

Review of SG Retail 2: Retail development in the countryside

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This review will assess the content of SG Retail2 and consider if it remains a robust policy for inclusion in the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2016. National and regional policies will be assessed to determine if there are any significant changes that need to be reflected within SG Retail2. The main aim of this review is to ensure that SG Retail2 remains a sound tool for development management to measure proposals for retail development in the countryside.

2. Policy Approach

- 2.1 The overall ethos of SG Retail2 is to support diversification in the rural economy whilst ensuring that there is not any detrimental impact on the rural character. Small scale retail developments in the countryside are promoted as a mechanism to improve the rural economy in Aberdeenshire but these should not have any significant adverse impact on existing retail centres.
- 2.2 Retail developments in the countryside are currently supported under this policy if they are designed to link in with, or ancillary to, new or existing tourist attractions. The policy provides a description of what exactly constitutes a tourist attraction for assessment under this policy. Proposals are also supported if they intend to expand or intensify an existing rural retail use, providing it fits in with the character of the rural area.
- 2.3 In all of these instances, it must be proven that options to locate on brownfield land or re-using derelict buildings have been considered. It is also a prime consideration that the development would not result in any adverse impact on identified network of centres, which should be conveyed through a retail impact assessment.
- 2.4 The policy goes into depth to explain the policy stance for different rural related retail developments: farm shops, farm supply shops and farmers markets.

3. Background

National context

- 3.1 Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) encourages a retail impact analysis to be undertaken for retail proposals that are not within a defined town centre or in accordance with the development plan.
- 3.2 In terms of rural development, SPP emphasises that the planning system has a significant role to play in supporting sustainable economic growth in rural areas.
- 3.3 The National Planning Framework 2 encourages rural development in order to promote sustainable growth, economic diversification and community development.
- 3.4 Planning Advice Note 73: Rural diversification (PAN 73) understands that retailing should be directed towards existing settlements but also details exceptional circumstances where retail can be permitted outside settlements. These are:

- A farm shop tied to an existing farm
- A shop designed to serve tourist or recreational facilities
- A small-scale shop attached to an existing or approved craft workshop retailing to the public
- A small-scale shop designed to serve a dispersed rural community.

Strategic/regional context

- 3.5 The Proposed Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan promotes retail development as a key economic growth opportunity. Whilst developments outwith settlements are likely to be supported, the Proposed SDP continues to emphasise the importance of town centres and the role that retail services can play in enhancing their vitality and viability.
- 3.6 In relation to accessibility, the Proposed SDP also requires all new developments to contribute towards reducing the need to travel and especially by private car.

4. Drivers of Change

- 4.1 Greater emphasis should be placed on accessibility, given that reducing car journeys is one the key targets in the Proposed SDP. However, this need only be highlighted in the justification text to avoid duplication given that policy SG Developer Contributions2: *Access to new development* applies to all new developments.
- 4.2 It is probable that the construction of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR), which is forecast to be completed by 2018, will increase pressure for larger 'destination' retail, if not within settlements on the periphery of Aberdeen, at its junctions. Such proposals will be assessed under this policy. The second paragraph of the reasoned justification text notes the benefits these developments can have on Aberdeenshire's rural economy. However, as a likely consequence of the AWPR and given the potential adverse impact these developments may have, if not related to a tourist attraction, on town or other centres, these should not be supported in the justification text.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 In criterion b) amend "retail impact assessment" to "retail impact analysis".
- 5.2 In the second paragraph of the justification text, replace "Structure Plan" with "Strategic Development Plan" and after the second sentence add, "These developments have the potential reduce travel distances, but as the Strategic Development Plan seeks to reduce car journeys, such proposals must also be accessible by public transport."
- 5.3 In the justification text, amend the last sentence of the second paragraph to "Supporting proposals for larger 'destination' retailing **associated with tourism** also has...".

6. Summary of Main Points

- 6.1 SG Retail2 remains a robust policy with one minor amendment: changing retail impact assessment to retail impact analysis to ensure consistency with

Scottish Planning Policy. However, in the reasoned justification text, larger 'destination' retailing should only be supported if it is associated with tourism, as it is envisaged the AWPR will have a significant effect on the retail sector with an anticipated demand for out-of-town developments. Furthermore, as the Proposed Strategic Development Plan seeks to reduce car journeys more emphasis should be placed on accessibility in the justification text.

References

Strategic Development Planning Authority (2013) *Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan – Proposed Plan*

Aberdeenshire Council (2012) *Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2012*

Scottish Government (2010) *Scottish Planning Policy*

Scottish Government (2009) *National Planning Framework 2*

Scottish Executive Development Department (2005) *Planning Advice Note 73: Rural Diversification*