Planning White Paper
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A Question of Need

George Nicholson, Secretary, The National Retail Planning Forum (NRPF)
The policy evolution

• What is NRPF? Giving decision makers the tools for the job.

• Planning Policy Guidance – a developing story – GLDP - SE Guidance – PPG3

• Retail Policy development – 1977 – 2007, From de-centralisation to re-centralisation and from a Retail Policy to a Town Centre Policy.
The policy evolution

• 1977 - Gov’t circular on Planning for large stores. Response to LA’s refusing applications for large new stores.

• 1985 - Concerns first raised in HoC about the effect of Out of Centre development on town centres. Vitality & Viability first appears

• 1987 – 1990 – 18 major inquiries into proposals for Regional Shopping Centres - decentralisation.

• 1988 – First PPG6 – “Major Retail Development” - emphasis on permitting market to function effectively. Role of Out of Town clearly identified and sanctioned. “Planning should not inhibit competition”

• 1993 - PPG6 - 1st revision, “Town Centres and Retail Development” - seeking a more balanced approach between Out of Centre and TC, but one still facilitating competition.
The policy evolution

• 1996 – PPG6 – second revision “Town Centres and Retail Development” – very controversial – Interventionist; Plan led; 3 key tests for assessing retail development relating to Impact & Accessibility. Sequential Approach to development; Town Centre first policy established.

• The new lexicon - “Edge of Centre”; “Suitable”; “Available”. Inconsistency of application – the need for further “Guidance” and the importance of clearer definitions emerges as an issue.

A question of need

- 1996 - PPG6 clear that need is an issue at the plan making stage when deciding to allocate sites, but less clear as to its relevance at application stage.

- 1999 – “Clarification” by Caborn Statement to HoC – Need is a relevant consideration at application stage for proposals outside existing centres and not included in up to date plans. No definition of need - Relevant factors to be decided by decision maker. Wide variations.
A question of need

• 2005 revised PPG 6 – Chapter 2 “A plan led approach” – 14 pages - Promoting Growth; Managing Change; Networks and Hierarchies; A pro-active Plan led System; role of plans; assessing need (quantitative & qualitative), allocating sites, scale, sequential approach, impact, accessibility, other relevant matters eg regeneration.

• Chapter 3 “Development Control” – 7 pages - assessing proposed developments, assessing need, scale, sequential approach, impact, accessibility, extensions, conditions.

• Guidance on undertaking assessments of; need; impact and the sequential approach (the “daughter documents”) to be published separately – still outstanding
A question of need


• The need for robust, evidence based [up to date plans](#), based on a clear understanding of both need and demand for new facilities.

• Replace current need and impact tests with a new “super test” which has a strong focus on town centre first policy and which promotes competition and improves consumer choice.
What Next?

• DCLG Stakeholder meetings
• Draft “super test” released at the end of the summer
• Revised PPS6 - 3 months consultation
• CC Inquiry results
• Autumn Workshops on Guidance Notes
• Spring 2008 – Final version of PPS6 released.”
The super test

• “Some key issues”
• transparent; robust; encourage level playing field; promote competition and consumer choice; impact & need, social considerations; based on understanding of economics of retailing; accessibility and scale; wider benefits eg regeneration & employment; carbon footprint etc.
• What indicators and data are required?
• Consolidate tests?