

1 SCOTTISH PLANNING POLICY 8 - TOWN CENTRES AND RETAILING (AN296-2006)

Reference is made to Article I of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 12th December 2005 wherein the Committee agreed the City Council's response to the Scottish Executive's consultation on Draft Scottish Planning Policy 8: Town Centres (SPP8). This was forwarded to the Executive for its consideration. Having assessed the consultation responses received, it has made certain revisions and has published the final version of the guidance. This now constitutes the national policy framework for town centres and retailing and will require to be taken into account in development plan preparation and in the determination of relevant planning applications. In its comments on the draft of SPP8 the City Council highlighted certain concerns with the revised policy guidance. These are outlined below together with the changes incorporated by the Scottish Executive into the final document.

Given the contentious nature of amusement centres, draft SPP8's absence of policy guidance on this subject was a matter of concern. The revised document now incorporates useful guidance on amusement centres.

The City Council noted the need for greater clarity regarding the concept of a network of centres particularly with regard to those centres within a network but not already designated as town centres. Revisions to the guidance have provided greater clarity on this issue.

While noting the potential advantages of the town centre health checks advocated in the draft guidance, the City Council also highlighted the resource implications for local authorities of elements of these exercises. The revised guidance does not specifically address this issue but indicates that updated advice on town centre health checks and vitality and viability indicators will be published in a Planning Advice Note.

Clarification was sought regarding the possible need to consider the impact on town centres of proposed uses other than retail and leisure, e.g. to what uses would it apply and how would they be assessed? The revised document indicates that updated guidance on impact assessment will be published in a Planning Advice Note.

In addition to the above, the finalised SPP8 incorporates a number of revisions which, among other things, seek to improve its clarity, provide certain shifts of emphasis and update earlier advice. The general thrust of SPP8 remains similar to that of its predecessor, with its emphasis on the sequential approach and with town centres being treated as the locations of first choice for new town centre type uses.