

**Planning Guidance (Wales),
Technical Advice Note (Wales) 4,
Retailing and Town Centres - November 1996**

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Introduction

Reference

1. This Technical Advice Note (Wales) (TAN) should be read in conjunction with "Planning Guidance (Wales): Planning Policy". Planning Guidance, Technical Advice Notes and circulars should be taken into account by local planning authorities in Wales in the preparation of development plans. They may be material to decisions on individual planning applications and will be taken into account by the Secretary of State and his Inspectors in the determination of called-in planning applications and appeals.

***Planning Guidance
(Wales): Planning
Policy, 1996,
paragraphs 173-186***

2. Documents listed in the Reference column in the margin provide information which should be read in conjunction with the TAN.

Retail Information

3. Information on the retail industry in a local planning authority's area together with information on the functioning of their town centres will assist the preparation of development plans and the consideration of planning applications. Baseline information and time series data can provide a picture of change and a guide to future trends. Securing the co-operation of local businesses and their associations to collect information and to share their views is

an important part of this process. Shopping catchment areas extend beyond local authority boundaries and an exchange of information with adjoining authorities is likely to be of benefit.

4. Area wide information which might be useful includes:

- **Population change:** combined with retail expenditure, this can result in the identification of shortfalls and opportunities for new retail developments.
- **Retail provision:** the amount and distribution of different forms of retailing across a local authority area can provide a useful profile of the industry and assist in identifying the shopping hierarchy. Usually expressed as total gross floorspace, the main types of retailing identified are: convenience (mainly food) and comparison or durable goods, (clothes, DIY, electrical components, etc.). Outstanding planning permissions and known commitments should also be monitored.
- **Retail expenditure:** which can mean the amount of money spent on retail services in total or per person within the catchment area for a development, a centre, or local authority area. Changing local economic conditions will affect expenditure levels and therefore the retail health of existing centres and businesses.

5. Information of value in measuring vitality, attractiveness and viability of town centres includes:

- **turnover in relation to floorspace:** turnover figures vary greatly and can be of assistance as an indication of the relative activity of different shopping areas and centres;
- **commercial yield on non-domestic property:** (i.e. the capital value in relation to the expected market rental) may be of assistance in demonstrating the confidence of investors in the long-term profitability of the centre;
- **shopping rents:** pattern of movement in primary shopping area rents (i.e. the frontage which attracts the highest rental value);
- **retailer representation and change:** present representation and demand from retailers wanting to come into the town, or to change their representation in the town, or to contract or close their representation;
- **the diversity of uses:** how much space is in use for different functions, such as: offices; shopping; other commercial; cultural and entertainment activities; restaurants; hotels; educational uses; housing, and

how that balance has been changing;

- **accessibility:** the ease and convenience of access by a choice of means of travel, including the quality, quantity and type of car parking, the availability of public transport services and the quality of provision for pedestrians and cyclists;
- **pedestrian flow:** the numbers and movement of people on the streets, in different parts of the centre at different times of the day and evening, and changes over time;
- **the proportion of vacant street level property:** vacancies can arise even in the strongest town centres, and this indicator must be used with care;
- **customer views:** regular surveys of customer views will assist authorities in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of town centre improvements and of town centre management;
- **environmental quality:** this should include information on air quality, noise, trees, landscaping, open spaces, litter and graffiti;
- **perception of safety/occurrence of crime:** this should include information on safety and security.

Impact Assessments

6. All applications for retail developments over 2,500 square metres gross floor space should be supported by an impact assessment providing evidence of:

- whether the applicant adopted a sequential approach to site selection and the availability of alternative sites;
- their likely economic and other impacts on other retail locations, including town centres, local centres and villages, including consideration of the cumulative effects of recently completed developments and outstanding planning permissions;
- their accessibility by a choice of means of transport including access for pedestrians, giving an assessment of the proportion of customers likely to arrive by different means of transport;
- the likely changes in travel patterns over the catchment area; and where appropriate;
- any significant environmental impacts.

Such assessments may also be necessary for some smaller developments, for instance those that are likely to have a large impact on a smaller town or district centre.

7. Impact assessments should adopt a broad approach and extend where appropriate beyond the boundaries of the local authority where a proposal is located. The parties should, where possible, agree data (such as trends in turnover, population, expenditure and efficiency in the use of existing retail floorspace) and present information on areas of dispute in a succinct and comparable form.

Changes of Use

8. Sustaining the vitality of town centres depends on flexibility in the use of floor space. The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987, Part A, comprises three classes covering uses that will generally be found in shopping areas (see summary below). Changes of use within a class and between essentially similar activities do not require planning permission. Space above shops can be converted into a flat without planning permission.

***Town and Country
Planning (Use
Classes) Order 1987,
(as amended),
(SI No 1987/764)***

***Town and Country
Planning (General
Permitted
Development),
Order 1985
(SI No 1995/418)***

Use Classes Order: Summary of Retail Provisions

9. Changes of use are permitted without the need to apply for planning permission from both A3 and A2 uses (with display window at ground floor level) to A1 (Classes A and D of Part 3 of the Order); conversion from A3 to A2 use (Class C of Part 3 of the Order); change between single and mixed uses within A1 and A2 uses (with display window at ground level) and as a single flat (Class F and Class G of the Order).

Class A1 (Shops)

- most types of shops as well as post offices, travel agents, hairdressers, funeral directors' premises, hire shops and dry cleaners.

Class A2 (Financial and Professional Services)

- banks, building societies and other financial and professional services (other than health or medical services), betting offices and other services provided principally to visiting members of the public.

Class A3 (Food and Drink)

- hot food shops, restaurants, cafés, snack bars, wine bars and public houses.

10. Changes of use can create new concentrations of single uses, such as restaurants and take-away food outlets, where the cumulative effects can cause local problems. Such proposals should be assessed against development plan policies, on their contribution to diversification and on the cumulative effects on matters such as parking and local

residential amenity.

Car Parking Standards and Management

11. Car parking standards should seek to achieve an adequate level of town centre parking reflecting the range of uses found and the range and level of public transport alternatives. The parking needs of town centre and edge of centre residents should be considered and appropriate provision allowed including where necessary residents only controls. Parking standards for residential development in town centres, including mixed-use schemes, should be applied flexibly to encourage such development. Development for non-residential uses, including retailing, should be subject to car parking standards expressed as a range of maximum and operational minimum provision to prevent excessive supply which would encourage greater use of private cars.

12. In town centres, parking should where possible serve the centre as a whole, rather than being provided for the exclusive use of a building occupier. Where appropriate, car parks for edge of centre stores should be encouraged to play a dual role, serving the town centre as well as the store as part of the overall parking strategy. In such cases a larger car park might be justified.

13. In assessing the availability of parking in town centres local planning authorities should consider the overall provision of on-and-off-street, public and private parking. Local authorities should also consider, with private operators, management and pricing policies for parking. They should achieve better use of existing car parking, by adopting and encouraging the implementation of policies which favour short-term parking for visitors to the town centre, such as shoppers, at the expense of long-term parking for commuters.

14. The quality of off-street, town centre car parks is important to users. Local authorities should, in co-operation with private operators, address pedestrian access, security, lighting, management and maintenance. These can be covered by a non statutory town centre management strategy (see Annex B).

Notification

15. The Secretary of State has directed local planning authorities to notify him of certain proposals for retail development before granting planning permission. They are also required to notify departure applications to the Secretary of State if they consist of or include:

- more than 10,000 square metres of gross retail floor space; or
- by reason of their scale, nature or location would

***Welsh Office
Circular 61/93
Town and Country
Planning (Shopping
Development)
(England and
Wales) (No. 2)
Direction 1993***

Welsh Office

significantly prejudice the implementation of development plan policies and proposals.

***Circular 39/92
The Town and
Country Planning
General
Regulations 1992***

***Town and Country
Planning
(Development Plans
and Consultation)
Direction 1992***

Environmental Assessment

16. The need for an Environmental Assessment of major shopping proposals should be considered in the light of the sensitivity of the particular location. For out-of-town schemes a floor area threshold of about 20,000 square metres (gross) provides an indication of significance and the need for Environmental Assessment. For new retail proposals in urban areas on land that has not been previously intensively developed, a development of more than 10,000 square metres (gross) may require Environmental Assessment.

***Welsh Office
Circular 23/88
Environmental
Assessment***

Cancellation

17. Annex A, 'Glossary of terms', to Planning Policy Guidance note 6, 'Town Centres and Retail Developments' is cancelled.

Planning Guidance (Wales), Technical Advice Note (Wales) 4, Retailing and Town Centres - November 1996

Annex A

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

New retail development takes different forms, each with its own operating characteristics, for example:

Types of Shop: food stores:

Supermarkets - single level, self-service stores selling mainly food, with a trading floorspace less than 2,500 square metres, often with their own car parks.

Superstores - single-level, self-service stores selling mainly food, or food with some non-food goods, usually with at least 2,500 square metres trading floorspace with their own car parks at surface level.

Types of Shop: comparison goods:

Town centre malls - purpose-built centres incorporating many individual shop units, usually concentrating on comparison goods, and sometimes leisure, residential and other uses.

Retail warehouse - large single-level stores specialising in the sale of household goods (such as carpets, furniture and electrical goods) and bulky DIY items, catering mainly for car-borne customers and often in out-of-centre locations.

Retail parks - an agglomeration of at least 3 retail warehouses.

Warehouse clubs - out-of-centre businesses specialising in bulk sales of reduced priced goods in unsophisticated buildings with large car parks. The operator may limit access to businesses, organisations or classes of individual, and may agree to limit the number of lines sold.

Factory outlet centres - groups of shops, usually away from the town centre, specialising in selling seconds and end-of-line goods at discounted prices.

Types of Centre:

Local centre - small grouping usually comprising a newsagent, a general grocery store, a sub-post office and occasionally a pharmacy, a hairdresser and other small shops of a local nature.

District shopping centres - groups of shops, separate from the town centre, usually containing at least one food supermarket or superstore, and non-retail services such as banks, building societies and restaurants.

Town centre - this covers city, town and suburban district centres which provide a broad range of facilities and services and which fulfil a function as a focus both for the community and for public transport. It excludes small parades of shops of purely local significance.

Regional shopping centres - out-of-town centres generally over 50,000 square metres gross retail area, typically enclosing a wide range of comparison goods.

TERMINOLOGY FOR RETAIL LOCATIONS

'Suitable' town centre site: a 'suitable' town centre site is one acceptable for a proposed form of town centre development in terms of its location, size, access, relationship to adjoining uses and any other factors pertaining to a particular site.

Edge-of-centre: a location within easy walking distance of the centre normally not more than 200-300 metres from existing town centre shops, providing parking facilities that serve the centre as well as the store, thus enabling one trip to serve several purposes. Lesser distances may be appropriate for smaller town centres and local circumstances such as topography will also determine appropriate distances.

Out-of-centre: a location that is clearly separate from a town centre, but not necessarily outside the urban area.

Out-of-town: an out-of-centre development on a green-field site, or on land not clearly within the current urban boundary.

Primary and secondary frontages: the definition of primary and secondary frontages depends crucially on local circumstances. Prevailing commercial rental values can give a good indication of the boundary between primary and secondary areas; the existence of retail uses is not in itself a good indicator.

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Annex B

TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT

Many factors affecting the quality of town centres lie outside the planning system. Effective management and promotion of town centres will help to enhance their vitality, attractiveness and viability. Together with the private sector and the local community, local authorities should consider appointing a town centre manager who may facilitate:

- better communications between private and public sectors including retailers, investors, residents and the public agencies. Such links can contribute to the preparation of the strategy for retail development and the future of town centres set out in the development plan;
- research into retail trends;
- improved identification and use of resources;
- better promotion of the town centre; and
- more effective achievement of development plan objectives.

Detailed non-statutory town centre management strategies, drawn up within the broad framework of the development plan, may bring forward initiatives such as:

- environmental improvements and the enhancement of town centre approaches, open spaces and the pedestrian environment. Covered spaces and links may be appropriate in some areas;
- street cleaning and refuse services that meet the needs of the businesses that contribute to the town centre economy;
- provision of well located bus stops and shelters, co-ordinated information on public transport services and convenient taxi facilities;
- provision of accessible, safe and secure car parks with high standards of maintenance including parking for disabled people and cycle parking provision;
- recreation and entertainment activities;
- crime prevention and safety improvements;
- provision for the needs of the emergency services;
- provision for goods delivery;
- provision for disabled and elderly people, and those with young children, for example, ramps, handrails, seating and other facilities, appropriate pavement design and surfacing materials, dropped kerbs, etc.;
- setting clear standards for town centre services, publicising them and reporting on performance including customer surveys;

- improved signing and information;
- works of art in public spaces;
- recycling facilities;
- toilet facilities.