



CgMs Consulting

Planning & Development, Archaeology & Historic Buildings

BRIEFING NOTE - Planning Policy Statement 6 : Planning for Town Centres

On the 21st March 2005, **Planning Policy Statement 6 Planning for Town Centres (PPS6)** became national policy, replacing **Planning Policy Guidance 6 (PPG6): Town Centres and Retail Developments**.

The **key aims** of PPS6 are similar to those of PPG6 :

- Focusing development in town centres;
- To enhance consumer choice with a wide provision of shopping, leisure and local services to meet the needs of the whole community;
- To ensure development is accessible by a range of means of transport;
- To encourage investment in disadvantaged areas to provide improved services, more employment opportunities and combat social exclusion;
- To promote high quality and inclusive design and make efficient use of land in town centres to deliver more sustainable development;
- To encourage a cleaner, safer, greener town centre environment.

Positive Planning for Town Centres: A Plan –Led Approach

The overall focus of PPS6 is geared towards the prosperity of the town centre. There is still a requirement for developers to demonstrate that proposals for new retail development are justifiable in terms of the sequential test, quantitative and qualitative need, evidence that new retail floor space would not harm the vitality and viability of the town centre.

In contrast to PPG6 which was more focused on development control, PPS6 is about enabling development through a plan led approach ensuring that the right development is available in the right location at the right time.

PPS6 places a large emphasis on the role of the LPA in allocating sites for developers via a plan led approach. This plan led approach should;

- Actively promote growth and manage change in town centres;
- Define a network and a hierarchy of centres each performing their appropriate role to meet the needs of their catchments;
- Adopt a proactive; plan led approach to planning for town centres, through regional and local planning.

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- LPA's should use tools such as area action plans and **compulsory purchase** orders to address the land assembly, transport, crime prevention, planning and design issues associated with the growth and management of their centres.
- LPA's should actively **plan for growth in town centres** over the period of their development plan by selecting appropriate existing centres to accommodate the identified need for growth by making better use of existing centres and buildings, including where appropriate redevelopment, and where necessary, extending the centre.
- LPA's should adopt a positive approach to planning for the future of all types of centres within their area and through the core strategy development plan document.
- LPA's should **assess the need for new floor space** for retail (based on a class of goods approach), leisure and other main town centre uses, taking account of both quantitative and qualitative considerations. Plans should meet the retail needs over a **5 year period** (longer for larger centres). LPA's to set indicative **upper limits** for the scale of development likely to be permissible
- LPA's should identify deficiencies in provision, assess the capacity of existing centres to accommodate new development, including, where appropriate, the scope for **extending the primary shopping area** and/or town centre (particularly to meet the needs of larger development), and identify centres in decline where change needs to be managed.
- LPA's to apply a **sequential approach** to site selection. In looking for new space, operators are expected to consider the scope to fit into centres, for example by reducing the footprint or reducing parking, but LPA's are told to 'take into account any genuine difficulties, which the applicant can demonstrate are likely to occur in operating the applicant's business model from the sequentially preferable site'. When considering the suitability of sites factors to be taken into account are: scale, format, car parking provision and scope for disaggregating. However, **a single retailer should not be expected to split their proposed development into separate sites.**
- Identified **sites are to be available within a reasonable period of time**, suitable and viable. Sufficient sites in number and size are to be identified to meet the scale and need with CPO powers being applied to assemble sites

Other Relevant Matters:

When drawing up plans other considerations, which may be material, include:

- Physical Regeneration
- Net additional employment
- Economic Growth
- Social Inclusion

Extensions to Existing Development

The sequential approach is only a relevant consideration in relation to extensions where the **gross floor space for the proposed extension exceeds 200 square metres**. This policy relates to development which creates additional floor space, including proposals for internal alterations where planning permission is required, and applies to individual units or stores which may or may not be part of a retail park, mixed use development or shopping centre."

Use of conditions

PPS6 gives detailed advice on the use of conditions. It advises LPA's to consider using appropriately worded conditions to;

- **Prevent** developments from being **sub-divided** into a number of smaller shops or units;
- Ensure that **ancillary elements remain ancillary** to the main development;
- **Limit any internal alterations** to increase the amount of gross floorspace by specifying the maximum floorspace permitted (including for example through the addition of mezzanine floors); and
- **Limit the range of goods sold**, and to control the mix of convenience and comparison goods.

More guidance and advice will be published separately and it will be relevant to implementing PPS6. The forthcoming guidance is listed below;

- Assessing Need and Impact of New Retail and Leisure Development
- Applying Sequential Approach
- Strategies for Smaller Centres
- Good Practice Guide to Planning and Tourism

The publication date of the above-mentioned documents is yet to be confirmed.

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