Regional Priorities for Town Centres and Retail Development

3.2.12 National guidance on retail and the roles of town centres is contained in PPS6. The main aim of PPS6 is to promote the vitality and viability of existing centres by focussing new investment within city, town and district centres through the application of a sequential test. As a result, the growth in out-of-town retail and leisure development has been significantly restricted in recent years. PPS6 requires that the Regional Plan should:

- give a strategic framework for the development of town centre networks;
- make strategic choices about centres of regional and sub-regional significance;
- assess the overall need for additional retail floorspace over the plan period;
- monitor and review implementation.

3.2.13 Regional priorities have been informed by the *Regional Town Centres Study* (2003) and an update study which took place in 2005 (available at www.emra.gov.uk). Together, these studies present a comprehensive quantitative and qualitative analysis of retail floorspace. The update study also considered the extent of the retail catchments of the Region's Principal Urban Areas, Growth Towns and Sub-Regional Centres.

3.2.14 At the general level, it is clear that:

- there is no clear retail hierarchy in the East Midlands which could be used as a basis for regional policy. Instead a Sub-area approach should be used to develop more localised strategies;
- there is no identified need for additional regional scale out-of-town retail floorspace within the Region;
- a number of existing centres require public sector support to encourage the required private sector investment. Emphasis should be placed on design led initiatives and town centre strategies to achieve this; and
- quantitative forecasts should be supplemented by a wider assessment of each centre's role as a focus for employment, leisure and recreation. However, there is a clear need for consistent monitoring of retail floorspace.

3.2.15 At the regional level, the latest projections indicate that by 2016 there will be potential for at least 444,000 sq.m. of net additional floorspace serving the 'comparison goods' market. This represents a substantial increase on the current situation, but is not inconsistent with past trends. Estimates for the post 2016 period are mainly based on an extrapolation of these projections.

3.2.16 In the absence of a clear hierarchy, the distribution of additional retail floorspace to town centres in the region should be in line with Policy 3. The focus for major growth is to be on maintaining the role of the existing Principal Urban Areas which function as the main retail and service centres and are already well served by transport and other infrastructure. There are also opportunities for some Sub-Regional Centres and rural market towns to consolidate and develop their roles in their sub-areas. Below this level, some local centres and rural towns will also need through positive action to ensure they continue to serve the needs of local communities. The following sections identify the priority centres for additional retail development.

Eastern Sub-area

Lincoln has a strong sub-regional and rural support role which should be significantly strengthened. Priorities for support include Boston, Grantham and Spalding. Given their proximity to each other, Grantham and Newark (in the Northern Sub-area) should look to develop complementary roles reflecting individual characteristics and development opportunities.

Northern Sub-area

The main town centres perform at a lower level than Derby, Nottingham or Sheffield to the north. Support should be focussed on the roles of Chesterfield, Mansfield-Ashfield, Newark and Worksop to retain a higher level of retail spend in the Sub-area and promote regeneration.

Peak Sub-area

Manchester, Sheffield and Derby are the major regional centres for the Sub-area. Given the nature of the Sub-area, development should be focussed on encouraging quality schemes that are in scale with existing historic town centres located mainly outside the National Park.

Southern Sub-area

There is a large proportion of retail expenditure 'leakage' to the south of the Region from the Sub-area at present. This untapped spend and the level of proposed population growth in Northamptonshire means that Northampton town centre has the potential to become one of the Region's highest performing retail attractions. The Growth Towns of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough require support to develop complementary roles consistent with planned levels of development. Daventry and Towcester should also have enhanced roles at a more local level.

Three Cities Sub-area

Nottingham, Derby and Leicester are nationally ranked shopping centres and should be encouraged to develop their roles. However there is also potential for complementary growth in the surrounding Sub-Regional Centres to retain a higher proportion of local income and reduce pressure on strategic transport infrastructure.

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Regional Priorities for Town Centres and Retail Development

Local Authorities, emda and Sub-Regional Strategic Partnerships should work together on a Sub-area basis to promote the vitality and viability of existing town centres, including those in rural towns. Where town centres are under-performing, action should be taken to promote investment through design led initiatives and the development and implementation of town centre strategies.

Local Planning Authorities should:

- *within town centres bring forward retail, office, residential and leisure development opportunities, and any other town centre functions as set out in PPS6, based on identified need;*
- *prevent the development or expansion of additional regional scale out-of-town retail and leisure floorspace; and*
- *monitor changes in retail floorspace on a regular basis.*