

# Intro internet shopping, competition from out of town



The UK's city/town centres and the way in which retailing is carried out is constantly changing. The drivers of this change reflect several different factors from alterations in the nature of consumer demand, to advancements in how retailers provide a service, and sell their goods. Many of these centres are facing a multitude of challenges to their liveliness and long-term sustainability, with reduced footfalls, reduced retail sales and resultant increased vacancies, brought about through the growth of internet shopping, competition from out of town parks etc.

It is the role of the local planning authority to implement retail policies and manage their city/town centres in order to address these situations, making retail areas as attractive as possible to potential customers and businesses. Edinburgh is the capital of Scotland, and is located on the east coast of the country. It is home to a significant amount of retail clusters such as Princes Street, George Street, Waverley Mall, St James' Centre and the Royal Mile among others. In 2015, Edinburgh attracted 3.85 million visitors, which generated £1.

32 billion. (ETAG, 2016) A substantial amount of this will have been retail expenditure, highlighting the importance for its extensive retail network to be carefully governed by the city council to guide and coordinate the constant stream of development and investment. In this essay I will look at the issues that the retail market in Edinburgh faces, and how retail change and development on a whole is being managed by the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC). I will refer to the policies they have employed to deal with such issues and how planning has shaped the retail market in the city. Scottish Planning Policy Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) is a statement of government policy on <https://assignbuster.com/intro-internet-shopping-competition-from-out-of-town/>

how nationally important land use planning matters should be addressed across the country, with SPP8 concentrating on town centres and their uses. It focuses on plan making, planning decisions and enabling high quality developments which promote efficient land use to increase sustainable economic growth. It states that local planning authorities should take appropriate steps to engage with the communities, businesses, investors etc.

SPP works alongside the National Planning Framework (NPF3) as a shared long term vision for development and investment across Scotland for the next 30 years. There are four main outcomes which explain how planning should support this vision. Firstly, that developments need to be a “ successful, sustainable place”, supporting sustainable economic growth and regeneration.

Secondly, they need to be a “ low carbon place”, with steps in place to reduce emissions. Thirdly, that they become a “ natural and resilient place”, protecting and enhancing our natural and cultural assets and finally, that developments must be a “ more connected place”, supporting better transport and digital connectivity. (SPP, 2006) (SPP, 2014, pg 2-7)

(NPF3) Once the planning policy has been looked at on a national scale, it must then be adopted and used within the planning policy implemented by local authorities. The CEC have constructed their city planning frameworks, development plans, studies etc. adhering to the SPP and NPF. Once you get down to a local level, the policies which are in place are more specific to the Edinburgh city centre and the issues that it faces, as a pose to Scotland

as an entity. There also becomes more of an individual focus on the different

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types of development within the city, allowing us to understand the role the planning authority has in managing, specifically, retail change. Identifying the key issues In 2005, The Edinburgh Area Retail Needs Study (EARNs) was commissioned by the council, to provide a forecast of future retail expenditure trends and what future development this may support.

This study found that the city centre had not benefitted from the right proportion of investment with other areas in the city region seeing more modernised shopping facilities. The study suggested that consumer spending would continue to grow, forecasting a 45% increase in expenditure on non-food retailing by Lothian residents between 2003 and 2015. There is an unmet demand from retailers for appropriate outlets in the city centre, that could be facilitated through new developments. In keeping with the NPF, any feasible projects should be strongly considered, placing priority on the city centre developments, in an attempt to sustain and enhance shopping experiences for residents and visitors. These findings show that the revitalisation of the city centre should be made a priority, with policy RET3 from the structure plan stating that developments elsewhere which undermine this status will be resisted. The EARNs study identified a target of 52,500m<sup>2</sup> of additional retail floorspace that should be aimed for in the city centre, having only experienced a low amount of development and investment at the time with 7% new floorspace. (EARNs, 2005) (Local Plan, pg 91-92, 2010) Planning Controls Following the study taken in 2005, it has become apparent that steps need to be taken to encourage and support sustainable development in the city centre, in keeping with the national framework and planning policy. In order for future developments to be

approved, they must meet certain requirements, (identified in Policy Ret 1 of the City Plan, page 93, 2010) Firstly, the proposal must “ provide high quality, commercially attractive units to a high standard of design that will strengthen the role of Edinburgh as a regional shopping centre, safeguard historic character and improve the appearance of the city”.

Developments should aim to make the whole shopping experience more enjoyable, whilst keeping the building appropriate for its location. Secondly, the proposal must “ reinforce the retail vitality of the shopping streets in the retail core”. The development should provide an outlet full of energy and intrigue, not a dull or boring shop. The proposal must “ pay attention to upper floors which are not to be used for retail purposes, and how these may be put to, or brought into beneficial uses which will enhance the public realm”. In this sense, the planning authority are pushing for mixed use buildings, to add diversity and look to adding interesting concepts into the city centre. The proposal must “ help create a safe and attractive pedestrian environment, safeguard historic character and improve the appearance of the city centre including the public realm”. Whilst still maintaining the historic charm of the city, developments should create inviting and pleasant spaces which visitors will enjoy. These planning regulations are a clear method for how the CEC manage retail change in their city centre.

Through creating a list of instructions to which all retail developments must adhere, they are able to keep a strict control on what can and can't be built. The status of the city has been enhanced by developments such as in the St James' Centre and individual conversions on George Street. However, to supply the demand that there is for retail units, the constraints of the historic

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city need to be addressed with a degree of creativity. New resolutions need to be investigated to create spaces whilst ensuring that the sustainability of the city is protected. The success of the city centre as a retail market, does not only depend upon the nature and quality of its shops but also on the appearance and attractiveness of the shopping environment.

It must be accessible to its customer base through car parking and effective public transport, creating convenience and easy movement to, and within the city centre. Through creating a multi-use city centre, with entertainment, leisure, hotel, office, housing facilities available etc. and retail at the heart, Edinburgh could be more and more competitive on a national scale. New retail development should be linked closely with improvements to the shopping environment and quality of the streetscape.