

Local Government and Communities Directorate
Planning and Architecture Division

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Ned Sherrat
Assistant Clerk
Public Petitions Committee
T3.40
Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP



Your ref: PE 1497
20 August 2014

Dear Mr Sherrat

**CONSIDERATION OF PETITION PE1497
Supermarket expansion on local high streets**

Thank you for your letter of 6 June which noted that the committee had considered the petition on 3 June and requested further information from the Scottish Government by 25 August:

1. The Committee would be grateful if the Scottish Government could explain further the circumstances when a Retail Impact Assessment (RIA) may be required for a development of under 2,500 square metres. Any further information on how such an RIA would affect the planning decision would also be very helpful.

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) was published on 23rd June 2014. The SPP includes a policy on promoting town centres and encourages a flexible and proactive approach. There is an expectation that the planning system should apply a town centre first policy when planning for uses which attract significant numbers of people, including retail and commercial leisure, offices, community and cultural facilities. Development plans are expected to include policies to support an appropriate mix of uses in town centres, local centres and high streets. The SPP also indicates that the impact of new development on the character and amenity of town centres, local centres and high streets will be a material consideration in decision-making.

As part of the development management process, retail impact analysis is expected to be undertaken for proposals for retail or leisure development with a gross floorspace over 2,500m² outwith a town centre, contrary to the development plan. The SPP indicates that for smaller retail and leisure development proposals which may have a significant impact on vitality and viability, planning authorities should advise when retail impact analysis is considered necessary. The expectation is that retail impact analysis would only be undertaken for development outwith a town centre, contrary to the development plan.

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It is recognised that development below the 2,500m² threshold may sometimes have a significant impact, particularly in relation to small or medium-sized town centres. Circumstances where retail impact analysis may be appropriate for developments of less than 2,500m² are likely to include where a proposed development could reasonably be expected to negatively impact on an adjacent town centre and/or to draw trade from further afield, affecting the wider network of centres.

The purpose of a retail impact analysis is to consider the relationship of a proposed development, individually and cumulatively, with the network of centres identified in the development plan. The findings of a retail impact assessment would be a material consideration in deciding the planning application, as may other evidence regarding the retail impact of the development.

2. The Committee is also seeking the view of the Scottish Government on the Federation of Small Businesses¹ proposal that request that the group which has been tasked by the Scottish Government with producing a "town centre master-planning toolkit" be asked to look into the issues raised by the petitioner

A consultant team has been commissioned to research and develop material to inform a future town centre masterplanning toolkit on the basis of a brief containing the following areas of focus:

- design options to help to improve the attractiveness, functionality and appearance of town centres
- proposals to help to improve the servicing arrangements, access and functionality of town centres
- support for 'town centre communities' to engage with each other, develop plans and deliver projects

The contractual arrangements with the consultants taking forward the work do not make specific reference to the points raised by the petitioner although it is expected that general issues relating to town centre uses, including retail, will be covered. The points raised by the petitioner have been brought to the attention of the consultants. Should any relevant material be identified as part of the consultant research then it will be made available to the Scottish Government and will be considered alongside other material for inclusion in the town centre masterplanning toolkit.

I hope this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

GRAEME WALKER

¹ Federation of Small Businesses (2014), *Letter to the Public Petitions Committee* (Page 3) Available at: http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_PublicPetitionsCommittee/General%20Documents/PE1497_H_Federation_of_Small_Businesses_03.03.14.pdf