



PLANNING COMMITTEE – 11TH FEBRUARY 2015

SUBJECT: WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON MEZZANINE FLOORS

REPORT BY: INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 Welsh Government (WG) is currently running a consultation about introducing subordinate legislation which would have the effect that where additional floor space for the purpose of the retail sale of goods is proposed in the existing footprint of a building, and it is proposed to be over a threshold of 200 square metres, it will be “development” and therefore subject to planning control. The purpose of this report is to consider the Council’s response to the consultation.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 WG is concerned that uncontrolled retail floor space increases may impact on the vitality and viability of existing centres which in turn can also undermine national planning policy aimed at promoting vibrant town centres. Uncontrolled increases in retail floor space may also lead to additional car use where locations are poorly served by public transport, causing a need for more parking, and social exclusion for those without access to a car. The proposed legislation would bring internal alterations to provide mezzanine floors under planning control.
- 2.2 The deadline for the submission of comments is 13 February 2015. A discussion of the proposals is provided below, along with comments from officers. Should members agree with the officers’ comments, they will then be adapted for completing the standard consultation form from WG.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The report takes account of the adopted Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan up 2021.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 Whilst uncontrolled increases in retail floor space could have negative impacts as described above, the purpose of the proposed provisions is not to halt retail mezzanines and other internal floor space increases, but to bring such developments which are above the specified size within planning control, and therefore subject to the same planning considerations as other retail extensions. Local Planning Authorities would still require sound planning reasons for not permitting such development. Local Planning Authorities currently have the discretion to attach conditions to restrict mezzanines on new retail developments.
- 4.2 Introducing this provision would support the aims of Planning Policy Wales (PPW) of promoting established town, district, local and village centres as the most appropriate

locations for retailing. Applications for mezzanine development would need to take in to account the tests set out in PPW such as impact on existing centres, need for the development, accessibility and impact on travel patterns.

- 4.3 In the right locations determined through the development management system, such development can contribute to the Welsh Government's planning policy objectives. The construction of additional floor space within an existing building may bring benefits to retailers such as better use of buildings, improved productivity from the existing building footprint, and more efficient use of land. Mezzanines may also reduce the need for new stores by improving performance and increasing return from an existing consent.
- 4.4 From this local planning authority's point of view, there have not been any examples of mezzanines being introduced in existing premises, and with the general economic downturn, particularly in the retail sector, it is unlikely that such development will be carried out in the near future. However, the proposal is a sensible one, and the consultation makes it clear that the new legislation would not preclude the construction of mezzanine floors - they may have positive impacts in certain cases - but they should come under planning control like any other significant increase in retail space. The threshold of 200 square metres is reasonable.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There would be no significant equalities implications, although the consultation does refer to the need to support the consolidation of existing town centres, which due to transport infrastructure are often more accessible than out of town retail areas.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 None.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That Officers reply to the questions set out in the consultation on the basis of the comments above, and any additional comments from Members.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 As set out in the report above.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and related acts and statutes.

Author: Tim Stephens – Development Control Manager.
Consultees: None.

Background Papers: Consultation from Welsh Government.