

A+DS Notes on Issues in Retail-Led Developments November 2009



The following questions reflect those raised when the A+DS Design Review panel considered retail developments at meetings upto Feb 2009

Architecture+DesignScotland
Ailtearachd is Dealbhadh na h-Alba

Most of these issues recurred repeatedly, with some variations depending on the type of developments proposed and their location. The projects received fell largely into two categories: retail led town or city centre developments (some of which contained supermarkets), and other schemes led by a supermarket operator for new stores often with associated car parking, petrol stations etc. The comments can be broadly grouped into nine categories which will always need to be considered. Some issues will be more important than others, and further issues may need to be raised depending on the particular circumstance, which must be determined for each project. It is intended that these questions can be used as a guide and starting point for the consideration of this type of scheme:

1 Response to Wider Context

- Is the development in the right location?
- Has a considered analysis of the wider context of the location been carried out?
- Does this cover vital issues such as scale and connectivity?
- How has the analysis informed the proposals?
- Do the proposals interact and integrate with their wider context in a positive way?
- How might the development impact on the future of the area?
- Do the proposals maximise the potential of the site?

2 Response to Immediate Context

- Has an analysis of the immediate context informed the proposals?
- Do the proposals relate positively to their surroundings and the features of the site?
- Do the proposals help to activate the streets and spaces around them?
- Have generic approaches been avoided or adapted appropriately to suit the location?
- Does this extend to solutions for servicing, car access, and other structures e.g. petrol stations and recycling?

3 Site Layout / Pedestrian Access

- Has pedestrian access been well considered as part of a green travel plan?
- Does the site layout incorporate good connections with the immediate and wider area?
- Do the proposals enable permeability through the site, rather than forming a barrier?
- Does the layout of the proposals help to activate surrounding spaces, particularly through arrangements around public spaces and entrances?
- Does the layout provide attractive and usable new routes for all users?

Ctd...

4 Vehicle Access / Parking / Transport

- Does the development sit within a public transport framework to minimise car use?
- Is the amount of parking provided adequate and appropriate?
- Is the visual impact of car parking arrangements incongruous and dominant?
- Have measures to better integrate car parking into the surroundings been considered, e.g. placing other uses adjacent, location under the commercial areas?
- Do traffic measures and servicing areas dominate or disrupt pedestrian access?

5 Public Realm / Placemaking

- Has a clear aspiration and vision for a sense of place in the proposals been articulated?
- Does the vision for the public realm capitalise on the unique aspects of the site?
- Do the place-making moves follow from and support the vision?
- Does the public realm connect coherently with adjacent public space?
- Has the environment of the new public realm been sufficiently considered e.g. issues of overshadowing and wind turbulence?
- Has the use of landscaping been sufficiently considered throughout, including car-parking?

6 Building Design / Massing

- Does the design of the buildings aspire to be more than generic?
- Have design options been fully considered and demonstrate a commitment to high quality?
- Are the material choices appropriate for the prominence of the building and its location?
- Is the building design, size and massing appropriate for the location, contributing to the qualities of the surrounding spaces?

7 Sustainability

- Is there a clearly set-out strategy for sustainable development covering a range of issues including transport, energy generation and construction?
- Have passive energy strategies been implemented to minimise mechanical processes to maintain comfort conditions?
- Do the material choices involve consideration of environmental factors?

8 Aspiration / Vision

- Do the proposals present a clear vision for the site that is suited to the context?
- Is the vision a result of consideration of all important aspects of the development or has it been dominated by economic drivers?
- Does the vision set out real sustainable development for the long term e.g. strengthening and improving the environment of existing town centres?
- How do the proposals relate to the Council's long term aspirations for the area?
- Have the proposals considered including a mix of uses?
- Is there evidence of an aspiration for high quality design from client and design team?
- Do the proposals meet the aspirations and match the vision set out?

Ctd...

9 Design Approach

- Is there a co-ordinated approach to the design of the building?
- Is the approach generic or has it been adapted or built around the particular situation of the project, in terms of both physical and social context?
- Has a thorough design statement been provided?
- Has the design of the project been considered to a full enough level, including considering buildings and spaces in three-dimensions?
- Are the public realm and landscape strategies integral to the proposals?

A+DS November 2009