



PLANNING BULLETIN

BRIEFING NOTE - Scottish Planning Policy 8: Town Centres
Consultation Draft
August 2005

A *Consultation Draft* SPP8 has been published inviting written responses by 11 November 2005. When finalised **SPP8 will replace NPPG8: Town Centres and Retailing.**

Statements of Scottish Executive policy contained in SPPs and Circulars are **material considerations** to be taken into account in development plan preparation and development management.

The **underlying policy remains unaltered** with the Executive's **support for town centres**. The document acknowledges the importance of a broader range of uses rather than a specific focus on retailing. The draft recognises that town centres are **not able to accommodate all forms** of retail development.

KEY DEFINITIONS

Town centre is used to cover city, town and district centres irrespective of size, that provides a diverse and sustainable mix of activities and land uses which create an identity that signals their function and wider role.

Shopping and Leisure Centres have a more specific focus on retailing and leisure, or can be elements of both. Examples include out-of-centre locations for shopping centres, leisure uses, retail warehouses and parks and factory outlet centres.

The focus will be on establishing a mix of uses and activities in *town centres*, and housing should form an important element of the mix. It is acknowledged that *town centres* are not able to accommodate all forms of retail development. Therefore, this SPP also establishes the methods for treating such proposals, which should be complementary to those in town centres

The Executive's **key policy objectives** for town centres are to:

- Identifying and promoting town centres as part of a network of centres
- Promote competitive places and encourage regeneration, in order to create town centres that are attractive to investors and suited to the generation of new employment opportunities
- Create a climate that enables all sectors of the community to have access to a range of shopping, leisure and other services and for deficiencies in provision to be remedied
- Improve the physical quality of our town centre environments.
- Support development in existing accessible locations or in locations where accessibility can be improved

In order to deliver these objectives, stakeholders should focus on the **policy principles** listed below.

Policy Principles

- a) Identifying and promoting town centres as part of a network of centres
- b) Focusing development in existing town centres by using a sequential approach to development
- c) Maintaining, improving and developing town centres
- d) Promoting an attractive and safe environment
- e) Ensuring that centres are accessible to all sectors of the community by a range of modes of transport
- f) Regularly monitoring and reviewing their policies

a) IDENTIFYING A NETWORK OF CENTRES

The network of centres and the role of individual centres within it should be identified within development plans. Where appropriate, the plan may also specify the centre's function, for example, a centre restricted to the sale of bulky goods only. In identifying the network, consideration should be given to the broad **quantitative and qualitative requirements** for all town centre uses. The network will then provide a context for the assessment of proposals for new development. Planning authorities and developers should adopt a **sequential approach** to selecting sites for all town centre type uses that contribute to the vitality and viability of a particular town centre, unless guidance in this SPP or the development plan provides for a particular exception. The **principles underlying the sequential approach also apply** to proposals to expand, or change the use of existing developments, where the proposals are of such a size or type that they would result in a change to their character as determined by the development plan.

Where development proposals **in edge-of-centre or out-of-centre locations** fall out with the development plan framework, it is for **developers to demonstrate that more central options have been thoroughly assessed**. Even where a developer demonstrates an edge-of-centre or an out-of-centre location to be the most appropriate, the impact on the vitality and viability of existing centres still has to be demonstrated and accepted by the planning authority. The development should also be subject to assessment against policy set out in SPP17, Planning for Transport.

Accessible edge-of-centre and out-of-centre locations may be considered appropriate for the retailing of particular goods, for example space expansive displays of bulky goods (furniture, DIY, carpets, garden and electrical goods), for which the location would provide a qualitative benefit to customers. These uses are not key contributors to the vitality and viability of town centres. Where possible, such uses should be located together to limit the need to travel between them. **Appropriate conditions restricting the sale of certain goods or the format of units, including the development of mezzanine floorspace, should also be used where appropriate.**

b) FOCUSING DEVELOPMENT IN TOWN CENTRES

12 Planning authorities and developers should adopt a sequential approach to selecting sites for all town centre type uses that contribute to the vitality and viability of a particular town centre, unless guidance in this SPP or the development plan provides for a particular exception. The principles underlying the sequential approach also apply to proposals to expand, or change the use of existing developments, where the proposals are of such a size or type that they would result in a change to their character as determined by the development plan. The sequential approach requires that locational preference should be as follows: first, town centre sites; then where no suitable town centre site is available, edge-of-centre sites; and where neither town centre nor edge-of-centre sites are available, then out-of-centre sites in locations that are, or can be made, easily accessible by a choice of modes of transport.

c) IMPROVING TOWN CENTRES

Town centre strategies are key to the delivery of such improvements. Within the context provided by the statutory development plan, the strategies should provide the more detailed framework, which enables action to be realised. Up-to-date monitoring and review of town centres making use of health checks should inform Town centre strategies

The strategies should: indicate the scope for potential change through redevelopment, renewal, alternative uses and diversification; consider the constraints to their implementation, for example diversity in site ownership and funding; and recognise the rapidly changing nature of retail formats

d) PROVIDING AN ATTRACTIVE AND SAFE ENVIRONMENT

It is essential that town centres provide a high quality, inclusive and safe environment if they are to remain attractive and competitive. Well-designed buildings and public spaces, which are fit for purpose, comfortable, safe, attractive, accessible and durable are key elements which can improve the health, vitality and economic potential of town centres.

e) ENHANCING ACCESSIBILITY

Retail and leisure developments should be highly accessible. They should be located close to existing access networks, that have potential to accommodate higher density development, or where accessibility can be improved by developer or public funding

f) MONITORING AND REVIEW

Regular review of the network of centres, development activity and a town centre's performance are all parts of this monitoring process. Keeping stakeholders informed of the results of monitoring and review exercises will enable a more proactive approach to development.

IMPLEMENTATION

Development Plans

Preparing development plans, planning authorities should identify a network of town centres, shopping centres and out-of-centre shopping areas

Assessing Proposed Developments

All planning applications should be rigorously assessed against the development plan and

the policy set out in this SPP. The assessment should be applied to all new development, redevelopment or extensions to existing facilities, changes of use, renewal of planning permission and applications to vary or remove existing planning conditions concerned with the scale and or character of the development.

To ensure robust consideration of the above, **an impact analysis should be undertaken in support of applications for retail and leisure development over 2,500 sq m gross floorspace which are at an edge-of-centre or out-of-centre location and which are not in accordance with the development plan.** They may occasionally be necessary for smaller retail and leisure proposals and other town centre uses, which may be considered to have a significant impact on vitality and viability.

Notification of Applications

Planning authorities are required to notify the Scottish Ministers when they intend to grant planning permission for:

- Development of retail shopping **10,000 square metres or more of gross retail floorspace**
- Development involving **retail sales** which is such that the goods for sale are likely to be purchased to a significant extent by persons resident within an areas of a local authority area other than that in which the proposed development is to be situated, where the council of the other area, having been consulted, has made representations to the effect that planning permission should not be granted
- Development which the planning authority considers to be a significant departure from an approved structure plan or a local plan approved by Scottish Ministers

In addition planning authorities should consult other local authorities in respect of any development where the goods and services are likely to be purchased to a significant extent by residents within a local authority area, other than that which the proposed development is to be situated.

For further information contact:

John Stockdale

Director

Direct Dial: 020 7832 1461

Email Address: john.stockdale@cgms.co.uk

Website: www.cgms.co.uk

LONDON OFFICE

Morley House
26 Holborn Viaduct
London
EC1A 2AT

Tel: 020 7583 6767
Fax: 020 7583 2231

CHELTENHAM OFFICE

Burlington House
Lypiatt Road
Cheltenham
GL50 2SY

Tel: 01242 259290
Fax: 01242 259299

KETTERING OFFICE

Ragsdale
1 Church Lane
Great Cransley
Kettering NN14 1PX

Tel: 01536 790447
Fax: 01536 799378