

**PE1497/J**

Local Government and Communities Directorate  
Planning and Architecture Division

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Ned Sharratt  
Asistant Clerk  
Public Petitions Committee  
T3.40  
Scottish Parliament  
EDINBURGH  
EH99 1SP



Your ref: PE 1497  
14 April 2014

Dear Mr Sharratt

**CONSIDERATION OF PETITION [PE1497](#)  
Supermarket expansion on local high streets**

Thank you for your letter of 2 April which noted that the committee had considered the petition on 1 April and requested further information from the Scottish Government by 29 April to allow the petitioner to comment on the submission.

1. *The Committee had some concerns about how the planning system is consistently applied across Scotland and I would be grateful if you could outline how the Scottish Government ensures consistent application of planning law.*

The Committee has an interest in development planning and consistent application of the Scottish Planning Policy (SPP), specifically with regard to policy on retail and town centres.

The draft SPP (published in April 2013) set out proposals to encourage a wider range of high footfall uses in town centres. Our SPP Position Statement (January 2014) confirmed our intention to ensure an updated town centre first planning policy and associated sequential test are included in the finalised SPP. We are currently finalising the Scottish Planning Policy and expect to publish it in June 2014. The Scottish Government expects planning authorities to take forward the SPP policies in place based development plans and development management within their areas - we will be monitoring compliance with the SPP in development plans following its adoption.

The planning system operates on the basis that decisions are taken at the most local level appropriate to the scale of the development. Ultimately, each individual planning authority is responsible for interpreting the legislation and policies in cases it considers. Each planning

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case is unique and has to be considered individually; while the planning system is generally consistently applied, there has also to be scope within the system for a degree of variation.

2. *The Committee would also be grateful if you could outline the assistance available to small and medium sized retailers under the business rate relief or other similar schemes.*

The Scottish Government is delivering the most competitive business tax environment anywhere in the UK through its business rates policies, worth over £590 million in 2014-15, as part of that official statistics show that almost two thirds [63%] of Scottish retail premises already pay zero or substantially reduced business rates.

To maintain the competitive advantage enjoyed by Scottish businesses and maintain Scotland's position as the best place to do business, the Scottish Government confirmed it will cap the annual inflationary increase in business rates to 2 per cent for 2014-15.

From April this year, the Scottish Government's Small Business Bonus scheme will be expanded to help even more small businesses by increasing the upper threshold for businesses with multiple premises from £25,000 to £35,000, extending the benefit to over 4,000 eligible additional properties and this will be maintained for the lifetime of the current Scottish Parliament.

The Scottish Government is also expanding the Fresh Start rates relief to give 50% rates relief to businesses for 1 year to who take on certain long term empty shops or offices with a rateable value of up to £45,000 to help rejuvenate our high streets. From April this year, this relief will include more premises with higher rateable values of up to £65,000 and additional types of empty premises, including those previously used as pubs, hotels and restaurants.

In addition, the Scottish Government proposes to create a new power next year, which will allow local Councils, who administer the rating system, the ability to create their own local relief schemes which a Council could use to support any businesses in their area and may include small and medium sized retailers.

I hope this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

**GRAEME WALKER**