

## 2.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

### National Planning Guidance

#### *PPG6 Town Centres and Retail Development*

- 2.1 Planning Policy Guidance Note 6 (PPG6, revised June 1996) sets out the Government's policies on '*town centres and retail developments*'.
- 2.2 The Government's stated objectives (paragraph 1.1) are to focus retail uses in town, district and local centres, thereby ensuring the availability of a wide range of shops, employment, services and facilities to people by a choice of means of transport. Specifically, local planning authorities are advised (paragraph 1.3) to adopt planning policies which:
- locate major generators of travel in existing centres;
  - enable town, district and local centres to meet the needs of residents of their area;
  - safeguard and strengthen existing local centres, which offer a range of everyday community, shopping and employment opportunities;
  - maintain and improve choice for people to walk, cycle or catch public transport; and
  - ensure an appropriate supply of attractive, convenient and safe parking for shopping and leisure trips.
- 2.3 PPG6 offers specific guidance (Annex B, paragraph 4) to local planning authorities on the formulation of planning policies for retail development, including the need to:
- take account of broad forecasts of retail demand and how the retail sector is likely to want to respond to that demand over the plan period, by reference to location;
  - consider the existing and likely relationships between the centres in the area. Different types of centre should be clearly defined in the plan, indicating the policy approach to be followed and the potential in each centre for change; and
  - identify a range of suitable sites on which the demand for developments might be best met, with particular attention to their accessibility by a choice of means of transport.
- 2.4 This study aims to assess retail needs in Winchester. If a '*need*' for new retail

development is established, then it will be necessary to identify opportunities to cater for that need.

2.5 The question of 'need' for retail development is referred to several times in PPG6:

- first, in the context of shopping centres meeting the 'needs' of local residents (paragraph 1.3); and
- second, that local planning authorities should consider the 'need' for new development (paragraph 1.10) and that if 'there is no 'need' or capacity for further developments, there will be no need to identify additional sites.' (Paragraph 1.10).

2.6 There has been some debate about what is meant by 'need' and specifically whether developers are required to demonstrate need. Planning Minister, Richard Caborn, sought to clarify the issue, in a written answer to a parliamentary question, 11 February 1999:

*'In the context of PPG6 and this additional guidance, the requirement to demonstrate 'need' should not be regarded as being fulfilled simply by showing that there is capacity (in physical terms) or demand (in terms of available expenditure within the proposal's catchment area) for the proposed development. Whilst the existence of capacity or demand may form part of the demonstration of need, the significance in any particular case of the factors which may show need will be a matter for the decision-maker.'*

2.7 This statement was addressed further in a House of Commons debate on supermarkets, 24 June 1999:

*'What does 'need' mean? In that written answer, I said that, first, would-be developers must demonstrate that need does not mean simply an assertion by the developer that there is a market demand. It means that the local planning authority must consider the wider needs of the community as well as the market demand for a plan before it accepts the development plan. If the local authority is satisfied that a need exists, it must also be satisfied that the sequential test has been applied in selecting the site.'*

*Even then, the local authority must also consider whether there will be an adverse impact on the existing centre before it allows the proposal to go forward.'*

2.8 These statements do not comprise a comprehensive or a clear definition of need. However, they suggest that, in addition to considering capacity and demand, in terms of expenditure and physical sites, local planning authorities and developers should

consider the wider 'needs' of the community in assessing retail policies and proposals. Our approach to the assessment of need is set out in the remainder of this report.

## **Regional Planning Guidance**

### *RPG9: Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (2001)*

- 2.9 RPG9 provides the strategic regional planning framework for the south-eastern region of England. The guidance provides up-to-date statutory regional planning guidance for Hampshire. However, this guidance does not raise new major issues not already covered by national guidance.
- 2.10 Paragraph 3.10 relates to the application of the sequential test. The guidance states that town centres should be the normal focus of retailing and services requiring accessibility by large number of people (an approach suggested by PPG6).
- 2.11 **Policy Q2** refers to the need to improve the quality of life in urban areas, including significant improvement to the urban environment, and by making urban areas more attractive places to live, work and shop.
- 2.12 In relation to local plans, Policy Q2 states that development plans should:
- set an overall strategy for enhancing the quality of life in each urban area which reflects a vision developed in consultation with local communities;
  - make optimum use of existing buildings and infrastructure, especially protecting those of historic and cultural value; and
  - utilise the opportunities for regeneration that may be created by new development.
- 2.13 **Policy Q3** deals with the location of new development to make better use of land and to create viable catchments for services and infrastructure.
- 2.14 **Policy Q5** states that the existing network of larger town centres should be the focus of major retail and leisure development to support urban renaissance, promote social inclusion and encourage more sustainable patterns of development. The supporting text to this policy states that regional planning bodies should assess the need outside London for major new retail and leisure facilities, and town centres should be the focus of major retail development.

2.15 In preparing development plans, the supporting text to Policy Q5 states that local authorities should:

- take account of any reviews completed by regional planning bodies which assess the need outside London for new retail or leisure developments (including expansion proposals);
- assess the need for retail development in their area;
- identify the preferred locations for growth; and
- apply the sequential approach to site selection.

2.16 **Policy Q5** additionally identifies the need to take into account the physical capacity of existing centres, whilst respecting their historic character and cultural value, the performance of existing centres, the scope for regeneration, and the potential impact of development on the vitality and viability of existing floorspace. Assessment of the capacity of transport infrastructure and minimising the need for shoppers to travel by car is outlined.

*Hampshire County Structure Plan (December 2000)*

2.17 The current Hampshire County Structure Plan covers the period 1996 to 2011. Considerable weight should be attached to its policies in terms of Local Plan policy formulation and in development control decision making.

2.18 **Policy S1** of the Structure Plan seeks to maintain and strengthen the vitality and viability of the town centres within the County by:

- supporting the primary shopping function of the centres;
- diversifying land uses in the centres;
- maintaining or improving the amenity and environment including the protection, enhancement or provision of open space; and
- improving access, safety and security for public transport, pedestrians, cyclists and people with special needs.

2.19 Policy S1 identifies 29 town centres within Hampshire, including Winchester, Andover, Basingstoke, Eastleigh, Fareham, Petersfield, Romsey and Southampton.

2.20 In the supporting text to Policy S1 it is stated that development proposals should not undermine the retail function of town centres by leading to an overall loss in the

quality and choice of town centre opportunities. However, an appropriate mix and balance of other land uses within the town centre as a whole, especially housing, leisure, entertainment and cultural facilities and employment and educational facilities is crucial.

- 2.21 In addition, the supporting text also states that many town centres have a rich built heritage and important historic environment. The conservation of the individual character of town centres and their buildings will be imperative when considering development proposals.
- 2.22 **Policy S3** states that a sequential approach will be applied to a range of key town centres uses, including large-scale retail developments. The first preference will be for town centre sites followed by edge-of-centre sites, and only then out-of-centre sites. **Policy S4** goes on to state that out-of-town developments will only be permitted subject a number of criteria being met, for example there being an identified need for the scheme.
- 2.23 Paragraph 361 of the Structure Plan states that a *tension* exists within Winchester between the need to conserve the historic fabric and the setting of the City and the need to provide for its residents and workers. The text states that the historic character of the City and its popularity impacts upon the environment.
- 2.24 The Structure Plan goes on to state that it is important the City is allowed to prosper. Economic activities such as retailing provide investment for the maintenance of the historic core as well as for the day-to-day needs of its population. **Policy E19** states:

*“Development within, adjoining or in the vicinity of, the built up area of Winchester will be controlled to secure protection of the heritage and historic fabric of the city.”*

#### **Winchester District Council Local Plan (April 1998)**

- 2.25 The current Winchester Local Plan was adopted in April 1998. However, the Local Plan period was 1991 to 2001. Therefore the adopted Local Plan is now out-of-date in certain respects.
- 2.26 The facilities and services chapter sets out the Council’s objectives to:
- enable and encourage the provision of new and improved facilities and services for local communities;

- discourage the loss of existing sites or buildings which could remain in use for the benefit of local communities; and
- ensure that adequate infrastructure is available or provided to accommodate new development.

2.27 Paragraph 8.9 of the Local Plan states provision for major new shopping facilities is not generally necessary or appropriate, accept for small-scale development in the City Centre and retail warehouses at Winnall. However, as indicated this guidance relates to the period up to 2001.

2.28 The Local Plan describes Winchester as a shopping centre of sub-regional significance within Hampshire's retail hierarchy. A sub-section relating to shopping in Winchester is provided within **Chapter 11** ('*Winchester*') of the Adopted Local Plan.

2.29 Paragraph 11.49 of the Local Plan states that the continued economic health of the town is heavily dependent on the vitality and viability of its central shopping area. The Local Plan's objectives for Winchester's role as a shopping centre relate closely to other objectives concerning conservation, tourism and transportation. The Local Plan proposes the following strategy:

- recognition of the continuing need to support the town centre's role as an important sub-regional shopping centre serving central Hampshire, particularly in respect of comparison and specialist goods;
- conservation and other constraints would limit the scope for major new development both within the town centre and around the edge of Winchester. Therefore, it was not generally proposed that land would be allocated for new development, except as indicated within the plan;
- continued controls over the loss of retail premises and the introduction of service uses within the Primary Shopping Area;
- provision for a new food store at Beech Walk, Winnall, in order to improve the choice and quality of retail provision, encourage healthy competition, and recoup trade being lost to other centres;
- provision for retail warehousing on land at Winnall; and
- encouragement for the development and improvement of local shopping facilities serving the suburbs of Winchester.

2.30 Paragraph 11.50 states the need, subject to the reconciliation of other requirements, to encourage proposals that would assist in developing and enhancing the role of the

town centre (especially in respect of comparison and specialist goods). Accordingly **Proposal W.11** of the Adopted Local Plan states:

*“In order to assist in developing and enhancing the role of the town centre, particularly as a comparison and specialist goods shopping centre, small-scale retail development which accords with other relevant proposals of this Plan will normally be permitted. Except as specifically provided for at Winnall (Proposal W.16), the Local Planning Authority will not normally permit further significant shopping development in or around Winchester.”*

- 2.31 Paragraph 11.52 of the adopted plan indicates that following the completion of The Brooks Shopping Centre, the Council does not consider there will be a future need for large-scale retail development in the Winchester area. Therefore, the Council sought to resist proposals for further major shopping development in the town in order to protect the continued vitality and viability of the centre as a whole.
- 2.32 Paragraph 11.54 states that whilst there is a need to have regard to modern retail trends, consideration should also be had to the need to protect Winchester's important characteristics.
- 2.33 Consideration was given in the plan to Winchester's retail floorspace requirements. The Council considered that no other suitable sites were available for retail development. On this basis the Council sought to resist 'significant' (defined as over 2,500 sq m gross floorspace) additional retail development. At the same time the Council sought to resist reductions in the amount of retail floorspace provision (paragraph 11.55, **Proposal W.12**, **Proposal W.13** and **Proposal W.14**).
- 2.34 Proposal W.16 allocated land at the junction of Easton Lane and Moorside Road for retail warehouse development (now completed). Additional retail provision was made as part of the proposal to redevelop the Knowle Hospital site (to the north of Fareham and the M27). Proposal NC9 allocated land at Whiteley for retail development (now complete) including a new food store.

#### **Winchester District Local Plan Review Deposit (October 2001)**

- 2.35 The Winchester District Local Plan Review Deposit was placed on deposit in October 2001, and covers the period up to 2011.
- 2.36 Chapter 8 ('Town Centres, Shopping and Facilities') contains the Council's approach regarding retail development and the town centre. This chapter sets out the Council's

proposals relating to town, local and district centres, and facilities and services, including shopping. The following strategy is proposed:

- recognition of the continuing need to support Winchester town centre's role as an important historic and market town and visitor destination serving central Hampshire, particularly in respect of comparison and specialist goods;
- adoption of a sequential approach to new development, where the main town and village centres are the favoured locations for the development of new facilities that attract large numbers of visitors;
- recognition that conservation and other constraints severely limit the scope for major new development both within the town centre and around the edge of Winchester. Therefore, it is not proposed that land is specifically allocated for new development;
- controls to prevent development that would reduce vitality and viability within the areas of Primary Shopping in Winchester and the main rural settlements;
- encouragement for the development and improvement of local and village centre facilities serving the residential suburbs of Winchester and rural settlements, and opposing the loss of facilities and services where they serve a local function; and
- encouragement for the use of upper floors, especially for residential, so as to make better use of under used property and maintain "*lived in*" centres.

2.37 Paragraph 8.10 states that Winchester town centre provides a concentrated mix of uses, reducing the need for people to travel and encouraging the use of sustainable transport modes. Local Plan policy aims to focus redevelopment within the centre, or failing that other identified centres. This approach is supported by **Proposal SF.1**. The plan indicates that all new development needs to be carefully designed and sited, in scale and character with the existing centre.

2.38 A new planning policy has been introduced to ensure the impacts of Class A3 public houses is controlled (**Proposal SF.2**).

2.39 The Council is seeking to promote the use of upper floors of properties within town centres (**Proposal SF.3**).

2.40 Paragraph 11.17 states that Winchester town centre offers the most comprehensive range of facilities and services available in the District. The economic health of the town centre is closely related to the vitality and viability of the core shopping area (paragraph 11.19). The Council will seek to ensure that Winchester remains a pleasant shopping destination and continues to attract large numbers of visitors. In



order to help support the primarily retail function of the centre the Council will seek to prevent the loss of retail floorspace within the centre (**Proposal SF.4**).

2.41 New shopping facilities will be provided as part of developments at the following locations:

- Knowle (**Proposal NC.1**)
- Purbrook Heath (**Proposal NC.2**)
- Bishop's Waltham (**Proposal S.2**).