

ACCESSIBLE RETAIL LETTER TO MEMBERS

28th April 2005

Dear member

As many of you will no doubt have seen in the press, the government has now finally published the PPS6 Planning Guidance on Planning for Town Centres.

We began the process of lobbying the Government over eighteen months ago and have established an ongoing dialogue with ODPM to set out the arguments as to why government policy on large format retailing should remain flexible with regard to the needs of our members. Because government policy has been moving against our interests for some considerable time, the principal objective at this stage has been to make known the case for flexibility and commence a staged process of adding flexibility and realism into national policy.

We believe that this process is proving successful: the government is listening to us, and is inviting us to take part in the discussions as to the direction of government policy. We are already preparing for further dialogue in connection with additional policy statements that will clarify PPS6, and in particular, how schemes should apply the sequential approach.

We have based our dialogue with government on the valuable research that we jointly commissioned with the Shopping Park Investors Forum and the British Property Federation. The evidence shows that the growth in large format, bulky goods retailing has not damaged the attraction, prosperity and success of town centres.

The PPS6 policy reveals the government has not ruled out the needs of large format retailers, and indicates that planning decisions should include an understanding of retailer's needs. It emphasizes that such needs should be balanced against the objective to enhance and protect town centres. With regard to the submissions made on behalf of our members, we are encouraged that national guidance considers that:

- Councils should continue to favour town centre and edge-of-centre development above out-of-centre but apply the sequential approach with regard to the requirements of the business model of large format retailers.
- Councils should be flexible in their identification of sites for development and to be realistic about whether town centres are 'suitable, viable or available' for some retailer's purposes

- Councils are called on to be more sensitive to the needs of developers as well as local communities and to identify sites that can accommodate 'a range of business models'
- Investment in deprived areas is to be encouraged.

We will continue to represent your interests on matters that affect the retail warehouse industry. The Government is currently looking at new legislation on mezzanines and we are lobbying accordingly. We are in the process of commissioning some research to support our case and will keep you advised of our progress.

We will continue to work to ensure the vitality and growth of our industry and to see that relevant legislation is both realistic and commercially - minded.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Lewis-Pratt
Chairman
Accessible Retail