

PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE:

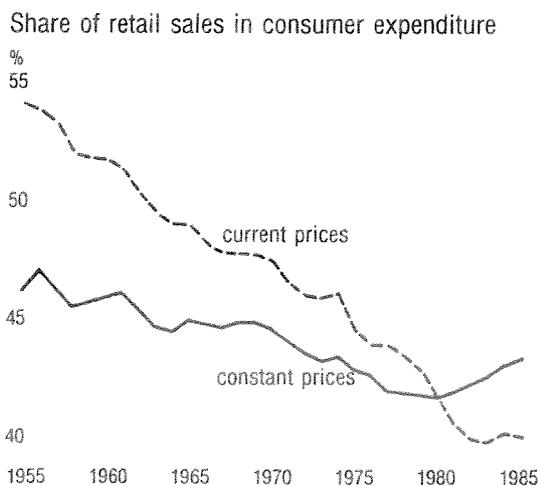
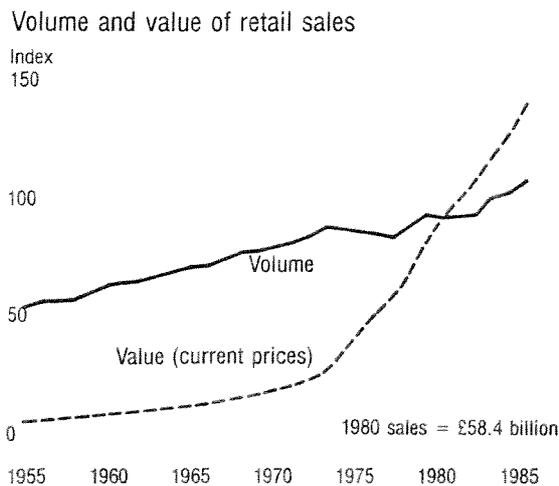
MAJOR RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

1. Retailing is a major industry. It is an important feature in everyone's life and of great significance to the national economy. Growth in retailing is likely to continue and this generates opportunities both for new forms of retail development and for the modernisation and improvement of existing town centres.

2. Distribution and retailing are constantly adapting to changing economic and social conditions and these, with changes in shopping habits, are bringing about changes in shops and shopping areas. Retailing developments which extend choice in shopping, allow more efficient retailing, enable a better service to be given to the public as a whole and make shopping more pleasant are to be welcomed.

Figure 1: The role of retailing in the national economy



Source: Economic Trends annual supplement, 1987

3. The Government has no intention of identifying specific locations suitable for major retail developments or for different types of retailing. But new retail developments normally require planning permission, and the following policy guidance is intended to assist local planning authorities and others in formulating structure and local plans and in dealing with planning applications for major new retail development.

Trends towards larger shops

4. There has been a marked trend in some types of retailing towards larger shops in order to increase efficiency and the range of goods available to the customer and to achieve economies of scale. The benefits can be passed on to the consumer in better value for money. These shops need a large floor area, ready access for trade vehicles and sufficient car parking close at hand. Consequently, retailers that sell food and other 'convenience' goods are tending to look for larger sites both within urban areas and elsewhere. Retailers of some 'comparison' goods such as carpets, furniture, electrical appliances and DIY products are also finding it advantageous to move to off-centre sites. Such developments can include what are known as 'retail warehouses', sometimes grouped together in retail warehouse parks.

5. Despite these trends towards larger stores, there continues to be a strong demand for the services provided by smaller shops which cater for the daily casual needs that are not so conveniently met by the larger stores, or which provide a wider range of goods and services.

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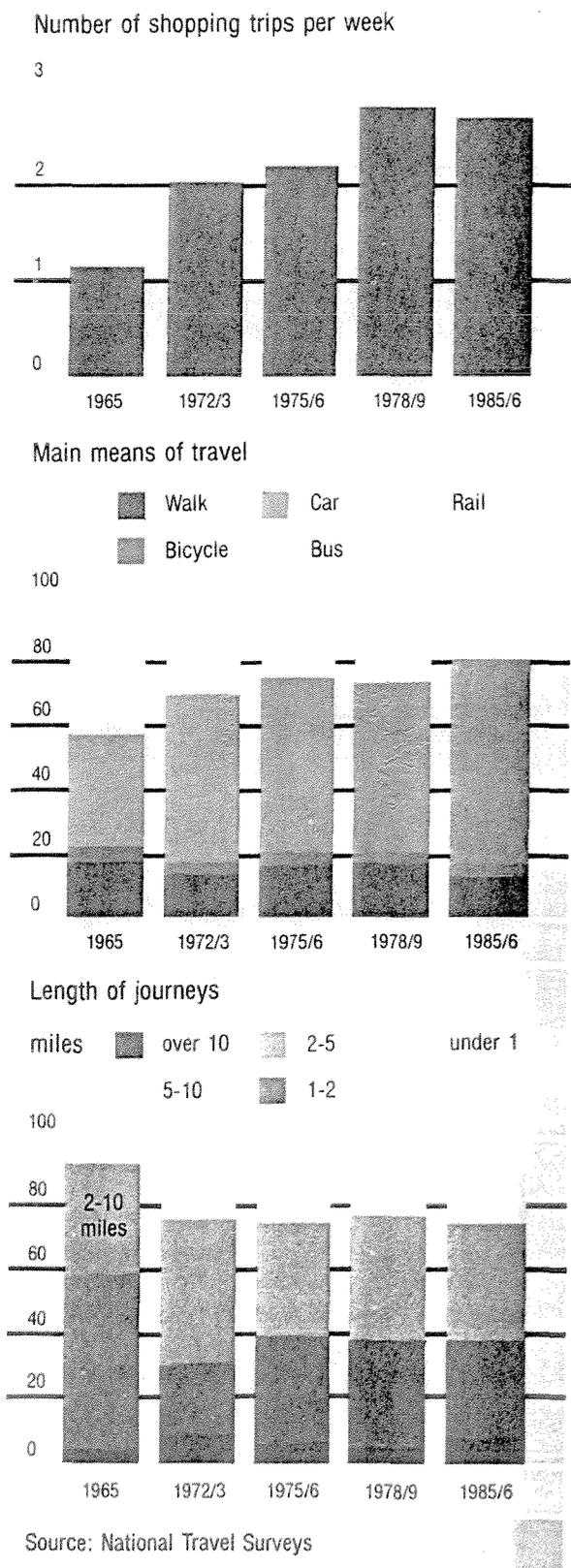
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Customer mobility

6. The increase in car ownership over the past 20 years and the greater willingness of people to travel some distance to do their shopping, coupled with the lack of adequate shopping facilities in some suburban areas, and even in some town centres, has led to changes in shopping habits and in methods of

Figure 2: Shopping journeys



retailing. However, not everyone has the use of a car, including many elderly people, the infirm or disabled, mothers with young children and those on lower incomes, who need to rely on public transport or walking. Their needs must continue to be catered for by easily accessible shops, especially those smaller shops that cater for a wide range of day-to-day needs among all sections of the community. Where possible, large new stores, especially those selling convenience goods, should be located where they can serve not only car-borne shoppers but also those who rely on other forms of transport.

Policy guidance on planning and large new retail developments

7. Policy guidance on planning control and major retail developments was given by the then Secretary of State for the Environment in answer to a Parliamentary Question on 5 July 1985. It stressed that '... it is not the function of the planning system to inhibit competition among retailers or among methods of retailing, nor to preserve existing commercial interests as such; it must take into account the benefits to the public which flow from new developments in the distributive and retailing fields. The public needs a wide range of shopping facilities and benefits from competition between them. Local planning authorities must take full account of these various needs, both in framing structure and local plans and in dealing with applications for new shopping developments of all types.

'Since commercial competition as such is not a land-use planning consideration, the possible effects of a proposed major retail development on existing retailers is not in this sense a relevant factor in deciding planning applications and appeals. It will be necessary, however, to take account in exceptional circumstances of the cumulative effects of other recent and proposed large scale retail developments in the locality and to consider whether they are on such a scale and of a kind that they could seriously affect the vitality and viability of a nearby town centre *as a whole*—for example, whether they seem likely to result in a significant increase in vacant properties, or a marked reduction in the range of services the town centre provides, such as could lead to its general physical deterioration and to the detriment of its future place in the economic and social life of the community. Town centres need to maintain their diversity and activity if they are to retain their vitality, but the range and variety of shops and services will change, as they have always done, in response to changing conditions.'

8. Structure and local plan policies on major retail development should be consistent with these general principles. When preparing plans it will be appropriate for local planning authorities to take account of forecasts of retail expenditure over the

plan period and the possible implications of these forecasts for the location of different types of retail development. However, policies should not attempt to prescribe rigid floorspace limits for new retail development, either overall or in specified localities, since this would impair the ability of developers, retailers and the planning authority to respond to changing market conditions and the demands of customers. Existing structure and local plan policies that are inconsistent with this guidance should be revised as soon as possible.

9. In preparing regional strategic guidance for London and the metropolitan areas in England, the Secretary of State for the Environment will, as appropriate, include guidance on major new retail development based on the general principles described above.

10. The Secretaries of State and their inspectors, in dealing with planning appeals and called-in planning applications, have regard to these general principles, the extent to which they are adequately dealt with in development plans, and to all other material considerations raised by the individual proposal, including its effect on the local environment and road traffic implications. Local planning authorities should likewise deal with applications for major new retail developments in relation to the same considerations and not in terms of commercial competition or by attempting to regulate volume changes in supply and demand for retail services, while having regard to those factors referred to in the statement at paragraph 7 above that bear on the vitality and viability of town centres.

11. In assessing those factors it should rarely be necessary to attempt detailed calculations or forecasts of retail growth or of changes in the geographical distribution of retailing. Even small variations in assumptions about trends in turnover, population, expenditure and the efficiency of use of existing retail floorspace can lead to a wide range of forecasts; and the preparation and consideration of assessments can add significantly to the cost and duration of the planning process without necessarily improving the eventual land use decision. Only in the case of developments which, either individually or cumulatively, are very large relative to the size of nearby centres, or where there is a succession of major developments over a short period, are the effects likely to be so substantial as to raise serious questions about the future of nearby town centres. Where it is appropriate for the parties to a planning application or appeal to prepare assessments, a broad approach should be adopted with the parties seeking to agree data wherever possible and to present information on areas of dispute in a succinct and comparable form.

12. The following paragraphs consider various types of retail development in the light of these policies.

Modernisation and refurbishment of town centres

13. This is to be welcomed, especially where it involves the use of derelict or unused land and brings about environmental improvement, including the careful treatment of historic buildings and townscape. This can play a vital part in the regeneration of the inner cities, retain and recreate jobs in those areas, and help to arrest further deterioration and to restore confidence in local businesses and in local communities. It can also make existing centres more attractive to shoppers and improve the ability of these centres to compete effectively with other retail developments.

14. There is ample evidence of considerable private sector interest in the modernisation and refurbishment of town centres in many parts of the country, both from major retailers well represented in those centres and from institutional investors, ground landlords and others. This will often require better access and car parking facilities, to which developers can contribute. Policies directed at encouraging the improvement of existing centres can serve both conservation and urban renewal objectives.

Categories of major retail development

Major out-of-town developments:

15. Proposals for such developments, which may be well over 100,000 sq ft and up to 1 million sq ft or more (10,000–100,000 sq m), have no place in the Green Belt, where there is a strong presumption against all inappropriate development. Nor are developments on that scale generally acceptable in the open countryside. In some cases there may be opportunities for such developments outside urban areas where they result in the reclamation of a large area of derelict land and other environmental improvements, such as new open space with public access, and where their effect on established town centres is likely to be very diffuse or where existing centres do not provide good facilities and do not lend themselves to modernisation.

16. Schemes of a similar scale within urban areas but outside established town centres will need to be considered having regard to the guidance given in paragraphs 7 to 14 above.

Large modern retail stores:

17. Large stores of up to about 100,000 sq ft (10,000 sq m) selling mainly food and other convenience goods are now a well established form of retail development and clearly meet strong customer demand for convenient car-borne weekly household shopping. The planning system has been able to cater for them, and several hundred such stores have been built.

18. Large retail warehouses have similarly shown themselves to be a successful way of catering for

major household goods, bulky DIY items, etc. Taking part of these heavy car-borne shopping requirements out of the town centre can positively help by relieving the centres of traffic congestion and making them pleasanter places for the more relaxed and varied shopping activities and other town centre uses.

19. Both these types of retail development can often make good use of derelict and neglected sites within urban areas and result in positive environmental gain and new local employment opportunities.

20. The fact that land may be designated for possible industrial use in an approved development plan does not necessarily mean that it can be used only for that purpose. Retailing is in the process of rapid evolution and if, for example, the development plan is dated and there is more industrial land available than is likely to be required in the foreseeable future, use of some of that land for retailing may be preferable to keeping the land vacant. Conversely, when the development plan is recent and land allocated for industrial purposes is nevertheless scarce in relation to demand for it from industry, then it will usually be right to reserve that land for its designated use.

Co-operation with neighbouring local authorities

21. Given the scale of some current proposals, it is important that local planning authorities inform other authorities of schemes whose catchment area is likely to include parts of neighbouring districts.

This is a requirement of Article 15 of the General Development Order.

Referral to the Secretary of State

22. The Secretary of State issued a direction on 15 December 1986 requiring local planning authorities to notify him of any proposals for development which consist of or include gross retail floorspace of 250,000 sq ft (23,325 sq m) or more before planning permission is granted. This direction is reproduced at the Annex. Local planning authorities are also required by the Development Plans Direction to give notification of schemes which would materially conflict with or prejudice the implementation of development plans.

23. These procedures provide the Secretary of State with the opportunity where necessary to call-in applications for his own decision, although the general policy remains that applications will only be called-in where the proposals are of more than local importance.

Development Control Policy Notes 13 and 14 and related Circulars

24. Development Control Policy Notes 13 (Large new stores, 1977) and 14 (Warehouses - wholesale, cash and carry etc, 1974) and related Circulars (DOE 71/76 and 96/77, Welsh Office 98/76 and 154/77) are withdrawn. Paragraph 4.22 of the Memorandum on Structure and Local Plans (DOE Circular 22/84, Welsh Office 43/84) is also withdrawn.

Town and Country Planning (Shopping Development) (England and Wales) Direction 1986

The Secretary of State for the Environment and the Secretary of State for Wales, in exercise of powers conferred on them by articles 10 and 15(4) of the Town and Country Planning General Development Orders 1977 to 1985 and of all other powers enabling them in that behalf direct local planning authorities in England and Wales as follows—

1. This direction applies in respect of—
 - (a) any application for planning permission, or
 - (b) any proposal by a local planning authority to seek deemed planning permission under Part II of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1976,

in relation to development which comprises or includes gross shopping floorspace of not less than 250,000 square feet (or 23,325 square metres) measured externally, where—

- (i) the application has not been determined before 1st January 1987 and no appeal has been made before that date, or
- (ii) the local planning authority have not before that date resolved to carry out or to authorise the carrying out of the development in accordance with those regulations.

2. Before—

- (a) granting permission on any application or
- (b) passing a resolution to carry out or to authorise the carrying out of the proposals for development

to which this direction applies, a local planning authority shall, in England, consult the Secretary of State for the Environment and, in Wales, consult the Secretary of State for Wales.

3. (1) Where a local planning authority are required to consult by paragraph 2 above they shall as soon as reasonably practicable send a copy of the material specified in subparagraph (2) to the relevant Secretary of State at the appropriate office.

(2) The material referred to in paragraph (1) above is:—

- (a) a copy of the application together with any plans or documents submitted with it;
- (b) a copy of any objections to the proposal received by the authority;
- (c) a copy of any representations made about the application by a local authority (within the meaning of section 270(1) of the Local Government Act 1972);
- (d) a statement of the issues involved, including whether the grant of permission would be contrary to the views of another government department,

and in the case of proposals by a local planning authority referred to in paragraph 1(b) above, is comparable material to that required in relation to an application for planning permission.

(3) The appropriate office in Wales is the Welsh Office and in England the appropriate office is the appropriate Regional Office of the Department of the Environment.

4. Where a local planning authority are required to consult by paragraph 2 above they shall not—

- (a) grant planning permission on the application, or
- (b) resolve to carry out or to authorise the carrying out of the development,

until the expiry of a period of 21 days from the date on which the material was sent to the Secretary of State.

15th December 1986.

J N PEARSON

An Assistant Secretary in the Department of the Environment
Authorised by the Secretary of State for the Environment to sign in that behalf

J C LEWIS

An Assistant Secretary in the Welsh Office
Authorised by the Secretary of State for Wales to sign in that behalf