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CHAPTER 5: CASE STUDY MANCHESTER

5.0 Introduction

On 10 September 1998, four years after the British Secretary of State for the Environment had announced a full-scale ban on all new out-of-town shopping center development, the £ 600-900 million Trafford Centre opened its doors for business. At just over 100,000m² of retail sales space, and approximately 30,000m² more of catering and leisure, the Trafford Centre is one of the largest out-of-town shopping malls in Europe. Its location in a suburb of Manchester at a site catering exclusively to car owners runs directly counter to most contemporary planning principles and current UK government policy. As with other malls of its type, the assortment offered in the 280 shops operating in the mall is geared towards that of the traditional city center, or, in quintessentially British terminology, the high street. Like CentrO, the anticipated impacts on retail trade had made the proposal highly controversial; a coalition of business and municipal interests had tried for years to block the project, but after a grueling nine-year gambit between developers, local authorities and central government, and approximately £ 10 million spent on impact assessments, the House of Lords finally upheld the building permit in May 1995. This decision brought to an end the most exhaustive planning inquiry into a commercial development in the UK's history (Trafford Centre Insight, 1997: 2; MEN 9 Sept, 1998: 5).



As spectacular as this may sound, the drama of the Trafford Centre is not unique, but rather symptomatic of the British planning system's struggle with the out-of-town shopping mall format. As illustrated in the conceptual framework in Chapter 3, certain specific conditions had framed the decisions, policies and strategies of the constellation of actors involved in the retail development process. These helped to create a particular "way of doing things" (or

mode of interaction) that resulted in the probable approval or denial of large-scale out-of-town retail projects.

This chapter will seek to explain the origin of the Trafford Centre by examining the institutional context in which the application was submitted, and the way this mobilized the actors involved. As with the other case studies, this chapter is divided into two parts. The first will survey the most relevant aspects of the political, legal and administrative system and include a chronology of the most important developments in national retail policy and its consequences in the postwar period. The second part of the chapter will focus on the Trafford Centre proposal in its historical context, with a brief analysis provided at the end as regards its impacts on trade. The chapter concludes with an application of the conceptual framework to the information unearthed in this case study, and draws a few general conclusions. The final comparison of case studies and reflection on methods will be the subject of Chapter 7.

5.1 National context

At present, the United Kingdom has a total surface area of 244,820 km² and approximately 60 million inhabitants. Officially, the United Kingdom is the term used for all of the kingdoms — England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland — while the term Great Britain excludes Northern Ireland. However, for purposes of readability, these terms will be used interchangeably in this chapter, and generally the focus will be on England, the most urbanized and politically powerful of the kingdoms, and where the case study area is situated.

5.1.1 The British retail structure

Although a wealth of information is collected and published regarding individual firms and sales data from within the sector, it is difficult to acquire good comparable data about the geographies of retailing in the UK. Eurostat, for example, observed that, “there are no recognized official data on floorspace or geographical distribution. The last overall census of distribution was conducted in 1971 but subsequently abandoned” (European Commission, 1993: 188). After the demise of the Census of Distribution, the government continued to offer more limited information on retail trade under the name Distributive Trades EDC, but this expired in the course of the 1980s as well (Stocks, 1989: 71). Nowadays, data is usually collected by consultants in an ad hoc manner using local knowledge derived from their own commercial property contacts (Burt et al, 1997: 2). Therefore, the figures as they are presented here and elsewhere in the chapter (which are taken from various secondary sources), should be interpreted as only giving an indication rather than an accurate appraisal of the country’s retail structure.

Before the mid-nineteenth century, the British retail structure was poles apart from what is today taken for granted. In urban areas, shops were usually either of the producer-retailer variety, such as blacksmiths, tailors or cobblers, or of artisans or merchants associated with a particular guild. Markets and fairs were also common, as were itinerant traders and peddlers (O’Brien and Harris, 1991; Kooijman, 1999b). Shops in the modern sense of permanent structures devoted to retail trade only became prevalent in the late nineteenth century, fuelled by technological improvements, a buoyant economy and ongoing urbanization. As new shop formats were introduced, the importance of haggling, guild membership and producer skills gave way to skills of salesmanship and advertising. The advent of fixed prices in department stores in particular caused severe price competition during this period, resulting in pressure on the government for the introduction of resale price maintenance (O’Brien and Harris, 1991: 47; see also §2.1). With this came a further professionalization of the sector, stock exchange listings for some retailers, and an expansion of some enterprises into regional and

even national markets. The market share of multiple retailers, for example, was only 3% in 1875, but grew to 20% by 1920 (Thomas, 1990; O'Brien and Harris, 1991: 48).

The Second World War marked an important turning point for the retail industry. As the retail sector modernized and consolidated, consumer behavior changed radically. Mobility and prosperity increased, and what were once considered luxuries (e.g. televisions, vacuum cleaners, washing machines) were soon considered necessities (Guy, 1980). During this time, the corporate and spatial consolidation that had begun before the war accelerated. Shop sizes steadily increased, as did the market shares of multiples, doubling from 30% to 60% between 1960 and 1990 (Guy, 1994: 10). These trends are perceptible in the table below.

Currently, the level of consolidation in the UK is among the highest in Europe (European Commission, 1993: 192). In 1995, for example, there were approximately 196,500 shops in the country, or 3.36 shops per 1,000 inhabitants, which is much less than on the Continent. Another indicator of Britain's consolidation is the fact that, in the same period, the top ten food retailers accounted for about 85% of all grocery sales (Kolen and Bell, 2000b: 4).⁸⁷

	1961	1971	1980	1984	1990	1994
Number of businesses (x 1000)	394	351	256	247	241	197
with single store (x 1000)	356	327	226	219	215	173
with over 10 stores (x 1000)	1900	1270	1004	832	901	1237
with over 50 stores (x 1000)	433	330	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
with over 100 stores (x 1000)	n/a	n/a	150	140	125	141
Sales in stores with						
over 10 stores (%)	40	44	54	57	61	67
over 50 stores (%)	31	36	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
over 100 stores (%)	n/a	n/a	37	42	48	55
Superstores and hypermarkets	0	32	280	403	733	990
Employees in retailing (x 1000)	n/a	1954	2408	2317	2468	2379
Percentage gross margin	24.9	29.2	26.9	27.4	29.7	30.3

Figure 28: Quantitative change in the UK retail sector (Burt et al, 1997: 5)

Parallel to corporate consolidation and growing shop size were the introduction of new retail formats. These have been described in the British retail literature as consecutive "waves" of out-of-town development. The first wave was supermarkets in the 1970s, the second superstores in the 1970s and 1980s, the third out-of-town shopping centers in the 1980s and 1990s, and the last factory outlet centers and retail parks in the late 1990s. Because these developments are so closely tied to the issue of planning policy they will not be discussed here separately, but will be included as part of the subsequent policy/development discussion.

5.1.2 Retail planning in the UK

It is impossible to fully understand the developmental history of the Trafford Centre without understanding the idiosyncrasies of the British planning system and the legal-administrative structure in the UK, both of which diverge in important ways from Continental Europe. The

⁸⁷ Despite claims of high levels of competition between the largest firms, a government inquiry was initiated in the late 1990s to investigate the possibility of monopoly practices and overcharging customers, or throwing up intentionally high barriers to entry (Telegraph 31 July, 1998; Telegraph 24 Sept, 1998; Telegraph 25 Sept, 1998; Hallsworth and Evers, 2002).

section that follows includes a brief introduction to the United Kingdom and the formal institutions that have a bearing on how planning is carried out. Reference will be made, where relevant, when this affects retail development.

5.1.2.1 Legal system

The legal system and public administration of England has remained remarkably stable over the centuries. Since 1066 there has been no imposition of foreign institutions through invasion and occupation, and no violent revolution has occurred since the restitution of the monarchy in 1666. In addition, as Britain has no written constitution, there are few decisive moments in its history where the state has been completely revamped. Instead, both its system of law and the principles of public administration have been in a gradual state of evolution (Norton, 1994; Lambregts and Spaans, 1997). Of course, this is not to say that there have not been major substantive changes in state structure via legislation and policy; on the contrary, unlike Continental Europe, there are no constitutional safeguards against public restructuring, something which has allowed political shifts to produce shifts in the way the state is organized.

In most countries on the European Continent, a system of law is in place using principles derived from Ancient Rome, concerned with the application of codified universal norms stipulated in a constitution or otherwise to particular cases. Two variants on this model are the Germanic and Napoleonic legal systems, the latter of which serves as the basis for Dutch law. Common Law, as applied in North America and the UK, varies from Roman Law in a number of important ways, and this has influenced how planning is and can be carried out (Salet, 1994). The most important feature of Common Law is that it is evolving and cumulative: as cases are handled by the courts, judgments subsequently become part of the law itself. The question of precedent is therefore vitally important (Newman and Thornley, 1996; Salet, 2002: 33). In the litigation surrounding shopping center approval, for example, Common Law procedures would take more cues from judgments in similar cases in the past, while Continental systems decide more on the basis of the specific policy, plans and legislation pertaining to the case. Sometimes this may interfere with the aspiration to “judge every case on its own merits” in the British planning system.

Specific laws relevant to retail planning include the 1946 New Towns Act, Town and Country Planning Act (enacted in 1947, and amended in 1971 and 1990), Inner Urban Areas Act of 1978, and the Use Classes order of 1987. Laws on shop opening hours, although less restrictive in Britain than other European countries, are also relevant for retail development. These, and the more specific policies derived from it, will be elaborated in the section on the formal planning system.

5.1.2.2 Administrative system

Because there is no constitution, no blueprint exists for the composition of the public sector, and the division of central-local responsibilities. Instead, historical tradition had implicitly dictated that all power was held by the parliament in London. Otherwise, there are laws passed from time to time that define the distribution of power. One such law is the Local Government Act of 1888 (LGA) which sought to modernize the public administration. This Act created 62 county councils based on historic shire councils (excepting London), and introduced universal household suffrage. Counties were divided into smaller metro boroughs, urban districts and rural districts. In addition, county boroughs were identified that had a status similar to the free cities in Germany (Interview Bristow, 2002). Local governments in this period acquired a certain degree of autonomy, including town planning which, again,

were not constitutional rights, but legislative mandates and/or based on tradition (Thomas, 1990: 7). The period following the 1888 LGA, roughly from 1890 to 1930, has been called the “golden age of local government” (Norton, 1994: 352-353). In some instances, English local authorities had attained a level of unofficial autonomy greater than the official autonomy in more decentralized nations on the European Continent (Ambrose, 1994: 38). It is in this period too that local governments began competing with one another for commercial facilities. As Gayler observed, “prior to [the] local government reorganization of 1974 many local authorities, particularly in Northern England, granted planning permission to out-of-town centers in order to prevent the loss of purchasing power of its population to neighboring centers” (Gayler, 1983: 71). As observed earlier, this is common behavior in decentralized systems.

The postwar era brought with it a series of reforms that seriously curtailed the influence English local governments had acquired. A reapportionment of authority was introduced under the Local Government Act of 1974 intended to rationalize the organization of British public administration. The 1974 LGA created new district councils via the amalgamation of boroughs with urban and rural districts and the establishment of metropolitan authorities, effectively regionalizing the local level especially in urbanized areas. As will be discussed later, this centralization was carried further by the Thatcher administration in 1985 to the national government level through a revision of this Act, enabling the abolition of metropolitan authorities and the creation of unitary authorities based on the former metropolitan districts. In 1998, the Labour government once again reshuffled the boundaries of public administration, creating Regional Development Agencies and a new democratically elected metropolitan council for London. The intention was, in part, to turn back the Tory-driven centralization and resume the regionalization that had begun in the 1970s (Jeffery and Mawson, 2002: 715).⁸⁸ Because this last change happened after the opening of the Trafford Centre, and because the effects are still being debated, it will not be elaborated on in detail here.

All in all, the system of English public administration can still be said to be prone to fluctuation but at the moment is still highly centralized. It is much more “united” than the Netherlands, and far more so than Germany. Unlike their brethren in the Netherlands and Germany, British mayors play “only a symbolic role” (Newman and Thornley, 1996: 31). This is borne out in part in the low share of local government revenues raised through local taxation. As an indication, the Urban Task Force reported this in 1995, to be around 12% in the UK⁸⁹ as opposed to 18% for the Netherlands⁹⁰ and 68% in Germany (Urban Task Force, 1999: 282).

⁸⁸ A 2002 white paper *Revitalizing the English Regions*, for example, discussed ways in which, subject to a referendum, regional assemblies could be established on a region-by-region basis.

⁸⁹ In 1990, the property tax system was restructured to create a Uniform Business Rate. This taxed the market value of local property, pooled the collected resources and then redistributed the proceeds roughly according to the population count of a local authority (Falk, 1998). A direct result is that English municipalities are less prone to the development of prisoners’ dilemma situations regarding large-scale retail proposals than many of their Continental counterparts.

⁹⁰ The Urban Task Force used the figure of 8%, but this has since risen due to the introduction of local fees (still mostly earmarked by the national government however). The figures for the other two countries are those used in the report.

5.1.2.3 The political system

Party politics plays a greater role in Britain in determining the course of retail development than in the Netherlands or Germany. Moreover, “unlike the Netherlands, Great Britain has no political culture of compromise” (Lambregts and Spaans, 1997: 84). One of the reasons for this can be found in the structure of the public sector: the British “spoils system” in which one party obtains complete control over policymaking (as opposed to most Continental systems where power is proportionally distributed among a winning coalition) creates little incentive for compromise. The adversarial nature of politics is reflected in other aspects of British society, including litigation surrounding planning disputes which are also framed in a “winner-takes-all” fashion. This will be returned to later.

5.1.2.4 The planning system

The United Kingdom has a rich tradition of urban and regional planning, and many of the most prominent names in the field — Ebenezer Howard, Patrick Geddes, Patrick Abercrombie, Peter Hall — are from Britain. Planning at the super-municipal level (including retail) is mainly a postwar activity however. Although formal planning can be traced back to 1909, modern urban and regional planning in the UK is based primarily on the groundbreaking 1947 Town and Country Planning Act. This legislation sought to address a number of deficiencies in the less comprehensive 1932 act of the same name by nationalizing the right to develop land (Hall, 1992; Booth, 1996). Like elsewhere in Europe, the need for strong planning was keenly felt in 1940s Britain due to a confluence of wartime damage (the need to rebuild old and damaged stock) and the “baby boom,” the first wave of urban renewal and the 1940-1960s urban deconcentration. The 1947 Act established a comprehensive system for planning at the local level by means of five principles: (1) providing an official definition of development, (2) mandating that local authorities prepare development plans, (3) requiring that planning permissions be evaluated according to these plans and “material considerations,” (4) a right of appeal of applicants to the Minister (i.e. Secretary of State with cabinet responsibility for the national planning authority) if denied a permit, and (5) the right of local authorities to enforce their decisions (Davies, 1998).

In view of these five principles, one of the first observations one can make about the statutory planning system in Britain is that, unlike the Netherlands and Germany (or indeed most of the rest of Europe and the United States), rights to build do not extend automatically from a legally binding zoning plan, but revolve around the planning permission itself. Nor is there a national spatial plan. This has several direct implications. First, the system can be described as inherently reactive and development-oriented since it only really comes into action with the submission of a development proposal. Second, the system involves a delicate balancing act between the rights and duties of the initiator, the local authority and central government. These two factors inject a great deal of flexibility into the formal system.⁹¹ Finally, in the spirit of Common Law, planning decisions and the “material considerations” they relate to then form precedents on which subsequent cases can be judged (Thomas, 1990: 41).

⁹¹ For example, the issue of whether “material considerations” outweigh the provisions stipulated in a local plan is subject to a certain degree of local discretion. This provides flexibility in the system when evaluating building applications (Thomas and Minett et al, 1983; Newman and Thornley, 1996; Healey, 1997). The right of applicants to appeal to the Minister/Secretary of State provides a further level of discretion, this time at the central government level. It also serves as a check on local authorities, either to protect against discretion degenerating into arbitrary decision making, or to (re)enforce central government authority. Furthermore, for projects with a wider scope (and out-of-town shopping centers often fall into this category), the Minister has the power to “call in” applications to his office to make the decision himself, rather than leave it to the discretion of the local authority.

In 1971, the Department of Environment was established to centralize policy on housing, construction, transport, planning, local government and other environmental functions (Cullingworth, 1997: 39). Its statutory responsibilities also included providing guidance to local authorities on planning matters, ensuring “consistency and continuity between local authorities in their interpretation of development control and their interpretation of statutory requirements of planning by approving the strategic elements of development plans and act as arbiter at planning appeals” and to initiate new ideas (Pal, 1996: 3). Although its instruction to local government “takes the form of ‘advice’ rather than obligatory rules... in legal terms, [this] forms a ‘material consideration’ which should be taken into account” (Guy, 2002: 322). This level of centralization is now characteristic of British planning. Indeed, “the national government holds the balance of power in defining the parameters of the regulatory system, and used it with a tight grip during the 1979-97 administrations” (Vigar et al, 2000: 25). The positions of central government on planning matters are published as White Papers (government policy statement), green papers (discussion papers), circulars and Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) notes (Department of Environment advice). The latter were introduced in 1988 in order to “provide a single source of up-to-date guidance and ensure an element of consistency between land uses as well as across the country” (Pal et al, 2001: 233). Although not legally binding, PPGs have been very influential in determining the course of retail development in Britain. At the local level, they frame the decision-making process about whether to grant planning permission, or whether sufficient material considerations exist to deny it. They are also used at the central government level when evaluating appeals and call-ins (Guy, 1994: 76). Because PPGs can be changed much more quickly than local development plans, this has served to amplify the level of flexibility of the British system as compared to continental systems where local plans are more determinative.

Another important characteristic of British retail planning that sets it apart from the Netherlands and Germany,

... has been the adjudication by public inquiry, either by way of appeals following refusals, or where government has called in major planning applications. This has often resulted in very high profile public inquiries, reflecting the level of controversy surrounding, particularly, out-of-town retail development (Mappin and Allmendinger, 2000: 196).

As will be discussed in more detail with respect to the Trafford Centre, the right of appeal to the courts is central to large-scale shopping center development in Britain. Because its structure is inherently adversarial, it “is a gritty earth bound procedure, far removed from free wheeling academic debate” (Stocks, 1989: 68). It is also often a long and expensive process, particularly because applications can often be altered, resubmitted, and if relevant, re-appealed. There are two main routes by which a developer may contest a disputed application: via an informal appeal by “written representations” or a more formal public inquiry (Thomas, 1990: 66-67; Pal, 1996; Cadman and Topping, 2001: 194). Both have their advantages and disadvantages. Written representations are generally quicker, and involve submissions to a planning inspector who reads the evidence, makes a site visit, and comes to a decision.

Public inquiry, on the other hand, can be a drawn-out process. The developer must send a note of appeal to the Department of Environment, which then appoints an inspector for the case. The inspector then hears the testimony of the parties, reads submitted evidence, makes a site visit, and then prepares a report with a decision to uphold the rejection or grant the

permit. The hearing takes place in a quasi-courtroom setting, with strict protocols and procedures and allows for oral statements and cross-examination of witnesses.

It is difficult in a small space to communicate the atmosphere of a public inquiry with its ploys, strategy, tactics, rhetoric and histrionics: most are fairly boring to anyone other than the *dramatis personae* and those personally affected... the form is adversarial. The experience and credibility of witnesses may be systematically destroyed... [or] vital evidence may have been omitted from written submissions because it does not support an appellant's or local planning authority case (Thomas, 1990: 69).

In some cases (like, as we shall see, the Trafford Centre), a decision by the inspector is overturned by the Secretary of State. If this happens, there are further legal recourses, such as the High Court, the Court of Appeal, and finally the House of Lords. The number of appealed applications for retail projects and the cumbersome legal battles accompanying them has been a continual source of concern in Britain.

In 1990, partly in order to reduce the number of appeals, the Town and Country Planning Act was amended to give more weight to development plans in determining applications. Such a "plan-led" aspect would also bring the British planning system somewhat closer to Continental European systems.⁹² Towards the end of the decade, the planning system was also embroiled in the discussion of the introduction of regions in the UK (these are much larger than metropolitan areas, and more like German states), and what impacts a decentralization of authority to this level would have. Finally, a green paper was recently published to discuss a fundamental restructuring of the English planning system (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2001). However, because the implications of most of these changes go beyond the scope of the timeframe of this thesis (the Trafford Centre opened in 1998), they will not be discussed further here. Thus, for our purposes, the original five principles as stipulated in the 1947 Act for the most part still comprise the legal foundation of the planning system in the UK during the Trafford Centre controversy (Davies, 1998; Vigar et al, 2000: 11). Thus, in summary, the British planning system is one where local authorities evaluate planning applications on the basis of a development plan and other material considerations, generally stemming from central government policy. The fact that central government input tends to outweigh local policy has intensified the level of centralization already inherent to the British planning system, as has the ability to initiate a planning inquiry procedure (Newman and Thornley, 1996).

5.1.3 Retail planning policy and development

As noted in §5.1.2.4, planning permission forms the heart of the British planning system. Consequently, retail planning revolves around the applications for shops or shopping centers submitted by either retailers or developers, rather than being specifically zoned for in a local plan. As noted, this is a reflection of the inherent flexibility of the planning system in the UK. Consequently, regulation of out-of-town retail development was "to be carried out through the normal operation of the land use planning system, rather than through special legislation, as in continental Europe. Thus, the planning system's response to applications for major off-center developments could potentially be changed at short notice" (Guy, 1994: 171). Because of this variable nature, different periods of retail policy can be distinguished in the UK, reflecting different government attitudes towards the market. The sections to follow will trace

⁹² Despite the recent emphasis on a (local) plan-led approach, these plans still need to be made in accordance with central guidelines. Thus, despite the small boost given by the new plan-friendly Town and Country Planning Act, spatial plans are still much less important in Britain as they are in Germany or the Netherlands.

the course of retail planning policy from its inception in the early postwar period to the present.

5.1.3.1 Local discretion and guardedness

Quite correctly, Guy observed that, “the course of retail development in Britain since the 1940s has been massively influenced by the land use planning system” (1994: 71). Before the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, retail development was largely free of specific government intervention (Taylor, 1998: 23). The nationalization of land-use by the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act allowed hitherto unthinkable levels of restriction on shop location and the 1946 New Towns Act also provided guidelines for shop location (O’Brien and Harris, 1991: 84). Notably, like Germany (and the Netherlands), a Christallerian notion of central places comprised the guiding principle for officially sanctioned shop location for most local authorities (Guy, 1980: 97; Dawson, 1983: 69-70; Thomas, 1990). Besides structure and local plans, local authorities also drew power from the Use Classes Order which regulated which changes in function would require a permit (e.g. from A1 shop to A3 food take-out or A2 professional services). In addition, local authorities could rely on the Inner Urban Areas Act to sustain the retail function of city centers, and declare an area a Commercial Improvement Area. Specific policies include shopping street pedestrianization, litter and graffiti removal from public shopping areas, and taking a strict stance against out-of-town retail proposals. All in all, Davies (1976: 177) remarked at the time that “there is no other country in Western Europe which has sought to contain the process of [retail] decentralization to the same degree as in Britain. Unsurprisingly, the vested business community, keen to maintain the status quo and protect their retail market position, applauded the stance generally taken by local authorities (Gayler, 1983: 26).

The major planning acts of 1947 and 1968 gave an opportunity, readily grasped, for intense conservatism motivated by ideas of conservation, containment and control. The end-product has been continual conflict with retailers anxious to develop store formats that would lead to greater profits and greater efficiency and, it must be stated, lower prices (Hallsworth, 1988: 154).

Most of this regulation, although enabled by the national statutory planning system, was not necessarily endorsed at the central government level; it was largely the initiative of local authorities. The first statement by central government specifically related to retail planning can be found in the 1972 Development Control Policy Note 13 (later updated in 1977) issued by the newly formed Department of Environment. This rather slim document was “cautious and unspecific” in its advice (Dawson, 1983: 99; O’Brien and Harris, 1991: 85; Tomalin, 1996) thus changing little at the local level. The tone of this document was circumspect, stating that out-of-town outlets should be permitted if it could be demonstrated that they would not otherwise fit within the existing retail core and if they “will not be detrimental to the interests of inner areas of our towns and cities” (in Thomas, 1999: 16). Thus, when preparing plans in the 1960s and 1970s, studies were conducted regarding meeting “projected need” to keep development spatially tidy: if permission was obtained for one large new store, it was unlikely that permission for a second would be granted, especially considering the level of fiscal centralization and pressure from the local business community. Thus, by the 1970s,

...a system was established in which retail planning was carried out under the twin umbrellas of Structure and Local Plans... In general, all sought to contain the pressures for decentralization and to maintain the traditional hierarchy of shopping centers (Davies and Howard, 1988).

However, change was in the air, and this planning system would soon be faced with what Fernie (1995, 1998) has termed the “first wave” of out-of-town development. As elsewhere in

Europe, suburbanization, prosperity and increased car ownership in the 1960s had created an enticing market for out-of-town shopping formats. In Britain, this was given a further push by the abolition of resale price maintenance in the mid-1960s (Guy, 1998a: 957). The effects of this rule-change was to unleash fierce price competition, especially among stores selling a wide range of products like supermarkets (Ferne, 1995). As land costs were substantially lower outside of town centers, discount retailers pressed wary local authorities to build at or relocate to these areas.

The multiplying number of applications for peripheral supermarkets posed a dilemma to a local planning system mistrustful of peripheral development.⁹³ Most fringe superstore proposals over 5,000m² were summarily rejected as being in conflict with local policy. Local authorities were moreover afraid of establishing a precedent in favor of such development, and denied all proposals placed before them. Some of these decisions were appealed while in other cases large new stores were built in existing shopping centers “despite evidence that these locations were often unsuited to this type of development” (Guy, 1994: 90). Writing at the time, Gayler complained that:

...superstore organizations have all too often fallen into line with government thinking in order to have their schemes approved. To hold out for an out-of-town location approval is to invite years of frustration, delay, high legal costs and most likely refusal anyway (Gayler, 1983: 18).

The enlarged jurisdictions resulting from the 1974 local authority act had also played a role in this hesitation. Its effect was to decrease competition at the local level for peripheral retail developments (superstores) because the catchment areas often fell within a single jurisdiction (see Chapter 2, §2.3.2 for more on this). A notable example, which will be discussed at length in §5.5.5, is that of Haydock Park: a proposal for a regional out-of-town shopping center in the 1960s rejected by the county council. Even in cases of multiple jurisdictions, the situation was vexing for developers:

...local politicians of different political persuasions and from different authorities can find very easy grounds for a common opposition front. So much so that there is little or nothing to be gained by an out-of-town center developer trying to play one local authority off against another by threatening to locate in a neighboring area (Gayler, 1983: 72).

In the 1970s, peripheral superstore and hypermarket development in Britain trailed behind that of France and Germany. However, an increasing number of developers were successfully appealing their case, arguing that such stores would not negatively affect town centers. This litigation created a lucrative market for impact assessments, which generally proved to the benefit of superstore developers, who could readily produce studies showing that these new formats were complementing — and not replacing — specialist functions within the cities (Thomas and Bromley, 1993; Guy, 1994; Howard, 1995). By the end of the decade, it had become clear that central government inspectors were more forgiving in their evaluation of out-of-town proposals than were local authorities and the number of appeals accelerated. Supermarket applications were soon joined with retailers seeking permits for stores selling bulky items (e.g. furniture, garden supplies, washing machines) and home-improvement (DIY) formats — the “second wave” of out-of-town development. By the early 1980s, superstores were appearing with more regularity in outlying areas, causing one expert to conclude that Britain’s planners had lost the first battle against out-of-town development (Interview Bridges, 2002).

⁹³ Dutch authors find it interesting that in the UK, it is generally localities that adopt a more conservative position vis-à-vis peripheral retail developments than the central government — this is exactly opposite to the central/local standpoints in the Netherlands (De Feijter and Jannette-Walen, 1999).

Astonishingly, this period has also been called the “golden age” of shopping center development in Britain, but these all concerned in-town and often city center locations. To realize such projects a “triangular partnership was typically formed between the local authority as owner and landlord of the site, the successful property development company, and its financial backer” (O’Brien and Harris, 1991: 94). Manchester’s Arndale Centre is a prime example of this kind of development, considered desirable by local planners.

Thus, at the beginning of the 1980s, the planning system still posed an effective block to developers wishing to develop peripheral shopping malls:

The experiences of other potential regional shopping center developers has not encouraged a flood of applications to build North American style out-of-town centers. The opposition and inherent protectionist attitudes of local authorities, together with the strengths of the existing retail hierarchy, have not made it a favorable climate in which to invest and seek a return on capital (Gayler, 1983: 19).

Within a few years, however, Britain would arguably become the most favorable climate in Europe to develop out-of-town shopping malls. Existing meta-institutional structures (e.g. no formal constitution, spoils system, adversarial culture) enabled a political shift to cause far-reaching public sector reorganization and dramatic shifts in planning policy at the central government level.

5.1.3.2 Lifting the Burden: the 1980s reforms

The system of restrictive retail planning as described in the previous section came to an abrupt end with the victory of Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative Party in the 1979 elections. With the coming of Thatcherism, the old system of retail planning was swept aside to suit the new ideology of the free market, and public authority was centralized further to expedite this (Thornley, 1991; Newman and Thornley, 1996). The first planning statement of the new government, Circular 22/80, used language that was vague in operational terms, but clearly had a positive view towards the private sector and placed economic growth at the top of the agenda.

A change in mentality was indeed needed. British cities in the early 1980s faced great challenges, generally bearing the brunt of the economic malaise that had enveloped the country. Shopkeepers in urban areas were confronted with problems of declining population, especially under the higher income groups, and rising expenses, accessibility problems, and a general decline in the level of amenities (Thorpe, 1983: 138). The Conservatives believed that many of the ailments afflicting British cities were primarily the result of divestment on the part of the private sector (Lambregts and Spaans, 1997: 85). The prescribed remedy was to create a more favorable business climate by relaxing planning rules and offering tax incentives. Although retail was just one small aspect of the wider project of Tory governmental reform, it is illustrative of the changes that occurred in other sectors. The following paragraphs will list the most important changes that occurred in the public sector that directly affected retail development. These were implemented during the course of over ten years, but centered around the white paper *Lifting the Burden*, published in 1985.

First, ostensibly as a “cost saving measure,” the **Census of Distribution** which collected data on retail trade was discontinued. This had the immediate effect of depriving local authorities of an important source of data when evaluating shop planning permissions for their potential impacts on trade. Specifically, it became much more difficult for municipalities to demonstrate that a proposed out-of-town development would damage the existing retail

structure, and obviously worked to the advantage of developers of out-of-town formats. In such cases, both parties hire consultants to supply them with relevant data and analysis. Discrepancies in the data or research findings presented has “made the Inquiry process unhappily long” (Davies and Howard, 1988: 9; Howard, 1995). The question of economic impact became a moot point after the Thatcher Administration declared a few years later that this could no longer be used as a material consideration in determining planning permission.

One of the most dramatic organizational reforms of the Tories was its far-reaching **administrative centralization** through the diversion of power away from the local and regional level. This was a highly political maneuver: many local authorities and metropolitan bodies had been traditionally left-wing bulwarks of the Labour Party, and as such were staunchly opposed to many Conservative policies, and hesitant in implementing them (Thornley, 1991). Although British local authorities never enjoyed the formalized autonomy and home rule powers of their counterparts in Germany or the Netherlands, they had over the years gradually and unofficially acquired a great deal of discretion in planning matters and service delivery (Norton, 1994). The centralization was for many local authorities a painful and bitter transition.

Regarding the regions, in a dramatic decision in the middle of the decade following the publication of the 1985 White Paper *Streamlining the Cities*, and a 1985 revision of the Local Government Act, the left-leaning metropolitan councils were simply abolished and power devolved to localities (Ghanbari Parsa et al, 1995: 21; Pal, 1996: 4). The abolition of the Metropolitan Counties and the Greater London Council in 1986 removed an important strategic guidance on retail development, and encouraged rivalry between city boroughs (Davies and Howard, 1988). Perhaps this was motivated by a “divide and conquer” mentality.

Still, as observed above, local authorities proved capable of coordinating efforts to block out-of-town shopping center projects and setting forth a restrictive retail agenda. Since local authorities could not be abolished, even by the Thatcher Administration, a different tactic was required to regain central government control over local planning decisions. The statutory powers of central government to intervene in planning matters were reasserted by the government, and retail applications were frequently “called in” by the Minister of Environment for review. The Tory government was more permissive of appealed superstore applications than its predecessor, and in many cases where a local authority had initially rejected planning permission for an out-of-town retail project, the Department of Environment granted it under appeal. It became clear that by the mid-1980s the central government was maintaining a “presumption in favor of development” when evaluating major out-of-town retail schemes, and encouraging and sustaining a “win-on-appeal” system of retail development in Britain.

The Thatcher administration was also responsible for instituting the area-based **Enterprise Zone** reform. Businesses establishing in designated Enterprise Zones were offered generous tax incentives (ten-year amnesty from local taxation) and waived planning controls (Booth, 1996: 30; Cullingworth, 1997: 98-99). In certain categories, no planning permission at all was required. It was hoped that developers would seize this opportunity to realize larger and bolder projects at Enterprise Zones, providing a much-needed impulse to troubled areas. Although retail was excluded from automatic permission in most Enterprise Zones, some did allow them (Guy, 1994: 174). Two major shopping center developments, Merry Hill and Metro Centre, both of which have been severely criticized in later years for the damaging effects they produced on nearby town centers, were developed at Enterprise Zones.

Unsurprisingly, an approach like this blatantly circumvented the formal planning process was heavily criticized by the planning profession, who were effectively placed at the sidelines of urban regeneration policy: “The 1980 Act which created Enterprise Zones has enabled ad hoc retail development outside of any formal plan to make a nonsense of retail planning in particular areas” (Davies and Howard, 1988). A parallel policy was the creation of **Urban Development Corporations** (UDCs) whose sole purpose was to attract investment to a particular area designated by the Secretary of State for the Environment. These organizations were independent of and not accountable to local authorities. Other measures included **City Challenge** and **Single Regeneration Budget** which provided urban regeneration funding on the basis of successful bids (competition-based allocation, rather than need-based) and private-sector involvement.

Aside from these organizational matters and a general push towards freeing up the market, there was little interest in retail planning as a policy arena during the first decade of Conservative rule. Retail location was seen as a matter to be decided by the private sector, not by civil servants, and questions of the economic impact of new retail initiatives were no longer considered sufficient for rejecting permits (Interview Bridges, 2002). This was explicitly articulated in the planning advice document Circular 22/84: “policies and proposals should neither seek to regulate competition between retailers, nor to stifle the evolution of new forms of retail provision” (in Thomas, 1999: 16). Consequently, schemes for out-of-town shopping centers were designed “without any regard for Structure Plans, and with little concern for their impact on existing centers” (Davies and Howard, 1988), and local authorities often felt “powerless” to prevent out-of-town retail development (Taylor, 1998: 82). Even new inner-city initiatives largely neglected retailing, focusing instead on housing, industry and infrastructure. It was around this time that the “second wave” of out-of-town development broke: non-food superstores.⁹⁴

5.1.3.3 Market response in the 1980s

The developments listed above contributed to producing a very attractive climate for large-scale out-of-town retail development. Such development was made possible, in part, by the central government overruling decisions made by local authorities to refuse planning permission, which were weakened by a lack of accurate census data. The average sales areas of retail establishments thus increased from 643m² in 1980 to 1,200m² in 1990, while the share of sales in superstores rose from 11% to 36% over this same period (European Commission, 1993: 199). Proposals for retail warehouse parks also increased, particularly schemes involving a pair of superstores (one food, the other non-food) and a small mall of approximately 20 shops. In all, “the speed of implementation of superstores and retail parks in the late 1980s was breathtaking and underlined the success of the [Tory] policy to strip away unnecessary government controls on development” (Tomalin, 1996: iv). However phenomenal the growth in superstores, the most devastating affront to town planners came with the “third wave” which was about to break: the out-of-town shopping mall.

⁹⁴ Particularly DIY formats, which had been given a large impulse by the Conservative’s encouragement of home ownership (European Commission, 1993: 195).

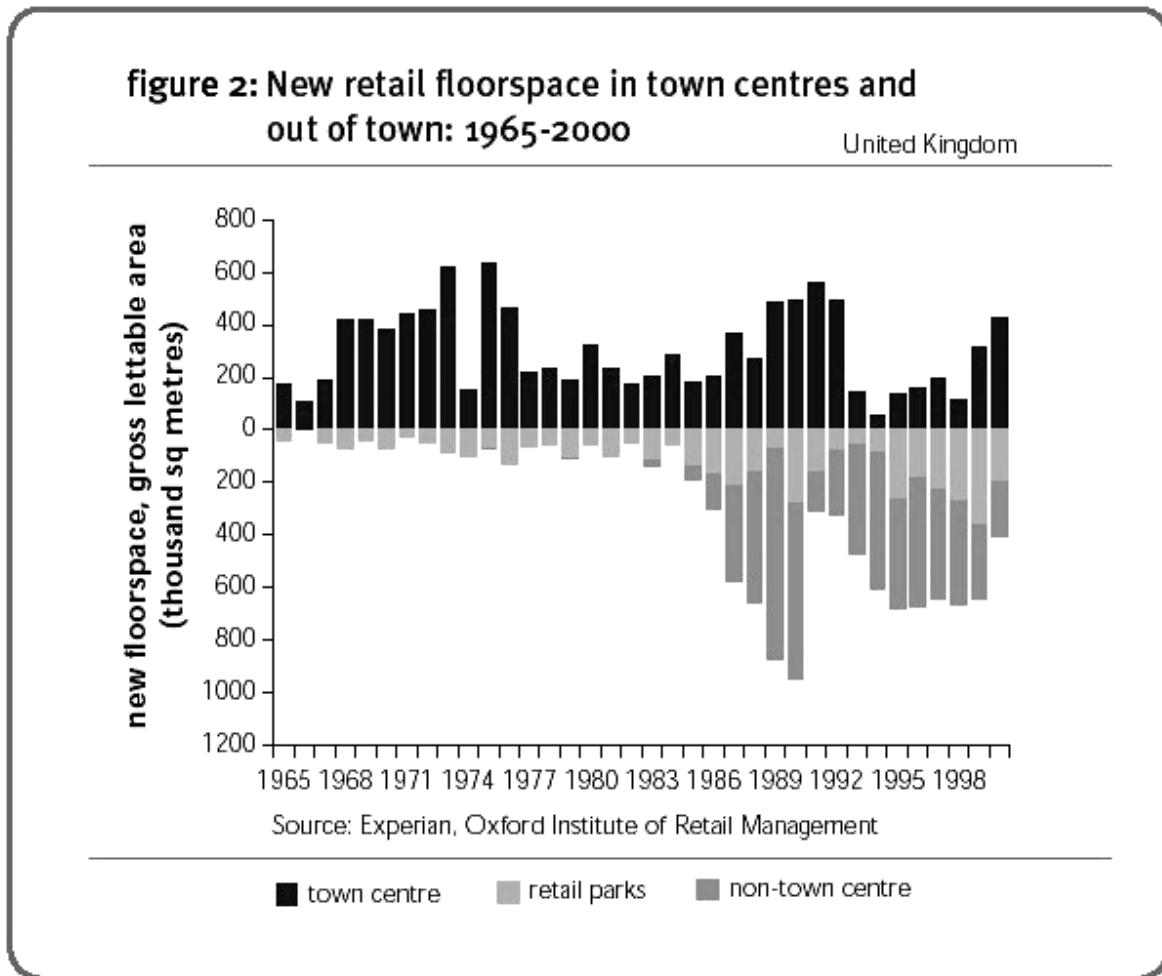


Figure 29: Growth in retail space according to type (ODPM, 2001)

Unlike the last two waves of out-of-town development, on which planning opinion was divided (the threat to the hierarchy versus relieving congestion in town centers) planners were united in their resistance to this new retail format, particularly because it duplicated the most essential high street provision (Gayler, 1989). As stated, enclosed shopping malls were confined to town centers or at edge-of-center locations, often to regenerate a derelict part of the city and in 1984 no out-of-town shopping center had yet been built. Still, there was an increasingly attractive market for American-style shopping in the UK. Postwar Britain had been undergoing a sustained growth in population and experienced an increase in consumer spending power and car ownership rates (Jones, 1969: 14-19). It was obvious that it was the planning system that was holding back the tide of out-of-town mall development, not the market.

The first out-of-town shopping malls appeared as a result of the Thatcher Administration's Enterprise Zone policy which effectively bypassed concerns by planners. In 1986, Metro Centre, the first out-of-town mall opened at the Gateshead Enterprise Zone near Newcastle: "Without doubt, it was the availability of extensive sites in Enterprise Zones together with the generous rates reductions that played a crucial role in the development of Metro Centre, Merry Hill and Meadowhall" (O'Brien and Harris, 1991: 105). It also served to open up the British market for more of these kinds of developments, and the number of applications rapidly multiplied. By 1987, there were close to fifty out-of-town shopping malls being proposed in the UK, ten of them in the Manchester metropolitan area alone (RTP, 1986).

Many malls were opposed by local authorities, the Secretary of State, or both, but gained permission via the courts after lengthy public hearings and appeals.

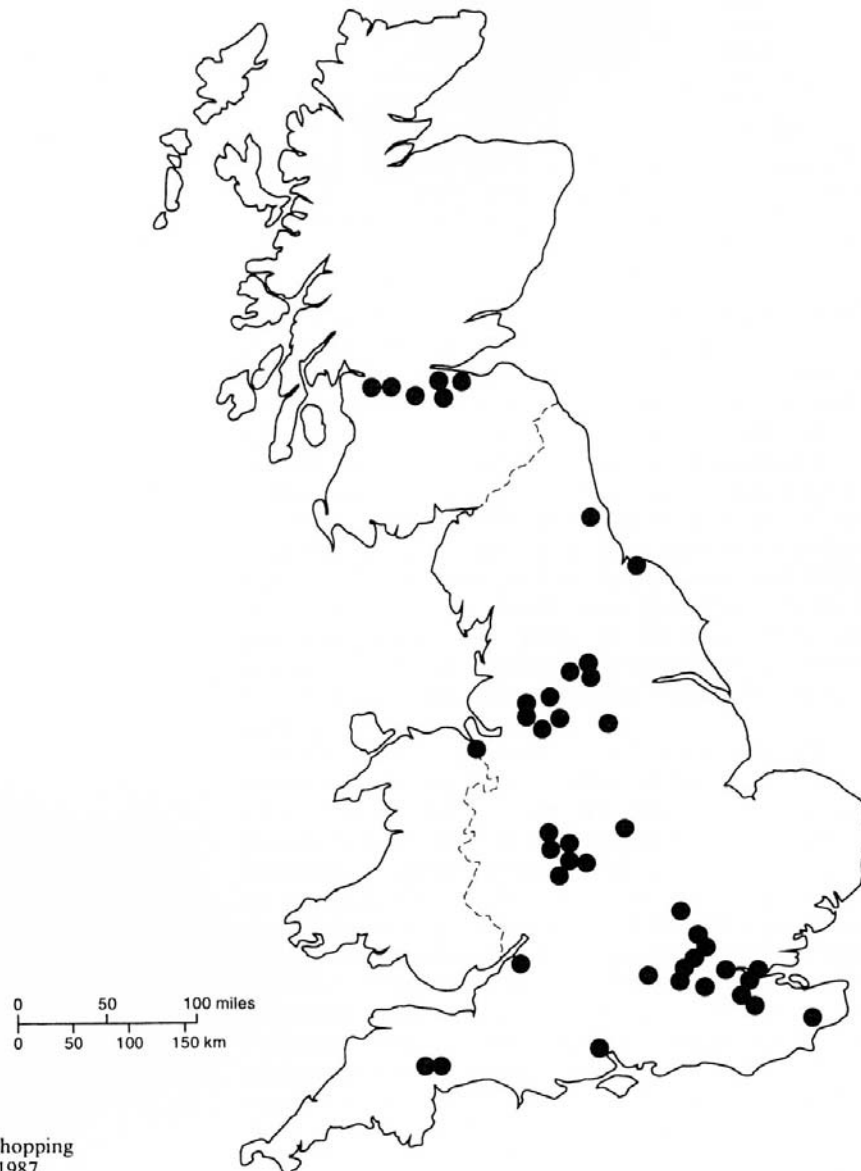


Fig. 3. Regional shopping centre proposals, 1987.

Figure 30: Out-of-town shopping center proposals in 1987 (Guy, 1994b)

By the mid-1990s, virtually all large and medium sized British cities had out-of-town developments and between 1970 and 1990, 33 million m² retail was added to the country's stock, 71% of which at peripheral sites (Kolen and Bell, 2000b: 3). Centers like Merry Hill were accused of undermining the vitality of centers in the entire region. In the absence of middle-level retailers and residents, gentrification in the 1990s resulted in transforming larger urban areas into two-tier cities, and smaller and less competitive neighborhood shopping streets were dying a slow death (Van der Wal, 1996; Volkskrant 22 Jan, 1996: 9). However dramatic this may sound, Guy (1994b) correctly observed that, when compared to the United States, the number of out-of-town shopping malls in Britain is still rather modest.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ In fact, in the 1990s the total number is less than that around Charlotte, North Carolina (Burt et al, 1997: 1).

5.1.3.4 New rules for retail development

At the beginning of 1988, guidelines finally came for retail development in the form of Planning Policy Guidance Note 6 designed to curtail the number of decisions made on call-ins and appeal, replacing all previous guidance notes, circulars and ministerial statements preceding it. The instructions to local authorities in this document did not indicate a major departure from the previous non-interventionist policy however. The 1988 PPG6, like Circular 22/84 before it, reasserted that commercial competition was not a land-use planning consideration:

It is not the function of the planning system to inhibit competition among retailers or among methods of retailing, nor to preserve existing commercial interests as such; it must take into account the benefits which flow from new developments in the distributive and retailing fields... since commercial competition as such is not a land use planning consideration, the possible effects of a proposed major retail development on existing retailers is not in this sense a relevant factor in deciding planning applications and appeals (Department of Environment, 1988).

Even more strongly, the document stated that,

Retailing developments which extend choice in shopping, allow more efficient retailing, enable a better service to be given to the public as a whole and making shopping more pleasant are to be welcomed (Department of Environment, 1998 in PW 9 June, 2000).

On the other hand, the 1988 PPG6 did state that local authorities could deny permits when “new development seriously affects the vitality and viability of a town center as a whole” (Department of Environment, 1988). However, because the clause “serious damage to vitality and viability” is rather subjective, and because there was a lack of data available to local authorities to demonstrate this anyway (i.e. after the abolition of the distribution census), planners expected little as a result: “There is widespread cynicism [among planners] about the effectiveness of the new document, and a belief that policy will continue to be made in the appeals and call-in system” (Davies and Howard, 1988: 11-12).

At the beginning of the 1990s, planners in the UK continued to level sharp criticisms at the central government for its nonchalant attitude towards retail. The lack of strategic and regional guidance was lamented, as was the apparent choice for a planning stance on retail that resembled more the United States than it did Continental Europe, despite the obvious shortcomings of the former. However, a changed central government attitude was already starting to make itself apparent with the publication of the 1990 white paper *This Common Inheritance*, which pledged to adapt British planning policy to the ideas being expressed at the preparations for the Earth Summit in Rio.

This paralleled a general mood in the country that was less neo-liberal than in the 1980s, and consequently less averse to planning controls. As stated, the Planning and Compensation Act was amended in 1991 to make it more plan-led and hopefully reduce the need for call-ins and appeals. Under the new conditions, counties were to prepare structure plans, which were intended to be fairly broad-brush and cover a timeframe of approximately 15 years; district councils would then prepare more detailed local plans, generally with a ten-year planning horizon. For larger conurbations, a new kind of plan was introduced, the Unitary Development Plan, which would combine the functions of both structure and local plans into a single document. This latter kind of plan will become relevant when considering the Manchester case.

In 1993, PPG6 was revised to take a harder line against out-of-town retail development. The new document sought to sustain and enhance the vitality of town centers and ensure that sufficient shopping opportunities existed for everyone (i.e. carless shoppers). It also asked that impact studies on existing shops be carried out. In addition, it encouraged clustering as opposed to competition and “town management” schemes for town centers akin to that in a mall. As discussed in Chapter 2, this regards the aspiration to achieve the benefits of shopping malls (i.e. in terms of aesthetics, convenience and amenities) through the coordination of businesses in the town center (Medway et al, 1999; Medway et al, 2000). In 1991, the Association of Town Centre Management (ATCM) was set up to coordinate activities with other relevant organizations. Throughout the 1990s the ATCM would lobby for increased planning control over retail development (Pal et al, 2001: 240).

Despite this positive language, little more was expected of the 1993 PPG6 than of its hands-off predecessor. Howard (1995: 238) complained that, “The PPG has been hailed as marking the end of out-of-town development. It contains, however, two key principles of earlier retail planning: that commercial competition is not to be considered [material]... Furthermore, the planning statutes remain unchanged.” Even the strong encouragement for town management schemes rang rather hollow since little institutional support existed for it — the Chamber of Commerce, for example, which would normally play a large role in this regard, is rather weak in the UK (Howard, 1995). In short, despite the encouraging language, the PPG provided no additional substantive planning controls, allowing permits to continue to be issued according to the appeal/call-in formula, rather than according to a thought-out conceptualization of the desired retail structure.

It is also at this time that the largest UK superstore developers found themselves ensnared in a situation of overproduction and destructive competition. In the early 1990s, Sainsbury, Tesco, Safeway and ASDA were taking severe financial risks to obtain new superstore locations before their rivals, even if the profitability of these new locations was dubious. The collective action problem which plagued these retailers resulted in a widespread diffusion of retail functions in the food sector (Hallsworth and McClatchey, 1994). At the same time, stores were being closed in urban locations to the extent that the central government began describing these areas as “food deserts”; immediately placing issues of accessibility, social justice and environmental impact on the political agenda (Lowe and Wrigley, 2000: 644). Moreover, the very working of the retail market seemed threatened by this push out-of-town: Wrigley (1993) suggested that the overdevelopment may have been also a conscious effort to drive up prices for new locations in order to thrust up a barrier to entry. Whatever the motivations, these factors prompted retailers and umbrella organizations like the British Retail Consortium (claiming to represent approximately 90% of the industry) to lobby the government to regulate the sector.

5.1.3.5 The Gummer years: compassionate conservatism

Planners and retailers did not have to wait long for new support from central government. John Gummer, the new Secretary of State, was more environmentally conscious than his predecessor, and hailed in a new era for retail planning in Britain. Two years after the Rio Summit, and full of ideas about sustainability, came the publication of PPG13 which attempted to integrate transport and land use policy. PPG13 called for a reduction in “the length and number of motorized journeys” and encouraged “alternative means of travel which have less environmental impact” in order to reduce reliance on the private car (Department of Environment, 1993). Clearly, this policy note complicated proposals for retail developments

that were manifestly car-oriented and pointed to a growing standpoint against peripheral retail development.

The following years the stance became more explicit. The Secretary of State announced a ban on all new out-of-town shopping development after reading the House of Commons Environment Committee's report *Shopping Centres and their Future*. This was the first major inquiry into the economic effects of a large-scale shopping mall on the regional shopping hierarchy in Britain. It also contained the findings of an investigation into the effects of the Merry Hill shopping center on the Dudley metropolitan area which had found significant levels of impact (House of Commons, 1994).⁹⁶ The Department of Environment's offensive against out-of-town developments intensified with its 1994 report *Vital and Viable Town Centres*. In this document, the concepts of vitality and viability — already mentioned as early as 1986 — were finally operationalized as policy concepts. The new focus was not only a reactionary response to new out-of-town retail formats in terms of sustainability and social justice, but also a response to general economic neglect of town centers. Despite this, the instrument employed to this end, an amended PPG6, is more significant for its introduction of rules inhibiting out-of-town retail growth than its promotion of town center management schemes.

The next incarnation of PPG6, specifically intended to promote town center development contained the substantive controls that its previous versions lacked. It specifically advocated a plan-led approach, the vitality of town centers, mixed-use development, town center management, good urban design and the like (Department of Environment, 1996). The most important aspect of the document however was the introduction of the “sequential approach” for the evaluation of retail applications. Quite simply, this rule stated that local authorities should give preference to town centers for new retail development, followed by edge-of-center locations, and finally out-of-town centers. The onus would be on developers to demonstrate that they had considered more central locations before submitting a proposal for an out-of-town site. This method quickly became interpreted as a mandate to check whether a proposal for a peripheral shop could be accommodated at a site closer to the town center, and the term “sequential test” was born.⁹⁷ Naturally, a debate soon erupted as to the precise definitions of these locations, the importance of establishing precedents, and the degree of local interpretation allowed in applying these terms (PW 30 Oct, 1998: 13; PW 30 Oct, 1998: 14-15; PW 25 Sept, 1998: 22-23). These discussions were soon put to rest, however, in a series of decisions that confirmed the government's resolve to implement the new restrictions.

Secondly, PPG6 reasserted its support for the “vitality and viability” of town centers and encouraged local authorities to facilitate town management schemes, and included — apropos for the mid-1990s — statements in support of sustainable development and a reduction of vehicle miles traveled. Some observers at the time pointed out, however, that the concepts of sustainability (environmentally driven) and viability (economically driven) may be at odds with each other (Tomalin, 1996). Interestingly, at the same time that regulations were being

⁹⁶ On the other hand, the decline of Dudley was not exclusively due to the construction of Merry Hill, as it had been losing trade to other centers for years. Part of the blame certainly lay with the local authority's inability to create an attractive city-center shopping environment. Whatever the case may be, this report and the parliamentary inquiry helped to reopen discussions on how best to sustain Britain's decaying town centers.

⁹⁷ Despite the fact that the term “sequential test” quickly became informally adopted, nowhere does PPG6 call this a test, but an approach (Hillier Parker, 1999).

tightened on shop location, rules on opening hours were being relaxed. In 1994, for example, retailers were successful in lifting the ban on Sunday trading, with complete freedom for small outlets (under 280m²) and six hours of trading for larger stores (TC 28 April, 2000; MEN 16 Jan, 2002). In the early 1990s restrictions on Sunday trading were called into question, and ultimately revised.

There was widespread support for the government's new hard line against out-of-town retail development. For example, the House of Commons Select Committee on the Environment's report into the effects of superstore development bragged that,

The evidence is clear: leading experts on planning and retailing, planning associations, local authorities and almost all the supermarkets themselves, support the central thrust of policy laid down in PPG6. We have rarely seen so much support for a government policy (House of Commons, 1999).

The measures also enjoyed bipartisan support in parliament (surely the Labour party would not take a more free-market position on this than the Conservatives). Parliamentary members like Thomas McAvoary were quick to point out that, although

...the Secretary of State has put his name to and, indeed, possibly staked his reputation on the new approach outlined in the revised PPG6 and PPG13 ... he and Conservative Members must recognize that the Government cannot easily escape the consequences of their approach to retail developments which they pursued with relish during the 1980s (House of Commons 15 March, 1995).

The new rules sparked a wide debate. One of the most common complaints was that by the time that the policy was implemented in 1996, most of the damage had already been done (Burt et al, 1997). The consultants Hillier Parker, for example, argued that so many superstores had been built at peripheral sites that the market was already saturated, and so many planning permissions had been granted but not yet acted upon that the "pipeline effect" would dampen the effect of any new restrictions. Hillier Parker argued further that the sequential approach may do little more than drive up prices of approved permissions already in the pipeline. Others were concerned that if PPG6 would force retailers to reduce their format to fit in town centers, this would be a situation where planners were determining what is best for consumers, not the market. Finally, there was the controversial view that retail parks and shopping malls might also be considered town centers in their own right (Lowe, 1998; RW 13 Aug, 1999: 24-25; Hillier Parker, 1999; Lowe, 2000). If successfully argued, this could result in allowing extensions to existing malls because they satisfy the sequential test!

Others were skeptical about the wording of PPG6, particularly the question of when a retailer could argue for a more peripheral location. For example, if retailers would only have to claim that they had "considered" a town center site, and found it to be uneconomical, this would be a rather weak policy. Surely town centers can be ipso facto considered uneconomical to large-scale discount retailers, and this fact has led to planning inspectors increasingly rejecting this line of reasoning (Taylor, 1998: 32). After some government statements and jurisprudence around 1997, however, it became possible for local authorities to reject large-scale peripheral developments if the items they were selling could be accommodated in a smaller, more central location (PW 16 October, 1998: 3; RW 21 Sept., 2001: vi). Finally, in 2000 the government laid all doubt to rest by formally rejecting the "format" argument for desiring an out-of-town location (i.e. that some formats require more space) (Interview Bennison, 2002).

Town center managers were supportive of PPG6 because they felt it would increase the attractiveness of town centers for investment, and because it would tip the scales against out-of-town applications on appeal (Taylor, 1998: 51). This seems to be the market reaction as well: “immediately after the revision of PPG6 there was evidence to suggest that it had directly influenced the future decisions of major retailers and forced them to begin to look at redevelopments of existing stores and shift back in-town” (Mappin and Allmendinger, 2000: 194-195). Indeed, several years later, the consultants Rodger Tym and Partners found that,

The latest version of PPG6 has had a profound effect on the location of retail development... where proposals do not match the objectives of PPG6 are pushed through to a public inquiry they are invariably dismissed, unlike the position prior to 1996 (RTP, 1999b).

By the beginning of the new millennium, Hillier Parker had found that out-of-town shopping center development had been “virtually eliminated by strict planning restrictions” and that town center schemes comprised over 90% of new development in the pipeline (RW 27 April, 2001; RW 19 Oct, 2001: 23) — see also Figure 29.

Over time, grocery retailers have found themselves constricted by the new rules, and have become increasingly critical of them (Pal et al, 2001: 237-238). This sentiment was echoed by the McKinsey group, who argued that planning rules (particularly with respect to retail) were stunting economic growth (PW 9 Nov, 1998). It is for future generations to decide whether locating planned shopping centers in town centers again, as they were in the 1960s and 1970s, is a blessing or a curse. One thing is clear: this policy has had some side effects. It can be blamed, as argued by McKinsey and others, of stifling the dynamics of the retail sector and driving up rents and land prices. In some cases, this has hurt independent retailers in town centers — the very types of shops that planners had hoped to preserve. In addition, by creating scarcity, the restrictions have increased the value of already approved permissions and out-of-town stock. This has the tendency to draw further investment, resulting in expansions (when permitted) or refurbishments (Yates, 1995).⁹⁸ Nevertheless, for better or for worse, it is obvious that PPG6 and its sequential approach has now become the cornerstone of British retail planning policy.

5.1.3.6 Labour’s Urban Renaissance

With the landslide victory of the Labour Party in 1997, expectations were high that the pro-planning policies that had been adopted under Gummer would continue and be strengthened. One of the first acts of the new government was to create the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR), showing a willingness to undo some of the Thatcherite anti-regional reforms. A month after assuming office, the new minister John Prescott announced his commitment to the sequential approach to retail planning, and a series of strict interpretations in reviewing planning applications quickly confirmed this predilection (PW 1 May, 1998: 13).⁹⁹ In a speech to the British Council of Shopping Centres on 5 November 1998, the Minister for the Regions, Regeneration and Planning announced that:

Let me be quite clear, we are not trying to strike a balance between town centers and out-of-town shopping. That would be the type of wishy-washy policy that means all things to

⁹⁸ At the century’s end, formerly no-frills retail park units were being upgraded to compete with high street locations, expanding the merchandise offered, and even dabbling into other “center” functions such as galleries at out-of-town locations (Telegraph 28 June, 1997; Guy, 2000).

⁹⁹ This, despite lobbying by the major retailers (and often backers of the Labour party) to relax planning rules (Telegraph 26 Oct, 1996).

all people. This Government — like the last one — has an explicit preference for encouraging retail development in existing town centers (Cadborn, 1988).

Encouraged by the success and general support of PPG6, the government began expanding the sequential approach to include other commercial developments and even housing (PW 9 October, 1998: 7; PW 21 August, 1998: 9).

In 1998, PPG6 was partly vindicated by a report published by DETR on the impact of large-scale retail development, namely large superstores and supermarkets on medium-sized towns. The report found effects on the vitality and viability of the investigated town centers from large format shops

...our research identified impacts on market share of between 13%-50% on the principal food retailers in market towns and district centers as a result of large foodstores in edge-of-center and out-of-center locations... these levels of impact on market share have directly and indirectly led to the closure of some town center food retailers; increases in vacancy levels; and a general decline in the quality of the environment of the center” (DETR, 1998: 7).

Unsurprisingly, these results were disputed and thus became another aspect within the general political debate on centers and periphery (Sunday Telegraph 2 Jan, 1998; DETR, 1998).¹⁰⁰

At the end of the decade, the Urban Task Force issued its aesthetically-challenged bold yellow report *Towards an Urban Renaissance*, which was seen as the runner-up to the next white paper. As the Italian Renaissance was essentially a revival of classical principles, so too did Lord Rogers’ Urban Renaissance constitute a partial revival of former planning principles. Most importantly for retail planning was a reemphasis of the urban hierarchical structure, discouragement of greenfield development and the need for compact cities (Urban Task Force, 1999: 52-55; Interview Robson, 2002). The report was well received by the media, being described by *The Guardian* as “usefully anachronistic in its faith in the capacity of government to plan” (in Bullivant, 2000: 55). Interestingly, and for some rather appropriately, Continental Europe was the source of inspiration for the proclaimed renaissance; in the introduction, the chairman of the task force wrote that, “in the quality of our urban design and strategic planning, we are probably 20 years behind places like Amsterdam and Barcelona” (Urban Task Force, 1999: 7) and later, “we have been heavily influenced in drafting this Chapter [recommendations] by our analysis of other north European approaches to land use planning, particularly the Netherlands and Scandinavia” (ibid.: 191). Despite little specific mention of retail issues, the unswerving support for towns and cities by the Urban Task Force clearly indicated a commitment to continue and even strengthen the regulatory stance already taken against out-of-town shopping development under PPG6.

The long-awaited urban white paper *Our Towns and Cities: The Future - Delivering an Urban Renaissance* was published the next year (November 2000). For those who had read the Lord Rogers report, its contents did not come as a surprise. In fact, DETR stated that, “we whole-heartedly support the vision set out by the Urban Task Force. We agree with most of its recommendations and have already implemented many of them” (DETR, 2000b: 42). The white paper, while again usually addressing retail issues in vague or indirect terms, did make

¹⁰⁰ Much of the controversy surrounded a DETR press release that claimed that the study proved that large format stores have a significant impact, while the conclusions of the actual report were more cautious (PW 16 Oct, 1998: 8; PW 16 Oct, 1998: 12).

a few statements regarding out-of-town retail. For example, it noted that, “between 1979 and 1997, 13 million square meters of out-of-town shopping floor space was developed. This undermined the viability of many town centers and encouraged increased use of car travel” (DETR, 2000b: 45) and pledged continued support for PPG6 and PPG13. In addition, in line with the disposition of the Labour party, it devoted an extra £ 33 billion to the £ 106 billion urban budget. Perhaps as an additional political maneuver, the white paper promised an updated version of PPG11 on regions to strengthen regional planning — another institutional “undoing” of the Thatcherite policy of centralization. Finally, Blair pledged to grant local authorities the authority to levy an additional business rate for improvements of certain areas, similar to the “Business Improvement District” initiative in many US-cities (RW 4 May, 2001: 21).¹⁰¹

It is far from clear which direction future British spatial policy will go in the next century. The restrictive planning as in the 1996 version of PPG6 was introduced under the Conservatives, and the Labour administration has continued it with renewed vigor. On the other hand “a major struggle is under way between forces which would maintain the patterns of paternalism and professionalism inherited from the welfare state era of mid-century, and the new forms of business alliance, a proto-local corporatism, which have developed in recent years” (Vigar et al, 2000: 285). Restrictive policies might also prove unmanageable under future market conditions as consumer behavior already may seem to be at odds with planning policy: in 2001, for example, the highest ranked centers by the Store Performance Consortium were: Heathrow Airport, followed by Oxford Street, Meadowhall, Bluewater, the Trafford Centre, Brent Cross, Lakeside, Cribbs Causeway, Merry hill and Milton Keynes (RW 20 July, 2001: 26). Note the interesting position of the airport, and the share of out-of-town malls! Thus, it is doubtful that such policies could halt, let alone reverse, the growing polycentricity of British metropolitan areas. In addition, while this restrictive policy currently enjoys wide political support in parliament and amongst planners and most stakeholders, recent investigations by the Office of Free Trading and the Competition Commission may result in calls for policy relaxations. However as we will see in Chapter 6, the British government is not the only government capable of holding conflicting standpoints simultaneously (Guardian 11 Jan, 2000; Hallsworth and Evers, 2002).

5.1.3.7 Conclusion: policy and patrons

When one looks back on approximately fifty years of postwar planning and the stances taken on retail in Great Britain, a clear pattern of policy vacillation is observable. A locally based conservatism towards out-of-town formats in the 1970s gave way under the Thatcher government reforms in the 1980s to a highly centralized system with a development-friendly stance. This gradually became more restrictive in the early 1990s as environmental concerns came to the fore and the consequences of out-of-town shopping on town centers and mobility began to make themselves felt. This stance has continued under the Labour government under the banner of the New Urban Renaissance, bolstered by an enhanced PPG6 and government white paper.

These swings in policy have favored different parties at different times. The political climate in the 1970s was so hostile to out-of-town development that many superstores and regional shopping centers were built in town centers. This tended to favor established retailers and big cities, and frustrated those who wished to trade from larger stores. In the next decade, the Thatcher Administration removed important institutional impediments to the free market

¹⁰¹ BIDs are designated areas set up to overcome the free-rider problem of town center management.

demand for peripheral retail development through the establishment of Enterprise Zones, Urban Development Corporations, abolition of metropolitan councils and the like. It also actively sanctioned much of this activity via the appeals/call-in process. The 1990s brought a reversal of opinion and policy with the announcement of increasingly strict measures to curb out-of-town retail. There were also some efforts to offer some “carrots” in the form of town center management as well as the traditional “stick” of planning restrictions. This last reform provided local authorities the opportunity to engage in some entrepreneurial activity of their own. Now we shall turn to a particular case, the Trafford Centre in the greater Manchester area.

5.2 Regional context

The purpose of this section is to sketch out some of the most salient characteristics of the region of England that the case study takes place: the North West. The most important themes treated are the administrative reapportionment over time which witnessed the birth and death of a regional level of government, the forces of economic restructuring, and the complex power plays involved in a struggle over out-of-town shopping center proposals. These themes will give insight into the context in which the victorious proposal — the Trafford Centre — emerged, the subject of the following section.

5.2.1 The Manchester Conurbation

After England’s affluent Southeastern region, the second most populous area can be found in northern England, much of which has grown into an immense highly populated polycentric urban region similar in some respects to the Dutch Randstad or the German Ruhrgebiet. North England stretches from Merseyside/Liverpool in the West to Sheffield and Leeds in the East. North West England, the subject of this study, is comprised of the urban agglomerations of Merseyside and Greater Manchester, which have grown into one another over time (Bontje, 2001: 191). This suburbanization is a well-known phenomenon “Manchester has a tradition of people leaving work and heading straight out of the city center to the suburbs” (Parker, 2000).

The jumbled urban structure is not simplified by local authority boundaries. Administrative borders in and around the Manchester conurbation have caused some confusion because of ambiguous names or changing borders as a result of jurisdictional reapportionment. For example, Manchester city has a clear border which divides it from its surrounding metropolitan boroughs on paper, but most residents of the conurbation are unaware of exactly where these borders lie, since they do not necessarily correspond to geographical landmarks or follow morphological features. Lately, for example, some areas of Salford are becoming gentrified as a result of the erroneous perception that these areas are, in fact, still part of Manchester city center! Another important feature to note is the low population in the conurbation’s core. Although still vastly important both commercially and culturally, Manchester city center has few residents. At the beginning of the 1990s, for example, the center housed only about 1,000 people (MEN 5 May, 2001).

At the regional level, the entity of Greater Manchester and specifically the Greater Manchester County Council (GMC) was created in 1974 as part of the general administrative reorganization then underway (see §5.1.2.2). As part of this effort, the large historical region of Lancashire county was divided up into three administrative entities: Lancashire county (reduced in size), and two Metropolitan Counties (Greater Manchester and Merseyside). Under the new jurisdictions, Greater Manchester would include the cities of Manchester and

Salford, the towns (formerly county boroughs) of Bury, Bolton, Oldham, Stockport, Rochdale and Wigan, and the two new boroughs of Tameside and Trafford.¹⁰²

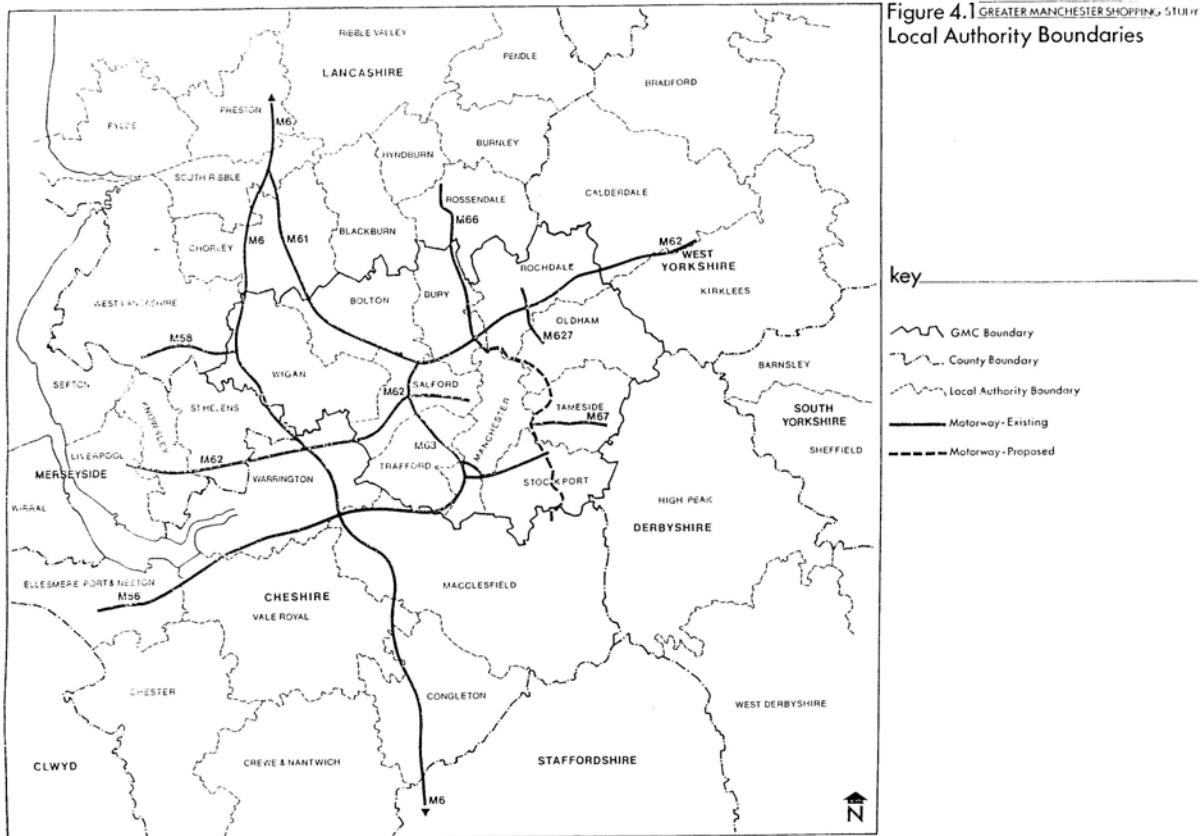


Figure 31: Local authority boundaries (RTP, 1986: fig. 4.1)

As stated in §5.1.3, the Thatcher Administration abolished the Metropolitan Counties in 1986, which granted local authority independence to the districts in the conurbation. Although there is some discussion about the establishment of regional authorities in England, the administrative situation surrounding the Trafford Centre controversy has not changed since 1986.

Economically, Manchester owes its fame to having been one of the largest and most prosperous industrial cities in Europe. In the mid-nineteenth century the city had already acquired 200,000 residents, and this number soared to over 700,000 by the 1920s. During the Second World War, Manchester was bombed heavily, and much of its center and industry lay in shambles. Reconstruction was accompanied by suburbanization, and the city’s population declined to around 540,000 by the early 1970s. This was aggravated further by the oil crisis, which affected North England acutely, particularly Manchester where domination by a few large industrial firms had made the city’s economy especially vulnerable to economic restructuring. Between 1975 and 1985 Manchester had not only lost a significant portion of its population, it had lost even more jobs. At times, unemployment rates have been as high as 20% for males in Manchester. The jobs that have been created since the oil crisis have been of a different sort: instead of full-time male/industrial they are more of the part-time

¹⁰² Trafford is not a historical place name. It is purely the product of the abovementioned reorganization in which ten local towns were amalgamated. Trafford is a heavily industrialized part of the metropolitan area, and was incorporated as a borough into the GMC until its abolition. Before this time, Manchester and some of its neighbors were within the county of Lancashire (Manchester2002, 2002).

female/service variety (Giordano and Twomey, 2002; Ward, 2002). In this sense, Manchester's economy resembles that of the Ruhrgebiet.

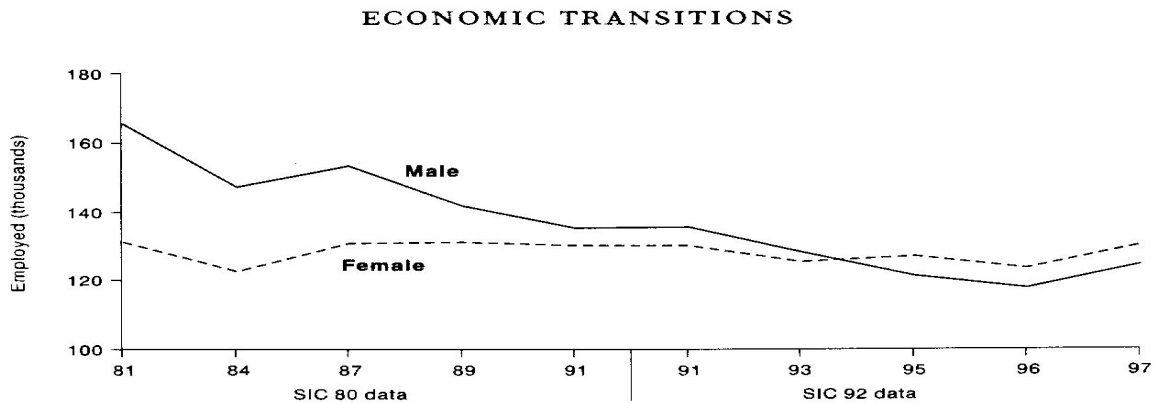


Figure 32: Unemployment in Manchester (Giordano and Twomey, 2002: 57)

Regarding the retail sector in particular, it has been said that “the conurbation is characterized by a densely developed hierarchy of shopping centers” (RTP, 1986: 1). Although the municipality of Manchester has approximately 425,000 people and the city center only a small fraction of that, the catchment area of its center is much larger: approximately three million people live within a 30-minute travel time. To serve this public, Manchester had 2.2 million m² of retail space within the city limits, 725,000m² of which was located in the center (Kolen and Bell, 2000b: 5, using 1997 data). Since this retail space far surpasses the population, it should be clear that the city center is dependent on patrons from outside for its viability. The uneasy transition of Manchester from an industrial to a service-oriented city heightened the importance of maintaining this function.

In the early 1980s and even without the threat of out-of-town shopping malls, there were calls to strengthen the retail in the city center. This was a response to two approvals by the Minister for out-of-town projects in Bolton and Stockport, overriding the objections of Manchester city council. Councilor Ken Franklin complained that, “we [Manchester] have conformed with the requirements of the GMC’s strict shopping policy. But other councils have bent the rules” (MEN 11 Nov, 1981: 11). According to Jones (1969: 12), the first movement to a “genuine” out-of-town location was by the department store Finnegan’s from Manchester to the affluent Wilmslow, about 18km to the south. However, by today’s standards this can hardly be called out-of-town because it relocated to the suburban town center, and not a greenfield site. The first attempt to build a regional center at a true out-of-town location was in 1964 at Haydock Park between Manchester and Liverpool.

5.2.2 Haydock Park controversy

Before launching into the history of the Trafford Centre development, it is useful to consider, by way of contrast, a previous application for an out-of-town shopping center in the region that failed. The following section will discuss the well-documented Haydock Park case, and draw some lessons for the Trafford Centre. An examination of the Haydock conflict as a historical antecedent reveals much about the pre-Thatcher planning context, and raises some interesting issues regarding the measurement of retail impacts (Interview Bridges, 2002).

In June 1963, an application was submitted to the Lancashire County Council¹⁰³ to build a shopping center at Haydock Park, a site situated on the junction of the East Lancashire Road and the M6 motorway. The size was noteworthy: the proposal called for over 100,000m² of retail space and therefore was significant in comparison to the retail already on offer in the city centers of Manchester and Liverpool. If built, it would have been the first out-of-town mall in the United Kingdom.

The application was initially rejected by the county, and an appeal was made to the Minister of Housing and Local Government. In the subsequent planning inquiry, two major impact studies were carried out by the University of Manchester's planning department. The first study, published in August 1964, drew up two alternate scenarios (one with the mall, and one without) and measured the impact as a difference between the two (University of Manchester, 1966). The methodology used Central Place Theory to define the future regional market by matching catchment areas to measured spending levels and demographics; the forecasted sales for Haddock were then removed from each of these market areas. Two maps taken from the study, one displaying Grade I and II centers, and the second smaller Grade III centers, are depicted below.

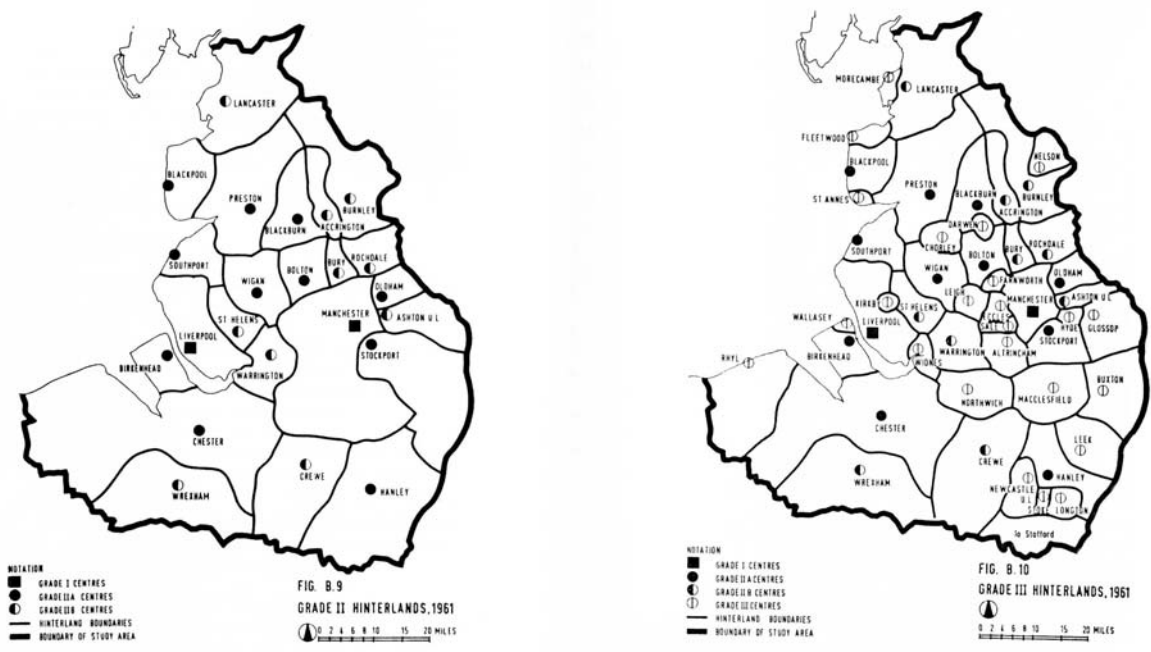


Figure 33: University of Manchester (1964)

The study found that the impact of Haddock Park would be dispersed and, over time, absorbed. Not satisfied with these results, another study was commissioned. This was performed by the same university department and used largely the same data. This research, however, used gravity modeling rather than Central Place Theory as its point of departure. As discussed in Chapter 2, this latter method is not based on provision but on competition: it assumes that consumers, being increasingly mobile, can choose among competing centers, and are not bound to shop within a single catchment area. Although the data entered into this model was mostly the same, this study came to the opposite conclusion, namely, that a large

¹⁰³ At that time Manchester, Trafford and several other municipalities in the region belonged to Lancashire County. This would change in 1974 (with the creation of the Metropolitan Counties) and again in 1986 (with their abolition).

impact could be anticipated from the proposed development on the existing retail hierarchy. It was suggested that the larger cities of Manchester and Liverpool could expect up to a 12% drop in retail sales, while smaller communities could experience impacts as high as 34% (St. Helens), 41% (Wigan) and 46% (Warrington) (University of Manchester, 1966; Gayler, 1983: 23). The application was subsequently denied on these grounds (Guy, 1994a: 171; Interview Bridges, 2002).

5.2.3 New institutional conditions

By the time that the application for the Trafford Centre was submitted in 1986, much had changed since the Haydock Park decision. Since that time, there had been two major jurisdictional reapportionments. In 1974, the Lancashire County (responsible for the Haydock decision and covered a wide area) was divided up into three smaller counties, two of them being the metropolitan counties of Merseyside and Manchester. In theory, if submitted a decade later, the Haydock Park developers may have attempted to play the Manchester and Merseyside metropolitan counties off against each other. However in practice, this administrative change did not significantly alter the playing field for out-of-town retail development. Metropolitan bodies in the UK took a firm policy stance against out-of-town development and unequivocally promoted the maintenance of the existing retail hierarchy.

For example, the **Greater Manchester Structure Plan**, adopted in 1981 by the Greater Manchester Council as the strategic planning authority, sought to deal with suburbanization by redirecting development towards the core of the conurbation, in order to bolster Manchester's role as a regional center. In addition, the plan supported the regeneration of the inner areas of Manchester and Salford, and the maintenance of the vitality of other town centers in the conurbation (RTP, 1986: 33; Stocks, 1989; Bristow, 1994). Obviously, the development of out-of-town shopping centers ran directly counter to the spirit of this plan. As far as the GMC was concerned, new retail projects were to be accommodated in the existing hierarchy, preferably in Manchester city center (see §5.1.3.1). It should be noted that Manchester was not alone in this, and "most of the structure plans of the 1980s and some later plans make preserving the retail hierarchy a central policy objective" (Schiller, 2001: 12).

In so far as the preservation of the retail hierarchy is concerned, the structure plan can be considered a success (RTP, 1986: 34). Areas in Manchester and Salford were cleared for redevelopment (halving the population there between 1951 and 1981), and those displaced were relocated to newly built council housing outside the city (Bristow, 1994: 117). It is also around this time that the controversial Arndale Centre was built in a piecemeal fashion.¹⁰⁴ It soon became derided as being an eyesore, poorly integrated in the urban fabric, and disrupting city center trade.¹⁰⁵ In addition to this obsession with the retail hierarchy, through its twelve years in existence, the GMC believed the region to be "overshopped," namely, that excessive retail space existed and that all new retail proposals ought to be viewed with

¹⁰⁴ The Arndale Centre in Manchester, like other Arndale Centres in England, was the product of an entrepreneur who bought up shop space on high streets and (secretly) the land behind the shops. Once a critical mass was achieved, he would apply to the city for planning permission to demolish the buildings and insert a single integrated shopping mall. In the case of Manchester, the developer was even able to obtain the remaining property from the city via eminent domain.

¹⁰⁵ The purported "Arndale effect" on the inner city of Manchester was to produce a stagnation of retail rent levels for almost a decade (RTP, 1986: 1). On the other hand, this project did foment the creation of the Royal Exchange Centre, a specialty center containing 41 units on three levels due to its proximity, and the fact that a tenant of the Royal Exchange Building had moved to the Arndale Centre (Dawson, 1983: 69).

suspicion (Stocks, 1989). The view that this position was based more on ideology than reality is supported by the fact that the market for comparison goods shopping was actually experiencing a boom in the early 1980s (Arrick, 1999: 1). In fact, retail spending increased by over 50% in real terms in the 1971-1990 period (RTP, 1999b).

As mentioned earlier, significant changes followed from the 1979 elections that curtailed the power of planners and local and metropolitan authorities. For example, two Enterprise Zones were established in inner city areas in Trafford and Salford that freed investors from planning rules and local taxation (Bristow, 1994: 118). More importantly, partly for political reasons, the Tory government abolished the metropolitan counties on 1 April 1986, criticizing them as “wasteful” and “unnecessary” (in Bontje, 2001: 215). With the removal of the Greater Manchester Metropolitan County, planning power fell to a number of self-governing unitary authorities, and new planning activities began at a decentralized level. Ironically, this was just at the time at which the metropolitan authorities were finally finding their role and internalizing a regional identity (Interview Bristow, 2002). A body was created in 1986 to coordinate planning in the region and absorb some of the loss of the GMC — the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities — had less cohesion than the metropolitan authority and only advisory powers. As part of the new Thatcherite institutional changes, pro-development and area-based Urban Development Corporations were set up to fill the vacuum. Not surprisingly, these organizations “are generally seen as more sympathetic to off-center [i.e. out-of-town] retail development than are conventional local authorities” (Guy, 1994a: 80). In the Manchester region, UDCs were set up for Manchester city center and Trafford Park to regenerate these areas. They competed for resources and were parochial rather than strategic in character.

Having lost the first two battles against out-of-town development, planners feared the worst with the coming of the third wave — shopping malls — within this new political climate. The legacy of Haydock Park had demonstrated that commercial interest in a large-scale shopping mall in the North West existed, and the fact that this (potentially) could have significant impacts on the retail structure. Indeed, these institutional changes had significant implications for the prospects for out-of-town shopping center development in the North West. One author who participated in the Trafford Centre inquiry observed that: “as the County Council was disbanding, applications for major shopping schemes began to slop over the unmanned dam” (Stocks, 1989: 59). The political ramifications of this was to become the first real test of the AGMA as a guardian of the structure plan, and will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

5.2.4 A storm of applications

In the same year that the GMC was being disbanded, local authorities in the Manchester area were receiving a deluge of applications for shopping centers: within a span of 10-months, over 650,000m² of retail space was proposed, mostly at peripheral locations. Specifically, ten out-of-town schemes were being drawn up, partly in response to growing consumer expenditure in durable goods (Arrick, 1999: 1), but also at a time when development schemes were already being prepared or under construction in seven of the eight suburban town centers (RTP, 1986: 1).¹⁰⁶ It was obvious that not all applications could be honored without causing severe harm to the existing retail structure, and any issued permits would affect the feasibility of the remaining proposals. To make matters worse, these proposals all tended to

¹⁰⁶ As stated before, this was being replicated in the rest of the country. In 1987 there were proposals for approximately fifty out-of-town shopping malls across the nation (Davies and Howard, 1988: 13).

be located adjacent to the boundaries of another authority rather than being located squarely within one district (RTP, 1986: 86). Two of the largest proposals were in Salford and Trafford. Since both districts bordered Manchester city and each other, it was felt that if both were given planning permission, the impacts on town centers could be severe. Fear of their neighbor's project was at least as strong a drive as the potential benefits the center would have (Stocks, 1989: 62). A political climate of mutual mistrust rapidly developed in the region. To strengthen their position (and proposal), the competing districts commissioned an impact study on the shopping center proposals in their districts: Salford hired Hillier Parker in January 1986, and Trafford Bernard Thorpe and Partners in May 1986.

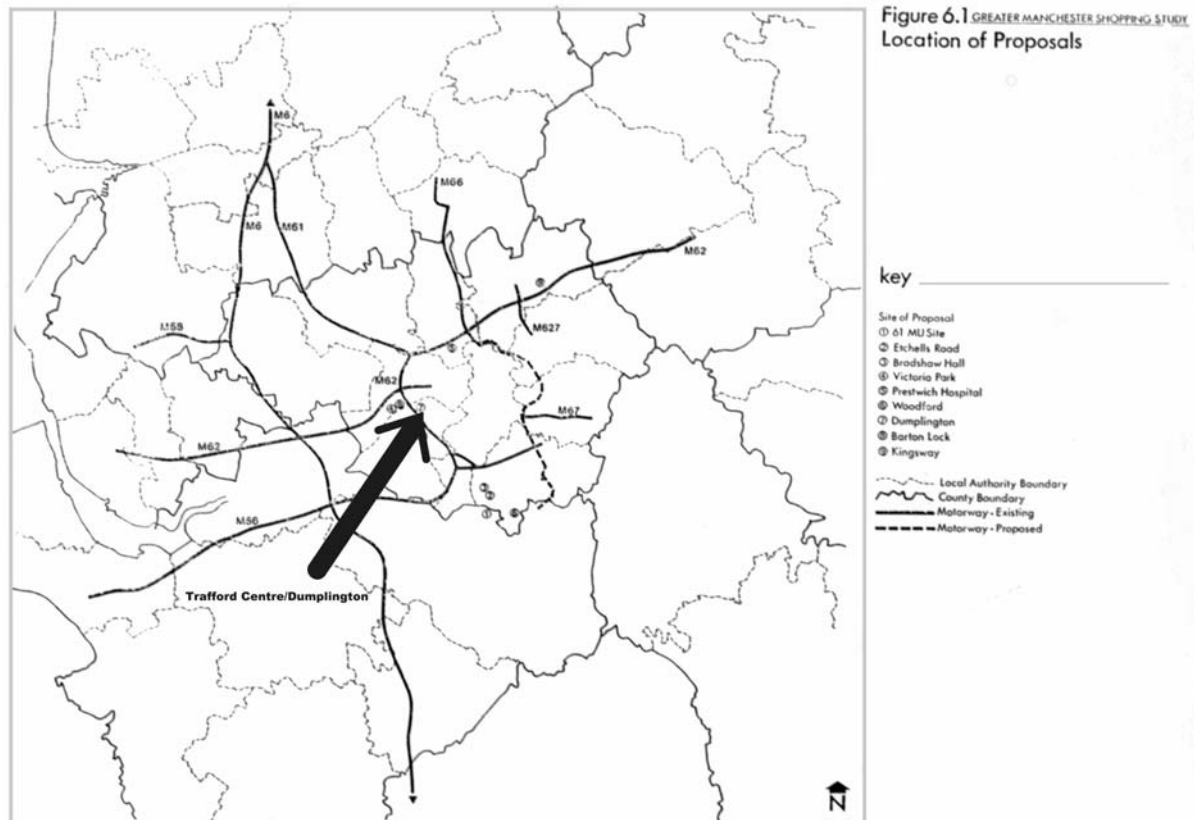


Figure 34: Location of proposals (RTP, 1986, 6.1)

This municipal deadlock prompted the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities in September 1986 to ask the consultancy firm Roger Tym and Partners to evaluate the 10 out-of-town shopping center applications in the metropolitan area. Given the political tension involved, the AGMA gave the consultants a relatively short (six-month) deadline to produce their results. In turn, Salford and Trafford agreed to defer making planning decisions until the publication of the RTP report (however both districts had already received the results of the studies they had commissioned and were making appropriate preparations).

5.2.5 The 1986 Greater Manchester Shopping Study

The results of the RTP report were, given the technical complexity of evaluating ten proposals simultaneously, also complex. There have also been criticisms of the methodology used, especially in comparison to the more thorough Haddock investigation (Interview Bridges, 2002). The tone of the report reflected the interests of the AGMA, being generally more concerned with the effects of retail centers on the existing hierarchy than of their potential profitability or benefit to consumers. The report warned that:

In the short term (up to 1991) much of the retail demand generated by the residents of the conurbation will be preempted by the town center developments which are proposed. Implementation of out-of-town schemes within this timescale could prejudice the investment which has gone into the town centers (RTP, 1986: III).

However, regarding the period after 1991, it felt that some schemes may be accommodated without damaging the existing structure. For this, the consultants proposed five alternative scenarios ranging from retention of current (restrictive) policies to a more market-led approach. Although Manchester city center, by virtue of its size, could absorb more trade deflection than smaller centers, the consultants did warn that this center “has only recently emerged from a period of relative instability and rental levels are just beginning to rise to a level which is more appropriate to its size and importance” (RTP, 1986).

The finding that (after 1991) to honor all applications would be unacceptable, but that sufficient need may exist to justify some applications placed the AGMA in a difficult position of choosing one project over the other — something they were not authorized to do anyway. The political situation was sufficiently volatile that any recommendation (for advise is all that the AGMA could do) for one above the other would certainly be contested by rival parties, and thus undermine the institutional legitimacy of the AGMA as a coordinative body. Nonetheless, the consultants did point out that “the three largest schemes — Dumplington, Barton Lock and Kingsway would cause relatively severe adverse impacts” while the impacts for the smaller proposals would be more benign (RTP, 1986: 77). This of course says rather little, but does tend to reveal the conservatism the AGMA had inherited from the GMC.

In an attempt to “play it safe,” the AGMA urged the districts — and particularly Salford and Trafford — to “resist the current proposals for major out-of-town shopping and to pursue a policy of enhancement of town centers” (in Stocks, 1989: 64). However, the temptation of gain and mistrust of the other districts proved too strong for three of the ten member districts: Trafford and Salford rejected this recommendation, and Stockport took a neutral stance. With these decisions, the battle lines had been drawn for a prolonged war of attrition. The institutional frailty of the regional body made it incapable of overcoming the collective action problem at this level of scale. Like many other out-of-town shopping center controversies in Britain, this had to be resolved at the national level.

5.3 Local context

Until now, attention has been concentrated at the national or regional level. At this point, it is time to narrow the focus once again to the level of the site that was finally to emerge victorious — the Dumplington proposal in Trafford Park.

The current location of the Trafford Centre is several kilometers to the West of Manchester at a site called Dumplington within the vast industrial estate Trafford Park. In the nineteenth century, Trafford Park was still open parkland and owned by the wealthy De Trafford family. The opening of the Manchester Ship Canal in 1894 gave this location a new significance for shipping. Urbanization progressed rapidly around the canal, allowing Trafford Park to grow into the world’s first and largest industrial estate (with 55,000 workers, it still remains one of the largest) (TC 1 Dec, 2001). In 1922, the Manchester Ship Canal Company bought about 1,000ha of the family’s estate, and redeveloped most of it for industry. The Dumplington site remained agricultural into the 1980s however. By that time, heavy industry was declining to such a degree that other uses were already being deemed more appropriate and profitable.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Later, in 1987, the central government designated the area as an Urban Development Area whose regeneration was a matter of national priority (Trafford Centre Insight, 1997: 2).

Two factors converged to make Dumplington an ideal location for a major shopping center development: accessibility and catchment population. Regarding the former, the site is served by two junctions of the M63 motorway, and good connections with the rest of the highway network. Regarding the potential customer base: approximately 5.35 million people live within 45 minutes driving time, making it an ideal location for a major shopping center development (UK Construction magazine, 1997).

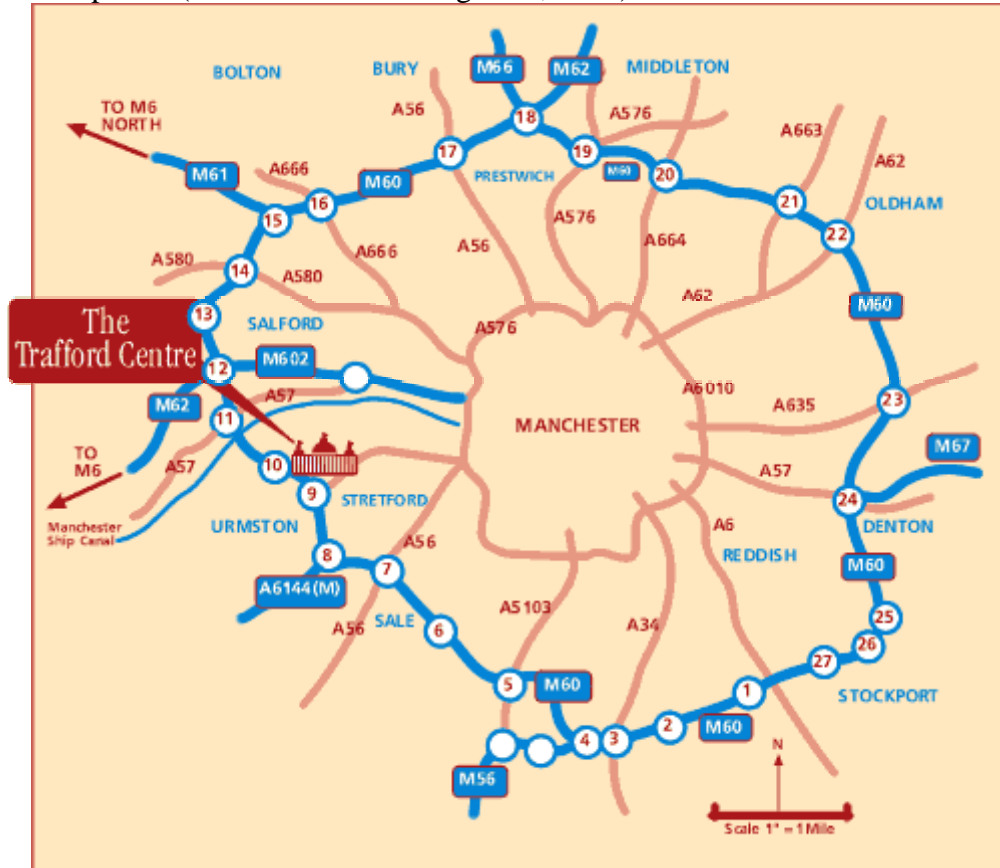


Figure 35: Location of Dumplington/Trafford Centre (Trafford Centre website)

5.3.1 The Dumplington application and first inquiry (1986-1990)

In 1986, the Manchester Ship Canal Co. Ltd. (MSC), submitted development proposals for a regional center at Dumplington to the Trafford district council. Actually, three different development applications were submitted: two for the construction of a shopping mall on approximately 61 ha of land, and a third for the construction of a similar shopping mall plus a regional sports complex, occupying approximately 120 ha of land (Court of Appeal, 1994: 2). The reader is here reminded of the strategy of British developers submitting multiple applications for the same site in order to enhance the probability of success or success on appeal. The scheme itself conformed to the classic North American shopping mall variety (see Chapter 1, §1.5). For the purposes here, a brief description of the location and size of the proposed development will suffice. Further details of the design will be treated in depth in §5.4.1.

Actors and interests

There were many opponents to the Trafford Centre. The most prominent was **Manchester City Council**. This led a **Consortium** of opposing municipalities which included all other local authorities in the conurbation except Trafford, Salford and Stockport (which would join the Consortium later). The **MSC** would play a key role in the process as a proponent for the Trafford Centre until being taken over by Peel Holdings in 1991. Formally, this actor started the conflict with the submission of the application in 1986 to **Trafford Borough Council**, who immediately lent full support (TCIP, 1999: 37). Shortly after this, the area was designated an Urban Development Corporation Area (via the Town and Country Planning Trafford Park Development Area Special Development Order SI No. 187) which made its development a matter of national priority, and the option of a major retail facility as a motor for regeneration more credible (Taylor, 1998).¹⁰⁸ At this early stage, central government opinion was divided: the idea of a shopping mall in the region was originally supported by the **Department of Transport** and Opposed by the Ministry of Agriculture. The **Department of Environment**, which has a stronger voice in such matters, had yet to take a stance. However, it was obvious from the beginning that this would be a long arduous struggle involving many countervailing parties and interests. The planning inquiry that was to follow employed three inspectors, 27 barristers and 90 consultants and other expert witnesses and drag on for many years (Stocks, 1989: 57).

The escalating conflict between Trafford Council and the other municipalities prompted then Secretary of State Nicholas Ridley to call in the eight applications submitted in Trafford and Salford and subject them to a public inquiry (MEN 9 Sept, 1998: 5). Three of the eight applications concerned regional centers (Trafford Centre, Carrington and Barton Lock) and the total floorspace proposed, when combined with existing planning commitments, was considerable, amounting to 39% of the conurbation's aggregate town-center stock (Arrick, 1999: 2).

The inquiry was led by planning inspector Brundell between 22 September 1987 and 26 February 1988 and was divided into sessions regarding individual locations and proposals and a general plenary session. Although not a formal material consideration under the new central government policy, much of the argumentation in the first planning inquiry still centered around economic impact. During this period, conflicting empirical evidence was submitted by MSC and the Consortium as to the capacity of retail expenditure in the conurbation. Academic witnesses on the dangers of out-of-town malls were flown in from the United States by the Consortium, and the Bishop of Manchester testified on behalf of the opponents as well (Stocks, 1989: 68). The developers estimated a surplus or retail need of £ 316 million, while the Consortium predicted a deficit of £ 184 million (both in 1984 prices). This disparity arose from different methods of calculation of future per capita expenditures, growth needs of existing retailers and the amount of floorspace already given planning permission in the region (Arrick, 1999: 2).

¹⁰⁸ The Trafford Park Urban Development Area, established in 1987 and which covered the Dimplington site, worked to encourage investment in the area, especially industry. To expedite investment, it constructed infrastructure such as roads and bridges, and landfill and reclamation. It also actively lobbied for central government funds. During its life-span of over a decade, it attracted over £1.75 billion in investment to the area. By far, the most significant project within the UDA was the Trafford Centre. Although the application had been submitted one year before the UDA was designated, the UDC followed the subsequent process as a concerned party, and worked with the developer to ensure quality.

Even when a total sales estimate was agreed upon by all parties (£ 121.4 million, or £ 178 in 1999 prices), the distribution of impact was calculated differently.¹⁰⁹ Obviously, the developers wished to argue that larger centers would experience more trade diversion than smaller centers, because this could be more easily absorbed. The table below provides a selection of some of the predictions of affected local authorities by the opposing parties.

Predicted trade diversion to the Trafford Centre in 1984 £ million		
Selected local authority	Prediction by Consortium	Prediction by developer
Manchester	29.8	39.0
Bolton	12.0	10.3
Stockport	11.0	9.3
Wigan	2.7	4.0
Altrincham	7.3	4.0
Salford	3.4	1.0
Stretford	2.4	1.5
Total	121.4	121.4

Source: Arrick, 1999: 3.

It should be added that it was only retail space that was counted for the inquiry, rather than total consumer-oriented commercial space such as night clubs, cinemas and restaurants. Since these facilities can and do have impacts on the existing hierarchical structure, it further calls into question the validity of public inquiries and impact reports used in decision-making on large-scale retail projects. In addition, the emphasis on the minutiae of floorspace figures and procedural rectitude was criticized by Stocks (1989: 68-69) as being pointless given the wide margins of error and disparity between studies. Ultimately, it is up to the inspector to decide which figures are more reliable or realistic. In making this decision, the figures supplied by the Consortium particularly failed to impress Brundell. He argued that their methodology:

Recorded the cumulative impact of the proposed development on existing traders rather than on the existing centers as a whole ... this is sufficient reason in itself to conclude that it does not meet the requirement of the Secretary of the State for the Environment that the effect the developments would have must be judged in relation to the vitality and viability of each town center as a whole (Salford City Council et al, 1988: 2).

Thus, following the submissions and testimony, the inspector finally recommended that outline planning permission be granted for all three variants of the MSC application for the shopping center and regional sports center and recommended that the other five competing ones be refused. Regarding the economic impact argument, it was believed that allowing one project to be built (i.e. Dumplington) would not seriously undermine the vitality and viability of existing centers, but more of the same might: "I do not believe that centers such as Bolton and Altrincham, which are closer to other proposals, have anything to fear on the basis of the evidence placed before me" (Salford City Council et al, 1988: 2). The Secretary of State accepted most of the inspector's recommendations, primarily the argument that the Trafford Centre should be preferred over the other proposals. However, in light of recent comments supplied by the Department of Transport regarding problems with safe traffic access to the M63, the Secretary of State decided not to immediately grant the permit. Further investigation was deemed necessary into the traffic situation, thus opening a second round of submissions and inquiries on this specific issue (Court of Appeal, 1994: 4; House of Lords, 1995: 3). At the same time, the Secretary of State granted permission to two of the three sub-regional retail proposals: Handforth, which was developed as a Tesco/M&S combination retail park,

¹⁰⁹ This is a very conservative estimate of potential sales at an out-of-town center, and an estimate made in 1999 was £450 million.

and Cheadle Royal, which was developed as a John Lewis/Sainsbury combination retail park (Arrick, 1999: 2).

5.3.2 Second inquiry and appeals (1990-1993)

As preparation for the next inquiry on the Trafford Centre, the Secretary of State wrote a letter on 4 November 1991 that set out the issues to be addressed. These were: (a) whether roadwork was needed to allow access from the M63 to the Trafford Centre, (b) the timing and extent of this, (c) whether the advantages of the proposal are sufficient for unconditional permission or whether (d) permission should be granted on the condition that certain improvements are carried out (in Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council, 1992: 3). Therefore, at this stage, the fate of the Trafford Centre no longer rested on considerations of economic impact — surely the main reason for its opposition by neighboring municipalities — but merely on considerations of traffic and infrastructure capacity. Opponents were therefore obliged to argue that the shopping center would generate unacceptable levels of vehicular traffic.

Sudden wavering by the Department of Transport once again cast doubt on the project's future. The decision by the Department of Transport that an extra motorway lane alongside the Trafford Centre would be necessary resulted in another year of consultation and submissions. After this, in late 1991, the new Secretary of State, Michael Heseltine, reopened the Trafford Centre inquiry, but just as this was about to commence, the Department of Transport changed its demand for a motorway lane to a series of measures regarding general access, further prolonging the timeframe for submissions (Taylor, 1998: 11).

The second inquiry was formally reopened on 9 June 1992 and was also led by Inspector Brundell. Like the first, it pitted the arguments of MSC, the Trafford Park UDC and Trafford against those of a Consortium of eight of the ten metropolitan districts against a regional center and some private businesses, Salford (who argued for a shopping center, but in its jurisdiction), and technical objections by the Department of Transport. In addition, the Secretary of State for the Department of Environment had just published his Strategic Guidance for Greater Manchester (RPG4) that accepted that a new sub-regional center could be accommodated in the western part of the conurbation (Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council, 1992: 19). Furthermore, Trafford council had in the meantime granted an application for an ASDA store directly opposite to the application site for the Trafford Centre (Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council, 1992: 77). This application was also contested and called in by the Secretary of State.

Several requests to widen the inquiry beyond matters of traffic were denied in the Spring of 1992 (Greater Manchester Consortium, 1992: 89). Thus, the Consortium had no other recourse but attempt to demonstrate that extensive road improvements would be required if the Trafford Centre were to be approved. In this, they based their claims on traffic models that attempted to simulate levels in 1997 using 1991 data. They had also attempted to show that unacceptable levels of traffic were generated at other regional centers. Without going into the particularities of the argument, it is sufficient to say that it failed to sway Brundell, who rejected their methodology as patently unsound such that “no reliance should be placed on the figures used by the Consortium” (Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council, 1992: 11).

Meanwhile, the Department of Transport argued that the necessary roadway improvements may not be implemented within the foreseen timeframe, and wished to impose the condition that the Trafford Centre not open until they had been completed. Brundell argued that, even

by their own admission the fourth lane would only take 12-18 months to complete and the Trafford Centre 24 months, giving a comfortable safety margin (Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council, 1992: 18). In addition, the inspector criticized the Department of Transport's vacillation on the subject of an extra lane: "the fact that this [demand for an extra lane] had not been raised earlier suggested that it was an attempt to bolster a case which was being lost on the traffic figures" (Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council, 1992: 14).

Salford argued that the Trafford Centre would seriously compromise its own plans for a shopping mall at Barton Locks. It also argued that the fact that this site had already been zoned in its local plan should be taken as a material consideration, due to the increased weight recently to a plan-led system in the amended Town and Country Planning Act. The inspector found it odd that Salford was using its UDP as an argument against a proposal that was not in Salford. Furthermore, he pointed out that the Department of Transport had objected to the Barton Locks proposal anyway, and that this was "unlikely to be overcome. This meant that the weight to be attached to the Salford UDP in this respect must be very limited" (Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council, 1992: 16).

At the conclusion of the inquiry in July 1992, Brundell recommended that permission for the Trafford Centre be granted, stating that although the planning advantages "have reduced in importance they still remain valid for the most part" but that they must be accompanied by improvements to Junction 3 of the M63, otherwise the costs in traffic would not outweigh the benefits (Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council, 1992: 77).

For opponents, this decision was highly disappointing. It was all the more frustrating because the entire inquiry had been framed by the 4 November 1991 letter by the Secretary of State focusing exclusively on traffic issues. Therefore, the Consortium submitted a post-inquiry document in November 1992 appealing to the Secretary of State to take other matters into consideration. Specifically, they argued that, as local authorities pursuing policies designed to protect and enhance their town centers:

...they believe that the development of a sub-regional shopping center in the western sector of the conurbation would undermine their objectives in this respect... [and] register their strongest objection to the grant of planning permission for the proposals at Dimplington or Barton Locks (Greater Manchester Consortium, 1992: 2).

The Consortium pointed out that the original application had been submitted six years before, and argued that significant changes had taken place since the original inquiry, "such that he [the Secretary of State] cannot rely on a number of the key conclusions reached by his inspector at the inquiry" (Greater Manchester Consortium, 1992: 5). These changes included central government policy statements such as the white paper *This Common Inheritance* and changes to relevant PPGs (e.g. PP1 on general policy and principles, PPG12 on development plans and regional guidance, and PPG6 on retail development). The Consortium also referred to changes in local government plans and policy such as the Strategic Guidance for Greater Manchester, the content of emerging UDPs, recent evidence of other out-of-town shopping centers (e.g. Meadowhall and Merry Hill), and up-to-date figures (e.g. retail expenditure, employment, public transport) and other material considerations (Greater Manchester Consortium, 1992: 5-6).

The Consortium pointed out that all these policy changes reflected the new direction of government thinking over planning and the environment, one which was much less amenable with out-of-town retail developments like the Trafford Centre proposal (see §5.1.3.4 and §5.1.3.5). They also argued that it would be premature to decide on Dimplington until a

decision had been made on the UDPs being prepared in Salford and Trafford (Greater Manchester Consortium, 1992: 87-89). Moreover, the Consortium contended that the proposal ran counter to most of the local plans being prepared in the conurbation — save that of Trafford and Salford, of course, which the Consortium opined contained “no attempt to justify the allocation of large areas for out-of-town shopping ... [and were] devoid of any strategic justification and without any reference to wider environmental issues” (Greater Manchester Consortium, 1992: 31, 34). A “better fit,” they argued, would be to put the site to industrial use (Greater Manchester Consortium, 1992: 102). Finally, they argued that the original inquiry “was conducted against the background of a consumer boom (largely credit-driven) which was almost unprecedented and unlikely to be repeated” (Greater Manchester Consortium, 1992: 98). Despite all these arguments, the Dumplington application was given the green light by Minister of Environment Michael Howard on 4 March, 1993. In the decision letter, written by B.C. Isherwood on his behalf, he states that, “with regard to the likely effects of the Trafford Centre on urban generation, it is considered that this issue was fully debated at the 1988 inquiry [and that] ... the additional representations do not provide any reasons to doubt that the Inspector’s conclusions on this issue remain valid” (Department of Environment, 1993: 5).

This decision was immediately taken to the High Court by the Consortium, thus exchanging the quasi-legal setting of planning inquiries for the full legal setting of the courtroom. The Consortium felt that insufficient heed was taken by the Secretary of State of their recent submissions. The substantive grounds of appeal rested on three main issues: (1) the likely increase in traffic volume on the M63 after the opening of the Trafford Centre, (2) the effect of the center on urban regeneration efforts in the conurbation and ability of shops to remain in business, and (3) the desirability of the site for high-technology industry. In the appeal, the Consortium reiterated the issues submitted to the Secretary of State in November 1992. The presiding judge Schiemann ruled in favor of the MSC on 15 October 1993 which once again gave the official green light to the Dumplington proposal (Court of Appeal, 1994: 11; MEN 9 Sept, 1998: 5).

The Dumplington proposal, now gaining attention in the local media under the appellation “shopper city”, was receiving heavy criticism from local business via the Chamber of Commerce. Manchester Chamber of Commerce president David Brown, for example, warned that “there will be no net gain of new jobs” and pointed to Meadowhall and Merry Hill whose neighboring city centers have been turned into “ghost towns” (MEN 11 March, 1993: 11). This argumentation was supported by the publication of studies by the Department of Environment into the effects of these centers (see §5.1.3.5). On the other hand, proponents of the Trafford Centre pointed out that the uncertainty over Dumplington by the ongoing inquiries and litigation threatened the planned extension of a light-rail line (Metrolink) to Trafford Park (PW 14 July, 1994: 6). They also complained that the interests of consumers were being neglected in the political controversy.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ At the time of the inquiry, the issues regarding the light rail connection were also being resolved. Metrolink gained right-of-access to Trafford Park, and soon also the Dumplington extension would receive Royal Approval. The MSC agreed to make a financial contribution, but refused to quantify this until its roadway contributions were known (Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council, 1992: 7). It was also felt that, “without the Trafford Centre there would be no prospect of this extension” (Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council, 1992: 15). Another £ 2.5 million was pledged by the Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority for the Metrolink line to Salford Quays and eventually to Eccles (PW 19 May, 1994: 5). Another event is that the developer, MSC, was taken over by Peel Holdings in 1991 after a long and bitter legal battle. Peel Holdings carried out the subsequent litigation regarding the Trafford Centre, and, after its success, the management thereof.

5.3.3 Final appeals and judgment (1994-1996)

The High Court ruling was subsequently taken to the Court of Appeal by the Consortium. At this stage, the judges could no longer review the *content* of the case, but were requested to determine solely whether Michael Howard had acted unreasonably in approving the project. Specifically, it was incumbent upon the appellants to prove that the Secretary of State's decision was not taken within the powers of the Town and Country Planning Act or "that the interests of the applicant have been substantially prejudiced by failure to comply with any of the relevant requirements relating to the decision" (Court of Appeal, 1994: 7). Because of this limitation, the new and more restrictive government policy still could not be directly taken into account, but instead it had to be argued that Howard's 1993 decision had shown a lack of regard for material considerations, including government policy. Not dissuaded, senior planning officers at Manchester City Council felt that a case could still be made that the new policy against out-of-town retail development represented a continuum rather than an about face and thus ought to have been considered by Howard (PW 19 May, 1994: 5).

In this, he was correct. In the unanimous judgment, Justice Glidewell explained that in light of the further submissions on the part of the Consortium in November 1992 and the subsequent decision by Michael Howard:

...either the Secretary of State did not reach his decision within the powers of the Act, or that the interests of the member authorities of the Consortium have been substantially prejudiced by his failure to give proper and adequate reasons (Court of Appeal, 1994: 56).

With these words, the outline planning permission for the Trafford Centre was quashed by the Court of Appeal. In the trade journal *Planning Week*, Manchester senior planning officer David Kaiserman described himself as "over the moon" upon hearing the news, adding that, "either the planning system stops something which is clearly anachronistic or it fails. Obviously, this was a very, very important decision which has introduced some commonsense into what was becoming a Mickey Mouse situation" (PW 14 July, 1994: 6). This situation was not to last, however, and full Disneyesque proportions would be attained the following year. The last recourse of the developer (MSC/Peel Holdings) was to appeal this Court of Appeal decision to the House of Lords, the ultimate arbiter of legal cases in the UK, which it immediately did (MEN 9 Sept, 1998: 5).

By the time the case had reached the House of Lords, almost nine years had elapsed since the original Dimplington application had been approved by Trafford district council. The justices were thus confronted with the issue of whether the Secretary of State was indeed remiss in his concentration on transport issues in the second inquiry, rather than more substantive matters like changed government policy on out-of-town retail development. Perhaps because of this, Lord Lloyd of Berwick was more sympathetic to the situation in which the Secretary of State had found himself than Justice Glidewell.

When circumstances are changing all the time, and new material is placed before the Secretary of State in a never-ending stream (a representation on which the appellants rely strongly was dated 22 February 1993, only ten days before the date of the decision letter), there is, as Schiemann J. rightly pointed out, a tension between the proper examination of all relevant material, and the need to come to some decision, sooner rather than later. The Secretary of State might be forgiven for thinking that in this case he has been shooting at a moving target (House of Lords, 1995: 2, emphasis in original).

The House of Lords therefore unanimously decided to overturn the ruling by the Court of Appeal, and restore that made by the High Court, thus concluding one of the most expensive, painstakingly exhaustive and lengthy shopping center approval procedures in British history.

Adjacent retail park

By the time of the final judgment, Peel Holdings already had well-defined plans for extensions to the retail provision in Trafford Park, specifically regarding merchandise the Trafford Centre lacked such as groceries. In order to prepare for the upcoming battle, the developer proposed to build 75,000m² of offices, homes and a marina on brownfields next to the Trafford Centre. This proposal took place at the same time as the debate over whether out-of-town shopping malls could be considered town centers in their own right (see §5.1.3.5).

The developers were confident that the government would concede to these demands. To facilitate the decision on the retail warehousing schemes (with a combined retail space of about 38,000m²), Peel Holdings had offered to contribute £ 16 million to help fund a £ 60 million supertram extension from Piccadilly Station, and the Trafford Park Development Corporation pledged another £ 6 million (MEN 9 Sept, 1998: 12). This would make use of an existing but defunct industrial line from Trafford Park to the city (which still required a 20-meter bridge over the Bridgewater Canal). In 1997, the developer offered £ 4 million towards the costs of the Metrolink line and space for a station at Trafford Park (RW 1 Aug, 1997 in ATCM, 1997). According to property consultant Jeremy Hinds:

Trafford Council is taking a private-sector-led approach. Given the high level of animosity between it and Manchester Council, there is no guarantee the strategy will come off, but if it does it will be difficult for the council to reject any extension of retail (in RW 13 Aug, 1999: 24).

However, such strategic maneuverings at the local level soon became a moot point as these applications too were called in and subjected to a planning inquiry. After the inquiry, Labour Party Secretary of State John Prescott decided to turn down both superstore proposals. This decision was appealed, and a second inquiry ensued. The next Secretary of State, Stephen Byers, then reversed Prescott's decision (RICS, 2002). After a five-year legal wrangle, reminiscent no doubt of the Trafford Centre controversy, Peel Holdings finally was granted permission for a 18,850m² retail park at Giants Field for bulky goods and a 10,500m² B&Q warehouse at the power station site. Both are in Trafford Park near the Trafford Centre, but the developer has stressed that these facilities are not intended to create a second Trafford Centre, but complement it with merchandise not offered at the mall (TC 1 Dec, 2001; RW 11 Jan 2002). With planning permission in hand, there was no longer a need to offer any concessions. For example, in 2001, it was expected that Peel Holdings would contribute approximately £ 16 of the £ 60 million Metrolink line (MEN 21 Dec, 2001). However, with the latest publication of the Metrolink budget and list of priorities, the Trafford Centre line has disappeared altogether, making it highly doubtful that any progress will be made in the near future (Interview Bristow, 2002).

5.4 Trafford Centre

As the name suggests, the Trafford Centre is situated within the municipality of Trafford, although it is less than 10 km from Manchester's city center. Despite being an archtypical out-of-town shopping mall, its location is still only about four kilometers from the edge of Manchester city and it is firmly nestled within the urban fabric that comprises this densely populated English conurbation.

Although the Trafford Centre was the brainchild of the mid-1980s, it only really began to take shape in the 1990s with the attraction of architects, builders and tenants. Regarding the general design, Peel Holdings described the basic layout as "a powerful shopping machine"

(TC, 2001: 4). This shopping machine is, however, like CentrO, yet another example of the hackneyed tried-and-true suburban shopping mall format. Like so many other malls around the globe, the Trafford Centre consists of an enclosed building flanked by parking facilities on the outside, and rows of shops in a pedestrianized environment with department stores functioning as anchors. In fact, the same firm that designed Sheffield's Meadowhall also worked on the Trafford Centre, and both are similar in size, retail offer and demographics of the surrounding area (ATCM, 1997, MMN 23 Feb, 1998: 21). Having said this, this section will go into more detail about the particularities of the Trafford Centre and related issues.



5.4.1 Design

Although like most malls in essence, the Trafford Centre sets itself apart in its magnitude of execution. The total retail offer is over 100,000m² and restaurant and entertainment add another 32,000m² to this total. No costs were spared in building the Trafford Centre. The project cost a reported £ 600 million upon opening, used over 2 million bricks, provides over 10,000 parking spaces, and involved the placement of 300 closed circuit television security cameras (MEN 9 Sept, 1998: 3). Almost one thousand semi-mature trees were planted in total on the grounds (Trafford Centre Insight, 1997: 2). Granite and marble, mined at Montignosa and Querleta in Italy cost Peel Holdings £ 5.8 million alone.

The style on the exterior has a neoclassical theme, and the central dome (adorning Selfridges) is larger than St. Paul's Cathedral (Lowe, 2000: 26). Palm trees and exotic plants were shipped in from the United States, and trees were planted alongside the road circumnavigating the site to shield the Trafford Centre from the M63, and give the complex a "self contained atmosphere" (MEN 9 Sept, 1998: 6). The costs of maintenance are also high; allegedly, three miles of brass handrails are polished every evening (TCIP, 1999: 26). On the outside:

Massive murals, friezes, portraits depicting bare-breasted youths at play and numerous statues all contributing to the sense of having walked into the Roman forum. This retro-

classicism is topped off by 22, twice life-size statues placed around the 50-ft colonnade which dominates the main entrance of the center (MEN 9 Sept, 1998 8).

On the inside, the neoclassicism becomes interspersed with other styles, according to the particular theme of the area. Regent Crescent, for example, has a slightly more upscale design to reflect the retailers trading there while Peel Avenue attempts to recreate a more high-street atmosphere. The various themes collide in entertainment complex *The Orient* where Arabic motifs (ironically occupied by McDonald's) give way to that of a Parisian boulevard and Ancient Egypt (Pizza Hut). Housing six themed restaurants and providing 1,600 seats to visitors, the Orient is the largest foodcourt in Europe. Nearby is an 18-lane bowling alley, and a 20-screen multiplex cinema, the largest in the UK (MEN 10 Sept, 1998: 2-3; BBC 10 Sept, 1998; RTP, 1999: 3).



While praised by the developers, the design was derided by opponents in the media. Writing at its opening, Bury (1998) complained that the mall “has no sense of place ... there is nothing of Manchester here – not even a themed area based on the city ... instead tourists will visit cardboard cutouts of Venice, Egypt and New Orleans.” Architects were also unimpressed: “the construction photographs show cut-and-paste architecture at its most flimsy and facile” (Walker, 1996). Although not mentioned by name, the Trafford Centre would be an example par excellence of what Koolhaas has called “junkspace” (Chung et al, 2001). On the other hand, as we shall see in §5.4.6, the attitudes of the public were quite different than those of architects — revealing a huge chasm of opinion between those who make the buildings and those for whom they are made.



5.4.2 Security and service

The Trafford Centre is renowned for its level of security. The interior of the Trafford Centre may seem to resemble open public spaces reminiscent of parks or town squares, but in reality, the level of control at the mall rivals that of a prison. Outside, the entire perimeter is fenced and illuminated after dark, and inside virtually every space is subject to a strict surveillance regime.¹¹¹ The 101 security guards employed by the center, along with a team of six plainclothes personnel (doubled in 2001) form one contingent of the Trafford Centre’s “united front against criminal activity” (TCIP, 2001: 22-23). No other mall in the UK has plainclothes officers.

Anyone committing an offence in the mall is banned from the Trafford Centre in the future, and the mall boasts a state-of-the-art comprehensive networking infrastructure to enforce this claim. A battery of over 300 cameras provides a vital early-warning subsystem to alert security and retailers of the presence of past shoplifters via a real-time CCTV system. In the main control room, officers can track visitors with moving cameras and 12 separate screens (see below). The installed network also includes a pedestrian flow monitoring subsystem, controls the mall’s lighting and fire alarms, and, most importantly, regulates security transmissions (Taylor, 1998: 63; PINACL, 1999). The parking garages are patrolled regularly and are also monitored by camera. All people and vehicles are registered and counted, and any incidents logged. Even the bathrooms are claimed to have been designed “to avoid opportunities for drug dealing” (TCIP, 2001: 22). Other deployments of the formidable arsenal of security forces included a truancy sweep (together with uniformed Greater Manchester Police officers) in November 2000 that caught 100 children and youth skipping school (TC 11 Dec, 2000). In 2001, security was tightened further with the introduction of “Operation Red Robin” which doubled the team of plainclothes security officers and mounted

¹¹¹ It should also be added that shopping centers in the United States, already known for their far-reaching security regimes (Judd, 1995), felt the need to boost security further in the 1990s (Christian Science Monitor 4 Dec, 1997).

police patrolling the perimeter (MEN 22 Oct, 2001). This was accompanied by an Orwellian fingerprinting campaign using invisible ink in an effort to crack down on credit card fraudsters. The Trafford Centre was also the first mall in the world to instigate a “civil recovery” policy that requires shoplifters to “pay for the value of goods stolen, the cost of their detention, investigation into the offence as well as a proportion of the cost of security and surveillance” (TC Feb, 2000).

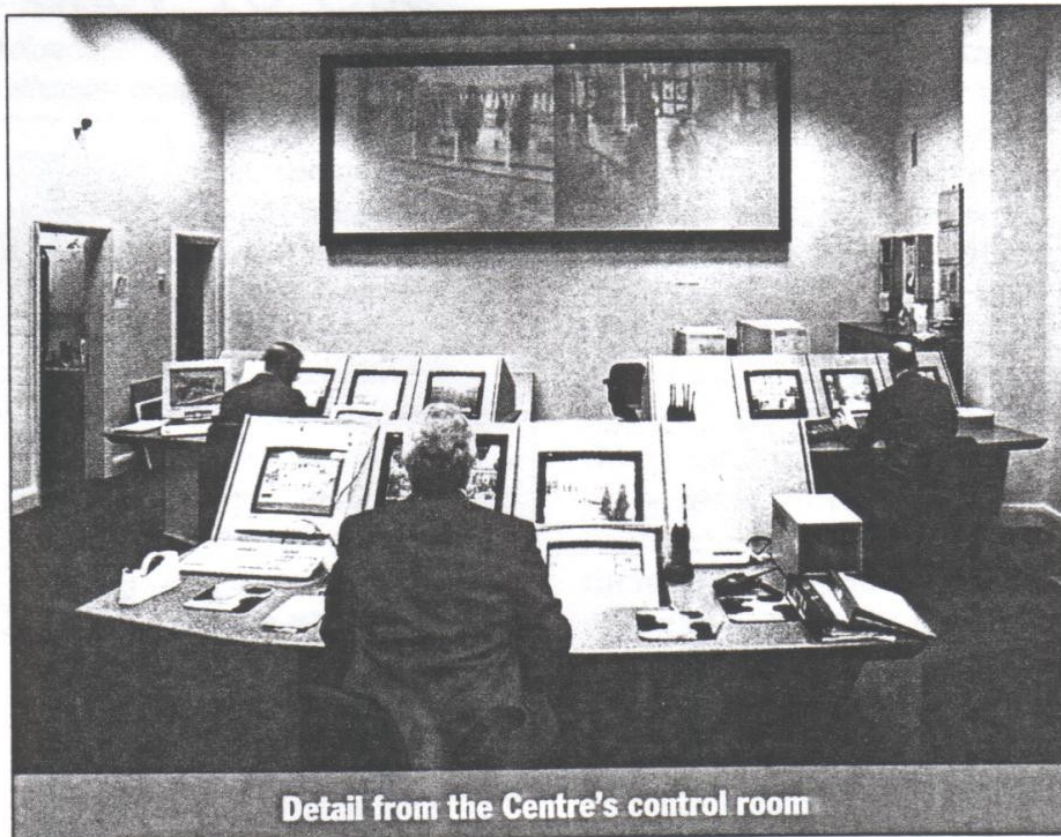


Figure 36: Trafford Centre security control room

As an alleged result of these measures, the center has one of the lowest crime levels for a mall of its kind, and only 20% of that originally predicted. For offenders, the feelings of exclusion and loneliness of banned teenagers is such that over 75% have written letters begging to have the ban lifted (TC 20 June, 2000). Other benefits have been more mundane:

The Centre's CCTV system has [also] proved itself a very useful management aid — e.g.: managers have filmed retailers depositing rubbish in service corridors and where necessary have imposed punitive sanctions to prevent reoccurrence (PINACL, 1999: 22).

In March 1999, the Trafford Centre was the largest development in the UK to receive the “secure by design” award (NSG Security Consultants, 2002). It should be added that a growing number of British city centers are adopting similar surveillance techniques, and many town center management initiatives in the North West include such measures (see §5.6.2) (NRC 5 May, 1999: 18).

Besides providing a safe environment, additional services for visitors include a crèche for ages 2 to 8 — sponsored by Nestle (!) — strollers and ID tags for small children, unisex parent-and-child restrooms, baby changing and breastfeeding facilities, and baby bottle warming services (TCIP, 2001: 19). Finally, because of its out-of-town location, free parking

is provided for up to 10,000 cars, along with a vehicle management system to guide motorists to available spaces.

The Trafford Centre also provides services to its occupants. These include guaranteeing an optimal tenant mix, maintaining the grounds and marketing. Marketing activities have concentrated on building the Trafford Centre as a brand via special events, advertisements and a sophisticated website. The management has also entered into co-promotion activities with tourist agencies, Manchester United, the Lowry and Golden Tulip Hotel to achieve branding synergy. This strategy has apparently paid off: a recent survey found that 99% of people living in the North West were aware of the Trafford Centre's existence (TCIP, 1999: 29).

5.4.3 Tenants

Ultimately, customers do not come to a shopping center for the benches, parking facilities, security or childcare, but to shop and enjoy the entertainment facilities. It is therefore imperative for developers to attract the best tenants they can to the center. Once suitable anchors are found (for upscale malls like the Trafford Centre invariably a department store) the developers can pick and choose retailers to generate an optimal mix (i.e. one that is complete and complementary). In the Trafford Centre one can find conventional high street fashion retailers such as Next, Dorothy Perkins, Principles and the Gap as well as more upscale designer shops such as Tommy Hilfiger, Mango and Ralph Lauren. The completed center had 263 shops and five anchors: Selfridges, Debenhams, C&A, BhS and Boots (Arrick, 1999: 3). Regarding this, the Trafford Centre had scored an early victory with the attraction of the prestigious Selfridges department store as an anchor. The retailer has been described as "one of the greatest show sights of London, like Westminster Abbey" (in Lowe and Wrigley, 2000: 647). This is the retailer's first outlet outside of London, and it was given a prominent space near the foodcourt/leisure center. The most obvious omission, however, is Marks and Spencer's.



Figure 37: Map of interior (Trafford Centre website)

In the UK, M&S is the most sought-after anchor tenant. For the Trafford Centre, this proved not to be as straightforward as Peel Holdings had hoped. M&S already had a large city center location and a edge-of-town outlet in Salford, and decided against the Trafford Centre.¹¹²

¹¹² This decision to stay in the city center was tied to the bombing of the city center in 1996. Because the M&S store was destroyed in the blast, the company decided to make a symbolic statement by replacing its outlet with an even larger store (Interview Bennison, 2002; Interview Bristow, 2002). Once the other tenants had been selected, the prospect of an anchor tenant like M&S showing interest in the mall at a later date would shake up the Trafford Centre. The idea of potentially using the Festival Village area for a M&S location would disappoint the retailers who had relocated there from the devastated city center.

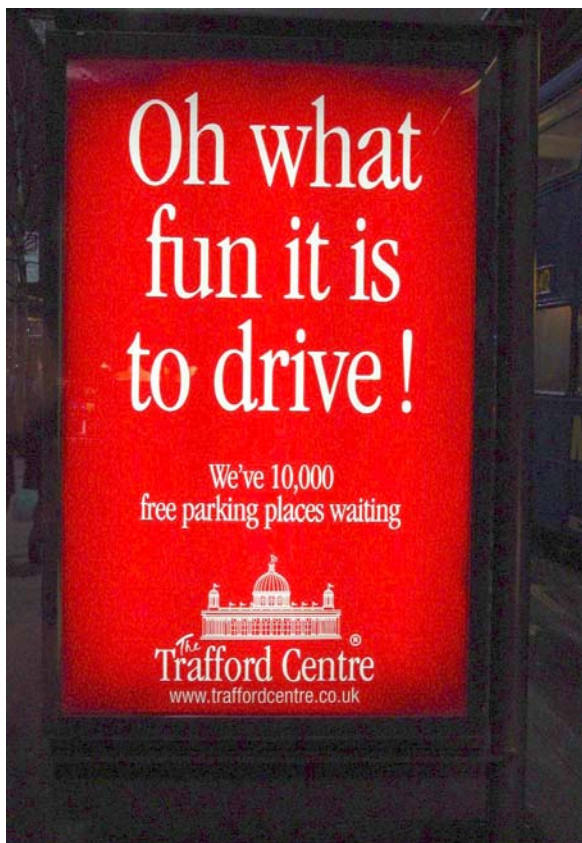
When questioned about this decision, Roger Aldridge, M&S Director of Estates and Store Development indicated that: “we would only establish in the Trafford Centre if it is clear the region could support another store since we do not consider the Trafford Centre a viable alternative to the city center” (in Thomas, 1999: 35). This did not stop M&S, however, from reversing this decision and opening a store in the Trafford Centre a few years later when C&A closed. Although it kept its flagstore in Manchester, the move was accompanied by the closure of its other location in Salford (MEN 21 Feb, 2002).

This raises the issue of relocation from traditional centers to out-of-town shopping malls. In a small survey of retailers moving to the Trafford Centre, nine of the ten respondents indicated that it was not company policy to automatically (re)locate in a regional center — only C&A argued that it would be “commercial suicide” not to do this (Taylor, 1998: 73). It should be added that this is the same retailer that had vacated the city center of Oberhausen for CentrO. Although Boots was more guarded in their response, “it would not be commercial suicide, simply the non-participation in a major retailing destination” the statement is still noteworthy given Boots’ proclaimed attachment to town centers, and their general policy not to locate out-of-town (Taylor, 1998: 73). In all, none of the ten retailers responding to the survey, including the five opening branches in the Trafford Centre, admitted any intention of closing their city center outlets (Taylor, 1998: 47). In fact, five of the ten retailers encouraged the support given to town centers by PPG6, and stated that this conformed to their own company policy, four of whom intended to open branches in the Trafford Centre (Taylor, 1998: 52). Despite this positive rhetoric, a few years later, the prestigious ladieswear outfits Laura Ashley and Morgan did close their city center shops, leaving only their Trafford Centre locations behind (MEN 7 Aug, 2001).

5.4.4 Jobs and traffic

Whether the Trafford Centre will result in a net gain of jobs, and how much, was the subject of much speculation. It was widely reported in the media that 7,000 jobs would be created by the Trafford Centre (although how much of this was the result of displacement is unclear). The recruitment and Training Foundation, set up in September 1997, offers training programs to the unemployed and those wanting to switch jobs, and includes “philosophy of customer service.” The first trainees were drawn from the immediate 6-mile area to ensure that local jobs would go to local people. Recruitment was then extended to Greater Manchester (MEN 9 Sept, 1998: 14). After hiring, employees can participate in a “comprehensive training program” in subjects such as Welcome Host, Blind Awareness, Sign Language, First Aid, Customer Service, Fire Marshaling, Trading Standards and Health & Safety. Additional courses are available in areas such as typing and foreign languages (TCIP, 1999: 17). The mall boasted that in its first year, 542 employees had completed their basic training package on consumer law, and 182 managers had completed the advanced course. The management estimated that the level of employees with training in this area will rise to one thousand by late 2000 (TCIP, 1999: 21). Whether such skills are readily translatable to other sectors is subject to debate however.

At the inquiries, the most contested aspect of the mall was not jobs but its perceived impacts on the nearby M63 motorway. To reduce congestion, the most advanced traffic management system in Europe was installed using state-of-the-art computer equipment designed in conjunction with the Highways Agency, and includes road-use sensors that automatically direct motorists along the least congested route to the center (MEN 9 Sept, 1998: 6). Electronic signs also alter speed limits according to capacity levels, measured by the sensors (Taylor, 1998: 68; TCIP, 2001: 20).



The mall is extremely car-oriented despite the fact that car ownership levels in the immediate area are well below the British average — the ATCM estimated that 57% of Manchester households do not own a car (Taylor, 1998: 12). Public transport to the mall is substandard — patrons must either take a long bus ride from the city center, or transfer from the Metrolink rail to a shuttle bus. Throughout the planning and development, there has been much talk of a direct Metrolink line to the Trafford Centre, but this is unlikely to materialize in the near future. This makes the stated goal of 25% of journeys to the Trafford Centre being taken with public transit (MEN 9 Sept, 1998: 12) highly unlikely.

5.4.5 Construction

Bulldozers moved onto the site in May 1996, and kept a tight building schedule, allowing the building frame to be completed by Spring 1997. The numbers of workers increased as work began on the units. Peel decided to enlist the same team for the Trafford Centre that had built Meadowhall, namely Bovis (management

contractor), Chapman Taylor Partners (concept architect), Bingham Cotterell (civil and structural engineer), Deacon and Jones (quality surveyor). Bovis in particular has built the majority of large-scale retail schemes in the UK in recent years, including Bluewater Park (Kent), Cribbs Causeway (Bristol), Brahead and Buchanan Centre (Glasgow) and the Oracle (Reading) (Cook, 1996). The most important reasons for the selection of developers and contractors was value-for-money, but also a guaranteed opening date (UK Construction Magazine, 1997). In all, construction took about two years, which is only about a fifth of the time it took to carry out the inquiry and appeals process.

5.4.6 Grand opening

The 10 September 1998 deadline required a last-minute Herculean effort, and just before opening, approximately 4,000 workers were busy around the clock cleaning and clearing the grounds of rubble (MEN 9 Sept, 1998: 15). On the eve of the opening, people had begun queuing outside the new center, some having arrived as early as 3 a.m. (MEN 10 Sept, 1998: 1). Because the weather was foul, even for a mid-September night in North West England, the management decided to let the visitors in early — the exuberance they felt and expressed to reporters as they entered the lavish entrée was certainly mixed with a touch of relief of being let in from the cold. Wilf Geldart, marketing manager for the sister-center Meadowhall, explained that “We love the rain and cold here because that is the attraction of shopping centers. It’s warm, it’s safe, it’s clean and everybody’s happy” (Telegraph 28 Dec, 1995).



A reported 130,000 people came to marvel the new Trafford Centre on its opening day (Taylor, 1998: 14). The first impressions of the customers was similar to that of Germans visiting CentrO for the first time: “I have been to Las Vegas and it has a similar feel” and “It feels like we are in Florida. It’s got the atmosphere of America on the main mall” (MEN 11 Sept, 1998: 3), “I’ve never seen so much marble and so many shops in all my life. This will really put Trafford on the map once and for all” (MEN 10 Sept, 1998: 1). In a reappraisal shortly before opening, the value of the mall had risen by £ 150 million (from £ 200m to £ 350m), and the management announced that it expected 30 million visitors annually (MEN 9 Sept, 1998: 10). Obviously, the Trafford Centre would pose a significant threat to the established centers, particularly Manchester city center whose shops competed for the same catchment population, and which sold similar merchandise to that offered in the new mall. It is to this center that we shall now turn.

5.5 Manchester City Centre

During the nine-year conflict over the Trafford Centre, the situation of the region’s primary retail center had changed. Suburbanization continued on into the 1980s, further eroding the base of support for the city’s higher order-retail destinations. In the 1990s, however, Manchester city center slowly began to regain its population, and prepare a Unitary Development Plan. This plan was completed in 1995, and embodied many of the same principles of the Greater Manchester Structure Plan ten years before. Among its goals was “the maintenance of Manchester’s regional center role in retailing and commerce, and the viability of other major town centers” (in Thomas, 1999: 22). However, since the abolition of the GMC in 1986, the plan was no longer valid at the conurbation level, and there was little it could do to influence areas outside the city limits. This lack of authority on the outside did not prevent Manchester from reacting to the threat by controlling what it could on the inside:

“It is nevertheless clear that the traditional town center is unlikely to become a passive victim of the process of retail decentralization” (Bromley and Thomas, 1993: 146).

5.5.1 City center regeneration

Indeed, Manchester city center did not stand still. Established by central government, the Central Manchester Development Corporation (1988-1996), for example, was given both the mandate to bring about the physical regeneration of 187 ha of derelict land at the edge of the city center, and the legal and financial means to carry it out. During its eight-year lifespan, the CMDC attracted £ 421 million of investment. It is interesting to note that this would be operating in competition for resources with the Trafford UDC established a year before the CMDC (Vigar et al, 2000: 129). Following the first public inquiry, the CMDC formally registered its objection to the Trafford Centre development (Greater Manchester Consortium, 1992: 46).

The 2000 Olympic bid introduced Manchester city council to the entrepreneurial planning that was to characterize it during the 1990s. Ironically, this bid was cosponsored by MSC, the Trafford Centre applicants, further complicating matters surrounding the Dimplington controversy (Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council, 1992: 53). The Olympic bid introduced a new governance structure in Manchester that was “both populist and popular” and centered around a small elite of business interests (Cochrane et al, 1996: 1324). Although Manchester lost the bid in 1993, it had acted as a catalyst for mobilizing private sector interest in the city, enabling other initiatives like “City Pride” to emerge. It also:

Won Manchester many friends and substantial support from the Government. Manchester has now acquired, or is in the process of acquiring many of the features of a regional capital of European significance — Bridgewater Hall, Metrolink, the Lowry Centre, Imperial War Museum, and so on (Arrick, 1999: 6).

More concretely, it enabled Manchester to capture £ 70 million of central government funds for infrastructure, even before the fate of the Olympic bid was known (Bristow, 1994: 120). The successful recruitment of the private sector and higher echelons of government to support the city in the Olympic bid was duplicated in other initiatives including city center revitalization. A Manchester city council councilor explained that:

What we have found in Manchester is a way of coexisting with the private sector, where we use the many strengths of the public sector and the private sector, not in competition, but by setting up bodies where we can use [those] strengths... rather than in a sense of confronting each other or separate from each other all the time (in Cochrane et al, 1996: 1330).

One of the faces of this new development-oriented model is that of Howard Bernstein, hired as the Manchester City Council’s deputy chief executive in 1990. He was “a favorite of then council leader Graham Stringer, who valued his capacity to cut through council bureaucracy and win results” (Thame, 1999: 74). Although he effectively acted as chief executive, this did not become formalized until 1998. His rise to prominence in city politics is primarily the result of an unforeseen and abrupt occurrence that would change the face of Manchester irrevocably.

5.5.2 Bombing and rebuilding of Manchester city center

At 11:00 a.m. on Saturday the fifteenth of June 1996, a 1½ ton IRA bomb which had been placed on a truck parked between M&S and the Arndale Centre was detonated in the heart of Manchester’s shopping area. The explosion wrecked 100,000m² of retail and office floorspace and flattened or severely damaged many of the surrounding buildings. The devastation was concentrated mainly in the area surrounding Corporation Street and St.

Mary's Gate and included prominent retail hubs as Marks & Spencer's, part of the Arndale Centre and the monumental Corn Exchange building at Exchange Square (Thomas, 1999). Some 650 businesses were displaced and, the costs of the damage were estimated to be as high as £ 700 million (PW 29 Jan, 1996; Parker, 2000).

The blast also made the provisions of the recently published Manchester Unitary Development Plan (UDP) immediately obsolete: "the explosion", explained the then city center group leader Peter Babb, "not only blew a hole in the center of Manchester, it blew one in the UDP as well" (PW 29 Jan, 1996: 16). Although this event dealt a severe blow to the North West's main retail center, it also offered the opportunity for the city to reinvent itself in the wake of the Trafford Centre threat. Indeed, Joe Malvisi, managing director of Frogmore Estates remarked that "Manchester City Council was already very clear about where the city had gone wrong in the 1960s. Within days of the bomb, they knew what they needed" (Parker, 2000).

What Manchester needed was money and a plan to develop a modern retail core. And Manchester's city planners were quick in their response to the crisis. Within days, they were surveying the damage and streamlining planning procedures in order to support a rapid recovery. A task force comprised of city officials, architects, town planners, jurists and local representatives was set up and held emergency meetings with landowners to assess the situation. Within three weeks Manchester Millennium Ltd. (MML) was established to oversee the reconstruction process, which included representatives from English Partnerships, Manchester City Council, the Bank of England, and the Government Office for the North West Region (i.e. the central government branch office). An international competition was held to attract private sector firms to draw up a masterplan. Rather than following the usual planning procedure required to create a new UDP, a facilitating Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) was drawn up to support the legal status of this masterplan. Concessions were made in a behind-the-scenes fashion to expedite the planning process, and negotiations were given an eight-week deadline (PW 29 Jan, 1996). Soon, the central government pledged £ 43 million towards the rebuilding of the city center, and an additional £ 20 million was promised by the European Union. The money was badly needed as the retail regeneration scheme alone cost approximately £ 100 million.¹¹³ The total public sector investment was estimated by the MML to be £ 83 million, achieving a private-sector leverage of £ 350 million (MML, 1998 in Thomas, 1999: 29). Other estimates of total investment have gone as high as £ 1 billion (Guardian 22 November, 1999). The haste to rebuild was not only motivated by a desire to triumph over the terrorist devastation: "this blow to the heart of the city came at a critical time with the Trafford Centre — over 1.2 million square feet of out-of-town shopping and leisure facilities — is due to open" (MML, 1997: 2 in Thomas, 1999: 30). In fact, the MML stated plainly that the competitive threat the Trafford Centre posed was one of the main reasons for the tight rebuilding schedule.

Four months after the blast, in November 1996, the members of the Edaw team were declared winners of the masterplan competition. The winning bid went far beyond a mere rebuild (Holden, 2002; Williams, G., 2002). The design, although protecting and enhancing historical landmarks, made radical changes to street patterns and the built environment and extended far outside of the affected area. The plan sought, in addition to repairing the bomb damage, to undo some of the harm caused to the city center by, among other things, the Arndale Centre and other postwar architectural impositions. The oppressive monolithic structure of the

¹¹³ Still, this seems rather modest when compared to the estimated £ 600 million spent on the Trafford Centre.

Arndale Centre was severed by a public pedestrian walkway and then expanded to accommodate 120,000m² of retail and 185 shops (PW 8 Dec, 2000: 28). Complemented by a new Exchange Square that possessed a more high-street atmosphere (PW 1 Dec, 2000: 1), the Arndale Centre was finally sold to Prudential for £ 320 million (Thame, 2000: 29). In retrospect, city officials could thank the IRA for its deed as this extension, renovation and reintegration of the Arndale Centre into the urban fabric would not have occurred without the terrorist attack (Interview Hallsworth, 2002; Interview Robson, 2002). Once all scheduled building activities are complete, the city center will contain more retail space than it did before the bombing.

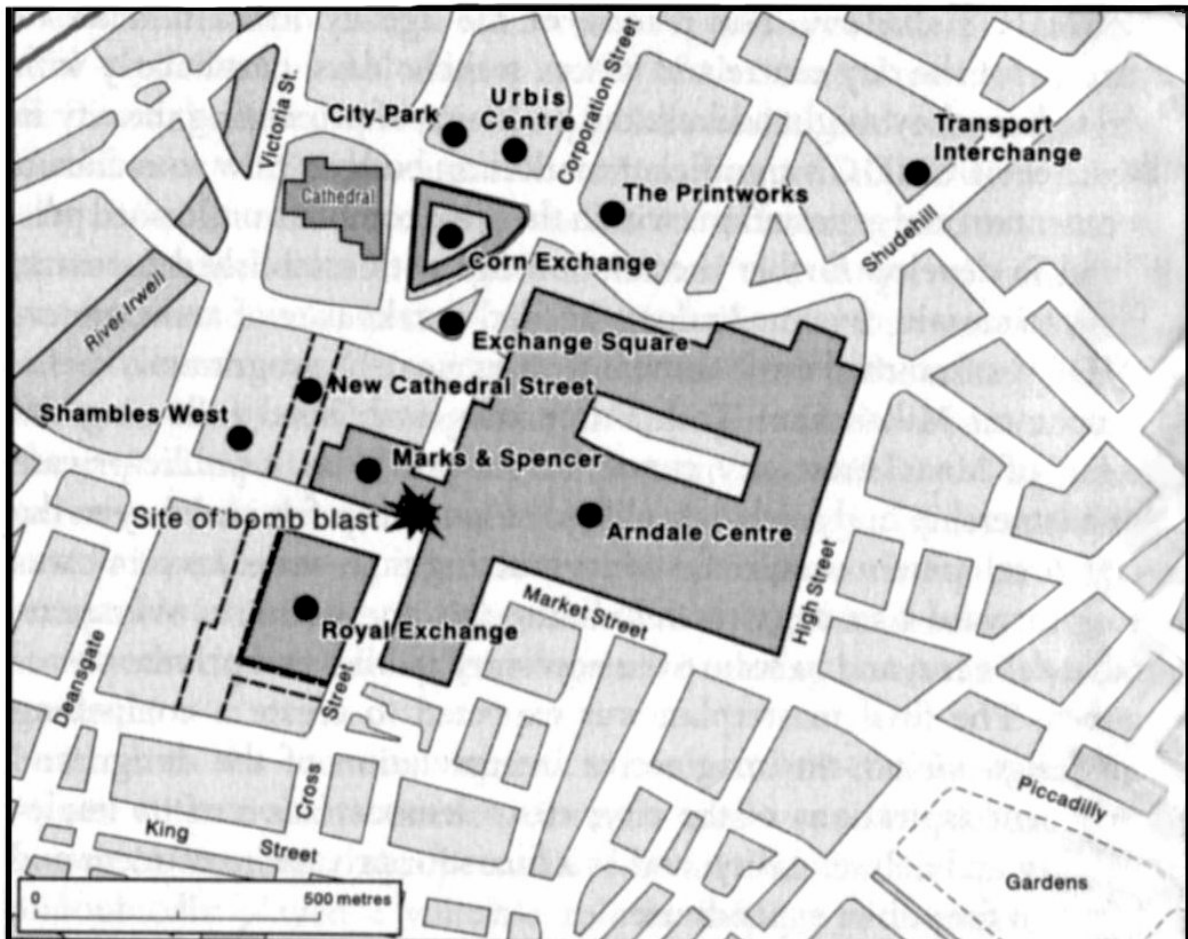


Figure 9.4 Manchester Millennium Limited Taskforce masterplan framework

Figure 38: City center map (Peck et al, 2002)

As construction activities on the Trafford Centre accelerated, the masterplan was carried forward into the first implementation plan by the MML, and signs of change were already becoming noticeable.¹¹⁴ The urban entertainment center The Printworks — whose multiplex

¹¹⁴ City center regeneration efforts seem to have been fruitful for housing as well as commercial development. There was additional support for city center retail in the form of new residents. Only about 1,000 people lived in Manchester city center in the early 1990s, but by the end of the millennium this number had risen to 7,500 (MEN 5 May, 2001). Most of these new households were small, childless and professional” and thus of interest for exclusive retailers (DETR, 2000b: 27-28). Rents and housing prices have increased in the city center. In the Summer of 2001, over 5,000 flats were under construction or awaiting planning permission (much of this concerned the conversion of warehouses or car parks to residential use).

cinema is intended to vie with that in the Trafford Centre — was pushed through the planning process in a matter of weeks. Shambles Square, once “a haven for pigeons and bag ladies” was slated to become a boulevard linking St. Ann’s Church and the new Millennium Quarter around the cathedral while New Cathedral Street was to acquire a 14,000m² Harvey Nichols department store, one of the few locations of this retailer outside of London (Thame, 1999: 73-74; Interview Robson, 2002). Another asset was the rebuilding and relaunch of the 40-unit three-story Corn Exchange as the Triangle fashion and lifestyle center, bolstered by the addition of new tenants like Ocean, Rodier Toni & Guy Essentials and Herbal Inn (RW 2 Feb, 2001: 22). Many of these retailers had moved from Manchester’s King Street, lured by 50% lower rent levels (RW 2 Feb, 2001: 26). Another attraction was the construction of the Urbis exhibition/visitor center, which opened in June 2002. However, the flagship of Manchester’s new city center would be the world’s largest Marks & Spencer’s at Shambles Square opposite the Arndale Centre (PW 3 Dec, 1999: 7).¹¹⁵ Its previous outlet had been completely destroyed by the bomb, only shortly after M&S had renovated it (Interview Bennison, 2002). All in all, at the end of the decade, a business trade journal wrote: “Manchester’s retail market is in a state of suspended animation, poised between the unwholesome effects of the rival Trafford Centre, and the completion of the rebuilding works which have disfigured the city center for three years” (North West Business Insider, 1999: 20). The projects are summarized in the table below.

Project	Characteristics	Financing	Phasing
New Cathedral Street	Pedestrian street between St. Ann’s Square and the historical quarter	Manchester City Council	1997- 1999
New Marks & Spencer’s	Largest M&S in the world at 45,000m ²	Marks & Spencer’s, Manchester City Council	1998-1999
Shambles West	Multi-use complex: leisure, culture, housing and offices	Prudential Portfolio, Manchester City Council	1997-2001
Arndale Centre	Architectural rehabilitation	Prudential Portfolio	1997-2001
Corn Exchange (i.e. Triangle)	Interior renovation, strives to become high-quality leisure and trade complex	Frogmore Estates	1997-2000
Royal Exchange	Renovation of theater	Prudential Portfolio, Arts Council Lottery	1998
The Printworks	Redevelopment as multiplex cinema (24 screens) and bars and restaurants	Richardson Developments Ltd.	1998-2000
Millennium Quarter	Event center, and city park	Manchester City Council	1999-2001
Exchange Square	Heart of commercial center	Manchester City Council	1999
Shambles Pub	Listed historical pub	National Heritage	1999
Transport projects	New transport stations and Metrolink rapid transit	Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority	1999-2001

Source: Commerce and the city, 2000.

Despite the many accomplishments of the city center regeneration program, the city continued to be steadfastly opposed to the Trafford Centre. However, because it now lay outside of its sphere of control, not much hope existed in blocking the project and the focus lay on meeting the challenge. The verdict of the extent to which the city center successfully

¹¹⁵ With this flagship store, M&S seemed to have overextended itself. One third of the space was subsequently sold to Selfridges for their second outlet in the North West (Interview Bristow, 2002).

weathered the Trafford Centre storm will be returned to when discussing the impacts of the Trafford Centre in §5.6).



Other Manchester locations

Between the Trafford Centre and Manchester city center lay another bold urban project: the Salford Quays. This waterfront area was redeveloped in the late 1990s into a multifunctional destination, and included a Metrolink line for fast access from and to the city center. Attractions in the area include The Lowry cultural center, the Manchester United Museum, the Imperial War Museum North and even a designer factory outlet center. Less than a year before opening, the manager at the Manchester Outlet Mall at Salford Quays decided to adapt the plans to allow much more food and leisure. The developers claimed that this was done in response to the success of the adjacent Lowry arts center, which drew double the expected number of visitors (RW 16 Feb, 2001). It may also be another response to the popularity of the Trafford Centre's foodcourt/entertainment area.

Manchester's troubled east side did not initially profit from the renewal activities in the center. Between 1975 and 1985 Manchester lost 60% of its jobs, and the ones that have returned are of a different sort: instead of full-time male/industrial they are part-time female/service. This hit East Manchester the worst, the locale where laborers lived. Now the 1,100 ha of land directly east of the center is about 30% vacant, and about 10% of homes are empty (Ward, 2002). With the resurrection of the city center, the next project for Peter Babb was the transformation of East Manchester. In this, the same strategy was adopted: the establishment of a New East Manchester urban regeneration company, similar to the successful MML (PW 8 Dec, 2000: 28). The "Sportscity" scheme for East Manchester, for example, revolves around the new stadium for the 2002 Commonwealth Games, combined with retail, residential and hotel functions, and is intended to attract additional investment,

create over 3,600 jobs and bring new (desired) people to the area (PW 11 Sept, 1998).¹¹⁶ The stadium will also include an indoor tennis center and sports academy. Interestingly, the motor for regeneration is a 17,000m² ASDA superstore, which under other conditions would not receive planning permission under the PPG6 regime (Interview Hallsworth, 2002; Wrigley et al, 2002).

5.5.3 New developments at the Trafford Centre

As the regeneration efforts in Manchester city center gained momentum, the Trafford Centre did not stand still either. It had already gained approval for two retail parks, allowing it to enjoy the synergy between the two destinations (see §5.3.3). As the Trafford Regional Sports Complex and miniature golf center were nearing completion, Peel Holdings announced its intention of building a £ 5 million Hotel directly across the Trafford Centre (MEN 9 Jan, 2001). New developments may be imminent. Peel Holdings now owns much of the land in the immediate vicinity of the Trafford Centre and is planning to “promote massive regeneration all along the Corridor, replicating the prestigious developments already visible at Salford Quays and Castlefield” (UK Construction Magazine, 1997: 7).

While no physical expansion was undergone on the mall itself, several new attractions and services were added and several units changed hands. In 2001, for example, the Trafford Centre acquired travel agent Holiday Hypermarket’s flagship, and The Bear Factory (where products are custom-made on the premises), the foodcourt also gained a themed Thai/Indonesian fast-food restaurant and an “authentic” Spanish restaurant-bar (TC 30 Aug, 2001). The center also attracted attention by featuring the inclusion of a gallery displaying works of local artists (TC May, 2001). However, as stated earlier, the most noteworthy acquisition was that of M&S, who agreed to open a £ 6 million store to replace C&A.¹¹⁷ In the same year, 100 tons of steelwork was inserted into the main dome to support the Disney-style theme park ride “Magical Journey”; this is the first attraction of its kind in a UK shopping mall (TC 25 Sept, 2001). Director of Operations at the Trafford Centre explained that the ride: “will prove to be a major attraction particularly for families. Its prime location next to the UK’s busiest cinema will provide an immediate captive audience” (TC 8 Aug, 2001). The ride contains an interactive component where passengers shoot creatures and other moving objects en route with an infrared laser device. Naturally, products of all the characters featured in the ride may be purchased at an accompanying themed gift store (TC 8 Aug, 2001).

¹¹⁶ The police are now making a big presence to “rehabilitate” local population to make it “safe” for colonization by businesses and wealthier newcomers. Residents even asked to make a “black list” of troublemakers in their neighborhood (Ward, 2002).

¹¹⁷ This was done as part of the Dutch retailer’s full-scale withdrawal from the UK (MEN 3 July, 2001). C&A had been derided by the British public with the unflattering appellation “Cheap & Awful” (Parool, 16 July, 2000: 9). As regards the new tenant, M&S Store manager Jonathan Bradburn admitted that the size (at only about 3,500m²) was not ideal, but that “after listening to our customers they have told us that now is the right time to move in [to the Trafford Centre]” (MEN 3 July, 2001).



Like many malls in North America, the Trafford Centre organized social events. Senior citizens and pensioners were invited to participate in the Trafford Centre's weekly "tea dance" in the early evening (TC June, 2001). In a more bizarre campaign, the Trafford Centre hosted the only singles' night to be held in a shopping mall in the UK (it had already been tested in supermarkets). For this, participants must be over 18, and are given a badge identifying themselves as single (with the text "I'm single, let's mingle"); Polaroid photos were displayed on a board with contact information for fellow visitors (MEN 20 July, 2001). The Trafford Centre also experimented with offering a drive-in movie theater experience with a screen near the Festival Village car park (MEN 20 Sept, 2001). Finally, the Trafford Centre opened up a "virtual mall" in 2001, allowing their tenants to trade online (RW 12 Jan, 2001: 28). This is part of the effort to help those in the center lagging behind in terms of sales (not surprisingly given the profit-dependent leases).

All in all, it is clear that the Trafford Centre and Manchester city center were competing fiercely for a similar customer base. Not only families, but also the youth and the elderly were targeted by the new mall. The next section will examine in more detail the outcome of this competition.

5.6 Evaluation of impacts

Prior to opening, there was wide speculation in the local media about the effects the Trafford Centre would have on local businesses, especially in Manchester. Much of this publicity was negative. Horror stories of traffic grinding to a halt on the M63 and mass store closures were reported in the media, heightened by the legal battles and controversy enshrouding the project. The *Estates Gazette* warned that the new mall "will have a massive negative impact on Manchester's retail core — look at the Meadowhall effect in Sheffield" and "It's a crazy scheme. It will impact on city center retail, it's a nonsense and shouldn't be happening" (in Taylor, 1999: 37). In a local publication, Bury (1998) grumbled that:

Who knows, with this level of investment [in the Trafford Centre] Manchester could have had a replacement for the much criticized Arndale Centre! Instead of which the populace is now burdened with two such leviathans each vying for the same customer base.

In a television interview on the cusp of opening, a Manchester city councilor did nothing to hide his contempt for the Trafford Centre: “the naked commercial greed the Trafford Centre people have exhibited has resulted in the worst environmental disaster in the UK” (in Taylor, 1998: 14). Shops, however, were not the only businesses in peril. The Trafford Centre’s foodcourt and entertainment area *The Orient* was expected to “tear away some of Manchester’s burgeoning night life” due to the scores of restaurants, bars and entertainment venues being built there, including the UK’s largest UCI cinema, with 21 screens and seating for 3,500 people (MMN, 23 Feb, 1998: 21).

Thus, it was very unclear at the time of the opening what the influence of the new shopping mall would actually be. Even experts and stakeholders were divided on the issue. This is evident from the results of a University of Manchester Master’s thesis which had surveyed retailers, consultants and town center managers about their views of the Trafford Centre and their opinions on the effectiveness of PPG6 (Taylor, 1998).¹¹⁸

Predicted impact of Trafford Centre on North West town centers						
	Considerable loss	Moderate loss	Same trading levels	Moderate increase	Considerable increase	
1-5 months	4	6	-	-	-	
6-12 months	1	6	3	-	-	
1st-3rd year	-	3	4	3	-	
4th-6th year	-	-	4	3	2	
After 6 th year	-	-	4	3	3	

Source: Taylor, 1998: 66.

As can be read from the above table, the stakeholders expected trade diversion to be greatest at the time of the Trafford Centre’s opening, and then taper off over time. For the first year, none of the respondents expected any growth in sales in neighboring centers due to the mall’s influence. Interestingly, by the fourth year (2002) all respondents predicted that trading levels would have returned to normal, or even be improved.¹¹⁹ All this indecision and division amongst the most involved and vocal actors raises the question of what the effects of the Trafford Centre were in reality. This is the subject of the following two sections. These will provide an overview of the figures and events that have emerged in the years since the opening of the mall in 1998.

5.6.1 Quantitative impacts of Trafford Centre

The consultants Rodger Tym and Partners criticized the methodology of subject interviews (e.g. shop managers and shopper surveys like the ones discussed above with respect to the University of Manchester MA thesis) as “inherently unreliable” (RTP, 1999a: 2). However,

¹¹⁸ In specific, the goal was to survey stakeholder attitudes about the positive influence (if any) which PPG6 had had in the wake of the Trafford Centre competition. Respondents included town center managers, retailers and consultants. One interesting finding was that less than half of the respondents (and even half than the town center managers among them) had felt that town centers had suffered from past retail policies, and only one specifically gave mention of “vitality and viability” (Taylor, 1998: 47). Specifically, 54% of the town center managers, 30% of the retailers and 25% of the consultants responding to the survey felt that town centers had not suffered (Taylor, 1998: 48).

¹¹⁹ It should be pointed out however that town center managers were largely responsible for these more positive views. Retailers and consultants were less sanguine.

by the same token, impact studies are equally notorious for the inconsistent results they produce. Statistics on impacts are also often sporadic, and reflect a narrow sectoral focus (e.g. the effect on men's shoe shops). The Distributive Trades EDC remarked:

The scope for accumulation of errors in the analysis raises major doubts about the accuracy of (impact) studies, to the extent that they are not currently a foundation on which important decisions about investment in the non food retail trades should be executed (in Stocks, 1989: 71).

Moreover, impact studies often are politically motivated and usually reflect the wishes of the party that commissioned the research. Hallsworth seriously questions the validity of such expert reports:

Broadly based property agencies/consultancies such as Hillier Parker and Healey and Baker are frequently called upon to provide expert opinion to 'inform' outcomes, and may be found on either side of the 'adversarial' British planning appeals system. As in any form of legal or quasi-legal system the more heavy-weight the expert testimony on one's behalf, the more likely is success (Hallsworth, 1995b: 255).

Besides, even impartial studies can diverge according to the methodology employed (Haydock) or goal (impact versus need). Therefore, bearing these points in mind, an attempt will be made to sketch out the regional economic situation following the opening of the Trafford Centre, and any trade diversion that may have occurred.

This section will first consider the figures reported by trade publications and then those produced by specific impact studies performed either before and after the opening. Some general comments will also be made on the methodology employed. The next section (§5.6.2) will look at some other (qualitative) effects the Trafford Centre has had on shopping centers and in the behavior of actors in the region.

5.6.1.1 Performance indicators

As stated, it is difficult to effectively gauge the effect that a particular development has had on the retail structure. Measurements taken directly after opening often overestimate the level of trade deflection (the novelty of the concept often wears off within a few months, and other centers may develop new strategies or rival projects to compete).

In theory, prime areas in big cities are generally less affected than smaller centers due to their lack of critical mass and prestige (Thomas and Bromley, 1993: 127). Bearing this in mind, the emphasis on the Manchester/Trafford Centre nexus which had been the cause of so much concern prior to the opening may be misplaced — especially in light of the level of activity in the city center to rebuild and improve the retail core. Indeed, rather than divestment, money flooded into Manchester city center after the Trafford Centre's opening. The largest Boots and M&S in Europe opened in 1999, and prime retail A1 rents around the pedestrianized Market street and Arndale Centre rose to £ 2150/m² (Manchester 2002, 2002).¹²⁰ Although rent levels had increased substantially in prime Zone A locations in Manchester city center (from about £ 1800 to £ 2700 per m²) as a whole, this was much less in most of the surrounding towns, except Stockport where rents actually fell (GMR, 1999: 7). In March 1999, the business journal *North West Business Insider* issued a property special that benchmarked Manchester's retail performance. It mentioned that the damage of the Trafford Centre appeared limited, with sales down by "only" 15% in the Christmas period and that town center management in suburban centers has also mitigated the effects of the mall. Other

¹²⁰ This price level is second only to London's Oxford street (but at £ 5575 in London, a far second). The rents in the Trafford Centre upon opening were also quite high, being in the £ 1800-2500 m² range (Taylor, 1998: 67).

centers also experienced a downturn in retail yields in their prime shopping areas (GMR, 1999: 9).

As regards the Trafford Centre, initially it (rather ironically) suffered from the newfound strength of its urban competitor. The lack of M&S was also felt the first year. Soon after opening, two-thirds of retailers in the Trafford Centre found their stores trading “worse” or “much worse” than expectations (RTP, 1999a). A number of new initiatives were launched to counteract these effects (see §5.5.3). The Trafford Centre also took the opportunity to unveil its plans for future — such as the possibility of M&S taking the space vacated by C&A (MEN 7 Sept, 2000: 21). In addition, the policy of remaining open on Sundays and evenings helped the Trafford Centre immensely, as city center shops are usually closed at these times — the Trafford Centre attracts approximately 3,000 more people per hour on Sunday than on Saturday (Guardian 30 July, 2000). The Leisure Dome stays open particularly late: until midnight on weeknights and 3 a.m. on weekends (MEN 9 Sept, 1998: 12). It is therefore not surprising that the Trafford Centre management joined other regional centers in lobbying the government for extra Sunday trading hours.¹²¹

By 2000, the mall’s efforts seemed to have been taking hold. There was a 6% rise in footfall over the year (TC 28 Dec, 1999). The center also reported that average turnover was up 31% in the last quarter of 1999 as compared to a year before (TC 9 Feb, 2000). Rent levels also seemed to be increasing (but this is only visible when units change hands or in the case of Next and Etam, with expansion) (TC 29 Aug, 2000; RW 8 June, 2001: 26). As may be expected, a preponderance of superlatives accompanied the coverage of the second-year anniversary of the Trafford Centre, as was certainly the case a year before. This date was telling because Manchester city center was finally taking its true competitive shape. Approximately 15 million visitors visited Trafford Centre in 2000, which is 9% more than the previous year, but still far from the initially announced 30 million at its opening in 1998 (MEN 7 Sept, 2000). Approximately 30-40% of visitors come during evening hours (6-9), and average family spend per trip is £ 81. In all, since the time of the RTP study in 1999, the Trafford Centre showed a strong growth in sales, gaining it the status of “the UK’s most improved” shopping destination (RW 20 July, 2001: 26).

In 2001, at an annual retail spend of £ 1.5 billion, the Trafford Centre ranked 21st in Great Britain for planned retail centers, which is about average for the country (RW 27 April 2001: 39). Still, the difficulties of the Trafford Centre may not yet be over. The new millennium has brought with it a renewed interest in city center shopping (due in part to a PPG6-influenced reinvestment in city centers), and a related decline in out-of-town malls. In 2001, the Retail Prospects Index ranked Manchester’s Market Street as the 10th most popular shopping destination (up from 13th) whereas the Trafford Centre dropped from the 62nd to the 90th place (MEN 20 July, 2001). Other malls were similarly affected: Meadowhall fell 26 places to 69, and Bluewater Park 64 places to 102.

5.6.1.2 Impact reports

In addition to such indicators of economic health, systematic impact studies were also commissioned to measure retail drain from existing centers. One of the first was the “Project Sunrise” report by ATCM (1997) called the *North West Towns Initiative*. Like others of its

¹²¹ Evening use of the center seems to be gaining in popularity, with an estimated 40% of customers arriving after 6 p.m. (TC June, 2001). In a survey at the center, 72% of respondents claiming to frequently patronize the shops after 5 p.m. (TC 30 Aug, 2001).

kind in the UK, this ex ante study was also faced with the problem of finding consistent and reliable data. Figures were supplied by various high street retailers, local authority departments and town center managers (some retailers had independently contracted similar impact studies of the Trafford Centre on their businesses, but refused to share this information). The results of the study were unsurprising. It found that the level of trade deflection would depend on the size of the rival town center, its distance from the Trafford Centre, its vitality, and the presence and nature of intervening centers. A summary of their overall findings for all centers in the region is depicted below (ATCM, 1997: 5).

Town/city	Travel time (min)	Comparison %	Initial trade deflection %	Deflection after three years %
Altrincham	13	85	27	7
Stockport	14	86	27	6
Warrington	20	85	24	6
Wigan	27	81	21	7
Ashton	24	73	19	4
Oldham	25	75	19	5
Rochdale	23	88	19	5
Macclesfield	24	78	18	5
Blackburn	41	94	15	3
Bolton	17	95	15	2
Salford	8	50	13	3
Eccles	5	57	12	4
Leigh	17	55	12	3
Chester	45	-	11	2
Blackpool	57	95	9	-
Birkenhead	57	-	8	-
Preston	38	85	8	3
Lancaster	59	83	7	-
Liverpool	39	92	6	-
Crewe	47	44	5	-
Manchester	12	89	5	-
Southport	52	82	5	-

Admittedly, these figures were extremely rough, being based on the distance of the various centers from the Trafford Centre and floorspace levels. An elaboration was then performed that attempted to take qualitative aspects into account, such as the quality of the “shopping experience” and similarity of goods offered. Liverpool, Stockport and Manchester, for example, would be direct competitors of the Trafford Centre and can be expected to suffer more than centers that subsist primarily on grocery shopping. The location and accessibility was also taken into account.¹²² Similarly, since studies on Meadowhall showed that impacts diminish strongly after a half-hour drive time, these findings were taken into account in the subsequent model. The consultants also considered the absence of M&S at the new center. Other considerations were intervening centers and catchment area characteristics (affluence and mobility).

¹²² The Trafford Centre has the largest car-borne catchment area in the UK at 3 million, but the anticipated congestion would dampen enthusiasm of motorists, especially when the novelty of the mall wears off.

The Impact Model			
High Impact	Medium Impact	Low Impact	Negligible Impact
27% - Altrincham 27% - Stockport 24% - Warrington 21% - Wigan	15% - Bolton 5% - Manchester 19% - Rochdale	19% - Ashton 15% - Blackburn 12% - Eccles 6% - Liverpool 18% - Macclesfield 19% - Oldham 8% - Preston 13% - Salford	9% - Blackpool 7% - Lancaster 12% - Leigh 5% - Southport

According to these figures, it was mainly intermediate centers that would experience the greatest loss in trade (this is also consistent with the literature on shopping centers). Altrincham would be most affected for a number of reasons: it is relatively close to the Trafford Centre, has an affluent and mobile population (similar to Trafford Centre patron profiles), and has a town center that offers similar merchandise, but with a combined floorspace of only one half the Trafford Centre (ATCM, 1997: 30-38).

In 1998, Lambert Smith Hampton and Roger Tym & Partners — the same consultants hired for the Greater Manchester Shopping Study over a decade earlier — also produced an ex ante report. In this, it was predicted that Manchester would face serious difficulties in the short term (late 1998 and early 1999), due to the myriad construction activities disfiguring the city center and the “novelty effect” of the Trafford Centre (RTP, 1998). The study estimated that trade in the city center would fall by approximately 11%, or about twice that estimated by ATCM report. This would be ameliorated with the opening of M&S and Harvey Nichols, and the coming of facilities like the Imperial War Museum and the Lowry Centre. Finally, the preparations for the 2002 Commonwealth Games was expected to give an additional impulse.

In 1999, the same authors produced a more significant follow-up report that used statistics produced during the first year of trading of the Trafford Centre. According to this report, retail trade declined in real terms by 15% in November 1998 in Manchester city center as compared to the same time in the previous year. Moreover, 85% of outlets participating in the survey reported a drop in sales since November 1997 (RTP, 1999a: 3). Most shopkeepers (75%) blamed the Trafford Centre for this, and this sentiment was confirmed by the consultants who wrote that “the opening of the Trafford Centre would appear to be the major causal factor which explains the decline in city center sales. Still, most shopkeepers indicated their faith in potential of Manchester to recover over time.

Manchester city center was not the only location experiencing a loss in sales. The other two centers investigated by RTP (Bolton and Stockport) reported a real decline in trade (14% and 9% respectively). It is interesting that these two centers were selected for the study, given the fact that the most affected centers according to the ATCM report included Altrincham and Warrington as well as Stockport, while Bolton and Manchester city center were considered “medium impact” locations. Perhaps even more interesting is the fact that Bolton fared much worse than Stockport in the ex post analysis (this can be explained in part by the opening of the Middlebrook Retail Park in the same year).

Soon after opening, two-thirds of retailers in Trafford Centre found their stores trading “worse” or “much worse” than expectations, one-third “broadly in line with expectations”; none of the respondents reported that sales exceeded expectations (RTP, 1999a: 5). This is surprising given expectations of a “novelty effect” that would produce artificially high levels

of trading. However, as these opinions were not backed by actual data, they may point either to a general disappointment with the center on the part of the mall's retailers, unrealistically high expectations, or to the effectiveness of campaigns by other centers in the conurbation to meet the Trafford Centre threat. It may be a reflection of the relatively high rents charged at the Trafford Centre as well.

Despite a general feeling of gloom in the conurbation regarding loss of sales, the final conclusion of the report was cautiously positive:

Ultimately, the region could end up with the best of both worlds; the successful out-of-center shopping scheme in the north of England at the Trafford Centre, and the city center reinforcing its position as the most 'in demand' retail location outside of the West of London ... Unfortunately, there have to be losers somewhere along the line. The success of Manchester city center and the Trafford Centre bodes more ominously for many of the lower order centers caught within the crossfire of the 'big guns' (RTP, 1999a: 5).

The following section will discuss some of the less quantifiable changes that occurred since the opening of the Trafford Centre, and shed more light on whether the arrival of the mall could indeed help bring about the best of both worlds.

5.6.2 Qualitative impacts of Trafford Centre

Assorted business statistics and scientific trade deflection models do not tell the whole story of what kind of impact the building of the Trafford Centre has had on the North West. More than simply draining trade away, it has changed the way that retailers and governments view the conurbation, and has brought about new forms of cooperation and competition. It may be argued that it was not so much the building of the mall per se, but the symbolic meaning it was given during the planning controversy that changed hearts and minds and mobilized the competition to change their behavior.

Due to the long gestation period of the Trafford Centre resulting from the nine-year controversy, Manchester city center and others in the conurbation were given ample time to prepare for the competition. By the opening of the Trafford Centre in 1998, possible responses to this threat were already being or had been implemented. The desire to face the Trafford Centre challenge was most evident in Manchester. Especially after the 1996 IRA attack on the city center, the resolve of Manchester to reinvent itself reached a fever peak. The details of the rebuilding activities and supplementary projects have already been discussed extensively in §5.5.2, and will not be elaborated here.

As small towns were expected to bear the brunt of trade deflection, they began to "identify their own assets and capitalize on them" (MEN 10 Sept, 1998: 8). Altrincham introduced free parking in its city center, and approved a multiplex cinema project (MEN 28 Aug, 2000). Ironically, Peel Holdings also decided to invest in Altrincham by helping to build a 4,000m² health and fitness complex (although this function does not compete with its Trafford Centre) (TC 7 May, 2000). Meanwhile, Stockport initiated its "jewel in the crown" campaign specifically to ward off the anticipated Trafford Centre effect. This community also lobbied strongly for a £ 30 million Ikea store in their jurisdiction. At the same time, Trafford and Macclesfield councils, fearing lost sales, attempted to persuade the Government Office for the North West that this outlet conflicted with national policies on out-of-town development (MEN 1 Aug, 2001). In the end, Ikea was refused permission by the Secretary of State in 2002 (Interview Bristow, 2002). Bolton and other towns like it pedestrianized their main

shopping streets and introduced strict parking regimes.¹²³ In addition, shortly before the opening of the center, an advertisement appeared in *Planning Week* for a “town center liaison officer” in the conurbation to “maintain the vitality of our town centers and ensure that they can meet the challenge of the Trafford Centre” (PW 31 July, 1998: 38 in Taylor, 1998: 9). Finally, 28 other towns united in a Consortium and hired a PR company to perform Trafford Centre damage control (BBC 10 Sept, 1998).

Physical additions to the retail structure soon became visible in the conurbation. During the period of the Trafford Centre controversy, the following projects were carried out, many specifically designed for meeting the anticipated competition.

Town	Project	Size in m ²
Wigan	Galleries	28,000
Leigh	Spinning Gate	11,300
Bolton	Market Place	23,500
Bury	Millgate Centre	Refurbishment
Rochdale	Weatsheaf Centre	16,600
Oldham	Spindles	28,800

Source: Arrick, 1999: 5

During the early 1990s, Warrington had embarked on a regeneration program led by its development corporation, resulting in the production of numerous office and industrial schemes (Thame, 2000). In addition to this, Warrington announced in 2000 that it had hired property consultants to ascertain how best to retain its shoppers, and Burnley initiated a £ 50 million scheme to counter the Trafford Centre effect. Regarding the latter, town center manager Carl Speight stated that, “we are striving to take back market share from out-of-town shopping centers, not just to protect what we’ve got” (in Thame, 2000: 42). One advantage of the smaller centers is that their rent levels are more affordable. While Manchester city center and Trafford Centre command rents as high as £ 2000-3000/m², other centers are only about half as much (Thame, 2000: 48).

5.6.2.1 Organizational responses

In the early 1990s, Manchester embarked on a mission to revitalize its economic base and reinvent itself. For example, with its “Attraction Packed Manchester” package-tour, the city is profiling itself as a tourist destination. This campaign attracted visitors from as far as South Africa and North America (MEN 19 Aug, 2000). Like Amsterdam, a catalyst for this was the Olympic bid (Cochrane et al, 1996). Looking back, Steve Potter of the MML explained that,

I think that there are different ways of looking at it [the Trafford Centre], you can look at it as a threat or competition to Manchester, or you can look at it as something which sharpened Manchester City Centre’s resolve to perform better, to offer better things, and so [the Trafford Centre] acted as a stimulus to Manchester to improve and not sit back on its heels and take things for granted (in Thomas, 1999: 33).

In addition to the many activities surrounding the rebuilding of the bombed city center explained in detail in §5.5.2, part of this “resolve to perform better” had manifested itself in the establishment of a town center management intended to duplicate the advantages enjoyed

¹²³ This was not always necessarily seen as an improvement (Telegraph 18 June, 1996), and in some cases proved detrimental (PW 11 Dec, 1998: 15). Manchester city center had also introduced a strict anti-car regime as part of its regeneration scheme including controversial measures such as increased parking fees, reduction in high-rise garages in the center and the possibility of a £5 entrance toll, which has been heavily criticized by some (Telegraph 18 June, 1996; Interview Bridges, 2002).

by out-of-town shopping malls. Specifically, this entailed improving traffic access, the quality of the urban environment, security and marketing. In Manchester center, for example, town center management is financed 50/50 public private, and M&S is a major contributor (Commerce and the city, 2000). However, the question remains open whether the funding is sufficient. Usually TCM initiatives have many ideas but little means to implement them.¹²⁴ In Rotherham, for example, the total budget made available to the town center manager was less than just the budget for Christmas decorations in the nearby Meadowhall (Taylor, 1998: 71)!

The table below lists the kind of TCM schemes being implemented in the conurbation as a response to the Trafford Centre by the number of times it was mentioned by queried stakeholders.

Town center management schemes instigated in response to the Trafford Centre	Number
Promotion of the town center via advertising, events, etc.	6
Town center loyalty card	6
Extended opening hours	5
Liaison with other town centers (e.g. shared computer databases of stock availability)	5
Increased pedestrianization	3
Park & Ride schemes	3
Free car parking	2
Improvement of the physical environment	2

Source: Taylor, 1998: 61.

All this would seem to indicate that the Trafford Centre had a significant impact, not necessarily in terms of trade deflection, but as a catalyst for a new development-oriented way of thinking. Indeed, in a paper given on 16 November 1999, Andy Arrick, of Rodger Tym and Partners stated that:

I conclude that the Trafford Centre may well have acted as a spur to development activity in the conurbation's sub-regional centers; the local authorities appear to have taken advantage of the planning delay and the national wave of new retail investment activity to get their houses in order ... I have no doubt that the Trafford Centre would have had a more harmful impact if it had been developed according to the aspirations of the promoter — that is, by the late 1980s (Arrick, 1999: 1, 7).

In conclusion, it would appear that, real or imagined, the fears associated with the arrival of the Trafford Centre helped to mobilize the cities in the conurbation to strengthen their own centers. The lengthy planning procedures and waves of litigation provided sufficient time to implement countermeasures and carry forward general town-center improvement schemes. In addition, the effects of PPG6 were also becoming manifest as investment was redirected towards town centers.

5.7 Conclusions

From the account presented in this chapter, it should be clear that the tale of the Trafford Centre is one of uncompromising strife. Even more than Oberhausen, where some compromises to the mall design were made to make the development more politically acceptable, the parties in the Manchester conurbation had become polarized into two diametrically opposed factions intent on fighting an all-or-nothing battle on this issue. The final result, that one party “won” the verdict, meant that it could proceed with an unadapted scheme, while the losing parties had no recourse but to brace themselves for the competition.

¹²⁴ There is also the free-rider problem, which is absent in planned shopping centers (Medway et al, 1999; Medway et al, 2000).

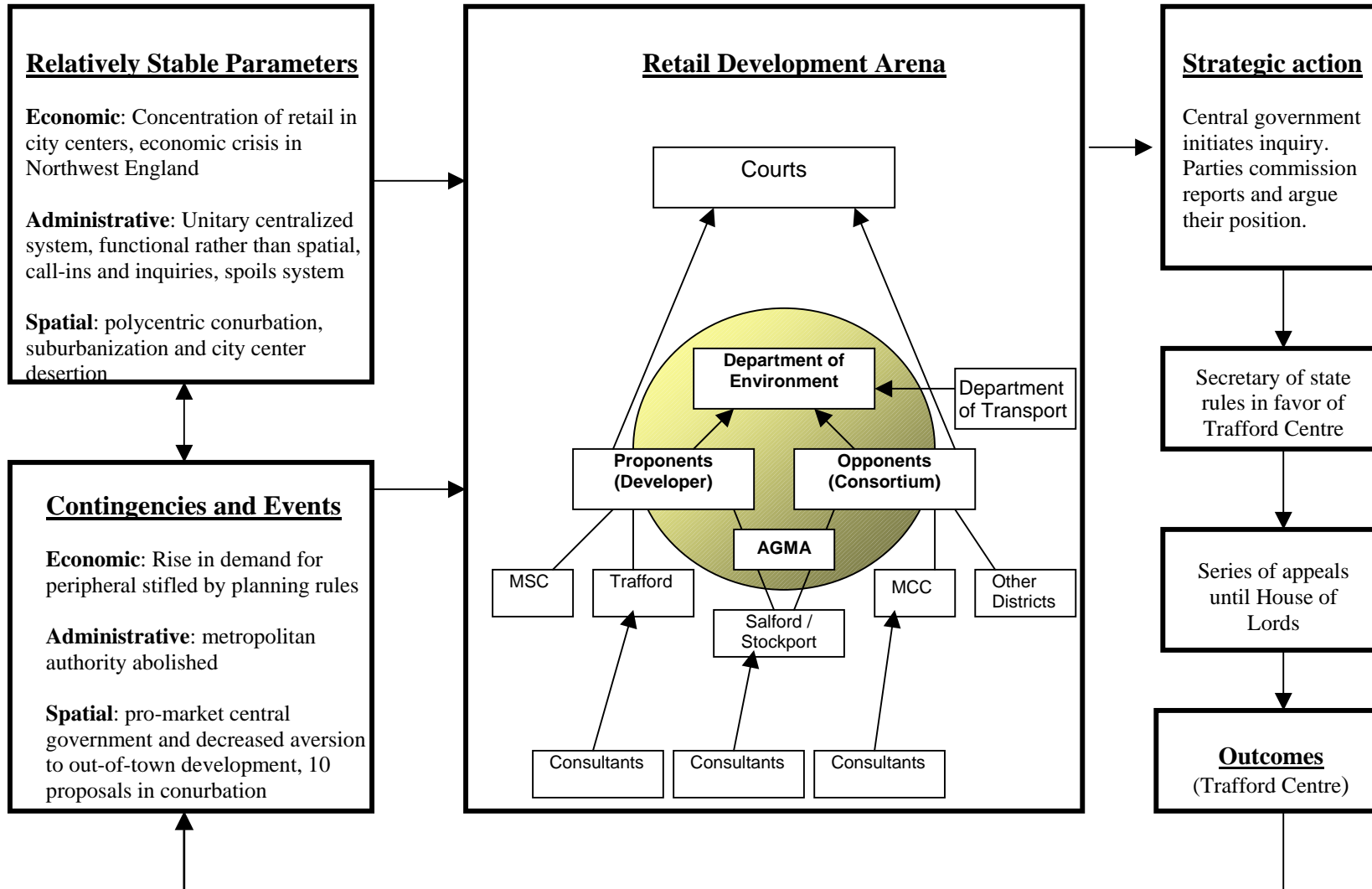
This section will attempt to pull together the various factors that framed the way in which the Trafford Centre controversy unfolded. As was done for the Oberhausen case study, the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 3 will be deployed to provide a systematic way to organize the information contained in the analysis. Afterwards, as was done in Chapter 4, a few general observations and conclusions will be offered about the British case.



5.7.1 Application of conceptual framework

The intent of this section is to reflect on how the Trafford Centre can be understood as the result of an interplay of actors operating within a specific institutional context. Much of this has already been explained in narrative form earlier in the chapter, but this section will draw this information together in a more formalized manner using the conceptual framework.

Explaining the development of the Trafford Centre



Economic structure

As can be read from the preceding figure, various economic factors contributed to the conflictual nature of the Trafford Centre development. Like the Ruhrgebiet, North West England also struggled with an ongoing economic restructuring process that left many of its inhabitants unemployed or underemployed in low-paying part-time jobs. The situation had become so dire at the end of the 1970s that even planning figureheads such as Peter Hall were advocating a relaxation of controls to stimulate economic development (Thornley, 1991). Soon thereafter, the Thatcher government introduced measures designed to welcome any kind of development that would benefit the consumer, and of course, create jobs.

Trafford was particularly affected by economic restructuring processes because it was primarily an industrial (rather than residential) area. The largest landowner in the area (MSC) had a stake in halting the downward spiral. Conversion of industrial land into a regional shopping center seemed like an attractive option to spur urban regeneration, given the popularity of out-of-town formats elsewhere, and the expanding retail market in the mid-1980s. As discussed at length in §5.2.4, Trafford was not alone in this regard.

Administrative structure

Administrative factors played a key part in defining the roles of the actors involved. The adversarial nature of the British political system is present in the planning system as well, especially in the way that out-of-town shopping centers have been dealt with. Like in electoral politics, the Trafford Centre controversy was a winner-takes-all situation: parties took sides and fought to the bitter end. As Hallsworth aptly put it: “in a winner-takes-all situation, coming second is expensive” (1995a: 14). Public inquires (already adversarial) were later replaced for a series of legal appeals (clearly adversarial). There was no arbitration, moderation or compromise of any consequence throughout the Trafford Centre controversy.

Another key administrative factor regards changes in the jurisdiction of public sector authorities. As explained in §5.1.2.2, there are no constitutional guarantees in Britain protecting the borders of local government. This is significant for retail development because governmental boundaries can have a great influence in determining whether a given public body looks upon a development proposal with glee, indifference or hostility (see §2.3.2). In the 1960s the entire region was under the authority of Lancashire County, which chose to reject the Haydock Park proposal due to its probable impact on the retail hierarchy. The GMC took a similar stance on out-of-town retail. In 1986, when the Trafford Centre proposal was submitted, this authority had just been abolished, leaving a power vacuum at the metropolitan level. The establishment of UDCs at approximately the same time helped to further engender a spirit of competition rather than cooperation.

Spatial structure

Finally, there were specific spatial aspects that heightened the conflict and helped to precipitate the 1986 deluge of applications in the conurbation. As explained in §5.2.3, the GMC had conducted a retail containment policy, favoring Manchester city center above peripheral or suburban locations, despite the fact that few people actually lived in Manchester’s center anymore. The GMC also believed that the conurbation was “overshopped” (i.e. that already too much retail floorspace existed) and thus took a very conservative stance regarding any new retail development proposal. The planning system proved to be effective in its aim to channel much large-scale retail into town and district

centers, the insertion of the gigantic Arndale Centre being a case in point.¹²⁵ With the ongoing suburbanization, this restrictive policy was creating a pressure cooker for out-of-town development. A public servant reflected on the explosive nature of this policy:

To preside, as we have in Greater Manchester and I suspect in other conurbations, over a substantial long term outward shift of population, the development of houses in suburb and greenfields, the construction of an outer ring road which makes it easier to drive a car round the edge of the conurbation than to the center, but to expect not to plan for a corresponding shift in shops, seems at best naïve... if I am right our strategic planning policy has led us into a mess in Greater Manchester, and, since similar evidence appears to apply to some other conurbations, probably elsewhere (Stocks, 1989: 74).

One reason why the “mess” — which came in 1986 — occurred, is because the restrictive policy was abandoned rather abruptly. By the abolition of the metropolitan counties, central government had disabled the means by which to coordinate retail development. Moreover, it had adopted an overtly pro-development stance. This created a strong incentive for district authorities to attract development before their neighbors did (see §5.2.4).

Actor interaction

From the above, it is clear that the institutional conditions existing in 1986 in North West England were not favorable to support an amicable resolution to the question of new shopping center location. The faltering economy, winner-takes-all political climate and, above all, the abolition of the GMC discouraged cooperation at the metropolitan level. The mistrust of local authorities of others in the conurbation quickly began to resemble that of the Ruhrgebiet, and the AGMA proved as powerless as the other coordinative bodies in the Ruhrgebiet to steer retail development. However it was even more acute in the UK considering the presence of: “deeply embedded institutional constraints against collaboration, such as the hypercentralization of the British state which limits local collaborative potential, or the dominant organization of government into functional departments, which impedes spatial coordination” (Healey, 1997: 34).

As regards the “actor constellation” in the conurbation, the submission of the ten out-of-town shopping center proposals polarized the ten district councils into two opposing camps: pro-development (those councils with proposals within their borders) and those arguing for a continuation of the restrictive policy conducted by the GMC.¹²⁶ On the other hand, at the level of the AGMA, all districts attempted to argue for strategic planning and coordination, revealing a dual reality of congenial rhetoric at the collective level, and self-seeking behavior at the individual level.

With regard to the actions taken by the actors (the “mode of interaction”), several points can be made. As noted, the unofficial stances of local authorities were either for or against the development of an out-of-town center. As it became clear that either Trafford or Salford would emerge victorious, the other pro-development councils quickly joined the opposition (Consortium). During the first inquiry, Trafford and Salford were caught in a dilemma: they were both in favor of an out-of-town shopping center, provided it be built within their

¹²⁵ According to Cliff Guy, “Britain is probably though the international leader in shopping mall development within existing town and city centers. British town centers appear to have been physically redeveloped for shopping centers much more than has been the case in France, Germany or the Netherlands, for example. Here, town centers have usually retained their physical form over the centuries without the wholesale redesign common in Britain” (Guy, 1994: 198-199).

¹²⁶ Stockport had remained neutral during the first inquiry, but moved to the anti-development camp for the second.

jurisdiction: “Salford and Trafford kept their options open as long as possible (each meantime urging the other to do the decent thing) ... [and] were caught in something approaching the classic prisoners’ dilemma” (Stocks, 1989: 62). Both councils had decided to commission impact studies of their own, while the AGMA commissioned its Greater Manchester Shopping Study. Not astonishingly, all the findings of the reports corresponded with the desires of those who had commissioned them.

This dynamic continued on after the Secretary of State called in the applications and subjected them to the first planning inquiry, the only difference being that the Department of Transport became involved as another skeptical party, but for completely different reasons (it was reluctant to build extra infrastructure). The inquiry was also framed in a win/lose fashion, and the “victory” of the developer and Trafford over the Consortium (at the second inquiry) was followed by an immediate appeal, ushering in an even less stable phase of the Trafford Centre’s history. As British politics seems to swing from one extreme to the other, so too did the fate of the Trafford Centre — given the green light by the Secretary of State, quashed by the High Court, overruled by the Court of Appeal, and finally granted by the House of Lords. Meanwhile, the strategies of Manchester and other towns shifted to strengthening the competitive capacity of their shopping areas in the event that the Trafford Centre be approved.



Outcomes

The definitive end of the Trafford Centre controversy came in 1995 with the judgment by the House of Lords. Unlike CentrO, no design concessions were demanded of the developer, and the mall could be built as envisioned: as an out-of-town shopping mall in its most pristine form (high street shops, foodcourt and entertainment, car-oriented, etc.): a machine for processing shoppers. The themed centers of Bourbon Street, Chinatown or Paris ring hollow and sometimes border on absurd (e.g. McDonald’s with an Arabic motif, or the Ancient

Egyptian Pizza hut). The ephemeral character this evokes makes the Trafford Centre truly a “building for consumption” in both senses of the word. The Orwellian level of control should moreover dispel any fantasy that the mall offers any degree of public space, other than in a purely cosmetic sense.

The complete control over design may be interpreted as a total victory on the part of MSC/Trafford. However, for the duration of the process, the continual uncertainty also meant a great risk for the mall’s proponents. Moreover, as the fight lasted so long, the “losers” had been given ample time to adopt countermeasures. Many redeveloped their main shopping areas and adopted some form of town center management. There have been a number of ex post impact reports on the trade deflection caused by the Trafford Centre, and most seem to indicate only modest losses from established centers, especially Manchester city center. In fact, retailers operating from the Trafford Centre were initially disappointed with their first year of trading. More recent evidence seems to suggest that the final result has favored large centers vis-à-vis smaller ones.

The Trafford Centre controversy also had less tangible impacts, such as accelerating the already existent tendency towards entrepreneurial forms of planning and city marketing. The success of the Trafford Centre, on the other hand, is unlikely to stimulate similar proposals in the near future however because the current planning system has shown itself to be openly hostile to this kind of out-of-town development. If the Dimplington application were submitted today, it would surely be struck down under the provisions of PPG6.

5.7.2 Some final thoughts on the Trafford Centre

Although Britain may have the most and largest out-of-town shopping malls in Northwest Europe, some have observed that this number is still rather modest, especially when compared to North America. As mentioned, it was impossible to obtain planning permission for an out-of-town regional center before the 1980s due to severe government opposition at both the local and central level. Although the reforms of the Thatcher Administration in the mid-1980s provided an opportunity to realize such centers, of the over 40 out-of-town shopping center proposals that were submitted in the late 1980s, “only a handful of these proposals proceeded beyond the speculative or planning stage, largely due to the changing government policy on retail developments in the 1990s summarized in PPG6” (Lowe, 2000: 263). Of the ones that were successful in gaining planning permission, this did not happen without a great deal of effort, as the Trafford Centre case so clearly demonstrates. What follows are a few final thoughts on the UK case study.

Planning is politics

The Trafford Centre proposal was extremely politically charged. Both the substance of the case (an out-of-town shopping center) and the procedures followed (planning inquiry followed by court appeals) reflect the “spoils system” and adversarial nature of British politics.¹²⁷ There are few mechanisms built in the system to encourage compromise, and parties were induced to battle for a total victory. One of the main weapons used in the struggle are impact assessments, and it is remarkable that although almost £ 10 million was spent on consultancy reports (Interview Bridges, 2002), the House of Lords did not take them into consideration. Opponents to the Trafford Centre must also have known that if they

¹²⁷ This concern was also voiced by Lord Rogers in 1999: “We must move towards a non-confrontational and participatory planning approach which avoids the ‘us and them’ ethos where a client is engaged in battle with a planning authority” (Urban Task Force, 1999: 191).

managed to stall a final decision on the proposal long enough, a change of policy on out-of-town retail at the central government level would eventually assist their cause, especially with an electoral defeat of the Conservative party. For this reason, planning consultant Lambert Smith Hampton was skeptical about the potential of government policy to protect town centers as long as central government “see-saws from one extreme to the other” (in Taylor, 1998: 53). With regard to retail planning, these extremes seem to regard economic liberalization versus market interventionism.

Absence of metropolitan/strategic planning

This point, related to the first, regards the swift transition from a strong metropolitan body to a very weak one. The official policy drafted by the GMC and implemented in the structure plan took the view that sufficient or too much retail capacity already existed. This viewpoint, coupled with a stated preference for central locations, and the desire to protect Manchester City Centre as the main retail core allowed the pressure for out-of-town development to mount. The GMC’s abolition in 1986 created a power vacuum at this level, providing a window of opportunity for developers to attempt gaining permits for out-of-town centers.

Entrepreneurial planning

In the period under investigation, Manchester city shifted from an old style of regulation (via GMC and blocking Trafford Centre) to a new developmental-style planning. The Olympic bid had given the Labour-dominated city its first taste of the fruits of public-private cooperation. The experience gained was swiftly put to use during the IRA bomb aftermath: the city council enlisted private parties to help rebuild the city center in a way that would enable it to compete with the Trafford Centre. Thus, in sum, the fragmented nature of the public sector at the local level, and politicized nature of it at the national level shifted much of the decision-making issues from spatial development/urbanization to politics.