

## **Outline of Proposed changes to PPS6**

### **i) Objectives:**

There are two clear objectives of the proposed changes to the document. The first objective is to ensure the changes support current and prospective town centre investment, which contributes to economic prosperity and to the government's social and environmental goals. The second objective is to ensure that planning promotes competition and consumer choice and does not unduly or disproportionately constrain the market.

### **ii) Regional Spatial Strategies:**

With regard to regional spatial strategies, the new proposals recommend a minor change which is to ensure that the regional planning body, where appropriate assess the need for new centres in areas of planned major growth such as in identified growth areas and proposed eco-towns.

### **iii) Local Development Frameworks and Area Action Plans:**

In assessing the need for new floorspace for retail, leisure and other main town centres uses, local planning authorities should take into account both quantitative and qualitative considerations as well as relevant market information and economic data including price signals. Local planning authorities should also ensure that when identifying and allocating sites, the allocations should not be unduly restrictive.

The guidance recognises the contribution that a broad range of retailer representation can have to an area as well as the provision of a larger store as an anchor to strengthen a centre's retail offer and the provision of smaller shops to add character and vibrancy to a centre and enhancing consumer choice.

Local authorities should also seek to promote competitive town centre environments which may include where appropriate, giving priority consideration to whether the established character and diversity of their town centres should be protected and enhanced.

The revisions support the use of conditions in limiting the minimum/maximum unit sizes in proposed retail developments, which could perhaps encourage smaller businesses. The use of conditions would also ensure that 'ancillary development' remains ancillary, that maximum floorspace levels could be specified and the range of goods able to be sold be limited, where appropriate.

### **iv) Need test:**

In accordance with recommendations set out in Kate Barker's Review of Land Use Planning, the proposals remove the requirement for an applicant to demonstrate 'need' for a proposal which is in an edge of centre or out of centre location and which is not in accordance with an up to date development plan strategy. The need test is seen as a 'blunt tool' that is not achieving the ends it was designed for, tending to distort competition and deny consumers choice. These elements are actively supported by the revisions.

### **v) Impact test:**

The existing impact test has been replaced by a new impact assessment framework which the government will require applicants with a proposal in an out of centre location to undertake. It tests whether impact is positive or negative on town centre consumer choice and retail diversity; investment and town centre trade and gives local authorities the powers to cap the size of large retail developments where this test is justified. In addition, LPAs would be required to account for the regenerative or employment benefits that non-town centre developments provide, which are only 'material considerations' in the current guidance.

### **vi) Sequential Approach:**

This test remains as per existing PPS6 to ensure that a sequential approach to site selection should be applied to all proposals, except to extensions to retail development. The preference is for town centre sites, followed by edge of centre sites and only then out of centre sites. The revisions also state that edge of centre sites that are well connected to town centres via pedestrian links should be considered favourably.