



## **SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE**

On 2 February 1999 the Council adopted the following Supplementary Planning Guidance (Policy Committee Minute 368(c(i))).

Both Policies 42 and 43 of the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No2 with Alterations remain valid but the Council, whilst acknowledging that out of centre retail development has to be assessed in relation to Government guidance, seeks to ensure the further protection and reinforcement of the retail provision within town centres.

### **Policy 42 – Shopping.**

**Noting the very limited need for further development, the Council will not normally permit additional retail floorspace out of centre unless it can be demonstrated, by a sequential test, that no sites or buildings suitable for conversion/redevelopment within the town centre are available for the proposed use and subsequently no sites adjacent to the town centre could be utilised for that purpose.**

**Under Policy 42(i), the Council will encourage, where appropriate, larger retail units within Letchworth and Hitchin town centres primarily from conversion.**

**Under Policy 42(iii), the Council will not permit the development of land at Nightingale Road, Hitchin (Local Plan reference HS2) for retail purposes including non-food retail warehousing. (Note: This reinforces the Supplementary Guidance No.10 adopted on 25 October 1997).**

### **Policy 43 – Shopping Areas in Town Centres**

To provide opportunities for attractive and wide ranging retail outlets in town centres, the Council will strenuously maintain and apply this policy to protect ground floor retail use in the defined core areas.

## **Background Information**

- 1.0 In December 1997 North Hertfordshire District Council commissioned MVM Planning and Donaldsons to undertake a retail and town centre study to aid the formulation of a retail policies as part of the review of the District wide Local Plan. The final report was received in January 1999. Because of the time scale to adoption of the review Plan it is appropriate to adopt Supplementary Planning Guidance for use in determining planning applications.
- 2.0 The four main towns of North Hertfordshire, Hitchin, Letchworth, Royston and Baldock, lie within a sub-catchment area which encompasses the larger retail centres of Cambridge, Stevenage, Welwyn Garden City, Luton, Bedford and Milton Keynes. All of which, together with the sub-regional shopping complex of Brent Cross and to some extent London can be expected to exert an influence on the shopping patterns within the District.
- 3.0 Since 1990 large scale retail developments have either been built or permitted within Letchworth, Hitchin and Royston including the Letchworth Business and Retail Park (incorporating a Sainsbury's superstore); the Morrisons development in Letchworth town centre; Safeway at Hitchin; and Tesco's out of centre in Royston. It is expected that the proposals and implemented schemes are likely to recapture a significant level of convenience expenditure that was lost in the late 80's and early 90's to surrounding towns. Also it is anticipated that this will consolidate the role of the four towns as principle destinations for non-food shopping for the district's population as a result of link trips.

- 4.0 Using a step by step methodology based on comprehensive data on existing committed floorspace within the district and using reasonable assumptions about the turnover of existing retail floorspace and potential turnover of new floorspace in relation to forecast catchment area expenditure, retail capacity assessments have been made for convenience, bulky and non-bulky comparison shopping. In assessing such capacity, assumptions have been made about levels of leakage from the catchment area and URPI data on existing and projected expenditure by the catchment population.
- 3.1 5.0 Convenience Goods. In both the Hitchin/Letchworth/Baldock and Royston catchment areas the projected turnover from existing floorspace and that with planning permission exceeds the forecast of expenditure generated by the future population. This means that for the purposes of Local Plan preparation there is no quantitative need to identify additional sites for retail convenience floorspace. In terms of considering applications for planning permission for retail floorspace, however, recent case law suggests while retail capacity can be a material consideration, the lack of floorspace need cannot be used in itself to refuse planning permission. Therefore in town centres, where there are opportunities to add to the choice of convenience retailing on sites with a high degree of functional integration with the core retail area applications may be favourably considered. Applications for retail development outside of town centres have to be assessed in relation to PPG 6 and other Government advice.
- 6.0 In relation to comparison goods, applying a leakage factor (40%), it is concluded that there is some existing limited capacity within the combined Letchworth/Hitchin/Baldock catchment area though by 2011 this will be negligible. Within the Royston catchment area applying similar leakage factor, there is capacity for approximately 2700 sq. mtrs. of floorspace by 2011. In terms of qualitative need for additional floorspace there is no requirement to plan for any new floorspace to 2011. Surveys of residents, however, indicate that there is concern about the lack of choice of goods on offer and both residents and retailers express a requirement for new and larger shops in Hitchin and Letchworth. It is important to protect both Hitchin's and Letchworth's retail offer and as such the adopted Policy 43 in the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 with Alterations will be adhered to in order to protect and reinforce the retail provision within the town centres.
- 7.0 There are strong reservations about the suitability of the Local Plan allocation HS2 at Nightingale road, Hitchin for bulky goods. Apart from a lack of commercial interest, it lacks accessibility by car from the wider catchment area it is intended to serve.