

Appendix B Draft Consultation Response to CLG

Proposed Changes to Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres Consultation

In answer to the consultation questions set out in the proposed changes to PPS6;

1) Will the proposed changes support current and prospective town centre investment?

Brighton & Hove City Council welcomes the proposed changes to PPS6. The Council is hopeful that it will provide a clear and composite statement of planning policy that can be incorporated into the preparation of the Local Development Framework and Area Action Plans. The proposed changes remain consistent with the Council's vision for the future of its defined town centres. It is considered that the proposed changes will support current and prospective town centre investment. The sequential test and new impact test should ensure that investment is directed to town centres where possible. The emphasis on customer choice and competition, and the use of conditions which may support smaller businesses will help the LPA to enable retail diversity to flourish.

2) Does the scope of the new impact test achieve the right balance and is it robust enough to thoroughly test the positive and negative impacts of developments outside town centres?

The Council welcomes the more detailed 'impact test' which will give local authorities more power to prevent large developments which could put smaller shops and town centres at risk. It is considered that the right balance is achieved. Firstly, by testing adherence to local development plans ensuring earmarked peripheral developments are not affected, and secondly by assessing impacts on investment, current and future trade, competition and diversity in local centres. Any detailed practice guidance should be published at the same time as the revised guidance.

"The Council particularly welcomes the more detailed impact consideration relating to the impact on town centre vitality and viability (3.19e(v)), which now includes the impact on local consumer choice and retail diversity in terms of the range, type and quality of goods. This consideration is particularly important in a city like Brighton, where so much of the centre's interest, prosperity, culture, attraction and retail offer results from the large proportion of small independent retailers and other small businesses. It is an important element of the forthcoming LDF that these businesses continue to be promoted and protected from the potential impact of large scale retail developments both within and outside the Council's defined shopping centres."

3) Is there scope to simplify and streamline the various impact considerations further?

No, the impact assessment considerations listed in para 3.19e and 3.19g of the consultation document are integral to robustness of any impact test. The council also welcomes the publication of a detailed practice guidance note at the same time as

the revisions for assessing the impact of proposals in order to ensure consistency. It is considered imperative that any additional practice guidance is produced at the same time as revised PPS6. Any nationally available sources of information relating to the suggested impact indicators should be referenced in this practice guidance, so that a common means of assessment can be undertaken in-house by the LPA and by applicants. This would also help to enable consistency and avoid over-lengthy pre-application negotiation between the planning authority and developers.

4a) Is the consideration of consumer choice and retail diversity as part of assessing the impact of a proposal appropriate and will it be sufficient to help promote competition?

Yes, combined with the LDF, maintaining and enhancing consumer choice is entirely appropriate within an impact test, as local authorities will have more tools to shape developments around their vision for town centres. Reference to the contribution that smaller shops can make to the character and vibrancy of centres is welcomed and is highly relevant to Brighton & Hove. Competition between firms generates choice for the consumer, hence this consideration of choice and diversity is also considered to be sufficient in promoting competition. The consultation paras 2.18a to 2.18c which relate to this question are fully supported.

5a) It has been suggested by some stakeholders that we should consider limiting impact assessments to larger development proposals and that it should be confined to retail developments. PPS6 and our proposed revisions maintain a flexible approach to the preparation of impact assessments for all main town centre issues and do not limit assessments to larger developments or retail proposals. Do you think our flexible approach should be retained?

Yes, a flexible approach should be retained as in some cases developments smaller than 2,500 sq metres in size may have a considerable impact on a centre.

6a) Are the existing health check indicators in Chapter 4 sufficient to enable informed judgements to be made about the various impact considerations which have been identified?

Yes, with reservations that health check indicators on their own do not tell the whole story of the vitality of a centre. Background documents and primary research also provide strong evidence to add context to the hard data. The addition to para 4.4 on health check indicators around land values and the length of time key sites have remained undeveloped should be treated with caution. For example, land may remain undeveloped for non-market reasons and undeveloped land also restricts supply of premises which can have the effect of inflating property prices.

7a) Do you agree with the proposed approach to the Practice Guidance which will support PPS6?

The approach is supported by the council. The Practice Guidance should be released alongside PPS6 and not following its publication, in order to ensure consistency in its application.

8) Other comments?

The Council supports the objectives of the proposed changes to continue to reinforce development to town centres by keeping the important 'sequential test'.

