

**SECTION 9**

**Town Centre and  
Shopping**



## 9.0. TOWN CENTRE AND SHOPPING

### 9.1. INTRODUCTION

9.1.1. The centre of Ross-on-Wye is clearly identified by the Market Place and the convergence of traffic routes upon it. Its boundaries extend generally to Old Gloucester Road in the south, Edde Cross Street and St. Mary's Church precincts on the west, Greytrees Road on the north and Millpond Street - Cantilupe Road on the east. The majority of buildings which gives Ross its special character are in or adjacent to this area as are most of the shopping, commercial and other community facilities. The aim of the Local Plan is to preserve and enhance the heritage and character of the area whilst ensuring that it continues to cater adequately for all town centre requirements.

### 9.2. SHOPPING

9.2.1. Ross-on-Wye can be regarded as a 'district centre', since it caters for the needs of the town's population plus its reliant surrounding rural area. The numbers of shoppers attracted to Ross to shop depends upon one or more of the following criteria:-

- i) the attraction or pull of other shopping centres (this could be Hereford City, Gloucester or local village shops),
- ii) journey time (and cost of journey),
- iii) the ability of the town to provide the population with their requirements.

9.2.2. Being a 'district centre', catering for the needs of a more localised population Ross-on-Wye possess a greater proportion of shops selling foods and other convenience goods than other shopping centres higher up the shopping hierarchy like Hereford City, Gloucester and other larger urban shopping centres. Durable goods still play an important role in the town and whilst it can be seen that there is now a greater variety of shops, choice is still limited.

9.2.3. The main shopping zone is shown in Appendix VI. However, it is important to note that there are retail outlets in Millpond Street and Station Street, including a large discount furniture warehouse.

### 9.3. EXISTING SHOPPING PROVISION

9.3.1. A Land Use Survey undertaken by the District Council in the town during the months of April, May and June in 1982, revealed that there were some 122\* occupied retail units in Ross-on-Wye. This figure compares with 124\* occupied retail shops as identified in the 1971 Census of Distribution ( a census carried out by the Business Statistics Office). Of the 122 occupied retail shops, 31 are primarily convenience goods shops (i.e. food shops, confectioners, tobacconists and newsagents) which is 20 units less than in 1971, whilst there are 85 durable goods shops as against 68 in 1971.

(\* These are purely retail units and do not include service shops such as laundrettes, hairdressers or repair/retail shops).

- 9.3.2. The total number of Grocers and provision dealers in the town has dropped considerably i.e. 20 in 1971 now down to 12, whilst a further loss is recorded in other food retailers (22 now down to 15). It is thought that this decline can be attributed to the town now accommodating a number of larger food stores (including Finefare and Gateway Foodmarkets) which has forced smaller food shops to close down.
- 9.3.3. Whilst the total number of grocers and provision dealers has dropped considerably, the total floor space area has only marginally lowered and in the case of other food retailers whilst numbers of units have fallen the total floor space area has increased. Consumer demand for food shops is likely to increase over the next 10 years and scope may exist for a further major food store to locate in the town.
- 9.3.4. An increase has occurred in the number of clothes shops, mainly ladies fashion and household textiles and also in the number of furniture and allied shops. This latter increase is mainly attributed to the durable shops i.e. carpets, furnishings, D.I.Y. materials etc., as well as an increase in the number of antique and craft furniture shops catering for the tourists.

#### 9.4. CATCHMENT AREA

- 9.4.1. The principle adopted to estimate the catchment area or area of influence which Ross-on-Wye shops have on the town population and its surrounding area, is the gravity model approach. This relates to the 'law' which assumes that different shopping centres all exert 'pulls' on specific areas of population.
- 9.4.2. Using this criterion (i.e. the attraction of the town, when compared to other centres; journey time and cost; and the range/type of shops provided), a catchment area taking in Hereford City and parishes southwards to Monmouth and the Forest of Dean along with the eastern parishes of the former Dore and Bredwardine Rural District were identified. The total area accommodates some 92,000 people to date and on a calculated estimate it is thought approximately 13,000-14,000 of this total would shop in Ross-on-Wye.
- 9.4.3. Whilst it is unlikely that the catchment area will physically change in the Plan period, the total population living within it is predicted to rise to around 99,500. Assuming Ross-on-Wye's expected rise in population in this period and that the town becomes more attractive to shoppers generally, it is thought that some 3,000-4,000 more shoppers could be attracted to the town within the next ten years.

#### 9.5. FUTURE DEMAND FOR SHOP FLOOR SPACE

- 9.5.1. It cannot be expected that such a small catchment area population could support any large scale expansion of shopping. Obviously Hereford City with its proposed new shopping centres will have an increased draw upon the population of Ross-on-Wye and its surrounding areas, but with the town's expected continued growth in population till the end of the Plan period there will be an increased demand for convenience goods i.e. food stores

- 9.5.2. Ross-on-Wye in recent years has also been able to offer a wider range of shops to its catchment population. It has an increased number of specialist shops which have attracted a number of shoppers from Hereford City and other market towns and rural areas and it is expected that this trend will continue. However, the extent to which new shops and shopping floor space will be required in Ross-on-Wye over the Plan period and beyond will depend greatly upon the town's success in attracting shoppers.
- 9.5.3. An indication of the amount of additional sales floor space required in the town can be arrived at mathematically (it must be understood that such figures are only indicators and any more accurate quantification would require extensive research). The calculations are based on the expected number of shoppers from Ross-on-Wye's catchment area from 1971 till 1991 being multiplied by expenditure per head (as determined by the Unit for Retail Planning Information) then being converted to a demand for shopping floor space.
- 9.5.4. The total estimated expenditure in the town being:-

<u>1971</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1991</u>
£3,746,000	£5,085,000*	£6,640,000* high estimate or, £6,238,000 low estimate

- 9.5.5. Taking both the high and low estimate for 1991 the expected increase in spending between 1981 to 1991 will be between £1.15 million and £1.55 million.
- 9.5.6. Assuming that an equal amount of money is spent on convenience and durable goods, which is not unreasonable, then an additional 465 to 929 square metres (5,000 - 10,000 square feet) could be required for the sale of convenience goods whilst 1,858 to 2,322 square metres (20,000 - 25,000 square feet) could be needed to accommodate the demand for the sale of durable goods.

## 9.6. QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY/LOCAL OPINION

- 9.6.1. The questionnaire survey undertaken in the town at the Public Exhibition in 1976 revealed that 85% of the town's population did their main weekly shopping in Ross; that most luxury items were bought from Gloucester, Cheltenham, Ross or Hereford City; that most people considered shopping facilities adequate for the town; that nearly all were in favour of improving the appearance of the town. (See Appendix VII for full results).

## 9.7. PLANNING POLICIES

- 9.7.1. Policies included in the current Herefordshire Structure Plan must be given due regard when producing the Ross-on-Wye Local Plan. However, these current policies are likely to be superseded by policies now proposed in the Written Statement of the County Structure Plan Review.

\* Expenditure figure based on 1971 values, therefore subject to inflation.

The following policies contained in the new County Structure Plan must therefore be considered:-

POLICY S2 - THE POLICY IS TO PROTECT THE COMMERCIAL VIABILITY OF EXISTING SHOPPING CENTRES BY:-

- "(I) MAINTAINING THE LEVEL OF FLOORSPACE IN ESTABLISHED CENTRES AS DEFINED UNDER POLICY S1:
- (II) REFUSING SHOPPING DEVELOPMENT OUTSIDE DEFINED TOWN CENTRE AREAS; AND
- (III) ESPECIALLY RESISTING PROPOSALS FOR NEW, OR THE EXPANSION OF EXISTING, OUT-OF-TOWN SHOPPING FACILITIES, WHERE SUCH DEVELOPMENT WOULD HAVE A DETRIMENTAL EFFECT."

POLICY S3 - EDGE-OF-TOWN, OUT-OF-TOWN, OR OTHER LARGE SCALE SHOPPING DEVELOPMENTS INCLUDING DISCOUNT STORES OR WAREHOUSES WHICH SELL DIRECT TO THE PUBLIC WILL BE PERMITTED IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES IF:-

- "(I) THERE IS A PROVEN LOCAL NEED FOR THE FACILITY;
- (II) THE DEVELOPMENT WOULD COMPLEMENT THE OVERALL FUNCTION OF THE ASSOCIATED TOWN CENTRE; AND
- (III) THE DEVELOPMENT IS ACCEPTABLE ON ENVIRONMENTAL AND TRAFFIC GROUNDS."

POLICY S4 - "WHERE A NEED CAN BE SATISFACTORILY SHOWN, ADDITIONAL SHOPPING FLOORSPACE WILL BE PERMITTED IN EXISTING DISTRICT SHOPPING CENTRES IN URBAN AREAS."

POLICY S5 - "IN LARGER RESIDENTIAL AREAS, WHERE SHOPPING DEFICIENCIES ARE IDENTIFIED, SMALL NEW SHOPPING CENTRES OF UP TO 6,000 SQUARE FEET GROSS FLOOR SPACE CAN BE INTRODUCED, PROVIDED THAT SUCH CENTRES DO NOT CONTAIN A SINGLE SHOP WITH A GROSS FLOOR SPACE EXCEEDING 3,000 SQUARE FEET. CONSIDERATION MUST BE GIVEN TO HOW SUCH CENTRES MIGHT BE COMBINED WITH SOCIAL FACILITIES IN ORDER TO PROVIDE A FOCAL POINT FOR THE COMMUNITY."

POLICY S6 - "APPLICATIONS FOR SMALL, INDIVIDUAL SHOPS IN TOWNS AND VILLAGES, E.G. CORNER SHOPS OF UP TO ABOUT 300 SQUARE FEET GROSS, SHOULD BE SYMPATHETICALLY CONSIDERED WHERE IT CAN BE SHOWN THAT A NEED EXISTS AND THAT THE DEVELOPMENT WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE ON ENVIRONMENTAL AND TRAFFIC GROUNDS."

9.7.2. The District Council have also adopted a policy (Planning Policy No. 5 Ross-on-Wye - Non Retail Uses in Central Shopping Zone) see Appendix VI which is primarily intended to safeguard the availability of continuous shopping frontage for the amenity of the public. (The recent Land Use Survey has confirmed that this policy has to-date been successful in its objective).

9.8. SERVICING

- 9.8.1. The problems of traffic movement and congestion in the town are fully discussed in 'Traffic and Transportation' and in particular, reference is made in Section 5.4. to the on-street delivery of goods to premises from the main but narrow shopping thoroughfares and the congestion which this causes.
- 9.8.2. In the context of the town centre and shopping facilities this is seen as a serious problem. With the exception of some premises around the Market Place and High Street, there are few adequate facilities for rear servicing. The expansion of rear servicing facilities would not only relieve the congestion in the narrow shopping streets but would assist in improving the general environment for shoppers and tourists alike.
- 9.8.3. With the consent and willingness of individual property owners, there are opportunities for providing more extensive service areas particularly to the rear of the east side of Broad Street, the eastern end of High Street and around the Market Place. It is appreciated that the necessary agreements and alterations would take a considerable time to achieve but as a long term objective, such a scheme would have many advantages.
- 9.8.4. Although the Market Place pedestrianisation scheme (referred to in 5.10.6. i)) could be implemented with limited frontage service access and loading bays, the provision of further rear service facilities in the area would improve environmental qualities and safety considerably.

9.9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT OF THE TOWN CENTRE

- 9.9.1. Suggestions for the improvement of the appearance of the Conservation Area including the town centre are put forward in Section 8.9. In particular the improvement of the Brookend Street area would be most desirable and the development of the untidy area of land in the sector between Brookend Street and Kyrle Street might act as a catalyst in increasing the importance of this seemingly neglected area of town. The improvement of the Crofts Lane area with a mall of small shops along the western end of this pedestrian corridor would increase the importance of this link between the main shopping area and the bus services and proposed library in Cantilupe Road.
- 9.9.2. There is some evidence of under-use of upper floors above the principal shopping and commercial frontages and the increased use of some of this property for residential use would be desirable where problems of access could be overcome. As a result of additional revenue for property owners, such development would hopefully lead to a general improvement of the structural condition of the very buildings which contribute to the character of the town centre. In addition, the availability of additional residential accommodation might be attractive to both young and elderly folk in view of the convenience of town centre facilities in close proximity to their place of residence.
- 9.9.3. Further minor improvements to the appearance of the town centre could be achieved by implementing some of the following suggestions:-
- a) co-ordinated repainting schemes,
  - b) gradual replacement of existing street furniture with more attractively designed equipment, e.g. litter bins, street lighting and seats,

- c) a phased programme for repairing footways with more attractive materials and the resurfacing of some carriageways,
- d) enhancement of the area fronting to Peacocks Store in Broad Street including repaving and planting (this area adjoins the entrance to Crofts Lane and enhancement would be particularly desirable if an improvement scheme is agreed for the latter area).

#### 9.10. THE CATTLE MARKET

9.10.1. Though the existing cattle market in Homs Road is really outside the town centre, its present location causes considerable congestion on market days as large vehicles requiring access to the market must, of necessity, utilise the heavily trafficked town centre road network. As a consequence of the restricted site area and access, cattle lorries often form long queues along the lower end of Trenchard Street and Greytree Road at peak periods causing further congestion at 'Five Ways' junction and elsewhere.

9.10.2. Environmentally, the present location is deleterious to the surrounding residential properties particularly in Homs Road and Nursery Road. The relocation of this use as a longterm aim would be very desirable for the obvious improvements which could be afforded to the town centre road network and surrounding property. Such a scheme must be a long term objective in view of the financial implications of purchasing a suitable alternative site and construction costs together with the design time. It is considered that the most appropriate location would be in the area adjoining the proposed Relief Road and the possible site for further industrial development discussed in 'Constraints Upon Development'.

#### 9.11. OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

9.11.1. The majority of office accommodation in the town is found on the first and second floors of buildings in the principal shopping area. Whilst a detailed survey of office accommodation has not been undertaken, no great demand for office floor space has been demonstrated in recent years. Should a need become apparent during the Plan period it is considered that this could be met by utilising some of the unused upper floors of buildings in the town centre.

#### 9.12. 'OPPORTUNITY AREAS'

9.12.1. To assist with the identification of areas in the town centre which would benefit from future attention (either in the form of redevelopment or minor environmental improvements) the following check-list has been compiled:-

- i) Pedestrianisation around the Market Hall.
- ii) Redevelopment of car park in Cantilupe Road.
- iii) Redevelopment/environmental improvements to land to the rear of Brookend Street/Kyrle Street.
- iv) Redevelopment of the cattle market site, Homs Road.
- v) Redevelopment of land adjacent to Crofts Lane and improvements/enhancement of Crofts Lane itself.



- vi) Redevelopment and improvement of the former Alton Court Brewery, Station Street.
- vii) Enhancement of the area fronting to Peacocks store in Broad Street.
- viii) Environmental improvements/enhancement work at 'Five Ways' junction.
- ix) Footpath between Trenchard Street and Greytree Road.
- x) Repair of miscellaneous structures in the Conservation Area:
  - a) steps and gate piers, St. Mary's Church,
  - b) boundary wall to south of the Prospect,
  - c) medieval style wall adjoining the Gazebo Tower,
  - d) retaining wall to Wilton Road and Royal Parade.

Outside the town centre further schemes are worthy of consideration, viz:-

- i) Restriction of parking and removal of the bollards at the lower end of Wye Street.
- ii) Improvement of the riverside frontage at Wilton,

