

CHAPTER 5 – RETAILING

S0: POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Objections

0943/1	<i>Somerfield Stores Limited</i>
1388/4	Ravenseft Industrial Estates Limited
1007/1	Citygrove Leisure PLC & Thames Water PLC

PIC 5/2 Objections

0509/9	Lattice Property (Formerly BG Property)
2136/4	<i>Thames Water (Property Division)</i>

Summary of Objections

- (a) Retail hierarchy needs to be more clearly defined to focus development, with particular reference to local district centres.
- (b) Findings of 'District Wide Town Centre and Retail Policy Review' have not been the subject of proper debate.
- (c) Floorspace projections relating to Wycombe Marsh (Table 3) underestimate scope. Figure imposes premature restriction, which would normally be reserved for the development control process.
- (d) Floorspace projections relating to Lily's Walk (Table 3) do not recognise a clear locational preference for Lily's Walk to be supported in advance of Wycombe Marsh.

Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions

5.0.1 The retail hierarchy is the subject of PIC 5/1 which more closely identifies a 3-tier system of sub-regional, district and local district shopping centres. The first two levels reflect Policy S2 of the adopted structure plan, whilst the third level is locally-determined as required by the same policy. The five local district centres are listed in paragraph 5.39 and are now intended to be shown on the Proposals Map. The five centres in question appear, on inspection, adequately to perform their intended retailing and service functions. The proposed change is accordingly endorsed and would appear to meet the relevant objection. The selection of local centres goes somewhat beyond simple retailing considerations. PPG13 in its most recent revision urges local authorities to: "...reinforce the existing role of town, district and local centres" (paragraph 36) and to "focus....jobs, shopping, leisure (facilities)...in or near to local service centres" (paragraph 40).

5.0.2 The intentions of PPG6 and PPG13 are clear as regards the need for identification and protection of the area's overall shopping hierarchy. It is accordingly a little anomalous that certain quite sizeable urbanised areas, such as Stokenchurch and Lane End, are excluded from the defined hierarchy. Loudwater is a special case which will be considered later. The two centres that have just been cited are indeed not especially accessible by public transport. However, the thrust of PPG13 advice is not only to advocate multi-modal accessibility but also accessibility by non-motorised modes and, significantly, the reduction in journey lengths and travel distance by all modes. It is true that community facilities, including individual shops, are

the subject of some protection under Policy CF1. Whether this is adequate to meet the apparent gap in policy protection will be discussed in the context of Chapter 13 (Community Facilities).

5.0.3 The District-Wide Town Centre & Retail Policy Review (CD/K/2) is a background study document which the LPA rely on to justify the shopping provisions of the Local Plan. It is hard to see how or why its various recommendations should be the subject of particular public scrutiny or debate. The relevant advice of PPG6 is to engage the interest and participation of the private sector in the overall preparation of statutory local plans. However, the way in which this is best done is through the procedures specified for the drafting, deposit and adoption of plans. The opportunity then presents itself for objecting to the plan's provisions, including the assumptions made in its preparation. The evidence of the various pre-inquiry changes to Chapter 5 of the Local Plan suggests that the LPA have indeed had regard to many of the views expressed by the various objectors to both shopping policies, retail floorspace and land allocations.

5.0.4 The former Table 3 floorspace projections and allocations were proposed for updating by PIC 5/2 and are now proposed for deletion by FPIC 5/11. The present intention is to use the methodology used by the 1997 Study (see above) to generate projected floorspace needs against which individual applications will be assessed. The preferred locations are specified in the various Chapter 5 and 6 land allocations and an overall criterion-based policy for new retail development is set out in Policy S1, the criteria being respectively locational (i-iii) and quantitative (a-d) in character. This general approach is the subject of objection under the heading of Policy S1 and will be later considered. Equally, the choice of retail land allocation is the subject of objection which will also be considered later in the report. For the present, the objections relating to the level of floorspace provision at Wycombe Marsh and Lily's Walk are met by the effect of FPIC 5/11 which is endorsed.

RECOMMENDATION

SH00/1 No modification.

S1: NEW RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

The Objections

0173/6	W J Whitehead
0379/40	Sport England
0424/1	Marks & Spencer
0669/1	B&Q plc
0705/1	Mr Paul Wagstaff
0816/3	Invensys plc
0874/6	National Farmers Union
0943/2	<i>Somerfield Stores Limited</i>
0947/2	Kier Ventures Limited
1004/4	Tesco Stores Limited
1007/4	Citygrove Leisure plc and Thames Water plc
1210/1	Sainsbury's Supermarkets Limited
1388/2	Ravenseft Industrial Estates Ltd

Summary of Objections

- (a) Question justification for allocation of retail sites.
- (b) Object to reference to demonstration of need; no definition of need has been set out.
- (c) Policy is contrary to national, regional and Structure Plan policy and does not adequately analyse the need for new development or allocate sufficient land.
- (d) Disagree with priority given to town centre locations over edge-of-centre locations.
- (e) Policy should refer to potential for providing sport and recreation as part of larger office and retail developments.
- (f) Policy S1 fails to take account of Policy S2.
- (g) Delete or amend criterion (iii) relating to out-of-town.
- (h) Object to reference in (a) to impact on other sites allocated for retail development; in line with PPG6 this should exclude out-of-town and include local district centres. Consideration should be in the context of recent developments and outstanding planning permissions.
- (i) Object to reference in (b) to loss of residential land; it should be amended to not normally result in the loss of residential land.
- (j) Object to reference in (c) to loss of employment land; it does not recognise employment generating benefits of land uses outside Use Classes B1, B2 & B8 and prevents loss even where there is a demonstrated need.
- (k) Object to criterion (d) and requirement to minimise the number and length of car journeys; would prevent acceptable farm shop development.

Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions

5.1.1 The major additional retail allocations which have been made in the Local Plan mirror the policy of the adopted structure plan. That is to say, Policy S2 of that plan requires that the defined sub-regional and district centres in Wycombe District receive the bulk of additional floorspace. Convenience shopping floorspace has been increased in High Wycombe and Princes Risborough and is allocated in the Local Plan within the Western Sector development (see Policy HW1) and in the centre of Marlow (see Policy M4). These last two allocations are the subject of site-specific objections and will be considered later. Major comparison floorspace is anticipated within the Western Sector (now a commitment rather than an allocation), equating to between 65-70% of probable growth in Wycombe with the remainder of the growth within the primary shopping areas as defined in the three town centres. Retail warehousing is allocated on two sites in High Wycombe and will also be considered later.

5.1.2 Leaving aside site-specific objections (ie Tesco at High Wycombe and Waitrose at Marlow), the available evidence shows that convenience retail expenditure available (within the area studied by the LPA in 1997) is likely to be in slight decline by about 4.4%. However, the expenditure share from the study area is likely slightly to increase from 57% to 60% over the period 1996-2011. Together with a modest inflow increase from outside the study area, this suggests an increase of some 1.6% in total expenditure. It appears therefore that a situation of relative stability has been achieved where almost all of the existing or allocated convenience floorspace is located within urban areas, if not actually all within town centres or on edge-of-centre sites. The most recent (post-1996) food-stores have been located edge-of-centre (Safeway at High Wycombe and Tesco at Princes Risborough) in contradistinction to edge of urban sites at Handy Cross and Loudwater. In the light of this recent containment and conformity with PPG6 advice, it would seem highly inadvisable to seek any relaxation of Policy S1.

5.1.3 The application of Policy S1, both as regards need and the sequential test of PPG6, appears reasonable in the context of substantial town centre expansion, careful definition of both primary and secondary shopping frontages and the allocation of specific sites for the quantitative and qualitative expansion of convenience floorspace. The special case of retail warehousing (Policy S2) will be considered later. The Local Plan requires all future retail development to locate within specified or defined areas, unless a need for additional retail floorspace within (undefined) edge-of-centre, urban fringe or out-of-town locations can be demonstrated. No specific priority can or need be accorded to any such sites, given the advice of PPG6 and subsequent Ministerial clarification of the subject. One area of substantial doubt is the absence of definition of the extent to which Policy S1 applies. This matter was raised at the inquiry and it would be helpful to define such an area within the confines of the existing Town Centre Insets.

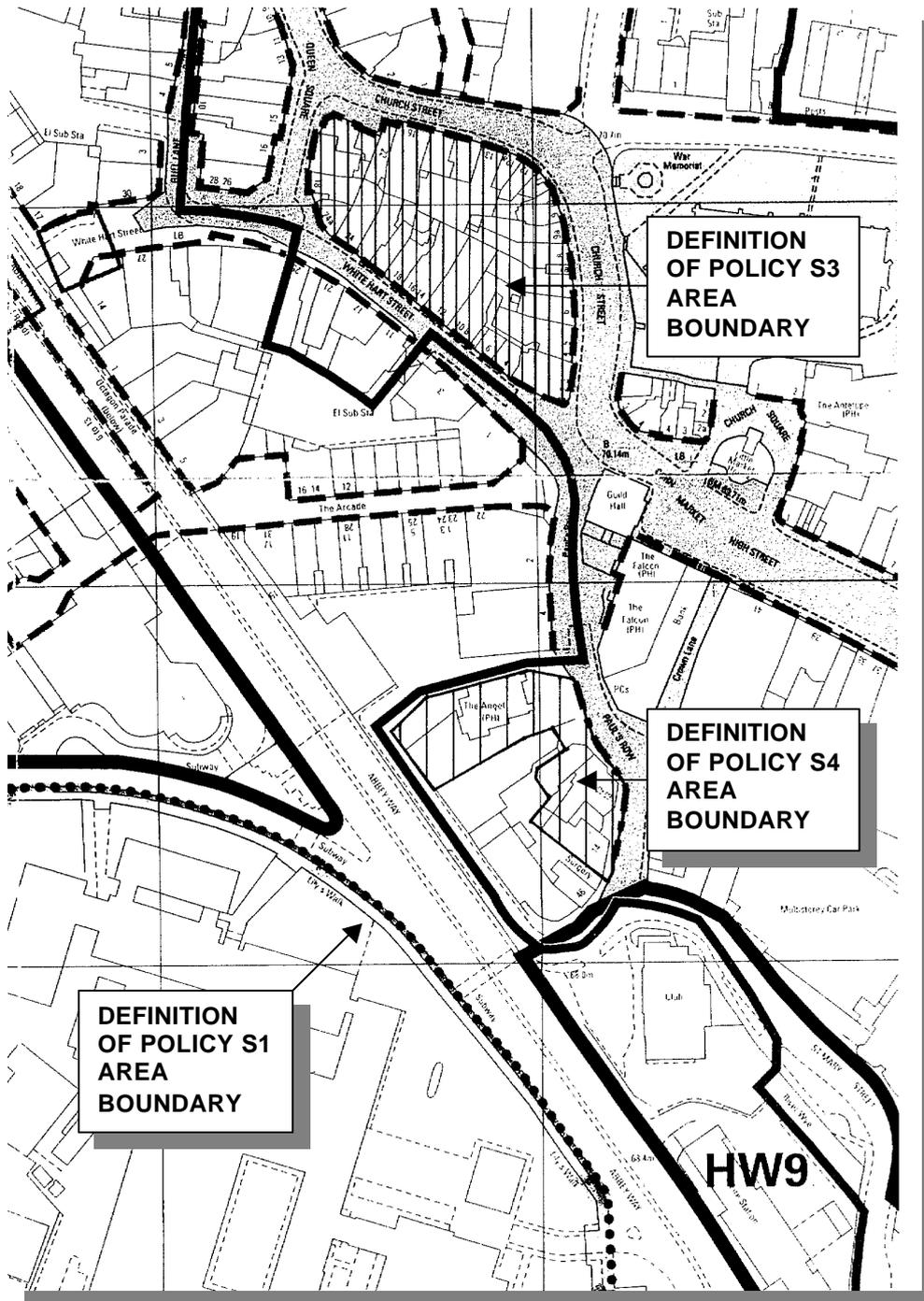
5.1.4 The present situation is a little anomalous in that the Town Centre Inset Maps define areas somewhat larger than that to which Policy S1 should logically apply. As currently drafted, Policy S1 imposes the PPG6 sequential test on all retail development that is not proposed for sites other than (a) allocated sites (b) protected frontages and (c) local district centres. This seems illogical, since it is clearly as desirable for any new shops to be steered towards accessible locations within the three town centres as it is for them to locate within the (as yet undefined) local district centres. The purpose of allocating sites (eg HW1) is to accommodate the bulk of projected retailing expansion. That of defining Policy S3 and S4 frontages is not so much to steer retail development there but to safeguard their integrity of function in the future. It would seem consistent with PPG6 advice and with structure plan policies to define that part of the three town centres (well within the overall confines of the Inset Maps) where retail development, generally consistent with Policy S1, would not need to satisfy the sequential test.

5.1.5 Such a modification to Policy S1 is accordingly recommended. It may be helpful to illustrate, by means of an extract from the High Wycombe Town Centre Inset, how such a policy area might be defined in detail and in practice. This is not intended to be prescriptive and the LPA will wish to determine the Policy S1 area. An additional useful feature of the Town Centre Inset Maps might be to define the building *curtilages*, as distinct from the shopping *frontages*, to which Policies S3 and S4 are intended to apply (see also the later recommendations with respect to these Policies). The reason for so doing is to avoid ambiguity and to introduce a degree of precision for the purposes of development control in future. The two Policies are intended very largely to secure the primacy of shopping uses along the respective frontages. However, there may well be composite proposals, especially those involving listed buildings, where the whole of the affected planning unit or units may need to be taken into account.

5.1.6 Policy S1 is flexible in the sense that it provides for both major shopping proposals, for which the PPG6 sequential test is clearly necessary, and for smaller retailing schemes which may emerge for unforeseen purposes and in at present unpredictable locations. It is right that such currently unknown proposals should not encroach upon residential and employment land allocations, in view of the stringency of supply. However, the unqualified embargo on retail development involving any such land loss is perhaps too rigid. There may be future situations where acceptable development (or redevelopment) may allow for the replacement of residential or employment floorspace. This may occur because of the achievement of locally higher residential or employment densities. An element of flexibility in the criteria (3)(a-d) (modified numbering) used for assessing such retail proposals would be welcome. Criterion (3)(d) might well be simplified to encourage multi-modal access and consequential social inclusiveness and a reduction in private car use for shopping.

5.1.7 In the specific case of farm shop development, the LPA have chosen to cover the matter in Chapter 8 of the Local Plan (see Policy C7 and related objections). This seems

sensible, firstly because the extreme sensitivity of much of the rural part of Wycombe District calls for very special policy consideration and, secondly, because the



subject area is bound up with the wider question of farm diversification and the adaptation of rural buildings. Since a cross-reference has been inserted by PIC 5/3 at paragraph 5.19, it would be logical to reflect this also in Policy S1 itself. The suggestion by Sport England (0379/40) that the inclusion, in retail development, of sport and recreation facilities should be referred to in Policy S1 cannot be supported. The reason is that there is no advice in PPG17

to require such provision (unlike the case of recreational open space in residential development). No doubt commercial and popular pressure will result in such spontaneous provision, as indeed is already the case, but the content of Policy S1 will in no way prevent such uses or activities in larger and more comprehensive development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SH01/1 Modify the Plan as proposed in PICs 5/1, 5/2, 5/3 and 5/4.

SH01/2 Further modify Policy S1 to read:

POLICY S1

(1) RETAIL DEVELOPMENT IS ACCEPTABLE WITHIN THE DEFINED TOWN CENTRE AREAS, PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SHOPPING FRONTAGES AND LOCAL DISTRICT CENTRES AND WITHIN ANY OTHER SITES ALLOCATED FOR SUCH USE AND DEFINED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP. SUCH DEVELOPMENT MUST BE OF A SCALE, EXTENT AND CHARACTER THAT COMPLEMENTS THE RETAIL FUNCTION OF EXISTING CENTRES.

(2) ANY RETAIL PROPOSALS OUTSIDE THESE AREAS WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED IF A DEMONSTRABLE NEED EXISTS FOR THE PARTICULAR DEVELOPMENT WHICH SHOULD BE MET WITHIN THE DISTRICT AND WHICH CANNOT BE LOCATED WITHIN THE ABOVE PREFERRED AREAS. IN SUCH CASES, THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONAL PRIORITIES SHOULD BE OBSERVED:

(a) SITES WITHIN THE DEFINED TOWN CENTRES OF HIGH WYCOMBE, MARLOW AND PRINCES RISBOROUGH; THEN,

(b) WITHIN ADJACENT EDGE-OF-CENTRE LOCATIONS WHERE ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENT CAN BE WELL INTEGRATED WITH THE EXISTING CENTRE; AND THEN,

(c) OUT-OF-CENTRE LOCATIONS WITHIN THE DEFINED URBAN EDGE OF HIGH WYCOMBE.

(3) ALL RETAIL DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS (OTHER THAN RURAL ENTERPRISES AND FARM SHOPS) WILL ONLY BE ACCEPTABLE WHERE THEY WOULD:

(a) HAVE NO ADVERSE IMPACT UPON THE VITALITY AND VIABILITY OF THE ABOVE PREFERRED AREAS (IN APPROPRIATE CIRCUMSTANCES, PLANNING CONDITIONS MAY BE IMPOSED ON CONSENTS IN ORDER TO CONTROL THE TYPE OF GOODS SOLD IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THIS); AND,

(b) NOT RESULT IN THE EFFECTIVE LOSS OF RESIDENTIAL CAPACITY, AND,

(c) NOT RESULT IN THE EFFECTIVE LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT CAPACITY; AND,

(d) BE READILY ACCESSIBLE BY A FULL RANGE OF TRAVEL MODES AND WOULD MINIMISE THE NUMBER AND LENGTH OF PRIVATE CAR TRIPS.

SH01/3 The precise extent of the application of Policy S1 should be defined on the High Wycombe, Marlow and Princes Risborough Town Centre Insets in such a way as to differentiate between allocated and unallocated edge-of-centre sites.

S2: RETAIL WAREHOUSE PROVISION

The Objections

0076/3	Hughenden Parish Council
0137/1	The High Wycombe Society
0158/20	High Wycombe and Marlow Green Party
0168/5	Ian Campbell
0173/5	W J Whitehead
0211/5	K P Hale
0367/9	Highways Agency
0379/41	Sport England
0506/11	Bassetsbury Area Protection Group
0509/3	Lattice Property (Formerly BG Property)
0526/27	Chepping Wycombe Parish Council
0678/3	<i>Thames Water Property Division</i>
0747/1	Citycourt Estates Limited
0816/4	Invensys PLC
0837/11	<i>Hazlemere Parish Council</i>
0839/10	Grange Action Group
0947/1	Kier Ventures Limited
1007/2	Citygrove Leisure PLC & Thames Water PLC
1009/8	Mr J E Pickering
1155/3	A P Sotte
1166/6	Miss L Wootton
1167/8	Miss N J Heath
1228/2	Mrs S J Latimer
1264/9	Stephen Robert Cooper
1309/2	Helen Lytollis
1311/5	David and Sally Smith
1337/11	Gordon Hooper
1388/1	Ravenseft Industrial Estates Ltd
1560/2	W J T Norris
1679/4	Mr & Mrs Brant, Kingsmead Road Caring Residents
1685/4	Mr L V Strange
1715/2	Mrs E Levings
1716/2	Mr C M Baker (Chairman Wooburn Residents Association)
1720/4	Mrs K L Sewell
1725/1	E R Foster

PIC 5/5 Objections

See Appendix 5

PIC 5/12 Objections

0137/23	The High Wycombe Society
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Summary of Objections

- (a) Question application of sequential test; it is contrary to national, regional and Structure Plan policy. Lily's Walk site performs better under sequential test – clear locational preference for Lily's Walk should be made explicit above Wycombe Marsh. Buckinghamshire College should be allocated; scoring system which formed basis of retail allocation is flawed.
- (b) Inadequate explanation of timetable for development.
- (c) Unnecessarily prescriptive and restrictive in term of goods to be sold.
- (d) Scale of provision has not been justified and should be challenged.
- (e) Retail warehouse development will adversely affect viability of town centre, particularly Western Sector.
- (f) Allocation underestimates scope for new retail floorspace specifically at Wycombe Marsh.
- (g) Wycombe Marsh not suitable for retail warehouse provision; site should be maximised as a residential brownfield site.
- (h) Policy should incorporate potential for providing sport and recreational facilities.
- (i) Object to requirement for provision of a distributor road.
- (j) Premature to include site in Plan, until such time as a Highways Study into all Eastern Sector sites is completed.
- (k) Large part of site is greenfield; no ecological surveys have been undertaken; contrary to EU law and Habitat Directives; site valuable as wildlife corridor and 'escape valve'.
- (l) Loss of allotment area (Green Space).
- (m) Retail warehouse provision will lead to increased traffic congestion contrary to PPG13 and Local Plan policy; extra burden on local road infrastructure.
- (n) Pumping of sewage to Little Marlow is not sustainable, nor environmentally efficient.
- (o) Development is an over intensification of the area Daws Hill and Flackwell Heath.
- (p) Question results of the 'sustainability appraisal' for this policy.
- (q) Potential negative effects on current level of River Wye; ecological and conservation, amenity and recreational effects. Question how compensatory flows would be maintained. Issues of water resources, land drainage and groundwater.
- (r) Negative effect on Conservation Area.

Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions

Site Selection and Location

5.2.2 The sequential merits of the two retail warehousing sites (Policies S2 and HW5) appear broadly consistent with the advice of PPG6. That is to say, the Lily's Walk site is unequivocally an edge-of-centre site and Wycombe Marsh, although out-of-centre, is potentially both highly accessible and capable of being reached by a variety of travel modes. Moreover, both are brownfield sites which are not only already developed but are also sites with significant problems of earlier process contamination. The advice in PPG6 (paragraph 3.24) is that "retail development should not be used simply as a mechanism to bring vacant or derelict sites into development". Their allocation in the Plan is not "simply" redevelopment; it is actively to assist in urban regeneration, to avoid greenfield locations and to provide suitable land for a growing and clearly significant retail activity. There is evidence of a demand for additional retail

warehousing in Wycombe District over the entire 1996-2011 period within the range of 12 000-18 000 sq m gross floor area (gfa).

5.2.3 Although the two sites are allocated under separate chapters and policies of the Plan, this seems a matter of editorial convenience and does not in itself indicate any preference in favour of the out-of-centre location. What is slightly inconsistent is the way in which restrictions on their trading are expressed. Such limitation appears particularly necessary in the case of Wycombe Marsh and is in any event supported by PPG6. Whether it is necessary to go into the amount of restrictive detail as in Policy S2(a-g) is doubtful. The advice of the PPG is to impose conditions, implicitly on retail *permissions*, but the prescription of such limitations in local plan *policies* is of doubtful benefit. What is even more doubtful, in the “plan, monitor and manage” regime envisaged by the LPA is the deletion of all floorspace limits or guidelines for either (or both) of the two allocations. This latter alteration to the Written Statement will be dealt with later; for the time being, a reasonable modification would be to signal only the probability of limiting sales to bulky goods by planning condition.

5.2.4 As for the intrinsic merits of the choice of sites for retail warehousing, there is both qualitative and quantitative support for additional floorspace, larger sites and more generally accessible locations. Whatever view is taken on global need or expansion potential, there are few existing single warehouse operations in High Wycombe much in excess of 4000 sq m (gfa) and certainly none which offer comparison-shopping linked trips. The unique merit of the Policy HW5 site is that it might offer four adjacent units of 1000 sq m (gfa) very close indeed to the expanded Western Sector. The conspicuous advantage of the Policy S2 allocation is that it might offer a much larger retail warehouse park with a more extensive range of outlets. It would indeed broadly compare in size with the edge-of-town single site operated by John Lewis. It would also be in an inherently more accessible and sustainable position. Most of the existing large operations are strung along the A40 corridor east of the town centre but in precisely the sporadic pattern that is not at all favoured by current PPG6 advice.

5.2.5 Alternative sites do not appear to be easily available within the urban area of High Wycombe. Certain of the key characteristics of retail warehousing development are demands for easy road access, level terrain, clear visibility and regular shape of sites. To these must now be added the PPG13 criteria of trip linkage and wider and multi-modal accessibility. The topography of the urban area, already noted as a policy issue in Chapter 2, means that large, level sites, both well served by an intensive public transport network and the existing framework of distributor roads, are going to be scarce and hard to find. Added to this is the requirement that employment floorspace, development areas and allocations should not be unduly reduced in extent. For some or all of these reasons, the LPA's considered rejection of the various Policy E4 employment sites is supported. This view is further supported by a recent appeal decision with regard to the site at Tannery Road, some 200 m east but detached from Wycombe Marsh.

5.2.6 For slightly different but equally compelling reasons, the redevelopment of the Buckinghamshire College site and its allocation for retail warehousing cannot at present be supported. If it were a cleared and readily available site, it might well be considered suitable, as is the adjacent Policy HW5 allocation. However, it is visibly occupied by mainly substantial buildings that are in evident and actively intensive use. The fact that the educational establishment might itself wish at some future date to relocate and expand in another place is insufficient argument. Such alternative siting might very well have to take place in a greenfield location and might also suffer from poorer accessibility. Hence it would induce greater travel distances and the wider use of private vehicles. The established College premises are a preferred town centre use which benefits from its range of supporting services and good accessibility by all modes of transport.

Retail Warehouse Floorspace Requirements

5.2.7 The LPA, in the latest alterations to the Local Plan, have dropped any reference to

either global floorspace requirements for the period up to 2011 or indeed even to broadly indicative site allocation levels. This is understandable in the sense that the scale of global need is seriously in dispute and that site capacities, especially of Wycombe Marsh, are somewhat indeterminate. However, this approach seems in danger of taking a non-prescriptive approach to land use planning to extremes. The key to the much-vaunted "plan, monitor and manage" approach to land provision is that the three components of the approach deserve equal weight. In other words, planned provision (at least in the short-term (5-10 years)), planning commitments and completions and consequential planned further releases must all be quantified. Unless this is done, it would be literally impossible arithmetically to relate short-term performance against mid-term projections of need. This would risk ad hoc decision making and might force the LPA into unwarranted and unwise land releases.

5.2.8 Nowhere is this risk more evident than at Wycombe Marsh itself. All the evidence (CD/T/5 and WR94/0/1388) suggests that its probable capacity (previously expressed at 8000 sq m (gfa)) equates to somewhere between 44% and 66% of the global requirement for Wycombe District from 1996-2011. The strongly disputed evidence of the LPA is that land supply at Wycombe Marsh is not deliverable in full within the timescale that is at present confidently envisaged. It is asserted by the LPA that all consents, processes and engineering operations will be in hand or completed to allow redevelopment "in the period 2005-2008" (WDC/H5A/1). The robustness and reliability of this claim is considered elsewhere in this report in connection with Policy H5A. For the purposes of Policy S2 implementation, it may merely be observed that the previous Table 3 projections of retail floorspace showed that precisely 66% of recognised growth would have to be achieved within about 33% of the available timescale. This would mean significant "end loading" of the Plan. It would also mean that, during the critical middle third of the Local Plan period, all retail warehousing completions, apart from limited present commitments, would vitally depend on the development potential of one site.

5.2.9 The absence of site-specific floorspace capacity is even more worrying when the question of economic viability of the site is concerned. A proper planning judgement on the mix and extent of component uses, in the face of considerable objections from a variety of interests, demands some appreciation of development density, mix and probable extent. Moreover, an expert (or indeed any) valuation of the component land uses based on such declared data will be absolutely essential to assess viability. Appendix 2 (Development Principles) of the Plan indicates, not only its extensive revision at a late stage in plan preparation, but very considerable and rigorous requirements by way of site preparation and extraneous works. The capital value of the entire 20 ha site may well be considerable but it will need reliably to match the heavy costs of STW relocation (including tunnelling) and other infrastructure related to redevelopment. It is easy to understand the wish of the landowner (Thames Water) and the LPA to retain as much flexibility as possible in the planning of what is a very extensive and potentially valuable site. It is equally easy to understand the concern and anxiety of objectors to such an open-ended approach.

5.2.10 A reasonable conclusion would be to require the restoration of the comparison shopping floorspace requirements in the Plan. Whether the broad phasing of requirements as between 2001-2006 and 2006-2011 need be prescribed is a matter best left for the LPA. So is a revised assessment of global need. There is some force in the Ravenseft (1388/1) argument that need for retail warehousing in Wycombe District is significantly less footloose than that for most other comparison shopping. It may well be, on this basis, that a further 4000-6000 sq m (gfa) might be justified as a safeguard against monitored shortfall over the whole plan period. This would equate to a roughly 40-45% increase over the previous (1996) level. Given the evident buoyancy of the sector, this might be reasonable. Individual planning applications would still need to be determined using the sequential test which is not simply overcome by a demonstration of unsatisfied need or trader demand. Applications would also need broadly to conform with all other relevant Local Plan provisions such as those which prevent the undue

loss of employment land. Such provisions will also cover such valid considerations as multi-modal access and linkage with other shopping destinations.

Development Capacity at Wycombe Marsh

5.2.11 The merits of Wycombe Marsh for substantial retail warehousing appear considerable. The component land uses may be broadly assessed as to impact. Assuming that about 25% of the available 202 000 sq m of site area is devoted to distributor roads and structural landscaping, the remaining 150 000 sq m would support the development envisaged. This would comprise 400 residential units (80 000 sq m) retail warehousing (26 600 sq m), employment uses (20 000 sq m) community uses (5000 sq m), an hotel plus various class B3 uses (15 000 sq m) and a residual 6000 sq m for remaining Thames Water on-site operations. The above summary is based on LPA evidence and assumes gross residential densities of 50 dwellings per hectare (dw/ha) and average plot ratios of 0.5:1 for class B1 activity and 0.33:1 for retail warehousing. These are high but by no means implausible densities, given the level nature of the site. What these calculations do suggest, however, is that highway land and car parking will have to be tightly planned in the interests of land economy and overall amenity.

5.2.12 The need to economise on site coverage tends to reinforce the choice of Wycombe Marsh for much of the retailing warehousing needs over the next 10 years. Such land use demands level land and ease of access and vehicle manoeuvring. It also tends to be very prodigal in land use, especially in out-of-town situations. As noted in the Urban Task Force Final Report "Towards an Urban Renaissance" (1999), retail parking provision has often sought to respond to *maximum* demand. PPG13 (Annex D) advice is to *restrict* such provision to 1 car space per 20 sq m (gfa). This suggests that about 70-80% or so of site area need be devoted to building footprint and to hard surfacing (assuming single storey construction). This level of impact might, in this context, be reduced by a combination of means. These might include the time-sharing of both HGV delivery space and customer parking as well as reducing parking provision below the PPG13 maximum and by the avoidance of specific site-dedication in such provision. The resultant maximising of planting and soft landscaping is not merely an amenity consideration. It would also be a matter of some concern to control run-off and surface water drainage requirements in what is likely to be a critical situation.

5.2.13 The above conclusions summarise both the admitted strengths and likely problems of allocating land at Wycombe Marsh under Policy S2. The objection that all of the site should be devoted to housing ignores the land availability constraints of the wider urban area. The key argument is that housing allocations may, if absolutely necessary, be made elsewhere. On the other hand, certain necessary uses, in particular warehousing and the second Policy RT6 hotel site, would be in extreme danger of having to seek greenfield locations. Other urban land uses, such as open space and playing field provision, seems locally inappropriate. The site adjoins very extensive areas of accessible public open space as well as widespread areas of safeguarded land to much of which Policy L2 protection applies in addition to being crossed by rights of way on foot. Moreover, the possible allocation, within Policy H5A, of hotel, community and restaurant uses as well as incidental open space ancillary to housing combines to suggest that both indoor and outdoor leisure would be locally accommodated.

Road Network and Accessibility

5.2.14 Certain objections relate to the provision of either a district or primary distributor road or roads through the area covered by Thames Water's historic ownership or more recent land assembly. So far from being either premature or unwelcome, the provision of three points of entry and their linkage seems one of the major advantages of the overall proposal. It is perhaps regrettable that more detail of such infrastructure improvement is not available for the wider public to appreciate the degree of advantage. However, enough evidence is at hand to point to some of the ways in which the new development area would assist in urban regeneration. Firstly, the road linkages might relieve the especially poorly aligned and congested stretch of the A40 between Abbey Barn Road and Hatters Lane, a distance of some

800 m. Secondly, the third point of possible access on Abbey Barn Road would relieve the local residential area of through traffic and would complement or, at the very least, not prejudice the eventual improvement of Abbey Barn Lane and the development of the Abbey Barn North housing area.

5.2.15 Thirdly, and possibly most importantly, public transport network linkage would be much enhanced. The internal road system at Wycombe Marsh would assist in both speeding up east-west bus corridor movement and would also achieve very acceptable route penetration and coverage of the redeveloped area. The shape of the area is such that 150-200 m maximum walk distance to public transport might be sought. Levels of service and reliability would be further enhanced if the Policy T11 busway from High Wycombe station to London Road were early implemented. Elsewhere in the report (see T11-T12) it is concluded that the disused line to Bourne End is most unlikely to be brought back into any form of railway use. However, as envisaged in the Plan and enthusiastically advocated by the High Wycombe Society, the probable availability of the old railway trackbed as far as Wycombe Marsh would mean a largely dedicated public transport alignment. This would extend over a distance of some 1.5 km, a not inconsiderable planning advantage in a very heavily congested road corridor.

Wildlife and Conservation

5.2.16 It is not the case that the site is greenfield in character. It is extensive and very largely open in the limited sense of not being built upon. However, its original development took place about 100 years ago and was for the purposes of locating a public utility, since extensively upgraded. Its seclusion, openness and lack of urban activity have naturally led to its being a sanctuary for wildlife. This is evidenced by the detailed observations of Bassetsbury Area Protection Group (0506/11) amongst others. Nevertheless, no part of the overall Wycombe Marsh site has been the subject of statutory (or other) designations under Policies L8-L10 (inclusive). Neither has its allocation and redevelopment for housing, retail or other urban uses been the subject of objection by English Nature or the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT). The lack of adverse comment from these bodies suggests that the botanical and ornithological interest of the area is limited to what might reasonably be expected of an under-used stretch of land in the middle of an extensive urban area.

5.2.17 No part of the Policy H5A Wycombe Marsh area has evidently been designated as a (non-statutory) Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) or a Local Nature Reserve (LNR). Neither has there been a statutory designation as a National Nature Reserve (NNR) or a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It follows that no part of it can be regarded as of international ecological interest or importance. The objection that Wycombe Marsh is protected by European Union legislation (or by regulations made under such legislation) is unfounded. That is because such internationally recognised sites are invariably defined on the basis of nationally-designated sites such as SSSIs. The objection that the existing allotments should be retained cannot be sustained for the clear planning requirement to secure 3-point road access, including access at the Abbey barn Road-Kingsmead Road junction. The LPA's evidence is that replacement land for allotments is available. Such replacement would be subject to separate legislation governing statutory allotments.

Infrastructure Provision

5.2.18 In the deposit version of the Local Plan, the road network surrounding the Wycombe Marsh site contained no fewer than six Policy T21 notations indicating local road junction improvements. These notations are now proposed for deletion. Their original purpose was to support various greenfield development proposals, notably Abbey Barn North and South (Policy H2(a-b)). The effect of implementing the Policy H5A housing and ancillary proposals would be slightly to increase the residential component of the combined development to be achieved in or near the A40 corridor. However, the present dwelling pattern proposed is inherently more sustainable in the sense of being higher density and very much more

accessible by public transport. The three projected junction improvements associated with the Policy H5A and S2 allocations would be wholly or largely funded by the development. The disruption and property acquisition occasioned by this reduced number of on-line road improvements would be significantly less. There is no evidence that the road traffic generated by the retail development would result in unacceptable local congestion, especially since retail and work-journey peak generation would not generally coincide.

5.2.19 The allocation of land for retail warehousing under Policy S2 does not in itself necessitate the removal of the STW to Little Marlow. This is because the development could independently proceed on the smaller Bunzl site adjacent to London Road and Abbey Barn Road. This would be very far from ideal as a planning solution. Not only would the reduced site area be far less able to sustain a proper contribution to the overall road network but it would presumably have to make physical provision within it for a major east-west distributor road. This would be a very unsatisfactory and uneconomical use of the cleared site, given its irregular outline, and might be very inefficient and unsightly in the necessary configuration of buildings and its circulation pattern. However, the essential point is that Policy S2 does not absolutely require the STW re-location with all its attendant costs, which are currently disputed. The question of these costs bears more directly on the housing proposals and is accordingly considered under that heading (see H5A).

Urban Expansion

5.2.20 The objection that the proposed pattern of development at Wycombe Marsh would be an over-intensification of the urban form in the Daws Hill-Flackwell Heath area is difficult to support. If anything, the combined area of the Policy H5A and S2 allocations is a good deal more compact than previous proposals (ie Policy H2(a-b)). Even if the retained Policy H2(b) allocation is added, there still remains a broad wedge of attractive open country between Abbey Barn North and Daws Hill, on the one hand, and Flackwell Heath and Abbey Barn North, on the other. There is admittedly the combined possible effects of the Policy GB8 development potential and the outstanding objection at Abbey Barn Farm to take into account. However, the pronounced barrier effect of the M40 motorway and the permanent protection given by the Green Belt in this area to be taken into account. In addition, much of the area north of the M40 is subject to Policy L2 protection as a Local Landscape Area. This matter will be further explored in connection with Chapter 12 objections (see RT6).

Other Considerations

5.2.21 The matters raised by the objection related to water resources, land drainage and groundwater is more fully considered under the heading of Policy H5A. A good deal will depend on the way that run-off and surface water drainage is controlled. The dead flat and low-lying nature of much of Wycombe Marsh may require the creation of balancing reservoirs, as part of a landscaping scheme, to avoid local flooding or ponding. This is important in view of the very close proximity of the extensive and most attractive public open space to the west. This open space is a central dominant feature of the High Wycombe Town Centre Conservation Area. On the other hand, the extreme eastern tip of this Conservation Area, in the vicinity of the Bassetsbury Lane enclave, would seem to be largely insulated from the probable direct effects of redevelopment. This is because of the screening effect of the old railway embankment (to be retained under Policy T11). There is also the fact that only non-motorised access to the Wycombe Marsh area will be possible from the Conservation Area, which is equally fortunate in that it is not at present traversed by any through roads or vehicle traffic.

RECOMMENDATION

SH02/1 No modification.

S3: TOWN CENTRES & PRIMARY SHOPPING FRONTAGES

The Objections

0164/1	Mr & Mrs Frewer
0834/10	Prudential Assurance Company Ltd
0843/3	Princes Risborough Chamber of Trade
1050/1	Green Property (UK) Limited
1196/2	Post Office Property Holdings
1683/6	Wycombe Area Access For All

Summary of Objections

- (a) Question whether policy is wholly appropriate, especially in context of major development planned in High Wycombe (Western Sector). Policy should be more flexible.
- (b) More flexibility required in terms of uses allowed on upper floors.
- (c) Anglers Court, Spittal Street, Marlow and Units 1 & 2, Horns Lane, Princes Risborough should be re-designated from Primary to Secondary frontage.
- (d) Concern at proposals to control traffic in town centres; potential loss of available parking to 'orange badge users'.

Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions

5.3.1 Policy S3 appears adequately flexible in that the slightly exceptional characteristics of High Wycombe Town Centre are recognised and possible planning merit by way of the preservation of listed buildings is included. The relevant objection (0834/10) appears to suggest that the Western Sector redevelopment, when completed, will reduce the extent of retail frontage or floorspace requiring policy protection. This objection cannot be supported for three reasons. In the first place, detailed inspection of the Town Centre broadly confirms the accuracy of the primary frontage classification. Secondly, the structure plan overall policy (CSP Policies S2 and S4) is to expand High Wycombe as a shopping centre (especially for comparison floorspace) and not merely to shift its centre of gravity. Thirdly, this latter effect may or may not happen; if it does, the completion of the Western Sector will be time enough to assess such an effect and, if necessary, then to adjust the S3 notation on the Proposals Map.

5.3.2 The Policy, as set out in the Deposit Plan (there is no wording change proposed by way of PIC), is silent on the subject of retaining shop uses within upper floors of premises. This is referred to in the supporting text only (at paragraph 5.35). A degree of flexibility would be very welcome, particularly with regard to the bringing back into residential use of the upper parts of shops. This is to be encouraged as a means of adding to the housing stock and because it assists in preserving the vitality of town centres. It is clearly conditional upon there being adequate, safe and independent means of access to residential accommodation at the upper level. It might not be appropriate, for example, in purpose-built shop premises where upper floor trading was intended from the outset. The restriction of changes of use of upper storeys from Classes A1-A3 within the town centre is supported. However, this ought explicitly to form part of Policy S3. To rely solely on the supporting text in determining planning applications might be potentially confusing to developers and would carry less weight if an adverse decision were appealed.

5.3.3 The perceived vagueness of Policy S3 and its application to the various town centre premises might be lessened or avoided if modifications to both wording and map definition

were made. The wording should make it clear that the entire building (or planning unit) which contains the protected frontage ought to be the subject of the policy. That would mean, for example, that the change of use of an individual ground floor shop within the frontage would not be permitted but that premises above would not enjoy similar protection, provided that they were physically independent. Conversely, where retail floorspace exists above ground floor level but is within the same planning unit (by reason of initial design or subsequent conversion) it would be the subject of the restrictive policy. The restriction on the cumulative effects of change of use from an existing shop use is manifestly intended to prevent a clear breach in the shopping frontage by dint of preventing two (or more) adjacent Class A2 or A3 uses to be established. Individual Class A3 uses in High Wycombe are to be allowed on their own merits.

5.3.4 It is clearly the intention of the Policy to safeguard the character of the primary shopping frontage by controlling the use or uses to which the upper parts of a frontage building might be put. If these upper parts are in current use as retail or ancillary floorspace, the explicit application of the Policy to *all parts* of the premises should be made clear. It is equally the object of the Policy to retain existing or established Class A2 (professional services) or Class A3 (food and drink) uses within the essential core of the town centre, at wherever floor level they may be, in the interests of maintaining its viability and vitality. The Policy therefore reasonably restricts the change of use of existing Class A2 or A3 premises, within the defined frontage zone, to any other use. In view of the objections which have been made to other policies in the Plan, an exception ought to be made for the seemingly conversion of upper parts to residential accommodation. Such an exception would follow the advice of PPG3 (paragraph 50) by "*encouraging more housing.....in town centres by.....converting space above shops and vacant commercial buildings*". A suitable S3 formulation is recommended; the LPA may wish to consider expanding the supporting text more adequately to justify and explain the policy.

5.3.5 Three objections relate to the defined extent of Policy S3 application in Marlow and Princes Risborough (1050/1: 0164/1 and 0843/3). The latter two have been conditionally withdrawn and the alterations to the Proposals Map Inset appear to meet them. Since the site in question is on the fringe of the local primary shopping frontage, its altered notation as subject to Policy S4 is endorsed. The objection relating to Angler's Court, Marlow, is not supported. This is because the site visibly forms part of the defined Policy S3 frontage of the linear town centre. Its exclusion would also require the additional properties to the north-east. Moreover, the trading pitch in question is not only well sited relative to the centre as a whole but also enjoys rear servicing facilities (the subject of retention under Policy M3) and adjacent off-street public parking provision. It is accordingly well placed for a variety of retail functions. The potential loss of such frontage shopping to non-shop uses would accordingly act to the detriment of the vitality of this part of the town centre.

5.3.6 The questions of disabled access and special parking raised by objection (1683/6) cannot be addressed by modification of Policy S3. Firstly, the relevant (Policy HW6) pedestrianisation has largely been completed. Provision seems, on inspection, to have been made for disabled access by car. Secondly, any restrictions on parking within any of the Primary Shopping Centres in the three town centres will necessarily reflect Appendix 10 of the Local Plan. Specified percentages of disabled provision are laid down there and appear to reflect the advice of PPG13 (paragraph 31): "*policies to reduce the level of parking must ensure that there are adequate numbers of suitably designed parking spaces for disabled people*". Thirdly, the matter is generally covered by Policy T1 (Accessible Development and Sustainability) and will be further considered under that heading. The actual extent and regulation of "orange badge" parking is a matter to be determined by the local highway authority and such details cannot be included in a land use plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SH03/1 Modify the extent of Policy S3 notation on the Princes Risborough Proposals Map Inset as PIC 5/7.

SH03/2 Modify Policy S3 to read:

POLICY S3

(1) WITHIN THE PRIMARY SHOPPING FRONTAGE ZONES, AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, PLANNING PERMISSION FOR THE CHANGE OF USE (OF ANY PART OF THE PREMISES IN QUESTION) FROM A SHOP USE (USE CLASS A1) TO A NON-SHOP USE WILL NOT BE PERMITTED. EXCEPTIONS TO THIS POLICY WILL BE:

(a) WHERE THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT WOULD DEMONSTRABLY ASSIST IN THE CONTINUED PRESERVATION OR REHABILITATION OF A LISTED BUILDING WHICH MIGHT NOT OTHERWISE BE ACHIEVED;

(b) WHERE, IN HIGH WYCOMBE TOWN CENTRE, THE PROPOSAL IS FOR A USE WITHIN CLASS A3 OF THE USE CLASSES ORDER AND WHICH WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO ITS OVERALL ATTRACTIVENESS; AND WHICH,

(c) WOULD NOT ADJOIN AN EXISTING (OR PROPOSED AND AUTHORISED) NON-SHOP USE OR CUMULATIVELY UNDERMINE THE EFFICIENCY OR CONTINUITY OF THE TOWN CENTRE'S RETAIL FUNCTION; OR

(d) WHERE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF THE UPPER PARTS OR STOREYS OF EXISTING TOWN CENTRE PREMISES WOULD INVOLVE THE CREATION OF INDEPENDENTLY ACCESSIBLE RESIDENTIAL UNIT(S).

(2) PERMISSIONS GRANTED FOR THE ABOVE CHANGES, AS EXCEPTIONS TO THE POLICY, MAY BE RESTRICTED TO THE PARTICULAR USE FOR WHICH APPLICATION WAS MADE, NOTWITHSTANDING THE PROVISIONS OF THE USE CLASSES ORDER.

(3) THE CHANGE OF USE OF AN EXISTING CLASS A2 OR A3 USE TO ONE WHICH IS OUTSIDE PARTS A OR C OF THE SCHEDULE TO THE TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING (USE CLASSES) ORDER WILL NOT BE PERMITTED

SH03/2 Modify the Proposals Map (High Wycombe, Marlow and Princes Risborough Town Centre Insets) to indicate the full extent of the individual premises or buildings and any adjacent land to which Policy S3 applies.

SH03/3 Modify the sub-heading of the supplementary text to read: **'Primary Shopping Frontage Zones'** (before paragraph 5.30).

S4: SECONDARY SHOPPING FRONTAGES

The Objections

0406/2 Warrant Investments Ltd
834/11 Prudential Assurance Company Ltd
1018/1 Messrs E F & A V George
1042/7 Mr J D Burnham

Summary of Objections

- (a) Policy too restrictive; policy should be amended to permit the natural expansion of service uses, as PPG6 advises.
- (b) Greater flexibility should be allowed in relation to A2 and A3 uses being permitted next to each other.
- (c) Regard should be had to the effects of the Western Sector in changing the prime retail focus of High Wycombe; there will be decreased demand for retail within some existing secondary frontages.
- (d) Primary frontage controls should be applied to secondary frontages in Marlow.
- (e) Paul's Row, High Wycombe, should not be designated as a secondary frontage.

Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions

5.4.1 Policies S3 and S4 are broadly similar in that they apply to defined shopping frontages within the three town centres of Wycombe District. Like Policy S3, the application of Policy S4 ought to be indicated by a notation that includes the land and buildings to which the need for frontage retention applies. The need for this is evidenced by the by the slightly anomalous inclusion of the words *"INCLUDING THE FIRST FLOOR OF THE OCTAGON CENTRE IN HIGH WYCOMBE"*. It would be consistent with the operation and permitted exceptions of Policy S3 if the two Proposals Map notations were brought into conformity. As with the other retail policy, a welcome element of flexibility would be introduced if the conversion of the upper parts of shop premises into suitable residential accommodation were permitted. Since it is the intention of the LPA to allow, in appropriate circumstances, changes of use to use as a community facility (paragraph 5.37), this perhaps ought to be made clear in the Policy.

5.4.2 The objections which relate to the ease of introducing Class A2 and A3 uses within secondary frontages is not supported. On inspection, the various secondary frontages appear already to sustain a mix of shop and non-shop uses. Their relatively prominent and accessible locations combine to suggest that it is this present mix which the LPA very reasonably wish to retain. The prohibition of adjacent non-shop uses has the extreme merit of simplicity; it would also serve to maintain a degree of retailing continuity. It cannot be held to be especially restrictive since, in theory at least, alternate units or a maximum of 50% of the units within any given frontage might benefit from the terms of the Policy. This would meet the PPG6 advice where an expansion of service sector uses within town centres is enjoined. It is significant that the terms of the Policy, even as modified, would allow all levels of accommodation above a conforming Class A2 or A3 use to be brought into use as such; this would allow for significant expansion.

5.4.3 As for the objection that the Western Sector redevelopment and comparison floorspace expansion would reduce demand for Class A1 units elsewhere, the reasons applicable to Policy S3 have broadly equivalent force. It would at present be wrong in principle to curtail the extent of shopping frontages speculatively and in the absence of any firm evidence. The extent of primary and secondary frontages within the principal shopping streets of Marlow appear, on inspection, to be accurately defined. As with High Wycombe, the probable considerable redevelopment areas (Policies M4 and M5) may result in changes affecting the pattern of shopping. This may come about as a result of alterations to the patterns of pedestrian and vehicle movement and parking. However, as in High Wycombe, these effects must remain speculative. It would be best to leave an assessment of the effects of added retail floorspace until redevelopment is completed in conformity with the Local Plan.

5.4.4 The site-specific objection to Policy S4 (0406/2) relates to property in a somewhat detached location towards the southern end of High Wycombe Town Centre. The inclusion of the frontage property appears appropriate for a number of reasons. It is located within the designated conservation area and is adjacent to a pedestrian priority area, the subject of Policy HW6. It is obviously on an important pedestrian desire line between the Wycombe

Swan and the heart of the town centre at the Guild Hall. The property in question also adjoins an extensive and prominent area, the subject of regenerative Policy HW9. It is seemingly the subject of a planning application to extend the existing A1 unit to facilitate a new Class A1 use. This fact rather neatly makes the point that the extent of the planning unit or premises ought to be indicated on the Proposals Map Inset with the Policy S4 notation. If the current planning application is favourably determined, the extent of the resultant permission will no doubt be indicated in the Local Plan as a Policy S4 commitment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SH04/1 Modify Policy S4 as in PIC 5/8.

SH04/2 Further modify Policy S4 to read:

POLICY S4

WITHIN THE SECONDARY SHOPPING FRONTAGE ZONES, AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, THE CHANGE OF USE (OF ANY PART OF THE PREMISES IN QUESTION) FROM A SHOP TO A USE WITHIN CLASSES A2 OR A3 OF THE SCHEDULE TO THE USE CLASSES ORDER OR THE CHANGE OF USE OF ANY SHOP UNIT WITHIN PART A TO ANY USE OUTSIDE PART A (INCLUDING PARTS C AND D) WILL BE ACCEPTABLE, PROVIDED THAT THE UNIT WHICH IS THE SUBJECT OF THE USE CHANGE DOES NOT ADJOIN AN EXISTING (OR PROPOSED AND AUTHORISED) NON-SHOP UNIT.

SH04/3 Modify the Proposals Map (High Wycombe, Marlow and Princes Risborough Town Centre Insets) to indicate the full extent of the individual premises or buildings and any adjacent land to which Policy S4 applies.

SH04/4 Modify the sub-heading of the supplementary text to read: "**Secondary Shopping Frontage Zones**" (before paragraph 5.36).

S5: LOCAL DISTRICT CENTRES

The Objections

0942/3 *Somerfield Stores Limited*
1004/5 *Tesco Stores Limited*

Summary of Objections

- (a) Change policy wording 'effect' to 'impact'.
- (b) Tesco store at Loudwater should be identified as a Local District Centre.

Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions

5.5.1 The substitution in PIC 0/00 of the word "effect" by the word "impact" meets one of the above objections (0942/3). This is appropriate since it is the word used in PPG6 in the context of the assessment of any proposed development upon established shopping centres. This wording change is endorsed but it would help in the understanding and application of Policy S5 if the first two paragraphs of the Policy were to be differentiated by explicit numbering. This would emphasise the apparent fact that the first paragraph refers to development proposals involving *either* external or internal changes. The second refers to development by internal

change of use *only*. In addition, since the Policy is quite properly cross-referenced to the Proposals Maps, it would be helpful to complete the cross-referencing and to include the precise locations in the text as well (see also paragraph 5.0.1 above). Certain other detailed wording modifications are suggested in the interests of greater clarity and of closer conformity with current planning guidance.

5.5.2 The categorisation of the Tesco foodstore at Loudwater as a Local District Centre does not seem at all appropriate. The reasons for this relate to its size, location, catchment and range of trading. It has a net floorspace of some 2843 sq m which may be compared with the largest equivalent convenience store at Hazlemere Local District Centre which is 700 sq m in net area (ie a ratio of 4:1 in relation to the Tesco foodstore's distinctly smaller and edge-of-town residential catchment). It is located at the extreme south-east edge of the High Wycombe urban area; moreover, an urban edge which is tightly constrained in the long term by the defined Green Belt and by the AONB designation. It is very conspicuously awkward of access on foot or by public transport and clearly attracts a mainly car-borne shopper clientele. It is visibly overtrading, both by reference to its apparent high car park occupancy and by its very high claimed turnover, in excess of £10 000/sq m.

5.5.3 Although the Tesco supermarket supports some functions of a local district centre (ie bakery, stationery, confectionery, pharmaceutical products and the like) these are not especially easy to use by the shopper on foot or anyone arriving by bus or cycle. There is no evidence of even the amount of "walk-in" trade which supermarkets in town centre or edge-of-centre locations commonly enjoy. There may well be some patronage from employees in the adjacent extensive Loudwater employment area (as defined by Policy E4). However, this enclave is separated from the foodstore by the motorway spur leading to and from J3 on the M40 motorway and by a large and busy 5-arm gyratory on the A40. All in all, the only safely pedestrian-accessible catchment would appear to be the comparatively tiny residential area at Wooburn Green. It is arguable that internal diversification might allow a greater range of trading in-store but the physical restrictions of the confined site would effectively bestow monopoly status on Tesco that would be contrary to the advice of PPG6.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SH05/1 Modify Policy S8 as in PIC 0/00.

SH05/2 Further modify Policy S5 to read:

POLICY S5

(1) DEVELOPMENT LIKELY TO HAVE AN ADVERSE IMPACT ON THE VITALITY, VIABILITY OR PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE LOCAL DISTRICT CENTRES (LISTED BELOW AND SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP) WILL NOT BE PERMITTED:

- | | | | |
|-----|-----------------|-----|------------|
| (a) | DESBOROUGH ROAD | NGR | SU 856 933 |
| (b) | BOURNE END | | SU 895 871 |
| (c) | HAZLEMERE | | SU 851 955 |
| (d) | WOOBURN GREEN | | SU 911 895 |
| (e) | FLACKWELL HEATH | | SU 895 899 |

(2) WHEN DETERMINING APPLICATIONS, IN THESE LOCAL DISTRICT CENTRES, FOR CHANGES OF USE OF EXISTING SHOPS (USE CLASS A1) TO NON-SHOP USES (USE CLASSES A2-A3), THE COUNCIL WILL TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE FOLLOWING:

- (a) THE DEGREE OF CUSTOMER ATTRACTION TO THE PROPOSED USE;
 - (b) THE FORM OF THE RETAIL COMPONENT OF THE CENTRE AND THE EXISTING LEVEL OF NON-RETAIL ACTIVITIES; AND
 - (c) THE SUITABILITY OF THE UNIT FOR SHOPPING IN RELATION TO ITS SIZE AND SERVICING ARRANGEMENTS (OR BOTH).
- (3) IN ALL CASES, PERMISSION WILL NOT BE GRANTED FOR THE CHANGE OF USE OF A SHOP TO A NON-SHOP USE WHERE THE PREMISES IN QUESTION ADJOIN AN EXISTING (OR PROPOSED AND AUTHORISED) NON-SHOP USE.
- (4) THE CHANGE OF USE OF ANY UNIT WITHIN PART A OF THE SCHEDULE TO THE TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING (USE CLASSES) ORDER TO ANY USE OUTSIDE PART A OF THE ORDER WILL NOT BE PERMITTED.

S7: CHANGES OF USE OF SHOPS TO NON-SHOP USES

The Objections

1042/8 Mr J D Burnham

Summary of Objections

- (a) Safeguards and enforcement measures are needed to ensure window displays are maintained.

Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions

5.7.1 Where existing or authorised retail shop use of premises (Class A1) is permitted to change to another use (eg to a betting shop in Class A2), it is very common practice to require that a suitable quasi-retail shop window display be maintained. This is covered by Policy S7(i) and will no doubt be required in situations (eg within an otherwise uniform parade of shops) where such a condition would follow the models suggested and would meet the relevant tests contained in C1/85 and C11/95. The imposition of such conditions and their continued effect may be the subject of appeal in the normal way. If such conditions are not appealed and their requirements are not met, the LPA may take enforcement action under the Planning Acts. It is open to any member of the public to draw the attention of the LPA to such a breach. It is at the LPA's discretion to take subsequent enforcement action. Given these legal powers, it is not necessary to cover enforcement procedures within the Local Plan, since any such guarantee of automatic enforcement would take away the LPA's absolute discretion to take future action.

RECOMMENDATION

SH07/1 No modification.

S8: SHOP FRONT DESIGN

The Objections

1260/25 The Marlow Society

Summary of Objections

- (a) Upper floor windows in Conservation Areas should not be enlarged for any reason; remove wording 'for display purposes'.

Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions

5.8.1 Policy S8 of the Local Plan is concerned with shop-front design. It is conceivable, if a little unlikely, that individual retailers might wish to enlarge upper floor windows for display purposes. Such requests will be unusual since first floor retailing is comparatively unusual, apart from within purpose-built premises. On the other hand, current urban regeneration policies very broadly favour "living above the shop" (ie the bringing back into residential use of upper parts). Such restoration may sometimes require the enlargement of upper floor windows for amenity reasons, even in conservation areas. It would be wrong and inflexible to place a general embargo on such treatment; individual cases should be judged on merit. The qualification "for display purposes" in Policy S8 is reasonable and has attracted only a single objection and none from commercial interests. It should accordingly remain.

RECOMMENDATION

SH08/1 Modify Policy S8 as in PIC 5/10.

S9: POLICY OMISSIONS

The Objections

0158/22 High Wycombe and Marlow Green Party

1004/3 Tesco Stores Limited

1125/6 Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College

Summary of Objections

- (a) Co-operatives should be promoted.
- (b) Plan should include policy promoting a site for a foodstore to replace the Tesco store which may be displaced by the Western Sector development.
- (c) Object to omission of a general criteria-based policy to control and guide retail development out-of-centre.
- (d) Development flexibility on the College and hospital site should be considered, to allow for retail development in the area, should the college consolidate.

Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions

5.9.1 The objection relating to the displacement of the Tesco store will be dealt with under the Chapter 6 (Town Centres) heading (see HW1). None of the other above objections to policy omissions can be supported, for the following reasons. The advocacy of co-operative

retailing is not a land use planning matter since any commercial form or agency of retail trading cannot form the basis of development plan policies and, by implication, their preferential treatment. The location of retailing out-of-centre is a non-preferred option in both national and local policy. General advice on such location is given in PPG6 (paragraph 1.16) and this should be read in conjunction with the relevant policies of the Local Plan (eg G2, S1 and T1). Explicit policies do not appear necessary. The Buckinghamshire College and the adjacent Wycombe General Hospital sites would certainly appear, if they were vacant and available, to be candidates for inclusion in the town centre shopping allocation. Since they are demonstrably not available for redevelopment, this sort of purely indeterminate and hypothetical allocation would be premature and unhelpful.

RECOMMENDATION

SH09/1 No modification.