

New Agendas for Retail Planning

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New Agendas for Retail Planning

- ▶ Research Background
- ▶ Scanning the Past Ten Years
- ▶ Weaknesses in Current Planning Policies
- ▶ New Planning Policy Agendas
- ▶ New Private Sector Agendas
- ▶ Future Role of NRPF
- ▶ Conclusions

My Research Background

- ▶ Currently ESRC Research Fellow: two-year project 'An evaluation of retail planning policy in the UK'
- ▶ Previous involvement in
 - ODPM 'Effectiveness of PPG6' report
 - ESRC / J Sainsbury Food Deserts research
 - BCOTR / Accessible Retail project
 - CASA / ODPM Town Centres project

Scanning the Past Ten Years

'George Nicholson identified two main problems. The first was the ad-hoc nature of the planning process with the unpredictability of planning enquiries and possible intervention by the Secretary of State. The second was the lack of readily available data to inform the deliberations of both local councils and retailers.' (*Labour Planning and Environment Group, Talking Shop, 1994*)

- ▶ Ad-hoc nature of the planning process?
 - Government guidance more detailed, comprehensive
 - But intervention continues (in England)
- ▶ Lack of readily available data?
 - CASA/ODPM Town Centres statistics
 - But:
 - ▶ Still no Census
 - ▶ Demise of URPI
 - ▶ No national standards in retail impact assessment, floorspace surveys, health checks etc.

Scanning the Past Ten Years (2)

- ▶ Planning policy development after PPG6/NPPG8:
 - 'Clarification' of development control criteria
 - In effect, tightening of 'town centres first' policy
- ▶ Growth of new agendas in retail planning:
 - Retail competition, innovation and productivity
 - Urban regeneration
 - Social inclusion
 - Market town revival
- ▶ A new regional dimension?
 - Regional planning agencies (in England), take on strategic planning role
 - Regional development agencies, finance for development
- ▶ Growth in popular concern over power of multiples:
 - 'Rip-off' allegations, pressure on suppliers
 - Small retailer decline
 - Local monopolies, lack of choice
 - 'Clone Town Britain'
- ▶ But little change in 'sustainable development' policy and rhetoric:
 - Focus mainly on private car use
 - Sustainable development equated with town centre development

Retail Policy: The Underlying Assumptions

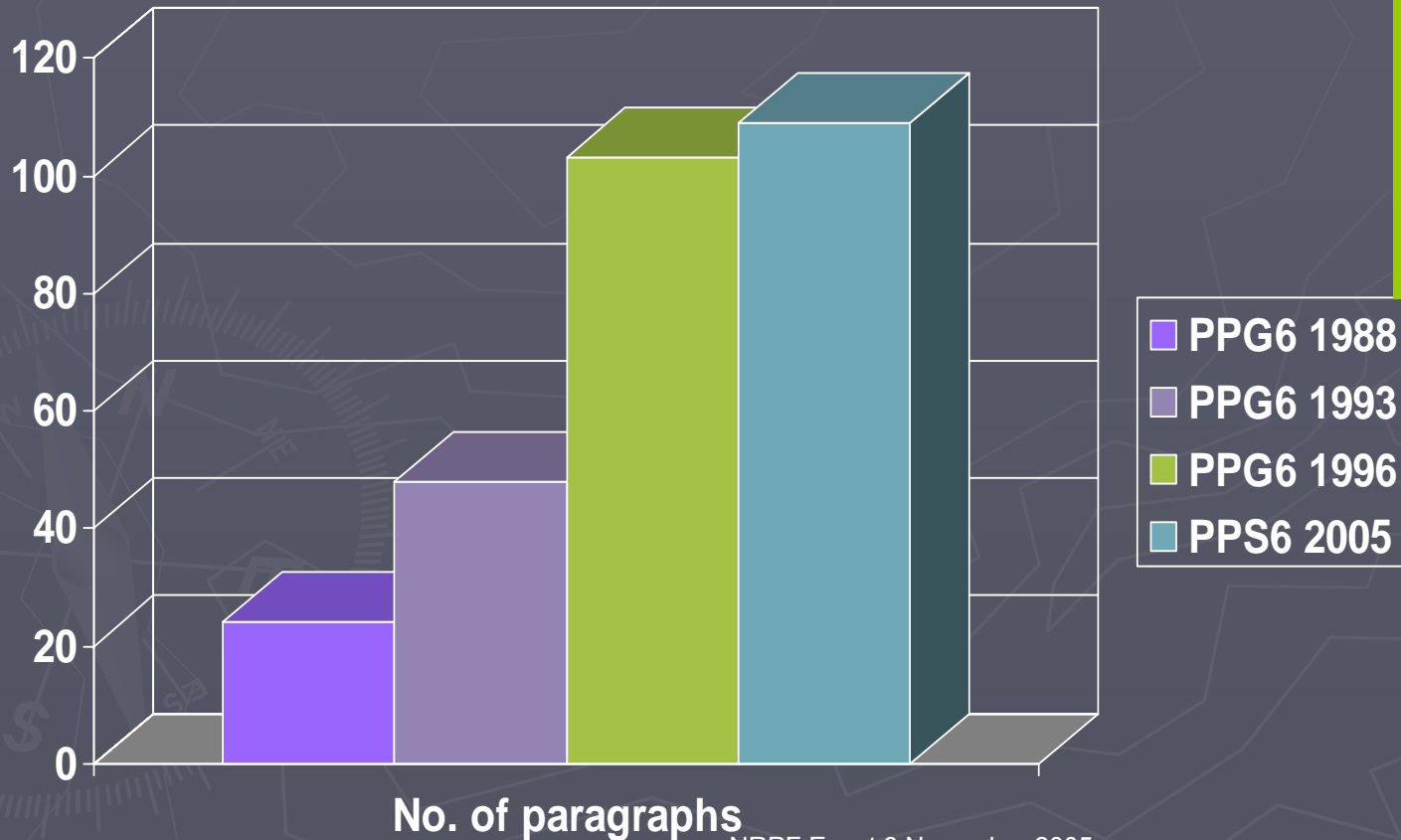
- ▶ 'Need' for new retail must be questioned: commercial viability not sufficient reason
- ▶ Restricting modern, efficient retailing will protect older smaller scale retailing
- ▶ Impact of any retail development within a town centre is not significant
- ▶ Building more off-centre stores will increase total car travel
- ▶ Placing new retail in town centres will reduce dependence on car trips
- ▶ Public transport/bike/walk is appropriate for shopping trips:
 - essential for non-car owners
 - adequate for car owners
- ▶ Consumers' views don't matter

Weaknesses in Current Policy

- ▶ Policies based on broad (partly untested) assumptions about retailer requirements and consumer behaviour: diversity not recognised
- ▶ Too much centralisation (in England), local planners have little discretion
- ▶ Guidance is
 - Too long and complex (in England)
 - Too bland: possible conflicts between objectives are ignored
 - Ambiguous, contradictory and confusing in places

Length of English Guidance, 1988-2005

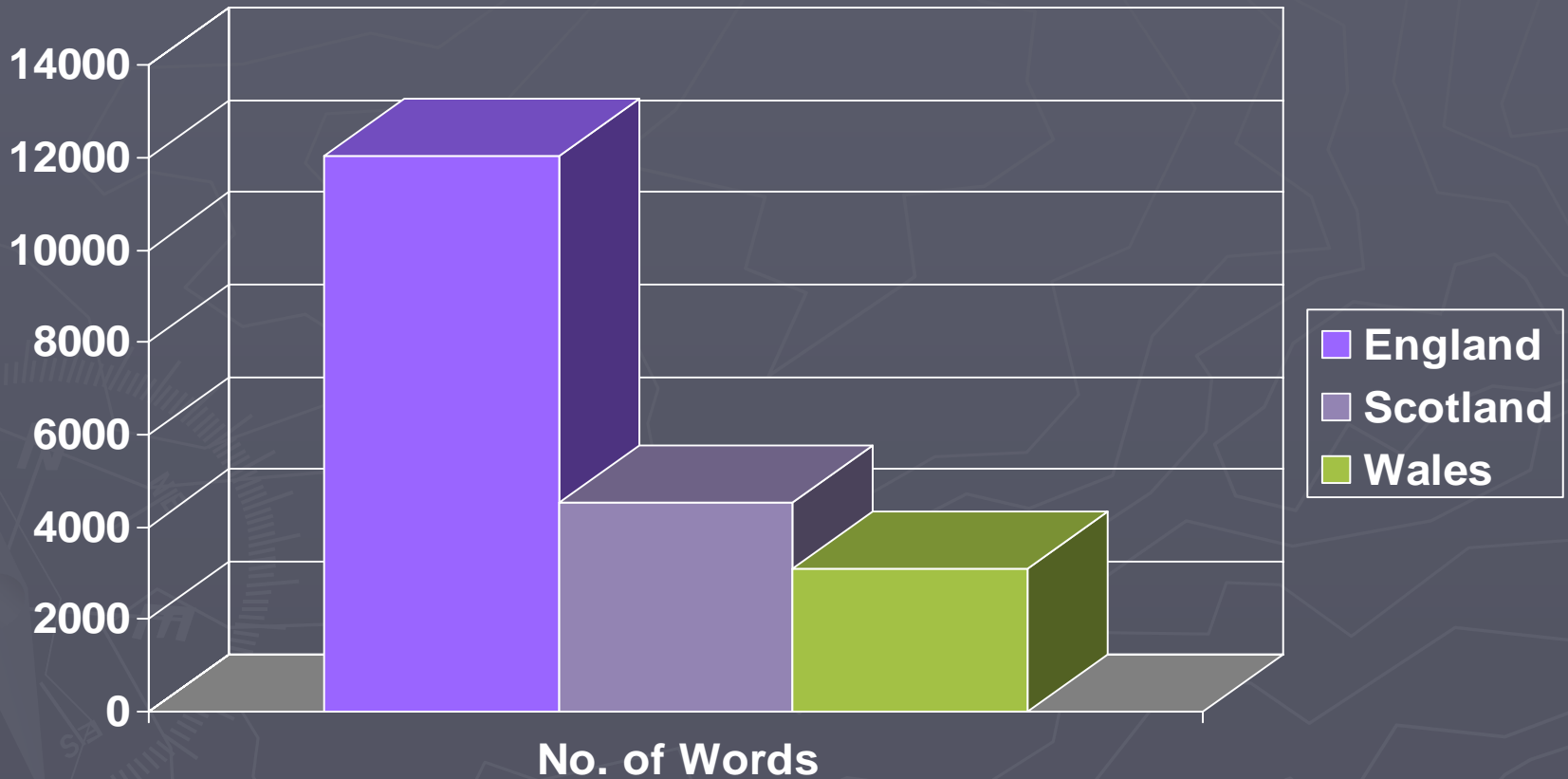
'Planning should become a promoter of things that are worthwhile rather than a series of complex, hard to understand and often contradictory rules that people find it difficult to pick their way through.' (*Lord Falconer, 2001*)



NRPF Event 8 November 2005

Length of Recent Guidance

(PPS6; Draft SPP8; Planning Policy Wales Chapter 10)



Weaknesses in Current Policy (2)

- ▶ Uses out-dated 'hierarchy' concept which ignores anything outside established town & district centres
- ▶ Both forward planning and development control guidance require information and expertise which are not available in many places
- ▶ Guidance on 'need' in development control is superfluous, duplicates impact assessment and/or advice on regeneration and social inclusion

Quantitative Need in Development Control

A needs assessment prepared in support of a planning application should, wherever possible, be based on the assessment carried out for the development plan document, updated as required, and in the case of retail development should relate directly to the class of goods to be sold from the development ('business-based' cases will not be appropriate). The need for additional floorspace should normally be assessed no more than five years ahead, as sites in the centre may become available within that period. Assessing need beyond this time period might pre-empt future options for investment in centres, except where large town centre schemes are proposed and where a longer time period may be appropriate to allow for site assembly. The catchment area that is used to assess future need should be realistic and well related to the size and function of the proposed development and take account of competing centres

In addition to considering the quantitative need for additional retail or leisure floorspace, local planning authorities should consider whether there are qualitative considerations, as described in Chapter 2, that might provide additional justification for the development. *(PPS6)*

All planning applications should be rigorously assessed against the development plan and the policy set out in this SPP. ... In addition, where the proposed development is not consistent with the development plan, the assessment should ensure that; ... The proposal will help to meet qualitative and quantitative deficiencies identified in the development plan). *(draft SPP8)*

Weaknesses in Current Policy (3)

- ▶ Inconsistency between emphasis on retail innovation/productivity, and requirement for 'flexibility' in new development
- ▶ Unclear, indecisive advice on control of development, especially concerning 'flexibility' and 'disaggregation'

Advice on Flexibility, Disaggregation etc.

In applying the sequential approach, and considering alternative sites, developers and operators should be able to demonstrate that in seeking to find a site in or on the edge of existing centres they have been flexible about their proposed business model in terms of the following planning considerations: _ the scale of their development; _ the format of their development; _ car parking provision; and _ the scope for disaggregation (see paragraphs 3.17–3.18).

The purpose of this exercise is to explore the possibility of enabling the development to fit onto more central sites by reducing the footprint of the proposal. In seeking to demonstrate flexibility under Paragraph 3.15 above, developers and operators should consider, in terms of scale: reducing the floorspace of the development; in terms of format: more innovative site layouts and store configurations such as multi-storey developments with smaller footprints; and, in terms of car parking: reduced or reconfigured car parking areas. However, local planning authorities should be realistic in considering whether sites are suitable, viable and available (see paragraph 3.19). Local planning authorities should take into account any genuine difficulties, which the applicant can demonstrate are likely to occur in operating the applicant's business model from the sequentially preferable site, in terms of scale, format, car parking provision and the scope for disaggregation, such as where a retailer would be required to provide a significantly reduced range of products. However, it will not be sufficient for an applicant to claim merely that the class of goods proposed to be sold cannot be sold from the town centre.

As part of this exercise it is important to explore whether specific parts of a development could be operated from separate, sequentially preferable, sites. For retail and leisure proposals in edge-of-centre or out-of-centre locations which comprise a group of retail and/or leisure units, such as a retail park, leisure park or shopping centre, the applicant should consider the degree to which the constituent units within the proposal could be accommodated on more centrally-located sites in accordance with the objectives and policies in this policy statement.

A single retailer or leisure operator should not be expected to split their proposed development into separate sites where flexibility in terms of scale, format, car parking provision and the scope for disaggregation has been demonstrated. It is not the intention of this policy to seek the arbitrary sub-division of proposals. Rather it is to ensure that consideration is given as to whether there are elements which could reasonably and successfully be located on a separate sequentially.

(PPS6)

Developers, owners and occupiers should, when identifying and developing sites, have regard not only to their own requirements but be sympathetic to the town setting in terms of format, design and scale. This should include the scope for accommodating the proposed development in a different built form, for adjusting or sub-dividing large proposals in order that their scale might offer a better fit with existing development, and for making use of existing vacant and under-used land or premises.

(draft SPP8)

Weaknesses in Current Policy (4)

- ▶ 'Town centres first' policy
 - Creates 'town centre cramming', vehicle and pedestrian congestion
 - Ignores negative impacts of large-scale developments within town centres
 - Fails to protect small-scale retailing against displacement and/or rent increases
- ▶ Inconsistent and unrealistic attitude to shopping travel:
 - 'Trolley/basket/leisure' shopping patterns not recognised
 - Assumes town centre shoppers are more likely to use public transport, even for bulk food shopping
 - Ignores possible reduction in car travel through development of new off-centre stores

Shopping and Travel

Type of Shopping	Type of Retailing	Typical Travel Mode
Basket	Corner shop Local centre City centre convenience	Walk, Bicycle
Trolley	Supermarket Hypermarket Retail park	Car
Leisure: Personal/Aspirational	City centre Regional mall	Public transport, Car
Leisure: Day out	City centre Outlet centre Speciality centre	Car, Public transport

Weaknesses in Current Policy (5)

- ▶ Forward planning guidance ignores existing out-of-centre development
 - Fossilises town centre networks
 - Neglects opportunities to reshape off-centre networks
- ▶ Little useful advice on improvement of declining retail areas
 - Urban/suburban district centres
 - Market towns
 - Villages

New Planning Policy Agendas

- ▶ Consider needs of shoppers – value for money, quality, variety, choice and access

‘Retail policy should reflect a fuller understanding of how different groups of consumers use and experience multiple and independent stores. At the heart of this idea is a more proactive approach to planning, rooted in the experiences of consumers making real retail choices within constantly changing local competitive situations. The key question is whether consumers feel they have sufficient choice and, if not, how can policy be used to address such situations?’

Ian Clarke et al, ‘Retail competition and consumer choice’, 2004

New Planning Policy Agendas (2)

- ▶ Simplify procedure for spatial planning of retail growth and change
 - Clarify roles of regional and local planning bodies
 - Broad not detailed analyses of capacity and need
- ▶ Town centre policy
 - Encourage improvement of retail quality and variety, not necessarily quantity
 - Link with 'eat the view' initiatives
- ▶ Plan for out-of-centre growth and change
 - Good quality accessible developments could grow as a preferable alternative to sporadic growth of large format stores
 - Poor quality developments could be replaced by new uses (housing?)

New Planning Policy Agendas (3)

- ▶ Simplify development control guidance – base around
 - Sequential approach (as originally conceived)
 - Assessment of trading impact
 - Reduction in shopping travel & expenditure leakage
 - Qualitative need:
 - ▶ Urban regeneration
 - ▶ Social exclusion
 - ▶ Improvement in retail quality

New Private Sector Agendas

- ▶ Support lobbying of local and central government with quantitative evidence of costs arising from planning control
- ▶ Extend regeneration/social inclusion efforts to show more awareness of the local economy, and be prepared to support local businesses (retailers and suppliers)
- ▶ Understand need for design of new developments to respect local physical environments

New NRPF Agenda

- ▶ Take higher profile, act as mediator between conflicting government interests
- ▶ Consider how planning policy can address popular and environmental concerns about retailer power and town centre distinctiveness
- ▶ Research?
 - Central/local relationships
 - Role of rpa's/rda's in spatial planning
 - Impacts of large scale development within town centres
 - Future of older retail parks and hybrid centres
 - Effectiveness of retail development in urban regeneration

Conclusions

- ▶ Existing retail planning guidance:
 - Internally inconsistent
 - Too detailed and complex (England)
 - Requires unavailable data/expertise
 - But ignores key questions
- ▶ The next revision should
 - Address needs of shoppers
 - Accept car travel but try to minimise it
 - Improve quality of town centres
- ▶ NRPF has crucial role in widening scope of 'retail planning' in order to meet these requirements