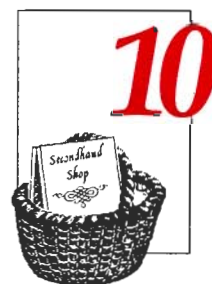


Beyond the Core

Secondary Shopping Areas



Traffic calming in a secondary street

10.1 INTRODUCTION

10.1.1 The term “secondary shopping street” is misleading. It carries with it a suggestion of ‘second rate’: diminishing the important role of many areas which make very significant contributions to the vitality and viability of our towns and cities, and have even greater potential.

10.1.2 In part, the problem arises from singling out just one element of a complex mixture of uses and activities going on each day in these areas. In most cases secondary shopping streets, especially those in historic towns and cities, contain much more than just shops. Typically, they also offer a wide range of retail and office-based services, pubs, restaurants, cafes and take-away food shops. They accommodate a wide range of the small and specialist businesses which can contribute so much to vitality and local identity. Many also house significant numbers of residents, and most offer considerable scope for more upper-floor conversions to flats and other new homes.

10.2 THE GOVERNMENT’S VIEW

10.2.1 PPG6 makes little direct reference to secondary shopping areas, as such. They are dealt with more by indirect inference, rather than explicit, positive guidance. However, the 1996 Revised version of PPG6 does expand a little on its predecessor by stating that there should be scope

for more flexibility in terms of the proportion of retail uses in secondary frontages, where diversification has most to contribute. Annex D promotes secondary shopping areas as being appropriate locations for amusement centres.

10.2.2 So, the official policy view, to the extent that one is discernible, seems to be that secondary shopping streets offer particular mixed-use opportunities and can also soak up certain ‘quasi-retail’ uses that might cause problems if concentrated elsewhere. However, the growing emphasis on edge-of-centre locations for some forms of large scale retailing, and on the desirability of mixed-use developments points to a rather more important role for secondary shopping streets - which tend to be both edge-of-centre and mixed-use - than the somewhat cursory references in PPG6 would suggest..

10.3 INVESTING IN VARIETY

10.3.1 Defining secondary shopping areas more in terms of what they are not, rather than what they are, has helped only to discourage appreciation of their true value. They may be of secondary importance in terms of retail turnover and the relationship this has to rental levels, but looked at from a wider perspective these areas have a valuable role to play in the character and future of historic towns - a role which is hinted at in PPG6. Two particular aspects underline the importance of secondary shopping areas: *local identity and the mixture of uses.*



Regenerating a Secondary Area - before and after



Local Identity

10.3.2 Proliferation of discount shops with uniform, corporate shopfronts, signs and product ranges has undoubtedly weakened the local identity of some secondary shopping streets (just as insensitive adherence to corporate image in many primary streets has tended to make the central shopping cores of our towns more anonymous). However, in most cases secondary shopping areas contain a significant proportion of smaller, more local, more varied businesses. This should mean that local identity can shine through with particular strength. Unfortunately, however, there is often a problem with the level of investment small retail businesses are able to maintain in the upkeep of their premises. It is partly, but certainly not solely, as a result of this problem that the most immediately obvious characteristic of many secondary shopping areas may be an air of neglect and shabbiness.

10.3.3 The “public realm” sometimes leaves much to be desired in secondary streets. Many lie just beyond the edge of pedestrianised areas. Frequently they are either dominated by traffic, and the street furniture that accompanies it, or simply suffer from street surfaces and furniture which are themselves poorly designed, shabby and ill-maintained. This type of neglect does much to devalue the contribution and image of secondary shopping areas. Investment and Town Centre Management measures should not be restricted to primary shopping streets. The public and private sectors must work together to bring this about.

Mixture of Uses

10.3.4 This guidance has already mentioned the relationship between secondary shopping areas and “speciality retailing” and businesses offering “financial and professional services” (A2) and “food and drink” (A3). Secondary shopping areas offer scope for a more flexible approach to the mixture of these uses. Coupled with lower rental levels, this provides an environment which can foster small, locally based businesses.



A3 uses in a secondary street

10.3.5 The official ‘rediscovery’ of the benefits of areas in which shops, workplaces, homes and pubs and other uses are all mixed together, offers planners and developers new opportunities and challenges: unconstrained by planning conventions which have dominated much of the 20th Century and challenging the financial conventions of the development industry and property market. After decades of segregation policies, it is going to be neither quick nor easy to restore a truly ‘vital’ mixture to the shopping cores of many of our towns and cities (although historic towns do tend to have advantages in this respect). So, the most sensible starting point in many towns will be to make sure that the places where uses are already mixed together get the treatment necessary to sustain them as attractive environments for living, shopping, working and playing - for vibrant, mixed-use communities. Many of the secondary shopping areas of our historic towns offer just that potential. The key to success is a ‘fine grained’ approach to planning and other means of environmental management to ensure that different uses and activities can co-exist rather than conflict.

10.4 LINKAGES

10.4.1 The importance of ‘edge-of-centre’ locations for certain types of major retail developments, as advocated by Government, has also been highlighted earlier. Such sites are often linked to the central shopping core by secondary shopping streets (e.g. the Grafton Centre in Cambridge, St.

Mark's in Lincoln). Investing in the environment of those streets can play a crucial part in the integration of new edge-of-centre developments with the core, so that the two support, rather than pull against, each other. In such cases, insistence on continuous shopping (A1) frontages may be neither feasible nor desirable, but the broader range of uses which can most easily be accommodated in a secondary shopping street can be used as a means of creating a strong, interesting, attractive and vibrant linkage. This will often need to be accompanied by improvements to the local street environment to ensure that the linkage is truly attractive.

GUIDANCE

- 1 Identify Secondary Shopping Streets by survey of:
 - types of shop
 - level of 'non-retail' use (ie. not in Use Class A1)
 - pedestrian flows
 - vacancy levels (tend to be higher in secondary streets)
 - uses above/below ground-floor level
- 2 Identify the particular character of each Secondary Shopping Area, taking account of such factors as:
 - physical character (e.g. presence of historic buildings and street patterns, common architectural styles or details)
 - history of the area
 - traffic levels, flows and patterns
 - presence of any key uses or activities (e.g. markets, cinemas, concentrations of pubs, restaurants or hot food take-aways)
 - types of user (e.g. visitors, locals, mixture)
- 3 Examine linkages between each secondary shopping area and:
 - the central shopping core
 - other key attractions (either existing or planned)
 - other areas (e.g. residential, employment, civic)
- 4 From findings of 1, 2 and 3, assess, with the local community (retailers, other businesses, residents, property owners), each area's strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities affecting it.
- 5 Taking account of 4, identify opportunities for:
 - developing each area's particular functional strengths (retail and other) and achieving an optimum balance of uses
 - improving the physical environment where necessary (public realm and private)
 - repairing poor or severed linkages to the central core and other key areas (e.g. traffic calming measures, improved facilities for pedestrians)
 - reducing any identified conflicts between different uses and activities which contribute to the area's vitality and viability
 - and, in most cases, increasing the supply of homes in and around the area (to improve 24 hour vitality and security and to support local businesses).
- 6 Draw up area-based Development Plan policies and Supplementary Planning Guidance to guide and simulate development and change within each area in accordance with 5, above.
- 7 Monitor the effectiveness of the policy for each area.

CASE STUDY : LINCOLN

1 Like many "secondary" shopping streets, the northern end of Lincoln's High Street has suffered from the difficult trading conditions of recent years. Traders have been complaining about dwindling custom, the upkeep of properties has been neglected, shops have come and gone quite rapidly and the whole area has been looking tired and run down.

The Council has responded by establishing:

- a "Revival Strategy"
- City Centre Management

2 The Revival Strategy has taken several years to establish. Initially, the Civic Trust's Regeneration Unit helped to organise a "workshop" for the local community. This produced a "SWOT" analysis. Several more sessions led to general consensus about the area's strengths (greater than many had originally imagined), weaknesses (obvious, but not insurmountable), opportunities (growing) and threats (considerable and changing), and a long-term Revival Strategy was agreed.



3 The Revival Strategy works like this:

- Top of High Street is designated as one of the five Revival Areas in the Local Plan
- All the Revival Areas are also within designated Mixed Use Areas
- The Policy relating to Mixed Use Areas allows for a broad range of uses (subject to requirements to ensure that they are mutually compatible)
- All major developments must include a mixture of uses
- The Mixed Use Policy also requires that all developments within a Revival Area have to help meet the objectives of the Revival Scheme for that area.



Top of the High Street, Lincoln

4 The advantage of this "objective-led" approach is its flexibility. The stated objectives of the Revival Strategy, which have been derived from work with the local community, carry the weight of Local Plan policy, but they do so in a form that allows a wide range of development solutions. The Council is able to play a complementary, pro-active role through City Centre Management, and by "marketing" the area's opportunities. In the case of the Top-of-High Street, the Strategy aims to develop the area's strengths in a combination of secondary, speciality and local shopping services by:

- making it a place that people want to spend time in as they move between the main shopping area (to the south) and the main "tourist" area (to the north); and
- using the mixed-use requirement and promoting Flats over Shops, to create substantial areas of housing behind and above the High Street shops, thereby increasing the local resident population and improving both vitality and security.

Further Reading:

1. *Edge of Centre Supermarket Schemes: Hereford City Council*
2. *Living Over The Shop: A Handbook for Practitioners, York: University of York. Petherick A. 1992.*
3. *Living Over the Shop: National Housing and Town Planning Council. Walker, R. 1990,*

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