Planning for Town Centres

Practice Guidance on Need, Impact and the Sequential Approach

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Scope of Presentation

• Status of the Guidance

• Target audience

• Regional and local assessments

• The role of need assessments

• Sequential site assessments

• Assessing impact

• The use of Conditions
Status of the Guidance

• Not a statement of Government policy

• To assist in preparing or reviewing need, impact and sequential site assessments

• To help to interpret national policies

• May be material to individual decisions
Target Audience

- Government Offices/Planning Inspectors
- Regional Planning Bodies
- Local Planning Authorities
- Investors, Developers and Operators
- Other town centre stakeholders
- Third parties
Regional and Sub-Regional Assessments

• Scale/distribution of growth – common data sets (RES)
• Global capacity – focus on comparison retail
• Strategic options testing – including new/expanded RSCs
• Establishing the hierarchy/network
• Thresholds (where appropriate)
Local Assessments

• Need for convenience/comparison/other town centre uses

• Developing the overall strategy – growth or decline? Expansion of PSA etc.

• Allocating sites based on:
  – Need
  – Sequential approach
  – Appropriate scale
  – Impact
  – Accessibility

• Local circumstances; impact thresholds; local impact considerations etc.
The Role of Need Assessments

- Essential to positive planning at RSS and LDF level
- Quantitative and Qualitative needs equally important
- An important material consideration in decision making
- Underpins the sequential approach – EC5
- Relevance to the impact test – EC16
Quantitative Need Assessments

• A simple step by step approach:-
  – Definition of study area
  – Assessment of current/future spend
  – Assessment of shopping patterns
  – Current/forecast turnover
  – Expenditure capacity and floorspace needs
Catchment Areas/Market Shares
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spend (£m)</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Turnover (£m)</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Surplus’ (£m)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Floorspace Needed</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Key Variables

- Population/spend/catchment assumptions
- Apportioning growth/floorspace efficiency
- Baseline performance and benchmarks
- Changes to market share i.e. impact
Qualitative Considerations

• Deficiencies or “gaps”

• Consumer choice and competition

• Overtrading

• ‘Location specific’ needs e.g. under served markets, extensions

• Quality of existing provision
London’s Metropolitan Centres
Other Town Centre Uses

• Cinemas
• Intensive sport/recreation
• Casinos
• Offices
• Theatres, museums and galleries
• Hotels
The Sequential Approach

- The general principles – accessibility and impact
- Classifying sites - a preoccupation with definitions!
- Proposals - judge the scheme not the site
- The area of search – compare like with like!
- Relevance of need – implications for flexibility
Suitable, Viable and Available

• Suitable – planning/operational issues

• Viable – what level of evidence is required?

• Available – timescales/phasing issues

• Respective roles of LPA and applicant
Flexible Foodstores

Asda, Halesowen

Asda, Hounslow
Flexible DIY/’Bulky’ Stores

B&Q, New Malden

Ikea, Southampton
Leisure Schemes

Atrium, Camberley

Liverpool ONE
Town Centre or Edge of Centre?

Kingsgate, Huddersfield
Demonstrating Compliance

- What is needed and by when?
- What is the intended catchment?
- Has a flexible approach been adopted?
- Is there a genuine alternative?
The ‘New’ Impact Test

- Requirements – range of uses covered
- Different locations – ‘in centre’
- Thresholds – 2,500 sq.m or other
- Other exceptions e.g. ancillary
- Scoping/proportionality
The Key Impacts

- Investment
- Vitality and viability
- Allocated sites
- In centre turnover
- Appropriate scale
- Other ‘local’ impacts
‘Significant’ vs other Impacts

• Need to understand the performance and aspirations of the affected centres

• Basic methodology builds on the ‘needs’ test – relationship between ‘need’ and impact

• ‘Significance’ depends on local circumstances

• Scope/level of detail and corroborating evidence

• Approach to different uses - proportionality
‘Balanced’ Decisions – ECI7

- Positive and negative effects
- Cumulative effects – what does this mean?
- The Development Plan
- Local impact considerations
Use of Conditions

• Link to sequential approach/impact
• Scale – net sales area
• Range of goods
• Unit sizes
• ‘Conditional allocations’
Summary

• Good Practice, not policy

• General principles, but not prescriptive

• Encourages transparency and consistency

• A guide to local decision making

• Proportionality and focus on key issues