



Elgin High Street

## Introduction

7.1 Retailing is an important sector in the Moray economy. It provides some 3,300 jobs and generates high levels of expenditure, equivalent to around £270 million per annum. Elgin is Moray's primary retailing centre which has a significant catchment covering the Council area but it must also compete with the larger centres at Inverness and Aberdeen for business and investment.

## National Context

7.2 National Planning Guidance relating to retail development was reviewed in October 1998 in National Planning Policy Guideline 8 (Revised) 'Town Centres and Retailing'. In relation to the preparation of Structure Plans, NPPG 8 sets out the following strategic policy requirements:

- To identify the capacity of existing town centres to accommodate additional retail development.
- To identify opportunities for new retail development outwith town centres and ensure that large scale development is co-ordinated with transport infrastructure.
- To set out criteria for the assessment of retail development proposals outwith town centres.

7.3 The principle of sustainable development is central to the Government's national retailing policy. New shopping development is encouraged to locate within or adjacent to existing town centres. This seeks to optimise the locational advantages for transport and enhance the attraction of town centres as focal points for retailing activity.

7.4 Government policy also states that sites outwith the defined town centre should only be considered for retail development where opportunities within the centre do not exist. In addition, such development should not damage the vitality and viability of the central shopping area.

STRUCTURE PLAN

STRUCTURE PLAN

STRUCTURE PLAN

STRUCTURE PLAN

RETAILING

7.5 NPPG 8 encourages the multi-functional development of town centres and the promotion of a high quality physical environment. It is anticipated that in the long term, policy measures directing new retail development towards core shopping areas will help to retain and enhance the popularity of town centres and encourage additional inward investment.

7.6 The Structure Plan aims for retailing are as follows:

- to encourage retail development within town centres and to promote their improvement
- to allow out of centre retail development only in exceptional circumstances
- to promote the retention of rural shop facilities.

## RETAILING IN TOWN CENTRES

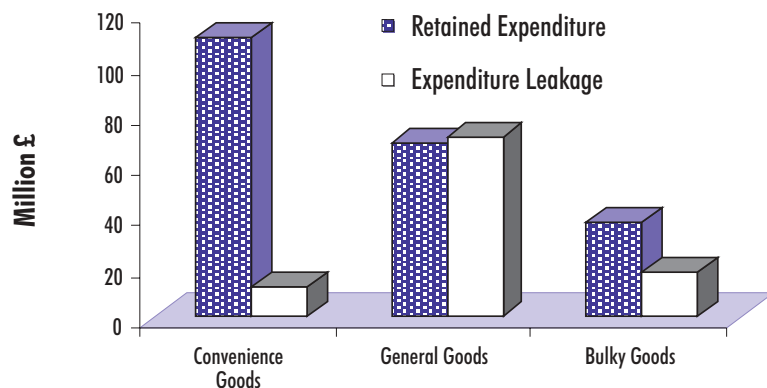
**Aim: To encourage retail development within town centres and to promote their improvement.**

7.7 Elgin is Moray's largest administrative and retailing centre accounting for approximately 48% of the District's total retail floorspace. Buckie, Forres, Keith and Lossiemouth act as secondary shopping centres offering a relatively limited range of retailing facilities.

7.8 A recent study commissioned by the Moray Council and Moray Badenoch and Strathspey Enterprise investigated the requirements for new retail space in Elgin during the next ten years. The study estimated that approximately £78 million per year of retail expenditure is leaking from the Elgin catchment area to the larger centres of Aberdeen and Inverness. Assuming that no further retail development takes place in Elgin, the annual outflow of expenditure is expected to rise to £112 million by the year 2007.

7.9 The study concluded that there is a clear requirement to expand the overall amount of retail floorspace in Elgin, especially comparison floorspace. It was suggested that this may best be achieved by a new hybrid development based around an anchor convenience store and several additional retailing outlets selling a range of comparison goods.

Figure 14: Retailing Expenditure in Moray



7.10 Therefore, in Elgin, new retail proposals will be directed towards the defined town centre, where the principal aim is to encourage the redevelopment of existing buildings and/or gap sites, and to areas within close proximity in line with the sequential test promoted by NPPG8 (Revised). The retail area at Edgar Road provides for bulky goods shopping. The plan recognises the consent for the new Asda development and the reuse of its current building/site for non-food retail warehousing. There is now a requirement to focus development in or immediately adjacent to the main town centre to reinforce its regional role and, to ensure that further development elsewhere does not dilute that role or further reduce its vitality and viability.

7.11 Therefore Elgin will continue to be the focus for retail development in Moray, with the neighbouring towns of Forres, Buckie, Lossiemouth and Keith functioning as secondary retailing centres. The Council will, in association with its partners, seek to improve the commercial environment of town centres.

### Update

The Moray Council, along with the Local Enterprise Company have co-funded a Town Centres Improvement scheme, which has been successful in attracting European funding. This is being used to support town centre events and environmental improvements which will enhance the performance of Town Centres in Elgin, Lossiemouth, Buckie and Keith.

**There will be a presumption in favour of new retail development within town centres. The Moray Council will in partnership with Moray, Badenoch and Strathspey Enterprise and the private sector, seek to instigate measures and promote projects which will improve the economic performance of town centres.**

The Structure Plan sets a presumption in favour of retail development within town centres. The Town Maps identify the town centre areas within the four main commercial towns of Elgin, Forres, Buckie and Keith. Within the defined town centres and in other shopping centres retail development will require to be acceptable in terms of the surrounding area and meet servicing and infrastructure specifications

**There will be a presumption to approve retailing development within designated town centres subject to:-**

- a) **Impact on the surrounding built environment: Sensitive design solutions will be sought on sites within or adjacent to designated conservation areas in Elgin, Forres and Keith. Key landmark locations may also be subject to design policy L/IMP3(iii). (This may specifically be applied to sites to the north of Alexandra Road in Elgin). Design solutions must also address pedestrian links and circulation around the site and access for the disabled.**
- b) **Infrastructure and access provision: Major development proposals may require to submit Traffic Impact Assessments as part of the planning application. Proposals**

Elgin Town Centre



**Policy S/R1:  
Retail Development within  
Town Centres**

**Policy L/R1:  
Retailing in Town Centres**



## RETAILING OUTWITH TOWN CENTRES

### **Aim: To allow out of centre development only in exceptional circumstances**

7.12 In order to protect the function of the town centre, proposals for new retail development (including 'bulky goods' retailing) in off-centre locations will only be considered where there are no alternative sites either within or adjacent to the town centre. It must also be shown that the development would not seriously influence the current vitality and viability within the town centre. In addition, there will be a requirement to upgrade the quality of the town centres in terms of their accessibility and physical environment.

**Proposals for retail development at locations outwith town centres will not normally be permitted where there is an alternative location for such development better located to the existing town centre. Proposals that can be justified in terms of their location must also be acceptable in terms of the criteria set down within the Local Plan.**

7.13 New retail development proposals which have the potential to create significant impacts upon the existing retailing patterns will be subject to formal retail impact assessments. They may also require to be the subject of a transport impact assessment or an environmental assessment (See policy S/IMP2).

**Proposals for new retail development which, due to their scale, nature or location, may lead to significant impacts on the existing retail patterns will be required to submit retail assessments.**

Established shopping areas, even in small towns, need protection from retail developments which can reasonably occur outwith the centre, and therefore guidelines must be set for such proposals as neighbourhood shops and retailing from industrial estates or commercial premises.

Only in exceptional circumstances, will proposals outwith the defined town centre be considered. Proposals for retail development outwith town centres will require to consider the physical, economic and environmental implications of development for the nearby town centre, and to meet the requirements of the 'sequential test'.

The defined town centres are identified on the basis of those areas which provide combined retail, commercial and social and recreational functions to the wider population. This will also allow the focusing of significant traffic generators so that national and local transport policy can best meet integration objectives.

Elgin has previously been the subject of an approach which allowed non-food bulky shopping to locate in the Edgar Road area as an addition to the traditional town centre. The implication of the revised policy within this plan is that, in the first instance, all new shopping proposals should be directed to the town centre. To accommodate this an extended Elgin town centre will be identified.

### **Policy S/R2: Retail Development outwith Town Centres**

### **Policy S/R3: Retail Impact Assessments**



*St Giles Centre*



## RURAL SHOPPING

### Aim: To promote the retention of rural shop facilities

7.14 Rural shops provide an important service for their local population, supplying a range of goods and services and creating employment opportunities. In comparison to shops in towns, rural shops have a relatively smaller catchment area but a wider social and community function.

7.15 The Rural Shop Support Scheme was initiated by the former Regional and District Councils and Local Enterprise Companies. It provided advice to shops in rural areas as a means of assisting with improvements to premises, staff training and financial arrangements.

#### Update

The Rural Shop Support Scheme has been amalgamated with the general 'Assistance to Industry' budget within the Council.

7.16 Since Local Government re-organisation, the Moray Council has operated a similar scheme. The Council recognises the community value of rural shops and will therefore continue to uphold the principles of the policy for Rural Shop Support.

In addition to providing support to rural shops, the Council proposes to set guidelines for "farm shops" in order to ensure that they do not undermine the objective of fostering the existing rural shop structure. It is however accepted that the use of farm buildings for shops, or selling directly from farms, can be an acceptable supplement to a farm business, but must be subject to controls which ensure that the stated objective to support rural shops is not prejudiced.

**Farm buildings which are no longer required for agriculture can in certain circumstances, be acceptable locations for small specialist retail outlets particularly when associated with recreational or tourism development. Any proposals for such a development will require to be sensitive to the original character and design of the building.**

**Produce grown on a farm may be retailed from the farm, provided such retailing is ancillary to agricultural operations.**



*Findhorn Village Shop*

STRUCTURE PLAN STRUCTURE PLAN STRUCTURE PLAN

LOCAL PLAN LOCAL PLAN LOCAL PLAN LOCAL PLAN LOCAL PLAN

**L/R10:  
Farm Buildings**

---

**L/R11:  
Sale of Farm Produce**

---