PPG6 - SETTING A BALANCE.

Research designed to address the concept that PPG6 can act as a sufficient planning mechanism ensuring the economic stability of out-of-town and town centre developments.

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ABSTRACT

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The publication of the House of Commons Environment Committee Report recommended a revision of the 1993 version of Planning Policy Guidance Note Six (PPG6) entitled Town Centres and Retail Development. Further investigation revealed that little research had been undertaken to discover if a revision of such guidance could redress the balance that had been distorted by the decentralisation of retail activity over the past few decades.

The Town Centres: Vision and Reality Conference held in London (November 1995) attracted a over 100 people from all different fields of planning and provided me with the opportunity to ask the environment secretary, John Gummer, if the revised guidance would redress such a balance. He replied by saying that "out-of-town shopping is not intrinsically bad, but for a long time this has been the only answer. There is a need to make development in the city centre more available and ensure that town centres are vibrant". This statement acted as the prime influence which resulted in the selection of a thesis topic.

The thesis was designed with the aim of discovering whether the current planning policy guidance was capable of supporting both out-of-town and town centre developments. This was to be achieved by collating the views of over 250 members of the planning world. A questionnaire was sent to private planning consultancies, local planning authorities, developers and retail operators in order to discover how different people from different fields of planning would react to the revised version of PPG6 following its publication in June 1996.

The hypothesis was rejected in the conclusion, as PPG6 concentrates upon the revitalisation and redevelopment of town centres, in the belief that out-of-town centres could look after themselves in the short-term. The research highlighted some of the areas that require further examination, particularly in terms of the impact of new retail innovations in the future.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction.

1.1 Aims and Objectives.

This thesis was prompted following the Town Centres Vision and Reality conference held in London (15th November 1995) within which PPG6 provided the focus for debate. There were many different points of view expressed within this conference however, the general opinions of PPG6 were sceptical whilst encouraging. There were several questions posed to different speakers (including John Gummer) involving a balance being sought between out-of-town and town centre developments using PPG6. The general opinion was that shared by John Gummer "out-of-town shopping is not intrinsically bad, but for a long time this has been the only answer. There is a need to make development in the city centre more available and ensure that town centres are vibrant. In the USA out-of-town centres have not been respected, let alone the town centres, and this situation must be avoided here". Town centre revitalisation is the major proposal within PPG6. This prospect has given rise to the question as to whether out-of-town centres will be able to survive despite the increasing levels of competition posed by the revitalisation of town centres following the USA example.

The research study will aim to investigate whether the revised version of PPG6 is an adequate policy for town centres and out-of-town developments to co-exist in the future. The thesis is designed with the objective of filling a gap in the literature that is not currently available to date, and providing a basis upon which planning policies can be designed to assist the survival of town centres and out-of-town centres in the future.

1.2 Methodology and Research.

Primary Sources of Information:

Over 200 questionnaires were sent to many consultancies, Local Planning Authorities and retail operators with the aim of gathering a range of personal and professional viewpoints concerning the revised version of PPG6 and its' foreseen effectiveness within town centres and out-of-town developments. This information proved to be valuable throughout the thesis, particularly when assessing the revised guidance in general.

Secondary Sources of Information:

An examination of reports / literature sources written by retail companies, private consultancies, Local Planning Authorities and other parties concerned with all aspects of PPG6 (particularly its' effectiveness and revision), town centres and out-of-town developments was undertaken in order to gain evidence of the range of views held. Such sources provided further basis for arguments held by different concerns in terms of ways in which people view town centre and out-of-town centre developments in terms of ease of access, attractiveness and choice etc, ways in which PPG6 has been seen to alter the position of town centre and out-of-town developments within the overall retail picture and changes needed to improve PPG6. Such information also proved to be valuable within every area of the thesis.

An examination of planning appeals and decisions concerning issues relevant to the thesis was undertaken. This information also proved valuable in terms of providing a basis for arguments voiced by different concerns. A wide range of cases were also studied in order to see how retail policy has changed over the years. This information was invaluable when attempting to judge whether PPG6 had proved to be an effective planning control since its implementation and in order to examine the changes it has made.

Tertiary sources of information:

Previous studies undertaken by professional groups, Local Planning Authorities, retailing organisations and any other groups / individuals concerning PPG6 were examined. These particular sources of information provided a history of retail experience. Sources such as these provided evidence of views held by each party throughout the periods of retail change (ie. when companies and consumers began to move out-of-town in preference to the town centres).

Overall each source of information was examined, intertwined and used in order to provide the reader with a sufficient level of knowledge to support and justify the reasons for the research, passages of investigation and final conclusions.

CHAPTER TWO

A History Of Retail Planning Policy.

"On average 3.4% of developed land within an urban area is generally devoted to retailing activities" and "people spend up to 60% of their income" within such areas, therefore indicating its importance. (McGibbon, 1993). Today retail distribution is one of the most important industries within the United Kingdom employing more than 2.8 million people in approximately 300,000 outlets. The marketing processes that have created the contemporary retailing system have been developed in no more than 150 years. This chapter will examine the changes and development of Britain's retail planning policies through the years.

(Jeffreys in O'Brien and Harris, 1991) presented a historical classification of retailing largely based upon economic analysis during the period 1850-1950. The following analysis of retail planning policy will be based upon the distinction of phases made by Jeffreys.

2.1 "Pre-industrial Retailing".

Jeffreys states that this phase depicts the period before 1850 when Britain was largely an agricultural country with a predominantly rural population. During this phase finished consumer goods could be purchased from trade shops, producer-retailers, markets and fairs, and nomadic traders. This system was a development upon that preceding it in terms of progress from a reliance upon self sufficiency, however retailers were still skilled traders requiring formal training or apprenticeships. At this early stage of development, few comparisons could be made to the modern system of retailing.

2.2 "Pre-1914 Retailing".

This phase of retailing activity lasted from 1850-1914. During the period from 1850 until the first world war Britain experienced significant economic change. The 1851 population census revealed that Britain's population was moving towards towns and cities in preference to agricultural land. Such movements provided collections of people with needs that required fulfilling, in other words ready made markets for retailers.

"Increasing urban population, a buoyant economy and low levels of unemployment led to new demands for goods and services. The economic shift occurring at this time opened new opportunities for retailing, and laid the ground for our modern system" (O'Brien and Harris, 1991). These changes had several effects upon retailing including diminishing importance in regard to tradition, more shops used exclusively for business purposes, shop prices set by retailers in favour of haggling practices, and possibly the most important factor was that of new larger-scale retailing formats emerging including multiples, co-ops and department stores. The industrial revolution made new methods of production available to retailers. Technological advances such as refrigerators, developments of new manufacturing techniques and the opening of new product markets allowed retailers to look towards fulfilling demands within regional and national markets. Multiple retailing practices rapidly developed within most forms of retailing. Jeffreys notes that by 1918 there were some 433 multiple firms in Britain controlling nearly 23,000 branches including Boots and WH Smith.

2.3 "Pre-1950s Retailing".

The British land use planning system was developed following a great deal of rapid unregulated urban development that took place during the nineteenth century. This concern resulted in basic public health conditions introduced to ensure a healthy and pleasant environment. During the 1920-30s urban sprawl began to develop and policies concerned with the containment of urban areas and the protection of the countryside were introduced. The 1947 Town and Country Planning Act was designed to "regulate the development and use of land in the public interest" (DOE, 1992).

In 1875 large retailing accounted for approximately 3% of the retail trade in Britain, however by 1920 three principle forms of large retailer (co-ops, department stores and multiple traders) accounted for more than 20% of Britain's retail trade. During 1914-1950 the relative importance and demand for such larger retailers grew. "The high street became the centre of retailing and greater attention was paid by retailers to getting an appropriate site" (O'Brien and Harris, 1991). The importance of price competition was largely replaced by concern for competition by image, store location and quality.

Until the mid 1960's, the hierarchical system of planning was the planning system used to provide retail services for the majority of the population. The mid 1960s saw movements away from this traditional system of retailing towards one which was concentrated around transportation routes. This transformation took place in order to satisfy new consumer demands created by factors such as increasing levels of affluence, suburbanisation, counter-urbanisation, rising levels of car-ownership, and increased female participation within the work force. These factors resulted in demand for a more specialised and sophisticated range of goods and services in different locations to suit the consumers' new lifestyles. In response to these new demands, a transformation of retailing activities in British cities took place. The decentralisation of demand resulted in the suburbanisation of retail activities.

The motor car has provided a mechanism to plan a town differently and separate activities within towns. Between the years of 1972 and 1992 the number of food shoppers with access to a car during existing opening hours doubled (see table one).

Table One: United Kingdom Car Ownership.

	1972	1982	1992
ONE OR MORE CARS	52%	59%	69%
TWO OR MORE CARS	9%	16%	24%

Source: General Household Survey No 23, 1992
(OPCS Table 2.34).

By 1992 three quarters of the population had the ability to shop for food by car. The growth of car ownership and usage had knock on effects within the town centres. Congestion and parking problems provided further fuel for the argument supporting out-of-town movements.

At first, transportation modes were regarded as the essential bonds connecting the elements of life (home, work and recreation) separated by early town and country planning policies. The growth of car ownership and usage resulted in the accentuation of distance between these elements of life, and the development of more and more roads in order to accommodate growing levels of traffic. It was not until the late 1980s that this policy had to change with the realisation that road traffic was growing at a rate that could not be accommodated by the further development of roads unless the country was to be destroyed.

The 1960-70s saw the revolution of the food retailing business with a number of companies operating at a national scale and store sizes increasing to superstore scales. Following these new revelations, town centres remained the focus for most non-food retailing activity and local shops had to adjust to meet new local needs. Planning policy around this time shifted towards protecting the inner city areas from retail decline such as that experienced within the Unites States of America following decentralisation. The recession of the 1970s emanated from a series of oil price increases. At times such as these, leading supermarket chains are renowned for embarking upon price cutting schemes with the aim to encourage a larger percentage of consumers to purchase goods from their stores rather than the competitors.

Decentralisation proved difficult to control with the implementation of planning controls until the Department of the Environment (DOE) devised a series of planning policy notes in 1972 addressing out-of-town developments. Much of this early retail policy provided unspecific and cautious advice for new retailing developments and the following years consequently saw the intermittent relaxation of planning controls. The development of the White Paper entitled "Lifting the Burden" in July 1985 intended to provide the backbone upon which other retail policies could be developed. This paper "altered the trend of reactive policy advice and created one of the only periods of positive (but not proactive) planning for retailing in the post-war period" Tomalin, C (1996). An increasingly laissez faire approach to retail planning followed from the mid 1980s until the early 1990s and the importance of the retail sector as a leading industry grew dramatically.

In the early 1980s the top three foodstore retailers by turnover - Sainsburys, Tesco and Asda - held a combined market share of around 20% of national grocery sales" (Wrigley in Bromley and Thomas, 1993). Later this group of top retailing firms was joined by the Argyll Group (the operators of Safeway) and Gateway (previously known as the Dee Corporation). "Between 1982 and 1988 the dominance of this big five group increased with their combined market share rising to 58%" (Wrigley in Bromley and Thomas, 1993). The competition between firms changed and began to focus upon the stores they operated from. It was not long before factors such as quality and choice had become as important as price. Retailing practices began to move out-of-town operating from superstores largely developed upon greenfield sites. Expansion such as this has been facilitated by technological advances which have proved a major factor particularly in terms of increasing labour productivity.

Table Two: The Development of Sainsbury Stores.

Date	Total no. of stores.	Total no. of new stores.	No. of supermarkets over 4,000 sq ft.	% Households owning cars.
1900	48	-	-	-
1950	244	1	-	7
1960	256	5	7	30
1970	225	19	99	50
1980	231	9	197	58
1990	291	22	289	73

Source: General Household Surveys & Social Trends

By the late 1980s the new superstores were generating two thirds of the major grocery retailing corporations annual increases in their first years of opening (Wrigley in Bromley and Thomas, 1993). Sainsburys board of directors stated that "60% of their stores are in/on the edge of town centres" (Coull, 1995) at the Vision and Reality

Conference in London. The development of Sainsbury stores can be examined within Table Two. Due to the development of the superstore concept in food retailing "grocery shopping has all but disappeared from the majority of city centres, and is now polarised between the out-of-town superstores on the one hand, and local convenience stores operating through long hours on the other" (Totterdill, 1990).

Until the mid 1980s restrictive land-use planning systems largely averted the development of peripheral shopping centres within the United Kingdom. After 1985 development was phenomenal with more than 6.6 million metres sq (71 million sq ft) of floorspace added to the United Kingdom stock between 1986-1992. Only 44 per cent of this stock was within the town-centre whilst the rest consisted of retail warehouse parks and out-of-town developments (Bromley, RDF and Thomas, CJ 1993).

During the 1970s the basic discount warehouse concept became transformed into the retail warehouse. These can be defined as "off centre stores, selling primarily bulky goods, operating from simple, single storey warehouse style buildings of 10,000 sq ft or more, with adjacent ground level customer car parking." (Howard and Davies, 1988)

The 1980s saw the emergence of retail warehouse parks resulting in a widening of the range of goods available to consumers therefore, further pressuring the town centre. Planners soon began to accept that retail warehouses were selling bulky goods such as furniture and carpets to car-owners and were probably best placed out-of-town. It was also accepted that such locations would provide suitable space for storage, display and customer parking that would be hard to find within the town centre. "Rather than converting redundant factories and warehouses to serviceable retail space, the emphasis gradually shifted towards the construction of buildings specifically designed for retailing" (O'Brien and Harris, 1991). Rising affluence and increasing disposable income has resulted in a desire to improve homes. This has fuelled the dramatic expansion of Do It Yourself (DIY) warehouses such as B&Q and Texas.

The car has continued to have an increasing importance within the retailing industry by encouraging the suburbanisation of retail activity such as suburban shopping malls (such as those within the USA and Canada), and specialised retail outlets. Such centres are in direct competition with established town centres as highlighted in the Merry Hill Shopping Centre Impact Study published in 1993. This study proved that such a large shopping development had caused severe retail decline within nearby town centres that were unable to compete such as Dudley. Newcastle-Upon-Tyne appears to be avoiding the decline experience in Dudley as noted by Bromley, RDF & Thomas, CJ (1993).

Plate One: Thurrock Shopping Centre, Essex.

In 1996 the Metro Centre opened across the river within the Gateshead Enterprise Zone. Early large-scale redevelopment and promotion of buildings within the city centre, combined with city transport improvements during the 1970s have most certainly relieved much of the pressure experienced from the new shopping development. The Mintel Report produced in 1995 stated that "United States style out-of-town centres such as Thurrock's Lakeside Shopping Centre in Essex (see plate one) already accounted for a quarter of retail sales. By the end of the century this figure will rise by a third" (Stone, 1995).

"The current scale of retail decentralisation has clearly caused a general weakening of many traditional centres." (Bromley and Thomas, 1993) It was soon realised that this damage needed to be repaired, and it was hoped a new set of reactive planning policies would relieve some of the problems created by such retail decentralisation.

Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) were developed in the early 1990s in order to set out the Governments policies on different aspects of the planning system. These new forms of guidance were aimed towards responding to a demand for a central form of planning. Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) are expected to take the content of each PPG into account when preparing their development plans.

PPG6 "Town Centres and Retail Developments" (1993) aimed to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres, ensure the availability of a wide range of shops, services and facilities to which people have easy access, maintain an efficient and innovative retail sector, and maximise the opportunities for shoppers and other town centre users to use means of transport other than the car" (DOE, 1992). When introducing the policy guidance Tony Baldry said "our Government policy is now clear in that town centres - the high street - is and should remain the anchor of our retailing system" (1993).

The policy guidance was considered to be in need of a review following an examination by the House of Commons Environment Committee. This resulted in a set of recommendations being produced for the Government on "revision/clarification of policy with a view to restraining non town centre shopping development further, and developing wide ranging measures to promote town centres involving private and public partnership" (Lucas, 1995).

The review of PPG6 by the Environment Committee resulted in thirty eight recommendations which can be condensed into seven categories:

- Clear and consistent planning guidance;
- Integration of planning and transport policy;
- A two strand approach to be adopted "Existing town and district centres need to be promoted as attractive and viable places in which to shop, and at the same time planning controls must restrict out-of-town developments, particularly retail parks and the new retail concepts such as factory outlets and warehouse clubs. The range of non-food goods sold by superstores should also be restricted" (Hayward and McGlynn, 1995);
- Strong support shown for town centre management initiatives;
- Fiscal measures in an attempt to boost the revitalisation of town centres;
- Strengthening of policy through research reinforces the need to improve ways of assessing the long term social and economic impacts of out-of-town developments;
- Public transport was mentioned, whilst highlighting the difficulties for local authorities to strategically plan to improve the provision of public transport, as public transport investments are not at present a structured part of the planning process and it re-emphasises the need to reduce public reliance upon the car." (Hayward and McGlynn, 1995).

"Town centres and shopping have now risen towards the top of the planning and political agenda" (Lucas, 1994). Rt Hon John Gummer (February 1994) summed PPG6 up by saying "it encourages new shopping developments in locations where they can reinforce town centres - in town centres or within walking distance of them." The new idea is "to re-establish urban communities and ensure that town centres are not deserted once the shops shut" (Buckley, 1995). Although PPG6 had many supporters, many were not convinced that the new policy guidance would be able to ensure economic stability within out-of-town developments and town centres particularly, whilst having to deal with the constant onslaught of new ideas and concepts of retailing.

CHAPTER THREE

Present Day Retailing and Related Planning Policy.

3.1 Food Retailing.

By the early 1990s two of the "big five" multiple food retailers had fallen behind in the development stakes. Asda and Gateway both felt the bite of the recession and allowed the remaining three groups (Sainsbury, Tesco and Argyle) to surge ahead in terms of profit raising and store expansion. However, the severity of the recession in 1992 brought the property values of food retail stores down 20% below the average United Kingdom property market price.

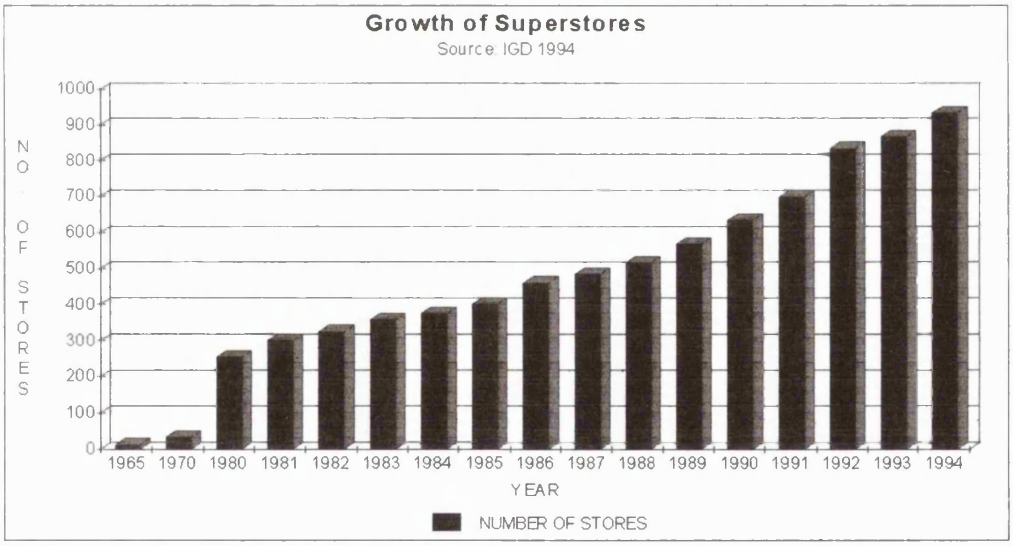

Figure One.

The growth in food sales remained fairly stable during the 1980s however, some observers were already predicting that the development policies of major store operators..."must eventually lead to a saturation of the market" (Penny & Broom, 1988). By examining figure one it can be seen that the rate of growth in superstores was extremely high and rapid, and it is hardly surprising that major food retailers have recently begun to look less favourably upon the prospect of developing more superstores. Today, the major food and grocery operators are beginning to react to market saturation worries by producing a portfolio of store formats to suit different situations.

Worries concerning the recession and market saturation resulted in many major retailer operators diversifying into other retail practices. Tesco and Sainsbury moved onto the international scene by opening stores within the United States of America in 1987. It was hoped that once the United Kingdom's potential was fulfilled in terms of development, the company could concentrate upon its expansion into the USA.

Sainsbury made the most decisive move of the two companies by purchasing full control of Shaw's supermarkets. This chain consisted of 49 stores and was located towards the north-east of the country. Although this move did not produce the greatest levels of turnover, it did contribute approximately 5% towards Sainsbury's total profits.

Many of the major retailers such as Boots, Marks and Spencer, and Sainsburys have also re-planned their stores in order to expand into other markets. Many shops now incorporate pharmacies, post offices, financial and photographic services within their store layout plans. Many of these larger retailers have also incorporated petrol stations on the forecourts of their out-of-town stores in order to fulfil the needs of their car users. Within these stores many essential goods are also sold in order to satisfy consumer needs outside normal opening hours. The further relaxation of Sunday trading and opening hour acts encouraged developments such as these and created an extended shopping week with many high streets and out-of-town centres opening throughout the week, in order to fulfil consumer demands. A number of stores also trading twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, such as "Seven-Eleven".

Continental discount food and grocery traders were attracted to the United Kingdom as we approached the Single European Market. These retailers saw opportunities in the market for companies operating with little capital investment and low margins. A major German discount store, Aldi, opened it's first English store in Birmingham during April 1990. Several existing low cost traders such as Kwik Save, Spar and Circle K became concerned that this company could inflict considerable damage upon their sales as it was renowned for low prices.

Such fears were largely unfounded and had receded by 1992 when it was realised that such discount traders were experiencing many difficulties in terms of finding suitable sites available for expansion purposes, unappealing product lines, and the reluctance of the English work-force to accept foreign working practices. By 1992 such discount food and grocery firms accounted for only 1% of the UK's total grocery sales and had not met earlier expectations of growth and profit making.

3.2 Retail Warehouses.

The early 1970s saw the initial developments of out of town retail warehouses as discussed in the previous chapter. These areas provided ideal sites for the development of DIY and garden centre style retail outlets which were considered unsuitable for town centres. During the 1980s a wide range of non-food goods were being sold from such retail warehouses including home improvement products, electrical goods and appliances, car accessories, carpets and furniture. Car-borne customers are attracted to retail warehouses due to the bulkiness of the products sold. Companies began to relocate from the town centres to congregate within retail park developments. Retail parks are now defined as "an agglomeration of at least three retail warehouses", DOE (1996). There are fears that some of these retail parks are beginning to act as new forms of shopping centres, however there is only anecdotal evidence that such developments are having an impact upon town centres.

3.3 Warehouse Clubs.

A warehouse club is defined as an "out-of-centre business specialising in bulk sales of reduced priced goods in unsophisticated buildings with large car-parks", DOE (1996). The first warehouse clubs were developed in the United States of America. In 1991 SuperValue Stores Inc. developed the pioneer food format development which traded under the name of "Club Foods".

Within the USA these developments proved to be extremely successful, however it was not until 1993 that advances upon the United Kingdom were considered. CostCo was one of the leading warehouse club stores within the USA with over 200 stores and 18 million members. The first UK CostCo store was granted planning permission in Thurrock, Essex following huge opposition from competing superstore operators. The development of the CostCo warehouse club was seen as the "end of the supermarket era" by the Sunday Times.

These companies rely upon a recipe of "no frills" outlets selling a very wide range of products, from computers to food, using the old Tesco slogan of "pile them high and sell them cheap" at a much larger scale. The operators often restrict access to businesses, organisations or classes of individual, and may agree to limit the number of lines sold.

3.4 Specialist and Brand Name Retailers.

Specialist retailers have opened up new stores to sell particular products and target specific markets. Freezer chains, such as Iceland, have done very well and have often been associated with forming the basis for the development of specialist retail centres.

Brand name retail outlets such as Disney, Warner Bros, Levis and Dr Marten have also entered the market with the aim of reducing costs by cutting out the middle-man. Such outlets have resulted in the extensive development of factory outlets in other countries such as America. Factory Outlet Centres are defined as " groups of shops, usually away from the town centre, specialising in selling seconds and end-of-line goods at discounted prices", DOE (1996). The United Kingdom has few examples of factory outlet centres however, with the introduction of new policy guidance and recent Cotswold Outlet Village decision, it seems that new developments are likely to face an uphill struggle.

3.5 Telecommunications.

The development of telecommunications, now and in the future, is likely to transform the way people shop today. Technological advances in the Internet and teleshopping will continue into the future and availability will improve, if the consumer wishes to partake in such activities. Today such technologies account for only 3% of all shopping, but this number is expected to grow to one third of all shopping activity by 2005 (Gates, B in Williams, C, 1996). Mixed use developments within town centres will probably be harder to achieve particularly if banking becomes more streamlined through further hole-in-the-wall and tele-banking developments. Today companies such as Midland Bank are branching out into telebanking under the name of First Direct. Whilst this company is attracting approximately "20,000 customers per month"

(Williams, C 1996), Direct Line is a company dealing with tele-banking and insurance; attracting approximately "22,000 customers per week" (Williams, C 1996). Home electronic shopping is currently at the experimental stage with companies such as Sainsbury branching out by collaborating with home delivery services.

The impact of technological advances upon the high street in the future is difficult to estimate at the moment, however the novelty is obviously proving popular to new customers, and may eventually reduce the need for many to visit the town centre. Technological revelations may also increase the pressures of suburbanisation and housing, with people choosing to move to areas such as Wales, the South West and North Yorkshire.

3.6 Retail Planning Policy.

"Today there are about 1,000 town centres large enough to attract national multiplier retailers, and some 400 of these centres are of interest to institutional investors" Williams, C (1996). The perception of consumer needs has changed over the years and this together with factors such as saturation of development within town centres, the recession, corporate restructuring and politics in particular, has transformed traditional retail formats. The continued health of town centres is dependent upon the ability to attract large numbers of people willing to spend their time and money within the heart of the centres.

The revised version of PPG6 entitled Town Centres and Retail Development was published in June 1996 and as expected received a mixed response. The primary changes between PPG6 July 1993 and PPG6 (Revised Version) June 1996 are listed below and will be examined in more detail within following chapters.

The revised guidance:

- shifts the focus of national policy to sustaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of town centres;
- encourages local authorities to identify a hierarchy of centres within development plans, from city centre, through town centres, district centres to local centres and village centres, where investment in new retail development can be promoted and existing provisions enhanced;
- confirms the use of the sequential approach in selecting sites within town centre, followed by edge-of-centre, district and local centres and only then, out-of-town centres, in locations that are accessible by a choice of transport modes;
- adds that the sequential approach should also be applied to town centre uses that attract a large number of people such as public and commercial offices, leisure and entertainment;
- edge-of-centre locations are redefined as those within an easy walking distance for shoppers, suggesting 200-300 metres in the case of food stores;
- recommends that if the need for new retail developments exists, it should be a factor when allocating sites in development plans. If there is no need or a lack of capacity for further developments, the need to identify further sites will be cancelled;
- requires applications of over 2,500 m sq to be supported by evidence of assessment of alternative sites, therefore placing the responsibility of assessing all potential options within the town centre onto the developers;
- clarifies the definitions of viability and vitality introducing extra measures such as customer viewpoints and behaviour, accessibility, perceptions of safety and environmental quality;

- requires that local authorities prepare town centre strategies in partnership with the private sector - these will act as material considerations when determining planning applications;
- confirms that any proposals for factory outlet centres and retail warehouse clubs should be assessed, on the same basis as other retail developments, in terms of examining the impact upon existing centres, accessibility by a choice of transport modes, the sequential test and the overall impacts upon car usage levels;
- clarifies that where there is a need for a development, which may be a major traffic generator but cannot be accommodated within a town centre or edge-of centre site, it may be wise for the development to be combined with an existing out-of-town centre if public transport links can be improved;
- requires local authorities to prepare a clear strategy for leisure uses within town centres and states that multi-screen cinemas (ie those of up to six screens) should be located within or on the edge of existing town centres. If this is not possible, the chosen site should be supported by a public transport system;
- reiterates the role of planning condition in terms of retail warehouse parks ensuring that the developments do not change their characters unacceptably over time (ie. in terms of sub division);
- confirms and strengthens the criteria for testing proposals for development, the redevelopment and extension of regional shopping centres;
- states that the key tests for new retail developments laid out within the document relate to proposed developments outside of the existing town centre;
- sets out a series of criteria for the use of determining the acceptability of development proposals, rather than the single test as originally proposed.

3.7 Land Values.

PPG6 encourages local authorities to prepare town centre strategies in partnership with the private sector, infrastructure agencies, the local community and property owners. This strategy is to be translated into the development plan at the earliest opportunity. The intention of town centre management strategies is to generate civic pride among local residents and confidence among investors and retailers.

Local authorities are urged to adopt positive approaches to mixed-use development and changes of use, the re-use of vacant sites and demands for new interim uses. (see section 6.8). In following such guidelines it is hoped that town centres will become desirable areas to reside, shop and develop in therefore, increasing land values.

Any proposals for new retail developments outside the preferred locations, should be assessed against the town centre strategy in the development plan and refused if it undermines that strategy. However, there is little encouragement for developers or retailers to move from out-of-town locations towards the town centre. It is hoped that greater restrictions placed upon out-of-town locations may realign investment in town centres. However, many commentators believe that "the reasons for a lack of development within town centres can be traced back to a lack of commercially viable directions", Williams, H (July 1996).

A component of measuring the vitality and viability within PPG6 involves the commercial yields on non-domestic properties (ie. the capital value in relation to the expected market rental). "This component demonstrates the confidence of investors in the long-term profitability of the centre from retail, office and other commercial developments", DOE (June 1996).

It is hoped that locational policies, traffic management and parking policies, and identified sites (if site assembly using compulsory purchase powers is necessary) will encourage further commercial and residential development within town centres.

Existing land interests in town centres can create problems. PPG6 states that if necessary "compulsory purchase order powers will be used to bring a particular retail site forward for development", DOE (June 1996). "This statement clearly indicates the planning authority's approach to overcoming the constraints of multiple ownership, but it provides no useful basis for determining when the site may become available, if at all", Denison, N (July 1996). "Where possible sites are available they may be in a multitude of ownerships and may require expensive / contraversial relocations of existing occupiers and/or the legal complications. The development of these sites will require a genuine partnership between the public and private sectors. Simply allocating a site in the local plan is not enough.

The Local Government Planning and Land Act (1990) states that local authorites with the consent of the Secretary of State could acquire land that:

a) "is suitable for and required in order to secure the carrying out of development, redevelopment, or improvement; or

b) is required for a purpose which it is necessary to achieve in the interests of the proper planning of an area in which the land is situated."

"Little use has been made of these powers, instead reliance has been placed on ensuring that local planning authorities make sufficient land available", Cullingworth, J B and Nadin, V (1994).

If taking a long term outlook, many retailers may operate under long leases that discourage them from closing unprofitable branches in town centres until the end of the lease period. The full impact of development may consequently take some years to become apparent. "The inflated expectations of many landowners or unrealistic aspirations of many planning authorities will prevent many possible sites coming to fruition in the short term" Williams, H (April 1995).

"In many instances in the past, sites identified for new town centre development or redevelopment have not been pursued because of problems of site assembly. Government must consider whether the compulsory purchasing powers available to local authorities are strong enough and can be used expeditiously enough, particularly since town centre schemes can often take up to ten years to complete, due to land assembly difficulties, whereas out-of-town development can often be completed within three years", RTPI (October 1995).

"With greater emphasis now being placed on development in town centres, and the prospects of securing consent for out-of-centre development apparently much reduced, it is likely that retailers will look more closely at town centre sites, or, more realistically, edge of town centre locations for new foodstores.

In conclusion, compulsory purchasing powers are being used to negate the detrimental effects that land value issues such as multiple ownership and site assembly have on the desirability of town centre development at present. It is hoped that the long term effect of commercial and residential development within town centres will lead to an increase in town centre land values.

CHAPTER FOUR

A Revised Version of PPG6 - The Main Changes.

The Secretary of State claimed that many town centres were now in a state of decline because local authorities had neglected them for so many years. "Councils are wrong to blame out-of-centre development for the decline of their town centres", Gummer, J (1995). It is the aim of the Government that Planning Policy Guidance Note Six (PPG6) will put an end to such neglect and put town centres back on the retailing map. This chapter will examine the revised guidance in more depth, particularly those areas that have been highlighted with concern by many commentators.

4.1 The Sequential Approach.

The revised version of PPG6 has reinforced the importance of the sequential approach by stating that both local authorities and developers selecting sites for development must be able to demonstrate that all potential town centre options have been thoroughly assessed prior to less central sites being considered. It is also made clear that if there is no need or capacity available for further developments, there will be no need to identify additional sites within the town.

The first preference for development is to locate it within the town centre, following an examination of available sites and buildings suitable for conversion. Before out-of-town sites are considered an examination of district/local centres linked with edge-of-centre sites should take place. The guidance does recognise that not all district centres, particularly historic and small towns, have sites available that are of a suitable size to satisfy requirements for parking, services and traffic generated from a large scale development. In such situations the guidance suggests that developments are restricted to a scale appropriate to the size of the centre.

The sequential approach has received a mixed response with exactly half the questionnaire respondents sharing the belief that it will prove to be an easy tool to use in practice (see figure two). However, half the respondents also shared concerns that the sequential approach would be a difficult tool to use in practice. One of the primary concerns shared by the majority of negative responses, related to the lack of a comprehensive and commercially based database of potential sites within local authorities. This would be a worthwhile practice for each local authority to invest in, but it is regarded to be very costly and time consuming.

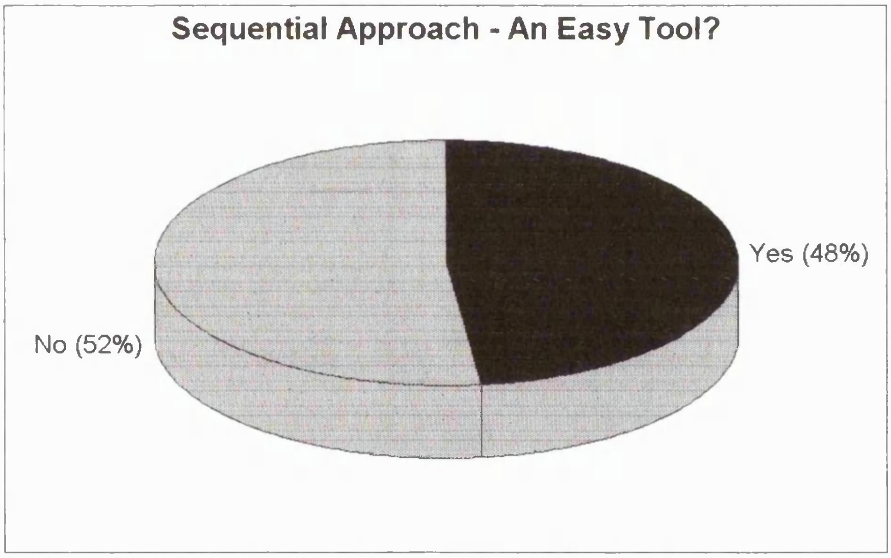

Figure Two

The approach is seen as one that suits the larger centre very well and this view was emphasised with many respondents suggesting that small or historic towns may experience difficulties if "suitable sites" are few and far between.

When assessing the suitability of different sites, various approaches may be adopted by developers and local authorities to support their particular application / case. These different approaches may pose the threat of additional problems in proving that other sites have been assessed properly.

Certain criteria used within the sequential approach also require clarification. For example, many respondents were confused as to whether "easy walking distance of 2-300 metres" to determine an edge-of-centre location should be measured from the boundaries or traditional centres. Other respondents expressed concerns about the clarity of definitions determining when a district centre becomes a town centre. Definitions, in paragraph 1.11 and the blue box at the beginning of section two, provide vague explanations that could be modified by different actors in order to support their application / case. Definitions such as these will become clearer and less ambiguous as courts start to pass judgement upon different appeal cases in the future.

Most observers believe the sequential approach will face its real test as the retail property market comes out of the recession and starts to recover.

4.2 Vitality and Viability.

The concepts of vitality and viability were introduced within the 1988 version of PPG6 as the qualities possessed by healthy towns. Vitality reflects how busy a centre is at different times whilst viability measures the ability of a centre to attract investment. The revised version of the guidance reiterates its original role as an instrument to maintain the viability and vitality of existing shopping centres including the smaller district and now, local centres. The definitions have been clarified and extra measures such as customer viewpoints and behaviour, accessibility, perceptions of safety and environmental quality have been added to improve the element of ease with which early signs of decline can be identified.

The guidance claims that the vitality and viability of a town centre is dependant on "retaining and developing a wide range of attractions and amenities; creating and maintaining an attractive environment; ensuring good accessibility to and within the centre; and attracting continuing investment in development or refurbishment of existing buildings", DOE (1996). This description provides local authorities with a broad outline to work from.

All the respondents were satisfied with the new measurements although many, particularly the local authorities themselves, were worried about the increasing workloads that monitoring elements such as this may produce. This key test was introduced within the original version of PPG6, so most local authorities should have incorporated the approach into their everyday workloads, and the revision should have little effect.

4.3 The Plan-Led Approach.

"The plan-led approach is a mixed use review designed to formulate a vision for town centres", Gummer, J (1995). The approach to retail development simply encourages plans at the regional and local level to incorporate the role of town centres. At the regional level, planning guidance is encouraged to set out a development strategy for the region identifying a network of town centres and deciding upon the role that the network can play. At the structure plan and UDP Part 1 stage the county council is encouraged to set out a hierarchy of centres through town centre, district centre to local centres and village centres. Throughout this hierarchy local planning authorities should indicate the role, function and relative importance of each centre and indicate areas where "investment in new retail and other development will be promoted and existing provision enhanced", DOE (1996). At the local plan and UDP Part 2 stage existing provisions and possible sites for development should be considered. Development plans should plan positively and assess need or market demand whilst identifying sites for development.

Throughout the plan-led approach the planning authorities are encouraged to work with the private sector and local communities when making any decisions. The private sector can provide a completely different outlook to a situation that local authorities may not have considered so they can prove to be useful however, when asked if the private sector should play a larger part in the plan-led approach, as suggested within the revised guidance, the majority of respondents believed they played a large enough part already (see figure three).

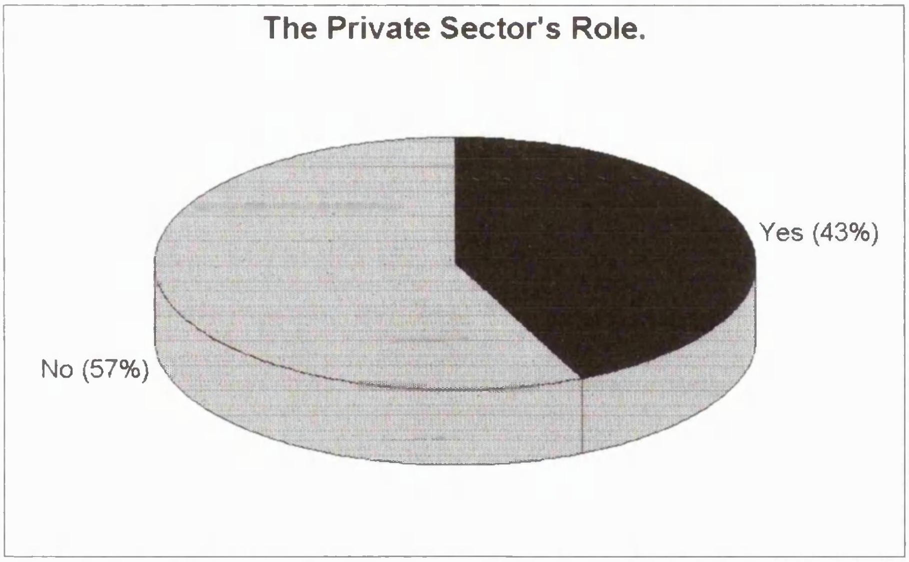

Figure Three.

The prospect of the private sector having further influence upon the planning system seems to have pleased those members of the private sector and worried those from local authorities. Other respondents suggested that the private sector could work in partnership with local authorities to determine the market viability of sites and the assembly of sites. Many respondents insinuated that members of the private sector were often more concerned with their own interests in preference to creating an overall sustainable strategy. General involvement seems easier to obtain where town centre partnership arrangements are in place. Many of the private sector respondents were of the opinion that "it is important for local authorities and the private sector to work together to encourage new development which will foster long-term confidence in the fabric of our improving established town centres", Raggett, B (1996).

4.4 Town Centre Strategies.

Town centre strategies are a new idea introduced within the revised guidance. This is a further move towards encouraging mixed use development within the town centres in order for them to act as places to visit after the shops have shut. Local authorities, private investors and infrastructure providers are encouraged to work together to design the town centre strategy which should be translated into the Local Plan at the earliest possible stage in order to provide a framework upon which to build.

The strategy itself should include the development of a comprehensive traffic management strategy and a set of policies for the provision, and management of, parking with the aim of improving the town's attractiveness and competitiveness. An urban design analysis is also encouraged to provide a framework for policies within the Local Plan, and specifying the key issues to provide guidance when preparing the development briefs.

4.5 Town Centre Management.

"Town centres require continuous improvement through an investment strategy. Private sector investment is not sufficient on its own. Without such investment, town centres will decay, reducing the value of the enormous investment already made in them by public and private sectors", Kaye, C (1989). Town centre management strategies have been established throughout the United Kingdom with the aim of saving town centres.

In order for a town centre manager to achieve anything, within a designated site, s/he must be able to assemble a team capable of attaining first class standards in the basics of housekeeping, maintenance and security, at an acceptable cost to sustain the appearance of the town centre. Secondly, the manager must be able to establish policies and standards, choose suitable staff, and allocate responsibilities amongst those staff. Communication skills are essential to enable proper control of the labour force and, backed by sound professional training and personal qualities, the manager should gain respect from all concerned. Good public relations are also essential if the town manager is to have good working relationships with the local community, local business organisations, local authorities and officers, local tenants and consumers.

The town centre management team is primarily responsible for promoting and marketing the centre to its full potential in order to attract consumers and retailers. The team is also required to advise architects of further developments within the area, paying particular attention to the needs of the tenants, the public and the management. The management team must monitor the town centre over periods of time to ensure early signs of decay or decline are taken care of. They are also required to ensure that public spaces are maintained. Within the revised version of PPG6 town centre management is considered as an important factor in restoration to put town centres back on the retailing map. Their input is considered as essential when drawing up town centre strategies (previously discussed).

The overall aim of the town centre management exercise is to increase the calibre of management and apply a strategy to the majority of town centres throughout the country. The fusion of public and private sector interests within the localities should maintain and enhance town centres "for the benefit of this and future generations", Kaye, C (1989).

4.6 Healthchecks.

The revised retail planning guidance specifically refers to the importance of local authorities using healthchecks to ensure that the early signs of dilapidation and decline can be dealt with as soon as possible. The key objectives are to record a standard set of information on the town centre covering the key indicators of health and performance; to establish trends over time in some key indicators; to create a profile of the centre summarising the key indicators in order to allow comparison with other town centres; to assess the centre in qualitative terms from the user's point of view; and to identify the principal roles of the centre.

The London Planning Advisory Committee believes that the health checks can play "a wider, more active role in strategic policy development" Warren, A (1996). LPAC have used the health checks to devise the policy classification of centres for consolidation and regeneration when setting up the revised network of London's town centres. These will provide information in the future upon which strategic advice can be given and unitary development policies can be devised for town and out-of-town centres.

A close partnership between local authorities and the private sector is required if the health checks are to be valid and present a range of viewpoints. The close partnership was achieved by LPAC and highlighted a number of different ways in which the health check data could be used.

The LPAC healthcheck has taken nearly two years to devise, but it is believed that duplicate healthchecks throughout the country should not take as long if the LPAC example is used as a base upon which to build. Three stages are involved - statistical research, attitudinal research and comparative analysis. The first stage involves collecting data upon how attractions, accessibility, amenity and action affect the town centre's vitality and viability. The second stage involves an attitudinal assessment of the town centre in terms of accessibility, amenity and attractions. This assessment is undertaken with the use of visitor surveys, independent observation or group discussions. The third stage involves comparisons of the town centre made with other similar centres. The characteristics of each centre are assessed in order to produce profiles which can then be used for comparison purposes.

Eventually it is hoped that such healthchecks will be actioned throughout the country. Today, the National Retail Planning Forum are working in association with the committee in order to streamline the present healthcheck report and improve the ease with which other local authorities can use it as a base upon which to build. The overall view is that healthchecks will prove to be very useful tools.

4.7 Leisure in Town Centres.

The revised guidance states that "local authorities, in consultation with the leisure industry, develop a clear strategy and policies for uses that support the evening economy of their town centres", DOE (1996). Local authorities should aim to improve access by co-ordinating public transport and entertainment hours, improve street lighting within the town centre, ensure safe and secure car-parking close to entertainment attractions (possibly sharing with daytime usage), and designate complementary uses such as restaurants, cafes and pubs within town centres. Prior to the leisure strategy being devised and planning permission granted, local authorities must ensure that such activities are not going to disturb nearby residents.

The guidance makes the distinction between different leisure uses stating that leisure uses such as bingo and pubs are best located within local centres. Other uses may need to attract consumers from a wider catchment area and could locate in town centres or within sites on the edge-of-towns. For example, uses such as small multi-screen cinemas and bowling planned in conjunction with adequate parking and complementary uses should be located within these sites. If these sites are not available the guidance suggested the uses are located within developments which will become highly accessible by public transport.

The introduction of these strategies within the revised guidance has been welcomed, however the sequential test has also been introduced when allocating leisure uses and many are worried that the guidance is introducing too much work for the local authorities to undertake.

CHAPTER FIVE

PPG6 - The Effect Upon Retailing.

5.1. Retail Parks.

"Like it or not Mr Gummer, retail parks are here to stay. Whatever it takes to revitalise Britain's jaded town centres, the rigid guidelines imposed by PPG6 are not going to improve matters simply because the shutters are up on out-of-town developments" Mottram, T (1996). This is an opinion shared by many developers and local authorities. The revised guidance will undoubtedly make it more difficult to secure planning permission for out-of-centre non-food retail schemes. Developers must now pass a number of rigorous tests, including demonstrations to emphasise that other suitable sites are not available, the development will not harm existing town and local centres, and that a provision of accessible public of transport will be made available.

Today the greatest demand for space within retail parks is originating from high street comparison retailers such as Argos, Mothercare and Burtons. These companies are looking towards relocating within sub-divisions of refurbished units. PPG6 accepts that retail parks and factory outlet centres cannot easily be accommodated within town centres and that their impact upon existing centres will be determined by the range of goods sold. It is for these reasons that local authorities are encouraged to impose conditions in order to restrict the type of goods sold (ie. limiting to bulky and electrical goods) in the hope that sub-division of units into smaller shops can be prevented. There is also a fear that unsuccessful DIY warehouses developing within the saturated market may be converted into stores selling higher-order goods such as clothes, computers or even food in an attempt to achieve high returns. Developments such as these can be avoided if conditions are applied to retail warehouses by local authorities.

"When out-of-town retail parks were conceived they offered retailing with bulk storage at a small premium over storage space. Today, however, overall rents on parks are not dissimilar to those in the High Street and greatly exceed warehouse rents" Hai, N in Mottram, T (1996). Many operators now share the opinion that the "small is beautiful" concept is likely to come into fruition in the near future with smaller units becoming more desirable in an attempt towards reducing capital costs. The Institutional Property Forecasting Services (IFPS) produced a report which found that the majority of warehousing retailers are opting to downsize their operations. This may eventually enable them to transfer their operations towards town centres if such a move is viable. The chairman of the British Urban Regeneration Association, John Fenner, believes retail parks will have an important part to play within town centres in the future. He has realised the potential of back land that could be used to accommodate arcades or larger units not dissimilar to those found within retail parks as we know them today. The movement of retail warehouses and factory outlet businesses could even help to revitalise declining shopping centres in the future by attracting consumers from a wider catchment area.

The key element to the success of such developments within town centres will obviously be the levels of parking provision. The shopping population have become accustomed to being able to shop for bulky goods using their car, so the town centre will have to provide facilities that are capable of competing with those found within out-of-town centres. "Town centres are the natural social centre and, all other things being equal, people would prefer to spend their time there", Hai, N in Mottram, T (1996). Many observers share the view that those town centres with the ability to attract factory outlet retailers and retail warehouse, should be encouraged to do so in order to adjourn their movement towards other countries. The hope of PPG6 is that restrictions placed upon out-of-town centres will realign investment within the town centres, but this is unlikely to occur whilst the option to move to other countries is still viable.

Observers have expressed concern that technology could spell trouble within retail parks. People may opt to choose products, such as washing machines, using technological sources such as the television or the Internet in preference to spending a Saturday morning in a retail warehouse. "This form of shopping could take 10-25% of the market in five years and, over a twenty five year period, who knows? " Hai, N in Mottram, T (1996). Although this is a very pessimistic viewpoint to possess, technological advances are likely to be an important element featuring in the future of all retail developments including retail parks.

Graham Cartledge believes that the new Government policy has placed a very dark cloud over the future of retail parks, but has under-estimated the power of the consumer. He shares the popular view that following ten years of luxury one-stop shopping in a pleasing environment with easy parking, "the average shopper will find it difficult to understand how a town centre compromise could possibly act as an improvement to their lifestyle", Cartledge, G in Mottram, T (1996).

5.2 Regional Shopping Centres.

Further out-of-town shopping centre developments are unlikely to be looked upon favourably following the recognition within the revised guidance that such developments can severely harm existing town or local centres within the locality. For this reason built shopping centres are seen as valuable real estate. For example, the Metro Centre can currently be purchased for about £350 million.

The revised version of PPG6 was greeted with a "resounding raspberry" from shadow planning minister, Keith Vaz (1996) who voiced particular concern about "the hundreds of extant planning permissions for out-of-town development". This concern was shared by the majority of questionnaire respondents, particularly those within the private sector. The revised guidance has comprehensively dealt with future major out-of-town retail developments and ignored the existence of extant planning permissions. The number of shopping centre developments in the pipeline have remained fairly stable over the past four years and returned to levels last seen prior to the consumer boom-led upturn in development activity (see figure four). However, construction levels are still very unstable and low due to the sceptical nature of developers and retailers. Hillier Parker estimate that "all major outstanding consents will be utilised prior to the end of the decade...and out-of-town shopping centre development activity will effectively cease following utilisation of outstanding consents", (November 1995). It is highly unlikely that any planning consents will be renewed following the revision of PPG6 so the majority of retailers are likely to act quickly and begin development if they perceive the market to be in a suitable condition.

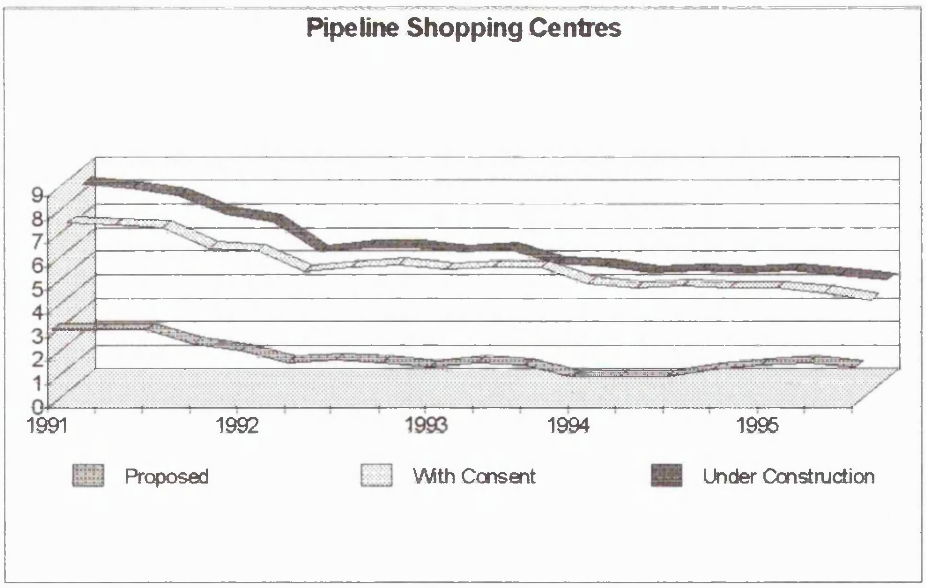

Figure Four

Source: Hillier Parker, November 1995.

Although a great deal of concern has been shed relating to this matter, out-of-town shopping centres, including pipeline schemes, still account for less than 2% of the total shopping space within Great Britain according to Hillier Parker. If the extant planning permissions are used up by the end of the century and the revised retail guidance succeeds in severely restricting further out-of-town development, town centres should soon benefit from an upturn in development proposals. Meanwhile, it seems that the local authorities of areas facing forthcoming regional shopping centre developments, must attempt to increase the attractiveness of the nearby town centres, in order to restrict the impact such developments will have.

5.3 Food Retailing.

The revised guidance attempts to encourage food retailers to act as anchor stores within town centres. It takes into account the fact that many smaller or historic towns may not be able to provide a suitable site for such a development. In these circumstances the guidance suggests that food retailers develop their stores within an edge of town site within easy walking distance from the town centre. Easy walking distance is to be determined by taking into account the barriers of topography, the attractiveness of town centres, and the attractiveness of the journey to and from the town centre.

Tescos (1995) suggested that there are often "competing demands for sites in town centres or edge-of-centre locations for comparison shopping, leisure activities, offices and health and education uses. In general, these are uses for which access by car is not essential and where a shift to public transport may well be realistic and practical". Statements such as these are encouraging to the Government's overall cause although major retailing operators approach food retailing with the aim to "innovate and to be guided by consumer requirements", Tescos (1995). The major retailers will, therefore continue to develop stores that the consumer requires rather than the Government.

Surely the Government needs to educate the consumers in an attempt to reverse the trends of out-of-town shopping.

Tesco believes that some areas may still benefit from the development of an out-of-centre supermarket and out-of-centre proposals should not be rejected, in favour of town or edge of centre sites, without a careful examination of the realism of alternative proposals. These views were further fuelled following the publication of studies commissioned from the RPS Group and by the Trip Rate Information Computer System (TRICS) for Safeway. These studies "demonstrated that the development of additional foodstores frequently leads to less travel by car, owing to reductions in the journey length for weekly or fortnightly bulk food shopping trips", Tescos (1995).

PPG6 does go some way towards attracting food retailers back to town centres although whether it will be able to attract food shoppers back to the town centre remains to be seen.

5.4 Discount Retail Stores.

The revised retailing guidance states that even if discount stores are only selling a limited range of goods, they can still have a "significant impact" upon town centres. Denison, N (1996) mentioned that he had never seen any evidence to support this statement. The guidance also encourages assessments of vitality and viability of shopping in the town centre to be undertaken before planning permission is granted for a discount retail store. Discount stores require smaller development sites than the larger mainstream operators. In paragraph 4.13 the guidance states that assessments of vitality and viability of shopping "may occasionally be necessary for smaller developments, such as those that are likely to have a large impact on a market town or district centre", DOE (1996). Although this statement is probably directed towards the larger discount food retailers such as Aldi and Netto, the lack of definition results in the statements contradicting each other as the smaller discount retail stores are highly unlikely to have a great deal of impact upon other centres as Denison, N (1996) suggested.

Surely if limited line discounters are restricted, the Government will in effect be restricting commercial interests and preventing innovation - doing exactly the things that the guidance states planning should not do.

Discount retail stores require less land than the larger retail operators, local planning authorities will be able to point to sites that meet the minimum land requirements, particularly if the operator is willing to forego parking provisions. It is for this reason that many agree with Denison, N (1996) when he said "the small retail outlet is likely to be severely curtailed by the revised PPG6".

5.5 Non-Food Retailing.

The non-food comparison remains the strength of the town centre today and as it is less susceptible to change and resulting movements, this trend is likely to remain so in the future. However, there have been examples throughout the United Kingdom of non-food retailing stores attempting to move into out-of-town centres in an attempt to reap the same rewards as food retailers. Companies such as Burtons, Argos and Mothercare have all attempted to relocate in refurbished sub-units within retail parks.. The revised retail guidance should restrict such movement if local authorities are able to implement the conditions of goods sold at an early stage as discussed within paragraph 5.1.

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warehouse. It is for this reason that many believe bulky goods retailing will be a major development on the Internet in the very near future probably resulting in the decline of retail warehouses that have located within out-of-town areas at a later date.

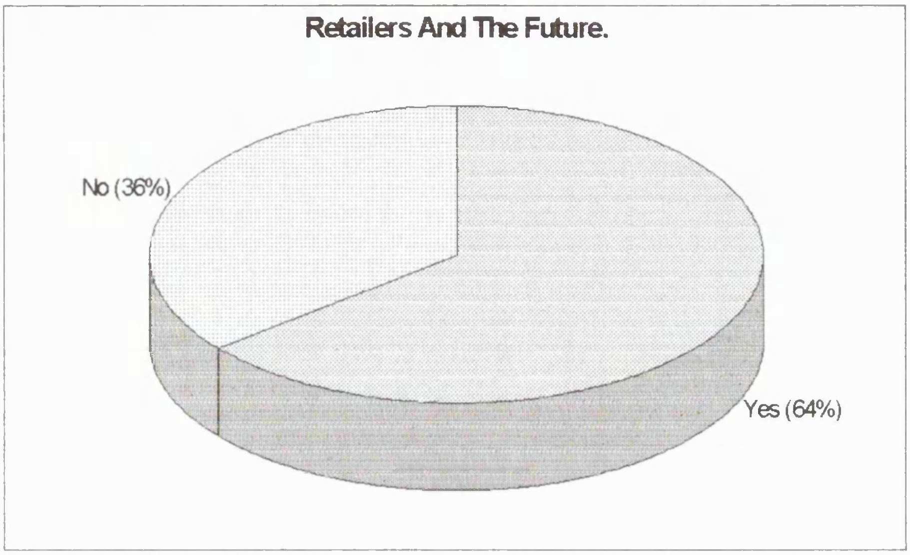

Figure Five.

The majority of respondents believed that retailers have the ability to look forward and would be able to adapt as new technologies take-over the retail market (see figure five). However, many believe that the impact of these new technologies could be greater than anyone expects ... "the idea that retail activity will always be carried out in a shop in a shopping centre may soon be a thing of the past" Williams, C (1996). Surely the revised retail guidance should have taken developments such as this into account.

CHAPTER SIX.

PPG6 Within Town Centres.

"The Secretary of State has moved the debate from an over-emphasis on retailing and reminded us of the many other uses and benefits of our centres", Gwilliam, M in Mottram, T (1996). This chapter will examine those other "uses and benefits" whilst also examining the provision of services within town centres of the future.

6.1 Car-Parking Provisions.

Today, the car has become a mechanism which can often determine the way towns are planned. Car-Parking must be provided within town centres if they are to be attractive or competitive in terms of alluring developers and consumers. It is primarily the responsibility of PPG13 "Transport" to organise car-parking through the implementation of the maximum car parking provision tool. PPG6 simply builds upon this guidance emphasising the importance of the town centre concept. Car-parking strategies are to be coherent and agreed at the regional planning level if possible, under the revised guidance. Such strategies are seen as essential by the majority of questionnaire respondents if mixed use development is to be achieved within town centres. The guidance suggests that car parking should be designed within town centres to serve the centre as a whole rather than dedicating parking to individual developments. Local authorities are encouraged to promote public-private partnerships to develop strategies which incorporate the provision and management of car-parks.

Car parking for the consumer is critical within town centres and the majority of multi-storey car-parks must be improved. The guidance goes on to say that "pedestrian access, security, lighting, signing and publicity, management and maintenance should be improved", DOE (1996). Pricing policies should also be implemented to increase the attractiveness of the town centre. Many of the questionnaire respondents suggested that all the town centre tenants could help to subsidise the prices of car-parking.

Local authorities, in co-operation with the private sector, are advised to discourage long-term parking for commuters within the revised guidance giving priority to short-term visitors to the town centre such as shoppers. The revised guidance states that local planning authorities should encourage town centre or edge of centre supermarket car-parks to serve a dual purpose (paragraph 3.16). Within paragraph 1.12 developers are encouraged to be flexible and realistic about the amount of car-parking they require. It would seem that retailers locating within the town centre will have to be willing to accept car-parking provisions that are less than they would prefer due to the restrictions of available sites.

Office development is one area that has diminished within town centres during the last few decades preferring to locate within out-of-town areas or business parks (see section 7.8). Companies such as Legal and General have moved towards out-of-town sites and referred to a lack of car-parking as a prime factor deterring town centre development. Obviously developments such as offices require parking provisions to be readily available to their staff.

When the questionnaire respondents were asked if the revised guidance would bring offices closer to fulfilling their parking demands within town centres, the majority believed that little would change (see figure six).

Although PPG6 goes some way towards encouraging further provisions of office car-parking to be made, some people still require a great deal of convincing. For example, Pyrke, A (1996) believes that "in the longer term it may become more attractive to refurbish 1960s office blocks rather than redevelop, so as to retain the higher levels of parking as an added attraction to potential occupiers".

It is the responsibility of local authorities to allocate land for the means of car-parking, but this will be difficult to ensure within town centres, particularly those that are small or historically based. Both PPG6 and PPG13 encourage local authorities to use the sites available for car-parking to their maximum potential. On and off-street parking is to be integrated with public and private parking when developing the car-parking strategy with the aim of fulfilling demand and attracting consumers back to the town centre.

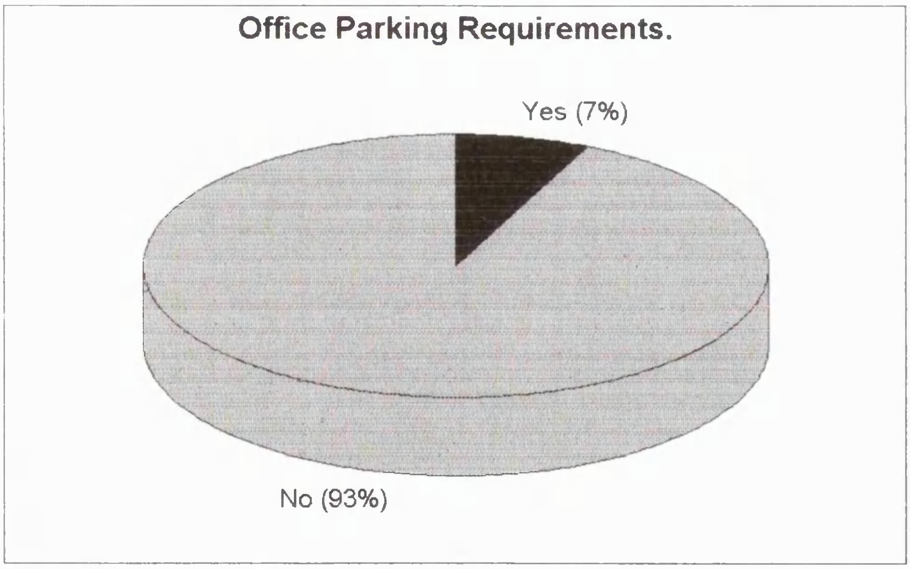

Figure Six.

6.2 Town Centre Management.

Town Centre Management was discussed in more depth within chapter four (4.5). This section will concentrate upon an examination of the future of town centre management following the publication of the revised PPG6.

A high quality environment is seen as an essential factor determining development within town centres by Boots. It must be frustrating to invest money within the stores when the environment within the town centre itself is not sufficient to attract and retain customers. The director of property for Boots the Chemist believes that "too many high streets through lack of attention to detail, particularly in cleaning schedules, the efficient removal of rubbish and litter and a rapid response to graffiti and flyposting, create an atmosphere of apathy which is extremely contagious ... Many of these problems can be tackled by more demanding management of service resources and a greater determination to deliver higher standards", Joyce, P (1995).

With the publication of the draft version of PPG6 in July 1995 came cries requesting further advice on town centre management. The revised guidance has answered many of these pleas by developing a more indepth outline of town centre management within Annex C. The contribution that should be made by a manager have been increased from four areas to eight within the new PPG6. A town centre manager should now contribute to: - "more effective achievement of local plan objectives;

- monitoring retail, leisure and other trends and the town centre's competitive position;
- improved identification and use of resources;

ALSO

- preparing a town centre strategy;
- better promotion of the town centre;
- co-ordination of cleaning, maintenance and security; and
- more effective use and management of car parks, including safety and security issues", DOE (1996).

The Government's eagerness to incorporate leisure activities within town centre developments is evident within the town centre management annex too. "Good town centre management" will now bring together leisure operators in addition to those agencies mentioned within the draft guidance. Leisure activities have also been added to the initiatives that town centre management strategies could incorporate.

Town centre managers are also encouraged to develop an entertainment strategy for their centre. This would involve identifying the types of entertainment desired within the area then using this information to develop a programme over the trading year which would be monitored and evaluated to ensure it is achieving its objectives. Many town centre managers when questioned suggested this as a component that could be employed to make their centres more attractive although many expressed the concern that they did not have the experience or knowledge to develop or implement such a strategy. Perhaps training could be given to town centre managers to enable them to experiment with these strategies.

When asked if town centre management received enough attention within the revised guidance the majority of respondents believed it had (see figure seven).

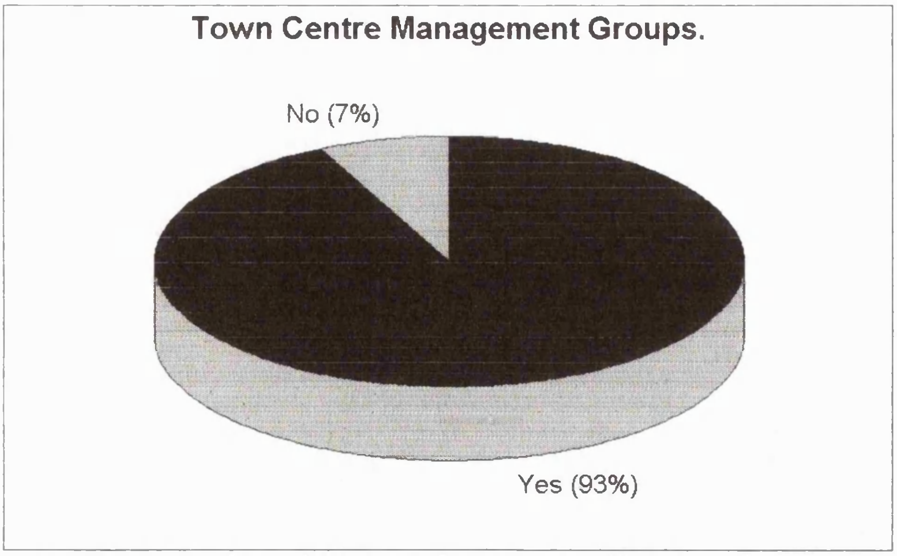

Figure Seven.

Some respondents emphasised the need for originality within each town centre and said that town centre managers must ensure that they focus upon the individual characteristics of the town centre and then introduce strategies to build upon these individual features eg historic or environmental assets.

Town centre management is seen as crucial in management of change. "The fusion of public and private sector interests that TCMs represent is vital in these dynamic times", Joyce, P (1995). With the publication of the revised guidance has come a strong desire to achieve such changes within town centres restoring their reputations as the leading retailing centres.

The increased emphasis placed upon the importance of town centre management can only aid its course, but the guidance still expects town centre members to support the funding of such strategies. In times of change, such as those experienced currently, retailers are more concerned with surviving rather than investing in town centre management. Many questionnaire respondents were of the opinion that if it is to be effective, town centre management will require further funding and resources in the future. As Joyce, P (1995) said "the funding issue has dominated the evolution of town centre management in Britain. A resolution of this problem is now vitally important. We cannot continue to see the concept dependent on the contributions from a limited number of organisations and companies".

6.3 Housing.

John Gummer expressed the wish to bring homes back to the town centres and encourage mixed use prior to the publication of the revised version of PPG6. The development of new housing is a factor high on the Government's agenda with four million new homes needed to fulfil demand in the next twenty years. Half of these new developments are to be developed upon "brown field" sites, and a "high proportion" of the remaining are to be developed within town centres (Gummer, J 1995). The revised guidance briefly mentions the requirements for new residential developments within paragraphs devoted to encouraging mixed use development. (paragraphs 2.13 - 2.17) . Many respondents believe that more attention should have been paid to the development of more housing in or near the town centre, particularly if government targets are to met.

The Civic Trust believes that residential uses, built for quality, can meet changing population needs and can make better use of vacant property and underused sites. Sites are often difficult to find within town centres and many will require further investment if they are to be viable for development purposes. Local authorities involved with the provision of housing within their town centres must ensure that the quality remains as high as possible. Mixed use development is encouraged with the aim of creating a safer more secure environment during day and night. Jane Dickman (1996) wondered if those living above Manchester's Arndale Centre would agree that such an environment could be created.

6.4 Urban Design.

"Urban design holds the key to reversing the decline of town centres", Hall, P (1995). The revised guidance tends to agree with this statement and highlights urban design as a factor crucial in the revitalisation and survival of town centres. The guidance encourages local planning authorities to undertake an urban design analysis, as part of the town strategy, to provide a framework for policies within the development plan and to guide the preparation of development briefs for particular sites. PPG1 is introduced as a tool for local authorities to learn how to approach design matters in general.

The importance of retail developments mixing in with their surroundings has proved important within historic towns particularly such as Lymington, in the New Forest and Brighton, in East Sussex. Its importance is duplicated within the revised guidance as it suggests that designs where appropriate, "develop and enhance" the town's local character.

Policies and guidance relating to shop front design should be developed in consultation with retailers, developers and the local community. Any such redevelopment should once again reflect the character of the local area, including existing street frontages.

Car-Parks are developments that do not fit into existing townscapes within many town centres and are, therefore highlighted within PPG6. The guidance recommends that these developments require design initiatives to facilitate changes that may help to disguise their existence.

The provision of well designed street furniture and signs is encouraged with an emphasis placed upon the design and co-ordination. The local planning authorities must ensure the amount, design, siting and maintenance of paving, signs and street furniture is documented within the environment section of their town centre strategy.

Out-of-town developments are highlighted within this section as sites that must attempt to adopt the surrounding local characteristics and incorporate recycling facilities to reduce the need to make specific trips.

Although quite a large amount of attention has been paid to urban design within the revised guidance there are still observers that may feel the guidance is of little use... "the concept of urban design should not be taken in its old-fashioned sense - producing nice drawings to pin on the wall. Instead, it should reconcile the huge constraints, both technical and property-based, which are placed on the centres", Hall, P (1995).

6.5 Leisure Activities and Provisions.

It is possible to achieve a combination of retail and leisure activities within both established and new shopping centres. The opportunities are obviously considerably greater within the new centres although a mixture of food, drink and musical entertainment can be achieved within the more traditional centres.

The revised guidance advises the local planning authorities of medium - sized and larger towns to develop a leisure based strategy. The integration of public transport, car-parking, street lighting and complementary entertainment uses, such as pubs and restaurants, should ensure that most town centres remain lively after the shops have closed at night.

Town Centre Management Groups are encouraged to introduce leisure related initiatives within their entertainment strategy (see section 6.5) with the aim of further restoring the attractiveness and competitiveness of the town centre throughout the day.

A large majority of the questionnaire respondents believed that a suitable level of attention had been paid to leisure activities and provisions within town centres (see figure eight).

However, a number of respondents mentioned that most out-of-town centres could provide perfect settings for leisure activities to be located. Many felt that the revised guidance had failed to recognise the potential hidden within many out-of-town centres.

The guidance did realise the problems related to locating large leisure developments, such as multi-screen cinemas within town centres, and suggested that these and similar developments are developed as close to the town centre as possible, in conjunction with parking and complementary uses.

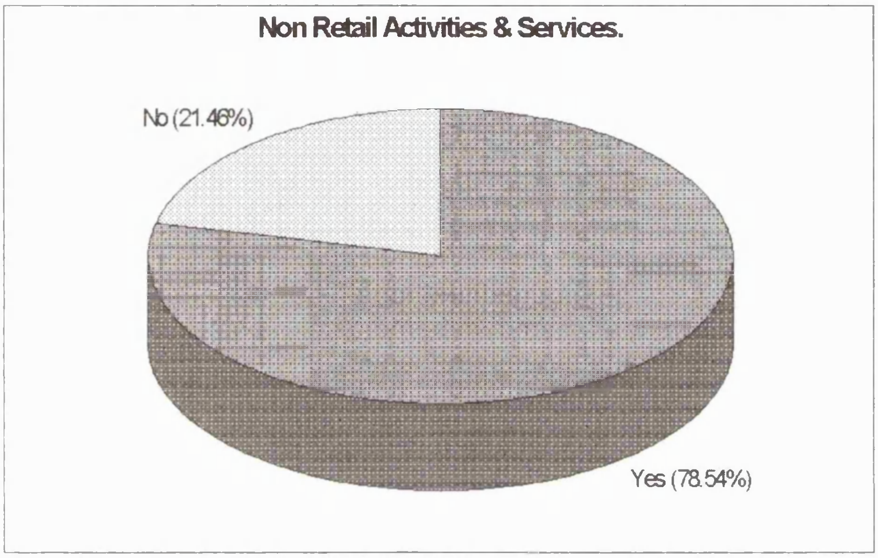

Figure Eight.

Many suggestions were put forward within the questionnaire responses of ways in which leisure and retail could be combined within the town centre. These included the introduction of food courts (covered and uncovered reflecting the time of season), ice rinks, informal markets, street theatre, live music, street performers (ie jugglers, buskers) and festival shopping such as that experienced within Covent Garden, London.

The Mall of America (Bloomington, Minneapolis) provides a fantastic example of how larger scale leisure and retail developments have been successfully combined. However, this development has its critics who believe not everyone wants leisure and retail activities to be mixed together!!

Newby, P in Bromley, RDF and Thomas, CJ made the point of noting that "not every shopping environment can, or should, be converted to accommodate leisure shopping. Much of our shopping behaviour will continue to be functional".

6.6 Accessibility.

"Accessibility remains one of the key features for the future viability and vitality of town centre retailing. Current forecasts suggest that, if left unchecked, traffic growth could rise by up to 143 per cent by 2025", Williams, C (1996).

Plans to limit drastically vehicular access to British city centres were unveiled by the European Community in August entitled "Cities without cars". Such schemes, together with the Traffic Calming Act of 1992 and possible road-pricing schemes, to reduce the levels of city centre traffic may simply constrain the use of cars within city centres and worsen the problems already being experienced. The more affluent members of the community will continue to use their car for shopping purposes and therefore, probably move towards using out-of-town centres. Meanwhile town centres will continue to decline with the poorer and less mobile members of the community continuing to shop there. Numerous US downtown areas have demonstrated this trend including Hartford, New York and Buffalo.

"It's the motor car out of its place that is wrong, not the motor car per se", Gummer J (1995). It is a fact that many shoppers wish to use the car for a variety of different reasons, and this has meant that local authorities have to provide good car parking facilities. The revised guidance supports this statement and suggests that the local authorities of town centres having to compete with out-of-town centres, develop a traffic management strategy and develop good quality car-parking. The guidance realises that town centres providing for the car-bourne consumer can face problems relating to congestion, pollution and parking. It goes on to suggest that the key issues of accessibility are:

- "to manage both access by car and parking as part of an overall strategy for the centre; and
- to promote improvement in the quality and convenience of less environmentally-harmful means of transport so that they provide a realistic alternative to the car; and
- to meet the access and mobility needs of disabled people", DOE (1996).

The advise provided within the revised guidance is much more succinct than that provided within the previous consultation draft, although it does tend to assume local authorities have the available resources needed to develop strategies and introduce new alternatives.

Accessibility has managed to gain a high profile within the assessments undertaken for new retail developments. New developments should be highly accessible by all consumers (including disadvantaged group members - see section 6.7) from the town centre by a range of transport means including the bicycle, on foot and by public transport. The guidance also suggests that where it is appropriate the developer contributes to improvements in public transport and pedestrianised access to the site.

New vehicular technologies are constantly being developed in the hope that shoppers will find it easier to carry out their weekly food shop for example, within the town centres again. For example, buses within Brighton are now designed with a ramp that reaches the kerb in order to allow easy access for less able shoppers and those with buggies or large loads. Meanwhile town centres such as Brighton are integrating the transport and environment strategies to develop park-and-ride schemes, encourage further public transport provisions, including the introduction of modern tram and metro systems for example. In order to improve the attractiveness and reduce the environmental effects of the car within town centres, pedestrianised areas have also been appearing throughout many United Kingdom centres.

However, many observers are not convinced that new technologies, or developments, will change anything. Jane Dickman (1996) believes that "public transport just doesn't cater for people with large loads, or indeed two full shopping bags, a pram and children." Out-of-town centres are all fully equipped in terms of the number of taxi bays and free-phones provided for their consumers. Although consumers without cars may use public transport to travel to out-of-town centres, the majority will travel home with their shopping in a taxi.

6.7 Disadvantaged Groups.

The terminology and definition of a "disadvantaged group" is open to a great deal of debate. However, Westlake, T in Bromley, RDF & Thomas, CJ (1993) included "low-income families, women, ethnic minorities, the elderly and the disabled, all of whom share the common characteristic of low mobility" within the category of disadvantaged.

The revised guidance encourages local authorities and town centre management groups to consider the needs of disadvantaged groups when devising strategies relating to design, accessibility, the location of retailing units particularly those providing convenience shopping, and the provision of public transport in particular. However, disadvantaged groups have not been accounted for in terms of housing provisions within the town centre. Those with mobility difficulties could benefit from being situated within the town centre, therefore reducing the need to travel.

Surely the guidance makes a mistake when discouraging the further development of discount stores. Limited line discount stores could prove advantageous to some members of the disadvantaged groups, particularly low-income families.

The encouragement of mixed use development (see section 6.8), within town centres, should prove advantageous to disadvantaged groups in terms of reducing the need to travel, although the guidance does not mention disadvantaged groups within this section when one would have thought it essential and very beneficial.

"The retail revolution has brought material advantage to most of the population through greater choice, comfort and cheapness of shopping", Westlake, T in Bromley, RDF and Thomas, CJ (1993). Many members of disadvantaged groups have not been able to benefit from many of these changes and this will probably not change in the future with the technological revolution, unless they are blessed with high levels of income. Bromley and Thomas believed that planning for disadvantaged groups could benefit the community as a whole, as initiatives may "provide indirect savings to the taxpayer by enabling disabled and elderly people to live independent lives", (Bowlby 1985 in Bromley, RDF and Thomas, CJ, 1993).

6.8 Mixed Use Developments.

The revised guidance has placed yet further emphasis upon the importance of achieving mixed use development within town centres. Local authorities are encouraged to identify suitable areas and sites, within or near the town centres, in which a mixture of small businesses, offices or housing could be developed. Many respondents suggested Horsham as a perfect example where a local authority had taken a proactive planning approach to town centre retailing and encouraged mixed use development successfully.

In Horsham a covered enclosure has been developed which houses a wide number of shops. However, within the walkway, a number of other uses have been developed ranging from office developments to housing (see plate two). The integration and wide mix of uses is clearly visible throughout the town centre with offices housing companies such as Inline KPG (an executive IT recruitment company), located above retail outlets such as MVC and MacDonalds.

Plate Two: Horsham Town Centre, West Sussex.

Many town centres throughout the United Kingdom have expressed concerns about the constant movement of commercial - professional office formats away from town centres towards business parks. Office functions are traditionally linked to the city centre, but are now being attracted towards business parks that are developed in order to provide cheaper office rents, plentiful parking and designed to meet up-to-date specific needs of offices. With these provisions being made available it is hardly surprising that more and more offices are choosing to move away from the town centre.

Gwyn Rowley believes "this trend will in turn reduce the demand for goods and services provided for office workers within the CBD", Bromley RDF and Thomas, CJ (1993).

"Trends in the retail industry and factors affecting shoppers suggest that future patterns will be much more mixed in terms of types of facilities and their location" Williams, C (1996).

6.9 Out-Of-Town Centres.

Out-of-town sites were so appealing as they were easy to develop with few of the restrictions often found within town centres in existence such as residents, restrictions on car-parking provisions, and listed buildings or conservation sites. During the development boom many companies were moving their concentration away from town centres towards out-of-centre sites as discussed within the first two chapters. Out-of-town centres were regarded as sites that could provide a wider range of shopping opportunities with a strong appeal to the car-bourne user. Unfortunately decentralisation has reduced the competitive position of many existing centres resulting in overall town centre decline in many places. However, many town centres have recognised the threat posed by out-of-town centres and realised that in order to compete refurbishment and revitalisation of many traditional town centres has taken place.

Out-of-town centres have generated a large number of long car journeys, however they have often deflected traffic from town centres and contained or reduced the levels of congestion in other centres. Many respondents and observers have noticed that the revised guidance has not mentioned the distinctive roles that out-of-town centres <u>and</u>

town centres provide in terms of the benefits and opportunities. The benefits of competition in particular, relating to lower prices and increased choice were mentioned within paragraph 32 of the superseded guidance, but have largely been ignored by the revised guidance as Denison, N (1996) suggested.

When speaking to the Rt Hon John Gummer at the Vision and Reality Conference in London (1995), I asked him if he believed out-of-town centres would survive following the revision of PPG6. He replied by saying that "out-of-town shopping was not intrinsically bad, but for a long time had been the only answer".

There is a need to make development in the city centre more available and ensure that town centres are vibrant. In the United States out-of-town centres have not been respected let alone the town centres and this a situation that must be avoided within this country!" This belief was shared by the majority of respondents when they were asked if they thought out-of-town centres would survive following the publication of the revised guidance.

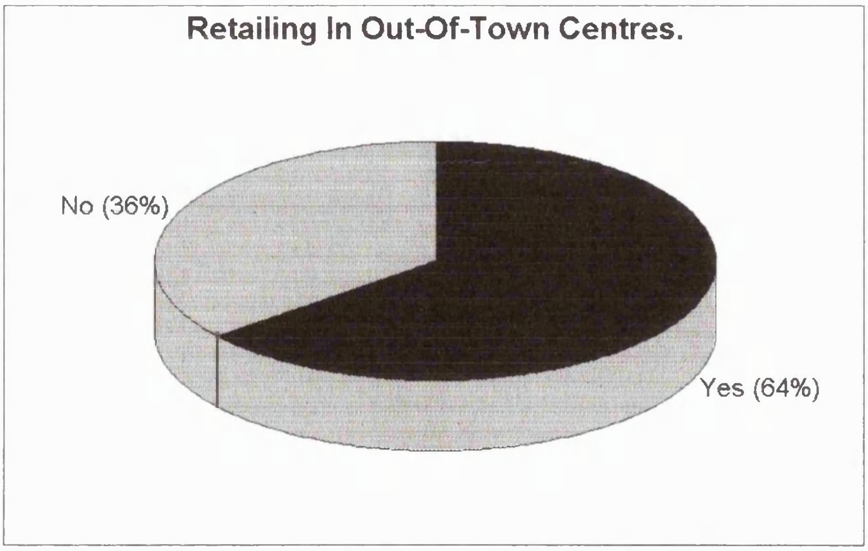

Figure Nine.

When examining figure nine it can be seen that more than half the respondents believed that out-of-town centre would survive and the revised guidance may be able to set a balance between the two centres.

The guidance offers no encouragement for businesses within out-of-town centres to compete or move. It seems likely that businesses situated in such areas will survive in the short-term. However, in the long term the advent of electronic shopping is likely to hit those traders, that have located within out-of-town centres to sell bulky goods, harder than those situated within town centres as the director of Arrowcroft, Daniel Carter, suggested at the Vision and Reality Conference (November 1995).

"Out-of-town retailing provides convenience for the more affluent ... out-of-town is barred to almost 30 per cent of the population who have no car. It is the less mobile and disadvantaged groups that cannot enjoy the benefits of these new developments", Joyce, P (1995).

The revised guidance will make further development within out-of-town centres extremely difficult. Ian Coull, the Board Director for J Sainsbury Plc, agreed that out-of-town development would come to an end so long as local authorities produce local plans that are able to suggest available town centre sites for development. Many of my questionnaire respondents agreed with this statement in general, although some mentioned that many town centre sites would require a great deal of investment if they are to seem viable for development purposes. The guidance does not provide further funds in order for this investment to take place. Local authorities are therefore reliant upon contributions from the major concerns within the town centres.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PPG6 as a Retail Mechanism.

This research prompted an indepth examination of the revised retail planning guidance (PPG6) and in the process has discovered elements which may determine whether the guidance succeeds or fails in the future. This chapter will highlight those areas and suggest how, if necessary, improvements could be made in the future.

7.1 Sustaining and Enhancing Town Centres.

Brundtland defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". The post Rio pursuit of a more sustainable pattern of development. Within the UK's Environment White Paper, 1990 the definition of sustainable development was reiterated as " living on the earth's income rather than eroding its capital. It means keeping the consumption of renewable resources within the limits of their replenishment. It means handing down to successive generations not only man-made wealth, but also natural wealth, such as clean and adequate water supplies, good arable land, a wealth of wildlife, and ample forests". The UK's strategy for sustainable development emphasised the importance of making good use of natural resources. It is, therefore, important to develop land carefully and take advantage of derelict or contaminated areas."The better the use we make of urban land, the less pressure there will be on the countryside and the greater the direct benefits in towns and cities", DOE (September 1990). In Britain this has initiated a shift in land use and transport policy, with particular relevance to shopping, as efforts are made to decrease car journeys and consequent emissions.

Agenda 21 published in 1994 by the Department of the Environment emphasised the need for all sectors of society to "participate in the formation of effective national strategies for sustainable development". It is desirable to increase people's awareness of the part they can play personally.

The revised version of PPG13 on transport followed in the footsteps of Agenda 21 and set out the government's approach towards sustainable development in detail. It was to be achieved by reducing the growth in the length and the number of motorised journeys, encouraging alternative means of transport and reducing the public reliance on the private car.

This new train of thought has transpired throughout PPG6 and is particularly apparent with references relating to reducing the need to travel and reliance on the private car. Such approaches have been welcomed by the majority of observers with a view towards encouraging sustainability. "It is probable that retail policy could make the largest single contribution to a more sustainable lifestyle", RTPI (October 1995). This statement may seem slightly unlikely in early stages following the publication of PPG6, however in the future these views may change.

The prime objective of PPG6 is to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres. PPG6 (Draft Version 1995) aims to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres; ensure the availability of a wide range of shops, services and facilities to which people have easy access; maintain an efficient and innovative retail sector; and maximise the opportunities for shoppers and other town centre users to use means of transport other than the car", DOE (1992). In July 1993 Tony Baldry, introducing the first PPG6 said "our Government policy is now clear in that town centres - the high street - is and should remain the anchor of our retailing system". The new idea is "to re-establish urban communities and ensure that town centres are not deserted once the shops shut", Buckley, N (1995).

This is to be achieved through the implementation of the plan-led and sequential approaches, together with related strategies. One type of development to be encouraged within the town centre is residential housing. This type of development would not only reduce the need to travel, but it would also help to fulfil the high levels of expected demand for housing in the future. Such demand for housing is thought to be derived due to changing social stances (particularly views towards marriage) and an increase in wealth throughout the country. Such demand is predicted to reach levels such as 4.4 million new dwellings by the year 2016. Rt Hon John Gummer supports the view held by members of the sustainable round table and environmental agencies such as the CPRE that at least 60 - 70% of this demand could be met within town centres. The development of housing within town centres would also help to re-invigorate them and provide encouragement for further investment.

The majority of respondents believed that the objective to sustain and enhance town centres was realistic (see figure ten). However, many disagreed primarily on the basis of the Government's inability of providing suitable levels of funding and resources required to attract investment and promote centres (see section 7.2).

The guidance emphasises the need to develop partnerships, between the public and private sectors to achieve the guidance's objectives, and many observers have agreed with this principle. For example Brian Raggett (1996), partner at Hillier and Parker, emphasised the fact that local authorities and the private sector should work together in order to "encourage new development which will foster long-term confidence in the fabric of our improving established town centres". It is, therefore essential that members of the private sector co-operate with the local authorities and that good working partnerships are created. In theory these partnerships seem easy to achieve however, in practice many private sector members do not wish to become involved. Many respondents also questioned the ability of public and private interests agreeing upon "the need for development" required when devising the town centre strategies which are used to sustain and enhance town centres. The private and public sector have different ideals and interests, however these will have to be overcome if any of the objectives within the revised guidance are to be achieved.

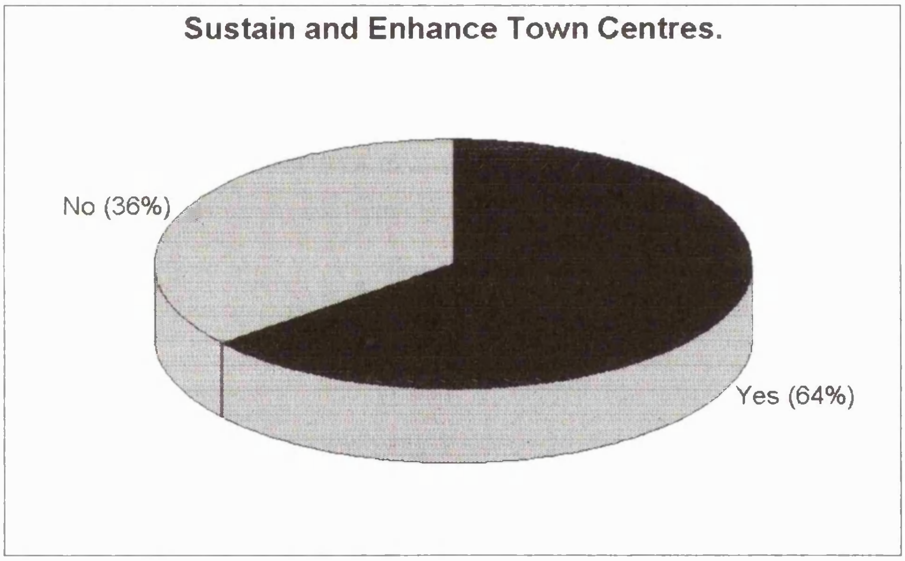

Figure Ten.

7.2 Resources and Funding.

Throughout this research the lack of resources and funding available to achieve the results encouraged within the revised guidance has been highlighted. The Government appears to be reliant upon the contributions from town centre retailers, businesses and local authority budgets to fund each initiative encouraged within the guidance.

The questionnaire inquired as to whether local authorities had sufficient funds to spare for the redevelopment, revitalising and the promotion of town centres. The majority of respondents believed that local authorities would have sufficient resources (see figure eleven). This may appear to be a surprising outcome however when examining the responses in more depth it can be seen that local authorities do require more funding, and are currently struggling to divide their budgets amongst the appropriate sectors with the aim of fulfilling all of their requirements.

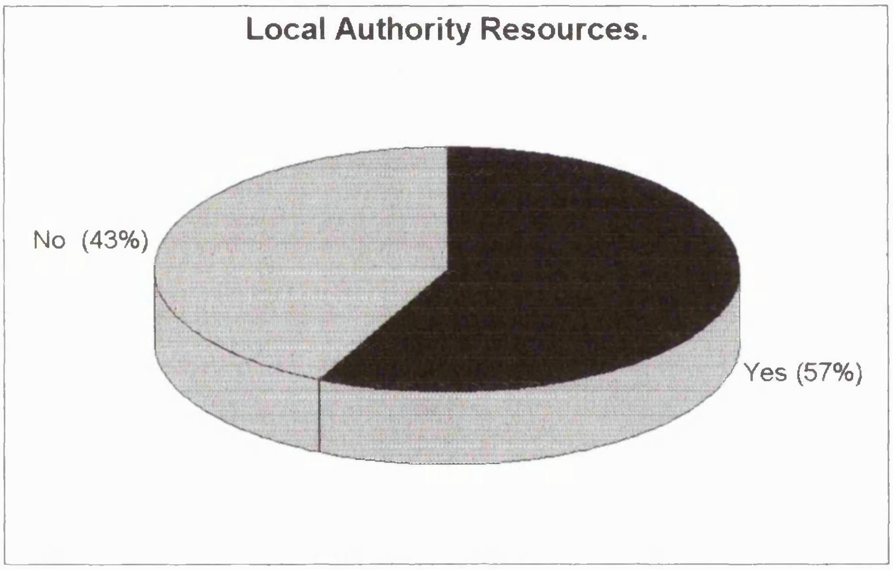

Figure Eleven.

Unfortunately, many respondents believed they would not be able to revitalise, redevelop and promote their town centres sufficiently to maintain them in the future, unless further funding and resources were provided from the Government. Within the guidance funding through programmes such as the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), City Challenge, English Partnership and the Department of Transport's "package bids" is to be achieved by local authorities in order to positively promote town centre regeneration. The number of funding agencies suggested has increased since the publication of previous drafts. However, many of the respondents were still unconvinced as to whether plentiful resources would be available to positively promote their town centres to a level that would encourage appropriate investment.

The plan-led approach (section 4.3) requires a great deal of expenditure, particularly if local authorities feel they are not suitably equipped with the experience necessary to prepare such development strategies. One perfect example of such a local authority is Crawley BC which paid a private consultancy, Hillier Parker, to prepare its development strategy. Martin Hull, a planner at Crawley BC, said that "the ideas proposed within the revised guidance are good, but with such low levels of financial help and experience, the ideas are unlikely to become reality" (1996).

In terms of sustaining and enhancing town centres (see section 7.1) the majority of questionnaire respondents believed this to be a realistic objective to achieve if further resources and funding was to be provided from the Government. The Government tends to be of the opinion that the private sector is more forthcoming with funding than they actually are and this misconception may be highlighted as a weakness of the guidance in the future.

7.3 Ambiguity.

Most forms of guidance allow different interpretations to be made and this is no exception. These planning notes are designed to provide guidance and therefore, cannot be too scrupulous, particularly when they are to be applied to many different sites that have individual characteristics and past experiences. Once a few appeal decisions have been made, certain aspects of the guidance will become clearer and less ambiguous. This process appears to be essential when examining the questionnaire responses. A large majority of respondents claimed areas of the guidance were too ambiguous and in need of clarification (see figure twelve).

Respondents made several suggestions identifying areas of the guidance that required clarification to reduce their ambiguity. The most popular area to be highlighted in relation to its ambiguity was related to the measurements of walking distance used when identifying edge of town sites. The guidance provides no indication as to whether these measurements should be made from and to the central point of each centre, or from the edge of each centre. In practice these measurements could prove to be vital within the determination of a planning application.

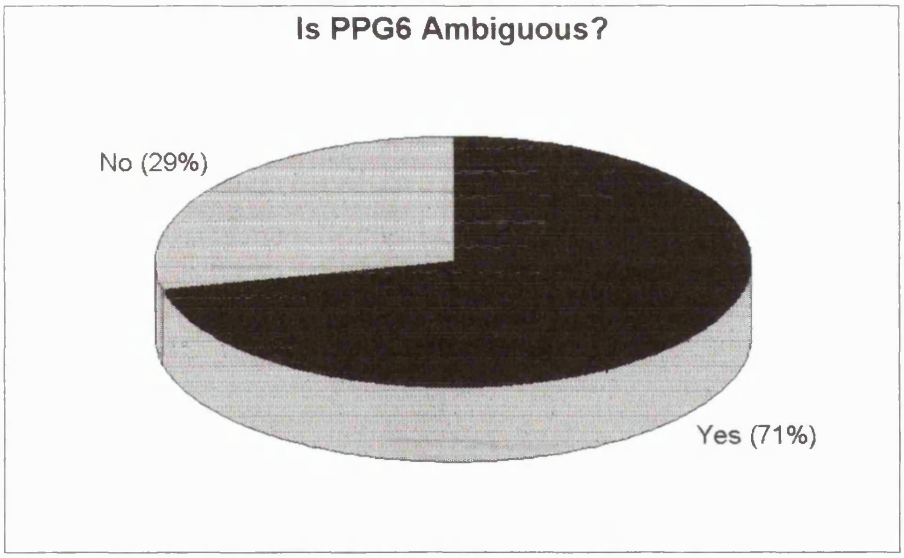

Figure Twelve.

Another area of concern implicated the measurements of vitality and viability examined within section 4.2. The guidance does not indicate which measurements of vitality and viability carry more weight than others and are, therefore more important when determining the outcome of planning applications.

Many areas of the revised guidance overlap with other guidance notes. For example, car-parking guidelines are to be found within PPG6 and PPG13. The Government encourages local authorities to integrate the advice provided within both documents when devising their town centre strategies. Many respondents complained about this although the Government is obviously attempting to co-ordinate and integrate all its policies in an attempt to move towards sustainable development.

The encouragement of mixed use developments within the guidance is to be applauded, although many observers believe a more comprehensive standard of guidance is required to demonstrate how such developments are to be achieved. Once again the guidance must allow room to manoeuvre in order for it to be applied to individual sites. However, the majority of local authorities and town centre managers are very inexperienced in the creation of mixed use developments and could probably gain from the provision of training schemes to clarify exactly what the guidance aims to accomplish.

The Government must be congratulated on their efforts to improve the glossary of terms section. A number of terms have still not been included within this glossary and are continuing to cause ambiguity within the planning world. Terms such as "need", "suitable" and "availability" were highlighted within this research. These are particular areas that will be determined in terms of personal points of view, although clarification should improve as planning decisions are made.

Another term that has caused confusion is that of "enhance" which has still not been defined within the guidance despite calls following the release of the consultation draft in 1995. A number of respondents expressed concerns that they were unsure as to the terms real meaning and the level of importance that should be attached to it when determining planning applications.

7.4 Essential Elements For Success.

Almost all of the questionnaire respondents agreed that PPG6 could not solve anything on its own (see figure thirteen) and suggested other factors that will be essential if it is to achieve anything.

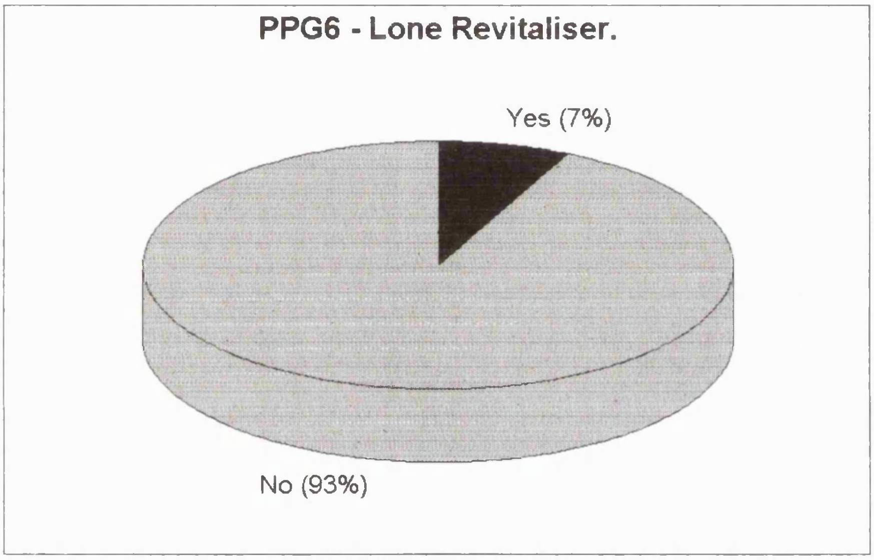

Figure Thirteen.

The guidance must be integrated with all other national government and local authority initiatives in order to introduce wider issues and encourage sustainable development.

Most respondents agreed that the most critical factor in determining the success of the revised guidance would be the development of proactive initiatives by local authorities, town centre managers and the private sector in partnership with local residents, traders, businesses, consumers, and community groups. The essence of partnership is emphasised throughout the revised guidance and all the questionnaire respondents commented on its importance. These partnerships will be critical when developing and promoting the town centres.

Investment is considered to be critical to the success of PPG6 if town centres are to be revitalised and redeveloped to compete with out-of-town centres. Investment must be made to achieve environmental enhancement, infrastructure improvements and redevelopment. A few respondents suggested that some town centre retailers should increase their willingness to provide resources to fund improvements to essential elements ensuring success within the town centre.

Town Centre Management Groups received a great deal of attention within the revised guidance (see sections 4.5 and 6.2). These groups are to work in partnerships with the local authorities, local retailers, local communities, traders and community groups in order to develop a town centre strategy. However, there is a fear that the views of town centre managers will be "brushed under the carpet" as one respondent claimed. Town centre management groups require more power within the decision making processes, ... although many local authorities may not agree with this point of view!!

Some people are still of the opinion that the only way to change the behaviour of consumers is to re-educate them to change the way they think. This is obviously beyond the remit of planning. However, if town centres can attract consumers they will gradually move away from out-of-town centres. Soon town centres will have to compete with new technologies so, if they are to continue to exist in the future, they must provide a basis upon which to build at the earliest possible opportunity.

7.5 The Future.

When looking into the future there are several important factors which may affect the impact that PPG6 has upon the retailing environment. For example, if another political party is elected in the general election in 1997 the entire policy framework may be changed. Policy alterations are unlikely to take place for a few years following the election of a new party. However, if such changes do take place it is hoped that policy modifications will incorporate policies to reduce the impact that future retail phenomena may have, make more funds and resources available to those attempting to revitalise retailing centres, and, as one of the questionnaire respondents suggested, take a more realistic look into "what the consumer demands from a retailing environment."

Denison, N (1996) insists that the primary areas of debate in future years will concern the "needs of the consumers, the majority of whom, according to most surveys, prefer to shop by car, particularly for bulk food shopping and bulky comparison goods; the needs of retailers, who in order to continue to innovate and compete require some flexibility in terms of site location; and the long-term needs of the environment, which ideally would require a return to pre-1960s society where most shopping needs were catered for by the local shop and most shopping was carried out on foot or by bicycle." If the "future town centre" is to sustain the mix of use envisaged within PPG6, it will have to accommodate residents, office workers, retailers, developers and visitors. In order to support these groups of people, the town centre of the future will have to accommodate high levels of access. PPG13 (March 1994) attempts to encourage retailing to continue within existing centres as they are more likely to offer a choice of access, particularly for those without the use of a car. However, in the future it is estimated that car ownership in areas such as London will increase by approximately half again between 1991 and 2011. Certain levels of car access will therefore, have to be accommodated within town centres. In order to reduce the onslaught of environmental effects that are likely to result from such car dominance, it will also be necessary to make town centres accessible to other forms of transport.

PPG6 attempts to encourage local authorities to design comprehensive transport strategies in order to reduce the need to travel into town centres by car. These strategies could introduce initiatives such as funding further provisions of rail infrastructure, subsidising the provision of bus services, park and ride schemes, the implementation of cycle routes, better provision for pedestrians and further mixed use development to reduce the need to travel. Such strategies are unlikely to reduce car travel to such an extent that it is no longer an issue in the future. Town centres must therefore, make provisions for parking at retail, office and similar development locations. However, it is essential that such parking provisions are kept to a minimum so as not to have a detrimental effect on the effectiveness of public transport schemes.

Looking a little further into the future, subsequent developments in the telecommunications industry and new technological innovations in the retail environment are already regarded as the ingredients that will transform the way people shop and the ways in which the retail environment will operate as a whole. New forms of retail guidance will need to incorporate these changes and ensure the continued existence and success of other forms of retailing in order to provide for disadvantaged groups which by such times may include those who are not computer literate!! Future guidance will probably aim to ensure the existence of smaller traders, encourage mixed use development within both town centres and out-of-town centres if they are both to survive and attempt to control the development of warehouses which will be used to store those goods purchased through such technological means.

7.6 Conclusion.

Initially, at the outset of this thesis, I was of the opinion that PPG6 was designed to act as a planning mechanism to ensure the economic stability of both out-of-town and town centre developments. However, this research has led me to formulate the opinion that the guidance shows a bias towards helping the development of town centres since out-of-town centres have developed to such an extent that they will be able to survive autonomously

PPG6 concentrates the majority of its policies upon encouraging town centre revitalisation in order to help them to compete with out-of-town centres. However, this research has highlighted many important areas of debate and it seems unnecessary for town centres and out-of-town centres to compete with each other. If government policies such as PPG6 are implemented correctly town centres and out-of-town centres should be able to co-exist. Both centres possess different characteristics and will therefore, attract different types of retailing activity. As long as the location of retail types and activity is carefully monitored, few problems should arise.

Many local authorities are realising that out-of-town and town centre activities can co-exist. For example, James Morrisey Associates carried out a major survey for East and West Sussex County Councils and discovered that the range of goods sold in out-of-town centres should be controlled in order to protect town centres. The consultants believe that bulky good retailing within out-of-town locations should remain a legitimate form of trade. With these findings in mind the newly devised West Sussex Structure Plan seeks to ensure that out-of-town development provides complimentary facilities for shoppers rather than competing directly with existing centres.

The revised policy guidance is most certainly a step in the right direction, although there are some areas that could be clarified and improved as highlighted within sections 7.3 and 7.5. Many people such as Brian Raggett, Hillier Parker, believe that a more radical approach is required if any real changes are to occur. Other observers share the beliefs of Siegle, H in Mottram, T (1996) who suggests that no amount of legislation will succeed in turning the tide with regard to out-of-town shopping, and believes that the town centre needs to become an attraction in its own right. With the guidance of PPG6 and a committed multi-interest approach this could most certainly be achieved. However, only time will tell how retailing activity will be affected following the publication and implementation of the revised guidance.

Other factors such as the development of telecommunications and electronic shopping are bound to influence changes in retail activity and the Government, local authorities, town centre managers, developers and retailers need to be aware of this. It seems likely that another revision of this guidance will take place in a few years in order for such technological advances to be incorporated within future retail policy. If this is the case, the Government must ensure that any signs of decline within other retail areas are recognised and dealt with at the earliest possible time in order to avoid the decline experienced within town centres due to decentralisation of retail activity.

In the mean time all members of public and private sectors must work together in order to attempt to revitalise town centres to the best of their ability. In the short-term it seems that out-of-town centres will look after themselves, however in the long term they may need the help of similar guidance notes to ensure their survival.

In conclusion it appears that PPG6 does not act as a planning mechanism to ensure the economic stability of out-of-town centres, but one that caters for town centres in order to aid their survival and revitalisation which should enable them to compete in the future. It is vital that the suggestions made within the guidance are taken into consideration when devising town centre strategies, however it is also important that out-of-town centres are also monitored to ensure they do not come under any great threat from future retailing innovations. The policy is often termed as a measure that shuts the gate after the horse has bolted, but it provides a basis upon which planners can build to ensure the constant existence of a retailing environment for <u>ALL</u> to enjoy.

INTERVIEWS

11th September 1996

Mike Hannigan

Chief Planning Officer

Standard Life

23rd January 1996 (Telephone Conversation).

Philip Robin

Partner and Head Of Planning and Environment Department

Healey & Baker

23rd January 1996 (Telephone Conversation).

Steven Hill

Senior Town Planner

Hiller Parker

31st January 1996 (Telephone Conversation)

Huw Williams

Town Planning Manager

Sainsburys

28th June 1996

Philip Robin

Partner and Head of Planning and Environment Department

Healey & Baker

15th July 1996

Steven Hill

Senior Town Planner

Hiller Parker

15th July 1996

Huw Williams

Senior Town Planning Advisor

J Sainsburys Plc

1st August 1996

Brian Harrison

Town Planner

East Sussex County Council

4th August 1996

Alan Buck

Town Planner

Brighton Borough Council

5th August 1996

Alison Finlay

Assistant Planner

Hove District Council

6th August 1996

Martin Hull

Town Planner

Crawley Borough Council

6th August 1996

Roger Bates

Town Centre Manage

Crawley Borough Council

12th August 1996 (Telephone Conversation).

Margaret Podd

Chief Planning Officer

Horsham District Council

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the following for their contribution to this thesis:

Philip Robin, Partner at Healey and Baker for his constant help and support.

Steven Hill, Senior Town Planner at Hillier Parker for his help and support.

Hew Williams, Senior Town Planning Advisor for Sainsburys for his help and criticism!!

Christina Tomalin, David Banister and Glenn McDougall for their help and support over the past two years.

Dr Mike McGibbon, Head of Geography Department, University of Greenwich for his help throughout the years.

John Packman, Senior Town Planner at Hove Borough Council who introduced me to town planning and has been there for me ever since.

All the questionnaire respondents from private consultancies, local authorities and retail operators that provided invaluable research data without which the thesis could not have been completed.

Finally, I would like to say a big thank you to all my family and friends for their help and patience during recent years.

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APPENDICES.

Appendix One

Questionnaire.

This questionnaire has been formulated in order to collate views concerning the revised version of PPG6. Such views will be included within a postgraduate examination of the capability of retail planning policy in terms of supporting both existing out-of-town and town centre developments.

The Sequential Approach.

1) When using the revised version of PPG6 in practice do you believe that the sequential approach will be an easy tool to use and apply?

If not, why not?

2) How do you see the sequential approach working in practice in terms of:

a) deciding site suitability

b) deciding site availability

c) deciding site viability

Local Planning Authorities.

3) Do you believe that local authorities will have the resources available to fulfil their role portrayed within the revised guidance?

Yes

No

4) Do you believe that the private sector should play a larger part in the preparation of local plans?

Yes, if so how can this be achieved?

No

5) Do you believe that the revised version of PPG6 alone will have the ability to revitalise town centres?

Yes

If not, what other factors do you believe are essential to it's success?

6) Do you believe the objective to sustain and enhance town centres is realistic?

Yes

No

7) Do you believe that the revised version of PPG6 will have sufficient powers to:

a) reverse the dominant economic trend of the past fifteen years and revitalise town centres?

b) enable the less mobile members of the community to gain access to a wider range of shops and services?

Town Centre Operations.

8) Do you believe that retail operators have the ability to look into the future in order to employ a plan led approach, particularly considering the constant onslaught of new ideas such as telecommunications that has become apparent during recent years?

Yes

No

9) Do you believe that offices will be able to fulfil their parking demands within town centres in light of the revised guidance?

Yes

No

10) Do you believe the importance of town centre management groups has been well represented within the revised policy?

Yes

No

11) In your eyes has enough attention been paid to the provision of non retail activities and services which support town centres?

Yes

No, how do you believe this could be improved

Out-of-town Developments.

12) Do you believe that clusters of out-of-town stores could develop into district or local centres with time following the experience with Foss Park Retail Park, Leicester?

Yes

No

13) Can you see PPG6 sustaining retailing within existing out-of-town centres in the long term?

Yes

No

The Practicalities of PPG6.

14) What has been your experience of the draft version of PPG6 for the purpose of policy decision making in terms of:

a) deciding which retailing is acceptable within town centres.

b) determining access to town centres.

c) deciphering some of the terms used such as "adequately, suitability and availability".

15) Are there areas within the new guidance that could be clearer or less ambiguous?

If so, where

No

16) Are there any further comments you would like to add with reference to this questionnaire or the revised planning policy?

Questionnaire Results

Questionnaires sent out	**250**
Questionnaires completed and returned	**204**

Question 1 - Do you believe that the sequential approach will be an easy tool to apply?

Answer	No. Replies	Percentage
Yes	106	52%
No	98	48%

Question 3 - Local authorities will have available resources?

Answer	No.Replies	Percentage
Yes	116	57%
No	88	43%

Question 4 - Private sector local plan preparation role.

Answer	No.Replies	Percentage
Yes	88	43%
No	116	57%

Question 5 - Will PPG6 alone revitalise town centres?

Answer	No.Replies	Percentage
Yes	14	7%
No	190	93%

Question 6 - Objectives realistic?

Answer	No.Replies	Percentage
Yes	204	100%
No	0	0%

Question 8 - Retailers ability to look into the future?

Answer	No.Replies	Percentage
Yes	131	64%
No	73	36%

Question 9 - Offices parking demands?

Answer	No.Replies	Percentage
Yes	131	64%
No	73	36%

Question 10 - Town centre management groups well represented?

Answer	No.Replies	Percentage
Yes	190	93%
No	14	7%

Question 11 - Provision of non retail activities?

Answer	No.Replies	Percentage
Yes	160	79%
No	44	21%

Question 12 - Clusters of out-of-town store developments?

Answer	No.Replies	Percentage
Yes	131	64%
No	73	36%

Question 13 - Can PPG6 sustain retailing within out-of-town centres?

Answer	No.Replies	Percentage
Yes	131	64%
No	73	36%

Question 15 - Areas which could be less ambiguous?

Answer	No.Replies	Percentage
Yes	160	71%
No	44	29%