**Attachment 12**

Allocated retail development found to harm town centre and conservation area

A development of four non-food retail units totaling some 4000 m2 was judged harmful to the setting of a Norfolk town centre conservation area.

The site had been allocated for non-food retail, leisure, offices and housing uses in the local plan. The appellant contended that the contemporary large ‘box-like’ design of the shop units, led by the function of the internal space, and use of modern materials was an expected outcome of the allocation and would have no greater harm on the setting of the conservation area. The inspector disagreed, and concluded that the development would harm the character and appearance of the locality and the conservation area because it did not respect the traditional character and form of local buildings, noting that the allocated uses did not necessarily mean large buildings, and the final design would have to take account of the conservation area in any event.

One of the arguments consistently put forward by AR in support of out of town retail parks is that the large box format is incongruous with typical town centre townscape. Although this decision is distinguished by its impacting on a conservation area, the planning arguments deployed by the Inspector are similar to those we have made in the past.