

A CHANGING PLANNING AGENDA?

TOWN CENTRES FIRST POLICY: THE CHALLENGE?

NRPF Research Group

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TOWN CENTRES FIRST

- **Where have we come from?**
- **Where are we now?**
- **Current policy for town centres**
- **How well does it work?**
- **What could happen?**
- **Where will we be in 10 years?**

GOVERNMENT POLICY

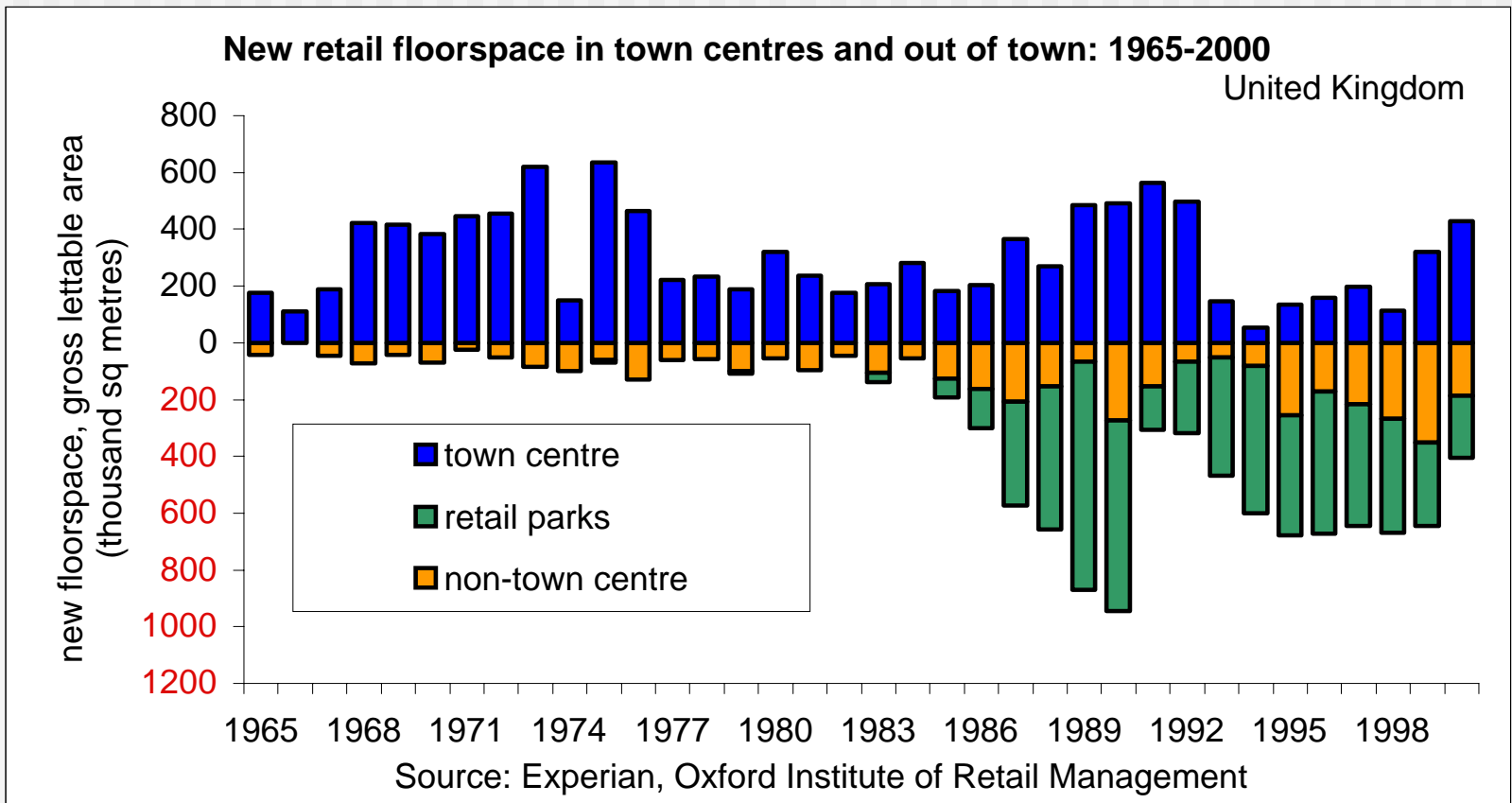
“ We remain absolutely committed to promoting the vitality and viability of town centres and we will be sticking to our town centres first policy, while providing choice, competition and innovation”

Ruth Kelly, 29 January 2007

HAS POLICY BEEN A SUCCESS?

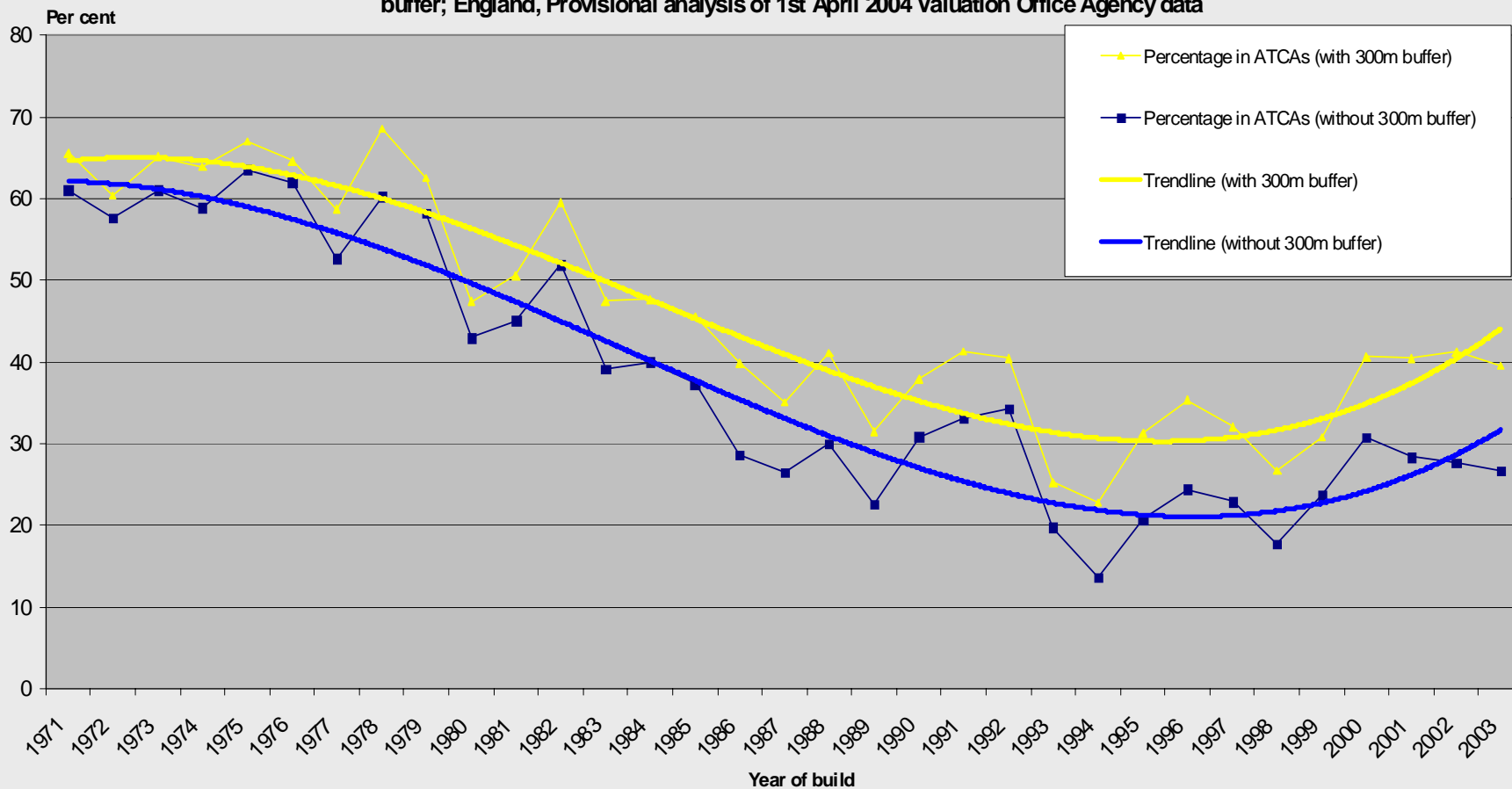
- **What is success?**
- **% new floorspace in town centres?**
- **More turnover in town centres?**
- **How do we know what is happening?**
 - **Lack of information (1995)**
 - **BCSC data (2000)**
 - **ODPM data (2005)**
 - **BCSC data (2006)**

BCSC Completions Data 1965-2000



ODPM Completions 1971-2003

Figure 2: Percentage of newly built retail floorspace in 2002 ODPM Areas of Town Centre Activity (ATCAs)^a, with and without 300m buffer; England, Provisional analysis of 1st April 2004 Valuation Office Agency data



BCSC RESEARCH: IN TOWN OR OUT OF TOWN?

%new retail floorspace in town centres

England Scotland Wales

■ 1999:	32	32	24
■ 2000:	40	24	50
■ 2001:	35	21	18
■ 2002:	33	39	11
■ 2003:	37	22	23
■ 2004:	32	5	18
■ 2005:	37	4	4

BCSC RESEARCH: IN TOWN OR OUT OF TOWN?

% of newly-completed space in town centres (1999-2005)

Retail Warehouses: 6%

Supermarkets: 23% *

Shopping Centres: 77%

***excludes some extensions and all mezzanines**

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

If you want to increase or maintain % of new retail floorspace in town centres:

- **How do you achieve it?**
 - **by policy continuity not by relaxing tests for out of town**
- **Who will deliver it?**
 - **town centre developments not retail warehouses or supermarkets**

BARKER PROPOSALS

- **Streamline national planning policy = rewrite PPS66?**
- **Remove the need test**
- **Relax parking standards**
- **Emphasis on economic performance of firms - not economically-successful places - city/town centres**

COMPETITION COMMISSION PROPOSALS

- **Review tests if they inhibit competition**
- **Introduce competition test**
- **ensure competition in local markets and preventing market dominance**

WINNERS AND LOSERS

- **Encourages large-format, out-of-centre retail development: supermarkets and retail warehouses**
- **Discourages town centre retail developments - rapid loss of confidence - retail pipeline will dry up especially in medium-sized towns**

NEXT STEPS

- **Planning White Paper - Spring?**
- **Should be more green:**
 - **independent review leads to green paper**
 - **legislation v policy changes - different timescales**

SCENARIOS

- **No change** - business as usual
- **Remove the need test** - out-of-town large-formats easier
- **Rewrite PPS6** - fewer, less tough tests?
- **Refocus policy tests** - refine what policy is trying to achieve and review tests

CONCLUSIONS

- **PPG6 has worked - benefits now coming through - but it took 10 years!!**
- **Need for policy continuity**
- **Even threat of change will change investment decisions for town centre schemes**
- **Government should recognise benefits of successful town centres and recommit to town centres**