



Protecting and reviving historic centres

An introduction to the planning perspective

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Agenda: The Planning Perspective



- Background context: planning policy towards reviving our (historic) Town/City Centres
- Coalition Government's reforming planning agenda.
 - Localism Act
 - National Planning Policy Framework
- The Portas Review
- Relevance for the future England's historic town centres.

Planning Context for town centres and historic cores?



- **Starting point:** All planning applications have to be determined in accordance with policies of the **development plan** – unless other “**material considerations**” indicate otherwise.
- The development plan has to be in accordance with **National Planning Policy –i.e. PPS 4;PPS5**
- Planning system – created on two linked statutes:
 - Planning Acts: sets statutory framework for control of land use, policy; environmental impact assessments.
 - Heritage Acts. Protect and enhancing the historic environment – both above and below ground.

How has Planning Policy evolved over time re town centre and historic centres?



- PPG16 – “Archaeology and Planning” - 1990
- PPG6 “Town Centres and Retail Development” 1993
- PPG15 – “Planning for the Historic Environment” September 1994
- PPG6 – Revised – July 1996
- PPS6: “Planning for Town Centres” 2005
- PPS4: “Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth. 2009
- PPS5: “Planning for the Historic Environment” 2010
- Planning Direction 2009; Good practice guides.

What are the key planning themes and changes over time re to town centres?



- Policies in 70,80s/90s
 - town centres historic built form cannot accommodate all new retail formats; out of town retail acceptable subject to impact assessment on “vitality and viability.” Primary/secondary frontages.
 - Out of town restriction only food and non food use.
- Policies in 21 century
 - “Sequential approach”; retail “need” assessments.
 - Regional development plans; hierarchy of centres.
 - Brownfield not greenfield; high density; reduce CO2 emissions.

Coalition Government planning reforms



- Localism Act 2011: New approach to planning in England.
 - Little if any Government interference .
 - Abolition of regional plans/housing targets.
 - Introduction of neighbourhood planning.
 - Review of all PPS – replace with a new simple & single document – National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
 - New planning system for “Major Infrastructure Projects”



Relevance of these changes to HTF

- Planning system to deliver “**sustainable development**” – economic (jobs); social (housing); environmental.
- **Key planning issue:** too much emphasis on planning’s economic/social role and not environmental protection. Objections to NPPF:
 - Threat to the green belt; natural environment
 - Watered down “town centre first” policy.
 - Threat to heritage assets in town centres.
- Neighbourhood plans – being drafted now .



Portas High Street Review December 2011

- **Key planning related recommendations:**
 - Create “Town teams” – all stakeholders get together.
 - Free town centre parking .
 - Relax restrictions of uses within the High Street
 - Make explicit presumption in favour of town centre development in the NPPF
 - Greater role of Secretary of State - “sign off” out of town development.
 - Council’s make greater use of their Compulsory Purchase Powers to revive the high street.



Conclusions

- Planning system is undergoing major change.
- Every town centre is different – they will each require their own unique solutions to revive them.
- Historic centres need to identify and promote their unique heritage assets so as to attract people to live, visit and work in the centres; not just shop.
- Historic centres need to integrate edge of centre sites for new development so as accommodate public needs – car parks; new retail provision.
- Historic town centres need to be more flexible in use of their heritage assets.



Recommendations to HTF

- HTF needs to:
 - Participate and provide advice to town centre teams that might be established – possibly in light of the Portas Review.
 - Participate and provide advice to those preparing town centre neighbourhood plans so as to help to protect and promote the heritage assets of that centre.
 - Therefore the HTF needs to work with English Heritage and provide guidance as to how town centre teams & neighbourhood plans can help revive historic town centres.