception of safety and occurrence of crime: this should include views and information on safety and security.
- XIV. Commercial yields on non-domestic property (i.e. the capital value in relation to the expected market rental): this demonstrates the confidence of investors in the long term profitability of the centre for retail, office and other commercial developments. This indicator will normally only be available for the larger town centres and should be used with care as investor confidence can be influenced by a number of extraneous factors unrelated to a particular centre and for many smaller centres there are in any event only a limited number of investment attractions from which conclusions can be drawn.
- XV. Pedestrian flows: the numbers and movement of people on the streets, in different parts of the centre at different times of the day and evening, who are available for businesses to attract into shops, restaurants, or other facilities. To be effective this indicator should be monitored regularly as it is the relative values (rather than absolutes) which are important together with clear evidence of changes over time. This can be done as a comprehensive survey during a typical shopping day or it can be carried out as a sample survey of people on the streets, in different parts of the city/town/urban area. The counts measure footfall, which can contribute to the identification of the street hierarchy.

These indicators should be collected and monitored regularly for the main centres in the retail hierarchy in order to provide baseline and time-series information on the health of centres and allow comparison between centres. The private sector should co-operate with the planning authorities in collecting data. The indicators will also provide the necessary context for considering the implications of retail impact assessments. In many instances it may be difficult to obtain all the vitality and viability health check indicators, especially for local authorities with limited staff resources. Where priorities on data collection have to be established, emphasis should be given to indicators (i)-(viii), especially in the smaller town centres.

The analysis of these health check indicators can also be used directly or to inform the preparation of a city or town centre strategy.

## **A 2.4 City/Town Centre Strategies**

A city or town strategy provides a detailed framework which enables the co-ordination of ongoing programmes, projects, and initiatives within the central area. Positive action to promote change may include the identification of development opportunities, site assembly, better access for public transport, cyclists and pedestrians, and environmental improvements, including improving the attractiveness of townscape and public realm. Such strategies will often incorporate the outcome of the health check appraisal of the relevant areas, indicating both areas of weakness and opportunity.

The following matters should form part of a strategy:

- availing of development opportunities and the need to promote land and site assembly. Renewal opportunities may also arise where underused property and land might be brought back into more productive use through joint action, using Section 212 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended or through other initiatives. Improved town centre management could also help in the co-ordination and implementation of a range of activities in support of the strategy;
- encouraging a diversity of uses in the town centre throughout the day and evening;
- ensuring accessibility by a range of transport types, including reviewing the car parking strategy;
- creating an attractive and safe town centre for pedestrians; and
- undertaking effective management and promotion of the town centre.

Such a strategy will generally contain:

- a profile of the city or town centre, which will identify the essential qualities of the centre and seek to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the community it serves by consolidating and building on its existing strengths;
- a 'visioning' statement, where a shared vision is drawn up and a strategy and action plan for the centre are then prepared to implement the statement;
- implementation proposals, which can range from the strategic to the specific, indicating responsibilities and delivery timetables; and
- provisions for monitoring and review, to ensure that the appropriate actions are being progressed and that changing circumstances are considered.

The city/town centre strategy will generally be prepared by the planning authority in liaison with stakeholders such as retailers, customers, chambers of commerce, and community groups. This liaison should continue through the various stages of the implementation of the centre strategy.

While the strategy can be done at any time it is probably best done either in parallel with the development plan process or just before the process begins so that it can inform the policies and objectives of the development plan, if resources permit.

## **A 2.5 Business Improvement Districts (BIDS)**

Planning authorities may wish to consider using BIDs. Originating in Toronto, BIDs are now in operation in many cities and towns throughout Canada, the US and the EU. Legislation<sup>10</sup> was introduced in Ireland in 2006 to allow for the operation of BIDs.

<sup>10</sup> Local Government (Business Improvement Districts) Act 2006 (No. 42 of 2006) and Local Government (Business Improvement Districts) Act 2006 (Commencement) Order 2007 (S.I. 165 of 2007)



A BID scheme is an organisational and financing mechanism through which businesses can develop and implement initiatives in defined areas to improve those areas for the betterment of the trading environment. A group of businesses in a particular area come together and decide firstly that they want enhanced services or a wider range of services or new facilities or activities in their particular area, the businesses then decide that they are willing to pay for such services, facilities or activities and form a BID company with the local authority.

The benefits of the BID process are that the planning authority and the businesses of the BID area work together, with clear objectives of delivering significant positive impacts on the economic vitality and viability of the city or towns. <sup>11</sup>Examples of what can be achieved are rapid response cleaning services<sup>12</sup>, or retail and marketing initiatives<sup>13</sup>.

The planning authority has the ultimate say in whether a BID proposal will go ahead and, in particular, it must ensure that the interests of the local community are protected. The commercial property owners/tenants who are ratepayers elect through a local plebiscite to make a collective financial contribution for the provision of additional services used for the maintenance, development and promotion of their business or retail district. Once approved by the Council, following a successful plebiscite, a specially established BID company will have responsibility for implementing the provisions of the BID scheme, with the local authority playing a key role in any such company.

Currently, there are two BID schemes operating in Ireland, one in Dublin<sup>14</sup> and one in Dundalk<sup>15</sup>. Although there is a difference in the range and scope of the work of the two BIDS, they give a practical and focused approach to developing the BID area.

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11 See Chambers Ireland Business Improvement District Tool Kit 2007 as a helpful step by step guide.

12 Dublin City BID has a rapid response cleaning service to ensure that any dangerous or unsanitary waste is removed from the BID area within one hour of it being reported.

13 Dundalk BID has launched the Nice One Brand- Dundalk Nice One Gift Card which can be used in the shops of Dundalk

14 [www.dublincitybid.ie](http://www.dublincitybid.ie)

15 [www.dundalktccm.ie](http://www.dundalktccm.ie)





# Annex 3

## Preparation of Joint or Multi-Authority Retail Strategies

### A 3.1 Introduction

This Annex provides guidance on the way in which relevant planning authorities, and in some cases regional authorities, as useful partners, should work together in preparing joint or multi-authority retail strategies, including assessment of retail market demand and the need for additional retail development:

### A 3.2 Purpose of Joint or Multi-Authority Retail Strategies

The previous guidelines improved the way in which local authority development plans addressed retail planning issues through their incorporation of retail strategies and sometimes on a joint basis. In some cases, planning authorities collaborated in developing regional retail strategies, for example in the case of the Greater Dublin Area.

However, outside of some of the larger metropolitan areas, retail strategies have been mainly developed for the administrative area of individual planning authorities. The focus on city or county council area-based estimates of future retail floorspace provision has tended to work against more joined-up assessments of retail development and activity based on the retail catchments around the main centres of population.

Accordingly, these guidelines recommend that retail strategies be prepared on a joint authority or multi-authority basis for the gateway cities (and their catchments) identified in Table 1. The approach is advised for other urban areas as well where retail catchments and administrative boundaries do not match.

The purpose of such joint or multi-authority retail strategies is to encourage a more holistic approach to planning for the retail sector based on the dynamics of the retail catchments around cities and large towns and to plan on that basis rather than a piecemeal planning authority by planning authority basis.

### A 3.3 Content of Joint or Multi-Authority Retail Strategies

The policy and objectives of the above strategies will be incorporated into the development plans by way of variation or as part of the development plan review process of the relevant planning authorities and should contain:

1. Details of the retail catchment covered by the strategy, including the basis upon which it was decided (which will be informed by a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the catchments for both convenience and comparison goods, travel patterns, and other relevant data);
2. An overall analysis of the retail sector in the relevant area, including the retail hierarchy, level of retail floorspace, extant but undeveloped permissions, vacant premises, vitality of retail centres and related planning and other policy objectives relevant to the retail sector;
3. High level objectives for the retail sector; and
4. A quantification of the broad extent of future retail floorspace requirements in relation to both convenience and comparison retailing both for the overall area of the strategy and the retail hierarchy, as set out earlier.

Once the joint or multi-authority retail strategy is in place, this strategy will enable relevant planning authorities to properly inform their development plan review processes about the overall quantum and type of development that the market is likely to bring forward in response to changing demographic and consumer spending factors.



Provision should also be made for consultation with the elected members, wider public, relevant stakeholders, and retailers and business interests in developing joint or multi-authority retail strategies. Strategies developed in this way will deliver better certainty and clarity and assist the development of a dynamic retail sector in tandem with achievement of long-term planning objectives such as the implementation of the NSS and sustainable urban development patterns.

#### **A 3.4 Timing of Preparation**

The joint or multi-authority retail strategies for urban areas identified in the guidelines must be prepared or reviewed as appropriate to inform each relevant development plan review process.

#### **A 3.5 Incorporation of Retail Strategies into Development Plans and Local Area Plans**

The preparation of joint or multi-authority retail strategies is a requirement for relevant planning authorities of these guidelines.

In order to ensure that such strategies shape development planning policy and development management practice, the conclusions and key recommendations of such strategies must be incorporated into the relevant statutory development plans.

Given the cyclical review process that development plans follow every six years, it is best practice that an up to date strategy has been prepared to inform the development plan review process. In turn, this may require some co-ordination between different planning authorities in the areas to be covered by a joint or multi-authority retail strategy to identify the best opportunity to prepare the strategy in order to inform development plan reviews of different authorities happening at different times.



# Annex 4

## Assessment of Retail Floorspace Requirements

### **A 4.1 Introduction**

This Annex provides guidance on the way in which planning authorities involved in preparing joint or multi-authority retail strategies should:

1. Assess the level of existing retail floorspace;
2. Determine future demand; and
3. Carry out projections of needs for additional retail floorspace.

Addressing the matters above through joint or multi-authority retail strategies is very important to enable the plan preparation process to be properly informed about the quantum and type of development.

The Department intends to conduct and conclude further research on essential information to determine the parameters above and building into a simplified and robust methodology for estimating future retail floorspace requirements.

The simplified approach being developed by the Department envisages retail strategies estimating floorspace requirements on the basis of applying certain nationally determined ratios of existing or known floorspace provision per head of population to expected population change identified in the various regional planning guidelines and development plan core strategies. The resultant calculations would indicate the broad quantum of required additional floorspace and for subsequent breakdown into the various convenience, comparison and bulky goods sectors.

However, until that methodology is finalised, this annex should be consulted and followed.

### **A 4.2 Existing Retail Floorspace**

The starting point for any assessment of additional requirements is to measure both the health of retail centres in accordance with the principles set out in Annex 2, and to measure the existing quantum of floorspace.

While the last comprehensive survey of shopping floorspace in Ireland was the 1988 Census of Services, a repeat of the Census of Services is not anticipated. It is therefore necessary for joint or multi-authority retail strategies to update the information on retail floorspace using local information.

This can be obtained either by checking the planning register to estimate the extent of new development and changes of use and demolitions or given the significant changes which have occurred in retailing a special retail floorspace survey may be required in order to provide the proper evidence base to underpin the strategy.



### **A 4.3 Market Demand**

A general picture of emerging retailer demand can be obtained from the following sources:

- Trends in planning applications for different types of retail development;
- Review of relevant newspapers, journals and periodicals; and
- Consultations with retailers, leisure operators and property agents.

Planning authorities should seek to identify the trends in market demand from these sources so that they can be taken into account when preparing development plans.

### **A 4.4 Assessment of Need**

A broad assessment of the requirement for additional retail floorspace can be provided by projecting the future change in population and the growth in consumer spending. Projections of increased spending should seek to identify the change in the value of spending at constant prices, rather than prices which include the effect of inflation.

It is particularly necessary to establish the retail catchment area for the gateway cities and towns, hub towns and other larger towns to be covered by joint or multi-authority retail strategies in Chapter 3 and to make allowances for cross local authority boundary shopping flows avoiding the tendency in some previous retail strategies to aim to stem what might otherwise be considered to be normal flows associated with retail choice.

Assessments of the change in retail spending which can be expected to be generated within the catchment area of retail centres can provide a useful mechanism for identifying future retail development requirements. The projected growth in retail spending can readily be converted into retail floorspace using appropriate sales density ratios for the different types of retail formats to be provided.

### **A 4.5 Assessment of Retail Floorspace Requirements**

An assessment of additional retail floorspace requirements will normally encompass both quantitative (floorspace required) and qualitative (requirements to improve mix and shopping quality) elements.

### **A 4.6 Quantitative Assessment**

A number of in-depth techniques have developed to identify future floorspace requirements based on population, turnover, disposable income, sales density and other indicators and these may be utilised until the alternative approach referred to above is put in place.

### **A 4.7 Allocation between Retail Sectors**

Once a broad quantitative assessment of the retail floorspace required has been determined, it should then be possible to subdivide the quantitative requirement above into the needs of the convenience and comparison sectors by using information on existing and future trends in a relevant retail strategy

### **A 4.8 Qualitative Assessment**

The preparation of retail strategies should also have regard to qualitative factors in determining the need for future floorspace e.g. changing retail trends and formats.



# Annex 5

## The Assessment of Retail Impact

### **A 5.1 Main Steps to the Assessment of Retail Impact**

As indicated in Chapter 4 the assessment of retail impact is not intended to prevent competition or prevent trade diversion in itself, but its purpose is to promote healthy urban centres in the public interest. This must be borne in mind when carrying out these assessments.

It is commonly accepted that there are five main steps to the assessment of retail impact:

- I. Identification of catchment or study area;
- II. Estimation of expenditure available within the defined catchment or study area;
- III. Estimation of the turnover of existing centres within the catchment area which is likely to be affected by a new development;
- IV. Estimation of the turnover of the new development for which a planning application is being lodged; and
- V. Estimation of the quantum of consumer retail spending available in the catchment area which will be diverted from existing centres to the new retail development.

### **A 5.2 Estimate of Trade Diversion from Centres in the Retail System**

Many of these steps in the assessment of retail impact are relatively straightforward and make use of readily available data. The one matter that is less clear cut in the assessment of impact is step (v) which is where the estimate of trade diversion from each of the centres in the retail system to the proposed development is made. A variety of approaches can be adopted at this stage of the assessment, some more sophisticated than others. It is not intended to impose a required methodology to this stage of the calculation. It is important for all approaches to be clearly substantiated, however, preferably using up to date information and survey evidence as far as possible. Unsubstantiated judgements and assertions do not assist in providing a clear assessment.

### **A 5.3 Professional Objectivity to Provide Clarity and Guidance for Decision Makers**

Those submitting retail impact studies on behalf of clients, or considering the work of others on behalf of clients should at all times be aware of the need to maintain professional objectivity. The purpose of an impact study is to provide clarity and guidance for decision makers. Clear, well reasoned and impartial submissions should be made which seek to address uncertainty and inform all parties.

