

Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government  
C/O National Planning Casework Unit  
5 St Philips Place  
Colmore Row  
Birmingham  
B3 2PW



30<sup>th</sup> November 2012

Dear Secretary of State,

**Re: The Threat of Out of Town Development**

We are writing to you as a collective of investors who since 2009 have purchased 42 town centre, shopping centres with a combined value of over £2.0bn.

Many of these locations can be described as secondary, but in each case we feel that with the necessary commitment of expertise and capital, communities can be regenerated and jobs both saved and created.

The challenges facing the High Street are well documented, but as seasoned investors we understand that all markets are cyclical and despite the perceived threat of the internet, town centres can thrive based on a mixture of vibrant uses anchored by a rejuvenated retail offer.

In every case where we have invested in a town centre we have also developed long term plans for further significant enhancement of our assets and we are well placed to deliver these plans. This further investment will allow the benefiting town centres to continue to be the hubs of economic growth and will result in substantial job creation.

However, rather than the internet, the biggest perceived risk to our ability to invest, is the threat of uncontrolled Out of Town Development. It has become clear that a number of Out of Town developers have submitted highly speculative and totally inappropriate schemes throughout the UK, mostly completely contrary to existing planning policy. Too often these schemes are also brought forward on Council owned land which only compounds the threat.

Local opinion is often bought with the promise of job creation and investment, with little or no consideration given to the fact that this will mostly be at the expense of existing town centre jobs and planned investment.

Every pound spent at a new Out of Town scheme is a pound that would have been spent in the existing and surrounding towns.

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None of these signatories are anti-development, we are passionately pro-appropriate development, however when making, as we hope to, decisions to invest hundreds of millions of pounds more in town centres over the next few years, we need to be assured that existing planning policy will be enforced.

Ultimately this may rest with you, due to your powers as Secretary of State to call in potentially damaging schemes; however, your department has made it clear that it is unwilling to use these powers in the case of retail development.

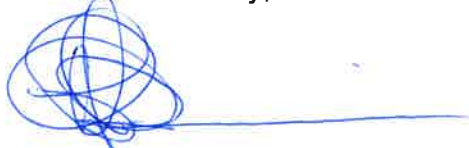
From this we can only assume that the much heralded "town centre first" policy is being sacrificed for the "growth agenda" when in our view, the town centre first policy and the encouragement of strong, healthy town centres, is a crucial pre-requisite for promoting economic growth in Britain.

This perception can only curtail further, much needed investment in town centres, if, as major investors, we cannot trust that existing planning policy will be implemented in a transparent and even handed manner.

We fully support and endorse the efforts of the BCSC in lobbying government on this topic, as outlined in their Autumn Statement Submission to the Chancellor and the letter of the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2012 to the Prime Minister.

We would be delighted to meet with you to discuss our concerns further and would welcome a statement that the primacy of town centres and existing planning policy will be respected.

Yours sincerely,



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