

**Business, the Environment and the Consumer 1968 – 1992:  
The Case of Marks and Spencer**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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## **Abstract**

The research addresses a central tension of modern society between materialism and retail expansion on the one hand and growing environmental awareness on the other, during the 1970s and 1980s. It does so through a study of the operations of Marks and Spencer, with comparative reference to other leading retailers, principally Sainsbury's and the John Lewis Partnership.

Marks and Spencer experienced a complex renegotiation of its relationship with the environment and resource use as it underwent rapid expansion and changes in the period 1968-1992. This has yet to be addressed by academics, especially in relation to the notable growth in environmental concern at this time. It is this changing retail context, as experienced by Marks and Spencer, coupled with the evolving significance of the broader environmental agenda, which this thesis addresses. It makes extensive use of the Marks and Spencer Company Archive to address the importance of the company's changing commercial operations, its relationship with consumers, the government and British society more broadly, in shaping its approach to the environment and resource use.

The thesis contributes to existing academic literature concerning retailing and the environment by illustrating the extent to which the environment was a highly constructed and negotiated retail concern, which invariably predated the environmental fervour of the late eighties and early nineties and the subsequent commercial clamour to be seen to be green. The research addresses Marks and Spencer's response to environmental issues, its energy conservation efforts, its retail store development, as well as the internal and external environments of its stores. It shows how the relationship between retailers and the environment was shaped as much by the outlook and operations of individual retailers and the changing nature of modern retailing, as it was the wider environmental agenda and growing popular concern.

## Table of Contents

	<b>Page</b>
List of Illustrations	6-7
Abbreviations	8-9
<b>Introduction</b>	10
<b>Chapter One:</b>	39
The Environment: From the Fringes to the Mainstream	
<b>Chapter Two:</b>	85
The Commercial Need to Conserve Energy	
<b>Chapter Three:</b>	117
Save It: Is “Energy Sense”, “Common-sense”?	
<b>Chapter Four:</b>	150
Out-of-town retailing: Who Moved Out and Why?	
<b>Chapter Five:</b>	176
Negotiating Retail Environments	
<b>Chapter Six:</b>	207
The Aesthetics of Commerce	
<b>Chapter Seven:</b>	239
Commercial Efforts to Control Retail Environments	
<b>Conclusion</b>	256
Bibliography	263
Appendix One: Marks and Spencer Chairmen 1967–1999	289

## List of Illustrations

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Fig.1: Electricity used per sq. ft. of building area</b>	99
MSCA, Subject file for Marcus Sieff: Energy Conservation, R/4/3/9, G. Colman, 'The St. Michael Approach to Energy Conservation' (23 April 1982)	
<b>Fig.2: How Marks &amp; Spencer saved energy worth £500,000 *</b>	106
MSCA, R/4/3/9, Department of Energy, 'How Marks & Spencer saved energy worth £500,000', <i>Daily Mirror</i> , 11 March 1975	
<b>Fig.3: This Easter, you could save yourself £20 a year. Interested? *</b> and	127
<b>Fig.4: "It may not be my house, but it's my heating bill" *</b>	
David J. Crossley, 'The role of popularization campaigns in energy conservation', <i>Energy Policy</i> (March, 1979), 57–68	
<b>Fig.5: Refrigerated provisions gondola with modified lip profile.</b>	140
MSCA, R/4/3/9, Building Division, 'Energy Conservation 1974–1982' (November, 1982)	
<b>Fig.6: Marks &amp; Spencer store development breakdown 1968-1985</b>	157
MSCA, Annual Reports, CR/D, Marks and Spencer Ltd (1968-1985)	
<b>Fig.7: Marks &amp; Spencer store development breakdown 1986-1992</b>	157
MSCA, Annual Reports, CR/D, Marks and Spencer Ltd (1986-1992)	
<b>Fig.8: Yeovil Store Front (1975)</b>	214
MSCA, Photograph Album Yeovil Store, P2/87/285 (1975)	
<b>Fig.9: Andover Store Extension (1985)</b>	214
MSCA, Photograph Album Andover Store, P2/87/5 (1985)	
<b>Fig.10: Ayr Store Front (1974)</b>	218
MSCA, Photographs of Marks & Spencer Ayr store: Exterior, P1/1/9/2 (1974).	

**Fig.11: Oxford Store Front (1978)** 218

MSCA, Photograph Album, Oxford Store, P2/87/193 (1978).

**Fig.12 and 13: Exeter Store Front and Side View (1981)** 223

MSCA, Photograph Album, Exeter Store, P2/87/104 (1981).

**Fig.14: Sainsbury's Green Park Development (1983) ^** 226

'Branch opening Bath', *JS Journal* (January, 1983),  
The Sainsbury Archive: JS Journal Online. Web.  
[accessed 10 September 2015], 3

**Fig.15: Sainsbury's Wolverhampton Store Front (1988) ^** 230

'Branch opening Wolverhampton', *JS Journal*  
(March, 1988), The Sainsbury Archive: JS Journal Online.  
Web. [accessed 10 September 2015], 5

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**Abbreviations****Main Text**

ACBE	Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment
ACEC*	Advisory Council on Energy Conservation
ATCM	Association of Town Centre Management
BEU	Business and the Environment Unit
BHS	British Home Stores
BSA	British Social Attitudes
BTCV	British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CES*	Centre for Environmental Studies
CFCs	Chlorofluorocarbons
COI	Central Office of Information
CPT*	Central Place Theory
DC	Distribution Centre
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
EC	European Community
ECD	Energy Conservation Division
ECO	Energy Conservation Officers
EDC*	Economic Development Council
EEO	Energy Efficiency Office
ENCORD*	Energy Conservation Research and Development
EPIA	Eel Pie Island Association Planning Sub-Committee
FES	Family Expenditure Survey
FoE	Friends of the Earth
FRAME	Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments
GHS	General Household Survey
HCFC	Hydrochlorofluorocarbon
HMIP	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution
ICSC	International Council of Shopping Centres
INCPEN	Industry Council for Packaging and the Environment
IRA	Irish Republican Army
LPA	Local Planning Authority
NCC	Nature Conservancy Council
NEDO	National Economic Development Office
NEEF	National Energy Efficiency Forum
NRA	National Rivers Authority



OPEC	Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PPG*	Planning Policy Guidance
TCM	Town Centre Management
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

**Footnotes**

BPT	Bath Preservation Trust
EG	Department of Energy
FJ	Commission for the New Towns
INF	Central Office of Information
JLPA	John Lewis Partnership Archive
MSCA	Marks and Spencer Company Archive
PLUP	Planning Land Use Policy Directorate
PREM	Prime Minister's Office
SA	Sainsbury Archive
TCPSS	Town and Country Planning Summer School
TNA	The National Archives

\* Appear in the main text and in the footnotes

## Introduction

### I

At the dawn of the 1970s, to listen to environmentalists would be to believe that we were on course to hit the proverbial iceberg; the rapacious and unbridled demands of modern society were in danger of sinking the ship. Brian Harrison claimed that 'every generation finds something different to worry about'; this generation had invariably found its something.<sup>1</sup> By 1990 Marks and Spencer had released an Environmental Policy Statement and declared that 'caring for the environment is too important to be just a sales gimmick'.<sup>2</sup> The emergence of a company document explicitly outlining the company's approach to the environment marked a notable turning point in the way in which Marks and Spencer conceived of the environment as a commercial issue and it was not alone in making such a move. Sally Eden has noted that 'the green banner was raised over many companies in the late 1980s as the rising tide of public environmental interest made the environment a topic for mainstream companies to build campaigns around'.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, whilst a shift in presentation and focus undoubtedly took place within Marks and Spencer in the late 1980s and early 1990s, a closer assessment of the company's environment policy highlights a more enduring concern on the part of the company with many of the issues included. Along with the more headline inducing issues, such as the company's efforts to phase out Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and its development of biodegradable detergents, Marks and Spencer also identified its commitment to energy conservation and its policies regarding store development and design. The latter concerns were not conceived of in the heated environmental fervour of the late eighties and early nineties, but were longstanding commercial concerns for the company, which played a significant role in shaping Marks and Spencer's relationship with the environment and resource use.

A detailed assessment of how such policies evolved within Marks and Spencer and the degree to which the environment and resource use took on a greater importance in the period 1968-1992 for the company, has yet to be undertaken by academics. Without a broader assessment of such concerns our understanding of the relationship between retailers and the environment remains predicated on the belief that the latter primarily emerged as a concern for retailers in the late eighties and early nineties, pressed upon them by a vocal environmental movement, increasing popular concern

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<sup>1</sup> Brian Harrison, *Seeking a Role: The United Kingdom 1951–1970* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009), p. 510.

<sup>2</sup> University of Leeds, Marks and Spencer Company Archive (hereafter MSCA), *Papers of Philip Symes 1989-1996*, A04/117A, 'Your World Our World', Leaflet (July, 1990).

<sup>3</sup> Sally Eden, *Environmental Issues and Business: Implications of a Changing Agenda* (Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 1996), p. 8.

and a political landscape which had woken up to the environment as a credible issue. This thesis explores Marks and Spencer's changing relationship with the environment in terms of the areas in which it operated, its use of resources and its response to the wider concerns of the environmental movement. Why did the company feel the need to produce a document containing its environmental commitments in 1990 and how had such policies evolved within the company in the period 1968-1992? This research identifies and explores the long-standing and complex relationship between retailing and the environment by identifying the plethora of internal and external forces which ensured that the environment and resource use were increasingly matters which Marks and Spencer could not ignore in the period 1968-1992.

It is the contention of the present research that the issues outlined in Marks and Spencer's environment policy were invariably influenced by the changing demands of modern retailing and the growth in concern for the quality and protection of the environment and the use of resources at this time, and therefore both are central themes within the thesis. The research addresses Marks and Spencer's attitude to, and use of, resources and the environment through an assessment of: its response to growing popular concern and a strident environmental agenda (Chapter One); the impetus behind the company's energy conservation efforts and how it approached the issue (Chapters Two and Three); the causes and implications of the growth in decentralised retailing and Marks and Spencer's response to it (Chapters Four and Five); the influence of a growing conservation agenda on the company's store development in terms of design and location (Chapter Six) and finally Marks and Spencer's efforts to ensure greater control over the internal and external environments of its stores (Chapter Seven). Collectively such areas of analysis highlight the varied nature of the environmental concerns which came to influence the operations of Marks and Spencer as a mainstream retailer.

Environmental awareness and concern entered a new phase in the 1970s as the exigencies and activism of the 1960s gave way to a reinvigorated discussion about the environment and resource use. It was, as Dominic Sandbrook noted, 'the years when green was good and small was beautiful'.<sup>4</sup> Edward Goldsmith's *A Blue Print for Survival* and the Club of Rome's *Limits to Growth* set the tone in 1972, as the earth's capacity to sustain the ever growing demands of modern consumer society was increasingly cast in doubt.<sup>5</sup> The first full picture of the earth taken from space in 1968, further brought home the limited parameters of human existence. The international environmental conference

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<sup>4</sup> Dominic Sandbrook, *State of Emergency: The Way We Were, Britain 1970-1974* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2011), p. 181.

<sup>5</sup> *The Limits to Growth: A Report for The Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind*, ed. by Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jorgen Randers and William W. Behrens III (London: Pan Books Ltd., 1974); Edward Goldsmith, *A Blue Print for Survival* (London: Tom Stacey, 1972).

held in Stockholm in 1972 confirmed the heightened attention afforded the plight of the natural environment and the use of the earth's natural resources. E. F. Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful*, published in 1973, voiced a growing concern with human encroachment upon the natural environment. Schumacher lamented the fact that 'modern man does not experience himself as a part of nature but as an outside force destined to dominate and conquer it'.<sup>6</sup> Schumacher's concerns chimed in accordance with the protestations of concern espoused by the Club of Rome regarding the fragility of the earth's resources and the depletion of its environmental quality.

In the late 1960s, in the midst of growing affluence and individual freedom, commentators began to question the efficacy of unabated economic growth, worshipped as it was as the answer to modern society's ills and inequalities. E. J. Mishan's *The Cost of Economic Growth* published in 1967 communicated a growing unease regarding the environmental costs of growth.<sup>7</sup> Nigel Lawson observed that according to Mishan 'the growth cult was held to be the *direct* cause of environmental deterioration'.<sup>8</sup> Mishan's disavowal of the notion that the road to the good life was paved with economic growth and Schumacher's romanticised clarion call that small was in fact beautiful, added weight to growing calls for a reappraisal of society's use and abuse of the natural environment. The arrival of the UK's first environment party in the form of PEOPLE in 1973 and the growing body of pressure groups, gave further voice and an ever increasing public profile to issues of resource use and environmental protection. Furthermore, the impact of such a growing agenda was evident in the light entertainment and literature of the period. Alwyn Turner in his study of the 1970s explores the cultural ramifications of such trends in a chapter dedicated to the environment. Turner observed that there was 'almost an insatiable appetite for eco-fiction of all-shades'.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, TV shows with a green element became popular as *The Good Life* and *The Wombles* caught the popular imagination. In Sandbrook's assessment of the green awakening of the early seventies the environmental undertones of *Doctor Who* and the lifestyle choices of Tom and Barbara Good both receive greater attention than the environmental significance of the activities of multiple retailers.<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, despite the emergence of a national dialogue concerning the environment and resource use, there was an equally strident clamour for the good life characterised as it was by white goods, holidays abroad and a car on the drive. People

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<sup>6</sup> E.F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful: A study of economics as if people mattered* (London: Vintage Books, 1993), p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> E. J. Mishan, *The Costs of Economic Growth* (London: Staples Press, 1967).

<sup>8</sup> Nigel Lawson, 'New Inflation, Old Obsession', *Encounter*, Vol. XLIII (August, 1974), 88-92 (p. 88, col. 2).

<sup>9</sup> Alwyn W. Turner, *Crisis? What Crisis? Britain in the 1970s* (London: Aurum Press Ltd., 2009), p. 56.

<sup>10</sup> Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, pp. 204-207, 211-212.

had more money to spend as disposable incomes rose and they were not afraid to do so.<sup>11</sup> As home ownership proliferated with owner-occupation reaching over 50 per cent of households in the early 1970s, an individual's stake in the environment increased; access to the good-life bred a greater investment in the quality of the environmental aesthetic.<sup>12</sup> Although notions of what constituted the good life were challenged by the growing fervour of environmental concern, the old orthodoxies of material acquisition as synonymous with personal progress and achievement, remained ever present. Andy Beckett observed that in 1978 'a new record was set for the total number of foreign holidays taken by Britons'; cheaper air travel was a sign of the times, despite the increase in green sensibilities.<sup>13</sup> Such a climate of individualism was identified by Jeremy Black in his book, *Britain since the Seventies: Politics and Society in the Consumer Age*. Black contended that 'although there is a widespread consensus that the environment is one of the central issues of our time, this co-exists with forces of untrammelled consumption and selfishness'.<sup>14</sup> Black points to the growth in organic foods as characteristic of the self-interested nature of the environmental efforts of many. The nature of popular engagement with environmental issues is explored further in Chapter One of this thesis in an effort to highlight the complex nature of popular pressure and the extent of its impact on the activities of Marks and Spencer at this time. The evolution of the environmental agenda and responses to it emphasised a complex relationship between wider environmental concern and individual motivations. Whilst the narratives of resource scarcity which characterised the environmental debate in the early 1970s remained, by the late 1980s and early 1990s the headlines disseminated dire warnings of greenhouse gases, ozone depleting CFCs leading to skin cancers and the destructive impact of acid rain; this narrative of danger caught the popular imagination as the consequences of environmental abuse were increasingly seen to present a real and pressing threat. Indeed, an individual's interaction with the environment was shaped by self-interest borne of day-to-day habits, material investment, aesthetic enjoyment and personal well-being.

Marks and Spencer highlighted the continuing status attached to consumption. Its relationship with the nation and its consumers, whilst founded upon its ability to fulfil consumer wants, developed into one of enduring familiarity and affection. As a retailer Marks and Spencer was given the status of a national institution 'to rank with Lords Cricket Club, the Boat Race and Winston Churchill' according to one radio

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<sup>11</sup> James Obelkevich, 'Consumption', in *Understanding Post-War British Society*, ed. by James Obelkevich and Peter Catterall (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.141-154 (p. 143).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>13</sup> Andy Beckett, *When the Lights Went Out: What Really Happened to Britain in the Seventies* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 2010), p. 420.

<sup>14</sup> Jeremy Black, *Britain since the Seventies: Politics and Society in the Consumer Age* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2004), p. 89.

commentator.<sup>15</sup> Such an endorsement underlined the pre-eminent position of the company and the extent to which consumption remained a central social, cultural and economic force, within British society. So ubiquitous to modern society had it become that Matthew Hilton noted that the 'definition of consumer society has shifted from a focus on access to one of choice': a shift which Hilton himself explores in his 2009 study *Prosperity for All: Consumer Activism in an Era of Globalization*.<sup>16</sup> Whilst Hilton stresses the need to acknowledge those without access to consumer goods and markets, the present research primarily maintains a focus on matters of consumer choice rather than access due to Marks and Spencer's position as a relatively middle-class retailer. Where consumer access is a concern this is explored within the research; indeed, instances of consumer protest at the cost of shopping at Marks and Spencer were not unheard of.

Nevertheless, the extent to which individuals were excluded from consumer society became increasingly relative in the 1970s. Avner Offer whilst seeking to highlight the difficulties facing the working classes, did note that whilst some did not have 'decent housing' this did not exclude them 'entirely from overseas holidays or motor cars'.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the work of Shinobu Majima has further highlighted the difficulties in identifying the extent of affluence at this time. Majima illustrates the increasingly relative nature of poverty and hardship through an assessment of family expenditure survey data.<sup>18</sup> It was clear that the good life was not something that all experienced equally; some did not experience it at all. However, with the availability of hire purchase, the conveniences and aspirations of the affluent lifestyle were increasingly more accessible and sought by many.<sup>19</sup> Notions of necessity altered, driven by societal and cultural shifts which prized material acquisition.<sup>20</sup> Environmental degradation posed an increasingly visible threat to this and yet the use of the motor car was an ever potent reminder of the contradictory nature of popular concern for the environment. Such outlooks and individual concerns had a notable impact on the extent of popular concern for the environment and consequently on the nature of the pressure exerted on retailers.

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<sup>15</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Durham manager on local radio', 17:5 (October, 1970), p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> Matthew Hilton, *Prosperity for All: Consumer Activism in an Era of Globalization* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), p. 3; for further studies which address the birth of the consumer society, its characteristics and evolution, see: Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J. H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Europa, 1982); John Benson, *The Rise of Consumer Society in Britain, 1880-1980* (London: Longman, 1994).

<sup>17</sup> Avner Offer, 'British Manual Workers: From Producers to Consumers. C.1950-2000', *Contemporary British History*, 22:4 (2008), 537-571 (p. 560).

<sup>18</sup> Shinobu Majima, 'Affluence and the Dynamics of Spending in Britain, 1961-2004', *Contemporary British History*, 22:4 (2008), 573-597.

<sup>19</sup> Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, p. 19.

<sup>20</sup> Brian Harrison, *Finding a Role? The United Kingdom, 1970-1990* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2010), p. 89.

Moreover, Offer, in his assessment of the transition of individuals from workers to consumers, critiques the 'rhetoric of consumerism' claiming that it has 'disenfranchised the weak'.<sup>21</sup> Offer asserts that whilst as workers individuals had a voice, as consumers 'they have none'.<sup>22</sup> However, Offer's assertion does not fully acknowledge the complexity of consumer practices or the relationship between retailers and consumers. To some extent greater consumer freedoms increasingly provided individuals with a potent platform from which to engage in a number of the key environmental debates of the time. Hilton and Daunton in their assessment of the political significance of consumption claimed that political issues were increasingly 'brought to bear' on acts of consumption.<sup>23</sup> The affluent consumer was no longer solely concerned about price, but also the wider implications of various consumption practices. Such a shift was evident in the creation of the Consumers' Association in 1957 under the direction of Michael Young and the success of the consumer magazine *Which?*. Both have been explored at length in the work of Matthew Hilton with respect to the growing critical engagement of consumers with the products they bought.<sup>24</sup> The growth in organic produce and health foods and the success of businesses such as the Body Shop further spoke to such wider interest and engagement. Brian Harrison drew particular attention to the strident consumer protests of the day which rallied against the fur and whaling trades and the practice of vivisection.<sup>25</sup> Many of these causes, and environmental concern more broadly, have been attributed to a growing middle class activism by contemporaries of the period and historians and is explored further in Chapter One.<sup>26</sup>

Consumer engagement at this time was not only evident in the products that consumers did or did not buy, but also their engagement in local planning cases. The latter is often an underused source in exploring the attitudes of consumers and the extent and nature of their concern for the environment. Academic literature which addresses retail development and planning, discussed later in this introduction (pp. 20-21), explores broad trends rather than documenting local opinion and correspondence regarding

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<sup>21</sup> Offer, 'British Manual Workers: From Producers to Consumers. C.1950-2000', p. 561.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 561.

<sup>23</sup> Matthew Hilton and Martin Daunton, 'Material Politics: An Introduction', in *The Politics of Consumption: Material Culture and Citizenship in Europe and America*, ed. by Martin Daunton and Matthew Hilton (Oxford: Berg, 2001), pp. 1-32 (p. 13).

<sup>24</sup> Matthew Hilton, 'Michael Young and the Consumer Movement', *Contemporary British History*, 19:3 (2005), 311-19; Matthew Hilton, 'Which is *Which?* Consumerist or Anti-Capitalist Magazine?', *History Today*, 54:9 (2004), 37-39; Matthew Hilton, *Consumerism in Twentieth-Century Britain: The Search for a Historical Movement* (Cambridge University Press, 2003) - chapter seven in particular addresses the emergence of the Consumers' Association.

<sup>25</sup> Harrison, *Finding a Role?*, p. 100.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62; Turner, *Crisis? What Crisis?*, pp. 50-51; Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, pp. 180, 214; Arthur Marwick, *British Society since 1945* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, second edition, 1990), p. 140.

specific retail store proposals. Additionally, Sandbrook draws attention to local protests evident in planning cases regarding matters of conservation in the early 1970s in his general history of the period, but does not address retail planning cases.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, a number of Marks and Spencer's retail development decisions at this time sparked comment from individuals and consumers. Consequently, two case studies concerning Marks and Spencer planning proposals are utilised in Chapter Six of this thesis as a means by which to further the thesis' assessment of the strength of popular concern for the environment and the degree to which this was influenced by other individual concerns.

Nothing highlighted the tension between society's penchant for material goods, the commercial motives of retailers and growing awareness and concern for the environment at this time more than the increase in out-of-town retailing. In relation to the growth of decentralised retailing Harrison notes that the extent of new floor space intended for out-of-town locations increased from a seventh in 1960-81 to over half in 1982-92, which doubled the amount of superstores across the country.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, Jeremy Black makes reference to 'the triumph of consumerism' as he describes what he believes is 'a world centred on the shopping centre'.<sup>29</sup> Black remarks on the fact that 'high-street shopping became the focus of planning disputes' particularly in the 1980s, although does not go on to explore these in any detail.<sup>30</sup> Overall retailers often remain largely side-lined in the pages of the general histories of the period, despite playing a central role in shaping the environment in which people lived and worked.<sup>31</sup> Marks and Spencer's presence in the national cultural psyche highlighted an influence and a presence far beyond the narrowly defined parameters of commercial retailing as an economic entity. Moreover, throughout the 1970s and 1980s Marks and Spencer retained its dominant position within the retail landscape, despite increasing competition.<sup>32</sup> The retailer underwent significant expansion to its sales footage during this time and its market share within the food sector increased. The company's image and the nature of the environmental concerns associated with decentralised retailing will be explored further in Chapter Five's assessment of the difficulties faced by Marks and Spencer in its efforts to develop out-of-town stores.

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<sup>27</sup> Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, pp. 194-195.

<sup>28</sup> Harrison, *Finding a Role?*, p. 77.

<sup>29</sup> Black, *Britain since the Seventies*, p. 11.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>31</sup> The following works make brief reference to the growth in out-of-town retailing at this time: Turner, *Crisis? What Crisis?*, p. 56; Beckett, *When the Lights Went Out*, p. 420; Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, pp. 339-340.

<sup>32</sup> Richard Adams, Jane Carruthers, Sean Hamil, *Changing Corporate Values: A guide to social and environmental policy and practice in Britain's top companies* (London: New Consumer Ltd, 1991), p. 353.



The growing cultural and social legitimacy of the retailer was strengthened further as the 1970s gave way to the materialism of the 1980s. The decade divided many, but for those who had access to the financial fruits borne of the free-market economics and individualist policies of the Thatcher era, affluent materialism was a religion pursued with missionary zeal. The concurrent resurgence of the environment within the popular consciousness in the late 1980s and 1990s, encapsulated in the Green Party's 1989 European Parliamentary election success, appeared to signal not only the endurance of the environment as a recurring issue but also the paradox upon which mass environmental concern was built.<sup>33</sup> Despite Brian Harrison's claim that there existed 'a repudiation of the affluent lifestyle' at this time, it is the contention of the present research that for the majority environmental concern was arguably driven by anthropocentric notions of the good life and a desire for it to continue.<sup>34</sup> The environmental threat wrought by certain consumer practices and processes brought home the destructive and unsustainable impact of people and processes upon the natural world; it was these consequences which society increasingly wished to eliminate and as such there was a popular demand for a flexible reappraisal, rather than a rejection, of the affluent lifestyle. This undoubtedly shaped the nature of environmental pressure and the extent to which it was brought to bear on the operations of Marks and Spencer; a society increasingly concerned with aesthetic standards, comfortable surroundings and personal safety did not challenge the foundations of retailing but rather sought to smooth its edges. The central contention of this research is that the commercial outlook and needs of the business frequently shaped Marks and Spencer's policies towards resource use and the environment as much as external regulation and popular pressure in the period 1968-1992.

## II

The subjects under consideration within the thesis range across a number of fields of scholarship which adds to the complexity as well as the richness of such a study. Concerns regarding the plight of the Earth's natural resources and the environment sparked a new field of study in the 1970s as Environmental History emerged as a distinct academic endeavour. Since its inception there has been notable debate as to the scope of the field. Donald Worster contended in 1988 in an essay entitled 'Doing Environmental History?' that it was the study of 'the nonhuman world, the world we have not in any primary sense created' and as such the built environment was excluded from such

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<sup>33</sup> Eden, *Environmental Issues and Business*, p.29.

<sup>34</sup> Harrison, *Seeking a Role*, p. 513.

enquiries.<sup>35</sup> Such a narrow stipulation of the field has been challenged. William Cronon criticised the ‘too strong a bias toward the wild and the rural’ that he believed existed within environmental history.<sup>36</sup> In response to Worster, Cronon argued that the field should explore ‘all the many places that give shape to the modern world’.<sup>37</sup> The importance of the built environment to environmental study was further explicated by Christine Meisner Rosen and Joel Arthur Tarr in 1994. They identified four key dimensions of environmental enquiry. The first two pertain to the effect of the city on the natural environment and the latter’s impact on the former. The third concerns society’s response to the first two and their subsequent efforts to mitigate environmental problems. The fourth is the ‘examination of the built environment and its role and place in human life as part of the physical context in which society evolves’.<sup>38</sup> It is the last two dimensions outlined by Rosen and Tarr to which the present research turns its attention in its assessment of the growth in decentralised retailing and the impact this had on both urban and non-urban landscapes. The scope and enquiries of the present research highlight the significance of urban and built environments in understanding the relationship between society and the environment and more specifically that of retailers and the areas in which they operate.

A number of other notable academic works have similarly acknowledged the validity of the built environment as a topic of interest within environmental history. B. W. Clapp’s *An Environmental History of Britain Since the Industrial Revolution* gives a detailed assessment of specific environmental issues including the use of natural resources, problems of pollution and recycling efforts and how these have evolved since the shifts enacted by the industrial revolution. In addition to such enquiries Clapp stated that ‘natural resources and...architectural heritage are the proper study of the environmental historian’.<sup>39</sup> It is the contention of the present research that architecture and store aesthetics is one of the central characteristics of retailing’s impact on the natural and urban environment and as such is important to any study exploring the relationship between retailing and the environment. The impact of the growing conservation agenda within planning circles at this time on Marks and Spencer’s retail store development will be assessed in Chapter Six. As a consequence of Clapp’s

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<sup>35</sup> Donald Worster, ‘Appendix: Doing Environmental History’, in *The Ends of the Earth: Perspectives on Modern Environmental History*, ed. by Donald Worster (Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 289-308 (p. 291).

<sup>36</sup> William Cronon, ‘Modes of Prophecy and Production: Placing Nature in History’, *The Journal of American History*, 76:4 (March, 1990), 1122-1131 (p. 1131).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1131.

<sup>38</sup> Christine Meisner Rosen and Joel Arthur Tarr, ‘The Importance of an Urban Perspective in Environmental History’, *Journal of Urban History*, 20:3 (May, 1994), 299-310 (p. 301).

<sup>39</sup> B. W. Clapp, *An Environmental History of Britain since the Industrial Revolution* (Essex: Longman Group UK Ltd., 1994), p. xi.

exploration of the environmental significance of Britain's industrial history, an assessment of the retail sector was necessarily absent. The apparatus of consumer society remained an invisible footnote as production took centre stage of Clapp's environmental narrative.

In a similar vein, John McNeill in his 2000 study, *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth Century*, took a global perspective in his analysis of the environmental consequences of continued economic growth, population increases and technological advances, but commercial narratives are left out, as is so often the case in environmental histories.<sup>40</sup> John Sheail's 2002 study, *An Environmental History of Twentieth-Century Britain*, similarly continues with such an omission as the activities of retailers and the structures of retailing are not addressed. Instead Sheail offers an insight into matters of conservation in terms of agriculture and a growing leisure industry, environmental hazards and the significance of urban infrastructures, providing explanations as to how environmental concerns 'came to be recognised, and a response formulated'.<sup>41</sup> In doing so Sheail points to the growing incursion, in the twentieth century, of the government in people's day-to-day lives and the role it played in shaping the environment. In particular, Sheail notes the importance of planning history as a key area of enquiry for those studying the environment. He discusses planning at length noting that some believed that 'whether as visionaries or as local-government officers, planners strove to tidy up the detritus of economic growth'.<sup>42</sup> It is evident at this time that the plight of the urban and natural environment was a frequent talking point within planning applications and this consequently had an impact on Marks and Spencer's store development. Sheail addresses dereliction and looks at the implications of the spread of industry into new areas and the environmental concerns surrounding this.<sup>43</sup> Issues regarding dereliction and urban sprawl were equally central to debates regarding retail store development at this time, although this is not explored by Sheail. The 1970s and 1980s witnessed a substantial growth in decentralised retailing as retailers sought the economies of scale and the freedom afforded them in out-of-town locations. This process brought retailers face to face with a plethora of environmental issues: the protection of the green belt, the use of derelict land and the environmental quality of the British high-street were perennial concerns within debates regarding retail store development at this time and to a large extent remain so to the present day.

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<sup>40</sup> John McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth Century* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2000).

<sup>41</sup> John Sheail, *An Environmental History of Twentieth-Century Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. ix.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

Whilst the growth in out-of-town retailing has been explored in the academic literature, this has not been done by historians of the environment but rather by retail geographers and planners. Most notably Russell Schiller has produced a number of publications concerning retail development and commercial property more broadly. In his 1986 article entitled 'Retail Decentralisation – The Coming of the Third Wave', Schiller outlined his theory regarding the movement of retailers into decentralised areas. He identified Marks and Spencer's move into the MetroCentre in 1985 as key in galvanizing the third wave of out-of-town development; the previous two waves had consisted of food retailers and retail warehouses respectively.<sup>44</sup> Whilst Schiller noted the shift in Marks and Spencer's store development, a detailed account of the way in which Marks and Spencer presented and undertook its store development and its move into out-of-town locations in the period 1968-1992 has yet to be undertaken; the present research seeks to redress this. Retailers were key agents in shaping the urban environment and the relationship between it and more peripheral sites, particularly in relation to the growth of decentralised retailing at this time. Such shifts in retailing brought to the fore many of the environmental concerns which arose as society's demands on the natural environment increased and retailers found that they had to more consciously negotiate their position within the urban landscape. Other notable contributions include Clifford Guy's assessment of the UK planning system and its influence on retail development.<sup>45</sup> In addition, Guy's 1994 publication, *The Retail Development Process: Location, Property and Planning*, explored institutional factors, such as sources of finance and public sector land use planning policies and the degree to which there existed a tension resulting in compromise between the key actors involved: retailers, developers, financiers and planners.<sup>46</sup> Following on from Guy's analysis, through its assessment of a number of Marks and Spencer's store development projects, the thesis highlights the extent to which compromise was a prevalent *modus operandi* for retailers, planners and local interest groups involved in the retail development process. Additionally, Hugh Gayler's study, *Retail Innovation in Britain: The Problems of Out-of-town Shopping Centre Development* looked more

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<sup>44</sup> Russell Schiller, 'Retail Decentralisation – The Coming of the Third Wave', *The Planner*, 72:7 (July, 1986), 13-15. Other works by Schiller addressing retail development include: 'Vitality and Viability: Challenge to the Town Centre', *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, 22:6 (1994), 46-50; 'Land Use Controls on U.K. Shopping Centres', in *Shopping Centre Development: Policies and Prospects*, ed. by John A. Dawson and J. Dennis Lord (New York: Nichols Publishing Company, 1985), pp. 40-56; 'Out-of-town Exodus', in *The Changing Face of British Retailing*, ed. by Edward Mcfadyen (London: Newman Books Ltd, 1987), pp. 64-73; *The Dynamics of Property Location* (London: Spon Press, 2001).

<sup>45</sup> Clifford Guy, *Planning for Retail Development: A critical view of the British experience* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>46</sup> Clifford Guy, *The Retail Development Process: Location, Property and Planning* (London: Routledge, 1994).

specifically at the impact of decentralised development trends.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, Robert B. Potter's *The Urban Retailing System: Location, Cognition and Behaviour*, J. A. Dawson's *Topics in Applied Geography: Shopping Centre Development* and Larry O'Brien and Frank Harris' *Retailing: Shopping, Society, Space* also constituted notable works in the field of retail geography through their assessment of the forces which shaped the shifting geographies of modern retailing and the character of commercial development.<sup>48</sup>

Nevertheless, despite the wealth of literature on the subject of retail store location this has been primarily concerned with charting broad trends within retail development rather than offering a comprehensive insight into the individual company outlooks which shaped the response of retailers to out-of-town retailing. In the 1998 article by Gareth Shaw et al. entitled 'Structural and Spatial Trends in British Retailing: The Importance of Firm-Level Studies', it was noted that 'strong opportunities exist to link the very broad models of retail change with the information derived from more intensive research of retail archives' but that this was often a neglected approach.<sup>49</sup> The present research undertakes such an analysis of Marks and Spencer's operations with a view to highlighting that in addition to the influence of wider planning attitudes and growing retail competition, the company's management culture, its image as a high-street retailer and its concerns regarding the quality of established retail environments, significantly shaped its store development practices. The thesis contends that Marks and Spencer's move into decentralised retail sites heightened its awareness of environmental considerations and their importance to the overall success of its retail operations; increased car use, land shortages and the quality of trading environments were frequently discussed at all levels of the company's operations at this time. Consequently, an assessment of the company's store development is central to the thesis' overall exploration of the relationship between Marks and Spencer and the environment in the period 1968-1992.

Central to the thesis' analysis of Marks and Spencer is the changing nature and strength of environmental concern at this time. There has been a substantial amount of academic attention afforded environmentalism. T. O'Riordan's *Environmentalism* and David Pepper's *Modern Environmentalism* both comprehensively address the evolution of environmental thought and the impact of economic growth, as well as scientific and technological changes which influenced society's approach to the environment and

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<sup>47</sup> Hugh Gayler, *Retail Innovation in Britain: The Problems of Out-of-town Shopping Centre Development* (Norwich, England: Geo Books, 1984).

<sup>48</sup> Robert B. Potter, *The Urban Retailing System: Location, Cognition and Behaviour* (Aldershot, England: Gower Publishing Company Limited, 1982); J. A. Dawson, *Topics in Applied Geography: Shopping Centre Development* (London: Longman, 1983); Larry O'Brien and Frank Harris, *Retailing: Shopping, Society, Space* (London: David Fulton Publishers, 1991).

<sup>49</sup> Gareth Shaw, Andrew Alexander, John Benson and John Jones, 'Structural and Spatial Trends in British Retailing: The Importance of Firm-Level Studies', *Business History*, 40:4 (1998), 79-93 (p. 91).

environmental protection.<sup>50</sup> John McCormick's, *The Global Environmental Movement*, added to such scholarship by assessing the development of the international environmental movement from its roots in the 19th century, to the internationalism of the post-war era and the "New Environmentalism" of the 1970s.<sup>51</sup> It is this latter phase which constitutes the environmental agenda discussed in the present thesis. McCormick defined environmentalism as 'the promotion of values, attitudes and policies aimed at reaching an accommodation between human needs and the limits of the natural environment'.<sup>52</sup> McCormick's definition is undoubtedly broad in its potential application and could be said to increasingly characterise the efforts of Marks and Spencer as it negotiated the expansionary changes in its own operations and the growth in status afforded the environment from the 1970s onwards.

There has been academic debate regarding the existence of a "New Environmentalism" in the early 1970s. Pepper argued that there was much talk of a 'new awakening' in terms of popular interest in the environment which has obscured the continuity in environmental concern evident amongst individuals.<sup>53</sup> Concerns regarding conservation and preservation of natural habitats and wildlife, as well as architectural heritage, were long-standing. Nevertheless, there were significant shifts evident as the tone and urgency of the environmental dialogue at this time signalled a new wave of environmental awareness and concern; as McCormick contended, 'New Environmentalism was more dynamic, more broad-based, and won much wider public support'.<sup>54</sup> This shifting tone was central to the dynamic between retail organisations and wider society at this time and is consciously explored in the present thesis in terms of the nature of attitudes towards the environment, the considerations which shaped them and the ways in which retailers engaged with them.

The impact of pressure groups on individual participation and the extent of the environmentalist challenge on established attitudes has similarly been assessed within the academic literature. Philip Lowe and Jane Goyder's, *Environmental Groups in Politics*, assessed the nature and structure of environmental organisations and their impact on politics and Peter Rawcliffe's more recent *Environmental Pressure Groups in Transition* built on this by addressing the evolution of national environmental pressure

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<sup>50</sup> T O'Riordan, *Environmentalism* (London: Pion Limited, 1981); David Pepper, *Modern environmentalism: an introduction* (London: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>51</sup> John McCormick, *The Global Environmental Movement* (Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, second edition, 1995).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xv.

<sup>53</sup> Cited Philip W. Sutton, *Explaining Environmentalism: In search of a new social movement* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2000), p. 123.

<sup>54</sup> McCormick, *The Global Environmental Movement*, p. 56.

groups in Britain since the mid-1980s.<sup>55</sup> Consequently, the present thesis does not focus on pressure groups themselves, but rather addresses them in relation to popular opinion and the extent to which the emergence of new groups and a growth in membership indicated an active popular awareness of the environment. Additionally, it explores the interaction between environmental groups and retailers to further assess the attitude of retailers towards the environment. The thesis acknowledges the adversarial relationship between environmental groups and retailers but it also draws attention to the, at times, neglected climate of co-operation and consultation which existed between environmental organisations and commercial retailers.

The impact of growing environmental awareness and concern on the established political parties and structures of government has also been explored at length within existing scholarship. John McCormick's *British Politics and the Environment* provides a detailed history of the environment within British politics and the ways in which this was framed by wider international interest and regulation.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, Mike Robinson's *The Greening of British Party Politics* makes extensive use of oral interviews with politicians conducted between 1986-1990 to assess the emergence and context of environmental concern within the main political parties, as well as detailing the ideologies and characteristics of the environmental movement.<sup>57</sup> The political backdrop of growing environmental concern is addressed in more detail in Chapter One of this thesis in an effort to better contextualise Marks and Spencer's adoption of its own environment policy in the early nineties.

One of the key aspects of the present research is the activities and concerns of the emerging environmental movement and the extent to which it came to influence the operations of Marks and Spencer. Efforts to define the identity and approach of the movement have been at the centre of academic debates concerning the environment. A distinction has been made in the existing literature between the forces referred to by sociologist Philip Sutton as, 'reform environmentalists' and 'radical ecologists', the latter often more commonly referred to as 'greens'.<sup>58</sup> Reform environmentalists have been largely characterised in the academic literature as working within the parameters and institutions of modern society in an effort to affect gradual environmental change. On the other hand radical ecologists, or 'greens', are identified as calling for a wholesale shift in

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<sup>55</sup> Philip Lowe and Jane Goyder, *Environmental Groups in Politics* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1983); Peter Rawcliffe, *Environmental pressure groups in transition* (Manchester University Press, 1998).

<sup>56</sup> John McCormick, *British Politics and the Environment* (London: Earthscan Publications Ltd., 1991).

<sup>57</sup> Mike Robinson, *The Greening of British Party Politics* (Manchester University Press, 1992).

<sup>58</sup> Philip W. Sutton, *The Environment: A Sociological Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p. 93.

society's approach to the natural environment. The newly established environmental groups of the 1970s embodied this more radical mind-set, as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth (FoE) challenged both the political establishment and private enterprise. However, despite the divergence in attitudes evident within the environmental movement and the propensity for academics to draw attention to those differences, it is evident that definitions in this instance can obscure as much as they enlighten. The environmental movement was transitory in character. Those individuals and organisations that once presented as a radical green force within the environmental trajectory, increasingly weaved in and out of respectable channels and interacted with established institutions as the opportunities presented themselves. Consequently, whilst the distinction between the more moderate and the more extreme environmental campaigners is not without its analytical value, for the purposes of this research references to an environmental agenda refer to both strands as a composite whole. This is in an effort to acknowledge the flexibility and pragmatism apparent within the movement itself and also the extent to which retailers and other organisations used the term 'greens' and 'environmentalists' interchangeably. Where a distinction between the two is evident within the primary literature this is explored and justified within the analysis. Additionally, the environmental movement when discussed in the present thesis refers to the myriad of forces which prioritised the environment as an immediate and necessary concern. This includes environmental pressure groups, the UK Green Party, environmental publications, such as the Club of Rome's *Limits to Growth* and Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful*, and the array of international conferences and agreements which increasingly bolstered and motivated a growing awareness and concern for the plight of the environment. Such a definition of the various actors which constituted the environmental movement at this time, whilst broad, corresponds with the subject matter discussed by McCormick in his assessment of the global environmental movement; the scope speaks to the size and reach of the movement rather than a weakness of definition.

The nature of what constituted the environment at this time and consequently matters of environmental concern, in addition to the more traditional environmental issues, are central themes within the present research. Sutton argued that when faced with the term 'the environment' individuals expect 'discussions of pollution, the science of climate change, animals and animal welfare, flora and fauna, environmental organisations such as Greenpeace, Green political parties and much more'.<sup>59</sup> He concludes that 'the environment has a very special and specific meaning, namely non-human natural conditions and surroundings'.<sup>60</sup> Such a definition undoubtedly speaks to a significant body of individuals and organisations and academic work has at times

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.



adopted such a focus when addressing the relationship between business and the environment. Nevertheless, it is the contention of the present thesis that such a definition does not constitute a full appreciation of the nature of the environment as a commercial consideration at this time.

Such a focus, as outlined by Sutton, has ensured that developments which have generated a significant shift in society's interaction and relationship with the environment, such as retail store development, have received a limited assessment in environmental discussions, in favour of more traditional environmental concerns, such as CFCs, product packaging, supply chains and resource use. Nevertheless, if the relationship between the environment and retailers is to be better appreciated and understood, as the present thesis seeks to do, then the definition of what constitutes the environment as a consideration and site of concern, needs to be broadened. The environment as an issue for retailers and the public, was not only conditioned by the growing environmental movement but also the nature of their own immediate environmental surroundings and the degree to which they identified and invested within them. The British High-Street at this time became as much a site of environmental concern as the more traditional British countryside. The changing character of retail store environments highlighted the complex relationship between individuals, retailers and the environment, in addition to the seemingly more legitimate environmental concern displayed in efforts to reduce packaging and to use energy more efficiently. Consequently, the "Environment" with a big 'E', defined as it was by the broader movement, and the "environment", as encountered by retailers and individuals as a physical and immediate consideration, will be explored and evaluated within the thesis. Both can be seen to influence the actions and attitudes of those involved, as well as highlight the varied and often contradictory nature of environmental considerations at this time. The present research thus extends the parameters of research concerning the environment by widening the range of environments and environmental issues under discussion in relation to commercial retailing.

Academic inquiry regarding the environment has given rise to a strident sub-discipline exploring the relationship between business and the environment. This academic interest has been particularly active from the 1990s onwards as the environment as a matter of commercial concern was deemed to have breached the confines of boardrooms up and down the country. A number of studies have addressed the impact of the growing environmental agenda upon business entities. Denis Smith's edited volume, *Business and the Environment: Implications of the New Environmentalism*, provides a business and management focus which assesses the significance of "new environmentalism" and the "green agenda" on established business

activities.<sup>61</sup> Richard Welford and Richard Starkey's, *The Earthscan Reader in Business and the Environment*, similarly added to efforts to evaluate the impact of the environment on business strategies, research and development endeavours and the growing sphere of environmental improvement within business organisations.<sup>62</sup> The tone and approach of the work, influenced as it was by the disciplinary approaches of its authors, has foregrounded organisational processes and management systems. This has led to an assessment of business and the environment generally, whilst losing some of the specificity of a company's individual interaction with the environment. The present thesis seeks to provide this specificity through its exploration of Marks and Spencer's relationship with the environment and environmental issues. In doing so the thesis intends to highlight the extent to which the company's operations, its image and sense of its own place within society, significantly shaped the way in which it interpreted and acknowledged the increasing attention afforded the environment. This confirms the academic value in, and need for, an assessment of broader trends and concerns as experienced by individual firms, supported by the opportunity provided by company archives, to better gauge the varied and complex ways in which environmental considerations were brought to bear on business organisations, in this instance the commercial retailer.

Eden's study, *Environmental Issues and Business: Implications of a Changing Agenda*, added to the academic rigour of debates concerning business and the environment with an interdisciplinary assessment of the internal and external forces which shaped business responses at the local, national and international level. Eden outlined the underlying debate within much of the literature concerning business and the environment regarding the ability of business entities to effectively and meaningfully engage in environmentally friendly activities.<sup>63</sup> A number of publications emerged in the 1990s outlining a pro-business stance. A notable example was John Elkington's, *Green Pages, The Business of Saving the World*, which addressed a myriad of issues from sustainability, to consumer practices, in an effort to outline the proliferation of a "green" network of organisations and approaches.<sup>64</sup> The advocacy within the academic literature for the ability of business enterprises to mitigate their environmental impacts was given greater validity by the sustainability agenda which gained ground in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Sustainable development, outlined in the Brundtland Report as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of

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<sup>61</sup> *Business and the Environment: Implications of the New Environmentalism*, ed. by Denis Smith (London: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd, 1993).

<sup>62</sup> *The Earthscan Reader in Business and the Environment*, ed. by Richard Welford and Richard Starkey (London: Earthscan Publications Limited, 1996).

<sup>63</sup> Eden, *Environmental Issues and Business*, pp. 12-15.

<sup>64</sup> John Elkington, Tom Burke and Julia Hailes, *Green Pages, The Business of Saving the World* (London: Routledge, 1988).

future generations to meet their own needs', moved beyond the anti-growth narratives of the late 1960s and early 1970s and seemingly validated the role of business in future efforts to ensure greater environmental improvements.<sup>65</sup>

Nevertheless, despite the mainstream shift away from anti-growth narratives, towards sustainable economic growth, a number of studies, whilst pro-business in terms of an underlying belief in the ability of firms to respond to environmental needs, have problematized the ability of business to affect environmentally beneficial changes in a sustained and meaningful way. Welford's 1997 publication, *Hijacking Environmentalism: Corporate Responses to Sustainable Development*, and Frances Bowen's, *After Greenwashing: Symbolic Corporate Environmentalism and Society*, both acknowledged the centrality of business in efforts to develop greater environmental improvement and to further the sustainability agenda, whilst questioning how and to what extent this can be, and has been, achieved in practice.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, Paul Hawken remarked that 'recycling aluminium cans in the company cafeteria and ceremonial tree plantings are about as effective as bailing out the *Titanic* with teaspoons'.<sup>67</sup> By the very nature of business organisations, they necessarily sit opposed to greening themselves out of existence. Consequently, for some, an innate contradiction remained which limited the capacity of business to effectively implement the required level of change. Hawken, argued that if business was to effectively engage with the environment it would have to change its outlook. Furthermore, Welford has advocated strongly for businesses to undertake a more fundamental re-evaluation of their operations in line with environmental considerations. According to Welford 'the starting point must be to make the modern business enterprise challenge its very reason for being'.<sup>68</sup> Welford's proselytizing tone however, misses the realities inherent in the ways in which businesses respond and evolve in relation to external challenges; a process of compromise and assimilation is invariably more evident in practice. Welford's approach has at times been characteristic of the limitations of the academic literature concerning business and the environment, which appears to move into the realm of advocacy on the part of greener business strategies rather than an analysis of present activities.

Smith and Welford have both attached great importance to the need for businesses to comprehensively address their corporate culture if they are to realise a

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<sup>65</sup> Gro Harlem Brundtland, *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future* (Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 41.

<sup>66</sup> Richard Welford, *Hijacking Environmentalism: Corporate responses to sustainable development* (London: Earthscan Publications Ltd, 1997); Frances Bowen, *After Greenwashing: Symbolic Corporate Environmentalism and Society* (Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>67</sup> Paul Hawken, 'A Teasing Irony', in *The Earthscan Reader in Business and the Environment*, ed. by Richard Welford and Richard Starkey (London: Earthscan Publications Limited, 1996), pp. 5-16 (p. 7).

<sup>68</sup> Cited in Eden, *Environmental Issues and Business*, p. 15.

greener business model. Nevertheless, the focus adopted by Smith, Welford and their co-authors according to Eden, ensures that 'company cultural change and the "future" outlook of business on environmental issues are overemphasised at the expense of attention to the current situation'.<sup>69</sup> In light of this and Eden's criticisms, the present research places an explicit emphasis on the realities of Marks and Spencer's awareness of, and interaction with, the environment and environmental issues by adopting an historical approach, rather than one conditioned by an emphasis on prescriptive models and advocacy of the virtues of "green" business. The thesis highlights the extent to which Marks and Spencer's interaction with the environment was fostered and negotiated by a mixture of old and new commercial concerns which at times heightened their effective engagement with the environment and at others limited it. Marks and Spencer's strident efforts to conserve energy and its promotion of, and support for, environmental quality in central trading areas elicited environmental improvements but were primarily motivated by commercial considerations. Nevertheless, the company's provision of greater comfort and convenience within its stores, through the increased use of technology, prized a different kind of environmental improvement, seemingly at odds with a broader concern for the environment. Such contradictions are central to an understanding of the relationship between business, and more specifically retailers, and the environment and are a central focus of the thesis.

The wealth of literature concerning business and the environment has to differing degrees touched specifically on the retail sector. Such research has addressed green consumerism and the extent of retail efforts to incorporate environmental considerations into their operations.<sup>70</sup> This body of work has often prioritised the 1990s onwards as a period of fruitful enquiry, which to some degree has given rise to an over representation of that period within the literature, to the exclusion of the burgeoning interplay between retailers and environmental ideas and concerns during the previous two decades. Consequently, in an effort to build on the existing literature the thesis addresses the period from 1968-1992 to illustrate the longer trajectory of environmental awareness evident within retail organisations and the nature and extent of this interaction. The decision to begin in 1968, a flash point of social protest and unrest, acknowledges the influence of the 1960s in shaping a new kind of activism and popular awakening with regards the environment. 1992 provides a useful closing date as the environment had

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<sup>69</sup> Eden, *Environmental Issues and Business*, p. 63.

<sup>70</sup> Adams et al., *Changing Corporate Values*, provides a series of useful fact files addressing the extent of environmental awareness and activity within a number of organisations including leading companies within the retail sector. S. E. Eden, *Green Consumerism and the Response from Business and Government* (University of Leeds: School of Geography, Working Paper Series 542, 1990), assesses the character and strength of green consumerism and the extent to which retailers and governments began to respond.

by this point become a consciously negotiated commercial concern and the UN Earth Summit in the same year marked the beginnings of a new chapter in environmental enquiry and protection.

### III

A number of publications have provided an insight into Marks and Spencer in terms of its operation and development. These have to differing degrees made use of the Marks and Spencer Company Archive. However, they have been largely company commissioned histories, as in the case of Goronwy Rees' *St Michael: A History of Marks & Spencer*; Paul Bookbinder's *Marks & Spencer: the war years 1939-1945*, who was the company archivist for a time; Asa Briggs' centenary history and Helen Chislett's more recent assessment of the company on its 125th anniversary.<sup>71</sup> All have produced traditional business histories of the organisation which have highlighted its progression at various points, from its foundation in 1884 as a series of Penny Bazaars, through the transformative leadership of Simon Marks and two world wars, to its modern day incarnation. In addition to the commissioned histories, successive chairmen have also produced memoirs documenting their individual assessment of the company and their time within it.<sup>72</sup> K. K. Tse produced an independent account of Marks and Spencer's retailing operations, looking in particular at matters of organisational behaviour, policies and structure and the company's close relationship with its suppliers.<sup>73</sup> Journalist Judi Bevan added to the available literature in 2001 when she published an assessment of the company's successes and the difficulties it faced in the 1990s.<sup>74</sup> She did so again in 2007 when she updated the research in the wake of Stuart Rose's accession to the top job in 2004, in an effort to acknowledge the changes in the intervening years and the company's apparent revival at that time.<sup>75</sup> Bevan utilised company documents and interviews of past and present employees to construct a picture of Marks and Spencer's history and the personalities involved. Both Tse and Bevan advanced wider

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<sup>71</sup> Goronwy Rees, *St Michael: A History of Marks & Spencer* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969); Paul Bookbinder, *Marks & Spencer: the war years 1939-1945* (London: Century Benham, 1989); Asa Briggs, *Marks & Spencer 1884-1984: a centenary history of Marks & Spencer* (London: Octopus, 1984); Helen Chislett, *Marks in Time: 125 Years of Marks & Spencer* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2009).

<sup>72</sup> Israel Sieff, *Memoirs* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970); *Marcus Sieff, Don't ask the price: The memoirs of the president of Marks & Spencer* (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1988).

<sup>73</sup> K. K. Tse, *Marks & Spencer: Anatomy of Britain's most efficiently managed company* (Oxford: Pergamon Press Ltd., 1985).

<sup>74</sup> Judi Bevan, *The Rise and Fall of Marks & Spencer* (London: Profile Books Ltd., 2001).

<sup>75</sup> Judi Bevan, *The Rise and Fall of Marks & Spencer: - and How It Rose Again*, Revised edition (London: Profile Books Ltd., 2007).

understandings of the internal workings of Marks and Spencer, but as a result of such a focus gave much less of an assessment of how Marks and Spencer engaged with wider social and political trends.

The present thesis similarly takes the form of a case study of Marks and Spencer, but seeks to build on the existing literature concerning the company by moving beyond a traditional business history approach. It makes extensive use of the Marks and Spencer Company Archive to provide a critical analysis of the company's interaction with its surroundings and issues of the environment and resource use in relation to wider social, political and environmental concerns. It uses the traditional tools of the business historian and situates them within a wider framework of historical analysis which addresses the importance of the retailer's changing commercial operations, the growing environmental agenda, changing popular opinion and a shifting planning context, as well as Marks and Spencer's relationship with consumers, the government and British society more broadly, in shaping the company's approach to the environment and resource use.

The way in which Marks and Spencer operated as a company in many respects conditioned how it responded to wider changes in its operating environment and the extent to which emerging concerns regarding the environment and resource use were acknowledged. The established literature concerning Marks and Spencer to differing degrees has addressed the company's management culture and structure. Above all Marks and Spencer was a company managed from the centre. A hierarchical management culture was firmly solidified under the tenure of Simon Marks who, according to Bevan, 'set the culture of a company that became slavishly responsive to the man at the top'.<sup>76</sup> The position lost none of its potency after his death in 1964; the primacy and control given to the chairman was a long standing characteristic of the company's organisational structure well into the late 1990s. This was not to say that the company did not develop a culture of self-reflection and criticism. Companywide scrutinies of various aspects of the business became an established way of evaluating the effectiveness of the company and resulted in a number of internal studies being undertaken. The technique was most famously employed during Marks and Spencer's 'Operation Simplification' in the mid-1950s. The impetus came from the then chairman Simon Marks and the review was undertaken by a small team headed by Marcus Sieff who at that time was director of personnel and store operations.<sup>77</sup> The scrutiny yielded significant results for the company in terms of cutting down its administrative costs; it revolutionised the company's approach to paperwork and confirmed the potency of periodic scrutinies as a management tool. This is particularly significant within the

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<sup>76</sup> Bevan, *The Rise and Fall of Marks & Spencer: - and How It Rose Again*, p. 38.

<sup>77</sup> Marcus Sieff, *On Management: The Marks & Spencer Way* (London: George Weidenfeld & Nicolson Limited, 1990), p. 125.

present research in light of Marcus Sieff's decision as chairman to initiate a chairman's scrutiny of Marks and Spencer's energy conservation efforts in 1986.

For many years Marks and Spencer's operations and image were embodied by the Marks and Sieffs, the Sachers and the Leners as family members by birth and marriage were trained in the art of the business. Bevan noted that Simon Marks had a notable aversion to allowing non-family members to sit on the board despite being aware of their abilities and service to the company.<sup>78</sup> This began to change under Israel Sieff's chairmanship and by the time Marcus Sieff took over in 1972 an increasing number of non-family personnel had attained positions on the board.<sup>79</sup> Derek Rayner became chairman of the company in 1984; he was the first non-family member to hold the position since the business' inception. The shift from a family business did not revolutionise Marks and Spencer's approach, although it did ease the way for great modernisation, particularly in relation to the company's store development and its propensity to develop in decentralised retail locations, as will be discussed in Chapter Five of this thesis.

Overall there were striking continuities which characterised the decision making process and management approach evident within the company during the period that this research covers. Both Derek Rayner and Richard Greenbury, who took over from the former in 1991 as company chairman, had been developed in the Marks and Sieff school of retailing and were as close to a continuation of family control as it was possible to have. Richard Greenbury once remarked in reference to the business' core principles: 'although Derek and I modernised them - the attitude to people, to suppliers, to customers - we stuck to them so there was real continuity'.<sup>80</sup> The doctrines of business and management established under Simon Marks were firmly entrenched and remained largely unquestioned until the soul searching period of the late nineties. The board saw a greater incursion of non-executive directors as well as non-family members between 1968 and 1992, although the way in which it operated within the company remained largely unchanged.<sup>81</sup> The agenda to be discussed at the weekly board meetings, as noted by Marcus Sieff, was dictated by the chairman; it was the remit of the board to decide company policy and management to implement it.<sup>82</sup> The company's operational structure beyond head office was relatively streamlined. Store managers would report to, and be guided by, 'divisional superintendents' who were given responsibility for a group of stores; the store network was divided into 12 divisions and the head of each

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<sup>78</sup> Bevan, *The Rise and Fall of Marks & Spencer: - and How It Rose Again*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62

<sup>81</sup> Sieff, *On Management*, p. 140.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 141-142; for more detail on the structure and operation of head office see Sieff, *Don't ask the price*, pp. 272-274; Bevan, *The Rise and Fall of Marks & Spencer: - and How It Rose Again*, pp. 50-51.

division would report directly to head office.<sup>83</sup> Marks and Spencer's store network increased from 245 in 1970 to 283 by 1995, with sales increasing from £360.9m to £6,806.5m in the same period (pre-tax profit rose from £43.7m in 1970 to £924.3m in 1995).<sup>84</sup>

The ethos which underpinned the running of the company was conservative in nature, governed by long established practices and tried and tested ways of getting the job done. Such an approach shaped the company's decision making with regards the growing issue of resource use and the environment. During the period 1968-1990 the environment was a broadly defined consideration within Marks and Spencer which had not reached the level of significance in the eyes of the company to warrant a department all of its own; in terms of how the business operated there was no cohesive single entity within the business which dealt holistically with such issues. It was only towards the end of the period under consideration that the business responded by initiating a group at head office to expressly address matters of the environment. In 1990 Marks and Spencer announced the establishment of an 'Environmental focus group'.<sup>85</sup> This was undoubtedly influenced by the growing popular and political fervour regarding such matters and the assessment made within the company that it needed to adopt a more thorough and cohesively organised response to the environment in its various facets and forms. The nature and significance of this will be scrutinised in more detail in Chapter One. Until 1990 matters relating to the environment and resource use were dealt with within existing departments. In particular the company's Building Group, which consisted of a number of areas including store development, engineering services, building maintenance and improvements, and equipment and supplies, oversaw a number of commercial matters which were increasingly influenced by changing concerns regarding resource use and the quality of the environment. In addition to the Building Group's oversight of the company's store development, it also administered the company's energy conservation efforts. In the wake of the 1973 oil embargo the company established an Energy Team within the Building Group, which coordinated the company's policy in this area, such was the seeming importance attached to this issue.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, it was evident that the issue of resource use and the environmental characteristics of the company's stores and surroundings were issues upon which successive chairman took a keen and vocal interest both at the local and national level; policy regarding such matters, as with all others within the business, was notably shaped and dictated from the very top of the company.

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<sup>83</sup> Briggs, *Marks & Spencer 1884–1984*, p. 90.

<sup>84</sup> Bevan, *The Rise and Fall of Marks & Spencer: - and How It Rose Again*, p. 311.

<sup>85</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Friends of the Environment' (March, 1990), p. 4.

<sup>86</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Think-Tank Looks at Tomorrow's Energy Problems', 5 (September, 1975), p. 6.



The company's organisational response to the environment and resource use is reflected in the nature of the sources pertaining to such matters within the Marks and Spencer Company Archive. The thesis utilises a broad range of internal correspondence and documents, training resources and audio visual material which highlight how and to what extent the company acknowledged the environment and engaged in resource conservation. A particular strength of the Marks and Spencer Company Archive is the availability of complete records of the company's annual reports and its staff magazine, *St Michael News*. The latter was a monthly publication aimed at staff at all levels of the business which reported on the company's development, retail policies and employees, as well as containing a small selection of customer correspondence. Its content was acutely related to the issues and concerns deemed to be significant to the company at any one time and as such it is a useful barometer of the company's overall focus and attitude. The company's energy conservation efforts and store developments were routinely recorded and promoted within the magazine. The expected readership of the publication was a matter upon which Marks and Spencer itself had given consideration. The company reported that following a survey it had conducted assessing the readership of the publication, 'most copies of *St Michael News* are read by at least six people in addition to the individual sales girl who receives it'.<sup>87</sup> Consequently, the magazine was an important form of communication within the business, which was also crafted with the expectation of outside readership, making it a valuable primary source through which to gauge the changing nature of the company's operations and focus. The company reports, in addition to outlining the annual financial performance of the company to shareholders and the wider public, also contained a statement from the chairman and a number of brief reports on key areas of the business. Whilst these were general round ups of the year, they detailed broad concerns within the company and are useful in assessing how Marks and Spencer conceived of its own role as a commercial retailer. The content of the statements provided by the chairman are used within the thesis to further highlight the concerns and attitudes at the highest level of the company and mitigate the absence of board minutes. Although they were first and foremost a presentation to shareholders and as such invariably positive in tone, they do illustrate the shifting retail context in which Marks and Spencer operated and the way in which the company wished to be perceived by shareholders and society more broadly.<sup>88</sup>

In addition, the company's repeated efforts to publicly promote its position on a range of issues has ensured that a rich selection of press releases, articles, speeches and promotional material is present within the archive. Whilst a degree of caution is

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<sup>87</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Who reads the NEWS?' (January, 1961), p. 2.

<sup>88</sup> An overview of the company's reports were published in publications such as *The Economist*; for example see: 'Marks & Spencer Ltd.' *Economist* [London, England] 8 June 1968: 92. *The Economist Historical Archive*, 1843-2012. Web. 30 October 2011.

necessary when assessing such material, due to the public facing nature of it, it does provide an invaluable insight into not only how the company viewed itself and sought to be viewed by others, but also how the company's acknowledgement of resource use and the environment evolved during the period. The often uncritical and positive nature of such source material has been critically engaged with and explored in relation to internal documents and material within the archive which has been produced by independent commentators and contemporaries to add to the rigour of the thesis' observations. Of particular significance for the present research are the energy conservation files of the chairman Marcus Sieff and the chairman's scrutiny undertaken by R. E. Hopkinson in 1986. These documents have been widely used within the thesis' assessment of the company's energy conservation campaign from its inception in 1974; they offer the opportunity to assess the motives behind such efforts and the form that they took within the business. In the absence of board minutes, to which researcher access has not been granted, such material also allows the opportunity to draw conclusions about the company's decision making regarding the issue, at the very top of the organisation. In addition, dossiers regarding the company's planning applications to build stores in Rickmansworth and Twickenham have also facilitated an assessment of the influence of outside forces on matters of store development and the extent of popular and consumer engagement with environmental issues in relation to retail store developments.

Although the Marks and Spencer Company Archive provides a varied and rich source base which remains relatively under explored by academics, it does have a number of limitations. This is due to the way in which it has been collected, its position as a company archive operated by the company itself and the fact that the process of cataloguing remains on going. The assembly of the archive itself has largely been governed by an ad hoc and variable acquisition of items collected from within the business and from external sources: customers, employees, both past and present. The lack of a consistent approach has impacted on the sources available. For example, whilst some store proposals are documented in detail within the archive and form an important part of the present research, others are not. Additionally, material generated by the Energy Team and the Environmental Focus Group is not present within the archive. In these cases other sources have been used to build a picture of such activities. The sensitivities involved in using a business archive for academic research were also a factor. Some documents were not available having been deemed commercially sensitive. This was the case with documents pertaining to Marks and Spencer's partnership with Tesco in the mid-1980s regarding out-of-town retail developments. Access to correspondence and negotiations between the two companies were closed and as such other sources were used to assess motivations: Marks and Spencer's statements to its own staff, promotional material and press commentary regarding the

partnership. Finally, some material has not yet been made known by way of formal cataloguing. A conscious effort has been made to limit the potential impact of this upon the research by using the archive's acquisitions catalogue, as well as the main catalogue, to source relevant material.

To provide a greater contextualisation and reference point for the significance of Marks and Spencer's efforts, the thesis also addresses to a lesser degree the activities and approaches of Sainsbury's and the John Lewis Partnership over the same period, through their respective company archives; both retailers have been consciously selected for their ability to be effectively and usefully compared to Marks and Spencer. The John Lewis Partnership's position as a retailer of both food and clothing, matched the dual focus of Marks and Spencer's own retail operations. In addition, the primacy and status given to both Sainsbury's and Marks and Spencer undoubtedly influenced their approach to wider environmental concerns and thus adds a useful point of comparison. All three retailers cater to the upper end of the retail market, which consequently provides the opportunity to explore the differences in approach and tone adopted by each retailer, in terms of their interaction with a comparative customer base. The use of company archives as the primary source base for this research not only facilitates a concerted assessment of those organisations but also provides an often under-utilised lens through which to gauge wider societal changes. The research also makes use of National Archive source material and a number of local and national planning documents, as well as the records of the Bath Preservation Trust, to add greater weight and objectivity to the analysis and assessment of Marks and Spencer's operations and that of other retail organisations.

The scope of the present thesis concerns the extent to which Marks and Spencer underwent a self-conscious reassessment of its interaction with resources and the physical environment and the factors which influenced and shaped this. Whilst the research acknowledges the increasingly global nature of environmentalism, the thesis maintains a focus on Marks and Spencer's UK operations. This is in an effort to ensure an effective and manageable research focus, as well as to foreground the significance of the national context to Marks and Spencer's approach and attitude towards the environment and resource use. Furthermore, the research consciously does not explore Marks and Spencer's supply chain due to the difficulty in obtaining sufficient primary source material, and the limitations of space, to undertake such an assessment effectively. This aspect of the company's environmental impact awaits further research. An exploration of Marks and Spencer's wider sense of itself in terms of its image and reputation, as well as the company's repeated references to its own social responsibility, will be critically explored throughout the thesis in relation to its approach to the environment and resource use.

The thesis will consist of seven chapters. Chapter One addresses the response of Marks and Spencer and other retailers to the environmental agenda in light of growing popular awareness and concern and the increasing status afforded such issues in the political sphere both nationally and internationally. The chapter establishes one of the central themes of the research, the inherent materialism within environmental concern at this time, displayed as it was through popular and commercial interactions with the environment and environmental issues. The importance of the individual ethos and attitudes of retail organisations is underlined through a comparison between the differing approaches towards the growing environmental agenda utilised by Marks and Spencer, Sainsbury's and the John Lewis Partnership. The varied interaction between retailers and environmental groups is also explored to assess the broader ways in which environmental concern was brought to bear on the operations of retailers and negotiated depending on the outlook and attitude of individual companies. The poster issues of the period, including CFCs, packaging and recycling, are discussed in an effort to illustrate the complex dynamic inherent within commercial and popular engagement with environmental issues. Chapter Two moves on to explore Marks and Spencer's attitude towards energy usage in light of the initial shortages and long-term price rises, in the wake of the 1973 oil crisis and the three day week. The reasons behind the company's decision to initiate a company-wide energy conservation campaign are examined in an effort to assess the extent to which environmental issues, in this instance energy use, became central commercial considerations due to the potential impact they had on the profitability of the company's operations. Marks and Spencer's adoption of energy conservation measures is addressed in Chapter Three through an assessment of the company's policies and initiatives regarding energy usage. An exploration of the company's inexpensive housekeeping measures, coupled with its more capital intensive research and development efforts, provides a key insight into the varied responses adopted by commercial retailers to address resource use. Furthermore, Marks and Spencer's decision to promote energy conservation within the business by drawing parallels between the needs of the company and those of the domestic household illustrates the importance of day-to-day habits and concerns in eliciting environmental change. The connection between resource conservation and self-interest, made by Marks and Spencer, further develops the assessment within the thesis of the material motivations inherent within popular and commercial responses to the environment and the role that retailers can play in promoting environmental behaviour.

A primary consideration within the thesis is the centrality of the environment to retail operations and the various ways in which environmental concern presented itself to retailers at this time. As a result Chapter Four addresses the reasons behind the growth in out-of-town retailing. The changing commercial and consumer demands on the

environment of central shopping areas had a profound effect on the geographies of modern retailing. Consequently, the chapter addresses the nature of these forces of change. The chapter highlights the significance of growing car use and suburbanisation, in conjunction with the evolving needs of commercial retailing in shaping the relationship between retailers and the physical environment. Chapter Five develops the analysis of decentralised retailing further by addressing Marks and Spencer's approach to out-of-town development and the extent to which the issue of retail store location increasingly became a matter of balancing and maintaining both established and emergent retail environments. The chapter draws attention to the growing narrative of environmental concern which emerged concerning urban areas and the extent to which the health of urban environments was dependent on a vibrant commercial base. Environmental protection increasingly amounted to the protection of various environments at this time. Whilst in some instances retail development ensured the increased incursion of society upon the natural environment, it also facilitated environmental improvements. The thesis' assessment of the changes taking place within retail store development, illustrates this central tension between commercial retailing and the environment.

The final two chapters of the thesis explore the internal and external characteristics of the retail store environment. Chapter Six provides an in-depth look at the significance of the aesthetics of retail stores and the extent to which store design and placement within urban areas was mediated through wider concerns regarding the need to conserve and protect the idiosyncrasies of local landscapes. Store developments undertaken by both Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury's are looked at in an effort to highlight the processes of negotiation and assimilation which characterised retail store development at this time. The extent to which store developments that acknowledged and utilised existing environmental characteristics provided an opportunity to make a physical brand statement on the urban landscape is assessed. The burgeoning relationship between Marks and Spencer and a number of organisations concerned with conservation and environmental protection is also explored. The chapter concludes with two case studies which outline Marks and Spencer's applications to build retail stores in Rickmansworth and Twickenham within designated conservation zones, in an effort to highlight the complex attitudes towards conservation and the environment at this time. Finally, Chapter Seven explores the notion that as retail environments changed and retailers became increasingly aware of the significance of the environment, this led to initiatives to not only protect it, but also to control it. The chapter draws attention to Marks and Spencer's vociferous promotion of, and active involvement with, Town Centre Management (TCM) and pedestrianisation schemes, to assess how retailers sought to try and shape the wider environment surrounding retail stores. The chapter will then address the extent to which concern for the natural environment was paralleled by a

desire for a controlled environment and greater comfort within retail stores. The increased use of air conditioning, artificial environmental features and regulated atmospheres, illustrates the complexities inherent in society's interaction with and use of the environment. Chapter Seven highlights the tension which existed between notions of progress and growth, in this instance encapsulated by a hi-tech, regulated store environment, and the protection of the natural environment. Whilst the inherently artificial and man-made nature of the store environment was a far cry from the natural environment championed by the growing environmental agenda, it nevertheless indicated a general preoccupation with environmental surroundings. Consequently, the final two chapters draw together the ways in which retailers negotiated the built, natural and artificial environments of the retail store and its surroundings.

All seven chapters seek to build a nuanced picture of the connection between business, the environment and the consumer, through an analysis of Marks and Spencer's retail operations. The environment was a commercially significant resource in a multiplicity of ways, which evolved and became more consciously negotiated as wider attitudes changed. Consequently, this thesis sets out how both the needs and demands of modern retailing and the growth in environmental concern, shaped the overall response of Marks and Spencer to the environment and resource use.

## Chapter One

### The Environment: From the Fringes to the Mainstream

Marks and Spencer released its first Environmental Policy Statement in 1990 and established an Environmental Focus Group at head office in the same year. Both signalled that for the first time the company began to take a more holistic view of environmental issues across the business. This marked a shift within the company in terms of the frequency and voracity with which it sought to promote its environmental credentials. Nevertheless, a number of the policies and initiatives contained within it had a much longer history within the company; 1990 did not mark a moment of spontaneous awakening. This chapter explores how Marks and Spencer's stance on the environment evolved in the period 1968-1992, how it consolidated its position in the late eighties and early nineties, and the factors which influenced this. The shifting political context and the complexities inherent in popular awareness and concern for the environment, as well as the company's own operations, form the basis of the chapter's analysis. Marks and Spencer's outlook and approach towards environmental issues has yet to receive a detailed assessment by academics.

The sub-field of business and the environment literature has often foregrounded business organisations generally, with less detailed assessment of retailers specifically, in relation to the environment. Although interestingly this is not to say that consumers have similarly been ignored, as the proclivities of the masses and the extent to which they "buy" and act "green" is a perennial feature of any assessment of the environment and its growing profile. Such a focus can be seen in Richard Welford and Richard Starkey's edited volume *Business and the Environment* and the formers *Hijacking Environmentalism*.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, literature concerning business and the environment, whilst acknowledging the emergence of a new, more active, environmentalism in the late sixties and early seventies, has prioritised the late eighties and early nineties as a period of decisive change. Indeed, Eden identified a turn in the early nineties, noting a period of 'consolidation' as the environment was increasingly incorporated within the activities of businesses.<sup>2</sup> This was undoubtedly seen within Marks and Spencer. However, the extent to which Eden provides a detailed assessment of how individual companies reached the point of 'consolidation' is limited. Although Eden makes reference to the actions of a number of leading retailers in her book *Environmental Issues and Business: Implications of a Changing Agenda*, the scope of the research - ranging as it did across a number of businesses and organisations both nationally and globally - ensured that

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<sup>1</sup> *The Earthscan Reader in Business and the Environment*, ed. by Welford and Starkey; Welford, *Hijacking Environmentalism*.

<sup>2</sup> Eden, *Environmental Issues and Business*, p. 8.

such references remained brief; this is particularly evident in relation to the efforts of Marks and Spencer who received only a fleeting mention.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, *Changing Corporate Values*, produced by Richard Adams and his co-authors, outlines the environmental policies of a number of leading companies, including Marks and Spencer, in an effort to illustrate ‘the opportunity for social change that consumer and company can create together’.<sup>4</sup> Such work highlighted a variety of social and environmental initiatives undertaken by companies in various sectors. However, the nature of the volume as a point of reference, rather than a detailed framework of analysis, ensured that it provided only a snapshot of those companies which it included. Consequently, there is a growing need for more in-depth, company-specific analysis of the interface between business and the environment and the factors which influenced it.

One of the central themes of the chapter is the impact of growing affluence, the nature of environmental concern at this time and the extent to which the latter was heightened by individual and commercial concerns; in short, was environmental protection an expression of self-interest? In the late 1960s an increasing fervour regarding the plight of the environment emerged, as long standing concerns for the natural environment were further galvanised and justified in light of the growing realisation that not only did the Earth’s resources have natural limits, but that society was increasingly believed to be outstripping them. The austerity and restrictions of the Second World War and the surrounding years had faded into memory and the proliferation of mass consumerism had by this time led to the democratisation of the “good life”.

Individuals of all social backgrounds experienced greater access and choice in relation to consumer durables and homeownership. Dominic Sandbrook observed that for those ‘people who had grown up after the Second World War, rising living standards had been a fact of life’.<sup>5</sup> This was particularly evident in the increased number of home owners at this time.<sup>6</sup> Such a trend highlighted society’s growing material stake in the environment. Individual homes, according to Sandbrook, became ‘markers of affluence, status, identity and independence’.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, Brian Harrison’s claim that ‘today’s luxuries became tomorrow’s necessities...chasing one another through the decades as symbols of status’, conveyed society’s desire at this time for greater material acquisition and its shifting perception of need.<sup>8</sup> Rising levels of affluence were particularly marked for many during the 1980s as ‘average disposable income rose by 37 per cent between

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 71 – brief reference made to Marks and Spencer’s acknowledgement of the commercial benefits of recycling.

<sup>4</sup> Adams et al., *Changing Corporate Values*, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Dominic Sandbrook, ‘Doomwatch: 73-74’, *The 70s*, BBC 2, broadcast 23 April 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Marwick, *British Society since 1945*, p. 199.

<sup>7</sup> Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, p. 19.

<sup>8</sup> Harrison, *Finding a Role?*, p. 89.



1982 and 1992'.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, despite the rising economic freedoms of many in the period 1968-1992, storm clouds began to appear as harbingers of ecological collapse increasingly emerged on the horizon.

The period was characterised by a growth in environmental pressure groups, heightened popular awareness and concern, as well as a mainstream media which facilitated the perception that the environmental concerns of the nation and the world, were more pressing and closer than they had previously been. The present chapter highlights the growth in popular concern regarding issues which appeared to pose a more immediate threat to individuals: pollution and the effect of CFC use. Moreover, the chapter assesses Marks and Spencer's efforts to present itself as environmentally 'clean' in terms of its delivery systems, its avoidance of harmful chemicals and pesticides and its reduction of waste to emphasise the degree to which retailers became sensitive to the changing social sensitivities regarding such issues. Environmental damage was increasingly associated with anti-social and inefficient behaviour; such associations were an anathema to Marks and Spencer's image as a socially conscious, responsive and efficient retailer.

As noted in the thesis introduction, the term 'affluence' itself is much contested and was by no means uniformly experienced at this time. Nevertheless, for those that did encounter a better standard of living, affluence remained a contentious reality. John Galbraith's *The Affluent Society* famously questioned the social efficacy of growing affluence in the late 1960s and painted a vivid picture of 'cities...badly paved, made hideous by litter [and] blighted buildings'.<sup>10</sup> Some have contended that increased awareness and trepidation regarding the state of the environment at this time amounted to a more fundamental popular concern regarding the tenets of growth and continued consumption. John McNeil chimed in accordance with Brian Harrison's sentiments that concern amounted to a popular rejection of affluence when he contended that 'the economic growth of the industrial countries in the era 1945 to 1973 provoked its own antithesis in environmentalism'.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, despite such a characterisation of environmental concern, it is arguable that what we actually witness is the gradual evolution of the environmental agenda into a force that was increasingly shaped and motivated by individual affluence rather than driven in opposition to it. The seemingly paradoxical existence of growing environmental awareness and increased consumer sales during this period highlighted such a complex development; there was to some extent an inherent materialism within mainstream popular concern for the environment. Hilton has argued:

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<sup>9</sup> Black, *Britain since the Seventies*, p. 28.

<sup>10</sup> John K. Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (London: Hamilton, second edition, 1969), p. xi.

<sup>11</sup> McNeil, *Something New Under the Sun*, p. 337.

Consumerism...has come to mean either a belief in the economic benefits of progressively increasing rates of consumption or the general adherence of society to materialistic values.<sup>12</sup>

For the majority at this time this was not fundamentally questioned; environmental concern remained constrained by those central tenets for many individuals and certainly the companies that furnished them. This is highlighted in this chapter's assessment of the approach taken by Marks and Spencer and its competitors to environmental concerns.

Jeremy Black identified the seemingly opposing concerns of modern society when he acknowledged that 'there is an expectation of air quality and of an absence of road-building that clashes with the goals of cheap personal mobility'.<sup>13</sup> Such a complex juxtaposition of competing agendas has been further highlighted by the association of environmental concern with the middle classes. Mike Savage's 2008 article explored the changing nature of middle-class identities in the post-war period as a result of growing affluence and greater social change. Savage noted that the desire of the middle classes to reassert their identity as distinguishable from that of the working classes, led them to emphasise their 'managerial and technical role' within society.<sup>14</sup> To some extent the desire on the part of the middle classes, as identified by Savage, to distinguish themselves from the working classes was realised in the increasing association of the former with environmentalism. Moreover, middle class efforts to associate themselves with managerial and technical roles carried with them an underlying claim to a greater knowledge and rationality than their working class counterparts. This arguably played into wider stereotypes concerning the "green consumer" as an individual that was able to discriminate in terms of their consumption habits in favour of the environment. It is evident that by the 1970s environmental concern was increasingly believed to have found a middle class voice. Alwyn Turner drew particular attention to the socialist Anthony Crosland's remarks; Crosland contended that increased awareness and concern sprang from 'a common enough middle-class and upper-class bias'.<sup>15</sup> He concluded:

Environmentalists were "kindly and dedicated people, but were usually affluent and wanted to kick the ladder down behind them".<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Hilton, *Prosperity for all*, p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Black, *Britain since the Seventies*, p. 44.

<sup>14</sup> Mike Savage, 'Affluence and social change in the Making of Technocratic Middle-Class Identities: Britain, 1939-55', *Contemporary British History*, 22:4 (2008), 457-476 (p. 458).

<sup>15</sup> Turner, *Crisis? What Crisis?* p. 50.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

Such a perception has persisted within the academic literature pertaining to the period. Dominic Sandbrook noted that 59% of those that read *The Ecologist* 'belonged to the professional middle classes'.<sup>17</sup> Sandbrook further identified the middle class stereotypes of shopping at Marks and Spencer and eating 'lentil curries' and 'muesli'.<sup>18</sup> Marks and Spencer's carefully cultivated image as a retailer of quality goods fed into this overall middle class ethos. The chapter's analysis of popular opinion and the activities of retailers seeks to illustrate that the association of the middle classes with environmental concern and the extent to which it influenced popular understandings of, and the response of retailers to, the environment, was far from straightforward.

Stereotypes abound regarding the environment and the activities of business; the latter is often seen as the antithesis of environmental concern. Anita Roddick, the founder of the Body Shop, claimed that 'the people who run most businesses don't care about the environment because they still have the mentality of robber barons. As far as they're concerned, the top and bottom line of business is profit'.<sup>19</sup> The present chapter shows how such a statement failed to acknowledge the role played by retailers like Marks and Spencer in promoting environmental causes and ameliorating its own impact on the environment. Moreover, Roddick's supposition posited the notion that the absolute pursuit of profit and environmental protection, were mutually exclusive endeavours. This chapter's assessment of the actions and initiatives of retailers, in relation to growing environmental concern at this time, highlighted the extent to which this was not always the case.

Substantial academic attention has been afforded the environmental movement in terms of its character and development.<sup>20</sup> As a result it is only given a short assessment here; the chapter primarily focuses on how retailers were influenced and affected by it. As noted in the introduction to the thesis, a number of scholars have addressed the increasing politicisation of the environment. In addition to the work of McCormick and Robinson, Derek Osborn's 1997 article provides an overview of the UK's environmental policy 1970-1995, highlighting in particular the various waves of interest which characterised national political endeavours concerning the environment.<sup>21</sup> Andrew Blowers' 1987 article more specifically addresses the extent to which the Thatcher Government's stance on the environment marked a transformation or transition; Blowers determines that to a large extent it amounted to the latter, but was marked by

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<sup>17</sup> Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, p. 214.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

<sup>19</sup> Jonathon Porritt and David Winner, *The Coming of the Greens* (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1988), p. 192.

<sup>20</sup> See the thesis introduction for a more detailed discussion of this.

<sup>21</sup> Derek Osborn, 'Some Reflections on UK Environment Policy, 1970-1995', *Journal of Environmental Law*, 9:1 (1997), 3-22.

contradictions.<sup>22</sup> This was most evident in the government's attitude to planning and development and will be explored later in the thesis in relation to retail store development.

The chapter identifies the evolving nature of the political interest in the environment. However, this is to provide a greater contextual appreciation of the climate in which retailers were operating, rather than a full and comprehensive explication of the wider national and international political landscape, concerning environmental issues. The chapter addresses popular awareness and concern for the environment, the extent to which individuals undertook environmentally conscious behaviours, as well as the factors that influenced this. Middle class stereotypes and the significance of green consumerism will also be explored in an effort to assess the degree to which they highlighted an increasingly material co-option of environmental concern. The chapter will then move on to assess Marks and Spencer's attitude to the environment and environmental concerns, its policy and initiatives regarding CFCs, packaging and recycling in particular and its interaction with external organisations. The individual commercial outlook of Marks and Spencer and the extent to which it shaped its approach to matters of the environment will be explored throughout the chapter, setting up a key theme within the thesis. Similarly, the exigencies and attitudes of the John Lewis Partnership and Sainsbury's are assessed to offer a point of comparison and to highlight the varied attitudes adopted by retailers towards environmental issues and the factors which influenced this.

### **Politics and the Environment: the national and international context**

Whilst debates regarding the sustainability of economic and technological growth, population increases and resource use were not new, they increasingly began to be addressed on a much broader scale.<sup>23</sup> The UN Conference on the Human Environment, which took place in Stockholm in 1972, was a clear indication of the growing status and attention afforded resource use and the global environment by the early 1970s. Whilst it built on previous work and interest, it marked a new chapter in the political development of the global environmental movement. Led by Maurice Strong, the conference 'established the legitimacy of environmentalism as a political movement'.<sup>24</sup> It led to the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which played a notable role in shaping the global agenda on the environment during the 1970s and

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<sup>22</sup> Andrew Blowers, 'Transition or Transformation? Environmental Policy under Thatcher', *Public Administration*, 65 (Autumn, 1987), 277-294.

<sup>23</sup> McCormick, *The Global Environmental Movement*, pp. 84-89.

<sup>24</sup> Denis Smith, 'Business and the Environment: Towards a paradigm Shift?' in *Business and the Environment: Implications of the New Environmentalism*, ed. by Denis Smith (London: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd, 1993), pp. 1-11 (p. 4).

still remains active today.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, the character and tone of environmental debates were shaped as much at the national level as the international.

Environmental concern had a long history within Britain, but in terms of its political significance it entered a new phase in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Events such as the Torrey Canyon oil tanker wreck off the coast of Cornwall in 1967 made headlines as the first major environmental disaster of its scale.<sup>26</sup> It led the government to establish the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution in 1970.<sup>27</sup> In the same year the government set up the Department of the Environment. This, coupled with the creation of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, signalled a more politically visible profile for the environment. Both the Labour and Conservative parties began to echo the concerns and considerations of the wider environmental agenda at this time. In 1970 the Conservative Party Manifesto asserted that 'the effects of technological change can sometimes lead to a deterioration in the natural environment and in the quality of life'.<sup>28</sup> The Conservatives further referred to 'the problems associated with the rapid growth of a sophisticated population' at the party conference of the same year.<sup>29</sup> The Labour Party made similar efforts to acknowledge the content and tone of wider environmental debates at this time as they outlined at their 1972 conference that the 'party recognises the gravity of the global environmental situation, especially as regards pollution, resource depletion and population growth'.<sup>30</sup> This was even more pronounced in the 1980s. Pollution and waste remained ever present concerns. The Conservative Party made reference to its desire to 'support the movement for recycling and reclamation' in its 1983 election manifesto.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, recycling became a buzzword for individuals and companies who increasingly sought to act in a more environmentally responsible way during the 1980s. The influence of wider environmental developments can again be seen in the Conservatives' 1987 manifesto. The party proclaimed that 'the world's resources of fossil fuels will come under increasing strain during the 21st century; so may the global environment if the build-up of carbon dioxide - the so-called "greenhouse effect" - significantly raises temperatures and changes climates'.<sup>32</sup> The party's reference to the "greenhouse effect" was a direct product of the growing attention afforded the issue. A transition was also evident within the Labour party. The party launched its *Charter for the Environment* in October 1985, signalling a more concerted effort to be seen to be

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<sup>25</sup> McCormick, *The Global Environmental Movement*, p. 125.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>28</sup> *British General Election Manifestos 1959 – 1987*, ed. by F.W.S. Craig (Dartmouth, England: Parliamentary Research Services, 1990), p. 129.

<sup>29</sup> *Conservative & Labour Party Conference Decisions 1945-1981*, ed. by F.W.S. Craig (Chichester, West Sussex: Parliamentary Research Services, 1982), p. 52.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229.

<sup>31</sup> Craig, *British General Election Manifestos 1959 – 1987*, p. 341.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 436.

acknowledging the environmental challenge.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, despite the inclusion of the environment within the manifestos and conference rhetoric of the two main parties both maintained an unwavering focus on economic growth and consequently remained, in the eyes of many, environmental antagonists.

There was a clear gulf between the ways in which the two main parties discussed and acknowledge the environmental “problem” and the fervour of the more radical criticisms espoused by the environmental movement at this time. This was evident in the policies and rhetoric of the UK environmental party, established in 1973 as PEOPLE (renamed The Ecology Party in 1975). A key component of the party’s agenda was to challenge the unquestioned efficacy of continued and unlimited economic growth. This was made clear in The Ecology Party’s 1983 election manifesto in which it claimed that its ‘first priority [was] to replace the Economics of MORE and MORE with the Economics OF ENOUGH’.<sup>34</sup> The emphasis, made in the original document, illustrated a clear departure from the traditional attitudes to growth espoused by the Conservatives and Labour. The Ecology Party changed its name again in 1985 to the Green Party, which mirrored the names of other environmental political parties. Despite the name change the group continued to focus on an anti-growth agenda. The party’s 1989 European Election result, which saw it achieve fifteen per cent of the popular vote, has been hailed as a substantial breakthrough for the Green Party, despite no seats being won.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, support for the party fluctuated and its 1989 result was the high point of a largely unfulfilled political promise, at a time when environmental concerns were at their most visible. Whilst the party fielded its highest number of candidates at the 1992 general election, its presence at the 1997 election was much reduced.<sup>36</sup> However, the Green Party’s presence and influence should not be dismissed; the party provided a jolt to an otherwise complacent political landscape. The Green Party, coupled with an environmental agenda growing in strength, ensured that the environment was an issue of which the political establishment increasingly had to take note.

Despite the growing prominence of the environment the country’s environmental efforts were often deemed sporadic and lacklustre. The national environmental record was characterised by ‘environmental lethargy, apathy or ignorance on the part of successive British governments’, according to McCormick.<sup>37</sup> He draws particular attention to the government’s record on acid pollution. McCormick noted that it was not until 1988, after a European Community directive that the British government ‘finally

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<sup>33</sup> Porritt and Winner, *The Coming of the Greens*, p. 63.

<sup>34</sup> The Ecology Party, *Politics for Life: 1983 Election Manifesto* (London: The Ecology Party, 1983), p. 10.

<sup>35</sup> Eden, *Environmental Issues and Business*, p. 29.

<sup>36</sup> Neil Carter, ‘The Green Party: Emerging from the Political Wilderness?’ *British Politics*, 3 (2008), 223-240 (p. 224).

<sup>37</sup> McCormick, *British Politics and the Environment*, p. 9.

agreed to reduce emissions of the Sulphur Dioxide and Nitrogen oxides that cause acid pollution'.<sup>38</sup> This recalcitrance on the part of the British government has been attributed to the lack of an holistic and well-rounded approach to environmental policy or indeed a desire to fashion one. Philip Lowe and Andrew Flynn noted in 1989 that government efforts had largely been 'pragmatic and incremental responses to specific problems'.<sup>39</sup> Increasingly it seemed that Britain's relative lack of environmental protection legislation contrasted sharply with a more 'dynamic Brussels'.<sup>40</sup> John Elkington and his co-authors contended in 1988 that 'Brussels ha[d] come to dominate policy making on the environment' within the European Community (EC).<sup>41</sup> Whilst there has been disagreement as to the effect the EC had on British environmental policy, it was evident that the EC was a vocal arbiter of environmental opinion and policy.<sup>42</sup>

There were instances where the British government did legislate for greater environmental protection. The Wilson government's 1974 Control of Pollution Act established 'new controls over waste disposal, and strengthened powers to deal with water, air and noise pollution'.<sup>43</sup> It was criticised due to the delay in its implementation; Elkington scathingly noted in 1988 that as of 1983 the Control of Pollution Act, 'given Royal Assent in 1974, was then, nine years and two Governments later, still not fully implemented'.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, Jonathan Porritt did note that the Thatcher government had had some successes with 'the introduction of Environmentally Sensitive Areas, the Food and Environment Protection Act [and] increased funding for the Nature Conservancy Council (NCC)'.<sup>45</sup> The creation of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution (HMIP) within the Department of the Environment in 1987 was also seen as a step forward. Despite this more streamlined approach to pollution control, and the enthusiasm shown it by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and a number of environmental groups, it too faced significant setbacks.<sup>46</sup> HMIP lacked sufficient funding and staffing to launch an effective stand against offenders.<sup>47</sup> The extent of oversight was minimal, 'in 1988/89 the number of visits by HMIP inspectors to registered works were fewer than 500'.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, despite there being 3,129 breaches of the Clean Air Act in 1986/87, local authorities only brought 153 prosecutions.<sup>49</sup> Consequently, the degree to which

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>39</sup> Cited in McCormick, *British Politics and the Environment*, p. 11.

<sup>40</sup> Elkington, Burke and Hailes, *Green Pages*, p. 29.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>42</sup> McCormick, *British Politics and the Environment*, pp. 130-131.

<sup>43</sup> Derek Osborn, 'Some Reflections on UK Environment Policy, 1970-1995', p. 4.

<sup>44</sup> Elkington, Burke and Hailes, *Green Pages*, p. 25.

<sup>45</sup> Porritt and Winner, *The Coming of the Greens*, p. 79.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>48</sup> Adams et al., *Changing Corporate Values*, p. 27.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

HMIP was able to be effective was significantly hampered by its inability to effectively and consistently enforce its directive. The National Rivers Authority (NRA), established in 1989, appeared more active in its regulatory role. The English NRA 'fined Shell £1m for an oil spill in the Mersey' and in the four months from September 1989 they brought 682 successful prosecutions, with a further 634 in process'.<sup>50</sup> The NRA was largely created due to the Thatcher government's privatisation of the water supply industry; under EC law 'it was illegal to place pollution control in the hands of private companies'.<sup>51</sup> The government also showed a keen interest in tighter controls regarding lead in petrol. However, the government did not take a robust approach to 'the clean-up of bathing beaches...or the banning of certain toxic chemicals in pesticides and herbicides'.<sup>52</sup> Such fluctuations in interest and intent characterised the national policy trajectory with regards environmental issues.

The intensity of environmental concern shifted in 1987. Concern over CFCs, and their depleting effect on the ozone layer, led to the signing of the Montreal Protocol, which built on the earlier Vienna Conference of 1985. The protocol committed signatories to a freeze on CFC production by 1990 and a thirty per cent reduction by 1999.<sup>53</sup> The discovery of the Ozone Hole in 1985 had added a new sense of urgency to the CFC debate which had emerged in 1974.<sup>54</sup> The British government had previously been uncooperative but changed its position in 1987 in favour of reductions.<sup>55</sup> Thatcher went so far as to arrange an international conference in London in February 1989, intended to push for further CFC reductions of eighty-five per cent, in line with those called for by scientists.<sup>56</sup> This signalled a departure from Thatcher's earlier derision of the environment as a credible political concern. Thatcher's apathetic attitude was conveyed in a private exchange between Thatcher and John Ashworth, the Government's Chief Scientist at the time, not long after she had taken office. Ashworth had attempted to engage her in the issue of global warming, to which she replied, "Why are you wasting your time? Are you telling me I should worry about the weather?"<sup>57</sup> The government were praised for its stance on CFCs at the London conference by FoE, although it was noted that manufactures and retailers had already taken steps to reduce CFC production and use.<sup>58</sup> In addition, the publication of the Brundtland Commission's report, *Our Common*

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>51</sup> McCormick, *British Politics and the Environment*, p. 21.

<sup>52</sup> Blowers, 'Transition or Transformation? Environmental Policy under Thatcher', p. 289.

<sup>53</sup> McCormick, *British Politics and the Environment*, p. 104.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., pp. 104-105.

<sup>57</sup> John Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher, Volume Two: The Iron Lady* (London: Vintage Books, 2008), p. 35.

<sup>58</sup> McCormick, *British Politics and the Environment*, p. 105.



*Future*, in 1987 also marked a shift in international and national framings of the environment debate.<sup>59</sup> The report was the result of work undertaken by the World Commission on Environment and Development, set up in 1983 due to growing fears over the depletion of the world's natural resources and the quality of the human environment.<sup>60</sup> It confirmed a new approach to environmental protection, one in which economic growth was deemed compatible with the environment so long as it was environmentally sustainable.<sup>61</sup> Such a position played into Thatcherite ideology to a greater extent than ever before, as the anti-growth narratives of the 1970s became a distant memory; the Brundtland Report gave Margaret Thatcher something to work with.

Thatcher's speech to the Royal Society in September 1988 marked a key moment in the national environmental trajectory. It was the first of three environment speeches made by the Prime Minister. The speech not only affirmed the importance of the environmental challenge, but brought the matter from the fringes to the centre; Thatcher validated the environment as a mainstream issue. Moreover, the speech carried all the hallmarks of a post-Brundtland agenda. Thatcher outlined that 'the health of the economy and the health of our environment are totally dependent upon each other'.<sup>62</sup> She additionally asserted that 'the Government espouses the concept of sustainable economic development'.<sup>63</sup> Thatcher's comments publicly reinforced the idea that environmental protection was not only compatible with the orthodoxies of continued growth, but dependent upon it. Thatcher's Royal Society appearance was followed by a speech to the Conservative Party Conference in October of the same year. Within the speech Thatcher clearly sought to present the increasing attention afforded the environment, not as a conversion on her part but rather as the product of a longstanding concern. Thatcher boldly contended, 'there is nothing new or unusual about the Tory commitment to protect the environment'.<sup>64</sup> She further proclaimed, 'industry is part of our habitat; economic growth is one of the systems that sustain human life today'.<sup>65</sup> Thatcher simultaneously raised the profile of the environment and endorsed the importance of economic growth. She made a further speech to the United Nations in 1989 which referred to increased carbon dioxide levels, deforestation and population growth, all of which had become hallmarks of the environmental agenda. Thatcher used the

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<sup>59</sup> Brundtland, *Our Common Future*.

<sup>60</sup> Sutton, *Explaining Environmentalism*, p. 209.

<sup>61</sup> Brundtland, *Our Common Future*, p. 41.

<sup>62</sup> Margaret Thatcher, 'Speech to the Royal Society', 27 September 1988, *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, <<http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/107346>> [accessed 06/07/2015].

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Margaret Thatcher, 'Speech to Conservative Party Conference', 14 October 1988, *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, <<http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/107352>> [accessed 06/07/2015].

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

opportunity to once again promote the need for continued economic growth stating that, 'first we must have continued economic growth in order to generate the wealth required to pay for the protection of the environment'.<sup>66</sup> Thatcher went on to state that the United Kingdom had 'more than doubled its contribution to UNEP' and to 'urge others, who have not done so...to do the same'.<sup>67</sup> Although the depths of Margaret Thatcher's commitment to the environment were still questioned, the speeches had signalled a sea change of sorts at the top of British politics. The environment was no longer able to be perceived as largely the preserve of 'tree-hugging weirdos', in the words of Porritt.<sup>68</sup>

In addition to the increase in government funding to the UNEP, Chris Patten, known to be sympathetic to the environment, was appointed as Secretary of State for the Environment in 1989. Patten subsequently appointed David Pearce, director of the London Environmental Economics Centre, who produced a report outlining the economic implications of sustainable development.<sup>69</sup> Patten also initiated 'the first ever strategic review of policies' which led to the publication of the Government's first environmental White Paper in September 1990, entitled *This Common Inheritance*.<sup>70</sup> The Environmental Protection Act came into force in 1990 and 'introduced Integrated Pollution Control'.<sup>71</sup> Thatcher also signed off on the Hadley Centre for Climate Research and Prediction which was founded in 1990. Such acts were tempered by the belief that Thatcher had lost her earlier enthusiasm for the environment during the latter stages of the White Paper consultation.<sup>72</sup> Further doubt was cast over the longevity of political concern over the environment due to the ungreen affair that was the 1992 General Election. Pippa Norris observed that 'environmental concerns were rarely debated' as traditional policy areas such as the economy and education were once again at the forefront of electoral discussions.<sup>73</sup> However, 1992 did see the publication of the Department of the Environment's 'survey of The UK Environment', which not only included 'a comprehensive assessment of the state of Britain's environment but a whole chapter on "public attitudes"'.<sup>74</sup> As such it would be inaccurate to suggest that the national tide had

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<sup>66</sup> Margaret Thatcher, 'Speech to United Nations General Assembly (Global Environment)', 8 November 1989, *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, <<http://www.margarethatthatcher.org/document/107817>> [accessed 06/07/2015].

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> John Vidal, 'Margaret Thatcher: an unlikely green hero?' 9 April 2013, *The Guardian* <<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/blog/2013/apr/09/margaret-thatcher-green-hero>> [accessed 25/07/2015].

<sup>69</sup> McCormick, *British Politics and the Environment*, p. 61.

<sup>70</sup> Rawcliffe, *Environmental pressure groups in transition*, p. 67.

<sup>71</sup> Osborn, 'Some Reflections on UK Environment Policy, 1970-1995', p. 5.

<sup>72</sup> Rawcliffe, *Environmental pressure groups in transition*, p. 67.

<sup>73</sup> Pippa Norris, 'Are We All Green Now? Public Opinion on Environmentalism in Britain', *Government and Opposition*, 32:3 (July, 1997), 320-339 (p. 323).

<sup>74</sup> Chris Woodford, 'Do People Care Enough to save the Planet? Public Attitudes to the Environment' (1997), *Explain that Stuff*,

gone out on environmental concern. Moreover, the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), often referred to as the Rio Summit, twenty years after Stockholm, was testament to the longevity of the environmental movement and set the agenda for future debates. It was attended by over one hundred national figures and further developed the sustainable development agenda as the primary means by which to achieve greater environmental protection.<sup>75</sup> The UK played an 'active part internationally at the Rio Earth Summit [and] in negotiating the Conventions on Climate Change, the Ozone Layer and biodiversity' which left a lasting imprint on future research and debates.<sup>76</sup> Consequently, whilst the intensity of the attention afforded the environment wavered, it was evident that it had successfully breached the inner sanctum of national and international policy concerns.

### **Green Activists and Armchair Environmentalists**

The growing political acknowledgement of environmental issues was in part galvanised by a shift in popular consciousness regarding the environment. Of particular note was the extent to which increasing environmental awareness and popular interest occurred outside of traditional political channels. People turned to popular protest and environmental pressure groups. The environmental movement in Britain has been described as the largest mass movement in the country's history, with an estimated combined membership of around four and a half million by 1990...[roughly] eight per cent of the total population.<sup>77</sup> Naturally such a growth in members did not intrinsically confirm the existence of an active 'green army' amongst the wider population; some individuals may go no further than signing up. Nevertheless, it did imply a growing popular consciousness towards the state of the physical environment and society's interaction with it. The growing membership base was a key characteristic of the new brand of environmentalism which emerged as the 1960s came to a close. The growth in groups and membership began in the early 1970s and fed off the spirit of collective action and protest that had characterised the European and American student movements, which reached a peak in 1968, as well as the anti-nuclear and peace protests which epitomised the culture of mass action and dissent evident in the 1960s.

Although organisations promoting an environmental message were not new, many had been around since the nineteenth century in one form or another, public interest in them was on the rise and a number of emergent groups struck a more direct

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<[http://www.explainthatstuff.com/public\\_attitudes\\_to\\_environment.html](http://www.explainthatstuff.com/public_attitudes_to_environment.html)> [accessed 28/03/2015] [n.p].

<sup>75</sup> Charles T. Rubin, *The Green Crusade: Rethinking the Roots of Environmentalism* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1994), p. 7.

<sup>76</sup> Osborn, 'Some Reflections on UK Environment Policy, 1970-1995', p. 5.

<sup>77</sup> McCormick, *The Global Environmental Movement*, p. 164.

and urgent tone. Groups like FoE and Greenpeace were not only global in terms of reach and influence but Greenpeace in particular signalled a renewed sense of activism and dissent. The name of the organisation and its logo echoed much of the spirit of the 1960s including the anti-nuclear strand of environmental protest. Both groups experienced a significant growth in membership during the 1970s and 1980s. McCormick reported that Greenpeace had roughly 10,000 members in 1980, 50,000 in 1985 and 320,000 by 1989.<sup>78</sup> Although not to the same extent, FoE also witnessed a marked increase. The organisation had 12,000 in 1980, 27,000 in 1985 and 120,000 by 1989.<sup>79</sup> The figures show a substantial increase between 1985 and 1989 as membership rates were undoubtedly positively affected by the rising urgency and status afforded environmental issues within the media and its growing political profile, particularly from 1988 onwards. A catalogue of environmental disasters throughout the 1970s and 1980s from Love Canal to Chernobyl and the Exxon Valdez oil spill, caught national and international headlines; such events heightened popular sensitivity to the environment. Despite the undoubted growth in the previous two decades, the early 1990s saw a cooling off in terms of membership. Rawcliffe noted that 'since 1990/91 the environmental movement has experienced relatively harder times, with the growth in the membership of most groups ceasing, and for Greenpeace, FoE and WWF actually declining quite significantly'.<sup>80</sup> However, although compared to the significant and unprecedented interest in environmental efforts in 1988/89 the reduced membership figures may suggest a waning of interest, this could also be a sign of the opposite; the environmental movement had achieved such a profile and presence on the national and international stage and within the political dialogue of the day, that individuals felt less of a need to join pressure groups to agitate and affect change.

The significance of membership to environmental groups was complex. Increased numbers meant increased resources; 'by 1990, Britain's largest fifteen national environmental groups had an estimated annual budget of £163 million'.<sup>81</sup> This financial boost was not always met with a similar boost in popular activity and engagement. Eden reported that 'some 58% of groups surveyed in 1982 said that less than 10% of their members were "actively involved"'.<sup>82</sup> The extra funds as a result of increased membership were instrumental, in and of themselves, in generating further action and high profile campaigns, irrespective of the degree of involvement of members.

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 164.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 164.

<sup>80</sup> Rawcliffe, *Environmental pressure groups in transition*, p. 76.

<sup>81</sup> Cited in Rawcliffe, *Environmental pressure groups in transition*, p. 3.

<sup>82</sup> Cited in S.E. Eden, *Voluntary Organisations and the Environment* (University of Leeds: School of Geography, Working Paper, 1990), p. 14.

Nevertheless, such percentages highlighted the extent to which the majority of individuals were often passive in their support of environmentalism.

Moreover, whilst the high media profile and activism of new environmental groups ensured that organisations such as Greenpeace and FoE came to be synonymous with environmental protection efforts, a number of established organisations continued to prosper. Sutton outlined that 'the overwhelming majority of new members drawn into the movement were joining...organisations which pre-date[ed] the advent' of new environmentalism.<sup>83</sup> In particular the National Trust found itself in a dominant position; the Trust accounted for 'more than half of all environmental movement organisation members in Britain', in 1989.<sup>84</sup> It is significant that the majority belonged to an organisation that, whilst carrying out key conservation work, did not echo the activism and fervour of the newer groups. The National Trust spoke not to a green fundamentalism but rather a traditional environmentalism; membership was packaged as a leisure activity. The National Trust provided environmental protection through the back door as membership appeared to be conditioned more by an affluent lifestyle and increased leisure time, than an active consideration of environmental issues. Lowe and Goyder noted that 'compared with the "gloom and doom" message of some of the new groups of the early 1970s, [its] appeal seems escapist'; members' 'subscriptions support[ed] practical conservation work and in return they receive[d] the tangible benefits of a glossy magazine and privileged entry to their societies' properties'.<sup>85</sup> There was an inherent consumerism evident in membership of such an organisation and the National Trust's dominant figures highlighted one of the characteristics of popular concern and involvement with the environment at this time; material affluence far from being rejected by the majority, was a key factor in continuing to shape and influence popular attitudes towards the environment.

Although there was a growing popular concern regarding society's impact on the natural environment it would be too simplistic to suggest that this was solely the product of a negative assessment of affluence. Wealth and materialism were central factors in the growth of environmental concern, as awareness of an individual's stake in the environment grew and standards and demands regarding the aesthetic quality of areas increased. Steven Yearly noted, 'environmentalism may be viewed as an attempt by the already wealthy to protect their own surroundings under the guise of preserving wildlife or the countryside'.<sup>86</sup> The marked increase in home ownership during the period gave

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<sup>83</sup> Sutton, *Explaining Environmentalism*, pp. 123-124.

<sup>84</sup> Sutton, *The Environment*, p. 104.

<sup>85</sup> Lowe and Goyder, *Environmental Groups in Politics*, p. 182.

<sup>86</sup> Steven Yearley, *The Green Case: A Sociology of Environmental Issues, Arguments and Politics* (London: HarperCollins Academic, 1991), p. 8.

people an ever greater stake in their local environment and a material reason to protect it. Porritt and Winner contended:

[A]lthough thousands of people are involved in many different kinds of struggle for their own particular patch of England's green and pleasant land, their readiness to extend this commitment to the next door village, let alone to somewhere at the other end of the planet, is often extremely limited.<sup>87</sup>

Their observation did little justice to the popular concern evident for wider global issues at this time. Particularly by 1989 individuals were showing a greater inclination towards concern for global issues as the ozone layer, radioactive waste, destruction of the rainforest and global warming caught the popular imagination.<sup>88</sup> Nevertheless, Porritt and Winner's statement did highlight a key aspect of environmental concern, people's desire to protect themselves and their immediate surroundings. Consequently, whilst growing popular concern for the environment was partly a response to the detrimental impact of growing affluence and materialism on the environment, it was also conditioned by a popular desire to ensure the continuation of a comfortable standard of living in an aesthetically pleasing and danger free environment.

Individual behaviour towards environmental issues was multifaceted and often sporadic. In 1992 Sharon Witherspoon and Jean Martin noted in a British Social Attitudes (BSA) report, that 'green attitudes were much more widespread than green activism'.<sup>89</sup> Growing awareness and fluctuating concern had to some extent cultivated a generation of armchair environmentalists. This was not to say that protest did not occur. In 1969 plans to site a third London airport were met with strident and successful opposition from the localities under consideration.<sup>90</sup> However, overall behavioural commitments were weaker than popular attitudes towards the environment would suggest. Moreover, at times environmentally beneficial behaviour appeared to be motivated by other considerations. Ken Young observed in the 1991 BSA report that 'the widespread (if possibly over-reported) practice of conserving resources cannot necessarily be interpreted as evidence of environmental concern'.<sup>91</sup> The financial incentive to conserve was arguably a primary consideration for individuals when undertaking efforts to use resources, in particular energy, more responsibly. Such a hierarchy of concerns was also

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<sup>87</sup> Porritt and Winner, *The Coming of the Greens*, p. 82.

<sup>88</sup> Woodford, 'Do People Care Enough to save the Planet? Public Attitudes to the Environment' [n.p].

<sup>89</sup> Sharon Witherspoon and Jean Martin, 'What do we mean by Green?', in *British Social Attitudes, the 9th report*, ed. by Roger Jowell, Lindsay Brook, Gillian Prior & Bridget Taylor (Aldershot, England: Dartmouth Publishing Company Limited, 1992), pp. 1-26 (p. 9).

<sup>90</sup> McCormick, *The Global Environmental Movement*, p. 72.

<sup>91</sup> Ken Young, 'Shades of Green', in *British Social Attitudes, the 8th report*, ed. by Roger Jowell, Lindsay Brook & Bridget Taylor with Gillian Prior (Aldershot, England: Dartmouth Publishing Company Limited, 1991), pp. 107-130 (p. 122).

strongly evident in the efforts of Marks and Spencer and other retailers when undertaking energy conservation efforts, which will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Two. Both retailers and individuals shared a complex variety of motivations when it came to decisions which impacted on the environment. Despite the fact that the environment was just one consideration amongst many and arguably not always the most important, it would be counterproductive to suggest that such behaviour showed no environmental consideration. Although this was a rather watered down appreciation of the environment it may be that individual “commitment” was dependent on other perceivable gains.

The growth in car ownership highlighted the disparity between popular concern for the environment and behaviour. A report in *New Consumer Magazine* in autumn 1989 noted that, “cars are certainly the biggest single consumer of world resources”.<sup>92</sup> The negative impact of fuel consumption and car use was well documented and publicised. However, convenience was the primary consideration for individuals and the lifestyle changes necessary in reducing car use were seemingly too great to be comprehended by the majority. Additionally, the same self-interest was evident in the use of unleaded fuel. The use of lead in fuel had become a much discussed issue in the late 1980s and was the focus of a survey carried out by the Department of the Environment in 1989. Of the people asked, ‘71 per cent of respondents said that they thought it was “a good idea” to increase the price of petrol by 17 pence per gallon’ in an effort to reduce harmful effects on the environment.<sup>93</sup> Nevertheless, only when the Government reduced the duty on unleaded petrol, thus making it cheaper than leaded, did a significant number of customers begin to buy unleaded fuel.<sup>94</sup> As such, environmental sympathies certainly existed but individuals were often motivated by an array of factors, in this instance a clear financial incentive. Whilst there was an emerging popular consensus that the environment was an important issue, attention and commitment to it varied according to personal circumstance and the nature of the specific issue.

### **The Response from Retailers**

The growth in popular awareness and concern for the environment was increasingly acknowledged by retailers. Marks and Spencer made a number of references to ‘the increasing public concern for environmental issues’.<sup>95</sup> The John Lewis Partnership similarly noted a marked rise in the attention afforded the environment by

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<sup>92</sup> Yearley, *The Green Case*, p. 38.

<sup>93</sup> Woodford, ‘Do People Care Enough to save the Planet? Public Attitudes to the Environment’ [n.p].

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.* [n.p].

<sup>95</sup> MSCA, *Annual Reports*, CR/D/64, Marks and Spencer Ltd, ‘Annual Report’ (1989), p. 27.

individuals.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, Sainsbury's appeared to seek to understand the dynamics of popular environmental awareness and behaviour. The retailer obtained a report from the advertising agency Lowe Howard-Spink in 1988 entitled *Project Aware: The Environment – Research into Marketing Implication of Growing Consumer Awareness*. The report was based on eight discussion groups which explored consumer attitudes to the environment and drew a number of conclusions regarding the propensity for individuals to act on broader environmental sympathies.<sup>97</sup> The author of the report, Kate Watts, contended that environmental behaviour was often influenced by a desire to be seen to be responsive and knowledgeable regarding issues which were seen to be relevant and in vogue. Watts remarked that individual interaction with environmental issues was often akin to 'keeping up with the Jones[es]'.<sup>98</sup> It was also noted in the report that concern was 'selfishly based' as individuals viewed issues in relation to their own lives and circumstances.<sup>99</sup> The research found that those individuals who did undertake some form of environmental gesture were concerned that old stereotypes remained prevalent. In one of the eight discussion groups, women from Manchester claimed that 'you can be made fun of - like a yuppie - the muesli belt - the brown bread and ozone people'.<sup>100</sup> The connotations of a fringe movement were hard to combat, even as environmental concern moved into the mainstream. In addition, some behaviours were still seen to be inherently middle class. The women noted, 'you go to a shop and buy organic food, and fill up with lead-free petrol - its [sic] all middle class'.<sup>101</sup> Certain lifestyle choices were often still heavily associated with a more exclusive, middle class, environmentalism.

However, retailers across the market spectrum began to engage with the environment and stock green products which indicated a belief on the part of retailers that the potential green market was much more diverse and wide ranging than such a specific class narrative would suggest. In 1989 a news article observed that Sainsbury's had 'followed Tesco's [sic] in entering the green war and is now offering millions of customers the chance to save the world while they shop'.<sup>102</sup> The 'pile it high and sell it cheap' business mantra of Tesco founder Jack Cohen, contrasted with the middle-class image of Sainsbury's and illustrated the extent to which the marketing of "green" products

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<sup>96</sup> Maidenhead, John Lewis Partnership Archive (hereafter JLPA), *Environmental Issues Folder, January 1991 – 1997*, 4411/j, Chief Registrar, 'First Report on Environmental Issues' (7 November 1991), p. 2.

<sup>97</sup> London, The Sainsbury Archive (hereafter SA), *Project Aware*, SA/MARK/1/18/1, Kate Watts, 'A report into the findings of 8 group discussions into consumer attitudes to the environment and associated issues, for Lowe Howard-Spink' (20 July 1988).

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>102</sup> SA, *The Grocer Green Awards Papers 1989*, SA/CR/GRE/2/5, 'In the Green War', *Lincoln Target* (26 January 1989) [n.p].



by retailers, was not dictated or restrained by the class profile of a retailer's customer base.<sup>103</sup> The overriding perception was that the environment was now a diverse and marketable concern; retailers could literally sell "green".

An independent survey conducted by Taylor Nelson Applied Futures found that thirty-six per cent of the British public 'subscribe to attitudes which make them potential green consumers'.<sup>104</sup> This form of environmental conscience salving was notably cultivated and encouraged by sections of the environmental movement and retailers alike, crafting a seemingly unholy alliance. As William Kilbourne pointed out, 'advocating green consumption is advocating more consumption, more technology, and more economic growth, all considered [an] anathema to the ecological process'.<sup>105</sup> Nevertheless, such a juxtaposition of environmental concern and consumerism further illustrated the underlying duality of society at this time. Green consumerism appeared to offer an answer to such seemingly competing desires. Green Consumer Week, which took place 12-18 September 1988, highlighted the emerging alliance between environmental groups and commercial retailers. Promotion of the event saw The Body Shop, Tesco and Safeway promoting the initiative alongside FoE and the Soil Association.<sup>106</sup> The stated intention of those involved was to 'educate consumers to shop for a better environment by mobilising consumer spending towards products that are ecologically friendly'.<sup>107</sup> *The Green Consumer Guide* was published to coincide with the initiative in an effort to further encourage 'purchasing power towards sustainably produced merchandise'.<sup>108</sup> The extent to which the environmental aspect was significant to retailers is difficult to ascertain, certainly it would seem that the profit potential and the publicity garnered from such a promotion were arguably a greater motivational factor. Indeed, although there were notable efforts to cultivate green consumerism, some commentators have equally decried the implications of such an approach. The journalist and author George Monbiot protested in 2007 that 'the middle classes rebrand their lives, congratulate themselves on going green, and carry on buying and flying as before'.<sup>109</sup> Such an assessment highlighted the extent to which green consumerism had the

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<sup>103</sup> William Skidelsky, 'How pile 'em high and flog 'em cheap won the day', 16 April 2005, *The Telegraph* <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/3640486/How-pile-em-high-and-flog-em-cheap-won-the-day.html>> [accessed 02/09/2015].

<sup>104</sup> Elkington, Burke and Hailes, *Green Pages*, p. 63.

<sup>105</sup> William E. Kilbourne, 'Green Advertising: Salvation or Oxymoron?' *Journal of Advertising*, 24:2 (Summer, 1995), 7-19 (p.16).

<sup>106</sup> David Swindley, 'UK Retailers and Global Responsibility', *The Service Industries Journal*, 10:3 (July, 1990), 589-598 (p. 592).

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 592.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 592.

<sup>109</sup> George Monbiot, 'Ethical shopping is just another way of showing how rich you are', 24 July 2007, *The Guardian* <<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2007/jul/24/comment.businesscomment>> [accessed 06/01/2015].

potential to become a mockery of more concerted efforts to affect environmental change. Nevertheless, green consumerism offered environmentalists an opportunity to work from the inside, to inculcate greater environmental stewardship through day-to-day habitual practices.

Green consumerism at this time predominantly focused on food and other household products. As such it was perhaps not surprising to see food retailers take a more proactive role in responding to, and seizing the perceived opportunity of, a more environmentally conscious customer base. Sainsbury's noted in a press release in September 1988 that 'as demand has grown for environmentally friendly goods, so we have striven to meet it'.<sup>110</sup> Sainsbury's statement came two months after the findings of the *Project Aware* study. The company's statement therefore appeared to be based to some degree on conclusions drawn from that market research. By September 1989 Sainsbury's claimed to be 'the first supermarket company to stock proprietary branded "environmentally friendly" cleaning products'.<sup>111</sup> Sainsbury's promoted the range further in a public statement in February 1990 which provided a more detailed breakdown of the features of the range. The company noted:

The seven products in the range are free from additives that can cause pollution and are formulated wherever possible from vegetable-based ingredients that are rapidly renewable as well as being biodegradable. None of the products nor their ingredients have been tested on animals.<sup>112</sup>

Sainsbury's showed an astute awareness of the nature of popular concern regarding the environment, by drawing particular attention to pollution and animal friendly practices. In addition, the company's reference to 'renewable' and 'biodegradable', utilised terminology increasingly associated with the environmental agenda, ensuring its message would resonate more immediately with consumers.

Sainsbury's were not alone in promoting more environmentally benign products. Marks and Spencer noted its own activities with regards green products within its company magazine in March 1990. It pointed out that 'St Michael detergents are highly-concentrated, so contain less phosphates' and that 'all detergents used in St Michael laundry products are readily biodegradable'.<sup>113</sup> Marks and Spencer showed a similar

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<sup>110</sup> SA, *General information on green issues 3 1986-1990*, SA/CR/GRE/4/8, 'Sainsbury's and the Environment', Press Release (7 September 1988).

<sup>111</sup> SA, SA/CR/GRE/REF/3/4, 'Sainsbury's Helps Households Stay Cleaner and Greener', Press Release (18 September 1989).

<sup>112</sup> SA, *General information on green issues 3 1986-1990*, SA/CR/GRE/4/6, "'Green' Policies Keep Sainsbury's Ahead", issued by Public Relations Department, J Sainsbury plc (February, 1990), p. 4.

<sup>113</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Friends of the Environment' (March, 1990), p. 4.

awareness to Sainsbury's in the terminology it employed to communicate the environmental credentials of its products. Moreover, reference to phosphates spoke to wider fears at this time regarding their contribution to water pollution.<sup>114</sup>

Although efforts to market green products in the late 1980s and early 1990s were growing, they were not without controversy. The issue of environmental labelling caused increasing concern and scepticism amongst the general public. A poll conducted in 1990 recorded that as many as '49% of the public...did not believe labels that say products are environmentally friendly'.<sup>115</sup> The limited knowledge of a product's complete environmental impact, from sourcing through to final consumption, weakened the strength and accuracy of some environmental claims and others remained vague and misleading. The charge of greenwashing was a frequent criticism levelled at retailers. Sainsbury's showed a sensitivity to this wider climate of confusion and scepticism when it made an effort to explain what it meant by the term 'environmentally friendly'. The company outlined that the phrase was used 'where a product provides an additional environmental benefit - e.g. organic food - or it has had an "unfriendly" ingredient removed - e.g. "phosphate free"'.<sup>116</sup> In 1989 Sainsbury's also announced a 'shelf-edge labelling system' which was to be rolled out across its store portfolio, denoting 'organically-grown fruit and vegetables', as well as 'cleaning products that do not harm the environment'.<sup>117</sup> There was a clear effort on the part of Sainsbury's to distance itself from charges of greenwashing.

The John Lewis Partnership equally appeared to be particularly keen to address the climate of mistrust and uncertainty regarding environmental labelling. Following a report from *Which?* Magazine and a Department of the Environment press release, the company's Assistant Director of Trading sent a circular to all Directors of Buying concerning the issue.<sup>118</sup> The document instructed buying directors to review all labelling pertaining to the environmental credentials of a product. The Partnership's own branded products were to 'avoid general claims such as "environmentally friendly" or "green"' as these 'cannot be substantiated' due to the vagueness of the claims.<sup>119</sup> The circular dictated that labels should be 'specific' and 'understandable' with 'no jargon'.<sup>120</sup> The

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<sup>114</sup> Adams et al., *Changing Corporate Values*, p. 30.

<sup>115</sup> Cited in Eden, 'Green Consumerism and the Response from Business and Government', p. 20.

<sup>116</sup> SA, G60 - *Competition issues public/political relations; environment 1991-1996*, SA/CO/11/2, 'Sainsbury's Environment Policy' (1993), p. 4.

<sup>117</sup> SA, *The Grocer Green Awards Papers 1989*, SA/CR/GRE/2/5, Sainsbury's Greencut From: Public Relations Department - page of newspaper cuttings, 'Industry sees wisdom of going green', *Sunday Times* (22 January 1989) [n.p].

<sup>118</sup> JLP, *Environmental Labelling 1989-1995*, 4411/k, circular from Assistant Director of Trading to Directors of Buying, 'Environmental labelling' (7 February 1990).

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

company acknowledged the difficulty in altering the predilection of manufacturers of other branded items to adhere to such practices but noted that efforts should be made to 'persuade suppliers'.<sup>121</sup> The assistant director went on to suggest that where suppliers 'persist with claims on their packaging which we find unacceptable we should consider not stocking the lines concerned'.<sup>122</sup> Such policy directives from the highest level of the company signified a clear effort on the part of the Partnership to ensure that the environmental labelling on products that it stocked was meaningful. The growing profile of such issues and the attention afforded it by consumer organisations, coupled with the publication of a government consultation paper in 1989, illustrated wider concern and the need for retailers to modify practices with regards environmental labelling.

In addition to concerns regarding the validity and reliability of environmental labelling, products said to be environmentally friendly often came with a higher price tag. Products that openly stated an environmental feature were also associated with a perceived reduction in quality and performance. Consequently, whilst there was a demand for retailers to be more environmentally conscious, the efforts of retailers particularly in relation to products and marketing, met with a mixed reception. Ken Peattie noted in his assessment of green consumption that 'individuals are highly inconsistent in the types of consumption and behaviours they integrate environmental values into'.<sup>123</sup> "Green" consumption decisions, as with environmental behaviour more broadly, were dependent on a complex interplay of factors. Consequently, whilst there was judged to be an increasing market for such products in the late eighties and early nineties this was a far from stable market segment. As the fervour of popular and political interest in the environment cooled in the mid-1990s, so green consumerism similarly lost some of its impetus. Gill Seyfang noted that 'sales of "green" product ranges fell and many supermarket own-brand ranges of "green" cleaning products...were discontinued'.<sup>124</sup> Sainsbury's confirmed in 1996 that due to declining sales the company's Greencare range had been reduced.<sup>125</sup> This was similarly the case for the Co-operative and Ecover also reported that a number of large retailers had declined to continue to sell the environmental range.<sup>126</sup> This was in part attributed to the advances made in products generally. Sainsbury's contended in 1996 that 'the difference in environmental

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ken Peattie, 'Green Consumption: Behavior and Norms', *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 35 (November, 2010), 195-228 (p. 219).

<sup>124</sup> Gill Seyfang, *The New Economics of Sustainable Consumption: Seeds of Change* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 39.

<sup>125</sup> Paul Gosling, 'Green goods get the red card', 21 April 1996, *The Independent* <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/green-goods-get-the-red-card-1305941.html>> [accessed 08/03/2015].

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

performance between Greencare and our standard products was no longer significant'.<sup>127</sup> In this instance the galvanising atmosphere of the late eighties and early nineties, with regards more environmentally conscious product development, can be seen to have had a more enduring legacy than the product ranges themselves. Nevertheless, the proclivity of consumers to buy products marketed as environmentally beneficial was naturally key to the development and longevity of such endeavours. As this wavered so too did the interest and efforts of retailers to market specific environmental ranges. Thus, whilst "green" product ranges were arguably the most obvious form of retailer engagement with the environment, in terms of the high public profile of product marketing and consumer engagement, they were not the most enduring.

One product area which did see a marked change was CFCs in aerosols. This change was attributed to increasing pressure from the public and pressure groups, as well as a robust regulatory response. As previously mentioned the signing of the Montreal Protocol in 1987 marked a concerted international effort to abandon the use of CFCs, commonly found in aerosol sprays, packaging and refrigeration units. However, whilst there existed popular concern regarding the use of CFCs, fuelled further by the health risks associated with ozone depletion, there was evidence to suggest that retailers had taken action regarding the use of CFCs in aerosols before such public concern had proliferated. Sainsbury's claimed to have begun 'to remove CFCs from aerosols as long ago as 1978'.<sup>128</sup> Moreover, the retailer was not alone in taking action at this time. Following a complaint from a customer in 1980, that the weight of the hairspray she had bought had stayed the same despite the cost increasing, Marks and Spencer made direct reference to concerns regarding CFCs. The company responded to the customer explaining that there had 'been some considerable reaction about the progressive damage caused by aerosol sprays to the ozone layer of the atmosphere'.<sup>129</sup> As a result Marks and Spencer 'changed the gas content of our hair-spray to one which is not harmful to the environment'.<sup>130</sup> Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury's appeared to have taken action before consumer awareness had mobilised on the topic and the wider international agenda regarding the use of CFCs had taken hold. Whilst the USA, Sweden and Canada had 'banned the non-essential use of CFC propellants in sprays' in the 1970s, the issue of CFCs did not receive concerted international attention until the mid-to-late eighties.<sup>131</sup> Furthermore, the substitution and removal of CFCs from aerosols was a relatively straightforward process and the alteration in consuming habits was relatively innocuous as alternatives were provided. The removal of CFCs from packaging was

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> SA, SA/CO/11/2, 'Sainsbury's Environment Policy', p. 5.

<sup>129</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Penny's Problem Postbag', 4 (November, 1980), p. 6.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>131</sup> McCormick, *The Global Environmental Movement*, p. 244.

similarly undertaken by retailers with relative ease. Marks and Spencer were keen to point out in a *St Michael News* article in 1990 that it 'sells only CFC-free aerosols and uses no CFC gas in the manufacture of food packaging'.<sup>132</sup> Lord Sainsbury also publicly proclaimed at the World Ozone Conference in 1989, organised by the government, that Sainsbury's had removed 'ozone damaging CFCs from...aerosols and packaging materials'.<sup>133</sup> Both Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury's, having acknowledged the issue in aerosols some years previously, were keener to draw attention to this position in the late 1980s and early nineties, when the subsequent commercial rewards in terms of image and publicity, were much greater.

The removal of ozone-depleting materials was more complex in the area of refrigeration. The use of alternatives required greater investment and strategic consideration. It was in this specific area that greater media scrutiny and international attention and regulation was a key factor in galvanising commercial action. Sainsbury's were particularly proactive in responding to the shifting climate of opinion with regard the use of CFCs in refrigeration. Internal documents from 1987 urged 'company involvement in this area be reviewed, and a policy statement prepared' due to the 'growing media interest in the claimed ecological effects of CFCs'.<sup>134</sup> Peter Ibbotson, Sainsbury's Director of Construction, when interviewed in 1994, explained that the Montreal Protocol 'really put the writing on the wall as far as Sainsbury's was concerned'.<sup>135</sup> The concern was that there was as yet no alternative and should CFCs and their derivatives be completely withdrawn, the company, along with many others, would be adversely affected. Consequently, Sainsbury's directed Peter Cooper, the company's Head of Refrigeration, to represent the interests of Sainsbury's to the UNEP, the Department of the Environment and the EC environment departments.<sup>136</sup> The intention was to secure the continued use of R22 (a HCFC) to use in place of CFCs, which, whilst not benign, did have a much reduced impact on the ozone layer, until a suitable alternative could be developed. Cooper engaged with the British Retail Consortium and the British Refrigeration Association. He also sat on committees and attended conferences to establish an 'effective lobby for the retention of R22'.<sup>137</sup> The active approach taken by Sainsbury's in seeking to influence the regulatory framework proved successful. The use

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<sup>132</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Friends of the Environment', p. 4.

<sup>133</sup> SA, *Lord Sainsbury address at World Ozone Conference*, SA/CR/GRE/15, 'Saving the Ozone London Conference', booklet produced by Public Relations department (March, 1989) [n.p].

<sup>134</sup> SA, *General information on green issues 3 1986-1990*, SA/CR/GRE/4/4, letter from D.L. Radlett to Mr. P.J. Dixon, 'CFC usage in JS own label packaging' (16 September 1987).

<sup>135</sup> SA, *Peter Ibbotson Interview*, SA/HIS/1/4/19, 'Peter Ibbotson, Sainsbury's Director of Construction, Oral Interview transcript' (12 January 1994), p. 6.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

of R22 was capped at existing levels, however, following amendments to the Montreal Protocol, there was a ten year grace period before the phase-out of R22 would begin.<sup>138</sup> The extent to which Sainsbury's efforts were the key factor in bringing about such a concession is difficult to gauge. Nevertheless, the company's actions set it apart from its competitors and undoubtedly played a part in shaping wider discussions regarding the use of alternatives to CFCs.

In contrast, Marks and Spencer showed no inclination to actively influence the wider trajectory regarding CFCs. The nature of Marks and Spencer's business may go some way to explaining its less strident approach; whilst its food business was growing at this time, Sainsbury's use of refrigeration was undoubtedly greater than Marks and Spencer's and thus the implications of a ban would be more pronounced for Sainsbury's. Nevertheless, Marks and Spencer did make repeated references to its efforts to eliminate CFCs within its refrigeration. A number of press releases were issued by the company to publicly declare its policy towards CFCs. In January 1989 a company press release outlined that Marks and Spencer were 'committed to the Montreal Protocol' and that they would continue to use the less damaging R22.<sup>139</sup> The company also emphasised its efforts to ensure that its equipment suppliers were equally committed to the position adopted by Marks and Spencer.<sup>140</sup> The number and frequency of public statements regarding it, highlighted the company's awareness of the wider significance attached to such issues. The government's endorsement of the international regulations, as well as the organisation of the national conference on the issue, undoubtedly further ensured that Marks and Spencer were keen to be seen to be doing something. Significant efforts were therefore underway to comply with the changing regulatory framework. Moreover, the greater cost and complexity of the refrigeration issue ensured that the impetus to effect change came from changing legislation and regulation not from retailers themselves.

Greenpeace gave concerted attention to the issue of CFCs and launched its 'Greenfreeze' campaign in the early 1990s, which sought to develop 'Greenfreeze' technologies that did not use CFCs or CFC substitutes. In particular it advocated the use of "natural refrigerants" such as ammonia.<sup>141</sup> Indeed, Marks and Spencer noted in 1993 that its stores at Warrington and Handforth began to 'use ammonia instead of CFCs'.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>139</sup> MSCA, *Papers of Philip Symes 1989-1996*, A04/117A, 'Environmental Update from Marks and Spencer' (31 January 1989).

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Stephen O. Andersen, K. Madhava Sarma and Kristen Taddonio, *Technology Transfer for the Ozone Layer: Lessons for Climate Change* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 290.

<sup>142</sup> JLP, *Environmental Issues Folder, January 1991 – 1997*, 4411/j, Marks & Spencer Ltd, 'The Environment' (1993), p. 12.

Ammonia was similarly trialled by Sainsbury's who made direct reference to Greenpeace's report on 'Greenfreeze' technology.<sup>143</sup> Greenpeace actively sought to influence the stance and policy, regarding CFC alternatives, adopted by retailers. This was evident in communication the pressure group had with the John Lewis Partnership in 1994. Greenpeace had been in contact with the retailer intermittently since 1993 regarding its policy on CFC alternatives, as it had with a number of retail competitors. Greenpeace were critical of the Partnership's position, claiming that it was out-of-step with Tesco, Sainsbury's and Marks and Spencer's policy.<sup>144</sup> As such Greenpeace requested that it 'reconsider' its position.<sup>145</sup> The company were adamant that it held the same position regarding the reduction of 'ozone-depleting and global-warming gases', as its competitors.<sup>146</sup> It was particularly concerned with what it saw as Greenpeace's efforts to 'portray the Partnership as being at odds with Greenpeace' and 'laggards in relation to...supermarket competitors'.<sup>147</sup> The Partnership appeared to judge that the summations of Greenpeace carried influence and as such would adversely affect the company's image. There was also a degree of indignation on the part of the company who proceeded to outline that it had phased out the use of CFCs in 1988. The Partnership further queried why its own statement that it was 'aware that R404a is a HFC and that emissions should be reduced as much as possible' was less sufficient than Tesco's statement that 'the hunt is now on for alternatives to HFCs'.<sup>148</sup> A response from Greenpeace was not documented. However, to some extent it seemed that the company had not conveyed a proactive or innovative stance with regards the issue, but rather sought to implement existing standards. In contrast, the other retailers mentioned by Greenpeace made reference to efforts to uncover alternatives. It was arguably this which set the companies apart. Whilst their position in terms of the use of alternatives to CFCs was little different, it was the tone and language adopted by the companies which influenced how they were viewed and portrayed by Greenpeace.

The influence of pressure groups was increasingly felt by retailers on matters of the environment more generally; they were often wary of the influence of such groups. The John Lewis Partnership were contacted by the Senior Energy Campaigner at FoE, Simon Roberts, in conjunction with the group's drive to 'improve energy efficiency in the

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<sup>143</sup> JLPA, *Environmental Issues Folder, January 1991 – 1997*, 4411/j, correspondence from Peter Melchett Executive Director of Greenpeace, to Stuart Hampson Chairman of the John Lewis partnership plc (10 November 1994).

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> JLPA, *Environmental Issues Folder, January 1991 – 1997*, 4411/j, correspondence from Stuart Hampson Chairman of the John Lewis partnership plc, to Peter Melchett Executive Director of Greenpeace (18 November 1994).

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.



business community'.<sup>149</sup> Having received the correspondence, Marek Effendowicz, the company's Chief Information Officer, penned a handwritten note to the company's Department of Building and Services stating that 'a complete brush-off for FoE is v.unwise [sic]'.<sup>150</sup> As a result the company provided a detailed explanation of its energy conservation efforts to FoE. The incident illustrated the importance attached to acknowledging and complying with such organisations. Marks and Spencer similarly showed an awareness of the impact pressure group activity had on its operations. A circular was sent out to all Marks and Spencer store managers, from its Press Office, concerning the commencement of Green Consumer Week in 1988. Despite the participation of retailers in augmenting and promoting the initiative, the circular solely identified the 'ecology lobby' as having orchestrated the campaign.<sup>151</sup> The circular noted that the increased attention afforded the environmental impact of products would 'raise a number of issues' for the company which managers 'should be aware' of.<sup>152</sup> The company sought to forewarn staff regarding the possibility of protest from FoE, regarding products sold by the company that used hardwoods from tropical rainforests. The plight of the rainforest had to some extent caught the popular imagination and was further championed by pressure groups like FoE, making it an increasingly sensitive issue. Marks and Spencer made it clear that the details of the circular were 'for your information only' and informed managers that a number of product ranges used Mahogany, although where possible veneers were used to reduce use.<sup>153</sup> The company made the stipulation that 'where function rather than appearance is important components are made from other woods'.<sup>154</sup> Such a distinction highlighted the key consideration of the retailer in ensuring the appeal of the product was not diminished, despite showing an awareness of the need to accommodate growing environmental concerns. It was evident that Marks and Spencer and John Lewis were increasingly aware of the significance of environmental pressure groups and of a need to mitigate potential backlash from such organisations.

In addition to the more adversarial interaction between outside groups and retailers, there was also evidence of a climate of co-operation and voluntary involvement

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<sup>149</sup> JLPA, *Energy*, 4411/L, correspondence from Simon Roberts, Senior Energy Campaigner of Friends of the Earth, to Chief Executive of the John Lewis Partnership (31 March 1993).

<sup>150</sup> JLPA, *Energy*, 4411/L, correspondence from Simon Roberts, Senior Energy Campaigner of Friends of the Earth, to Chief Executive of the John Lewis Partnership (31 March 1993), handwritten note from Marek Effendowicz Chief Information Officer to the Department of Building and Services (14 April 1993).

<sup>151</sup> MSCA, *Circular from John J. Poppleton, to All Store Managers*, ACC/11/382, 'Green Consumer Week' (12-16 September 1988).

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

with pressure groups and outside organisations. The nature of this and the groups involved undoubtedly illustrated a great deal about the individual attitude and approach of retailers to the environment. In contrast to Marks and Spencer's concern over Green Consumer Week, and both John Lewis' and Marks and Spencer's apprehension over the activities of FoE, Sainsbury's actively sought to engage with such groups and initiatives. The company contacted Jonathan Porritt in 1990 in an effort to bring him on board as a consultant. It was Sainsbury's intention that Porritt would assist the company 'to be more effective both with identifying future trends in environment thinking and in the development of environmental policy'.<sup>155</sup> Porritt, who brought his tenure as Director of FoE to a close in 1990, accepted Sainsbury's offer and served as a consultant until 1994.<sup>156</sup> Sainsbury's efforts to cultivate a partnership between themselves and a leading environmental figure indicated a proactive and innovative approach on the part of the company to issues concerning the environment. Not only did Sainsbury's seemingly wish to respond to existing environmental issues but it also sought to identify trends yet to emerge. Moreover, the company was portrayed favourably in the *Green Consumer Guide*, published in connection with Green Consumer week, for its approach to the environment.<sup>157</sup> In contrast, Marks and Spencer felt the coverage of the company in such publications had been 'disappointing' and 'selective'.<sup>158</sup> The organisations with which Sainsbury's allied itself were in vogue and appeared at the cutting edge of environmental change and activism.

The somewhat less strident and traditional concerns of the groups supported by Marks and Spencer appeared less dynamic in comparison and spoke to a different focus with regards the environment. Marks and Spencer developed a number of links with organisations that sought to improve the environment. Nevertheless, the company itself made a distinction between the more recent construction of environmental issues, such as CFCs and the impact of acid rain, and the 'work being done in practical conservation in both rural and urban areas to protect our natural heritage'.<sup>159</sup> The company promoted the work of the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) and outlined its financial support for the organisation.<sup>160</sup> The company's links to the organisation, as well as others, will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six in relation to Marks and

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<sup>155</sup> SA, *General information on green issues 3 1986-1990*, SA/CR/GRE/4/2, Letter from Christopher Leaver Head of Public Relations Sainsbury, to Jonathan Porritt Esq. (15 March 1990).

<sup>156</sup> Jonathon Porritt, 'Foreword', in *Environment Report*, J Sainsbury Plc, 1996 <<http://www.j-sainsbury.co.uk/investor-centre/reports/1996/environment-report-1996/>> [accessed 09/05/2015].

<sup>157</sup> Adams et al., *Changing Corporate Values*, p. 437.

<sup>158</sup> MSCA, ACC/11/382, 'Green Consumer Week'.

<sup>159</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Community Affairs - Funding Boosts "Green" campaign' (April, 1989), p. 5.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Spencer's efforts to support and engage in conservation efforts. Nevertheless, it was evident that Marks and Spencer were keen to draw attention to this aspect of environmental concern, as removed from the headline grabbing, "trendy" environmental efforts which fuelled awareness of groups like Greenpeace and FoE. This focus was evident in Marks and Spencer's efforts to engage young people in the environment. In 1989 Marks and Spencer joined forces with the Young People's Trust for Endangered Species by sponsoring its activities to encourage young people to get involved in conservation.<sup>161</sup> The company was also involved in supporting the Young Environmentalist of the Year competition in conjunction with the Young People's Trust for the Environment and Nature Conservation.<sup>162</sup> Both activities conveyed Marks and Spencer's interest in furthering the education and engagement of young people but also its specific support of conservation as a means of ensuring greater environmental protection and quality.

Marks and Spencer's promotion of more traditional environmental concerns was displayed in its support, which dated back to 1976, of the Keep Britain Tidy Group. The company gave funding to the organisation which launched a nationwide campaign to draw attention to the issue of litter. Running with the headline "Spikey says – Please take your litter home" in the October edition of *St Michael News*, the piece outlined briefly the main aim of the campaign stating, 'his [Spikey the Hedgehog] message is that we should take our litter home, not leave it behind or chuck it out of the window'.<sup>163</sup> It was clear that the campaign engaged with concerns over the aesthetic damage caused by littering and appealed to people on an individual basis, cultivating the notion that everyone had the opportunity to make a difference. Moreover, whilst *St Michael News* was an in-house publication, ostensibly for Marks and Spencer employees, it was designed with a wider audience in mind. Employees were encouraged to take the magazine home and share with family members and friends. The inclusion of images and information regarding its latest fashion lines functioned to some extent as an advertising tool. Thus, the inclusion of the details of the Keep Britain Tidy campaign showed a desire to promote the campaign and the company's involvement. Litter and the aesthetic quality of the environment, remained as essential to many, as the plight of the rainforest and the protection of the ozone layer.

Despite the proliferation of a wider environmental agenda, Marks and Spencer primarily conceived of environmental issues in relation to its trading environment. This

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<sup>161</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Save our species...and win yourself some great prizes' (May, 1989), p. 16.

<sup>162</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Great News for Young Greens - Young Environmentalist of the Year competition' (May/June 1990), p. 12.

<sup>163</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Spikey says – Please take your litter home', 6 (October, 1976), p. 7.

outlook was predicated on the belief that the company had a responsibility to the areas in which it traded and this included the environmental quality and character of an area. Such an outlook was also heavily influenced by the commercial advantages to be drawn from a prosperous and aesthetically attractive operating environment. Marks and Spencer received awards and built a reputation for high standards in terms of its store environments, both internal and external. The company was recognised for its efforts at the local level in Maidenhead in 1980 winning an award in recognition of 'the company's concern for the environment'.<sup>164</sup> Similarly, in 1983 Marks and Spencer was nominated for a Queen Mother's Birthday award, which was 'given for a high level of achievement in improving the environment and for preventing litter'.<sup>165</sup> Whilst such activities spoke of an environmental awareness on the part of the company, it was an inherently traditional environmentalism and was often perceived by Marks and Spencer, not as a separate issue but linked to other business concerns, such as efficiency and store development concerns.

Marks and Spencer's efforts to engage with environmental concerns beyond the immediate needs of the business were categorised under the broader heading of 'community affairs' and notions of social responsibility. A source working for the company at Head Office in the early 1990s and involved in assessing the company's environmental position, contended that 'Marks and Spencer was rooted in social concern but saw the need to manage the environmental issues as part and parcel of good business'.<sup>166</sup> In this respect the company endeavoured to deal with the environmental challenge through its established channels of concern, rather than alter its fundamental outlook. The tendency of the company to conceive of the environment in this way did not prevent effective environmental intervention. Nevertheless, it did arguably lead it to be viewed as a "soft" consideration in comparison to other business concerns. The notion that a business had a responsibility to an area, beyond a solely economic one, has generated substantial debate. Frances Bowen noted Milton Friedman's supposition that 'the business of business is business' and concluded that if Friedman's argument was to be believed then 'issues such as environmental protection should be left to elected governments that act in the collective interests of society'.<sup>167</sup> Whilst Friedman's remarks spoke to the basic premise of a commercial organisation's operations, they failed to acknowledge the growing complexity of what the business of business involved. A negotiation of the

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<sup>164</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Store clean up awards', 2 (April/May, 1980), p. 1.

<sup>165</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'News in Brief', 4 (June, 1983), p. 3.

<sup>166</sup> Interview conducted at Marks and Spencer headquarters between author and Head Office source, 17 July 2013 - the individual has a long history with the company and has been involved in the company's environment initiatives since the early 1990s.

<sup>167</sup> Bowen, *After Greenwashing*, p. 78.

environment was key to the operation of retailers; indeed, the environment was the business of business.

Whilst Sainsbury's similarly spoke of its own social responsibility, the company made a more decisive move towards acknowledging the changing tone of environmental concerns, particularly in the late eighties and early nineties. Sainsbury's made repeated references to its desire to lead from the front when it came to the environment. In a 1988 press release the company stated that it uses 'its strength in a very positive way to provide effective leadership in environmental issues'.<sup>168</sup> The company's contention that it led the field appeared to be endorsed by the awards that it received commending its contribution. In 1989 Sainsbury's was awarded an Environmental Management Award, at the Better Environment Awards for Industry, in recognition of the environmental management initiatives developed by the company.<sup>169</sup> Sainsbury's had established an Environment Affairs Committee which 'acts as a Board sub-committee working...to identify opportunities and recommend action within all areas of the company's activities'.<sup>170</sup> The creation of a committee concerned solely with the environment that reported directly to the board, in conjunction with its other environmental efforts indicated a clear intent on the part of the company to address growing environmental concern. Sainsbury's showed a keen awareness of wider trends and a desire to be vocal in its association and support of them. The company made much of the build up to the 1992 UN conference in Rio. It announced that as of May that year it was launching a series of 'pledges in support of The Earth Summit' which took place the following month.<sup>171</sup> This was supported by publicity leaflets and posters outlining the company's pledges towards the environment and encouraging others to make their own pledge.<sup>172</sup> This, coupled with the company's relationship with Porritt, indicated that Sainsbury's sought not only to ride the "green wave" but also to get ahead of it to a greater extent than many of its competitors.

Marks and Spencer acknowledged that it was far from a front runner in terms of its support for the environment. As part of a 1988 scrutiny of the company's 'Community Affairs' activities, it was noted that the environment was 'a major issue' across a range

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<sup>168</sup> SA, SA/CR/GRE/4/8, 'Sainsbury's and the Environment'.

<sup>169</sup> SA, *Certificate*, SA/CR/GRE/2/2, 'Better Environment Awards for Industry' (1989).

<sup>170</sup> SA, SA/CR/GRE/4/6, "'Green' Policies Keep Sainsbury's Ahead", p. 1.

<sup>171</sup> SA, *Tree of Life and Environment Week papers 1991-1992*, SA/CR/GRE/4/15, 'Sainsbury's pledges to help the Environment', issued by Public Relations Department, J Sainsbury plc (24 April 1992).

<sup>172</sup> SA, *Tree of Life and Environment Week papers 1991-1992*, SA/CR/GRE/4/15, 'Tree of Life Pledging for the Planet', poster [n.d]; 'Supporting the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development The Earth Summit – Rio de Janeiro – June 1992', leaflet [n.d].

of topics but that Marks and Spencer's 'involvement is minimal'.<sup>173</sup> The report called for the company to 'increase [its] involvement and seek out key areas where...support can be meaningful and motivating'.<sup>174</sup> Public Affairs, Store Operations and the Estates Department were tasked with reviewing the company's operations with 'immediate' affect to ensure greater involvement.<sup>175</sup> Indeed, a shift in the company's approach to the environment as an overall issue can be seen from 1988 onwards. It was arguably influenced to some extent by the wider groundswell of popular interest and concern at this time, as well as the validation given to such issues by Thatcher's rhetoric on the national and international stage. The environment was increasingly given greater primacy in the company's annual reports. Previously environmental news had been stationed underneath a heading of "Social Responsibility". By 1988 it had emerged as its own section, highlighting the growing significance of the topic and the importance attached to being seen to engage with it by the company. In its 1989 annual report Marks and Spencer noted 'the increasing public concern for environmental issues' and claimed that it was 'mindful of [its] special position in this regard'.<sup>176</sup> The company went on to state that it had a 'long tradition of social responsibility for our products and our operations'.<sup>177</sup> Whilst the environment was still presented in terms of the company's social role, it was arguably no longer one issue amongst many, in terms of the company's social considerations, but was increasingly the central issue. In addition, the deluge of press statements released by the company outlining its position on CFCs, hardwoods and Marks and Spencer's overall position regarding the environment, conveyed the changing impetus given to the environment within the company.

Specific environmental issues not only got more coverage in Marks and Spencer's public reports and statements but they were also discussed in more detail. Marks and Spencer's 1991 annual report contained a detailed round up of the company's environmental commitments across a range of subjects, from food additives, pollution and recycling to animal welfare, store design and the 'conservation of global resources'.<sup>178</sup> The reference to global resources was not a new consideration for the company, it had been actively engaged in energy conservation efforts since the 1973 oil crisis, but it did signal an awareness of the changing scope of environmental concern from a national issue to one of international dimensions. A year previously, in April 1990,

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<sup>173</sup> MSCA, *Report*, CR/C/2/52/1, A. P. Watson, 'The Chairman's Scrutiny: Community Affairs' (June, 1988), p. 32.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>175</sup> MSCA, *Agreed Action Plan*, CR/C/2/52/2, 'Action Plan - The Chairman's Scrutiny: Community Affairs' (25 Jul 1988-7 Sep 1988), p. 3.

<sup>176</sup> MSCA, *Annual Reports*, CR/D/64, Marks and Spencer Ltd, 'Annual Report' (1989), p. 27.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>178</sup> MSCA, *Annual Reports*, CR/D/66, Marks and Spencer Ltd, 'Annual Report' (1991), p. 31.

Marks and Spencer released an Environmental Policy Statement which professed the company's long-standing commitment to the communities in which it traded, whilst acknowledging that concern regarding the environment had evolved in recent years to include a variety of other issues.<sup>179</sup> Marks and Spencer also outlined that the increasing attention afforded environmental concerns by the company was also being communicated to suppliers. The company stated that this was 'to ensure that the policies we follow together are environmentally sound'.<sup>180</sup> Marks and Spencer's close relationship with its suppliers has been well documented. Once referred to as a 'manufacturer without factories', it was evident that the company utilised its enduring partnership with suppliers to ensure the greater proliferation of its environmental efforts not only across its stores and distribution, but also in the manufacture of its goods.<sup>181</sup> The policy statement was a direct effort by Marks and Spencer to communicate its stance on environmental issues and to place them within the wider policy narrative of the company and its business ethos. It amalgamated established policies such as its stance on the importance of energy conservation and the quality of high streets, with new concerns regarding the use of lead free petrol and organic produce and presented such policies as natural and fundamental extensions of Marks and Spencer's 'dedication to providing...the highest level of consistent value, quality and service' to its customers.<sup>182</sup> The environment was very much understood and communicated through Marks and Spencer's relationship with its customers and its established principles.

Marks and Spencer's policy statement was followed three months later with a promotional leaflet entitled 'Your world *our* world'. The title of the leaflet arguably sought to build a rhetorical link and a sense of community between the company and the wider public. Marks and Spencer yet again drew particular attention to the importance of the environment in which the company traded and claimed that 'caring for the environment is too important to be just a sales gimmick'.<sup>183</sup> The statement was designed to convey a deeper commitment on the part of Marks and Spencer and distance itself, as Sainsbury's sought to do, from accusations of a superficial sea change in policy to capitalise on the growing popularity of the environmental agenda. The leaflet contained a detailed breakdown of the company's environmental efforts. It noted the company's longstanding support of FRAME (Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments) and

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<sup>179</sup> MSCA, *Papers of Philip Symes 1989-1996*, A04/117A, 'Environmental Policy Statement' (2 April 1990).

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> Tse, *Marks & Spencer: Anatomy of Britain's most efficiently managed company*, p. 4.

<sup>182</sup> MSCA, A04/117A, 'Environmental Policy Statement'.

<sup>183</sup> MSCA, *Papers of Philip Symes 1989-1996*, A04/117A, 'Your World Our World', leaflet (July, 1990).

its policy of not testing products on animals.<sup>184</sup> Marks and Spencer developed 'the quiet delivery vehicle' using air suspension and noise suppressant floors. This had been in operation for some time and was now promoted in terms of its environmental benefits.<sup>185</sup> In particular the company made reference to the 'high level servicing' which the company undertook on all its delivery vehicles, in an effort to 'cause the least possible harm to the atmosphere from the vehicles' emissions' and the addition of the 'latest technology for fuel efficiency'.<sup>186</sup> Whilst the efficiency of the vehicles brought its own economic incentive, the inclusion of the atmosphere as a consideration was a product of the wider shift in attitudes towards pollution and a heightened popular awareness of it. The company outlined its adherence to national controls with regards the use of pesticides and the testing procedures which Marks and Spencer undertook to ensure that its standards were adhered to across its sourcing and supplier network.<sup>187</sup> Marks and Spencer also documented its decision to not use the agricultural chemical Alar on its apples.<sup>188</sup> Whilst Alar had received approval by the Department of Agriculture, its use had engendered some controversy and the company's decision not to use it can be seen as 'evidence that M&S [took] the issue of pesticides seriously'.<sup>189</sup> Marks and Spencer's company culture and ethos undoubtedly influenced its approach to environmental concerns. Its scientific background, exceptionally high standards in terms of product quality and a meticulous attention to the processes and practices of its suppliers and the manufacture of its goods, ensured a robust framework from which to respond to emergent concerns regarding the environment and its own operations.

The company's environment leaflet and its policy statement were precursors to the drafting of Marks and Spencer's policy document regarding the environment which the company unveiled in July 1993.<sup>190</sup> The declarations within the document, were a mix of longstanding concerns and recent developments which highlighted the evolution of the company's perception of, and approach to, environmental issues. In 1990 Marks and Spencer established a focus group to address the company's policy towards the environment. The group was made up of five divisional directors from food, construction services and store development, corporate planning and development, corporate affairs and the Far East division; this highlighted Marks and Spencer's effort to address the environment across the business.<sup>191</sup> In 1992 this was further solidified by the company's appointment of a 'full-time manager to co-ordinate the group's environmental

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Adams et al., *Changing Corporate Values*, p. 355.

<sup>190</sup> MSCA, *M&S The Environment*, HO/11/1/1/32 (July, 1993).

<sup>191</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Friends of the Environment', p. 4.



initiatives'.<sup>192</sup> Such a move to begin to structurally acknowledge the importance of the environment within the company showed a shift in emphasis in the way that Marks and Spencer dealt with and viewed the issue. The environment was an innate consideration for retailers in relation to stores and resources and as the scope of environmental concern altered in terms of popular awareness and national and international focus, so too did retailer's notions of it expand. The development of a codified document solidified Marks and Spencer's effort to amalgamate old and new policies into a more holistic and comprehensive environmental policy, which ranged across the full extent of the company's activities.

A number of factors drove the efforts of retailers to give greater recognition to environmental issues throughout their organisations. The increase in popular attention, scrutiny from the media and pressure groups, undoubtedly had a substantial impact in ensuring the greater degree of attention afforded the environment. However, speaking in 1996, Len Randall from Marks and Spencer stated, 'the main motivator for a retailer in the environmental area is legislation'.<sup>193</sup> Whilst this was often still relatively weak in some cases, environmental regulation was increasing and arguably set the tone for the future in terms of environmental protection efforts. Moreover, the influence of the EC on standards and practices was also increasingly felt and the international treaties with regards CFCs had had a substantial impact on retail processes, as well as consumer products. Marks and Spencer stated in relation to the launch of its range of organic produce in 1989 (subsequently discontinued in 1990) that it had 'adopted and endorsed the EEC...recommendation for the minimum pesticide levels well before they came into force in the UK'.<sup>194</sup> The various institutions promoting and regulating for environmental change at this time opened up the potential avenues of influence that affected retailers. Randall also noted that legislation was often 'preceded by social and political forces and complemented by economic' factors.<sup>195</sup> Randall's remarks highlighted the composite factors which increasingly moulded the retailer's response to the environment.

The late 1980s and early 1990s saw initiatives by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to try and encourage and inculcate a greater awareness of the environment within business. The DTI produced a document entitled 'Your Business and the Environment' in the late eighties seeking to 'promote waste minimisation' and the inclusion of 'environmental considerations in corporate strategy and management

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<sup>192</sup> MSCA, *Annual Reports*, CR/D/67, Marks and Spencer Ltd, 'Annual Report' (1992), p. 23.

<sup>193</sup> Rebecca Reid, 'Go Green – A Sound Business Decision (Part 1)', *Journal of the Society of Dyers and Colourists*, 112 (April, 1996), 103-105 (p. 104).

<sup>194</sup> MSCA, A04/117A, 'Environmental Update from Marks & Spencer'.

<sup>195</sup> Reid, 'Go Green – A Sound Business Decision (Part 1)', p. 104.

decisions'.<sup>196</sup> The language and tone of the document conveyed the primacy given to market forces and the needs of business, as the DTI outlined its efforts to 'encourage' business to act.<sup>197</sup> The DTI also established the Business and the Environment Unit (BEU) in June 1989 as part of its Environmental Programme. The BEU focused on 'waste management, clean technology and recycling', with the intention of providing 'information, advice and support' to businesses with regard the environment.<sup>198</sup> The importance of recycling and waste management was also endorsed by the Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment (ACBE), which was established in 1991 and came under the auspices of the DTI and the Department of the Environment.<sup>199</sup> Both the BEU and the ACBE showed a clear intent on the part of government to encourage business to take account of the environment and drew particular attention to the financial incentives to be gained by doing so. Such groups advocated increased environmental efforts but did so by endorsing and promoting the traditional strategies and approaches of business; they spoke in a language that would resonate in boardrooms and shareholder meetings. In this respect the BEU and ACBE showed an awareness of the complex considerations of business, and the need to navigate those in promoting the environment. Indeed, Marks and Spencer explained that 'it only adopts schemes that have proven benefits, address Marks and Spencer issues and are cost effective'.<sup>200</sup> Consequently, the relationship between business and the environment, whilst increasingly influenced by the groundswell of concern and interest in the latter, was invariably shaped and dictated by the needs and priorities of the former.

In this regard, recycling became a key policy for Marks and Spencer because it had the desirable ability to cater both to the commercial and financial concerns of a retailer, as well as to changing popular attitudes towards waste and the environment. It undertook a variety of recycling efforts in a number of areas across the business. In 1981 the company drew particular attention in its in-house magazine, to its policy of recycling hangers; Marks and Spencer noted two key benefits of the policy. The company explained that the 'recycling of used hangers is expected to save M&S £100,000 a year'.<sup>201</sup> It further claimed that 'ecologically too, it is right to recycle materials which would

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<sup>196</sup> SA, *General information on green issues 3 1986-1990*, SA/CR/GRE/4/2, Department of Trade and Industry, 'Your Business and the Environment Protecting the Environment: next steps for business' [n.d], p. 1.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>198</sup> SA, *General information on green issues 3 1986-1990*, SA/CR/GRE/4/2, Department of Trade and Industry, 'DTI's Environmental Programme The Business and the Environment Unit' [n.d], p. 1.

<sup>199</sup> The Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment, *The Environment: A Business Guide* (London: Department of Trade and Industry, 1996).

<sup>200</sup> Reid, 'Go Green – A Sound Business Decision (Part 1)', p. 105.

<sup>201</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Hanging on to £100,000', 7 (October, 1981), p. 6.

otherwise be thrown away'.<sup>202</sup> Despite the overriding commercial benefit to be derived from the practice, Marks and Spencer were keen to acknowledge the environmental contribution it engendered. In 1990 the Maidenhead store was praised for its efforts in recycling hangers, having established hanger recycling points at tills. The Deputy Manager Stephen Rayfield stated, 'customers can now see we care about what happens to the waste we create'.<sup>203</sup> Not only did recycling tubs at tills make the most practical sense, but it also allowed the company the opportunity to make its recycling efforts visible to customers and market itself as a progressive and conscious business with regard the environment. Nevertheless, rather than simply re-using them, which was judged to be 'uneconomic', the company sent used hangers back to the warehouse to be melted down and remade into hangers.<sup>204</sup> Whilst the reuse of materials was environmentally friendly, the energy and resources used to remake the hangers, rather than simply reuse them, arguably diluted this. Marks and Spencer's policy regarding hangers illustrated how environmental practices were moulded to suit the demands and concerns of retailers.

The distribution policies and processes of Marks and Spencer were also altered to incorporate recycling systems. The company announced in 1990 a pilot scheme that had run for six months at its Hayes Distribution Centre (DC) and the seventeen stores connected to it. Referring to it as its "'green" recycling campaign', the stated aim of the endeavour was to 'cut down on costly and environmentally-unfriendly waste disposal'.<sup>205</sup> Marks and Spencer reported that it expected the centre's disposal costs to be halved and it estimated that the amount of materials sent to landfill would 'drop from 100 per cent to 20 per cent'.<sup>206</sup> This was made possible by the increased use of recycled board (seventy per cent) in the company's cardboard boxes used for transit, as well as the adoption of reusable plastic delivery trays.<sup>207</sup> The scheme was deemed to have been so successful that the company adopted the scheme across all of its UK operations. Marks and Spencer's initiative also attracted the attention of the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, David Heathcoat-Amory who made a visit to Hayes DC and the company's Maidenhead store.<sup>208</sup>

Marks and Spencer's recycling scheme was awarded a Golden Leaf Award, sponsored by the Conservation Foundation and the PA Consulting Group (an international management and technology consultancy), 'for its "responsible

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>203</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, Jill Wedge, 'Waging War on Waste: Recycling rubbish helps to cut costs' (October, 1990), 4-5 (p. 5).

<sup>204</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Hanging on to £100, 000', p. 6.

<sup>205</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'It's take-off for recycling campaign: Praise for Hayes DC' (October, 1990), p. 1.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>207</sup> MSCA, A04/117A, 'Your World Our World'.

<sup>208</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'It's take-off for recycling campaign', p. 1.

environmental management'.<sup>209</sup> The company was commended for demonstrating 'that business can benefit a great deal by being environmentally concerned'.<sup>210</sup> The extent to which the recycling scheme made commercial sense was arguably Marks and Spencer's primary concern. Waste disposal costs were rising and despite the fact that a UK Landfill Tax was not introduced until 1996, attitudes towards waste at the local and national level were changing, with increasing emphasis placed on reducing the amount of waste going to landfill.<sup>211</sup> In addition to the financial and pragmatic considerations which underpinned Marks and Spencer's recycling efforts, they were equally promoted for the environmental benefits. The company entitled a *St Michael News* article showcasing its recycling initiatives, 'Waging War on Waste', a refrain that Marks and Spencer used more than once within its communication to staff.<sup>212</sup> The robust language echoed shifting attitudes and wider environmental debates concerning waste and the extent to which it was increasingly perceived to be a negative social, economic and environmental issue, rather than simply a by-product of modern society. Marks and Spencer's "war", waged as it was through its recycling efforts, changed the connotation of waste as it was increasingly found to be profitable; waste was made useful and productive within the business cycle. The proliferation of recycling efforts highlighted the extent to which commercial needs shaped the company's response to environmental concerns.

The carrier bag was also an increasingly visible sign of waste on the part of consumers and a key target area for Marks and Spencer. Although charging for carrier bags and the introduction of a "bag for life" is now a common feature of twenty-first century food shopping, the roots of such initiatives can be traced further back. In 1975 Marks and Spencer referred to the fact that it charged two pence for its food carrier bags, noting that 'if we gave them away free their use would soar tremendously'.<sup>213</sup> In outlining its policy with regard carrier bags, Marks and Spencer claimed that its specialists were 'constantly searching out new ways of saving money and natural resources'.<sup>214</sup> Such a contention presented the interests of business and that of the environment as compatible. Marks and Spencer's reference to natural resources may have been influenced by wider debates concerning the sustainability of natural resources, which were heightened at this time due to concerns regarding energy use both within the company and nationally. The company's efforts to contain the use of carrier bags were

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<sup>209</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Golden words of praise' (October, 1990), p. 5.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>211</sup> SA, SA/CR/GRE/4/2, 'DTI's Environmental Programme The Business and the Environment Unit', p. 1.

<sup>212</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, Wedge, 'Waging War on Waste', pp. 4-5; 'Bin brigade wage war on waste' (January/February, 1992), p. 4.

<sup>213</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, Josie Matthews, 'Protect – Inform – Enhance – a wrapped up case', 4 (August, 1975), p. 7.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

ongoing and it received concerted attention in 1991 within the company's magazine. In the March issue of *St Michael News* the company announced the arrival of a 'very strong re-usable bag that is environmentally-friendly'.<sup>215</sup> Yet again Marks and Spencer had found the "green" in going green, as the company charged customers fifteen pence per bag. In addition, Marks and Spencer expected to make savings of 'nearly £1.5 million' if staff 'use food and textile bags with more control'.<sup>216</sup> Marks and Spencer's approach to the issue of carrier bags showed a longstanding concern with cost management and an awareness of resource use. Nevertheless, as wider concern for the environment grew, the company increasingly foregrounded it within its justification and presentation of policy regarding carrier bags.

The changing culture concerning waste was evident in attitudes towards packaging. In 1969 Marks and Spencer ran an article in *St Michael News* which identified that due to the company's 'rapid expansion' into new lines, there was 'a constant demand for a new way of "wrapping it up"'.<sup>217</sup> It appeared that the company's answer to displaying and protecting the product, was packaging. By 1975 Marks and Spencer outlined a keener desire to keep packaging to a minimum. A member of the company's packaging department, Euan Aitken, proclaimed that 'the best packaging is no packaging at all'.<sup>218</sup> It was nevertheless, deemed 'a necessary evil', due to the company's desire to 'protect - inform - and enhance' the product; packaging was viewed as a key point of sale device.<sup>219</sup> Marks and Spencer's efforts to reduce packaging where possible, were invariably due to the costs it placed upon the company. In 1975 Marks and Spencer noted that £20 million annually was spent on packaging and whilst this amounted to 'less than three per cent of...total sales', it remained a key area for potential savings.<sup>220</sup> The company's approach to packaging can be seen to have been influenced by Marks and Spencer's recycling efforts by the late eighties and early nineties. The company noted in 1990 that it was 'conscious of the need to cut back and recycle as much as possible of the various packaging materials in use'.<sup>221</sup> Marks and Spencer also began to use recycled material in its food packaging, although James Stafford, the company's technical manager for packaging, pointed out that such material 'must be odourless, so it imparts no taint to the foodstuff and it must accept print well to look attractive'.<sup>222</sup> It was

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<sup>215</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Bags of help for the environment and your pocket' (March/April 1991), p. 4.

<sup>216</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'A carrier bag campaign to reduce waste' (May, 1991), p. 4.

<sup>217</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'You can see what you buy at M&S', 16:6 (Autumn, 1969), p. 3.

<sup>218</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, Matthews, 'Protect – Inform – Enhance', p. 7.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>221</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Friends of the Environment', p. 4.

<sup>222</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Box clever on foods' (January/February 1992), p. 4.

clear that packaging decisions were increasingly a negotiation between the desire to maintain standards of quality and the company's efforts to be responsible and sensitive to wider concerns regarding the environment and waste.

The prominence given to recycling and packaging reduction by Marks and Spencer, in the late eighties and early nineties, was arguably influenced in part by outside forces. A broader effort to tackle waste and encourage greater recycling within industry was increasingly apparent. Journalist Nils Pratley noted in *Retail Week* in March 1992, that the Industry Council for Packaging and the Environment (INCPEN) were devising a plan for 'integrated solid waste management'.<sup>223</sup> This was in an effort to adhere to the government's 'target of recycling 50 per cent of recyclable household waste by 2000' and an 'EC directive that is likely to include a target of recycling 60 per cent of packaging waste within ten years'.<sup>224</sup> Packaging waste was also an issue upon which FoE campaigned and lobbied at the national level.<sup>225</sup> The fact that recycling was receiving national and international attention undoubtedly added an extra impetus to commercial efforts to recycle and to be seen to do so. Whilst external targets remained voluntary, much to the ire of FoE, it was evident that regulation was likely to increase. Tony Baldry, who was Junior Environment Minister at the time, remarked that 'if industry does not take action, we shall have to take action ourselves'.<sup>226</sup> Although it was doubtful that a robust response would come from the national government, there were signs that an EC directive, as mentioned above, would likely come to pass in the not too distant future. Consequently, the wider climate of pressure and regulation signalled to retailers a changing attitude. Indeed, such concerns were not new to Marks and Spencer, policy addressing packaging and waste pre-dated the changing regulatory landscape. However, the commercial expediency in engaging in such practices was further confirmed.

Whilst a number of retailers increasingly acknowledged environmental concerns, there was far from a consensus across the sector. This was highlighted by the approach and attitudes of the John Lewis Partnership. The company received a number of letters concerning its position on environmental issues from members of the partnership, concerned about the apparent lack of an environmental policy. One partner (the name given to employees) wrote in June 1992, that 'the Chairman's statement...that "until governments can sort out what they want to do, individual businesses cannot do anything" is nonsense'.<sup>227</sup> The Chairman responded by stating that 'very little seems

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<sup>223</sup> JLP, *Environmental Issues Folder, January 1991 – 1997*, 4411/j, Nils Pratley, 'FoE fight plan for packaging waste', *Retail Week* (20 March 1992) [n.p].

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.* [n.p].

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.* [n.p].

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.* [n.p].

<sup>227</sup> JLP, *The Gazette*, Anon, 'Environmental Concerns' (5 June 1992), p. 530.

scientifically certain on a global scale' and 'there is little sign as yet of agreement on the best solutions or how they are to be reached'.<sup>228</sup> Noting that 'empty gestures come two a penny', the Chairman explained that he felt that if significant change was to take place it would have to be underpinned by political and international agreement.<sup>229</sup> Indeed, the Partnership did respond to the changing regulatory framework with regards CFCs, following the Montreal Protocol. It was evident that the Chairman believed the 'public responsibility of companies' was dictated by the law and as such the Partnership would use that as the measure of its activities.

The Chairman's view of the Partnership's role in the environment was traditional in that it appreciated the need to improve 'our own environment with a small "e"' but was wary of engaging in 'grand ideas beyond our station'.<sup>230</sup> The Chairman's remarks regarding the immediate environment of the company's operations echoed the sentiment and outlook of Marks and Spencer for much of the seventies and eighties. The significance of the environment to the operations of retailers was not lost on either company. However, whilst Marks and Spencer sought to engage with environmental concern as it became more diverse and broader in scope, the Partnership took a more reserved, and to some degree hostile, approach. An individual writing to the Chairman in 1991 noted that they were relatively new to the company and wished to know what the company's policy was regarding the environment as it appeared that one did not exist.<sup>231</sup> The Chairman stated that it was not the role of the Partnership to concern itself with devising new environmental policies but rather to sell products to consumers which generate a profit.<sup>232</sup> Consequently, the central concerns of the company were, 'what do our customers want...what is the law, and what is the cost?'<sup>233</sup> The basic premise of the Partnership's responsibility and role echoed the sentiments of Friedman and stood far removed from the attitudes of Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury's.

Nevertheless, the Partnership undertook a review of its approach to environmental concerns in 1991. The subsequent report noted surprise at the speed with which such concerns had entered into the 'political and corporate mainstream' and outlined a number of recommendations regarding the Partnership's stance.<sup>234</sup> The reasons identified in the report for the company's reserved approach echoed many of

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<sup>228</sup> JLP, *The Gazette*, the Chairman, 'response to Environmental Concerns letter', sent by Anon, dated 5 June 1992 (20 June 1992), p. 530.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 530.

<sup>230</sup> JLP, *The Gazette*, the Chairman, 'response to Environmental Concerns letter', sent by "Prepared to Pay" (1992), p. 580.

<sup>231</sup> JLP, *Environmental Issues Folder, January 1991–1997*, 4411/j, Richard, 'Environmental Issues letter', *The Gazette* [n.d].

<sup>232</sup> JLP, *Environmental Issues Folder, January 1991–1997*, 4411/j, the Chairman, 'response to Environmental Issues letter', *The Gazette*, (7 December 1991).

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>234</sup> JLP, 4411/j, Chief Registrar, 'First Report on Environmental Issues', p. 2.

the Chairman's statements on the matter and it was made clear that the company did not wish to 'stand on a soap box' or be 'pressure group driven'.<sup>235</sup> It was felt that the reasons for the company's 'deliberate inaction' were not being communicated clearly enough and that a series of factsheets and press statements should be devised to explain the Partnership's stance on specific issues.<sup>236</sup> Overall it was recommended that the company should adopt a more consistent, less 'ad hoc' approach to environmental issues as it was deemed that this was 'in conflict' with the company's commitment to 'the highest level of good citizenship' as outlined in its constitution.<sup>237</sup> The Partnership's reserved stance on the environment did not drastically alter. The Chairman's statements in response to enquiries in 1992 illustrated that the report did not change minds overnight. Nevertheless, there was evidence that the topic was eliciting greater discussion within the company and that concessions were being made. It was not enough to simply implement EC legislation and national regulations, the competitive nature of commercial retailing and the growing fervour of opinion with regard the environment ensured that it was a topic which companies had to robustly acknowledge and publicly engage with.

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This chapter has addressed the emergence of Marks and Spencer's environment policy and its response to a number of key environmental issues, in comparison to that of Sainsbury's and the John Lewis Partnership, in the period 1968-1992. A detailed assessment of this kind into the environmental response of Marks and Spencer has yet to be undertaken by academics concerned with the relationship between business and the environment. The chapter has highlighted the validity of Eden's contention that the late 1980s and early 1990s marked a period of 'consolidation' with regards businesses' response to the environment.<sup>238</sup> The intensity and frequency with which Marks and Spencer vocalised its support, through numerous press releases and policy statements, marked a significant shift in the way in which the company acknowledged the environment and environmental issues. The latter came to the fore as a key commercial consideration at this time and one which retailers needed to be seen to be addressing.

Nevertheless, the chapter has sought to broaden understanding regarding retailers and the environment by providing a more detailed assessment of the policies and how they evolved over a longer period of time than is often acknowledged within existing literature. Despite Denis Smith's assertion that the '1980s saw the emergence

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<sup>235</sup> JLP, *Environmental Issues Folder, January 1991–1997*, 4411/j, Marek Effendowicz, Chief Information Officer, 'The Partnership's public stance on the Environment' (19 November 1991), p. 2.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>238</sup> Eden, *Environmental Issues and Business*, p. 8.



of environmental issues' on to corporate agendas, the chapter's assessment of Marks and Spencer's environment initiatives indicates that the retailer was aware of environmental considerations earlier than this.<sup>239</sup> The company introduced carrier bag charges and a campaign against litter in conjunction with the Keep Britain Tidy group in 1975 and 1976 respectively. The chapter has shown that whilst such policies were commercially advantageous, they were equally promoted by Marks and Spencer for their environmental benefits. This will be further shown in the thesis' assessment of Marks and Spencer's energy conservation efforts and its store development policies.

In addition to the chapter's exploration of Marks and Spencer's retail policy and that of its competitors, it has addressed the wider climate of increasing popular and political attention afforded such issues. This is in an effort to place the company's efforts within a wider context and explore the various avenues of pressure and influence which existed between the company and other social and political forces. The chapter's assessment of the political landscape has illustrated a gradual process of "greening" as depicted in the work of Robinson and McCormick.<sup>240</sup> It was evident that the environment had moved to the political mainstream by the early 1990s. This was helped in no small part by Margaret Thatcher's series of speeches in the late eighties, which normalised and validated the environment as a key area of concern. Whilst the policy and legislative commitments of the government cannot be said to have been as robust as the Prime Minister's rhetorical urgency, it did seem as if the environment had come of age. The claims and concerns of environmentalists and green activists were increasingly in the popular domain and could no longer be passively ignored or dismissed as polemical narratives of marginal social, political and economic significance.

Popular awareness and concern regarding the environment was increasingly apparent. However, this often remained issue specific and was mediated through a variety of more immediate day-to-day concerns. Consequently, the growing mass of support for the environment did not constitute a "green" revolution; there was little evidence that individuals saw a fundamental flaw between their established way of life and environmental protection. Many sought simply to engage in incremental efforts to reduce some of the more obvious environmental threats. In light of these trends the chapter has made a number of key observations regarding the significance of popular interest, the relationship between the environmental movement and retailers and the nature of commercial responses to the environment.

Firstly, the chapter has illustrated how the link made between the middle classes and a propensity to care about the environment has been an enduring characterisation.

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<sup>239</sup> Smith, 'Business and the environment: towards a paradigm shift?', p. 1.

<sup>240</sup> Robinson, *The Greening of British Party Politics*; McCormick, *British Politics and the Environment*.

Indeed, the stereotype of the “muesli and lentils brigade” noted by Sandbrook, and Crosland’s admonishing remarks, had a lingering significance.<sup>241</sup> This has been seen in the opinion data explored in this chapter. The *Project Aware* study, used by Sainsbury’s to gain a greater appreciation of customer concern for the environment, contained consumer responses which highlighted a self-conscious realisation that environmental activities were still popularly associated with niche middle-class lifestyles.

However, whilst the chapter has acknowledged, in line with existing literature, a middle-class element within growing environmental awareness and concern, particularly in relation to affluence, it has also illustrated the extent to which this was a far from straightforward class issue. The environmental efforts of Tesco, briefly referred to in this chapter, has shown the extent to which the response from retailers marked a more broad-based commercial attempt to cater to environmental concern irrespective of perceived class divisions. Moreover, the chapter has noted the reluctance of the John Lewis Partnership to be seen to be adopting an overt stance on environmental issues, despite its middle and upper-class customer base. This suggests that whilst trends regarding class were evident in relation to environmental concern, they were by no means absolute and did not necessarily condition the response of retailers to act in a specific way. Such a finding illustrates the value of utilising company archives to more critically assess the broader characteristics ascribed to popular concern for the environment and the ways in which this was mediated by retailers.

Secondly, the chapter has highlighted how the growth of green consumerism was promoted by environmentalists and retailers alike. The introduction of “environmentally friendly” products by retailers illustrated the degree to which environmental concern was mediated and shaped by established social practices, despite the seemingly contradictory nature of “buying” and “selling” a better environment. The environment became a conscious and complex consideration for retailers as they re-evaluated their position and approach to environmental issues. This was evident in the increasing attention and promotion given to environmental issues by Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury’s. Both had established an environment policy by 1992 and had begun to take a more holistic and vocal approach to the environment.

The chapter’s analysis of the response of retailers has illustrated that pressure groups had an impact on retailers at this time; the internal documents of Marks and Spencer and the John Lewis Partnership, pertaining to the activities of FoE, confirm this. The organisation was deemed important enough as to warrant the attention of both companies and a defensive stance was adopted by both for fear of greater repercussions if they did not justify themselves to FoE. Despite this pressure, and the wider critique by environmentalists of a “more and more” culture, the chapter has also identified that

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<sup>241</sup> Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, p. 180; Turner, *Crisis? What Crisis?*, p. 50.

retailers were increasingly utilised by environmental groups and organisations to further local and national environmental efforts. A climate of cooperation and collaboration could be found between retailers and environmental groups as often as any sense of conflict. Sainsbury's association with Jonathan Porritt and Marks and Spencer's link to the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and Groundwork emphasise this.

In addition, the chapter's comparative assessment of the tone and approach adopted by Marks and Spencer, Sainsbury's and the John Lewis Partnership has provided an explanation of the variety of internal and external factors which influenced their response to environmental concerns. Marks and Spencer's sense of its own position and role within society did much to shape its desire to be seen to acknowledge and respond to environmental issues. Indeed, Sainsbury's modern and proactive approach to the environment, highlighted in particular by its efforts regarding CFCs in refrigeration and its links to Porritt, contrasted to the attitude adopted by Marks and Spencer. The latter was invariably more traditional in the organisations with which it associated. Marks and Spencer was also keen to proclaim the need for environmental protection whilst eschewing associations with "green" elements, which the company continued to portray as fringe forces; this is discussed further in the following chapter in relation to the company's environmental rationale behind energy conservation. In contrast, the retailing philosophy and business ethos of the John Lewis Partnership favoured a less vocal, more reluctant approach. Consequently, the relationship between companies and the environment, whilst mediated by the wider environmental agenda, as well as the popular awareness and political attention afforded the environment, was heavily shaped by the established culture and outlook of the individual retailer.

Finally, the chapter contends that for the majority of individuals and retailers environmental concern was not altruistic but instrumental - a means to a material end. The response of retailers was shaped by commercial advantage and the individual's by the desire to hold on to the standard of living which they had come to enjoy. Increased environmental degradation threatened the stability of both and as such concern for the environment, whilst influenced by the ardent calls of environmentalists and the exigencies of pressure groups, was also motivated by self-interest. Furthermore, it was evident that society's attitude towards waste had shifted, it was no longer deemed an innocuous by-product of consumption but rather a sign of profligacy and inefficiency, characteristics which were invariably an anathema to companies that sought to promote a socially responsible and competent business image. The impact of such changing social attitudes can be seen in Marks and Spencer's repeated references to its "war on waste"; the company sought to mediate popular opinion to enhance its own commercial image.

The chapter's examination of Marks and Spencer's environment policy, and the reasons behind its creation, has foregrounded the fact that the growth in discussion of environmental issues by retailers, beyond what was necessary by law, owed much to the ability of commercial organisations to gradually interact with and assimilate the broader "green" ethos into their commercial outlook. The extent to which traditional business concerns of efficiency and cost reduction readily catered to business and environmental needs, allowed retailers to reconstitute their position as environmentally sensitive actors. The commercial economies to be found in going "green", as well as the benefits of a socially responsive and progressive image, highlighted the extent to which environmental concern was not always an imposition but also a commercial opportunity; Marks and Spencer's environment policy was shaped as much by commercial considerations and opportunities as environmental concerns. This was repeatedly evident in the approach that the company adopted towards its recycling and packaging efforts; both yielded substantial savings and were undertaken in such a way as to ensure that it would not adversely affect the business. This approach to environmental issues characterised the company's approach throughout this period.

Whilst the arrival of an environmental document outlining the company's policy was new in the early 1990s, Marks and Spencer had found that environmental concerns had had an increasing significance on its own operations prior to this. This was evident in the company's energy conservation efforts and its store development in the period 1968-1992; both were eventually included within Marks and Spencer's environment policy. Consequently, in an effort to assess the longer trajectory of Marks and Spencer's shifting awareness of the environment and resource use the following chapter explores the company's justifications behind its energy conservation efforts in the wake of the 1973 oil crisis.

## Chapter Two

### The Commercial Need to Conserve Energy

In the wake of the 1973 Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Oil Embargo, a sense of crisis pervaded Britain; the brief embargo had brought home the vulnerability of the country's energy situation with shocking ease. Petrol prices rose steeply and shortages followed, generating a climate of anxiety and uncertainty. The discovery of North Sea oil at the dawn of the decade offered some comfort, although it would take time to come on stream. In the meantime, bountiful oil supplies and low prices, which had characterised the post-war period, were abruptly brought to an end. As Beckett noted, oil prices 'remained damagingly high'.<sup>1</sup> The crutch upon which British society rested was looking less and less secure. The situation was compounded by industrial unrest; the strikes of 1972 and 1974 exacerbated an already fragile resource situation. As coal stocks sat motionless and the now infamous three-day week took hold, the national energy situation was deemed to have reached crisis point. The combination of the oil crisis and industrial unrest led Prime Minister Edward Heath to call on the nation to conserve energy. Consequently, conservation had been validated on the national stage and became a central and defining feature of the national dialogue concerning energy. Despite the manmade nature of shortages, such calls to conserve energy embodied growing environmental appeals for constraint. Oil had been the life blood of the affluent society and its ability to symbolise the excesses associated with growing affluence became much starker in the wake of the events of 1973. Bernard Taylor remarked in 1974, 'does all this mean that the Club of Rome's prediction is coming true – that the world is running out of food, metals and other critical resources?'<sup>2</sup> The apparent ease with which the country's security of supply had been weakened alarmed an otherwise energy-complacent public.

The inertia and apathy regarding energy in the post-war climate had led to a noticeable silence on the issue of energy conservation.<sup>3</sup> The dialogue surrounding conservation in the immediate aftermath of the 1973 crisis was almost deafening in comparison. Heath himself noted in 1974 that, 'what we have seen in the past few months has been one of those periodic historical shifts in the relationships between peoples and nations which mark the beginnings and ends of chapters in the history

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<sup>1</sup> Beckett, *When the Lights Went Out*, p. 138.

<sup>2</sup> Bernard Taylor, 'Strategic Planning for Resources', *Long Range Planning* (August, 1974), 12 – 26 (p. 16).

<sup>3</sup> MSCA, *Subject file for Marcus Sieff: Energy Conservation*, R/4/3/9, David Fishlock, 'A Collective Responsibility', *Financial Times* (1975), p. 17.

books'.<sup>4</sup> The events of 1973 undoubtedly precipitated a change in outlook and attitude towards energy usage and resource availability more broadly; the warnings of environmentalists were beginning to strike an ever more credible note.

The shock engendered by the potent pairing of the oil embargo and industrial unrest has been routinely acknowledged within general histories of the period. Beckett drew particular attention to Patrick Jenkin's unfortunate request for people to 'clean their teeth in the dark to save electricity'; an incident which according to Beckett caused Jenkin some degree of embarrassment.<sup>5</sup> Beckett's account of the incident highlighted the panicky sense of crisis which manifested itself at this time. Similarly, Sandbrook noted Edward Heath's claim, in an appeal to the National Union of Miners to reach a deal, that 'the oil crisis had plunged Britain into the worst economic emergency since 1945'.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, a number of contemporaries and academics have discussed the significance of such events and the factors which influenced government policies. Gill Owen produced a detailed study in 1999 which contained an assessment of the energy policies and campaigns of the UK government and other interested groups; it also outlined the fluctuating significance and attention afforded the issue nationally.<sup>7</sup> John Chesshire's 1986 article similarly discussed national strategies with regards energy and the degree to which the national energy position had shifted after 1973.<sup>8</sup> In addition, David Green and Susie Parsons briefly addressed the issue of energy conservation in the domestic sector.<sup>9</sup> Whilst governments and domestic households have been assessed within the academic literature, in terms of the factors which have influenced their approach to energy use, this analysis has not been as forthcoming in relation to the retail sector. Where academic analysis has addressed retailers it has not been undertaken by historians and the focus has largely been on the food sector, with no assessment of the history of such concerns within retail firms; this approach is evident in the study conducted by S.A. Tassou et al. in 2011.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> 'Energy panic could bring trade slump, Mr Heath says', *The Times* [London: England] Thursday 17 January 1974: 2, *The Times Digital Archive*. Web. 16 Apr. 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Beckett, *When the Lights Went Out*, pp. 134-136

<sup>6</sup> Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, p. 608.

<sup>7</sup> Gill Owen, *Public Purpose or Private Benefit? The Politics of Energy Conservation* (Manchester University Press, 1999).

<sup>8</sup> John Chesshire, 'An energy-efficient future: A strategy for the UK', *Energy Policy*, 14:5 (October, 1986), 395-412.

<sup>9</sup> David Green and Susie Parsons, 'Energy Efficiency Year, 1986: What is in it for domestic consumers?' *Energy Policy*, 14:2 (April, 1986), 98-100; other studies of domestic energy use include: Iman Mansouri, Marcus Newborough and Douglas Probert, 'Energy Consumption in UK Households: Impact of Domestic Electrical Appliances', *Applied Energy*, 54:3 (1996), 211- 285; Adam Faiers, Matt Cook, Charles Neame, 'Towards a contemporary approach for understanding consumer behaviour in the context of domestic energy use', *Energy Policy*, 35 (2007), 4381-4390.

<sup>10</sup> S.A. Tassou, Y. Ge, A. Hadaway, D. Marriott, 'Energy consumption and conservation in food retailing', *Applied Thermal Engineering*, 31 (2011), 147-156.

More broadly the issue of energy and resource use has been a recurrent theme within literature concerning the environment. McNeil has explored energy in terms of the extraction of fossil fuels and the pollution and environmental disasters which were associated with their use.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, Clapp gives consideration to the shifting landscape regarding fossil fuels in terms of price and demand, as well as the implications of economic growth on the availability of such resources, in his assessment of the UK's environmental history since its industrialisation.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, this has focused on fluctuations in broad trends and usage and has not addressed the retail sector.

In light of such an absence within the existing academic literature, Marks and Spencer's engagement with energy conservation remains a history in need of being told. The company's response to energy and energy conservation in the wake of 1973 was significant and showed much about the relationship between the needs of commercial retailing, national agendas and environmental matters. By 1975 Marks and Spencer was claiming that 'full-scale energy management [was] now a fundamental part of [its] business'.<sup>13</sup> Such a proclamation highlighted the perceived need by retailers at the time to begin to actively engage with issues of energy conservation. There was a perceivable change in the relationship between retail organisations and energy; this shift was characterised by a greater awareness and sensitivity towards energy usage. The company's policy regarding energy conservation would by 1990 come to be included in the company's environment policy, but its initiatives regarding energy had a longer history; the evolution of the company's attitude to, and presentation of, its energy efforts provides a valuable window through which to explore the evolving significance of the environment and resource use and how this was mediated and influenced by Marks and Spencer's changing commercial operations and concerns.

Consequently, the central concern of the chapter is to assess the factors which led Marks and Spencer to make the above claim; why did energy conservation become a 'fundamental' issue for the retailer? The chapter will assess how far the actions of Marks and Spencer and other retailers were influenced by the broader national context. Marks and Spencer's response to the unfolding energy situation will then be addressed in light of the company's own commercial motivations with regards energy conservation. The impact of price rises, potential cost savings and continued commercial expansion will be addressed. There will also be an enquiry into the significance of Marks and Spencer's self-image in governing its approach to the issue of energy conservation; the

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<sup>11</sup> McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun*, pp. 297-306.

<sup>12</sup> Clapp, *An Environmental History of Britain since the Industrial Revolution*, pp. 151-176, 247-256.

<sup>13</sup> MSCA, *Press Cuttings*, L/1/2/13, Folder: Saving Energy - January 1975–September 1975, The Electricity Council England and Wales, 'Electricity Working with Marks and Spencer', *The Guardian* (23 July 1975) [n.p].

company's tutelage of Israel in the importance of energy conservation efforts indicated a very self-aware and confident retailer. The extent to which Marks and Spencer maintained a focus on its energy conservation efforts in light of other commercial challenges to its profitability will be appraised. Finally, the importance ascribed to the environment and the finite nature of resources in Marks and Spencer's promotion of the need to conserve energy will be evaluated in an effort to decipher the origins and motivations behind such a conflation of commercial and environmental concerns. The chapter highlights how Marks and Spencer's expansion efforts, coupled with its desire to present itself as a socially conscious and nationally important retailer, shaped its stance on energy conservation.

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In the immediate aftermath of the oil embargo it was clear that the country faced a significant shift in its energy situation. Sandbrook contended that there was a fifteen per cent reduction in oil supplies.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Taylor observed in 1974 that 'crude oil prices have been increased four-fold and the oil producing countries have indicated that the price may be increased again in 1974'.<sup>15</sup> The significance of the 1973 embargo in illustrating the vulnerability of the British market to outside influences heightened the sense of unease apparent at this time. Heath, referred to it as 'the grave emergency now facing our country'.<sup>16</sup> The constituent part of the immediate crisis was economic. Up to fifteen – twenty per cent of production was lost due to the shortage of fuel.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the implications of the shortages and rise in prices tapped into a more pervasive and implicit fear within certain sectors of society that the current standard of living, upon which an individual's wider social standing rested, was under threat. The situation was compounded by increasing inflation and rising unemployment. Consequently, the first and most immediate period of crisis in the wake of the oil embargo, posed tangible and direct consequences for individuals, organisations and society as a whole. It visibly challenged the complacency underpinning everyday energy usage. The speed with which the Government brought in new legislation added to this overall sense of crisis. The Emergency Regulations and the Fuel and Electricity Control Act initiated in 1973, highlighted the Government's desire to restore a degree of control over the situation; at a time of perceived instability they were keen to be seen to act. The Government's three-day week and the S.O.S campaign launched in 1974, in which people were instructed to

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<sup>14</sup> Sandbrook, 'Doomwatch: 73 – 74'.

<sup>15</sup> Taylor, 'Strategic Planning for Resources', p. 12.

<sup>16</sup> Sandbrook, 'Doomwatch: 73 – 74'.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.



“Switch Off Something”, characterised the initial response to the crisis and further heightened the sense of urgency and uncertainty which pervaded at that time.

Marks and Spencer was not isolated from the national narrative of crisis which existed in the closing months of 1973 and characterised 1974. The company felt the effects of the arrival of the three-day week. The company noted in its 1974 annual report that ‘the State of Emergency measures introduced in December limited production for many suppliers to three days a week and restricted lighting and heating in stores until March’.<sup>18</sup> Whilst the company’s annual sales continued to increase at this time the situation undoubtedly had an impact on the day-to-day running of Marks and Spencer’s stores. The company also referred to the situation as a ‘power crisis’ in the same report, echoing the wider sense of concern evident at this time.<sup>19</sup> Marks and Spencer was not alone in this. The John Lewis Partnership repeatedly referred to a crisis within its in-house magazine, *The Gazette*. The Partnership showed concern for ‘the Country’s present economic crisis’.<sup>20</sup> Subsequently, both retailers endorsed the framing of the nation’s troubles as having reached crisis levels. However, it is of note that the choice of words used by the two retailers differed slightly. Marks and Spencer specifically referred to a ‘power crisis’ as a response to the restrictions it faced in powering its stores, whereas the John Lewis Partnership more directly framed the situation as an ‘economic crisis’, alluding not to its own immediate situation but that of the nation. Both descriptions aptly conveyed the variety of concerns which characterised the dialogue concerning energy at this time. It was clear that in its scope and impact the energy situation appeared pervasive and destabilising to the extent that many perceived of it as a crisis.

Conversely, although Marks and Spencer publicly identified the existence of a crisis in its annual reports and company magazine it was somewhat more cautious within its internal correspondence when appraising the situation. A circular to stores dated November 1974 stipulated that, ‘in addition to the normal common sense economies to energy usage’, there were ‘other aspects which may be borne in mind should the situation at any time reach crisis proportion’.<sup>21</sup> Such a statement implied that the company had considered contingency measures should the situation worsen. Whilst the effects of the embargo and the Government’s emergency measures were not commercially beneficial, there was an understanding at the very top of Marks and Spencer that things had not yet become critical for the retailer. The internal nature of the correspondence allowed Marks and Spencer to divert itself from the language of the

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<sup>18</sup> MSCA, *Annual Reports*, CR/D/49, Marks and Spencer Ltd, ‘Annual Report’ (1974), p. 8.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> JLPA, *The Gazette*, John Lewis Partnership, ‘Fuel restrictions and a credit squeeze from the chairman’, 55:43 (24 November, 1973), p. 1067.

<sup>21</sup> MSCA, *Subject file for Marcus Sieff: Energy Conservation*, R/4/3/9, Folder ACC/11/465, ‘Conservation of Energy II’ (22 November 1974) [n.p].

national narrative of crisis and more accurately convey to staff its own position with regards the company's energy usage. Moreover, the circular conveyed an underlying sense that the significance of energy usage would have a longer shelf-life than the trajectory of the initial crisis.

The events of 1973 precipitated a change in how energy was perceived and appreciated. Gerald Friedlander, who had previously worked in Marks and Spencer's Building Group at Head Office and was at the time working as a freelance energy consultant, noted in a *St Michael News* article, 'that from now on we would have to take a very hard look at the way in which we are using this precious commodity'.<sup>22</sup> Friedlander's reference to energy as 'precious' implied not only the centrality of energy supplies to the nation's ability to function, but also the finite nature of energy resources. Whilst the discovery of North Sea oil to some extent alleviated concerns regarding the availability and stability of the UK's resource position, it was clear that, as a result of the brief embargo and the ensuing climate of crisis, the nation's relationship with energy was being more critically assessed, not only by the Government but also by retailers. Marks and Spencer's inclusion of Friedlander's energy conservation article in its own magazine and Friedlander's reference to energy as a 'precious commodity' underlined this.<sup>23</sup> It implied an understanding that individuals and organisations could no longer be profligate in their use of energy.

Whilst the immediate aftermath of the oil embargo generated a dialogue of crisis at the national and commercial level, there was a perceivable shift in attitudes by the mid-1970s. Some began to doubt the dire situation proclaimed on the national stage. Rather than talk of shortages many commentators at the time identified a plentiful supply, particularly as the initial uncertainty regarding the oil embargo began to dissipate and the strike action which had affected the production of electricity had come to an end. *The Economist* declared in an article in 1976 that, 'today, one third of the way to 1980, Britain is in...a most unexpected "short-term energy glut which will last as far ahead as one can see"'.<sup>24</sup> The article reinforced this assessment by stating that the coal industry 'now finds that it is piling up mountains of unsaleable stocks'.<sup>25</sup> Such an image contrasted significantly with narratives of resource scarcity. The article further observed that '1976's electricity demand [is] 23% below what it [the electricity industry] expected when investing for 1976 in 1970', observing that it 'has now found itself closing or partly closing 47 power stations instead'.<sup>26</sup> Such a shortfall in demand may have been the result of a

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<sup>22</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, Gerald Friedlander, 'Waste not want not', 3 (June, 1974), p. 6.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>24</sup> 'Energy Through Pressure', *The Economist* [London: England] 26 June 1976: 62–63 (p. 62), *The Economist Historical Archive*. Web. 1 May 2013.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

number of factors, not least the arbitrary nature of estimating and the fact that the public had been urged, following the launch of the Government's campaign in 1975, to conserve energy. Nevertheless, the reality of the energy situation only three years after the initial crisis, appeared to hold the hallmarks of the pre-embargo energy landscape in which supplies were readily available. Energy continued to retain its national significance after the immediate energy crisis had dissipated because of the broader economic threat facing the country; energy was an expensive national commodity and its impact on the balance of payments situation had not gone unnoticed. Consequently, the motivational impetus cultivated by the initial price rises and shortages cannot be ignored. Nevertheless, the initial crisis can only go so far in explaining the character and development of the energy agenda.

That a sense of unease regarding the energy situation pervaded into the 1970s was clear, yet the roots of such concern were undoubtedly economic. Tom Lester contended, in a 1975 *Management Today* article, that 'the energy crisis is not in essentials to do with energy at all'.<sup>27</sup> As the initial shortages receded, despite continued references to scarcity, resource availability was not the most pressing concern. The cost of energy and its importance to the country's balance of payments propelled the continuing sense of crisis attributed to the energy situation. Bernard Ingham, Director of Information in the Department of Energy in 1975, stated in a *New Society* article, 'there is no current shortage of energy, nor is there likely to be in the medium term. The root problem is the cost of energy'.<sup>28</sup> Whilst Ingham's summation of the situation did not harmonise with the Government's popular reasoning with regards the need to conserve, it did more accurately grasp the nature of the Government's disquiet over the country's energy situation.

In a talk to the Advisory Council on Energy Conservation (ACEC), established in October 1974, J.C. Davidson affirmed that the energy situation 'has a disproportionately large effect on the national trade balance, and the incentive for governments to influence energy usage will be very great indeed'.<sup>29</sup> It must be noted that concern regarding the balance of payments was not the sole preserve of the British at this time; it was an issue which traversed national boundaries. The Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund predicted that 1974 'will almost certainly be "a year of staggering

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<sup>27</sup> Tom Lester, 'The UK's Energy Lethargy', *Management Today* (March, 1975), 50–58; 129–134 (p. 52).

<sup>28</sup> London, The National Archives (hereafter TNA), Central Office of Information, INF 12/1318, *Energy conservation campaign 1975/76*, Bernard Ingham, "'Selling" non – energy', *New Society* (26 June 1975), 769 – 770 (p. 769).

<sup>29</sup> TNA, The Department of Energy, EG 16/81, *Advisory Council on Energy Conservation: Formal circulated papers for 1974*, ACEC (74) 18, J. C. Davidson, 'Thoughts on possible consumer and consumer government reactions to the energy situation' (19 November 1974), p. 2.

disequilibrium in the global balance of payments”<sup>30</sup>. Similarly, other countries experienced the destabilising economic effects of the Arab oil embargo. Nevertheless, the sense of protracted economic decline which stalked the national landscape of 1970s Britain existed for a reason. The balance of payments situation appeared to take a greater hold of the British economy giving rise to the notion that it was on borrowed time. *The Economist* in 1974 estimated that ‘Britain’s current account balance of payments deficit [wa]s running at £3 ½-4 billion’.<sup>31</sup> The rising cost of energy imports was a troubling trend for a nation still awaiting the arrival of North Sea oil reserves and an escalating balance of payments deficit; the situation was compounded further by the general economic turbulence of high inflation and protracted unemployment. Lester contended in 1975 that ‘there is no denying the serious urgency of the energy balance of payments problem to the nation’.<sup>32</sup> Clearly, the significance of the balance of payments issue in heightening the sense of urgency with which the country needed to reassess its use and relationship with energy, must not be ignored. One of the evident legacies of the energy crisis was a deterioration in the balance of payments situation.

A series of advertisements promoting a National Economic Development Office (NEDO) report entitled, *Energy Conservation in the United Kingdom*, were used in multiple publications highlighting the link between the need to conserve and the subsequent benefit to the balance of payments deficit. One such advertisement appeared in both *The Economist* and *Management Today* in 1975 stating that energy saving ‘can save you money and at the same time help the country by reducing imports’.<sup>33</sup> A similar sentiment was found in a British Gas advertisement from 1977. The piece entitled ‘Save It’ appeared in three issues over the course of the year. It asserted that the cautious use of energy ‘will also give a big boost to our balance of payments’.<sup>34</sup> There was a clear effort to foster a link in the public consciousness between the balance of payments issue and the energy situation and the significance of both to the national economy. The link between the cost of energy and its negative effect on the national economy was also remarked on by Marks and Spencer. In the December 1974 issue of its staff magazine, *St Michael News*, the company stated that ‘much of our national economic problem derives from the high cost and scarcity of energy resources’.<sup>35</sup> This

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<sup>30</sup> Taylor, ‘Strategic Planning for Resources’, p. 16.

<sup>31</sup> ‘Time to get tough about energy’, *The Economist* [London: England] 9 November 1974: 82 – 83 (p. 83), *The Economist Historical Archive*. Web. 18 November 2012.

<sup>32</sup> Lester, ‘The UK’s Energy Lethargy’, p. 52.

<sup>33</sup> ‘Save money by saving energy’, *The Economist* [London: England] 11 January 1975: 33, *The Economist Historical Archive*. Web. 19 November 2012; ‘Save money by saving energy’, *Management Today* (March, 1975), p. 132.

<sup>34</sup> British Gas, ‘Save It’, *Management Today* (February; April; July, 1977), pp. 39; 130–131; 15.

<sup>35</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, Marcus Sieff, ‘A Personal Message from the Chairman’, 7 (December, 1974), p. 1.

again emphasised the extent to which the energy situation, and the subsequent reaction to it, was as much a reflection of the wider economic situation as it was the use or misuse of energy. Furthermore, the balance of payments situation and its adverse impact on the British economy was invariably seen as a threat to the 'good life'. The Governor of the Bank of England at this time proclaimed that the balance of payments issue 'will mean for the British consumer "some years of relative austerity stretching perhaps to 1984, with little scope for improvement in personal standards of living"'.<sup>36</sup> Such a dismal pronouncement, in light of the continued affirmation of the link between the balance of payments and the fuel situation, necessarily brought with it renewed impetus to conserve energy. The association of energy use with the wider macro-economic landscape of the nation highlighted the potential effect on individual standards of living; the link between economic well-being and energy usage furthered the initial sense of crisis initiated by the events of 1973, even as the reasons for the crisis evolved and became more complex. The impetus for action was twofold; not only was energy conservation imperative for the national economy, it was also presented as important to the household economy and the affluence there enshrined. This ensured that governments, individuals and retailers had a vested interest in addressing energy usage even as the original energy crisis dissipated to some degree.

The significance of the immediate crisis and the balance of payments situation in engendering a response became more discernible as the initial point of impact receded. Despite vociferous calls to conserve energy in the early to mid-1970s, a shift was apparent in the early 1980s. Whilst energy was still an issue, it did not receive the attention the likes of which it received in the immediate wake of the embargo and during the Government's 1975-1977 national campaign. An advertisement featured in *Management Today*, crafted by the Honeywell Energy Management Group in 1977, stated that 'everybody's talking about saving energy'.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, such a confident pronouncement was motivated by the nature of the business rather than a true reflection of the realities of social and commercial focus at this time. The national and global backdrop was changing. R.E. Hopkinson noted in his report to the Chairman on Marks and Spencer's energy conservation efforts, that 'in 1986 the scenario is dramatically different. Energy is in a plentiful supply and relatively cheap'.<sup>38</sup> The economic burden of energy had somewhat reduced and the attention afforded the issue had waned. Such a situation implied a pragmatic engagement with energy conservation efforts galvanised

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<sup>36</sup> Taylor, 'Strategic Planning for Resources', p. 16.

<sup>37</sup> Honeywell Energy Management Group, 'Let's get to the bottom line of your building's energy saving potential', *Management Today* (January, 1977), p. 81; (March, 1977), p. 106.

<sup>38</sup> MSCA, CR/C/2/37/1, R. E. Hopkinson, 'The Chairman's Scrutiny Energy' (December, 1986), p. 18.

primarily by economic and commercial considerations. When the energy situation became less adverse to commercial and national outlooks, efforts to redress trends in energy usage became more lax. To some degree this illustrated the stimulating effect the original crisis had had.

Once the initial energy crisis had passed, other commercial considerations began to take priority. The second oil shock in 1979 whilst causing prices to spike, did not engender the same level of disruption or uncertainty which characterised the 1973-74 crisis. Marks and Spencer in particular during the early 1980s became increasingly concerned about the level of shrinkage (the waste of products due to damage or theft, either by members of the public or staff) the company had to deal with. Hopkinson noted that training with regards energy management was minimal or absent by 1986 but that this, 'contrasts to the level and attention given to staff training to reduce shrinkage costs'.<sup>39</sup> The number of articles featured in Marks and Spencer's internal magazine at this time regarding shrinkage far outweighed those concerning energy usage. This shift highlighted the changing commercial priorities of the company and the nature of commercial engagement with wider national issues. As the immediate national and commercial threat seemed to disperse, Marks and Spencer's dialogue regarding energy usage became less ardent. Its focus on energy was influenced by the intensity of wider discussions but was shaped by its own internal agendas; shrinkage was a growing concern for the company. The shift in the attention devoted to energy conservation by Marks and Spencer in the early 1980s was not characteristic of all retailers at this time. The John Lewis Partnership deemed it important enough to initiate its own energy conservation efforts in its Waitrose stores – something which it had held off doing in the crisis atmosphere engendered by the embargo and industrial action of 1973. The shift in intensity afforded energy by Marks and Spencer appeared to be the result of the shifting significance of other issues within the business rather than the diminished significance of energy usage generally. Respite from the all-encompassing nature and demands of the initial crisis meant that whilst energy was a commercial concern it was now one of many.

It was testament to the longstanding shift with regard to energy post-1973 that despite the diminished attention afforded energy usage by Marks and Spencer in the early 1980s, it still remained a concern. The fact that Marks and Spencer's Chairman, Lord Sieff, commissioned a scrutiny into the company's conservation efforts in 1986, to be undertaken by Hopkinson, illustrated the importance still attached to it. Hopkinson reaffirmed this within the report:

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

If we are to contain our costs in these highly competitive times then we need good and effective management of all our resources, including energy.<sup>40</sup>

Hopkinson's remarks confirmed that energy remained a decisive commercial issue even if its prominence was less evident. In the latter half of the decade Marks and Spencer sought to reaffirm the need for energy restraint in the minds of its workforce. A 1987 article featured in *St Michael News* exhibited the title, 'M&S...again in the frontline of the battle to conserve energy'.<sup>41</sup> The heading itself conveyed much about the company's continuing desire to conserve energy but also to be seen 'again' as being at the forefront of commercial and national efforts. John Holding, the company's newly appointed energy manager went on to stipulate that 'M&S led the country in energy conservation...and while we have been reasonably vigilant since then we must not be complacent'.<sup>42</sup> Holding's statement implied that once energy conservation had entered the company's consciousness it had remained there, it was the degree of consciousness afforded it which had ebbed and flowed. The initial crisis had acted as a catalyst in garnering attention and action in terms of energy conservation and the significance of energy prices to the nation's balance of payments further ensured a receptive audience to the calls to conserve energy. Nevertheless, the propensity for retailers to conserve was not guaranteed or maintained indefinitely as a result of the crisis. The success of the crisis in instigating a response from retailers was also dependent on other factors; the crisis had planted the seed but it was nurtured by other commercial motivations which outlasted the initial crisis.

### **Marks and Spencer's Response**

Upon the launch of Marks and Spencer's energy conservation efforts in 1974 the company stated that it had three clear aims. These were outlined in a document compiled by the Building Group for the attention of the Chairman in 1982. The document stated that at the point of inception the 'objectives were to help contain the running costs of the business, to show a lead to the country in reducing the strain on the Balance of Payments at a time when oil imports were very high and to conserve finite resources of fossil fuels'.<sup>43</sup> The company's efforts were based on a threefold appreciation of its own commercial context, the wider national outlook and the potential environmental ramifications of continued uninhibited consumption. Whilst the company were eager to

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>41</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'M&S...again in the frontline of the battle to conserve energy' (August, 1987), p. 8.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>43</sup> MSCA, *Subject file for Marcus Sieff: Energy Conservation*, R/4/3/9, Building Division, 'Energy Conservation 1974 – 1982' (November, 1982), p. 1.

mitigate the immediate impact of increasing prices the stated aims of its energy campaign highlighted the company's appreciation of the wider significance of the shifting importance of energy resources. The stated aims also illustrated Marks and Spencer's belief in its own wider role and significance to the nation. All three of Marks and Spencer's concerns can be seen to condition its language and actions with regards energy usage at this time.

The impact of energy costs on retailers was significant in engendering a desire to change habits and practices. Mr N. Jenkins, writing to the *Financial Times* in 1975, went as far as to assert that 'the present drop in consumption is undoubtedly due to price alone'.<sup>44</sup> As a result of price rises the commercial sector did encounter a noticeable shift in their operating costs. Marks and Spencer noted in its staff magazine in 1975 that if the company had continued to consume as much energy as it had the previous year, its 'electricity bill would have gone up by over £1 million'.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, in 1976 Marks and Spencer observed that despite reducing its overall consumption of electricity, 'prices have gone up so much that we have to pay 25 per cent more for what we use'.<sup>46</sup> The cost of energy had undoubtedly ensured that energy usage had become a significant operating concern for Marks and Spencer. Additionally, Friedlander observed in his 1974 *St Michael News* article that 'any increase in the price will have an immediate and pronounced effect on profit margins'.<sup>47</sup> Not only was this the case in the years following the perceived energy crisis but almost a decade later Sainsbury's identified a similar concern for the escalating cost of energy resources. Sir John Sainsbury, during a speech at the National Energy Management Conference in November 1985, at which he discussed his company's energy conservation efforts, announced that 'in ten years prices for our fuel and electricity have risen by a factor of 3.2 compared to 2.04 for what we sell'.<sup>48</sup> He subsequently went on to emphasise that 'it is thus of the greatest importance to us to continue to improve our energy performance'.<sup>49</sup> The cost of energy to the business was significant; energy prices rose at a much higher rate than the price of the company's products, according to Sir John Sainsbury. This had the potential to markedly affect profit margins. Subsequently, energy costs were a key motivating factor

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<sup>44</sup> MSCA, *Press Cuttings*, L/1/2/13, Folder: Saving Energy - January 1975–September 1975, Mr N. Jenkins, 'Incentives to Save Energy', *Financial Times* (24 June 1975) [n.p].

<sup>45</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'A Switch in Time – could save £ ½ million', 1 (February, 1975), p. 1.

<sup>46</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Keeping Costs Down – there's something for us all to do', 2 (March, 1976), p. 1.

<sup>47</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, Friedlander, 'Waste not want not', p. 6.

<sup>48</sup> SA, *Lord Sainsbury KG, General Speeches November 1981 – November 1985*, SA/FAM/5/23, Sir John Sainsbury, 'Energy Efficiency – Supermarket Savings', National Energy Management Conference (13 November 1985), p. 4.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.



in both Marks and Spencer's and Sainsbury's desire to assess their own energy strategies.

When addressing commercial motivations behind the attention afforded energy by retailers, the potential savings that retailers could make were central. Marks and Spencer made repeated references to the savings the company had made as a result of its energy conservation efforts launched in 1974. In a report by Bernard Lubert (the company's Chief Engineer) to the Chairman Marcus Sieff, in 1980, the former stated, 'we are currently saving at the rate of £2.8m a year'.<sup>50</sup> A year later in a document entitled *Energy Conservation: The Essential Strategies*, Lubert further noted:

We estimate that since the introduction of our Energy Conservation policy we have saved over £17 million.<sup>51</sup>

The company outlined yet more savings in a document dated April 1982 in which it was stated that Marks and Spencer had 'saved a total of £20,000,000 by the end of March 1982'.<sup>52</sup> The company had clearly been able to make substantial annual savings over a sustained period of time. The focus on quantifying its energy conservation efforts in financial terms was central to conveying the commercial credibility and value of such endeavours. Energy conservation was still a relatively new consideration compared to more traditional commercial concerns and Marks and Spencer's savings undoubtedly justified the time and attention afforded the issue. Marks and Spencer was keen in a 1982 summary of its conservation efforts, entitled 'The St. Michael Approach to Energy Conservation', to affirm that energy conservation 'may sound altruistic but it has been proved to be good business'.<sup>53</sup> Marks and Spencer sought to outline to staff and shareholders the efficacy of energy conservation by quantifying success in the most traditional and ardently commercial of all signifiers, its ability to reduce costs and boost profit. The company were undoubtedly motivated by such considerations, as its focus on savings attested.

Marks and Spencer's expansion efforts at this time also ensured the continued relevance of energy conservation to the retailer. Not only was Marks and Spencer increasing the number and capacity of its stores, but the food side of the business was growing significantly. Such developments were continually referenced in the company's annual reports. In Marks and Spencer's 1972 report it was noted that 'extensive

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<sup>50</sup> MSCA, *Subject file for Marcus Sieff: Energy Conservation*, R/4/3/9, Bernard Lubert, 'Energy' (22 February 1980), p. 1.

<sup>51</sup> MSCA, *Subject file for Marcus Sieff: Energy Conservation*, R/4/3/9, Bernard Lubert, 'Energy Conservation: The Essential Strategies' (1981), p. 1.

<sup>52</sup> MSCA, *Subject file for Marcus Sieff: Energy Conservation*, R/4/3/9, G. Colman, 'The St. Michael Approach to Energy Conservation' (23 April 1982), p. 1.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

development plans have already been made covering several years ahead and involving the expenditure of nearly £20,000,000 per annum'.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, Judi Bevan noted that 'between 1960 and 1970 M&S food sales rose from £24m to £97m'.<sup>55</sup> This level of development had a crucial impact on the company's energy usage. Whilst the company outlined substantial energy savings, energy manager G. Colman in his 1982 report concerning the company's approach to energy conservation observed:

[Savings] would have been more but for the installation, during the expansion programme of a substantially higher proportion of energy intensive plant and equipment such as foods refrigeration, escalators, customer and goods lifts and air conditioning.<sup>56</sup>

It was clear that Marks and Spencer endeavoured to manage the complex juxtaposition of rising resource prices and commercial expansion. The complexity inherent in balancing such aims was most evident in relation to the company's refrigeration needs. As has been stated, the food side of the business had significantly expanded by this time. A 1975 article in *St Michael News*, stated that 'refrigeration, both display and cold rooms, amounts to some 27 per cent of the Company's total energy bill'.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, a graph taken from Colman's 1982 report (figure one) outlined where electricity had been used per square foot of building area and how this had changed from 1973 to 1982. The graph shows refrigeration accounting for twenty-nine per cent of overall use in 1973, by 1982 this had increased to forty-two per cent.<sup>58</sup> Whilst overall the graph depicts energy savings of thirty per cent, the company witnessed a thirteen per cent increase in energy used for refrigeration. Consequently, it was evident that Marks and Spencer had a clear impetus to conserve energy in order to offset the impact of its own continued expansion.

The significance of commercial growth in motivating energy conservation efforts was similarly identified by Sainsbury's. Sir John Sainsbury stated in 1985 that the company's energy saving efforts were:

All the more valuable for us given that modern supermarkets with in-store bakeries and a greater space for fresh and frozen foods have become more and more energy intensive.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> MSCA, *Annual Reports*, CR/D/47, Marks and Spencer Ltd, 'Annual Report' (1972), p. 8.

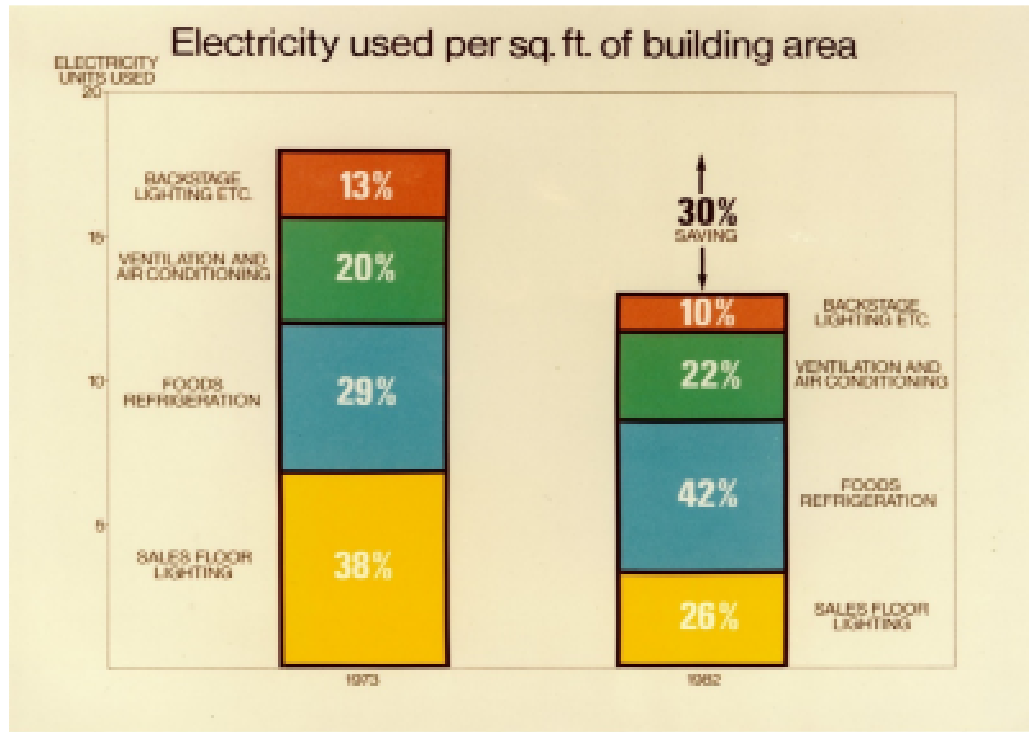
<sup>55</sup> Judi Bevan, *The Rise & Fall of Marks and Spencer...and How It Rose Again* (London: Profile Books Ltd., 2007), p. 57.

<sup>56</sup> MSCA, R/4/3/9, G. Colman, p. 4.

<sup>57</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'A Switch in Time', p. 1.

<sup>58</sup> MSCA, R/4/3/9, G. Colman [n.p].

<sup>59</sup> SA, SA/FAM/5/23, Sainsbury, 'Energy Efficiency – Supermarket Savings', p. 3.



**Figure One: Electricity used per sq. ft. of building area**

The development of food retailing for both Sainsbury's and Marks and Spencer, whilst on a much bigger scale in the case of the former, ensured that both became much more conscious of their energy consumption; refrigeration was an energy intensive, expensive, commercial endeavour. It became a commercial necessity for both Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury's to develop and find long-term solutions to the unfolding energy situation. In view of this it seems that an argument can be made for growth itself having driven forward the commitment to conserve energy as much as the energy crisis itself; the latter acted as a catalyst in terms of awareness and cast light upon a situation which was already necessarily changing as commercial expansion meant that the energy needs of retailers became a more significant commercial consideration.

The importance of growth in generating greater efficiency has been much discussed by academics and contemporaries of the period. C. A. Jenne and R. K. Cattell in a 1983 article contended that 'growth seems to be the key to rising efficiency through the embodiment of more energy efficient technology in new plant'.<sup>60</sup> It is evident that the same can be said for commercial as well as industrial growth as both Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury's developed and invested in new technology. In Marks and Spencer's 1975 annual report the company noted that 'specially designed frozen food units, covered at night to maintain temperatures, use less energy than the previous equipment' and that in 'new stores and extensions, [it was] designing energy conservation systems'.<sup>61</sup> Commercial strategies with regard energy usage were stimulated to some extent by commercial growth which fostered a need for new innovations and greater efficiency.

Whilst energy costs, commercial expansion and potential savings, spurred commercial efforts to address energy usage, the Government's role in directly dictating commercial responses to the energy situation was less clear. The example set by the Government's own national energy conservation campaign (launched in 1975) should not be ignored and will be explored in the following chapter which addresses how both the Government and retailers interacted with the issue of energy conservation. However, for the purposes of the present discussion regarding the causal impetus behind retailers' efforts to conserve, the presence of the Government was less pronounced. Notwithstanding the initial emergency legislation implemented by the Government, which forced retailers to alter their day-to-day trading habits in the wake of energy shortages, the Government thereafter appeared to take a less invasive approach. There were signs that measures identified by the Government were adopted by retailers. Eric Varley, the

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<sup>60</sup> C. A. Jenne and R. K. Cattell, 'Structural Change and Energy Efficiency in Industry', *Energy Economics*, 5:2 (April, 1983), 114–123 (p.120).

<sup>61</sup> MSCA, *Annual Reports*, CR/D/50, Marks and Spencer Ltd, 'Annual Report' (1975), p. 12.

then Secretary of State for Energy, remarked in a press article in 1975 that he 'appreciate[d] the opportunity afforded [him] by the *Financial Times* to renew four appeals to Boards of directors'.<sup>62</sup> Varley outlined the need to 'demonstrate [a] firm commitment to energy saving throughout the company'.<sup>63</sup> He highlighted the need to appoint an energy manager and to 'encourage saving among employees'.<sup>64</sup> Varley further stated the importance of documenting the impact of energy costs, and also the measures put in place to ameliorate them, within annual reports.<sup>65</sup> There was evidence that all of these stipulations were carried out by Marks and Spencer. Although, the extent to which the impetus to do so was primarily driven by Government recommendations was less clear.

Hopkinson's 1986 scrutiny characterised Marks and Spencer's impulse to conserve as an internal one; he referred to 'self-imposed changes' when documenting the savings achieved by the company.<sup>66</sup> To some extent the company had a vested interest in presenting its initiatives to contemporary observers and customers as voluntary. In view of the wider economic uncertainty besetting the nation it would have been commercially prudent to portray a proactive stance. Nevertheless, the internal nature of Hopkinson's scrutiny should be borne in mind. The document was to be seen by the upper echelons of Marks and Spencer management, not a public audience. Therefore Hopkinson's remarks appeared to be based less on a desire to grandstand and more on a desire to report his findings.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, the sense that retail organisations were working to their own rule book was similarly asserted by contemporary observers. John Trafford commented in the *Financial Times* in 1975, that 'most of the progress to date has been by individual companies which have not waited for a lead from Whitehall'.<sup>68</sup> It appears there was an appreciation at the time that the efforts made by retailers with regard energy conservation were in some respects undertaken under their own volition. Consequently, when addressing the motivations behind Marks and Spencer's own energy conservation efforts, whilst the attention afforded the topic by the Government validated and endorsed such endeavours, its influence as a barometer of energy standards and strategies was less apparent.

The lead taken by retailers at this time in relation to energy savings was evident in the case of building insulation levels. Although greater levels of insulation to minimise

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<sup>62</sup> MSCA, *Subject file for Marcus Sieff: Energy Conservation*, R/4/3/9, copy of 'Energy Conservation: Financial Times Survey', *Financial Times* (28 January 1975) [n.p].

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> MSCA, CR/C/2/37/1, Hopkinson, p. 17.

<sup>67</sup> The document itself gave a full and frank picture of the company's energy conservation efforts, noting a number of key areas for improvement and renewed impetus.

<sup>68</sup> MSCA, *Press Cuttings*, L/1/2/13, Folder: Saving Energy - January 1975–September 1975, John Trafford, 'Lethargy in energy saving', *Financial Times* (16 June 1975) [n.p].

heat loss in buildings had been one of the key features of the Government's energy conservation campaign, it was apparent that the level of insulation required by existing legislation was lacking. In Hopkinson's report he noted that the 1985 Building Regulations stipulated a u-value of 0.6.<sup>69</sup> According to Marks and Spencer, following the 1974 energy crisis the company was ahead of the curve in adopting a u-value of 0.4.<sup>70</sup> In order to achieve this the company used 'cavity wall insulation, roof insulation, double glazing and draught proofing'.<sup>71</sup> Hopkinson pointed out that by 1986 a u-value of 0.4 was 'quite common and has become the "norm"' amongst competitors.<sup>72</sup> Hopkinson identified several key retailers (notably Tesco, Asda, BHS and Sainsbury's) who had all adopted the u-value of 0.4 in an effort to ensure more efficient energy use. Consequently, the national standards lagged behind insulation levels adopted by retailers. Hopkinson also speculated that 'there may soon be a change in Building Regulations down from 0.6 to 0.4' implying that the Government's national standards may be reviewed leaving them more in line with current standards adopted by retailers.<sup>73</sup> In fact u-values for domestic buildings, whilst altered in 1976 following the oil crisis to 1.0 and again in 1982 to 0.6, were not altered again until 1990 at which point the building regulations required a u-value of 0.45.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, Hopkinson's scrutiny went on to assert that Tesco began to experiment with a u-value of 0.35 and that Marks and Spencer intended to investigate the validity of this increased level of insulation in terms of conservation benefits and initial outlay of funds.<sup>75</sup> The fact that Marks and Spencer and several other retailers went above and beyond the measures stipulated by the national Government at the time, illustrated the prominence of retailers in the development of more efficient energy practices. The motivation behind such advancements were borne of the growing pressures of energy demands on the profitability of retail operations, rather than government intervention at the national level.

In contrast to the financial factors which motivated Marks and Spencer's energy conservation efforts there were other less quantifiable concerns. Marks and Spencer's image as a trusted national retailer was a marketable commodity. Such an image was both attributed to the company by outsiders, contemporaries and consumers, and also cultivated from within and undoubtedly influenced Marks and Spencer's commercial

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<sup>69</sup> A U value is a unit of measurement assessing heat loss in a building. The higher the U value the more inefficient the insulation standards of the building. A low U value indicates higher levels of insulation. Randall McMullan, *Environmental Science in Building* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, seventh edition, 2012), pp. 48-49.

<sup>70</sup> MSCA, CR/C/2/37/1, Hopkinson, p. 63.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>74</sup> L D Shorrock and J I Utley, *Domestic Energy Factfile* (Watford: BRE Bookshop, Building Research Establishment, 2003), p. 30.

<sup>75</sup> MSCA, CR/C/2/37/1, Hopkinson, p. 64.

narrative and motivation regarding energy conservation. In 1974 Marcus Sieff, in a circular to all store managers, outlined that 'it is essential in the interests of the country and controlling our own expenses that we conserve energy'.<sup>76</sup> Sieff was likely making reference to the balance of payments situation. As discussed earlier, the company showed an awareness of the national economic situation and the significance of energy prices to the national trade balance. What is of more interest here was the wording used by the Chairman. Sieff's proclamation highlighted the company's efforts to characterise energy conservation as both a commercial and national imperative; the company portrayed its efforts as serving both itself and the nation. In this regard Sieff aligned Marks and Spencer's own fortunes, with that of the country.

Marcus Sieff went on to assert in the 1974 circular that:

Marks and Spencer have taken the lead in the past. This is another occasion on which we should be able to set a valuable example to the country whilst benefiting ourselves.<sup>77</sup>

Sieff showed a clear desire to influence not only the actions of his own company but also to have a wider national impact. He intended for the actions of the company to alleviate the national economic burden but also to indicate the way forward for others in society. As such the impetus to respond to the energy crisis for Marks and Spencer was also about being seen to respond. Colman in his 1982 report stated, 'we at Marks and Spencer acknowledged our social and commercial responsibility to demonstrate a lead to the country'.<sup>78</sup> Consequently, the company's involvement in energy conservation efforts served to heighten its position and standing within society and as a platform upon which Marks and Spencer could actively cultivate and strengthen the company's image as a national institution; a retailer who was sensitive and proactive not just to its own commercial sensibilities but those of the nation.

Reference to the wider role and impact of Marks and Spencer's energy conservation efforts were further alluded to by contemporaries. In a 1975 letter to *The Times* it was remarked by the Master of Churchill College Cambridge and Chairman of the ACEC, Professor Sir William Hawthorne, that, 'by making better use of energy they [Marks and Spencer] demonstrate social responsibility as well as financial common-sense'.<sup>79</sup> The suggestion that to use energy responsibly was equal to displaying a social responsibility emphasised the perceived gravity of the energy situation in 1975.

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<sup>76</sup> MSCA, *Subject file for Marcus Sieff: Energy Conservation*, R/4/3/9, from The Hon. Sir Marcus Sieff to All Store Managers, 'Energy Conservation' (27 November 1974) [n.p].

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. [n.p].

<sup>78</sup> MSCA, R/4/3/9, G. Colman, p. 1.

<sup>79</sup> MSCA, *Press Cuttings*, L/1/2/13, Folder: Saving Energy - January 1975–September 1975, from the Master of Churchill College, Cambridge to Sir Marcus Sieff, 'Saving Energy', *The Times* (18 January 1975) [n.p].

Additionally, the statement underlined the increasing duality inherent in the role of retailers at this time to act both as a commercial and a social entity. The financial needs of retailers in the face of growing energy costs dovetailed with the changing social and environmental constructions of energy and energy usage; what was perceived to be good for the nation was also good for business. Marks and Spencer employees were similarly recognised on the national stage through their energy conservation efforts. Bernard Lubert was rewarded for his work on energy conservation as chief engineer for the company with an OBE in the Queen's 1983 Birthday Honours.<sup>80</sup> Marks and Spencer's endeavours in this area and the publicity attached to it confirmed the growing social and national remit of retailers. Marks and Spencer did not shy away from speaking out on what it believed itself and others should be doing to assist the nation. The company were engaged in meetings with numerous national bodies including the Department of Energy and staged exhibits at two national energy shows organised by the Government, as well as the International Council of Shopping Centres (ICSC) Paris exhibition in March 1979.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, the company noted in the same year that its measures had 'won an International Committee of Shopping Centres European Award'.<sup>82</sup> Marks and Spencer's promotion of its energy efforts emphasised not only its desire to endorse its own position and standing within society, as well as outline its own sense of its position and responsibilities, but also highlighted the potential role of the retailer in promoting wider social change.

Marks and Spencer were not alone in trying to conserve energy, Sainsbury's and a number of other competitors similarly engaged in a number of conservation measures. Nevertheless, Marks and Spencer was the only retailer to feature in the Government's national advertisements, designed to support its 1975 'Save It' campaign.<sup>83</sup> The privileged position afforded Marks and Spencer in the campaign may have been influenced by the links between the company and the Heath Government, despite its demise a year earlier. Between 1970 and 1972 Sir (later Lord) Derek Rayner, then a Director of Marks and Spencer, advised the Government on 'the improvement of efficiency and effectiveness' at the Ministry of Defence.<sup>84</sup> The expertise displayed by Rayner in matters of efficiency, coupled with the reputation and brand strength of Marks and Spencer at this time, would not have gone unnoticed by the new Wilson administration. Moreover, the inclusion of Marks and Spencer gave the Government's

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<sup>80</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Former chief engineer honoured', 4 (June, 1983), p. 1.

<sup>81</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, "'Save It' saves millions", 2 (May, 1979), p. 1.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>83</sup> It is unclear whether other retailers were asked and simply turned down the offer to feature. However, the publicity benefits to be garnered from appearing in a national campaign arguably make this less likely.

<sup>84</sup> Colin Pilkington, *The Civil Service in Britain Today* (Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 68.



advertisements a familiar and reliable face. The adverts were issued by the Department of the Environment and appeared in numerous national publications. The advertisement featuring Marks and Spencer (figure two) had the hallmarks of the Government's campaign; the 'Save It' logo was clearly visible in the bottom right corner. Marcus Sieff was pictured alongside text quoting a recent letter Sieff had written to *The Times*. Sieff stated, 'the measures we have taken not only make a contribution to the national effort of energy conservation, but the company will save something like £500,000 of our original estimated energy costs'.<sup>85</sup> This reiterated the mutual benefits derived from Marks and Spencer's efforts for both the company and the nation. Moreover, Sieff made reference to the ability to make substantial savings without 'loss of efficiency'.<sup>86</sup> This was undoubtedly central to the Government's aim, to encourage energy conservation efforts and illustrate the fact that conservation would bring advantages to a business, not harm. The fact that Sieff had penned an open letter to *The Times* confirmed Marks and Spencer's desire to immerse itself in the wider national narrative concerning energy and to foreground its own conservation efforts. The company's inclusion in the Government's national advertising campaign offered further validation of not only the retailer's efforts, but also of Marks and Spencer itself as a prominent national actor and point of reference.

As well as the benefits of being seen to respond to the issue of energy conservation, there was also a potential concern had retailers like Marks and Spencer not acknowledged and responded to changing attitudes towards energy. Marks and Spencer were undergoing expansion into more energy intensive equipment and conveniences at this time, yet there was clearly a wider national narrative which called for energy restraint. The company, by virtue of its own assessment of its place and image within society, had to respond to it. Not least because of the initial climate of crisis engendered by the embargo and the national strikes, but also because such a climate of instability compounded the wider uncertainty with regards the national economy. At a time when Marks and Spencer's sales figures were increasing annually, it had to negotiate a fine line between commercial progress and social sensitivity; the company could not be seen to be wasteful during a period of initial scarcity and economic instability. Marks and Spencer was motivated in its energy conservation endeavours by a desire to balance the need for restraint and growth.

The sensitivity inherent in such a position was clearly understood by the company at this time. Bernard Lubert stated in a 1975 article for *St Michael News*:

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<sup>85</sup> MSCA, *Subject file for Marcus Sieff: Energy conservation*, R/4/3/9, Department of Energy, 'How Marks & Spencer saved energy worth £500,000', *Daily Mirror* (11 March 1975) [n.p].

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* [n.p].

DAILY MIRROR 11 3 73

# How Marks & Spencer saved energy worth £500,000

Sir Marcus Siff, Chairman of Marks & Spencer Ltd, wrote in a recent letter to *The Times*:-

"By adopting sensible measures, we have been able to reduce our consumption of energy by over 15 per cent during 1974 compared with 1973 without loss of efficiency. The measures we have taken not only make a contribution to the national effort of energy conservation, but the company will save something like £500,000 of our original estimated energy costs. The savings have been achieved by:

- 1) Developing throughout our business an awareness of the importance of using energy more efficiently.
- 2) A re-combination of lighting and heating levels which has enabled us to make savings without loss of efficiency or comfort.

3) We have established an Energy Conservation Team in every store and at head office who are charged with the responsibility to make sure that we maintain, and where possible increase, our initial savings."



Sir Marcus Siff, Chairman of Marks & Spencer.



This specially designed lamp, fixed with energy-conserving fluorescent tubes, can be turned on a single remote-control pilot.

Designed by the designers of energy



Lower foot-candle levels of lighting mean reduced heat losses and reduced air conditioning. One store alone made one tonne of lighting cuts, 5 and 10% - 40% more efficient lighting included, using energy-saving developed fluorescent tubes as per Chart shown to the left for non-essential lighting.



Jack Garner, Maintenance Director, Marks & Spencer, Office of the Director, Marks & Spencer, London. The picture shows a staff member operating the 'OFF' switch and before we can see the light.



Energy sense is common sense.

THIS ADVERTISEMENT WAS ALSO IN TODAY'S FINANCIAL TIMES, DAILY TELEGRAPH, DAILY EXPRESS.

Figure Two: How Marks & Spencer saved energy worth £500,000

Energy conservation doesn't mean that we're moving into a dark age of cold misery...what we are aiming at is comfort without waste. We have got to get back to the idea of just having enough heat, enough lighting and enough hot water as is really necessary. By being energy conscious and economical we can stop wastage.<sup>87</sup>

Such a sentiment successfully highlighted the growing concern at the time that society had become somewhat indulgent and wasteful. Lubert's protestations regarding the need to use only 'enough' energy, whilst presuming that individual notions of 'enough' chimed in accordance with each other, emphasised the complex nature of Marks and Spencer's message. Whilst evoking the need for restraint in people's use of energy, the company paralleled this with calls to buy and consume *St Michael* products. Marks and Spencer were keen to present energy conservation as a means to maintain 'comfort without waste' and ensure the sustainability of current lifestyles which were defined by increased consumption. By 1975 the company's efforts to engage in the dialogue surrounding energy conservation was heightened by an underlying effort to reshape attitudes and to move perceptions of conservation away from the popular notion that to conserve necessarily meant going without. This effort to present energy conservation as a delicate equilibrium between the avoidance of excess and the maintenance of existing levels of 'comfort', was further emphasised by the following remarks made by Lubert:

Learning just how much energy we really need to use is a bit like delicately balancing a see-saw – not too much, on the other hand not too little. But in reality it's no game, and it's a situation we are going to have to get used to. So Save It!<sup>88</sup>

Such a statement echoed the promotional slogan of the Government's energy conservation campaign. Additionally, the language used by Lubert illustrated the propensity for the company to talk of the energy situation in terms of its wider ramifications. Lubert's remark underlined a belief that energy usage was undergoing a significant and long-lasting change. Such an appraisal undoubtedly influenced Marks and Spencer's desire to act; the company acknowledged that energy as a national or commercial concern, was not about to disappear. The gravity of the situation as envisioned by Marks and Spencer was also outlined in a 1979 article published in *St Michael News*. Lubert observed that the energy situation was 'a world problem and we're

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<sup>87</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'A Switch in Time', p. 1.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

part of it'.<sup>89</sup> Lubert's claim once again upped the stakes of the energy question and simultaneously placed Marks and Spencer in the thick of it.

Lubert's assertion that the energy situation was a world issue was not mere rhetoric. Marks and Spencer in the wake of the 1973 oil embargo, and subsequent climate of crisis, began to actively engage with Israel concerning the issue of energy conservation. Lubert claimed in a 1980 report to the Chairman, regarding Israel's energy conservation, that 'it has been our [Marks and Spencer's] aim, from the beginning to make available to Israel the benefit of our knowledge and experience'.<sup>90</sup> Such efforts were undertaken with no immediate commercial benefit and added authenticity to the company's claims that 'saving energy is a worldwide problem'.<sup>91</sup> In this instance Marks and Spencer were not only seen to respond at the national, but also the international level. Furthermore, the multiple trips made by Lubert and others to Israel and the meetings had at various levels of government and business within the country, affirmed Marks and Spencer's belief in its own influence and illustrated its attitude towards energy conservation. The company's stipulation, in a 1979 *St Michael News* article, that it was willing to 'share [its] experience with anyone who wants it' emphasised the wider outlook adopted by the company in relation to such matters.<sup>92</sup> Marks and Spencer's efforts in Israel also cast further light on the company's appraisal of its own motivations. Having visited Israel in May 1980 Lubert identified in his report to Sieff that he had 'outlined to the Minister [for Energy and Infrastructure, Mr. Y. Modai] the Marks and Spencer approach to Energy Conservation and the reasons for the campaign; economic, commercial and moral/political'.<sup>93</sup> Marks and Spencer's dialogue with the Israelis illustrated the multifaceted nature of the retailer's appreciation of the growing significance of energy. Its engagement with Israel was undoubtedly underpinned by the long standing connection between the company and Israel. The Jewish heritage of the Marks and Sieff families and the subsequent interest and support given to Israel both independently of, and through, the company, undoubtedly motivated Marks and Spencer's choice of international arena. Moreover, the initial oil embargo was itself a reaction by Arab members of OPEC against western support of Israel in the Yom Kippur War. Marks and Spencer's support of Israel was to some extent an acknowledgement of Israel's precarious energy position as a result of the wider international context. Nevertheless, Marks and Spencer's focus on energy conservation in its interaction with Israel at this

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<sup>89</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, "'Save It' saves millions", p. 1.

<sup>90</sup> MSCA, *Subject file for Marcus Sieff: Energy Conservation*, R/4/3/9, from B. Lubert to the Chairman, 'Israel – Energy Conservation' (4 March 1980), p. 1.

<sup>91</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, "'Save It' saves millions", p. 1.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>93</sup> MSCA, *Subject file for Marcus Sieff: Energy Conservation*, R/4/3/9, from B. Lubert to the Lord Sieff of Brimpton (Marcus Sieff), 'Visit to Israel – May 1980: Energy Conservation' [n.d. likely to be shortly after the visit] [n.p].

time displayed the company's inclination to share its knowledge and approaches. The company clearly believed that the energy situation required a holistic approach which traversed national, commercial and social boundaries.

### **Finite resources, pollutants and the next generation**

The final motivation which Marks and Spencer outlined upon the launch of its conservation efforts in 1974, as previously noted, was its desire 'to conserve finite resources of fossil fuels'.<sup>94</sup> Such a motivation on the part of Marks and Spencer was undoubtedly influenced by the shifting climate of opinion with regards resource use and the quality of the environment at this time. The scarcity of energy supplies experienced as a result of the embargo and industrial action added greater weight to the growing concerns regarding the finite nature of resources and the sustainability of current lifestyles. The energy situation presented a tangible example of the often more abstract claims made by environmentalists; the fragility inherent in depending on finite resources and the threat borne of continued environmental inaction appeared all the more pressing. This link was not lost on contemporaries. A number of advertisements which addressed the issue of energy conservation drew attention to its environmental significance. An advertisement for the company Philips, featured in *The Times* in 1973, stated:

At a time when energy conservation and the quality of the environment are matters of concern to all, the resources of Philips are working for the good of mankind.<sup>95</sup>

Such a statement emphasised the connection between society's careful use of energy and the preservation of the natural environment. The effort on the part of Phillips to align itself within its advertisements to the wider agenda concerning the environment at this time, underlined the growth in the perceived influence and importance of such concerns. Whilst Philips claimed in the piece that such issues were a 'concern to all,' it was less clear whether this was an acknowledgement of the increase in concern evident within popular opinion, or whether it was intended to convey the notion that the potential impact of environmental damage was all-encompassing. Nevertheless, the engagement with such ideas in the company's advertising material signified its belief in the power of the environment and energy conservation to resonate with a consuming public at this time.

Marks and Spencer made a number of references to the environmental dimension of resource use and in particular its relevance to energy conservation efforts. The company sought to present its efforts as not only good for the business but also

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<sup>94</sup> MSCA, R/4/3/9, Building Division, 'Energy Conservation 1974–1982', p. 1.

<sup>95</sup> Philips, 'Display Ad.' *The Times* [London: England] Wednesday 24 October 1973: 20, *The Times Digital Archive*. Web. 8 December 2012.

good for the environment. In a promotional piece entitled *Energy Watch* in 1992 Marks and Spencer contended that 'energy conservation is not just about saving money for Marks and Spencer. It's about the quality of your children's future environment'.<sup>96</sup> The inclusion of such sentiments within Marks and Spencer's company literature echoed the sentiments which had been conveyed within internal government communications. The potential generational impact of current levels of energy use was referenced in Mr M. V. Posner's note regarding fiscal options when assessing conservation strategies (1974), under the auspices of the Department of Energy and the ACEC. Posner made particular reference to 'the cost on our grandchildren' and noted that such considerations should receive sufficient attention so as to assess not only the cost of energy now and in the immediate future but also the 'cost to buy the last barrel'.<sup>97</sup> Both Posner's and Marks and Spencer's framing of the energy situation endorsed the need to address energy as a long term concern. The reference to future generations was noteworthy and should not be understated. Whilst it may appear sentimental, it mirrored the traditional calls of environmentalists who frequently drew attention to the potentially damaging effects of resource use on as yet unborn generations. Jonathan Porritt himself claimed that one of the 'minimum criteria for being green' was a 'recognition of the rights of future generations in our use of all resources'.<sup>98</sup> It was, and still is, a fundamental consideration to those who advocate on behalf of environmental protection. Marks and Spencer's reference to the needs of future generations, and in particular children, with regards resource use, facilitated the continued incursion of such ideas into the commercial sphere, even if such a process of osmosis remained only skin deep. The company's primary aim undoubtedly remained the commercial savings derived from conservation. Nevertheless, this did not mean that the company did not also appreciate and welcome the environmental benefits to be derived from such measures, or the commercial benefit of being seen to acknowledge them. Marks and Spencer produced its *Energy Watch* leaflet in the summer of 1992 at the same time as the United Nations Rio Summit on the environment and development. The heightened attention and consideration afforded the environment both nationally and internationally during that time ensured that Marks and Spencer's comments resonated with the prevailing mood. Furthermore, the company's framing of its energy efforts in such a way gave greater mainstream credibility to sentiments espoused by the wider environmental agenda.

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<sup>96</sup> MSCA, K8/522, *Energy Watch* (Summer, 1992), p. 1.

<sup>97</sup> TNA, EG 16/81, *Advisory Council on Energy Conservation: Formal circulated papers for 1974*, ACEC (74) 8, note by Mr. M. V. Posner, 'The Price Mechanism and Energy Conservation' (6 November 1974), p. 2.

<sup>98</sup> Jonathon Porritt, *Seeing Green: The Politics of Ecology Explained* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher Ltd, 1984), p. 10.

Central to the environmental case regarding energy conservation was the finite nature of fossil fuels, the nation's primary source of energy at this time. This was not only a justification used by Marks and Spencer in its own efforts but was routinely drawn attention to by official bodies and the press at the time. P. Le Cheminant remarked to the ACEC in 1974 that:

The slower the rate at which we are forced to exploit our energy resources the less damage we will do to the environment and the more readily we can accommodate, and repair, the damage which is inevitable.<sup>99</sup>

Moreover, D. G. Cameron writing in *The Economist* in 1978 proclaimed that a delayed response to the energy situation represented, 'another big bite into the ever decreasing fossil fuel store which will never be replenished'.<sup>100</sup> Both Cheminant and Cameron acknowledged the importance of rethinking energy practices to offset the environmental damage engendered through the depletion of finite resources. Cameron's reference to it in 1978 highlighted the staying power of such concerns even after the initial shock of shortages had long abated.

Similarly, Marks and Spencer continued to make a number of references to energy as a precious resource into the early 1990s, further indicating that such concerns had a long and enduring impact on both national and commercial considerations regarding energy. Marks and Spencer launched an internal promotional campaign featuring Sherlock Ohms and Dr Watts-on in 1990; this was intended to once again galvanise the company's energy conservation efforts. Sherlock Ohms and Dr Watts-on were to 'investigate the case of the missing millions'. Within the promotional leaflet sent out to staff Ohms proclaimed, "I discovered long ago that energy applied unnecessarily is a waste of precious resources".<sup>101</sup> To which Watts-on retorted, "You're beginning to sound like one of those infernal greens who tell us we're all doomed if we go to sleep and leave the telly on".<sup>102</sup> Whilst the parody was designed to amuse and entertain it raised a number of interesting points with regards energy usage. Ohms was clearly characterised superficially as a "green" character and this was humorously reinforced by Watts-on's response. Marks and Spencer managed to draw attention to the issue of energy waste and the need to conserve resources whilst simultaneously seeming to

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<sup>99</sup> TNA, EG 16/81, *Advisory Council on Energy Conservation: Formal circulated papers for 1974*, ACEC (74) 1, Note by P Le Cheminant, 'The United Kingdom Background' (23 October 1974), p. 3.

<sup>100</sup> D. G. Cameron, 'Letter to the Editor - Europe's energy', *The Economist* [London: England] 11 February 1978: 6, *The Economist Historical Archive*. Web. 8 December 2012.

<sup>101</sup> MSCA, *Subject file for Marcus Sieff: Energy Conservation*, R/4/3/9, The Energy Team, 'Watts-on' (September, 1990), p. 1.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

mock the “greens”. There was no explicit indication as to who the company was referring when referencing ‘those infernal greens’, although it may be surmised that such a comment implicitly referred to the green political agenda at this time. Particularly as the Green Party had had its biggest electoral showing in the 1989 European Election. Furthermore, Ohms and Watts-on appeared again in a 1991 training video entitled *Energy Gremlins*. In the video Ohms claimed that “the issue of conservation goes beyond petty politics Watts-on” in response to Watts-on’s claim that Ohms was again, “sounding a little green”.<sup>103</sup> This seems to confirm the political focus of Marks and Spencer’s “green” references. Additionally, the dialogue between Ohms and Watts-on illustrated Marks and Spencer’s desire to appear receptive to specific environmental concerns, such as resource depletion, whilst distancing itself from the “green” agenda which was still intermittently plagued by connotations of irrationality and extremes; environmental concern needed to be rationalised and moderated to fit the measured and considered commercial image proffered by Marks and Spencer.

This is not to say that the company was not influenced by the changing environmental agenda and the effect this had on perceptions regarding energy conservation. Whilst the finite nature of resources was a recurring theme it was also evident that as the environmental agenda grew in knowledge the characterisation of the need to conserve energy diversified. Increasingly in the early 1990s greater attention was paid to the damaging effects of carbon dioxide emissions and the “greenhouse effect” by environmental campaigners, as a result of the discovery of the Ozone-hole in the 1980s. In turn Marks and Spencer began to make specific reference to such concerns, highlighting the influence the changing environmental discourse had on how energy use was perceived and presented within the commercial sphere. In 1990 J. R. Benfield, Marks and Spencer’s Divisional Director of Store Development asserted that:

A small individual effort could result in a substantial saving, not only to the company’s energy bill, but to the environment also, by reducing harmful emissions to the atmosphere, caused by the generation of energy.<sup>104</sup>

Enfield’s statement borrowed the language of the environmental agenda at this time to draw a link between the established commercial needs of the business and the needs of the wider environment. The suggestion was that commercial and environmental survival could be mutually achieved through a more judicious use of energy resources. Moreover, Enfield’s comments posited the notion that the demands of business and the environment were not always mutually exclusive or paradoxically opposed.

The influence of changing environmental ideas on Marks and Spencer at this time can be seen again in a staff promotional leaflet from 1990 in which it was proclaimed that

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<sup>103</sup> MSCA, P10/1/50, Marks and Spencer Ltd, *Energy Gremlins* (1991) [on VHS].

<sup>104</sup> MSCA, R/4/3/9, ‘Watts-on’, p. 1.



less energy usage 'means less carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere to contribute to the greenhouse effect'.<sup>105</sup> Not only did Marks and Spencer's reasoning actively utilise the lexical framings of the environmental movement through its reference to the 'greenhouse effect', it also indicated a clear effort to disseminate such knowledge and to reinforce the cognitive link between energy use and environmental degradation. The fact that Marks and Spencer's environmental reasoning behind the need to conserve energy can be seen to evolve over time, emphasised the extent to which commercial retailers were receptive to wider social and environmental concerns. Energy conservation and more broadly the environment, was a far from static issue and it required a fluid commercial response.

Lastly, whilst it was unclear as to whether national and commercial claims regarding the need to protect the environment by way of conserving energy were stimulated by an appreciation of wider societal sentiment at a grass roots level, certain commentators did draw such a causal link. Taylor contended at the time:

The current concern about the Environment, agitation about Pollution, and protests against the Consuming Society provide other cogent reasons for...management...to re-assess their organisation's use of energy.<sup>106</sup>

He went on to state, 'air and water pollution is waste, litter is waste, planned obsolescence is waste, and waste in a world with limited resources is antisocial'.<sup>107</sup> Here Taylor alluded to the growing social dimension afforded such issues as he advanced the notion that at this time waste was no longer considered a benign by-product of societal progress; it existed as an antithesis to a healthy society. Consequently, the conservation of resources became a social as well as an environmental necessity. Taylor further remarked that the public had become 'increasingly concerned about pollution and waste'.<sup>108</sup> Such a contention is supported by the observations made in Chapter One regarding the nature of popular concern regarding the environment. Moreover, consumers wrote to retailers about efforts regarding energy conservation in relation to the environment. In 1991 Mrs M. Fleming wrote to the manager of the John Lewis store in Milton Keynes. She stated that she had been 'a regular customer' in the store but was unconvinced that the company was sufficiently engaging with the need to conserve.<sup>109</sup> To outline her case regarding the importance of energy conservation she went on to assert that, 'approximately half of the human produced greenhouse gasses are from the burning of fossil fuels. Using less energy and using energy more efficiently results in

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>106</sup> Taylor, 'Strategic Planning for Resources', p. 18.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>109</sup> JLP, *Energy*, 4411/L, letter from Mrs Margaret Fleming to the Manager of the John Lewis Store in Milton Keynes (10 December 1991) [n.p].

reduced emissions of carbon dioxide and pollutants'.<sup>110</sup> Mrs Fleming's letter highlighted a popular awareness of the growing discursive link between energy conservation and harmful emissions, as well as the possibility of retailers being held to account over their efforts or perceived lack thereof.

Whilst popular opinion made it increasingly appropriate to show engagement with energy conservation in light of its environmental impact, retailers themselves often acted ahead of the popular curve in terms of practical behaviour change. As will be shown in the following chapter, retailers did much to promote a more pragmatic and active engagement with energy conservation amongst its workforce and the wider public. Moreover, such action was evident in the John Lewis Partnership's response to Mrs Fleming's letter. The company's Chief Information Officer, Marek Effendowicz, replied with a detailed explanation of the company's efforts. He finished with the assertion that the Partnership 'are conscious of the need to use as little energy as possible. All our buildings are designed with economical energy usage in mind and each has an energy efficiency target which is continually monitored'.<sup>111</sup> Whilst it is unclear as to whether it routinely provided such detailed responses to all customer enquiries, the length and thought that went into Effendowicz's reply illustrated the desire on the part of the company to be credited with acting upon the issue. Such a stance from the John Lewis Partnership highlighted a marked difference from its earlier outlook in the wake of the 1973 shortages which was characterised by an ad hoc approach governed largely out of necessity in the face of marked shortages. The concerted effort outlined by Effendowicz to Mrs Fleming emphasised the growth in the importance of such issues and the long term ramifications of the shift in energy resources set in motion by the oil embargo and the industrial strikes of 1973.

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This chapter has explored the motivations behind Marks and Spencer's energy conservation campaign established in 1974. Marks and Spencer's claim that it was motivated by a need to rationalise its own operating costs, reduce the impact of energy imports on the national economy and preserve finite resources, has been addressed in its various facets.

The 1973 oil embargo and the industrial unrest of 1974 had a catalytic effect on the efforts of Marks and Spencer to engage more robustly in a reappraisal of its energy habits. It is clear that the perceived crisis focused attention on the implications of energy use for the economy as a whole. Whilst it was predominantly presented as an energy

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid. [n.p].

<sup>111</sup> JLPA, *Energy*, 4411/L, response from Marek Effendowicz (Chief Information Officer) to Mrs M. Fleming (13 January 1992) [n.p].

crisis, the wider economic fortunes of the nation, in particular its balance of payments situation, heightened the sense of urgency regarding the country's reliance on imported energy resources. The epicentre of the crisis itself was relatively short in duration and its consequences, once the initial shortages had abated, illustrated the extent to which national events could influence the outlook of commercial retailers.

Analysis of Marks and Spencer's stance regarding energy conservation has shown the company's desire to be seen to be responsive at a time when the country was perceived to be in the midst of a crisis. The chairman at the time, Marcus Sieff, was increasingly vocal regarding the need to conserve energy and talked repeatedly of the nation and the national need. The open advocacy of energy measures on the part of Marks and Spencer conveyed the idea that the company was leading from the front, both within the commercial and national arena. This further reinforced the company's position as a national institution and correspondingly reinforced consumer confidence in the retailer as a reliable and efficient operator. The company's inclusion in the government's national advertising campaign with regards its conservation efforts further cultivated and solidified such an image at a time when retailers were increasingly expected to offer more than simply the provision of goods. The chapter's discussion of Marks and Spencer's dialogue with Israel further confirms the company's intention to lead and influence others. It showed the company's belief in the efficacy of efforts to conserve energy in a variety of arenas beyond its own specific circumstances. Furthermore, such interaction between state officials in Israel and top figures within Marks and Spencer highlighted the transferability of the concerns and approaches adopted by commercial retailers.

A central theme of the chapter has been the pronounced effect that increased energy prices, and the growing energy demands of continued commercial expansion, had on the operating costs of the business. At the same time as energy was becoming more expensive, retailers were increasingly finding they needed to use more of it; such a situation necessitated a change in approach with regards energy usage. The savings that Marks and Spencer was able to make through its energy conservation efforts ensured that it was a business strategy that paid. Such a financial impetus was a galvanising factor in the company's decision to alter its approach to its energy usage and in the decision of many of its competitors to do the same; the chapter has highlighted how Sainsbury's similarly began to more robustly assess its policy towards energy at this time. Additionally, the chapter's discussion of building insulation practices, with regards retail stores, has illustrated the degree to which commercial expediency led retailers to go beyond national standards. This climate of innovation will be assessed in greater detail in the following chapter's assessment of the methods used by Marks and Spencer,

and its competitors, to cultivate greater energy conservation and changing habits within its retail operations.

The chapter's assessment of Marks and Spencer's public engagement and its internal documents, including correspondence and training material, has highlighted that Marks and Spencer and a number of its competitors were aware of the environmental dimensions of energy use and conservation efforts. The intention of the present chapter has not been to claim that Marks and Spencer was a paid up environmental advocate. However, it has been shown that the company was increasingly aware of the environmental implications of its efforts and sought to acknowledge these, believing that such justifications would resonate with an increasingly aware and more environmentally conscious society.

Moreover, Marks and Spencer's presentation of its energy conservation efforts during this period highlighted the shifting nature of environmental awareness and how this influenced the company. As wider environmental concern developed from a focus on the finite nature of resources and the plight of future generations, to include growing fears regarding the effects of harmful emissions, this can be seen in Marks and Spencer's own environmental justification of the need to conserve energy. Furthermore, the chapter has illustrated Marks and Spencer's efforts to simultaneously promote its environmental case and yet distance itself from the "greens". This was most clearly displayed in the training material which the company developed, which illustrated the extent to which there remained a reluctance within the company to be associated with the more extreme connotations of environmental concern; old stereotypes died hard.

Marks and Spencer's changing attitude towards energy usage was fundamentally economic, but the company was also undoubtedly influenced by the wider national context and the evolving environmental discourse at this time, in its presentation and justification of its policies. Chapter Three continues the thesis' exploration of Marks and Spencer's evolving stance with regards energy by addressing the ways in which the company implemented its energy conservation campaign.

## Chapter Three

### Save It: Is “Energy Sense”, “Common-sense”?

The methods and approaches used by Marks and Spencer and successive governments to try and engender energy conservation efforts were as diverse as the reasons behind the growing attention and status afforded the issue. Although the initial oil crisis was relatively short in duration, it generated a belief that at a national, commercial and individual level, the approach and attitude of many towards energy use needed to change. How this was conceived and carried out by UK governments and Marks and Spencer is the focus of this current chapter. The nature of Marks and Spencer's efforts to inculcate the need to conserve energy, not only within its own organisation but also its efforts to shape the practices of individuals, is of particular note. The issue of energy conservation illustrated the complexities inherent in trying to orchestrate a change in individual and organisational attitudes and habits. This mirrored many of the wider struggles which characterised efforts to encourage greater environmental awareness and action. Marks and Spencer launched a companywide energy conservation campaign, which, as mentioned in the previous chapter, received national attention through the Government's use of the retailer as an example of good practice within its own national press campaign. Despite such influence, Marks and Spencer's energy conservation efforts have yet to be explored by academics.

The measures employed by the Government in the wake of the oil crisis and industrial unrest have been well documented. Dominic Sandbrook and Andy Beckett have both provided an overview of the Government's response and the arrival of the three day week.<sup>1</sup> A fifty per cent reduction in street lighting, the banning of floodlights for sporting events and the order to maintain office temperatures below 63°F characterised the initial period of crisis.<sup>2</sup> However, the long-term efforts of successive governments to cultivate energy conservation efforts are not addressed in the general histories of the period. This has more often been the focus of academic study regarding energy campaigns more specifically. David J. Crossley's work on national campaigns in particular offered a more in-depth assessment of the UK Government's efforts to inculcate the need to conserve energy within the domestic household.<sup>3</sup> In addition, Ian Brown's 1987 article similarly addressed national approaches to energy and the extent

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<sup>1</sup> Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, pp. 584-586; Beckett, *When the Lights Went Out*, pp. 132-138.

<sup>2</sup> Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, p. 585.

<sup>3</sup> David J. Crossley, 'The role of popularization campaigns in energy conservation', *Energy Policy* (March, 1979), 57-68.

to which they were consistent or effective.<sup>4</sup> This work has been broadened by Owen's study, referred to in the previous chapter, which offered a critical assessment of government campaigns in a variety of countries including the UK.<sup>5</sup> Whilst Owen makes reference to the commercial sector in terms of energy use, there is no sustained assessment of retailers.

Those conducting research in the sub-field of business and the environment have similarly done little to acknowledge energy conservation efforts within the operations of retailers in any detailed way. Eden made a brief reference to the substantial savings made by Safeway in terms of its energy conservation efforts between 1988 and 1989, as part of her wider analysis of why businesses sought "greener" business strategies and approaches in the late eighties and early nineties.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the profiles detailing the social and environmental policies of a number of top companies contained in Adams, Carruthers and Hamil's *Changing Corporate Values* do contain references to the energy conservation efforts of a number of retailers, but this is limited to a statement that such policies existed within specific corporate entities rather than a thorough assessment of them and their evolution within the companies concerned.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, the efforts of retailers to implement their own energy conservation campaigns, as Marks and Spencer did in 1974, have yet to receive detailed assessment within the existing academic literature.

The present chapter seeks to redress this by investigating Marks and Spencer's energy conservation efforts in conjunction with the broader national context shaped by the government's own efforts to increase awareness and alter habits with regard energy usage. There will be an assessment of the successive energy conservation campaigns launched by the Government and the extent to which they influenced the approach of Marks and Spencer. The company's research and development efforts, which illustrated the perceived gravity of the energy situation and the propensity for retailers to take a longer-term view when it came to resource use, will also be explored. Marks and Spencer's focus on housekeeping methods and its adoption of the language of the household economy as central tenets of its efforts to generate energy conservation efforts in its staff, are addressed. Indeed, there was a clear intent on the part of Marks and Spencer, through its company literature and communication to staff, to draw a link between its own efforts to conserve as a commercial company and the plight of the domestic household. The potential to communicate this to a wider public audience

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<sup>4</sup> Ian Brown, 'Administering energy saving: four years on', *Energy Policy* (December, 1987), 534-537.

<sup>5</sup> Owen, *Public Purpose or Private Benefit?* pp. 87-116.

<sup>6</sup> Eden, *Environmental Issues and Business*, P. 10.

<sup>7</sup> Adams et al., *Changing Corporate Values*, pp. 136, 139, 143, 160, 225, 236, 315, 322, 326, 438, 448.

through the dissemination of its staff magazine illustrated the opportunities open to retailers to influence wider behaviour, due to their informal day-to-day access to people's lives. It is evident that Marks and Spencer sought to find the common ground between its needs and those of individuals to affect changes in energy habits. Consequently, its efforts offer a valuable opportunity to evaluate the role of retailers in influencing and responding to changes in their operating environment, in this instance, with regard energy resources.

### S.O.S

The Government's approach to energy following the embargo of 1973 and the miners' strike of 1974 was characterised by a desire to alter energy habits and instil within people the need to consume less energy. Despite the discovery of North Sea oil the nation's energy position had all too quickly been destabilised; the speed with which the nation's economy and people's daily lives had been brought to a halt cultivated a pervasive sense of crisis. In an effort to stem the perceived decent into chaos, the three-day week was introduced and the Government instructed the nation to 'Switch off Something'. The phrase was the embodiment of the Government's initial energy campaign launched in 1974. The S.O.S campaign had all the hallmarks of a crisis response, hastily envisioned, simple in its message and directed at the masses; the S.O.S call itself embodied universal connotations of emergency. The campaign was borne in the eye of the initial storm. To some extent it had the desired effect; popular awareness of the need to conserve energy was higher than it had ever been. Measures like the reduced speed limits sanctioned by the Secretary of State for Energy Eric Varley in 1974 and pithy advice slogans such as 'have a bath with a friend', had ensured that energy use was on the popular radar.<sup>8</sup> A survey conducted by the newly configured Department of Energy, established January 1974, highlighted that popular attitudes to energy conservation showed a high tide of awareness.<sup>9</sup> Individuals when asked how important they deemed energy saving to be, fifty-nine per cent thought it was very important and twenty-three per cent of respondents deemed it to be essential.<sup>10</sup> The sampling was randomly selected by the department and as such was not unduly predisposed to an interest or awareness in energy conservation. As noted by the accompanying report produced by the Department of Energy, this amounted to 'an extremely high level of awareness of the need to conserve energy' with four out of five

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<sup>8</sup> Horace Herring, 'Does energy efficiency save energy? The debate and its consequences', *Applied Energy*, 63 (1999), 209-226 (p. 209).

<sup>9</sup> TNA, EG 16/81, *Advisory Council on Energy Conservation: Formal circulated papers for 1974*, ACEC (74) 6, Department of Energy, 'Public Attitudes to Energy Conservation' (November, 1974), p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* [n.p].

people deeming energy conservation to be either essential or very important.<sup>11</sup> Whilst such levels of awareness could be argued to have been heavily influenced by the period of crisis itself and the very real day-to-day impact of higher prices and fuel shortages, as opposed to the Government's S.O.S campaign, the timing of the survey suggests otherwise. The research was undertaken in the August of 1974, some months after the three-day week was brought to an end and at a time when energy costs for most households would have been less marked due to the warmer weather. The Department of Energy itself noted that due to the timing of the data collection the results may 'represent a low watermark of public awareness'.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, the figures collated by the Department of Energy appeared to attest to the success of the S.O.S campaign in ensuring that energy retained a noticeable profile even as the initial impetus of the immediate crisis began to wane.

In light of the success of the S.O.S campaign in further galvanising and sustaining an awareness of energy conservation amongst the public, *The Economist's* claim in 1974 that 'Britain's lack of an energy-conservation programme in the face of mounting debt is indefensible', was unnecessarily disparaging.<sup>13</sup> The country did not completely lack a programme but rather the S.O.S campaign was directed too much towards popular awareness, with less appreciation of what this amounted to in practice. The effects of greater awareness on individual energy use were not straightforward. Despite well over three quarters of respondents claiming the importance of energy saving in the Department of Energy's survey, when individuals were asked how they would cope with increased energy rates the results were slightly more nuanced; people's behavioural responses to the prevailing energy situation was less emphatic. The results recorded that forty-five per cent of participants would economise as a result of higher energy rates meaning that over half of the individuals taking part found other solutions to the energy predicament. As many as twenty-six per cent contended that they would simply have to pay the increase and eleven per cent claimed they would seek a wage increase. Similar to the latter solution, five per cent contended that they would work more hours. Thus, forty-two per cent of respondents gave answers which implied that the energy situation would not inherently change their attitude to energy use but rather the cost increases would be compensated for in other areas. There were some signs that increased energy rates would lead to behaviour which brought about conservation; six per cent of individuals responded that they would cut down on their heating and five per cent claimed they would go without.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, it was apparent that whilst attitudes to energy conservation appeared sympathetic, the realisation of such sympathies in terms of

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> 'Time to get tough about energy', *The Economist*, p. 82.

<sup>14</sup> TNA, EG 16/81, ACEC (74) 6, 'Public Attitudes to Energy Conservation' [n.p].



behavioural change was less assured. Furthermore, in the survey data it was reported that 'the number of people planning to install energy-saving devices in their homes in the future is low'.<sup>15</sup> The report found that:

Five per cent are planning to install double glazing, four per cent draught reducers, four per cent a changed form of heating, three per cent roof insulation and three per cent lagging on pipes or tanks.<sup>16</sup>

Such figures conveyed the popular reluctance to commit financially to energy conservation methods. Many of those that asserted that they were planning to install in the future, were those that had already undertaken some form of energy measures. Future action appeared to some extent to be dependent on an individual's existing sensibilities towards energy, as well as on their ability to finance such efforts.

Despite the gap between popular awareness and individual behaviour, reductions in energy use were observable; Varley noted in a parliamentary session in April 1975 that:

Energy consumption has gone down...total energy consumption in 1974 was 4.5 per cent. down on 1973. Oil consumption in 1974 was down by over 6.5 per cent. compared with 1973.<sup>17</sup>

Varley sought to validate the 1975 'Save It' campaign by outlining savings. Nevertheless, the aforementioned campaign was not launched until 20 January 1975. As such the savings mentioned by Varley were likely attributable to the initial S.O.S. campaign rather than the new 'Save It' initiative. The reductions were also undoubtedly affected by the shortages and restrictions put in place by the emergency measures at the end of 1973 and during the first few months of 1974. Moreover, some observers have attributed the decline in energy consumption to other external factors. Patrick Jenkin, the opposition spokesman on Energy raised such a contention in the same parliamentary session. Jenkin enquired, 'in view of the mild winter, rising unemployment and a stagnant economy, why does the right hon. Gentleman think that his figures have anything to do with his Save It campaign?'<sup>18</sup> Whilst such external factors can be said to have had a tangible effect on levels of energy consumption, to equate reductions in use solely to such conditions and ignore the impact of the campaign produces the same narrow explanations which Jenkin appeared to caution Varley against. In reality there was no mono-causal explanation for the apparent reduction in energy usage. Although rising unemployment and the hostile economic environment experienced by many had some

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Parliamentary Debates House of Commons (HC Deb), 7 April 1975, vol. 889, cols. 798-800.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

effect on individual use of energy, it would be disingenuous to assert that reductions in energy use were solely the result of such external influences. As the attitude data collated by the Department of Energy suggested, individuals were aware of the need to save energy and despite a weaker correlation between such awareness and the implementation of energy conservation methods, this was not to say that efforts to install the latter were non-existent. Furthermore, the data collected by the Department of Energy reported that a significant proportion of individuals believed that energy prices were rising at a slower rate than other items. It was remarked that 'the majority of respondents felt that all fuels had gone up in price over the last 12 months, but fuel/energy was felt to have gone up less in the last 12 months than most other items of household expenditure'.<sup>19</sup> In light of such observations it seems that reductions in energy use were not inherently a result of the prevailing economic situation alone. Moreover whilst individuals appeared reluctant to implement specific energy conservation measures, this was not to say that their energy habits were not changing and eliciting an overall reduction in energy usage. Therefore, the data provided by Varley, and the results of the public attitudes survey conducted in August 1974, illustrated a degree of effectiveness on the part of the Government's initial S.O.S campaign.

In addition to the S.O.S campaign a series of advisory bodies were also created, the most notable of which was the ACEC under the Chairmanship of Professor Sir William Hawthorne, in October 1974. Additionally, an Energy Resources Subcommittee of the House of Commons Select Committee on Science and Technology was also established, chaired by Labour M.P. Arthur Palmer. A number of publications were also produced in an effort to publicise the energy situation. A report by the Central Policy Review Staff entitled *Energy Conservation* was published in 1974 outlining the Government's position. The report boldly stated that 'only Government can engender both the sense of urgency and the actual urgency that is needed'.<sup>20</sup> Such a claim was based on a variety of tacit assumptions regarding the role of government and its ability to affect widespread changes in day-to-day habits. It implied that the Government were in a position unique to itself from which to instigate significant changes in consumer behaviour and social patterns of energy use.

Following the S.O.S campaign, despite high levels of popular awareness regarding the need to conserve energy and the Government's assessment of its own responsibility in engendering a sense of urgency, the extent to which it would be able to generate a change in individual behaviour was questioned. J. C. Davidson noted in his talk to the ACEC in November 1974 that 'individuals will be slow to change existing habits

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<sup>19</sup> TNA, EG 16/81, ACEC (74) 6, 'Public Attitudes to Energy Conservation', p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> The Central Policy Review Staff, *Energy Conservation: A Study by The Central Policy Review Staff* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, July 1974), p. 1.

of behaviour in energy usage'.<sup>21</sup> Davidson further contended that people 'will give up other pleasures in order to continue using high cost fuel for the freedom of personal transportation and to ensure warmth in their homes'.<sup>22</sup> Individuals had grown used to a certain standard of living and as the three-day week came to an end and the sense of emergency with regards energy supplies abated, there was less immediate incentive to 'Switch Off Something'. The Government concluded that if a long-term change in energy habits was to be realised energy conservation would need to be further cultivated and promoted. A national drive to change attitudes was envisioned by the Government in 1975, in the form of an energy conservation campaign entitled, 'Save It'. The launch of such a campaign highlighted the assertion at the time that the energy situation presented a significant enough concern to warrant a continued national effort to alter consuming habits.

### **Save It**

The Government's 'Save It' campaign, like its predecessor, implored people to be less wasteful. The focus remained on energy conservation efforts as the primary means by which meaningful energy savings could be achieved. The centrality of conservation to the Government's energy platform at this time was underlined by the creation in 1975 of the Energy Conservation Division within the Department of Energy. The Government also appointed its first Minister specifically responsible for energy conservation in 1976. Nevertheless, although the new 'Save It' campaign was based on a similar assumption of the need to conserve energy, the Government sought to distance the campaign in spirit and tone, from the earlier S.O.S campaign. In a document intended for the Treasury, the Central Office of Information (COI) outlined that the 'Save It' 'campaign is intended to promote the long-term conservation of all fuels...by all consumers'.<sup>23</sup> The correspondence further emphasised the transition between the initial S.O.S campaign and the new 'Save It' campaign. The COI identified that the latter 'contrasts with the 1974 exercise which involved only a single short-term conservation message for domestic electricity'.<sup>24</sup> The Government's approach had evolved as it sought to engender a more long-term reappraisal of energy habits.

The complexity of the Government's aims in launching the new 'Save It' campaign were evident in a letter to J. H. James at the Treasury Chambers in December 1974 from D. J. Etheridge of the COI. Within it Etheridge reiterated that, 'this will require

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<sup>21</sup> TNA, EG 16/81, ACEC (74) 18, Davidson, 'Thoughts on possible consumer and consumer government reactions to the energy situation', p. 1.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> TNA, INF 12/1318, *Energy conservation campaign 1975/76*, document intended for the Treasury, 'Energy Conservation Campaign' (2 January 1975), p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

a heavyweight campaign, since it will not be easy first to create and subsequently to maintain a change of attitude and habit whilst avoiding a sense of short-term crisis'.<sup>25</sup> The repeated affirmation of the need for it to be a robust and far reaching campaign, in Etheridge's words 'heavyweight', underlined the perceived gravity of the task envisaged by the Government. As the initial shortages and price rises abated the inclination on the part of the individual to alter habits and attitudes was distinctly less assured. In trying to move beyond a short-term crisis response - which whilst engendering action was not always precise or enduring in its effects - the Government arguably ran the risk of signalling a reduction in concern. By endeavouring to portray the energy situation as a long-term commitment it implied a degree of distance in terms of time and consequence, which had the potential to dilute perceptions regarding the importance and proximity of the issue and thus weaken the individual's impetus to act. The Government noted in a talk to the ACEC, in 1974, that 'concern with security of supply will often be of even greater interest to the consumer than concern for economy'.<sup>26</sup> With this in mind as energy availability returned to normal, the Government would need to develop attitudes towards energy conservation based on a more enduring platform than that provided by the initial crisis. Consequently, the Government sought to move beyond, as one MP at the time called it, 'the panicky "switch off something" and "clean your teeth in the dark" campaign' of 1974.<sup>27</sup>

Moreover, the cost of the Government's 'Save It' campaign was significant, particularly in light of the broader economic difficulties besetting the nation. With inflation at an all-time high and rising, and unemployment on a similar trajectory, the existence of a seemingly wholesale Government effort concerned with energy consumption was notable. Mr R. A. Fleming, working in the finance division of the Government's COI, contended that the campaign 'is likely to...become one of the most important and costly - campaigns ever handled by COI'.<sup>28</sup> Fleming further stated that 'this will be a campaign of very heavy weight', noting that 'the launching cost (for 2 ½ months) will be about £1.4m (compared with the earlier [estimate] of £1.6m for 3 months) and the annual rate perhaps £2.7m'.<sup>29</sup> Whilst such figures were cost projections, they highlighted the importance attached to the issue. The extent to which the Government would have put resources

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<sup>25</sup> TNA, INF 12/1318, *Energy conservation campaign 1975/76*, correspondence from D. J. Etheridge, to J. H. James, Treasury Chambers, 'Energy Conservation Campaign 1975' (17 December 1974), p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> TNA, EG 16/81, ACEC (74) 18, Davidson, 'Thoughts on possible consumer and consumer government reactions to the energy situation', p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> Parliamentary Debates Commons (HC Deb), 7 April 1975, vol. 889, cols. 798-800.

<sup>28</sup> TNA, INF 12/1318, *Energy conservation campaign 1975/76*, R. A. Fleming, 'Energy Conservation Campaign' (16 December 1974), p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> TNA, INF 12/1318, *Energy conservation campaign 1975/76*, correspondence from R. A. Fleming to Mr Etheridge, 'Energy Conservation Campaign' (11 December 1974) [n.p].

into energy conservation, without the added instability of a hostile economy and growing popular disquiet regarding the Government's ability to manage such trends effectively, is debatable. The outlay of funds by the Government to launch a second campaign illustrated the fact that energy was no longer an isolated issue but one that was increasingly seen as relevant to the nation's economic wellbeing.

The 'Save It' campaign was structured around four key approaches. These were outlined by Davidson in his talk to the ACEC in 1974. Davidson contended that a mixed programme of exhortation, education, incentives and regulation would be required from government to ensure an effective national effort in altering energy habits.<sup>30</sup> This four pronged approach greatly influenced the Government's campaign which ran with the phrase, 'Energy Sense is Common Sense' along with the 'Save It' slogan.<sup>31</sup> The campaign was promoted through a variety of mediums including posters, television commercials and print adverts in both the specialist and popular press with a view to attracting the widest possible audience comprised of all backgrounds and interests. The 'Save It' campaign was intended to target all energy users, not only the domestic market but also commercial and industrial users. The Department of Energy, as mentioned in the previous chapter, devised a series of case studies focusing on the energy conservation efforts undertaken by business. David Fishlock in a 1975 *Financial Times* piece on the launch of the campaign confirmed that the Government sought to 'develop its campaign in industry through case studies'.<sup>32</sup> The use of such promotional advertisements documenting commercial and industrial efforts highlighted the potential benefits and relative ease with which changes in energy use could be made. Moreover, the series of case studies also further endorsed the contention that this was an issue on which everyone was able to, and by extension should, play a part.

In addition to promoting greater awareness, one of the key motivations behind the new campaign was to provide greater knowledge and advice regarding the ways in which individuals could implement energy saving measures. The Government sought not only to explain why, but also how, changes in energy use must and could take place. Sir Herman Bondi, Chief Scientist at the Department of Energy at this time, in a presentation to the ACEC in 1974, identified a gulf between popular awareness of energy conservation and the knowledge required to undertake it effectively. Bondi asserted that, 'there is a great deal of goodwill towards energy conservation among the general public,

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<sup>30</sup> TNA, EG 16/81, ACEC (74) 18, Davidson, 'Thoughts on possible consumer and consumer government reactions to the energy situation', pp. 2-5.

<sup>31</sup> TNA, INF 12/1318, Fleming, 'Energy Conservation Campaign' (16 December 1974), p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> MSCA, *Subject file for Marcus Sieff: Energy conservation*, R/4/3/9, David Fishlock, 'Government launches drive to conserve energy', *Financial Times* (21 January 1975) [n.p].

but crass ignorance of how energy is used and wasted'.<sup>33</sup> Bondi's remarks substantiated the earlier findings of the Department of Energy's survey in the August of 1974 and the conclusion that the S.O.S campaign had been effective in raising awareness but had faltered in providing the information necessary to cultivate long term changes to energy habits. Whilst the 'Save It' campaign was the responsibility of the Department of Energy and literature concerning the campaign was devised by itself and the COI, a number of other Government departments also provided information and support. The Department of the Environment produced a number of booklets on saving energy in buildings and the Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food devised a leaflet on fuel savings in the agricultural industry.<sup>34</sup> David Crossley also noted that in support of the 'Save It' campaign 'material sponsored by the energy utilities encouraging energy conservation' was also developed.<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, the Government's intention to inform and advise was visible in a number of press advertisements released by the Department of Energy containing the 'Save It' logo. The advertisements displayed in figures three and four, were intended to appeal not only to an individual's desire to save energy but also a desire to save money. Both advertisements refer to insulating the home, which was a key focus of the Government's campaign towards domestic energy users. The title of figure three reads, 'This Easter, you could save yourself £20 a year. Interested?' The potential financial savings, rather than energy savings for their own sake, were front and centre of efforts to persuade individuals to engage in energy conservation practices. The body of the advert provided a step by step guide to the installation of loft insulation in an effort to educate individuals and as a corollary, to engender action; the guide not only conveyed the sense that installing loft insulation was a relatively easy task, it also provided the knowledge to allow individuals to undertake the task themselves. The advertisement shown in figure four focuses in particular on individuals who did not own their own homes. Part of the Government's approach to its 'Save It' campaign, in contrast to the earlier S.O.S campaign, was to segment energy users according to their circumstances, individuals who privately rented their homes were a key target group. The advert itself refers to a number of energy conservation measures and explicitly itemises the savings which resulted. The 'Save It' logo, which adorned both adverts, worked on two levels. It referred to the saving of energy and money, as the government campaign highlighted the financial pragmatism of conserving energy; it consequently incentivised the action being taken.

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<sup>33</sup> TNA, EG 16/81, *Advisory Council on Energy Conservation: Formal circulated papers for 1974*, ACEC (74) 17, Sir Hermann Bondi, 'Random Thoughts on Energy Conservation' (26 November 1974), p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> Crossley, 'The role of popularization campaigns in energy conservation', p. 59.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

# This Easter, you could save yourself £20 a year. Interested?

If your loft is uninsulated, it's costing you a lot in heat loss. And even with 1" insulation you're still wasting money. So it's well worth investing a few hours and a few pounds to put things right. Insulate your loft now and you could be saving up to £20 a year for life. Follow these simple steps and you'll find it a lot easier than you think.





**1. Remember:** (a) to stand on a plank put across the joists while you're working. (b) to make sure that the loft remains well-ventilated. (c) that insulation works by reducing heat loss from the ceiling below, not sealing off the roof space in itself. (d) to prevent condensation on pipes, and (e) to lag the pipes and the cold water tank (except underneath the tank).



**2. Using glass fibre or rock wool** (minimum of least 2" thick or 2" if water already got 1" of insulation), start at the eaves and work from the edge towards the centre. Tuck glass fibre well into the gaps.



**3. Push small crumbles** of the roll into all the narrow gaps.



**4. When the job is complete, press** one sheet of glass fibre against the gaps over the insulation already laid.



Issued by the Department of Energy

Figure Three: This Easter, you could save yourself £20 a year. Interested?

## *"It may not be my house, but it's my heating bill."* DENNIS WILLIAMS



The thought of insulating someone else's house leaves most people cold. Not Dennis Williams. He was looking forward to his well-earned retirement and wanted his home to be warm at a price he could afford.

So although he rents, he figured that spending money on something that would reduce his costs and keep him warm had to be a worthwhile investment.

Mr & Mrs. Williams rent a 40 year old, three bedroom detached house in Slough. As a retired couple their heating requirements may not be similar to yours. In the last year, their total fuel bill was £ 538, of which, it's estimated, they spent the following amounts on heating and hot water:-

Gas fire (main heating)	£ 88
Electric storage radiators (background heating)	£ 44
Immersion heater	£ 30
Total	£ 162

\* If his loft had been insulated, hot water tank and windows, these bills could have been £ 40 higher.

He bought nine rolls of insulation. Installing it looked easy enough so he got up into the loft and did the job himself.

Then he sealed some of his windows (leaving sufficient for ventilation) and wrapped up his hot water tank in a nice thick jacket.

Last autumn though, he became increasingly concerned about the rising cost of heating. Once again he used his head. September and October were mild so he delayed turning on his heating.

When winter finally did arrive, he concentrated on keeping his living room really snug and 'saved it' in the rooms he wasn't using by turning down his radiators. As a result, he reduced his electricity consumption for the year by over 40%. And his total fuel bill by £26.

(Not bad when you consider the whacking rise in prices last winter.) Well done Mr. Williams. A lot of people could benefit from your example.

**Department of Energy.**



Figure Four: "It may not be my house, but it's my heating bill"

The Government also implemented a number of grant schemes in an effort to generate further conservation efforts. Whilst this was identified as a key feature of the Government's official 'Save It' campaign the energy-saving loans and grants were introduced for industry in 1974 and 1978, both before and after the existence of the 'Save It' campaign.<sup>36</sup> This illustrated the continuation of the energy agenda beyond the parameters of specific campaigns. Similarly, in 1978 subsidies for households were established under the auspices of the Department of the Environment.<sup>37</sup> However, the influence of external environmental and consumer groups in pushing for such concessions should not be underestimated. In particular FoE established initiatives to assist pensioners with insulating their homes; the group successfully lobbied the Labour Government in the mid-1970s to introduce insulation grants.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, in 1980 the National Consumer Council presided over an independent review of the grants programme and recommended 'higher grants for pensioners and disabled people'; this was subsequently implemented by the Conservative government in 1981.<sup>39</sup> In light of such efforts it was clear that the Government were not alone in endeavouring to facilitate energy conservation, external organisations played an important role. Energy had become not only a national concern but also an environmental and consumer issue of some consequence.

The 'Save It' campaign did produce some identifiable successes. The Director of Information within the Department of Energy at the time, Bernard Ingham, produced a *New Society* article which revealed the results of a survey addressing popular attitudes to energy conservation following the launch of the 'Save It' campaign. Ingham observed that 'approaching half (41 per cent) of the 1,000 respondents in 100 constituencies said they had recently embarked on some particular energy-saving measure'.<sup>40</sup> Ingham illustrated the veracity of the findings by drawing on data provided by insulation manufactures. They stipulated that 'production of 3 inch loft-insulation materials is several times higher than last year's level'.<sup>41</sup> This was particularly significant in view of the mild winter identified by Jenkin in the House of Commons debate assessing the impact of the 'Save It' campaign. That individuals would spend out on an energy saving measures at a time when their heating bills were presumably lower anyway, due to the reduced need for heating, strengthened the argument that the Government's conservation campaign had had some success. The Government's campaign focused heavily on insulation as an effective conservation measure, which may explain the

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<sup>36</sup> Gill Owen, *Public Purpose or Private Benefit?*, p. 93.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>40</sup> TNA, INF 12/1318, Ingham, "'Selling" non-energy', p. 770.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 770.



increased production and demand for insulation in particular. The data collected indicated that individuals exhibited a higher propensity to act following the launch of the 'Save It' campaign. The promotion of specific conservation measures and the provision of advice regarding potential savings had an impact with domestic consumers. Moreover, the 'Save It' campaign illustrated the fact that the energy situation was not a national footnote, significant only during the embargo and its immediate aftermath, but an essential component of the country's future prospects and those of householders, industry and business.

Despite some observable successes the continuing need for the Government's 'Save It' campaign was questioned as early as 1976. Whilst the immediate S.O.S campaign found its justification in the initial crisis mentality engendered by the rapidly changing availability and cost of energy resources, the secondary 'Save It' campaign lacked the impetus of a panic mentality. As a result those in Government who sought to promote further efforts towards the cultivation of energy conservation, in the form of another campaign, had to fight the wider machinations of Government interest. This was particularly apparent in light of correspondence between the Secretary of State for Energy, the Treasury Office and the Prime Minister. As early as September 1975, only nine months after the launch of the 'Save It' campaign, Joel Barnett of the Treasury Office in a minute to the Prime Minister suggested that the 'additional expenditure required for the counter-inflation publicity might be offset by discontinuing the "Save It" energy conservation campaign'.<sup>42</sup> Barnett's correspondence prompted Varley as Energy Secretary to counter such a notion and reaffirm to the Prime Minister that he 'attach[es] great importance to the "Save It" Campaign this winter'.<sup>43</sup> It was notable that the Prime Minister at this time echoed Varley's sentiments and replied shortly after affirming, 'I agree that the "Save It" campaign should not be sacrificed in order to keep the overall expenditure of the Government publicity campaign below a particular ceiling'.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, it was to only be a brief reprieve for the 'Save It' campaign. In 1976 a request for funds to continue the campaign into 1976/7 was denied. In writing to the new Secretary of State for Energy, Mr Anthony Wedgwood Benn, Barnett stipulated a number of reasons for the denial of funds. Barnett contended that the changes instigated by the "Save It" campaign were ingrained enough so as to make further publicity unnecessary. Barnett stated in the letter, dated 18 February 1976:

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<sup>42</sup> TNA, Prime Minister's Office (hereafter PREM) 16/606, *correspondence and Papers, 1974-1979*, correspondence from the Secretary of State for Energy, to the Prime Minister (25 September 1975).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> TNA, PREM 16/606, *Correspondence and Papers, 1974-1979*, correspondence from the Prime Minister, to the Secretary of State for Energy (4 October 1975).

Some of the changes which occurred during 1975 (the stocking and production of thicker insulation, and the expansion of insulation manufacturing capacity) are probably irreversible; general advertising may have done all it can.<sup>45</sup>

Such a supposition did have some merit. Despite earlier claims as to the centrality of the Government in engendering a change in behaviour with regards energy use, it was evident that its ability to enact change, whilst in many ways significant, was nonetheless effective only in so far as individuals heeded the message and acted upon it; without legislation and effective enforcement the Government remained at the mercy of its ability to persuade and incentivise. Furthermore, other concerns affecting the nation, such as rising unemployment and intractable levels of inflation, ensured that the attention afforded energy conservation nationally would ebb and flow.

As the 1980s dawned there was growing concern that national efforts to address energy usage had dimmed and lacked co-ordination. The second oil shock of 1979, the result of decreased oil outputs following the Iranian Revolution, whilst not causing the same level of consternation as its 1973 predecessor, did act as a timely reminder that energy supply and demand remained an ever present issue. The arrival of the Thatcher Government in 1979 also arguably added impetus to efforts to re-evaluate existing structures and approaches, by way of signalling a new era and renewed focus. The Select Committee on Energy recommended in 1982 that responsibility for energy be concentrated in one department or a separate institution as opposed to multiple departments, as it was at the time.<sup>46</sup> This was given further impetus by Marks and Spencer's Derek Rayner, who had again been employed by the Government to address questions of organisational efficiency. Rayner's scrutiny contended that the current Energy Conservation Division (ECD) was not taken seriously within the Department of Energy.<sup>47</sup> Consequently, Rayner recommended the establishment of an Energy Efficiency Office (EEO) within the Department of Energy to replace the ECD; the EEO was set up in 1984.<sup>48</sup> The change in terminology from conservation to efficiency led some to claim that this represented a substantial shift in the Government's approach to energy in the 1980s. Gill Owen contended that with regards energy, 'the predominant theme of the 1980s in government was "efficiency"'.<sup>49</sup> By the mid-1980s the price of oil began to fall as supplies increased and the 'Save It' mentality of earlier government efforts, according to Owen, was less appropriate.<sup>50</sup> Perhaps the strongest indication of such a

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<sup>45</sup> TNA, INF 12/1318, *Energy conservation campaign 1975/76*, correspondence from Joel Barnett at the Treasury, to the Rt Hon Anthony Wedgwood Benn MP Secretary of State Department of Energy (18 February 1976), p. 1.

<sup>46</sup> Owen, *Public Purpose or Private Benefit?*, p. 93.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

shift was the EEO's branding of 1986 as 'Energy Efficiency Year' and the corresponding national campaign entitled 'Monergy', which was supported by a national advertising campaign. Nevertheless, the transition from promoting conservation to calls for greater efficiency, has to some extent been overstated. The use of efficiency as a means of improving energy habits had been a feature of both the language and endeavours of the Government's previous energy campaigns. To some extent the more pronounced promotion of efficiency as opposed to conservation in the 1980s amounted to a rebranding effort, rather than a substantial change in focus.

Environmental groups promoted efforts towards greater energy efficiency. In 1980 FoE, in addition to their work in promoting home insulation, formed the National Energy Efficiency Forum (NEEF) to promote energy saving efforts by consumers.<sup>51</sup> Horace Herring noted that 'it has become an article of faith amongst environmentalists that improving the efficiency of energy use will lead to a reduction in energy consumption'.<sup>52</sup> The work of Herring and others placed a question mark over the efficacy of energy efficiency efforts in achieving beneficial environmental outcomes.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, it was evident that a number of advocates including environmentalists and the Government at this time fostered a growing desire to promote efficiency measures, as well as conservation, as a means of altering energy habits. The Association for the Conservation of Energy was established in 1981 and became 'the major lobbyist for energy conservation in the UK', ensuring a continued platform for conservation as well as efficiency within the theatre of national energy politics.<sup>54</sup> Conversely, although interest in energy efficiency and conservation did see a resurgence in the mid-1980s, as the designation of 1986 as 'Energy Efficiency Year' and the subsequent 'Monergy' campaign attested, this was often characterised by inconsistencies. During the EEO's Energy Efficiency year, arguably its most defining moment whilst in existence, the Government announced cuts to its home insulation grant scheme of 'four and a half million pounds'.<sup>55</sup> However, despite the seeming inconsistencies and the fluctuations in the level of attention afforded it, energy conservation and efficiency had succeeded in gaining a seat at the political table which long outlived the initial catalyst of the 1973 crisis. Although the Department of Energy was abolished in 1992, energy efficiency and conservation efforts were placed under the auspices of the Department of the Environment.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore,

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<sup>51</sup> Green and Parsons, 'Energy Efficiency Year 1986: What is in it for domestic consumers?', p. 99.

<sup>52</sup> Herring, 'Does energy efficiency save energy?', p. 210.

<sup>53</sup> See: Horace Herring, 'Energy Efficiency – a Critical View', *Energy*, 31:1 (January, 2006), 10-20; Herring, 'Does energy efficiency save energy?' for an overview of the arguments.

<sup>54</sup> Owen, *Public Purpose or Private Benefit?*, p.96.

<sup>55</sup> Green and Parsons, 'Energy Efficiency Year 1986: What is in it for domestic consumers?', p. 99.

<sup>56</sup> Owen, *Public Purpose or Private Benefit?*, p.114.

energy usage was given renewed importance in light of the growing debates concerning greenhouse gases and the impact of energy pollution. The campaigns which had provided the gateway to the Government's efforts to engender changes in attitudes and behaviour with regards energy usage, highlighted the longevity of energy concern as well as the changing national discourse with regards resource use. The post-war energy landscape, characterised by cheap and readily available supplies, had been shattered and public and private energy use was a topic intermittently up for national discussion.

### **Save It: Marks and Spencer's Response**

The way in which Marks and Spencer responded to the need to alter energy habits was influenced by the tone of the Government's efforts, as well as its own commercial approach. Not all retailers in the wake of the 1973 oil crisis were convinced about the efficacy and ability of their organisation to save energy and alter existing habits. The John Lewis Partnership noted in the immediate aftermath of the oil embargo and in light of subsequent efforts to limit the use of energy that, 'the Partnership does not burn fuel for fun and the scope for reducing consumption by as much as 10 per cent without some dislocation or discomfort must be thin'.<sup>57</sup> The statement conveyed a sense of indignation and scepticism that large savings could be made. The Partnership perceived the potential savings it could make with regards its energy usage to be minimal without causing a detrimental impact on the business. A similar sentiment was further evident within the Partnership's internal communication concerning the Government's restrictions regarding vehicle fuel in the wake of the initial oil crisis. When referencing the measures the company had put in place to limit consumption, it stated that such arrangements 'continued to prove adequate'.<sup>58</sup> The language used implied that in the immediate aftermath of the embargo it judged its actions in terms of what was deemed sufficient but with little suggestion that the company sought to overhaul its energy usage. Marek Effendowicz, the John Lewis Partnership's Chief Information Officer noted in a March 1986 edition of its in-house publication *The Gazette*:

The drive to save energy at Waitrose began in earnest in 1981. The unit cost of energy was rising, with two electricity price increases every year during the late 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> JLPA, *The Gazette*, 'Fuel restrictions and a credit squeeze from the chairman', p. 1067.

<sup>58</sup> JLPA, *The Gazette*, Mr D. Gorsky, 'Monthly reports to the Chairman: Coping with the emergency regulations – Fuel and Power Restrictions', 56:2 (9 February, 1974), 33–34 (p. 33).

<sup>59</sup> JLPA, *The Gazette*, Marek Effendowicz, 'Switch It Off! Marek Effendowicz reports on the partnership's drive to reduce energy costs' (15 March 1986), 148–150 (p. 148).

The Partnership's move to engage in comprehensive energy management was much later than many of its competitors. The second oil shock of 1979 and continued increases in energy prices throughout the 1970s, undoubtedly did much to spur the Partnership to take action. As such whilst the emergency measures put in place by the Government did shape how retailers initially responded, the approach and tone of the measures enacted, as well as the extent and timing of future efforts to alter energy habits, were heavily influenced by the attitudes and commercial judgements of individual retailers.

In contrast to the John Lewis Partnership, Marks and Spencer undertook a reappraisal of its energy usage and did so before the oil crisis and the miners' strike triggered broader concern and awareness. Marks and Spencer commissioned an energy audit a year before the crisis broke as it wanted to assess the 'viability of Total Energy Schemes', either gas or electricity, which would 'meet the entire energy requirements of a building'.<sup>60</sup> The company worked with both British Gas and the Electricity Council. The latter carried out the audit and the results were announced 'immediately before the energy crisis', according to Bernard Lubert's assessment of the development of the company's energy policy.<sup>61</sup> The timing of the audit highlighted an existing interest on the part of the company in its own energy use and the potential for greater efficiencies. When the energy crisis unfolded Marks and Spencer was already in a position of knowledge with regards not only its levels of energy use but more specifically where it was being used. This arguably enabled the company to respond robustly to the rapidly changing context of late 1973 and early 1974, when shortages and price rises were at their most alarming. Marks and Spencer made use of the advantage and the audit formed stage one of the company's four stage strategy devised to deal with the energy situation.

The four stage strategy adopted by Marks and Spencer following the energy crisis consisted of an appraisal of the energy audit, the implementation of 'simple good housekeeping measures', an 'improvement in efficiency of energy use' and 'further technical innovations' according to Chief Engineer Bernard Lubert's report.<sup>62</sup> Whilst Lubert's characterisation of Marks and Spencer's strategy remained vague, it did indicate that the company sought to engender improvements which ranged from inexpensive behavioural change, to potentially more costly technical changes; both approaches, as will be shown, were the foundation of Marks and Spencer's commercial strategy. In addition, there was a clear effort to communicate a change in attitude towards energy use throughout the company. A guidance note concerning the 'sensible use of energy' was circulated to all stores and warehouses with the directive that this was to be disseminated 'at least twice' annually.<sup>63</sup> The stipulation that the guidance note was to be

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<sup>60</sup> MSCA, R/4/3/9, Lubert, 'Energy Conservation: The Essential Strategies', p. 2.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>63</sup> MSCA, R/4/3/9, Building Division, 'Energy Conservation 1974 – 1982', p. 1.

communicated to warehouses as well as stores indicated the desire of management to ensure that changes were made across the business rather than simply within its vast store network, which consisted of 252 stores in 1974.

In addition to circulating basic guidance Marks and Spencer also adopted inexpensive promotional measures. Following a meeting between Chairman Marcus Sieff and Lord Rothschild, Director of the Government's Central Policy Review Staff at this time and responsible for the report outlining the Government's own approach to energy conservation, "switch it off" labels were fixed to 'all switches except those on sales floors, and Emergency Escape routes'.<sup>64</sup> The move echoed the wider sentiments of the Government's S.O.S campaign. The company sought to encourage immediate and simple acts which would reduce the company's energy usage. Moreover, Marks and Spencer reported the following in February 1975:

- Sales floor lighting reduced by one third
- Display lights, including neon fascia signs and windows, not to be turned on before lighting-up time, and only kept on as long as they are effective.
- Lighting and heating to be turned off in unoccupied areas.
- Heating on only when really necessary.
- Escalators should only be run during trading hours.
- Air conditioning chillers not to be used during the winter.
- Large ventilation fans only when necessary during trading hours.
- Food refrigeration equipment to be switched off when empty. Stock displays to be condensed when appropriate.<sup>65</sup>

The measures required no initial outlay of funds and a number of them amounted to common-sense economies with no adverse impact on the company's operations. Nevertheless, Marks and Spencer had signalled to staff a change in attitude towards energy use within the company. This change was reinforced by articles in the company magazine, posters, exhibitions and competitions, all designed to promote continuing awareness of the need to consciously assess and reduce energy usage.

Additionally, inefficient machinery was replaced and Energy Conservation Officers (ECO) were appointed in each store in early 1975. The ECOs were appointed to 'advise' and 'monitor' their individual store with regards energy use; the role was to be undertaken by a member of store management, such was the seeming importance of

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>65</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'What stores are doing', 1 (February, 1975), p. 2.

the energy issue at this time.<sup>66</sup> The creation of ECOs illustrated the desire of top management to spread awareness throughout the company and to devise an effective way of monitoring activity across its network of stores. Marks and Spencer's use of ECOs also pointed to further synergy between the company's approach and the strategies discussed by the Government. Sir Hermann Bondi, in his presentation to the ACEC regarding energy conservation, argued that firms 'should be encouraged (or even required) to have energy conservation officers'.<sup>67</sup> Whilst no such compulsion was used to ensure the practice was adopted, the timing of Marks and Spencer's decision to appoint ECOs, after Bondi's comments to the ACEC and the company's links to the government, suggest that Marks and Spencer was influenced by the advice being explored nationally. The measures adopted by the company suggested that energy usage was now a matter of some importance to Marks and Spencer and its operations. Although energy considerations were not a wholly new consideration for the company, it was clear that the 1973 crisis acted as a fulcrum from which its efforts had become more concerted and driven.

Marks and Spencer's energy conservation campaign was initiated at board level and Marcus Sieff was an active proponent of energy measures both within the company and nationally. G. Colman in his company report, entitled *The St. Michael Approach to Energy Conservation*, contended that the initial success of the company's conservation campaign was aided by the attitude and approach of top management and the Chairman. Colman observed:

Initially there must be total commitment from the highest level. Lord Sieff, Chairman of Marks and Spencer plc., is totally involved in demonstrating a continuing, whole hearted and dedicated involvement in Energy Conservation Policies.<sup>68</sup>

Colman further surmised that:

By providing top-level backing to those directly responsible, he has created the right attitude of mind throughout the business for all staff to exercise vigilance in the use of Energy.<sup>69</sup>

The degree to which an effective and lasting attitude of mind was inculcated within the business will be addressed more thoroughly later; however, it was evident that the role of management in ensuring that energy measures and attitudes were effectively addressed, was deemed essential. Marcus Sieff concluded in an open letter to the *Financial Times* (June 1975) that 'little will be achieved without the drive and

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<sup>66</sup> MSCA, CR/C/2/37/1, Hopkinson, p. 7.

<sup>67</sup> TNA, EG 16/81, ACEC (74) 17, Bondi, p. 1.

<sup>68</sup> MSCA, R/4/3/9, G. Colman, p. 1.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

determination of Government and top management alike'.<sup>70</sup> The very public way in which Sieff sought to spread his views regarding energy conservation attested to the strength of his attitudes and involvement regarding the issue.

Sieff's views were also echoed by contemporaries and Government groups. In a Government produced promotional video entitled 'Save It', Dick Morris, Director of Courtaulds (a long-time supplier of Marks and Spencer) and a member of the ACEC, stated with regards energy conservation measures, 'what we want is co-operation, leadership from the top and total involvement of everybody in business and industry today, to achieve this without compulsion'.<sup>71</sup> Morris' remarks harmonised with the sentiments expressed by Sieff and pointed to a consensus regarding the centrality of management attitudes in ensuring meaningful change in energy habits. Morris' presence within the ACEC and his company's link with Marks and Spencer further indicates that wider channels of influence and communication existed between commercial organisations as well as Government, which assisted in shaping a cohesive response to the changing energy situation.

Marks and Spencer was not the only commercial retailer to stress the centrality of effective management structures in the proliferation of energy conservation efforts. Sainsbury's similarly highlighted the importance of management. Sir (later Lord) John Sainsbury stated in a speech in 1984 that 'as in most things in business, [once] the priorities hav[e] been set from the top...there must be follow-through at all levels of management, down to the shop floor'.<sup>72</sup> He further contended in a speech at the National Energy Management Conference in 1985 that, 'in our experience, good energy management requires firstly top management commitment'.<sup>73</sup> John Sainsbury's presence at a national conference organised by the Department of Energy illustrated again the visible presence of retailers within wider debates concerning energy use and management. Sainsbury, similar to Sieff, had himself had a long acquaintance with the British Conservative Party and was made a life peer in 1989. Such a connection undoubtedly fostered a desire to support the Government in its policy regarding energy conservation and efforts to promote it. In his remarks Sainsbury highlighted the importance of ensuring open channels of communication and influence throughout the business in effectively implementing policies. This was evident in the development of Sainsbury's energy policy, in similar ways to Marks and Spencer, as measures were actioned at top management level. In an effort to engender a waterfall effect Sainsbury's

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<sup>70</sup> MSCA, *Press Cuttings*, L/1/2/13, Folder: June 1975, Marcus Sieff, 'Incentives to Save Energy', *Financial Times* (18 June 1975) [n.p].

<sup>71</sup> MSCA, P10/5/131, Central Office of Information film for the Department of Energy, 'VHS: Save It - Energy in Industry' (1975) [on VHS].

<sup>72</sup> SA, SA/FAM/5/23, Sainsbury, 'Energy Efficiency – Supermarket Savings', p. 4.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.



established a reporting structure whereby all divisions of the business were called upon to produce an annual energy management report, thus ensuring 'main Board involvement on an annual basis'.<sup>74</sup> Sainsbury's also employed energy officers in each store ensuring, as Marks and Spencer had, that a system of enforcement and oversight was established throughout the retailer's operations. It was clear, both in the case of Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury's that efforts were co-ordinated and supported from the top down; the continued endorsement of energy conservation by top management arguably did much to engender grassroots action within both businesses.

Marks and Spencer established an Energy Conservation team within its Building Group to monitor usage and explore new ways and opportunities for savings. The team was also entrusted with administering 'an annual programme of conservation investment'.<sup>75</sup> According to an internal report in 1982 the team consisted of 'specialists in the fields of Electrical Engineering, Heating, and Ventilating, Refrigeration, and Building Technology'.<sup>76</sup> The report further stipulated that 'their directive was to co-ordinate the work of the Building Group in Energy Conservation projects, and act as a "think tank" to evaluate new Energy Conservation measures'.<sup>77</sup> Such a mandate underlined the extent of the company's intentions with regard conservation and efficiency measures. Nevertheless, much of the literature surrounding Marks and Spencer's initiatives reflected the tendency of contemporaries to characterise measures as no more than 'good housekeeping'; Marks and Spencer's initial efforts were identified as such by some within the press at the time. Tom Lester commented in 1975 that:

Marks and Spencer has shown what can be done by little more than willpower. By adapting what it describes as "sensible measures", such as reducing the standard of lighting and heating in its stores and making staff aware of the need to save energy, a 15% reduction in consumption is claimed for 1974 over the previous year.<sup>78</sup>

It was clear that such measures had a marked impact on the company's expenditure with a fifteen per cent reduction in energy usage. The fifteen per cent savings made by Marks and Spencer matched the recommendations made by the ACEC in 1974 to the Secretary of State for Energy for commercial targets.<sup>79</sup> However, it seems that the evident success of Marks and Spencer's housekeeping measures and the press attention surrounding them has obscured the company's more experimental and capital intensive schemes

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>75</sup> MSCA, R/4/3/9, Building Division, 'Energy Conservation 1974 – 1982', p. 1.

<sup>76</sup> MSCA, R/4/3/9, G. Colman, p. 2.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>78</sup> Lester, 'The UK's Energy Lethargy', p. 132.

<sup>79</sup> TNA, EG 16/81, *Advisory Council on Energy Conservation: Formal circulated papers for 1974*, ACEC (74) 16 (R), 'Interim Recommendations to the Secretary of State for Energy' (19 November 1974), p. 1.

that it began to investigate. J. C. Davidson in his talk to the ACEC claimed that 'many firms both industrial and commercial, will prefer to accept higher operating costs to making new capital investment'.<sup>80</sup> Although this to some extent captured an interesting dynamic prevalent in commercial considerations, it failed to grasp the innovative attitudes engendered by the perceived need to conserve energy. It was testament to the seeming significance of the resource situation that there were clear signs that companies did begin to pursue more substantial changes and that these efforts can be dated, in the case of Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury's, much earlier than many commentators acknowledged.

Gerald Friedlander, a former member of Marks and Spencer's Building Group, argued in 1974 that 'unlike in the home, one cannot make economies of energy simply by switching off or by lowering the setting of thermostats'.<sup>81</sup> It may be argued that Friedlander, in his position as an energy consultant, had a vested interest in portraying the situation as one which warranted a more substantial investment of time and money; there was a proliferation of energy agencies and businesses established at this time to capitalise on the changing shifts in energy practices. Nevertheless, the publication of Friedlander's views in *St Michael News* implied that his views and outlook were shared by Marks and Spencer. Furthermore, Friedlander's stipulation regarding the need for more concerted action was borne out in the company's approach to its conservation programme. In an article entitled, 'Think-Tank Looks at Tomorrow's Energy problems', printed in the September 1975 edition of *St Michael News*, a number of key developments were outlined regarding the company's conservation efforts.<sup>82</sup> The title of the piece alone denoted an underlying appreciation within the company that the energy issues which it faced required not only an immediate and concerted response but also a long-term commitment. The reference to 'tomorrow's energy problems' illustrated the perceived longevity of the impact of the 1973 oil crisis and the extent to which it marked a shift in attitudes towards energy.

Marks and Spencer's research and development efforts in relation to energy conservation indicated the importance the company attached to managing energy usage. One of the key concerns for the business at this time was the impact lighting had on its energy bill. Consequently, the company invested in research and development efforts to devise new lighting technology. Lubert was instrumental in a number of projects and flew to Eindhoven in the wake of the oil crisis to 'discuss a new development in

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<sup>80</sup> TNA, EG 16/81, ACEC (74) 18, Davidson, 'Thoughts on possible consumer and consumer government reactions to the energy situation', p. 1.

<sup>81</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, Friedlander, 'Waste not want not', p. 6.

<sup>82</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Think-Tank Looks at Tomorrow's Energy Problems', 5 (September, 1975), p. 6.

energy-saving fluorescent tubing with top scientists at Phillips.<sup>83</sup> This led to the development of a new tube titled the TL84 which 'was to save 30 per cent of the cost for the same level of lighting as natural fluorescent, and it made its worldwide premiere' in Marks and Spencer stores.<sup>84</sup> According to the company's think-tank on energy conservation in 1975, '80 stores will have this...by the end of March next year and all stores will have it within the following two years'.<sup>85</sup> In addition, Pelmet lighting within stores was reduced to one lighting tube as opposed to two. Marks and Spencer also developed night covers to be placed over freezer units in all stores and adapted its refrigeration units to reduce the spillage of cold air (figure five). This showed a common-sense approach to energy conservation whilst innovating in new methods. The company also investigated solar heating panels which resulted in an experiment at its Crawley store, followed by the installation of solar panels in seven stores in 1977/78.<sup>86</sup> The endeavour proved impractical in terms of maintenance requirements and costs; Hopkinson documented in his 1986 scrutiny commissioned by the Chairman concerning the company's energy conservation efforts (previously discussed in Chapter Two), that no future installations were planned. Nevertheless, the significance of Marks and Spencer's effort to engage with such technology should not be ignored, it highlighted the propensity for the company to experiment with its energy measures. Marks and Spencer also conducted research into heat reclaim (particularly from store based refrigeration units). Such endeavours confirmed that the company went beyond mere housekeeping endeavours.

Furthermore, although the more experimental measures, such as solar energy, did not achieve a companywide roll-out, they did signify the growing attention afforded renewable energy paths and the efficacy, in light of heat reclaim research, of recycling energy resources. The company's research and development efforts into more environmentally benign energy supplies, whilst tentative and short lived, illustrated the growing credibility of such technologies and the perceived need to find alternatives to established approaches towards energy.

In a 1981 report addressing Marks and Spencer's energy strategies, Lubert outlined that the company had 'spent £1.5m on [its] Energy Conservation measures' and it had saved 'considerably more than this' over the previous four years as a result.<sup>87</sup> Not only did the company commit itself financially to more substantial and long-term energy measures, it found it profitable to do so; whilst housekeeping measures brought about

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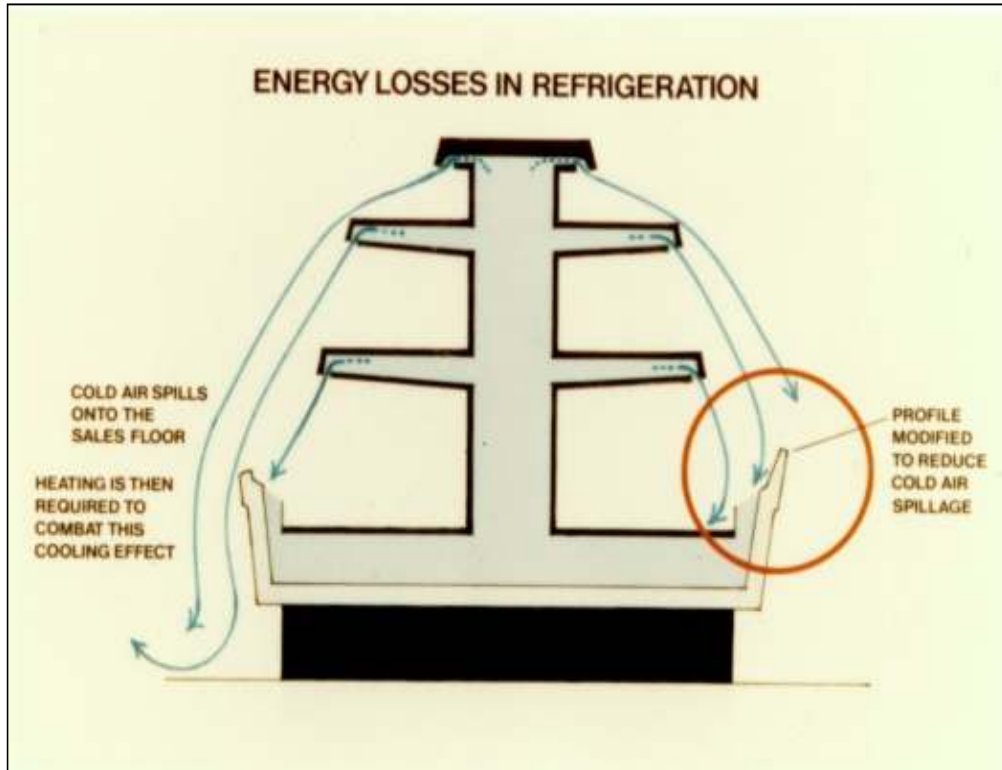
<sup>83</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Casting some light on the subject' (March, 1976), p. 3.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>85</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Think-Tank Looks at Tomorrow's Energy Problems', p. 6.

<sup>86</sup> MSCA, CR/C/2/37/1, Hopkinson, p. 53.

<sup>87</sup> MSCA, R/4/3/9, Lubert, 'Energy Conservation: The Essential Strategies', p. 9.



**Figure Five: Refrigerated provisions gondola with modified lip profile**

substantial savings the payback potential was limited once the initial wave of behaviour changes and efficiency efforts had been inculcated. Marks and Spencer's efforts to investigate more experimental techniques was to some extent a pre-emptive move in recognition of this fact.

Sainsbury's also showed an awareness of the need to invest in new systems and technologies and the company contended that it had begun to do so even before the 1973 energy crisis. Sainsbury's specifically claimed that it had 'saved energy through heat recovery from lighting since 1968', indicating that not only were commercial entities engaging in more substantial investment, but that this had a precedent which predated national calls to 'Save It'.<sup>88</sup> Additionally, in 1989 Sainsbury's also outlined that due to its heat recovery from refrigeration plants, 'no new store requires a boiler'.<sup>89</sup> The company by 1989 was able to heat its new stores completely through recycled heat, making a substantial saving not only financially but also in terms of energy consumption. The payback period of such techniques was longer as immediate financial returns were less likely. However, measures like Sainsbury's heat recovery did prove to be commercially viable and illustrated the long-term commitment of Sainsbury's in fundamentally changing its energy habits, rather than simply cultivating a short-term response to the immediate energy landscape. Increasingly it appeared that retailers understood that the energy situation in the wake of the 1973 oil crisis had set in motion an incremental energy revolution that if heeded and dealt with comprehensively, could yield significant financial and environmental benefits.

Furthermore, to some extent retailers pushed the boundaries on experimental measures further than the Government at this time. Retailers employed heat pump technology within stores, designed to improve the efficiency of heating systems. Within Hopkinson's report for Marks and Spencer he identified that 'many retailers install heat pumps as standard e.g. C&A, Sainsbury's, Mothercare and BHS'.<sup>90</sup> Hopkinson went on to state that Marks and Spencer had four such installations by 1986. However, when the Department of Energy's Interdepartmental Committee on Energy Conservation Research and Development (ENCORD) looked into it they concluded in 1978 that 'at present the probable costs of heat pumps and of the modifications...seem too high'.<sup>91</sup> Although there was a gap of eight years between the committee's remarks and Hopkinson's observations, the latter referred to the usage of heat pumps as standard for many retailers implying they had been developed and used for some time. Additionally,

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<sup>88</sup> SA, SA/FAM/5/23, Sainsbury, 'Energy Efficiency – Supermarket Savings', p. 9.

<sup>89</sup> SA, SA/CR/GRE/15, 'Saving the Ozone London Conference' [n.p].

<sup>90</sup> MSCA, CR/C/2/37/1, Hopkinson, p. 54.

<sup>91</sup> TNA, EG 16/144, *Interdepartmental Committee on Energy Conservation Research and Development: Papers Jan 1 1976–Dec 31 1978*, ENCORD (78) P8 Part I, J.D.L. Harrison, 'Heat Pumps in the UK – The Case for Government – Supported Research and Development' (18 April 1978), p. 1.

whilst Marks and Spencer equally drew attention to the possible costs involved in using such technology and echoed the cautionary sentiments expressed by the Committee's assessment, it was clear that the company found heat pumps sufficiently viable to begin implementation, if only on a small scale, to say nothing of the more widespread adoption evident within the other organisations referenced above. This research and development culture within commercial retailing highlighted the extent to which retailers could be engines of change, both in terms of attitudes and technological development.

Marks and Spencer's approach to energy conservation also highlighted a desire to change attitudes and habits amongst its staff and the wider public. Whilst it was evident that individuals were beginning to display an awareness of the wider implications of energy use, this was not yet sufficiently mainstream as to engender an habitual recourse to energy conserving behaviour. There was a clear effort on the part of Marks and Spencer to inculcate a 'common-sense' attitude to energy conservation amongst its staff. This paralleled the Government's wider affirmation within its 1975 'Save It' campaign, that 'energy sense is common-sense'. It was seen as imperative to the company's energy campaign to ensure a wider appreciation and urgency amongst employees. John Harding, Marks and Spencer's Energy Manager, argued in 1988 that 'the major contribution will still come from our staff and only if support is apparent from the highest level'.<sup>92</sup> This sentiment echoed Marcus Sieff's earlier stipulation in 1980 that 'continued savings depend to no small measure on the support and enthusiasm of our staff in exercising care and good sense in the use of energy'.<sup>93</sup> Such remarks offer an insight into the relationship between management structures and employees and the importance of the latter in realising policy aims. It was one thing for top management to endorse the importance of conservation efforts but without the holistic involvement in this endeavour of employees at all levels of the organisation, such pronouncements remained relatively ineffectual in engendering change.

The importance of employees in creating an effective energy conservation strategy was understood by Marks and Spencer's top management and a number of promotional techniques were rolled out to aid attitude change within the company. As has already been noted posters, videos and signage were employed at store level. There were also a number of schemes designed to get staff members actively involved in both promoting awareness and developing energy saving methods. This was effectively engineered through a series of competitions which welcomed individual staff and whole store involvement. Marks and Spencer ran an inter-store competition to see which store

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<sup>92</sup> MSCA, *Subject file for Marcus Sieff: Energy Conservation*, R/4/3/9, from John Harding Energy Manager, to the Managers of all Stores, Warehouses and M&S operated Distribution Centres, 'Energy Management' (21 April 1988), p. 2.

<sup>93</sup> MSCA, *Annual Reports*, CR/D/55, Marks and Spencer Ltd, 'Annual Report' (1980), p. 7.

could produce the most energy savings. This became a regular feature in its in-house magazine in which it announced the winner and itemised the savings made; the competition simultaneously encouraged staff involvement and strengthened the company's own monitoring apparatus as the figures were passed up the chain of command. The success of this scheme was highlighted in a 1975 article in *St Michael News* in which it was observed that, 'the big cut-back is the result of simply making an active effort to "switch off" and of being aware of saving energy'.<sup>94</sup> The article outlined the savings made by eleven stores across the country between 1974 and 1975. The data collected illustrated the significant savings being made at store level, where the majority of energy was expended. Chesterfield came out in the lead with a twenty-five per cent reduction in energy usage and most of the eleven stores documented achieved a double figure reduction.<sup>95</sup> Newbury came in last place and secured a five per cent decrease in its usage.<sup>96</sup> The savings achieved by individual stores confirmed the importance of individual involvement at all levels of the business in ensuring an effective energy conservation strategy. Marks and Spencer were not the only retailer to appreciate the need for active involvement at all levels. Tesco's energy committee chaired by the company's Engineering Director met every two months with the 'prime preoccupation' of staff motivation.<sup>97</sup> The competitions set up by Marks and Spencer illustrated how such management beliefs were put into practice and according to the savings made by each store, there was an enthusiastic engagement at store level; eight out of eleven stores achieved energy savings of ten per cent or above.

Furthermore, there were also efforts within Marks and Spencer to seek to involve members of staff not only in implementing the ideas of management, but also in sharing conservation ideas of their own. It launched a companywide competition in 1975 to encourage submissions of energy saving schemes. Marks and Spencer reported in its company magazine that 'scores of energy saving ideas flooded to the suggestions committee'.<sup>98</sup> The response to the competition signalled a genuine and active effort amongst staff members to contribute both towards the efforts of the company and to the conservation drive. Staff engagement in extracurricular competitions, publicised through *St Michael News*, ensured active stimulation and engagement with the subject matter and cultivated a vested interest in the success of the company's energy campaign. There were a number of instances where energy saving ideas submitted by members of staff were adopted by Marks and Spencer. In 1982 Tony Kruge, a maintenance foreman at the Pantheon store, 'earned £500 from the suggestions scheme when he came up with

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<sup>94</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Chesterfield Are the Tops', 6 (November, 1975), p. 1.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>97</sup> MSCA, CR/C/2/37/1, Hopkinson, p. 66.

<sup>98</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Winning the Energy Battle', 2 (April, 1975), p. 3.

two ideas which should cut the store's energy bill by £10,000 a year'.<sup>99</sup> Kruge's idea concerned heat savings due to changes in the ventilation and thermostat systems within stores. His idea was subsequently implemented across Marks and Spencer's store network.<sup>100</sup> Consequently, the competitions had a multitude of benefits for the company. Not only did they ensure the continual promotion and reiteration of the need to conserve, but they also brought about great savings.

Marks and Spencer's efforts to engage and motivate staff were further underlined by its continual inference that to help the company would to some degree also help the individual, as most readily seen in the monetary prizes handed out to competition winners. In addition, an employee ardently stated in a *St Michael News* piece from 1987 that 'it's not only M&S's money we're talking about – it's ours...as more and more of us become shareholders as well as employees we can all benefit from any savings we can make'.<sup>101</sup> The practice of handing out shares to longstanding employees provided yet another tangible reason for employees to invest and maintain energy conservation efforts in an effort to help the company manage costs and remain competitive.

Marks and Spencer sought to further encourage individuals to engage in energy conservation by drawing comparisons between the needs of the company and the needs of the domestic household. Reference was made to the home and to the demands of the domestic sphere a number of times within Marks and Spencer's communications with staff. A 1977 *St Michael News* segment stated, 'we can't afford to rest on our laurels. Either at work or at home. We must not relax our efforts because we've got to save for our future now!'<sup>102</sup> Such an assertion clearly codified the needs of the individual and the nation with the needs of Marks and Spencer as a commercial entity and implied that to some degree the home and the workplace were interchangeable in the effort to conserve energy. Marks and Spencer conveyed the notion that efforts to conserve in either environment necessarily benefited the other as such actions illustrated an attitude of mind which traversed traditional social boundaries between public and private spheres.

The connection between the retailer and the household was referenced again in 1987 in a *St Michael News* article entitled 'M&S...again in the frontline of the battle to conserve energy' in which it was claimed that energy savings are, 'no easier for a company the size of M&S than [they are] for an average family. Which is why, just as a family does, M&S is always looking at ways in which it can keep the bills down'.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Tony's brainwave slashes energy bill', 4 (June, 1982), p. 3.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>101</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'David keeps his wife in the dark!' (August, 1987), p. 8.

<sup>102</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Well done but we must keep on "Saving It"', 3 (June, 1977), p. 2.

<sup>103</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'M&S...again in the frontline of the battle to conserve energy', p. 8.



Through such a confluence of the two spheres the company intentionally sought to further its efforts to change attitudes towards energy use. It referenced the pre-existing, everyday concerns of the household and extrapolated them into the wider dialogue surrounding the use of energy. The cognitive link the company sought to foster between the individual household and the collective aims of the company were further strengthened by Marks and Spencer's use of phrases and idioms traditionally associated with the household economy. The reference to bills above, a term so typically associated with the domestic household appears somewhat out of place within the wider commercial context and yet Marks and Spencer's use of it successfully highlighted the similarities between the economic imperatives of the household and the high-street retailer, irrespective of scale. Moreover, the link between Marks and Spencer and the domestic household was further explored by the company in the article title, 'Waste not want not' featured in its company magazine, *St Michael News* (June 1974).<sup>104</sup> The use of a phrase familiar to the language of the domestic household conveyed a sense of continuity between efforts towards energy conservation and the traditional exigencies of the householder. This was evident within the title of another *St Michael News* article in February 1975, entitled, 'A Switch in Time – could save £ ½ million'.<sup>105</sup> The title brought to mind the idiom "a stitch in time saves nine", which ensured a degree of familiarity with individuals as well as a connection between Marks and Spencer's energy efforts and more established philosophies. Such a convergence of old and new added credence to the growing calls to conserve energy and by virtue of grounding the topic within established domestic orthodoxies Marks and Spencer conferred an important sense of authenticity and validity upon such measures.

Marks and Spencer's efforts to galvanise energy conservation efforts within the business did fluctuate. As discussed in Chapter Two, the attention Marks and Spencer afforded energy conservation waned as other commercial concerns began to appear more pressing in the early 1980s. This to some extent calls into question the effectiveness of the company's efforts to engender a fundamental change in attitudes and behaviour. Hopkinson's 1986 appraisal of Marks and Spencer's energy strategy outlined a number of deficiencies in terms of focus and approach. Hopkinson's findings provide insight into the workings of commercial organisations and their ability to develop and maintain systems and policy over time, as well as the complex nature of cultivating attitude change. Hopkinson's evaluation casts doubt on the extent to which the company managed to instil energy conservation amongst its employees to the extent that it became an unconscious habit. It seems that without the barrage of promotional material and constant and fervent reiteration of the expediency of responsible energy use,

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<sup>104</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Waste not want not', p. 6.

<sup>105</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'A Switch in Time', p. 1.

employees were less consistent in their efforts. Hopkinson noted that, 'this year [1986] £17.5m worth of energy will be consumed throughout the business, an increase of 16.5% on last year'.<sup>106</sup> Although some of this increase was the result of Marks and Spencer's extensive expansion programme at this time, it was clear that this did not provide a complete explanation. Hopkinson undertook an audit of Division Seven's energy conservation officers and concluded that, 'standards had slipped e.g. lighting was left on un-necessarily' and that 'they tend to work on their own initiative and are given little guidance and training'.<sup>107</sup> Hopkinson proceeded to point out that this failing in training provision was not just limited to Division 7 but was a companywide issue. He claimed that, 'in the area of Energy Conservation there is virtually no training given' and that 'there is no manual as to Best Practices'.<sup>108</sup> Such an assertion suggested that whilst Marks and Spencer sought to alter staff practices in this area, its efforts would have benefited from a more structured and consistent approach. As Hopkinson noted, 'to give staff the knowledge to control energy costs, they need to be trained and educated'.<sup>109</sup> Marks and Spencer did act on Hopkinson's findings and issued a series of promotional pieces and training items in the wake of Hopkinson's scrutiny, such as the *Energy Watch* pamphlets and the *Energy Gremlins* VHS discussed in Chapter Two. Consequently, it was apparent that the company sought to learn from the findings of the 1986 report and the commission of the report by the Chairman in itself spoke to a continuing desire to address energy usage within the business.

Hopkinson's scrutiny of Marks and Spencer's practices outlined issues with consistency. In terms of store practices with regards recording usage Hopkinson observed that whilst 'stores do monitor their energy costs...there is no set pattern [as] it is left to the store to decide the frequency and method of recording'.<sup>110</sup> Hopkinson further noted discrepancies in the company's utilisation of controls. He contended in the report that 'controls are an essential feature of any energy management programme' but that the company's 'approach is inconsistent'; Marks and Spencer's ability to ensure best practice and consistency overtime was cast in some doubt.<sup>111</sup> The timing of the report in the same year as the launch of the Government's 'Monergy' campaign was no coincidence and the failings outlined by Hopkinson were underlined by his contention that 'this year is "Monergy" year sponsored by the Department of Energy, yet we had no contribution to make'.<sup>112</sup> Hopkinson spent a significant section of his report assessing the actions and methods of Marks and Spencer's competitors. A comparison was made

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<sup>106</sup> MSCA, CR/C/2/37/1, Hopkinson, p. 1.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

regarding energy usage per square foot and per employee. Despite the overall tone of Hopkinson's report implying a backwards step in Marks and Spencer's energy efforts, the figures highlighted that the company was competitive in its energy usage. In terms of energy per square footage it was only out performed by Asda, coming out ahead of Tesco, BHS and Sainsbury's. Although it should be noted that the demands of Tesco's and Sainsbury's business as food retailers dictated a greater level of energy intensive activity on the sales floor than Marks and Spencer; whilst the latter's food business was expanding the company's clothing sales remained dominant at this time. Nevertheless, Marks and Spencer's belief that it was no longer out in front, rather than the company having fallen detrimentally behind its competitors, gave it a renewed impetus to reassess its approach.

Hopkinson's findings with regards staff training and awareness did have an effect on the company's energy conservation efforts. The technological measures put in place by Marks and Spencer were having some impact in keeping energy demands down. It was individual efforts which proved less consistent, although the company had previously been successful in galvanising attention towards, and enthusiasm for, conservation efforts. It was evident that there were attempts to reignite awareness and action in the late eighties and early nineties. The re-launch of Marks and Spencer's Energy Team, through the Ohms and Watts-on publicity material referred to in the previous chapter, attested to a desire to reaffirm the need to address energy usage. Following Hopkinson's report there was also a resurgence of articles in the company's magazine *St Michael News* outlining its energy conservation efforts and the role of energy conservation officers, in an effort to bolster awareness amongst staff. The fact that the company sought to learn from its lapse in effective energy management and continue to move forward and re-evaluate its strategy, underlined the fact that energy had now become a mainstay of commercial considerations. Whilst effective engagement with conservation methods fluctuated in line with other commercial concerns, this was largely due to the fluid nature of commercial priorities, rather than a sign that energy conservation had had its proverbial day.

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The chapter has provided a detailed assessment of the methods and approaches adopted by Marks and Spencer and the significance and tone of the national energy campaigns launched by successive governments.

The transition from the authoritative tone of the Government's S.O.S campaign, to the persuasive calls of its 'Save It' campaign, highlighted an awareness of the complexities inherent in attitude change. The cheap and plentiful energy supplies of the post-war era had generated a culture of waste and complacency. If a greater stewardship

of natural resources was to take place, it had to be developed and inculcated within the day-to-day habits of individuals and retail processes. The methods used by the government ranged across the domestic, commercial and industrial sector with varying degrees of success and focus.

Marks and Spencer was undoubtedly influenced by the wider methods advocated and utilised by the government at this time. The company's early efforts to generate immediate savings had all the hallmarks of the national S.O.S campaign and the provision of ECOs within stores readily echoed the advice given by government advisory bodies. In addition, the research and development activities of retailers, which led to technological changes in store operation, illustrated a long-term change in the relationship between retailers and their attitude to energy resources. Nevertheless, the delayed efforts of the John Lewis Partnership to initiate a comprehensive energy conservation programme emphasised that approaches to energy conservation were also uniquely shaped by the approach and attitudes of individual retailers.

Marks and Spencer's approach to ensuring the effective dissemination of the need to conserve energy throughout the business highlighted an acute awareness of the centrality of the domestic household in forming habits and attitudes towards resource use. Whilst Marks and Spencer used a number of incentives, such as competitions and cash prizes, to generate innovation and involvement from staff members, the company showed an understanding of the connection between individuals and the demands made on them by the costs of running their own household. The company utilised this by drawing repeated links between the plight of Marks and Spencer in trying to reduce its energy 'bills' and the traditional exigencies of managing the household economy. The use by Marks and Spencer of the household as a reference point facilitated the conflation of the needs of the domestic and commercial spheres. The day-to-day nature of an individual's interaction with the workplace and the home ensured that such places were central to achieving long-term attitude and behavioural change and Marks and Spencer illustrated a keen awareness of this with respect to its own energy conservation campaign. Indeed, the adage used by the national government that 'energy sense was common sense' arguably had a better chance of realisation being promoted within the stores and warehouses of one of the nation's leading retailers than it did being propounded by a distant government spokesperson.

The chapter's assessment of Marks and Spencer's evolving energy strategy has illustrated the long-standing nature of the issue for the business. Consequently, the chapter supports the main contention of the thesis that efforts to understand the relationship between commercial retailers and the environment and resource use need to take an historical look at such concerns, rather than a short-term assessment of the emergence of company environment policies in the early 1990s. This need for a broader

enquiry is further highlighted in the following chapter's analysis of the store location strategies adopted by retailers in the period 1968-1992. Store development had an unparalleled impact on the environment and landscape of local areas and brought to the fore the impact of human activity and increased commercial growth on the urban environment. An assessment of the evolving needs of commercial retailers and consumers and the physical limits of land resources in the centre of towns and cities, illustrates the extent to which retailers increasingly had to consider the environment in its various facets and the demands placed upon it, if it was to maintain a competitive commercial position; this is the focus of the following chapter.

## Chapter Four

### Out-of-town retailing: Who moved out and why?

Retail store location as an issue for discussion had moved out of the boardroom and onto the national agenda by the 1970s. The issue typified growing concerns regarding the availability of space and the impact of commercial activities on the environment. At the centre of such attention was the increase in out-of-town retail development.<sup>1</sup> The centre of towns and cities, which had once 'exerted an overall and cohesive force', were no longer deemed the only option by retailers.<sup>2</sup> Tesco claimed in *The Times* in 1984 that they 'would never again develop a shop in the High Street'.<sup>3</sup> Whilst Tesco's claim bore no resemblance to its actual store development trajectory, it did emphasise the growing credibility of retail sites in decentralised locations. The Director General of the Retail Consortium, Richard Weir, asserted in 1987 that 'large retail developments in the centre, or on the edge, of towns, as well as green field sites, have dramatically changed the shopping environment familiar to customers'.<sup>4</sup> The range of environments in which retailers operated were increasingly diverse by the early 1990s. In the period 1968-1992 it was evident that the growth of out-of-town retailing was the result of a varied causal matrix of shifting commercial and consumer demands which asked increasingly more of the environment in terms of its ability to accommodate such activity. Store development left a visible and lasting footprint upon the national landscape and as such is central to any assessment of the relationship between retailing and the environment.

The reasons behind the growth in decentralised retailing have generated considerable academic enquiry, with a variety of factors explored to varying degrees, but there has been less of a detailed focus on specific companies. This chapter seeks to add to the existing literature by providing such a study of Marks and Spencer's attitude to

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<sup>1</sup> 'Out-of-town' was defined by the Department of the Environment as a 'development on a green-field site, or on land not clearly within the current urban boundary'. The Department defined 'out-of-centre' as 'a location that is clearly separate from a town centre, but not necessarily outside the urban area'. Cited in Clifford M. Guy, 'Classifications of retail stores and shopping centres: some methodological issues', *GeoJournal*, 45 (1998), 255-264 (p. 262). Despite the official distinction made between the two it was evident that Marks and Spencer and a number of its competitors and contemporaries used the term out-of-town to refer to both types of development. As such the present research uses out-of-town as an inclusive term to refer to sites not situated within the urban centre.

<sup>2</sup> Gwyn Rowley, 'Superstores and Hypermarkets: Data Bases on Out-of-Centre Developments', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series*, 10:3 (1985), 380-382 (p. 382).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 382.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Weir, 'Foreword', in *The Changing Face of British Retailing*, ed. by Edward Mcfadyen (London: Newman Books Ltd, 1987), pp. v-vi (p. v).

out-of-town retailing, with an assessment of the nature of consumer demand and the commercial and environmental considerations which influenced its approach. A number of academic works have emphasised consumer demand resulting from growing suburbanisation, increased car use and rising levels of affluence. Russell Schiller points to the pressure from increasingly car-borne consumers in his 1994 article concerning the impact of decentralised retailing on town centres. He suggests that the move out-of-town was a 'locational dilemma' for retailers as they sought to 'reconcile their desire to protect town centres and yet serve an increasingly car-born public'.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, Peter Jones when citing G. Macdonald's defence of out-of-town developments contended that Macdonald's stance rested on the observation that such 'developments clearly demonstrate the sort of shopping environment...that today's customers increasingly demand'.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, consumers increasingly wanted more from the shopping experience, more space, more convenience and more choice. Rosemary D. F. Bromley and Colin J. Thomas similarly highlighted changes in consumer lifestyles as a key causal factor in altering the physical location of retail stores. They argued that 'consumer services such as retailing have followed the population in decentralizing from city centres'.<sup>7</sup> Bromley and Thomas do point out the commercial advantages to be garnered from such changes, however, these are said to have arisen as a result of commercial efforts to satisfy 'changing consumer demand'.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, appraisals by geographers and planners of the dynamics which galvanised increased retail decentralisation have tended to suggest that retailers primarily reacted to the wider socio-economic shifts taking place in society at this time. This assessment of the literature is supported in the work of Peter Jones and David Hillier who identified a tendency within the geographical literature in the 1970s to perceive out-of-town retail development 'as reflecting the "movement of people from the inner city to the suburbs"'.<sup>9</sup> Such causal narratives regarding the growth in decentralised retailing continue to feature strongly within the academic literature.

In addition, the importance of the changing commercial needs of retailers and the growing spatial restrictions in town and city centres have also been acknowledged. Schiller has drawn attention to the pressure placed on local authorities due to the lack of

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<sup>5</sup> Schiller, 'Vitality and Viability: Challenge to the Town Centre', p. 46.

<sup>6</sup> Cited in Hassan Alzubaidi, Claudio Vignali, Barry J. Davies, Ruth A. Schmidt, 'Town centre versus out-of-town shopping: a consumer perspective', *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, 25:2 (1997), 78-89 (p. 78).

<sup>7</sup> Rosemary D. F. Bromley and Colin J. Thomas, 'Retail change and the issues', in *Retail change: contemporary issues*, ed. by Rosemary D. F. Bromley and Colin J. Thomas (London: UCL Press Ltd, 1993), pp. 2-14 (p. 3).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Jones and David Hillier, 'Changing the balance – the "ins and outs" of retail development', *Property Management*, 18:2 (2000), 114-126 (p. 118).

suitable retail sites for development on the scale increasingly required.<sup>10</sup> Ross Davies has identified the impact of increases to commercial rates and anti-social behaviour as detrimental to the overall appeal and profitability of central trading areas, arguing in 1986 that this had caused retailers to look elsewhere.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, whilst Clifford M. Guy and J. Dennis Lord maintained in 1993 that the main causal factor was the growing suburbanisation of the population, they did note that out-of-town sites were often cheaper and increasingly offered retailers the freedom to realise the economies of scale which a competitive retail market was increasingly demanding.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, whilst the existing literature has to varying degrees acknowledged the changing demands of retailers and consumers it has often focused on broad trends, rather than detailed company studies. The exception to this is Stephen Brown's 1988 article concerning Marks and Spencer's Sprucefield development, which assessed consumer and retailer responses to the proposed store.<sup>13</sup> However, Brown's work focused on an assessment of impact rather than a sustained exploration of the factors which led the company to begin to develop decentralised sites. Additionally, Schiller has noted Marks and Spencer's decision to develop in out-of-town locations, but this has been as part of a broader effort to assess wider trends in retail development, rather than a detailed exploration of the company's attitude towards store development.<sup>14</sup> As such a detailed assessment of Marks and Spencer's position regarding decentralised development and the factors which made it increasingly more appealing to the company has yet to be undertaken.

Consequently, this chapter seeks to explore the reasons behind the growth in out-of-town retailing by assessing the extent and impact of consumer pressure and the changing realities of commercial operations, which placed ever greater demands on the environment, with specific reference to the operations of, and justifications put forward by, Marks and Spencer. The responses of other retailers, most notably Sainsbury's, will be acknowledged in an effort to provide a wider contextual framework of retailer experiences of the broader trends outlined within the existing literature. Focusing on Marks and Spencer allows for a greater understanding of the ways in which trends in decentralised retailing were experienced and influenced by the specific needs and

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<sup>10</sup> Russell Schiller, 'Retailing and Planning', *The Planner*, 60:6 (June, 1974), 744-749 (p. 745, col. 3).

<sup>11</sup> Ross Davies, 'Retail Planning in Disarray', *The Planner* (July, 1986), 20-22 (p. 22, col. 1).

<sup>12</sup> Clifford M. Guy and J. Dennis Lord, 'Transformation and the city centre', in *Retail change: contemporary issues*, ed. by Rosemary D. F. Bromley and Colin J. Thomas (London: UCL Press Ltd, 1993), pp. 88-108 (p. 88).

<sup>13</sup> Stephen Brown, 'Marks out of town', *Retail and Distribution Management*, 16:2 (1988), 13-18.

<sup>14</sup> Schiller, 'Retail Decentralisation – The Coming of the Third Wave'; Schiller, 'Out of Town Exodus'; Schiller, *The Dynamics of Property Location*, all make reference to the decision of Marks and Spencer to develop in decentralised locations.



outlook of individual companies and in turn how this dictated the company's use of, and relationship with, the environment in local areas. The chapter begins by outlining the extent of decentralised retail development at this time and Marks and Spencer's store development trajectory more specifically. It then addresses the consumer and retailer led concerns and demands which influenced attitudes towards retail development. The chapter explores the degree to which retailers prioritised a causal narrative of consumer demand and the shifts evident in how Marks and Spencer perceived and discussed consumer preferences. The overall importance of environmental limitations and concerns in shaping the issues and responses which characterised retail store development at this time are also addressed. Indeed, John Sheail remarked that 'the limiting factor to further economic and social growth might no longer be capital, markets or labour, but the environment itself'.<sup>15</sup> In the period 1968-1992 Marks and Spencer and a number of its competitors were increasingly experiencing the realities of Sheail's observation. The environment in central shopping areas was not a limitless resource indefinitely capable of absorbing the increasing demands placed upon it. The chapter's assessment of Marks and Spencer's attitude and approach to out-of-town retailing highlights the realisation of this fact on the part of the company and the ways in which it sought to navigate commercial considerations and the complex realities of urban environments at this time.

### **The Growth of Out-of-town Retailing**

During the 1970s, the 'number and size of new shopping schemes grew substantially' and the use of out-of-town sites became more frequent than had previously been the case.<sup>16</sup> The balance between town centre and out-of-town development remained heavily with the former until the mid-eighties. However, a shift had undoubtedly begun to take place. In a review carried out by the Distributive Trades Economic Development Council (EDC) in 1988, it was noted:

Proposed floor space out-of-town exceeds the town centre development by a factor of 2.5 to 1 and the amount of space with planning permission in out-of-town locations almost matches that in town centres.<sup>17</sup>

According to the EDC figures, the appeal of out-of-town retailing was growing. Stores built in decentralised locations were often of a much bigger size, due to the nature of the location and the reduction in spatial restrictions which characterised many town centres.

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<sup>15</sup> Sheail, *An Environmental History of Twentieth-century Britain*, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Scott, *The Property Masters: A History of the British Commercial Property Sector* (London: E & FN Spon, 1996), p. 203.

<sup>17</sup> Distributive Trades EDC, *The Future of the High Street* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1988), p. 51.

Subsequently, whilst the increase in floor space in decentralised locations identified by the EDC did suggest a growing interest in out-of-town shopping locations, some caution is needed. The data highlighted the scale of decentralised developments as much as it indicated their increasing number.

Sales figures also illustrated the growing impact of out-of-town retail sites. Alessandra Guariglia noted that 'while in 1982, only 5% of retail sales were made in out-of-town centres, this percentage had grown to 17% in 1994'.<sup>18</sup> Guariglia further remarked that seventy-two per cent of Sainsbury's sales occurred in off-centre locations by 1992 and the figure was even higher for Tesco, at eighty-seven per cent.<sup>19</sup> Such percentages underlined the growing propensity for profitable operation in sites away from traditional town centres and high-streets. Nevertheless, despite the high percentage of off-centre sales at Sainsbury's and Tesco, the overall national percentage, whilst denoting a significant increase since 1982, still remained only a fraction of the total retail sales within the UK; this is of even greater significance in light of the fact that the mid-to-late 1980s and early 1990s are generally considered to represent the peak of out-of-town development. Subsequently, it is clear that the figures can only go part way to explaining the nature of attitudes to out-of-town retail development at the time and the dynamics at play in facilitating a commitment to town centre or off-centre locations. There was an undoubted increase in decentralised retailing. However, this did not amount to an abandonment of town centre retailing nor was out-of-town retailing adopted equally across the operations of all retailers.

### **Marks and Spencer's Store Development**

When looking at Marks and Spencer's own store development the utilisation of both high-street and off-centre sites was evident as the company sought to expand its commercial territory. According to figures from its annual reports between 1971 and 1992 the company added roughly 4,299,000 square feet to its sales footage.<sup>20</sup> This was the result of a concerted development programme which saw a mixture of expansions to existing stores and a number of new sites added. The company's commitment to store development at this time was underlined by the substantial sums of money spent. Chairman Marcus Sieff, in an address to managers in February 1981, outlined that 'expenditure on footage development in the Financial Year 1980-81 will be in excess of

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<sup>18</sup> Alessandra Guariglia, 'Superstores and Labour Demand: Evidence from Great Britain', *Journal of Applied Economics*, V: 2 (November, 2002), 233-252 (p. 233).

<sup>19</sup> Cited in Guariglia, p. 234.

<sup>20</sup> MSCA, *Annual Reports*, CR/D, Marks and Spencer Ltd (1971-1992).

£40 million'.<sup>21</sup> Such investment in increased sales footage was all the more significant in light of the wider economic landscape at this time. Marcus Sieff observed in the 1980 annual report that 'people had less money for spending in shops'.<sup>22</sup> Sieff made a similar observation in 1981 stating that the escalation in the cost of living was, 'leaving less money available for High Street shopping'.<sup>23</sup> Yet despite this, the company, according to Sieff's address, invested over a fifth of its pre-tax profit, which stood at 184.4 million in 1981, into store expansion and development.<sup>24</sup> The drive towards expansion illustrated the continued success of the company, despite adverse trading conditions, at the turn of the decade. Marks and Spencer's decision to direct such investment towards established town centre and high-street locations was notable in light of the rising cost of living and the potential effect on high-street spending. Based on the information available in the company's annual reports, Marks and Spencer opened forty-four new stores in the period from 1968-1985 and 184 extensions (figure six).<sup>25</sup> Not only were store extensions the predominant means of expansion at this time and thus ensured most of the company's store development occurred in established high-street locations, but the new stores that were built in the period before 1986 were also exclusively located on central sites.

Only from 1985 onwards did the company's store portfolio show greater diversification. Liam Martin of the Lewis and Hickey architectural group, who were responsible for much of Marks and Spencer's store design for many years, noted in 1990:

Edge of town centres, joint venture mini shopping centres constructed by the company in partnership with other retailers, store satellites, food dominant and food only neighbourhood stores...are new developments in the company's retailing strategy since 1985.<sup>26</sup>

Martin's assessment was borne out when looking at the company's store openings documented in its annual reports from 1986-1992. A greater diversity in store format and location were clearly evident, with the addition of twelve out-of-town/edge-of-town stores by 1992 and twenty neighbourhood stores (figure seven).<sup>27</sup> The latter, also referred to as

<sup>21</sup> MSCA, *Copy of Marcus Sieff's Chairman's address at Managers' Meeting*, CR/B/4/1/195, Marcus Sieff, 'Guide notes for the Chairman's address at the Managers' meetings' (February, 1981), 1-11 (p. 8).

<sup>22</sup> MSCA, CR/D/55, 'Annual Report' (1980), p. 6.

<sup>23</sup> MSCA, *Annual Reports*, CR/D/56, Marks and Spencer Ltd, 'Annual Report' (1981), p. 6.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> MSCA, *Annual Reports*, CR/D, Marks and Spencer Ltd (1968-1985).

<sup>26</sup> MSCA, HO/10/3/1/1/15, Liam Martin of Lewis and Hickey architects, *Design for success: The Story of the Design & Building of Marks and Spencer Stores 1922-1990* (Lewis and Hickey Architects [c.1991(?)]), p. 28.

<sup>27</sup> MSCA, *Annual Reports*, CR/D, Marks and Spencer Ltd (1986-1992); Edge-of-town sites have been defined as 'a location within easy walking distance of the primary shopping area' as cited in Guy, 'Classifications of retail stores and shopping centres', p. 262. Where Marks and Spencer have made the distinction between an out-of-town and edge-of-town development this has been acknowledged within the text.

district stores, were often food only, catering to the changing shopping habits of the suburbanised consumer and the increased desire for convenience.

Additionally, Marks and Spencer announced in 1985 a partnership with Tesco to 'develop joint sites in edge of town locations'.<sup>28</sup> The first site to be developed as a result of that partnership was opened near Cheshunt in Hertfordshire at the Brookfield Centre. Marks and Spencer also referred to efforts to develop sites with the Asda-MFI Group Plc in its 1986 report.<sup>29</sup> The company noted in the same report that 'negotiations are well advanced for a number of similar out-of-town developments', highlighting Marks and Spencer's desire to continue to explore decentralised developments in the future.<sup>30</sup> This was made clear in a statement made by Jim Benfield, the then Divisional Director of Store Development, in 1990. He stated:

We [Marks and Spencer] are still developing on three fronts - out-of-town, neighbourhood food stores and traditional high street locations - reflecting a strategy which is changing the shape of the Marks and Spencer chain.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, this continued to be underpinned by significant sums of investment. Marks and Spencer outlined in its 1986 annual report that 'in the four years ahead to 1990, we are planning a total capital expenditure of over £1,500 million which will be invested in further developing stores in established city centres and opening out-of-town stores'.<sup>32</sup>

Similarly, in the company's 1989 annual report it was reported that 'capital expenditure on expansion, development and modernisation was £147 million', a greater sum than was forecast in 1986 and testament to the significant levels of investment in store development by the company.<sup>33</sup> The £147 million amounted to an increase in sales area footage of 294,000 square feet and the modernisation of a further two million square feet.<sup>34</sup> The combination of new footage and the modernisation of older stores confirmed the company's efforts to maintain its established store catalogue, the majority of which was still located in high-streets and town centres. Indeed, in the period 1986–1992, despite the utilisation of stores in new off-centre locations, extensions to existing sites remained dominant, forty-five in total (figure seven).<sup>35</sup> Although the company had made a clear effort to engage with wider trends in off-centre development, its presence on the

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<sup>28</sup> MSCA, *Annual Reports*, CR/D/60, Marks and Spencer Ltd, 'Annual Report' (1985), p. 10.

<sup>29</sup> MSCA, *Annual Reports*, CR/D/61, Marks and Spencer Ltd, 'Annual Report' (1986), p. 8.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>31</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'World Footage Hits New Record', *International News* (Christmas, 1990), p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> MSCA, CR/D/61, 'Annual Report' (1986), p. 8.

<sup>33</sup> MSCA, *Annual Reports*, CR/D/64, Marks and Spencer Ltd, 'Annual Report' (1989), p. 13.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>35</sup> MSCA, *Annual Reports*, CR/D (1986-1992).

### Marks and Spencer Store Development 1968-1985

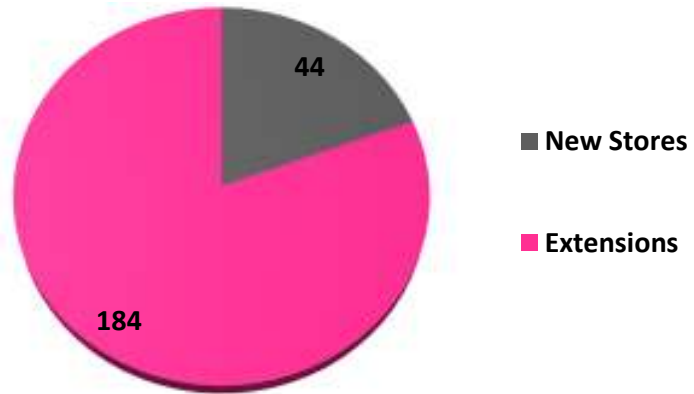


Figure Six: Marks and Spencer store development breakdown 1968-1985

### Marks and Spencer Store Development 1986-1992

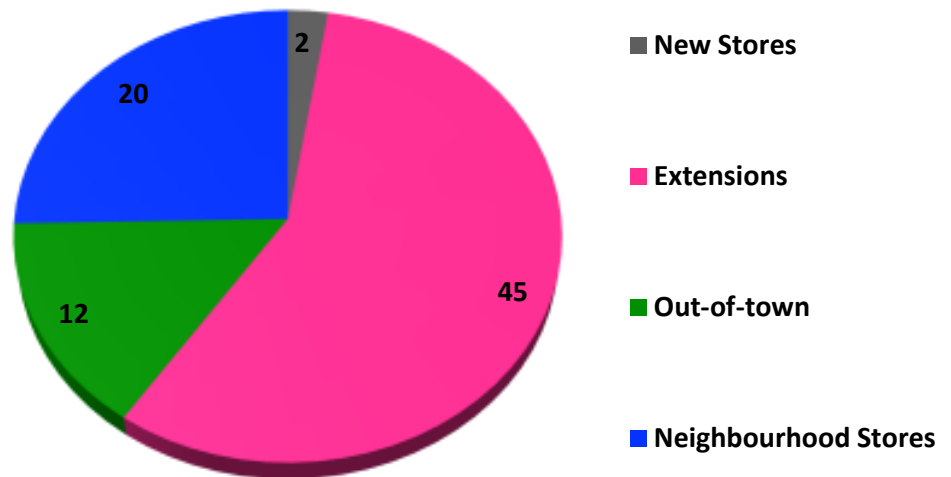


Figure Seven: Marks and Spencer store development breakdown 1986-1992

high-street remained dominant within its store progression. Consequently, Benfield's claim in 1990 that the Marks and Spencer chain was undergoing marked change was true to a degree but did not fully acknowledge the extent to which the nature of the company's store portfolio had for the most part remained rooted in the high-street and town centres. Nevertheless, despite only amounting to a fraction of the company's store footage by 1992, out-of-town retailing and its perceived consequences on the nature of retailing, remained a key and growing preoccupation for Marks and Spencer and others.

### **Consumer Demand: Suburbanisation and the Motor Car**

In light of the growth in off-centre development observed more broadly at this time, and Marks and Spencer's own efforts to engage belatedly with the trend, it becomes increasingly necessary to assess the myriad of factors which galvanised such a move. A school of thought promoted by commentators at the time, and academics since, has been that retailers were following the desires and demands of consumers. As a corollary, retailers were not innovative in terms of their adoption of more diverse store locations but rather reactive to wider socio-economic trends. The growing suburbanisation of British society has been repeatedly used to explain and justify the spread of retailing away from established locations. Clifford Guy contended, when addressing the causality of the increase in off-centre retailing, that 'the main reason is arguably the growth of suburban population[s], which has generated a demand for retail facilities close to home'.<sup>36</sup> The notion has pervaded that as individuals began to settle away from town centres and demands for greater convenience grew, consumers increasingly sought shopping opportunities on their door step. J. A. Dawson summed this up in 1974 when he concluded that 'the primary factor responsible for the growth of suburban retail activity is the decentralisation of demand'.<sup>37</sup> Such a conclusion further conveyed the notion of a reactive retailing sector at the mercy of wider pressures.

This rendering of the motivations behind the move out-of-town was not only outlined by academics but also retailers. Sir John Sainsbury in an address to the Oxford Preservation Trust in 1981 outlined a similar argument. He observed:

The first results of the 1981 Census show that no less than 1 1/2 million people have moved from town centres to suburban and rural areas during the last 10 years. Inner city areas generally showed a population decline of over 15%.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Guy and Lord, 'Transformation and the City Centre', p. 88.

<sup>37</sup> Jones and Hillier, 'Changing the balance - the "ins and outs" of retail development', p. 118.

<sup>38</sup> SA, *A Paper given by Sir John Sainsbury to the Oxford Preservation Trust*, SA/CR/GRE/9, Sir John Sainsbury, 'Food Retailing and the Environment' (July, 1981), p. 4.

It is evident from these figures that there was a shift taking place. The growing spatial diversification of retail store location was, according to retailers, population led. Indeed, Sainsbury went on to assert, 'this is an acceleration of a trend begun in the post-war era with the development of new towns and overspill towns'.<sup>39</sup> According to Sainsbury the growing propensity for retailers to site stores in suburban and out-of-town locations was seemingly the necessary conclusion to population trends observable for decades. Moreover, Sainsbury's remarks suggested a degree of inevitability regarding the move out-of-town and a justification for such developments, for which they themselves were attempting to garner greater acceptance. The company's assessment of the consumer-retailer relationship appeared to empower the consumer and exonerate the decision of retailers to move out-of-town.

The impact of population trends and the growth in new towns and suburbanisation on consumer preferences regarding retail provision is not as clear as some have argued. Although the population changes taking place, and large scale road building, meant that retailing in more decentralised locations was increasingly a more viable prospect for retailers, this did not automatically result in ardent consumer calls for a geographical change in retailing provision. Elizabeth Mills made this observation in 1974, in her national study regarding 'Recent Developments in Retailing and Urban Planning'. She contended:

Several studies of consumer opinion have recently been carried out and so far there is little evidence to suggest that shoppers in Britain are demanding a dramatic change in shopping habits, although many who claim to speak on their behalf insist that this is the case.<sup>40</sup>

Mills' remarks cast some doubt on the consumer pressure argument. She alluded to the rising cost of living, increased petrol prices and a growth in concern for the environment as possible indicators that popular pressure for such sites may be less than was at first assumed. Furthermore, a study undertaken by Broxbourne Borough Council to assess the impact of out-of-town development similarly cast doubt on such explanations as late as 1985. The study claimed that decentralised developments, and in particular a new superstore, had 'undoubtedly taken trade away from the town centres, and has limited their immediate catchment areas'.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, 'a significant number of shoppers still prefer to shop at a town centre location'.<sup>42</sup> By 1985 a number of retailers had incorporated decentralised retail sites into their store portfolio and yet despite claims to the contrary,

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>40</sup> TNA, Centre for Environmental Studies (CES): Papers, *Planning Research Applications Group*, PRO 30/87/554, Elizabeth Mills, 'Recent Developments in Retailing and Urban Planning' (December, 1974), p. 32.

<sup>41</sup> *The Effects of Major Out-of-town Retail Development: A literature review for the Department of the Environment* (London: HMSO, 1992), p. 69.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

there still remained ample consumer demand for central shopping areas. Marks and Spencer's then Chairman, Mr J. Edward Sieff, maintained in 1971 that 'he believed customers preferred to shop in traditional and established shopping areas where ample car parking facilities were available'.<sup>43</sup> Sieff's comment was undoubtedly shaped by his desire to encourage greater provision for car-borne shoppers within town centre locations. Nevertheless, the fact that the company remained without decentralised developments throughout the 1970s and the early 1980s attested, at least in part, to a belief in continued consumer support for, and the efficacy of, centralised retailing provision. Population moves did not in and of themselves negate the future productivity of town centre and high-street retailing.

Marks and Spencer's appraisal of consumer attitudes seemingly altered in the mid-1980s, long after suburbanisation had taken effect and other retailers had moved out-of-town, around the time that they themselves began to develop out-of-town stores. The company's 1984 annual report outlined that 'when considering future store development plans, the company will have to review what steps are necessary to ensure that our investment is directed to locations where our customers will prefer to shop'.<sup>44</sup> The insinuation was that the company's new direction was the result of changing consumer preferences with no acknowledgement of other commercial factors which may have shaped the company's store development strategy. Nicholas Faith made an astute observation about the company in a 1987 article for *The Economist*. He stated, 'it is Marks and Spencer's style to present changes as reactive, rather than major steps forward'.<sup>45</sup> The company's justification of its decision to develop out-of-town stores certainly highlighted this. Marks and Spencer's image as a reliable and stable retailer in the eyes of consumers, and society more generally, arguably did much to shape the company's desire to appear responsive to consumer preferences as opposed to being driven by solely commercial considerations.

The advent of the motor car had an undeniable impact on the geographies of retailing and was at the centre of much of the debate surrounding decentralised shopping. The out-of-town store and regional centre were often characterised as the answer to the growing challenge presented by an increasingly car-borne population. Colin Buchanan, in his self-titled 1964 report concerning the impact of greater car use on town centres, asserted that 'the motor vehicle has infiltrated into the country's affairs to an extent which amounts to a social and economic revolution'.<sup>46</sup> He concluded that as

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<sup>43</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Financial Times names Chairman "Man of Week"', 18:5 (June/July, 1971), p. 4.

<sup>44</sup> MSCA, *Annual Reports*, CR/D/59, 'Annual Report - Centenary Insert' (1984), p. 11.

<sup>45</sup> MSCA, *Press Cuttings*, L/1/2/23, Folder: April, 1987, Nicholas Faith, 'What the Marksmen have in their sights', *Business Magazine* (April, 1987), 58-60 (p. 58, col. 1).

<sup>46</sup> Colin Buchanan, *Buchanan and after: a summary of the Buchanan report* (London: British Road Federation, 1964), p. 3.



a nation Britain was 'inextricably committed to the motor vehicle'.<sup>47</sup> The proliferation of car use ensured greater mobility and freedom of choice in terms of the activities and environments that individuals could experience and engage with. It also had a profound impact on established retailing areas. The Buchanan report highlighted that as early as 1964 there was a growing unease as to the ability of town centres to absorb the motor car and its effect on the surrounding environment. Buchanan concluded that without a concerted effort to ameliorate the effects of increased car usage, 'it will be easily within our ability to ruin this island by the end of the century'.<sup>48</sup> Whilst such a proposition was somewhat hyperbolic, the strong sentiment regarding the growing significance of the motor car was testament to the growing interest and uncertainty afforded it at this time.

Increased car ownership was evident in data collected by the Family Expenditure Survey (FES). The 1972 survey showed that 45.3 per cent of British households owned one car whilst 7.4 per cent owned two.<sup>49</sup> According to the General Household Survey (GHS) data this figure was even higher for 1972 with fifty-two per cent owning one car and nine per cent owning two or more. These figures increased by 1982 with fifty-nine per cent owning one car and sixteen per cent owning two or more. By 1992 an even bigger growth was discernible with sixty-nine per cent of households owning one car and twenty-four per cent owning two or more.<sup>50</sup> The slightly higher rate of car ownership identified by the GHS compared to the FES may well be the result of the slightly different focus of each survey. Nevertheless, both data sets highlighted increased car ownership. Sainsbury's used the FES and GHS data in an effort to justify its move into out-of-town developments, in its evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee on the Environment, which sat from 1993-94 and produced the report *Shopping Centres and their Future*.<sup>51</sup> The data did highlight a significant shift in consumer mobility and retailers undoubtedly had to engage with and cater to such a change. However, the car was by no means universally owned even by 1992, thirty-one per cent of households were still without cars. Moreover, access to the family car and how it was used was dependent on a number of factors. Elizabeth Mills was commissioned to write a report entitled 'Recent Developments in Retailing and Urban Planning', by the Government's Centre for

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>49</sup> Cited in TNA, PRO 30/87/554, Mills, 'Recent Developments in Retailing and Urban Planning', p. 30.

<sup>50</sup> SA, SA/BRA/1/3/9/1, 'Evidence to the Select Committee on the Environment: Shopping Centres and their Future - Sainsbury's Supermarket Development', Sainsbury's plc (1993), p. 2.

<sup>51</sup> House of Commons Environment Committee. Fourth report, 'Shopping centres and their future', HC 359-I of session 1993-94 (London: House of Commons, November, 1994), *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online*, [http://0-gateway.proquest.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/openurl?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2004&res\\_dat=xri:hcpp&rft\\_dat=xri:hcpp:rec:1993-093468](http://0-gateway.proquest.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:hcpp&rft_dat=xri:hcpp:rec:1993-093468) [accessed 28.08.2015]

Environmental Studies (CES) Planning Research Applications Group, in 1974. She made reference to the fact that 'only 16 per cent of those who do the shopping - housewives - hold driving licenses'.<sup>52</sup> Although a greater number of families may have owned a car, this did not automatically ensure its availability for day-to-day acts of consumption. Data compiled in the National Travel Survey from 1989/91 showed that in that year, whilst eighty per cent of males held a license, only forty-nine per cent of women did so: In 1975/6 and 1985/6 the figure for female driving licenses was twenty-nine per cent and forty-one per cent respectively.<sup>53</sup> Consequently, whilst the accommodation of the car in the geographies of retailing and consumption was an issue of increasing importance, the car did not define the consuming process for everybody. Research undertaken by the Distributive Trades EDC in 1988 showed that 'more than a third of all households in England and Wales still rely on public or other forms of transport'.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, shopping practices continued to occur with or without the use of a car.

Nevertheless, the implications of greater car use on the quality and character of central environments was an issue of growing concern. Marks and Spencer made repeated references to the increased incursion of traffic within central shopping environments and the need to compensate for it. In 1973 the company's annual report stated the need for 'improved facilities for the shopper, which should incorporate good car parking adjacent to the city centre'.<sup>55</sup> Marks and Spencer saw better shopping environments as being synonymous with greater car parking provision. This was a recurring motif within Marks and Spencer's annual reports. In 1987 the company asserted that, 'local authorities have a responsibility to improve facilities for the shopper in towns by providing traffic free high-streets with adequate car parks adjacent to town centres'.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, the company's 1991 report affirmed that 'good car parking is an essential part of shopping facilities'.<sup>57</sup> Whilst Marks and Spencer called for greater car parking provision, in an effort to bolster the appeal of high-street shopping, it also clearly sought a traffic-free shopping environment. Indeed, retailers not only wanted greater parking provision to accommodate car use but also sought to ensure that the incursion of the car was isolated from the immediate shopping environment. The environmental impact of cars, congestion and traffic fumes was far from an ideal atmosphere in which

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<sup>52</sup> Cited in TNA, PRO 30/87/554, Mills, 'Recent Developments in Retailing and Urban Planning', p. 30.

<sup>53</sup> SA, SA/BRA/1/3/9/1, 'Evidence to the Select Committee on the Environment', p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> Distributive Trades EDC, *The Future of the High Street*, p. 28.

<sup>55</sup> MSCA, *Annual Reports*, CR/D/48, Marks and Spencer Ltd, 'Annual Report' (1973), p. 8.

<sup>56</sup> MSCA, *Annual Reports*, CR/D/62, Marks and Spencer Ltd, 'Annual Report' (1987), p. 11.

<sup>57</sup> MSCA, *Annual Reports*, CR/D/66, Marks and Spencer Ltd, 'Annual Report' (1991), p. 8.

to shop at leisure. This desire to remove cars from central areas was highlighted in Marks and Spencer's 1988 report, in which it outlined:

We continue to press for traffic-free shopping areas in our discussions with local authorities, developers and other retailers, in order to improve customer convenience, comfort and safety.<sup>58</sup>

Here Marks and Spencer draw attention to the potential ill-effects of increased traffic in town centres and high-streets with reference to the need to maintain safety and comfort. There was a desire at this time to accommodate the car whilst eliminating it from view, in order for it not to diminish the surrounding environment. The promotion and development of pedestrianisation schemes by retailers was a clear response to such concerns and will be addressed in Chapter Seven. Nevertheless, the limited space available in many towns and cities made this an increasingly complex balance.

The perception that central locations were no longer able to accommodate and appeal to car-borne consumers persisted. The image of town centres and established high-streets as somewhat restrictive and inaccessible, held significant weight at this time. There was a sense of paralysis in terms of the ability of such locations to find a suitable answer to increased road demands and calls for great parking provision. The extent to which these new demands could be accommodated was increasingly dependent on the negotiation of the spatial limits of such environments. The issue of accessibility was central. Russell Schiller observed at the time, that 'accessibility is...a powerful force working towards the loosening of our present urban structure'.<sup>59</sup> Thus, whilst retail stores firmly ensconced at the heart of towns and cities, had previously been the established orthodoxy, this was becoming increasingly untenable due to the physical limitations of established retailing environments. Guy elaborated on this, claiming that:

The rise in car use for shopping has disadvantaged the central area, where high land values mean that free car parking cannot easily be provided...and traffic congestion can make access difficult.<sup>60</sup>

High land values in central areas was a key commercial concern at this time and will be addressed further later on. The barriers to greater vehicle penetration not only posed a threat to consumer access, but also that of retailers themselves. This is something which has received less attention in debates regarding the imperatives behind moves out-of-town. However, increased consumption and the promotion of a bulk-buying consumer culture only exacerbated the need for frequent deliveries utilising bulky lorries and delivery trucks. As Gayler noted, 'access to stores for lorries is especially difficult in many

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<sup>58</sup> MSCA, *Annual Reports*, CR/D/63, Marks and Spencer Ltd, 'Annual Report' (1988), p. 14.

<sup>59</sup> Schiller, 'Out-of-town Exodus', p. 68.

<sup>60</sup> Guy and Lord, 'Transformation and the City Centre', p. 88.

of Britain's oldest cities, and often not well planned for in redevelopment schemes'.<sup>61</sup> The inconvenient and unattractive incursion of delivery vehicles into the shopping environment, whilst not new, was perceived to be increasing and coupled with greater private car use became a much more visible issue.

Marks and Spencer made multiple references to local authorities when calling for greater town centre parking amenities. The company's 1987 annual report declared:

Authorities who provide these facilities for the car-borne shopper will ensure the continuing commercial health of town centres with their important contribution to the social and economic life of the community; failure to do so will result in town centre decay.<sup>62</sup>

There was a clear inference that local authorities were responsible for the health of central areas. Such a sentiment also implied that commercial activity was central to maintaining the quality of the town centre environment and that of the high-street. The reference to decay clearly alluded to the perceived consequences of a failure to accommodate the car-borne shopper and, as a result, to maintain a substantial retailing presence in central areas. Whilst it was not an overt ultimatum or threat, the implications of the statement and the fact that it was from the company's published reports suggests that Marks and Spencer sought to exert pressure on local authorities with the underlying inference that if measures were not taken, this would result in the potential withdrawal of retailers from central areas.

The increasing presence of traffic not only led to efforts to ameliorate the impact of transport on town centres, but also saw a greater recognition that it was potentially having a detrimental environmental impact. This was evident in the town of Rickmansworth. In 1989 the council proposed implementing a new traffic system. A Rickmansworth councillor at the time outlined that 'the intention is to divert through traffic away from the central section of the High Street, particularly heavy, evil-smelling lorries interested only in getting through the town'.<sup>63</sup> Now in this specific case the councillor was referring to the problems the town centre faced with through traffic and thus not the demands of heavy traffic linked to delivering to the high-street and the town centre itself. Nevertheless, it was clear from the investment in a new system that traffic was deemed to be a sufficient enough threat to the town to warrant intervention. Additionally, the language used was also of note as it played on broader concerns regarding pollution and environmental degradation; the reference to 'evil-smelling lorries' was a particularly

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<sup>61</sup> Gayler, *Retail Innovation in Britain*, p. 16.

<sup>62</sup> MSCA, CR/D/62, 'Annual Report' (1987), p. 12.

<sup>63</sup> MSCA, *Rickmansworth Store*, S392/27/20, document compiled by Ray Sewell of Raymond Sewell Chartered Surveyors (1989), copy of a letter by Councillor Martin Trevett, Chairman, Highways Committee, Three Rivers District Council, 'Not even a vote was asked for', *Watford Observer* (August, 1989), [n.p.] col. 2.

pejorative description, inferring a detrimental and harmful effect on the surrounding environment. Within the same letter the councillor pointed out that 'two hundred people were questioned in a recent survey carried out by one residents' association, and a massive 85 per cent said they preferred the High Street minus the traffic, noise and fumes'.<sup>64</sup> There was a clear association between increased traffic and other nuisances. The councillor did not provide details of the question to which individuals were responding, although it may be safe to say that if it included direct reference to 'traffic, noise and fumes' that the majority were unlikely to vote in favour. Nevertheless, there did appear to be a growing sense that the high-street, and the quality of the town-centre environment, was under siege. The high visibility and immediacy of the problem of traffic in town centres, and the ease with which individuals could connect the increased presence of cars to other unwanted environmental conditions, ensured that discussions regarding traffic frequently connected with wider concerns regarding the protection of the environment.

However, awareness of the potential impact of car use on the environment, was tempered by individual desires for greater convenience. Despite a growing popular awareness of the environment, and a seeming acknowledgement on the part of individuals that it needed protecting, there remained a significant reluctance to allow this to affect car use. Mills observed that:

There seems to be a growing body of public opinion which seeks to restrict the use of the car on environmental grounds. It should be borne in mind, however, that once a household acquires a car it is usually reluctant to revert to other forms of transport.<sup>65</sup>

Ownership and use of a car was a somewhat prized commodity for those that could afford it. The increased desire for convenience and attachment to the motor car amongst consumers, underlined many of the commercial arguments for off-centre development. In addition to this, the increased use of cars undoubtedly had a detrimental environmental effect in terms of quality and functionality of established retailing areas. Consequently, changing social practices and lifestyles, brought about by technological developments, in this instance the motor car, had a direct impact on the environment and the way in which retailers operated within it.

Consumer demand was the centrepiece of retail justifications for out-of-town retail development. When launching a joint proposal with Tesco for an out-of-town development at Holmbush Farm, Shoreham, Marks and Spencer asserted in the promotional booklet that 'in response to customer demand...Marks and Spencer is

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid. [n.p.], col. 3.

<sup>65</sup> TNA, PRO 30/87/554, Mills, 'Recent Developments in Retailing and Urban Planning', p. 30.

developing edge-of-town stores in selected locations'.<sup>66</sup> The importance of consumer preference was again referenced in Marks and Spencer's promotional literature concerning an edge-of-town proposal in Warrington. The company outlined that it now had 'eight edge of town stores...with three more opening in 1991, providing a network of easily accessible stores which have proved extremely popular with customers'.<sup>67</sup> The public image presented by the company was that it was a responsive retailer acknowledging consumer demand. Sainsbury's gave a similar explanation of its store development when providing evidence to the 1994 Environment Select Committee. The company stated that 'the evolution of retailing is effectively consumer led, adapting to the changing needs of the population'.<sup>68</sup> Thus, Marks and Spencer were not alone in embracing a narrative of consumer pressure as the rationale behind decentralised development. This explanation was further adopted by Ross Davies writing in *The Planner* in 1986. Davies referred to 'the increased mobility of consumers and their clear preferences for new forms of retail development in non-traditional locations'.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, Gayler claimed in 1984 that 'the development of out-of-town shopping centres is just one example of a function, in this case retailing, responding to changing needs in our society'.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, such suppositions obscure the operational and commercial benefits which also underpinned commercial decisions to move out-of-town.

### Commercial Advantages

When addressing commercial motivations behind the greater decentralisation of retailing provision it was evident that there were significant advantages to be found from moving out of central locations, some of which mirrored the benefits experienced by consumers. As was briefly mentioned before, the degree of access provided at stores in central locations for stock delivery was becomingly increasingly limited. Mills noted that 'the provision for delivery vehicles is one of the major problems facing planners in their efforts to reorganise and redevelop central shopping areas'.<sup>71</sup> The demands of modern day retailing in some respects began to outstrip traditional town centre and high-street sites. Sainsbury's attested to this in its submission to the Environment Select Committee. The company stated that 'few people realise how many vehicles are needed to deliver goods to a store in a week...This volume of traffic cannot be desirable in town centres -

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<sup>66</sup> MSCA, *Shoreham Store*, S392/29/2, 'Holmbush farm Shoreham: A Joint Development Proposal by Marks and Spencer and Tesco', Marks and Spencer Ltd (1990s) [n.p].

<sup>67</sup> MSCA, *Warrington out-of-town store proposals*, S/1/2/3, 'A proposal for an Edge of Town Store in Warrington', Marks and Spencer Ltd (1980s), p. 2.

<sup>68</sup> SA, SA/BRA/1/3/9/1, 'Evidence to the Select Committee on the Environment', p. 2.

<sup>69</sup> Davies, 'Retail Planning in Disarray', p. 20, col. 2.

<sup>70</sup> Gayler, *Retail Innovation in Britain*, p. 2.

<sup>71</sup> TNA, PRO 30/87/554, Mills, 'Recent Developments in Retailing and Urban Planning', p. 28.

which is another argument for the edge-of-town store'.<sup>72</sup> Although it must be borne in mind that the delivery needs of a supermarket were likely to be greater due to the perishable nature of the goods, parallels can be drawn with Marks and Spencer and the John Lewis Partnership as both companies had substantial food sectors, in addition to their non-food ranges. Moreover, Sainsbury's remarks put the environmental impact of the growing demands of retailing front and centre as the company sought to justify and explain the commercial imperatives behind its concerted move to out-of-town and edge-of-town sites. It was evident that retailers began to find the operating environment available in central locations increasingly hostile to their operational needs, thus causing them to begin to look elsewhere. Indeed, the extent to which retailers could no longer take the environment for granted as a limitless and compliant resource within central areas, was significant in shaping retail store development trends.

The realities of the spatial limitations of many traditional retailing locations were being realised at this time. Marks and Spencer's efforts to expand its operations brought the company face to face with the physical limits of its operating environment. This was repeatedly referenced in Marks and Spencer's internal literature regarding its reasoning behind developing in decentralised locations. In an internal document produced by the Personnel Group and distributed to Marks and Spencer employees in 1984, regarding the company's move into out-of-town sites, it was proclaimed that 'it is not physically possible to develop further some stores'.<sup>73</sup> In addition a spokesperson for Marks and Spencer stated in a press article from 1986, 'we are plagued by the problems of success. After 100 years we are running out of space. There's no room. It's as simple as that'.<sup>74</sup> Thus, it was evident that due to the company's continued growth it found it increasingly difficult to negotiate its physical presence within central environments. Such a situation increasingly highlighted the extent to which commercial entities relied on a favourable and hospitable natural environment in order to ensure continued profitability. Such an interaction between the environment and retailers invariably needed to be one based on commercial adaptation rather than commercial dominance.

Moreover, the apparent restraints on growth within established shopping areas also had a direct impact on Marks and Spencer's ability to develop in terms of stock levels and its ability to display it. Don Trangmar, the main board director in charge of new developments at the time, commented in an article in *Business Magazine* in 1987, 'even now...we're not growing as fast as we could because of pressure on space'.<sup>75</sup> Marks and

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<sup>72</sup> SA, SA/BRA/1/3/9/1, 'Evidence to the Select Committee on the Environment', p. 8.

<sup>73</sup> MSCA, *Memos, minutes and relating papers regarding store developments, 1915-1988*, HO/10/2/3/6, Personnel Group 'Out-Of-Town Superstores' (May, 1984), p. 1.

<sup>74</sup> MSCA, AO4/77OH, Stephen Aris, 'The Out-of-town Shopping Boom', *Intercity* (Jan/Feb, 1986), 24-25 (p. 24, col. 3).

<sup>75</sup> MSCA, L/1/2/23, Faith, 'What the Marksmen have in their sights', p. 58, col. 3.

Spencer needed to access new areas if they were to ensure the company's continued expansion and this was not always available in town centres and high-streets. In a 1987 *Retail* article, the writer asserted that 'virtually every merchandise area in Marks and Spencer is crying out for more selling space'.<sup>76</sup> This observation came not long after the company launched its first furniture range. Such a development undoubtedly put greater emphasis on the need for space and subsequently provided the company with a significant incentive to begin to develop out-of-town stores. Indeed, Marks and Spencer launched its first furniture catalogue in 1986, the same year the company's first off-centre site opened at the MetroCentre. Nicholas Faith writing in the *Business Magazine* in 1987 reported that household goods accounted for '£500 million of Marks' sales'.<sup>77</sup> Within the promotional material for Marks and Spencer's Warrington proposal the company stated, 'there will be ample space for an enlarged homeward section which will include a wide range of home furnishings arranged in room settings'.<sup>78</sup> With the launch of its furniture range the company sought to create a marketable environment in terms of establishing domestic scenes within stores. This type of in-store marketing was invariably better suited to larger stores. Consequently, the development of Marks and Spencer's product range meant that the commercial benefits of decentralised development for the company were growing.

The broader operating advantages that were to be garnered from larger store formats were also something which Marks and Spencer could not ignore. Whilst its market share within the clothing sector was dominant at this time, this was not to say that the company did not see the development of new competitors. The eighties saw the establishment of Next (1982) and whilst the extent to which Marks and Spencer viewed the retailer as a direct threat to its own market share was debatable, such changes did heighten the need to maintain a competitive advantage. This was increasingly seen to be achieved through economies of scale through larger stores. A study undertaken by the Department of the Environment in 1992 identified that 'the policies of major retailers, which reflect their commercial aims, suggest that it is more profitable to have fewer and larger outlets'.<sup>79</sup> Such a supposition was borne out in Marks and Spencer's development plan with its sustained effort to expand existing sites within its store portfolio, as was outlined previously. The benefits of larger stores was further explained by Guy:

Retailers operated on principles of high sales volume and low margins, and hence required large stores in low-cost locations in order to benefit from economies of scale.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> MSCA, *Press Cuttings*, L/1/2/23, Folder: May 1987, 'M&S first choice for furniture', *Retail* (1987), p. 17, col. 3.

<sup>77</sup> MSCA, L/1/2/23, Faith, 'What the Marksmen have in their sights', p. 58, col. 1.

<sup>78</sup> MSCA, S/1/2/3, 'A proposal for an Edge of Town Store in Warrington', p. 4.

<sup>79</sup> *The Effects of Major Out-of-town Retail Development*, p. 81.

<sup>80</sup> Guy, *Planning for Retail Development*, p. 35.



Store size was not only about the need for greater space to display specific items, but also about the amount of space overall in which to display goods and sell to consumers. The out-of-town format was seen to cater to these commercial needs and the increasing demands made on the environment.

Marks and Spencer observed that stores in out-of-town locations 'provide space for a more extensive range of merchandise and the wider aisles and improved displays mean that customers can shop in greater comfort'.<sup>81</sup> The company marketed its move out-of-town by highlighting the increased opportunities for greater consumer comfort. The complex interplay between consumer desires and commercial necessities was conspicuously evident here. Indeed, there was a discernible desire on the part of retailers to cultivate an environment in which consumers were encouraged to consume greater quantities. This was invariably ensured through the greater ease of movement around stores, wider product ranges and the increased amount of stock on display. The fact that out-of-town stores, by virtue of their size in terms of store provision and greater parking amenities, facilitated this commercial aim, was alluded to by Marks and Spencer. The Personnel Group noted that the company felt it 'could do valuable additional business if we had a major store with ample free parking to encourage our customers to buy larger quantities'.<sup>82</sup> This was further attested to in 1989 regarding Marks and Spencer's proposal for a store at Hedge End. The company stated that 'edge of town stores provide greater comfort for customers with large areas being given over to customer circulation'.<sup>83</sup> Subsequently, although the consumer benefits evident in out-of-town developments seemed to endorse arguments which prioritised consumer driven causal explanations for decentralised retailing, they actually in many respects emphasised the complex negotiation of commercial objectives. Chairman Lord Rayner stated in 1984, 'edge-of-town shopping units...would offer customers a wide range of products and comprehensive facilities within a modern, attractive shopping environment'.<sup>84</sup> The increased sales and enhanced consuming environment offered by larger stores in decentralised locations was acknowledged at the highest level. Yet the perceived consumer benefits were prominently endorsed whilst the commercial advantages were left to be inferred. Although consumer trends complimented a move by retailers out-of-town, it was clear that the availability of larger sites in such locations freed retailers from the restrictive retailing environments found in many town centres. As such, the growth in

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<sup>81</sup> MSCA, S/1/2/3, 'A proposal for an Edge of Town Store in Warrington', p. 2.

<sup>82</sup> MSCA, HO/10/2/3/6, Personnel Group, 'Out-Of-Town Superstores', p. 1.

<sup>83</sup> MSCA, *Estates Records 1950-1990*, ACC/11/461, Box 2, A275, 'Marks and Spencer, Hedge End, Eastleigh' (June, 1989) [n.p.].

<sup>84</sup> MSCA, *Press Release*, HO/3/1/3/1/52, Lord Rayner, 'Company: Partnership between M&S and Tesco on developing shopping centres with car parking provisions' (21 November 1984), p. 1.

out-of-town development undertaken by retailers was more than a reactive endeavour; the evolving needs of commercial retailing underpinned the spatial reorganisation of retailing at this time.

Despite efforts to limit off-centre development, the extent to which town centre environments could accommodate the expansion that retailers began to direct out-of-town, was increasingly limited. The poor conditions observed within town centres at this time and the cost to retailers of maintaining their stores in central locations were significant. Marks and Spencer drew attention to this in its 1981 annual report. The company stated:

There is urgent need for joint action by the High Street associations to press for good conditions, especially in view of the substantial increase in rates now being paid by retailers.<sup>85</sup>

The fact that this featured in the company's report emphasised the extent to which this was deemed to be an issue worthy of wider attention. The issue of rates and the costs of operating in traditional retail areas was not an isolated issue. The report issued by the Distributive Trades EDC in 1988, regarding the future of the high-street, echoed the concerns of Marks and Spencer. It contended that the costs of high-street trading were becoming uncompetitive. They observed that the inflexibility inherent in rents and land costs which invariably increased rather than decreased, to reflect periods of 'slow growth or falls in retail sales', ensured that some central locations were no longer as competitive as alternative sites out-of-town.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, the situation did not show signs of changing in favour of retailers; Davies observed in 1986 further 'huge increases in commercial rates'.<sup>87</sup> The fact that Marks and Spencer's out-of-town development escalated after 1986, whilst invariably dependent on a multitude of interacting factors, does to some extent corroborate the suggestion that the cost of retailing in central locations was reducing its commercial appeal.

Marks and Spencer's remarks in its 1981 report regarding the need for improved conditions were all the more significant as the report was produced just after the Brixton Riots, which caused substantial damage to central trading areas. Although relatively short in duration the riots highlighted the vulnerability of retail organisations to conditions in central areas and the importance of the quality of urban environments to the successful and profitable operation of retail stores. The Marks and Spencer store itself, despite being at the centre of the violence, remained untouched, but the company made substantial efforts in the wake of the riots to improve the Brixton area and rebrand the central retail space. The company noted that it was concerned with the conditions in

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<sup>85</sup> MSCA, CR/D/56, 'Annual Report' (1981), p. 7.

<sup>86</sup> Distributive Trades EDC, *The Future of the High Street*, p. 45.

<sup>87</sup> Davies, 'Retail Planning in Disarray', p. 22, col. 1.

Brixton as early as 1978, as a result it set up its Community Involvement Department.<sup>88</sup> Following the riots, Marks and Spencer launched the 'Backing Brixton Campaign' and spoke of its intention to restore confidence to the area so that 'work can take place to improve local amenities'.<sup>89</sup> Lord Scarman who chaired the enquiry into the riots, was observed supporting the campaign by wearing an 'I'm Backing Brixton' badge created by Marks and Spencer; 'over five thousand of the badges were given away in Brixton' in an effort to 'attract shoppers back to the area'.<sup>90</sup> In addition to this Marks and Spencer gave its Brixton store a 're-decoration facelift inside and out and sixty new lines were introduced'.<sup>91</sup> The company's efforts indicated that trade in the area had suffered due to reduced footfall and confidence in the area. Marks and Spencer noted that its Brixton store manager and two company employees who were seconded to work in the local area, were actively working to improve conditions within the area.<sup>92</sup>

The 'Backing Brixton Campaign' was also backed by other local businesses and local and national government. It received national press attention. A 1982 article in *The Economist*, entitled 'St Michael has a halo', reported that Marks and Spencer was at the centre of a committee of local traders working to improve conditions.<sup>93</sup> It also noted a Department of the Environment grant of £100,000 to assist in the rejuvenation of the Brixton area.<sup>94</sup> The article's title, 'St Michael has a halo', inscribed the company's brand, St Michael, with a virtuous and altruistic quality which presented the company's efforts as fulfilling some higher purpose. Whilst Marks and Spencer was instrumental in co-ordinating local efforts and improvements in the area, its concern was primarily driven by commercial calculations; depressed areas do not convey a vibrant and welcoming atmosphere to consumers.

The impact of the Brixton riots highlighted the extent to which the social, economic and environmental characteristics of an area were interrelated and central to the effective and profitable operation of retailers. A *St Michael News* article noted in 1981, 'today's problems are at our front doors...the high street cannot be insulated from the social decline and economic distress of the back streets'.<sup>95</sup> In the wake of the riots there was an even greater sense that central areas were in danger of cultivating an

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<sup>88</sup> MSCA, CR/B/4/1/294, Draft copy of a speech given by Marcus Sieff at the Scottish Business in the Community National Conference in Glasgow (11 May 1984), p. 12.

<sup>89</sup> MSCA, *Annual Reports*, CR/D/57, Marks and Spencer Ltd, 'Annual Report' (1982), p. 7.

<sup>90</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Lord Scarman backs Brixton', 6 (September, 1981), p. 1.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>92</sup> MSCA, *Annual Reports*, CR/D/58, Marks and Spencer Ltd, 'Annual Report' (1983), p. 9.

<sup>93</sup> MSCA, *Marcus Sieff: articles and press cuttings relating to Marks and Spencer 1980-1996*, R/4/7/1, 'St Michael has a halo', *Economist* (February, 1982) [n.p].

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.* [n.p].

<sup>95</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, Helene de Klerk, 'Bristol, Brixton...where next?' 3 (April, 1981), p. 8.

atmosphere of decay and disorder, rather than growth and stability. Marks and Spencer affirmed that its actions in Brixton following the riots demonstrated 'the company's continuing belief that a healthy and prosperous environment means healthy and prosperous business, and that every business should be involved in the community in which it operates'.<sup>96</sup> The needs of the company had led Marks and Spencer to affirm the necessity of greater environmental care and stewardship of the urban environment. Indeed, the quality and health of local environments was essential to the successful operation of commercial retailing. Whilst this brand of environmental concern appeared far removed from the rallying cries of Greenpeace and FoE, the immediate consequences of environmental instability witnessed by the company in the wake of the riots revealed the fundamental, day-to-day dependency of retail stores on the character and quality of the local environment. Moreover, Marks and Spencer's campaign and its partnership with the local council illustrated the influence that retailers had, operating in both the private and public sector, to ensure greater commercial profitability and success. The combination of the riots, greater car use and the increasing cost of operating in central locations, increasingly led Marks and Spencer to engage in local dialogues and initiatives with local authorities and groups. This is most clearly displayed in Marks and Spencer's involvement and promotion of TCM schemes, which will be addressed in Chapter Seven.

Land prices in town centres and high-streets were becoming less competitive. Retailers increasingly found that in decentralised areas 'land was cheaper and more readily available than in central areas'.<sup>97</sup> This was attested to by the John Lewis Partnership in feedback the company provided the Government in 1983, concerning potential policy revisions to national planning guidance. The Partnership stated that it was 'now easier and cheaper to develop away from existing centres'.<sup>98</sup> Thus, when assessing the reasons behind retailers embracing new out-of-town locations, it was clear that the differential in land prices was a motivating factor. Additionally, the freedom afforded retailers when developing in comparatively less built up areas and on previously undeveloped sites, was in stark contrast to the often piecemeal acquisition of land in town centres. Schiller argued, 'development is simpler and quicker, construction is less complicated and retail operations are more efficient' in 'fringe locations'.<sup>99</sup> Although the sites used for retail development were not always problem free, the MetroCentre was

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<sup>96</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Riot-torn areas get M&S help', 7 (October, 1981), p. 6.

<sup>97</sup> Guy, *Planning for Retail Development*, p. 14.

<sup>98</sup> TNA, *Department of the Environment and Predecessors: Planning Land Use Policy Directorate*, PLUP 3/4727/1 Part 1, Planning policy on large retail developments: consideration of revision to Development Control Policy Advice Note 13 (large new stores); comments by local authorities, 1 January 1978-31 December, AT 29/567, 'Responses from Individual Retailers' (15 December 1983), p. 2.

<sup>99</sup> Schiller, 'Out-of-town Exodus', p. 68.

built on an old industrial site, the ability to start from scratch in terms of building new stores rather than working with existing infrastructures, afforded retailers greater flexibility and ease of construction. The significance of costs, both in the purchase of land and construction and maintenance, cannot be ignored within an assessment of the motivations leading retailers to move out of town.

Whilst the impact of local and national government policy and attitudes will be explored in more detail in the following chapter, it was evident that government funding also played a part in incentivising the development of certain off-centre schemes. In particular the construction of the MetroCentre at Gateshead was facilitated by an urban development grant from the Department of the Environment and the Metropolitan Borough of Gateshead because of a desire to encourage redevelopment and investment in the area. The funding aided improvement to the accessibility of the centre. Therefore, not only was land found to be cheaper in peripheral locations, the greater development of access routes and transport infrastructure also heightened the desirability of such sites in the eyes of retailers. The 1980s saw an increase in road networks across the country, despite government' concerns over public spending.<sup>100</sup> The impetus behind efforts to improve and extend the nation's road networks was largely due to increased car ownership, coupled with the development of new towns and conurbations and the growing suburbanisation of the population. Nevertheless such development also provided solutions to underlying commercial concerns. A number of factors ensured the growing appeal of decentralised developments and consequently had a direct impact on the changing demands placed on the environment at this time.

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This chapter has assessed the reasons behind the growth in decentralised retailing, with specific reference to the attitudes and justifications voiced by Marks and Spencer. The growth in out-of-town development had a visible impact on the environment and notably altered the ways in which society engaged with, and viewed, land on the urban periphery. The chapter has sought to convey the complex interplay between consumer lifestyles and habits and the internal demands and operating needs of retailers, in motivating a change in the way that retail stores were accommodated within the built and natural environment. Both social and commercial changes engendered a proliferation of the environments in which retailers operated. Decentralised retailing complimented changing consumer lifestyles and individuals increasingly frequented such sites whose wide aisles, controlled conditions and ample parking catered to the changing social perception of shopping as a leisure activity,

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<sup>100</sup> Barry Cullingworth and Vincent Nadin, *Town and Country Planning in the UK* (Abingdon: Routledge. fourteenth edition, 2006), p. 402.

seemingly far removed from the cumbersome congestion of central areas. Nevertheless, whilst shifting social trends were significant it was evident that the needs of retailers and doubts regarding the ability of central areas to meet them, more directly dictated the actions and response of retailers. Companies were beginning to outgrow the capacity of many towns and cities. The often greater spatial freedom and cheaper rates afforded those retailers that built in peripheral locations were key factors in the growth of such development.

The chapter's assessment of the internal discussion within Marks and Spencer regarding out-of-town retailing highlighted the fact that the company needed more space in which to fully realise an optimal operating capacity in terms of its stores. As sales increased Marks and Spencer found that the lack of suitable space within central areas limited their ability to ensure that sales footage effectively accommodated existing demand. Moreover, the continuing diversification of Marks and Spencer's product range into furniture and other household items similarly had a bearing on the timing of the company's announcement to develop in decentralised locations. Indeed, it was clear that Marks and Spencer's attitude to out-of-town developments was primarily based on a strategic consideration of the company's own position, rather than a reaction to general population shifts and growing car use in and of themselves. Whilst the latter was an increasingly central concern for the company, Marks and Spencer made a concerted effort to try and promote the need to accommodate the car-borne shopper within existing centres. Marks and Spencer's repeated calls for conditions and facilities to be improved in central areas implied that it believed that more could have been done to ameliorate the pressures placed on central environments due to increased car use and competition. The company's delayed decision to move into out-of-town sites in the mid-1980s (BHS' decision to do so almost a decade earlier will be discussed in the following chapter) despite the much earlier growth in suburbanization and car-use adds weight to the argument that the motivation behind Marks and Spencer's move into out-of-town locations was primarily conditioned by its own needs.

Despite this, the chapter has shown the tendency on the part of retailers to construct a narrative of consumer need. This justification was prevalent in Sainsbury's and Marks and Spencer's public remarks concerning new decentralised developments. This was arguably in part due to an effort to justify such developments in the face of opposition and concern amongst planners and local commentators regarding out-of-town stores. To prioritise a narrative which placed commercial imperatives publicly at the centre of such discussions, particularly in the face of opposition to decentralised development, would have done little to enhance the image of those retailers undertaking it. As will be seen in the following chapter, attitudes towards out-of-town retailing were complex and varied. It was not surprising that the consumer benefits of such schemes

were emphasised publicly to a greater extent than the needs of retailers for greater space, better access and cheaper land.

Furthermore, it is evident that Marks and Spencer altered its assessment of public preference regarding the location of retail stores following its own commercial assessment, in the mid-1980s, that decentralised retailing was a profitable option for the company. Until that point, even in light of growing suburbanisation and car use, Marks and Spencer had maintained that consumers preferred the provision of retailing in central areas if accompanied with greater parking provision. Once the company began to pursue out-of-town development it publically implied that such a decision was borne of a desire to develop in areas in which its customers preferred to shop. The shift in the company's expression of consumer preference, whilst influenced in part by its belief that central areas were not catering adequately to the car-borne shopper, illustrated that the extent to which wider social trends motivated the company's move out-of-town was dependent on the proclivities and commercial agenda of Marks and Spencer.

Finally the chapter has shown the importance of the environment in shaping the operations and organisation of modern retailing. Marks and Spencer began to diversify the location of its stores because city centres and high-streets became more complex environments in which to operate profitably. A shortage of suitable land, increased congestion and the changing demands of retail operations ensured that retailers had to reassess their place in the urban landscape. This harmonised with consumer desires for increased convenience: greater choice, more space in the aisles and free car parking. In turn such concerns impacted on how the environment was being consumed and developed. Not only would store development become a prominent feature of Marks and Spencer's environment policy in the early 1990s but it had also ensured that the company was made increasingly aware of the character and limitations of the urban environment in the period studied. Out-of-town development illustrated the extent to which the relationship between retailers and the environment was about more than the headlines: CFCs, packaging and pressure groups.

## Chapter Five

### Negotiating Retail Environments

Following Chapter Four's assessment of the reasons behind the growing commercial appeal of decentralised development, and Marks and Spencer's own justification and outlook, the present chapter explores the difficulties and concerns which accompanied such developments. The management of increasingly diverse retail landscapes highlighted the significance of physical surroundings to commercial retailers in light of trends which increasingly threatened their suitability and quality. The growing attention afforded the issue of store location was characterised by a discussion of various environments, be they city centres and high-streets or out-of-town retail sites. Moreover, different retail environments began to confer identities upon retailers as the physical landscape was increasingly imbued with its own commercial textuality. The retailer's commercial image was shaped as much by store location as it was products. This was particularly evident in the case of Marks and Spencer. In contrast to companies such as Sainsbury's who inhabited a less place specific identity, Marks and Spencer's commercial image was increasingly understood and communicated through a specific environment, the British high-street. It was not only the company's physical presence but also its sense of self which underpinned Marks and Spencer's commercial link to it. The degree to which Marks and Spencer had become synonymous with high-street retailing is central to understanding the significance of out-of-town retailing, both to the company and wider society. The location of stores in increasingly diverse locations engendered fears regarding the continued expansion of urban environments into rural areas as well as the potentially detrimental economic and environmental effects on more traditional high-street and town centre locations. The perceived challenge posed by out-of-town development to the rigid orthodoxies of central place theory generated widespread attention from a vast array of groups; planners, politicians and retailers, all made their voices heard both at the local and national level.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Central Place Theory (CPT) refers to a geographical theory which seeks to explain the spatial development of urban environments. Originally devised by Walter Christaller (1933) classical CPT was based around hierarchies of centres and was widely used throughout the 1950s and 1960s in academic and planning circles in an effort to forecast and plan urban environments. However, the theory began to lose some favour in the 1970s in the wake of growing decentralisation (see: Peter Scott, *Geography and Retailing* (London: Hutchinson, 1970)), as classical CPT increasingly appeared to lack the flexibility needed to fully comprehend the modern urban environment. There have been subsequent efforts to foster a more flexible interpretation of CPT (see Charles Dennis, David Marsland and Tony Cockett, 'Central Place Practice: Shopping Centre Attractiveness Measures, Hinterland Boundaries and the UK Retail Hierarchy', *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 9 (2002), 185-199).



The difficulties inherent in developing in decentralised locations have received sizeable academic attention, particularly from retail geographers for whom the location and spatial dynamics of retailing have been of particular interest. This has led to a focus on theories of spatial hierarchies and modelling techniques to map the development of retailing and structures in the field of retail geography.<sup>2</sup> P. T. Kivell and G. Shaw observed that geographical research was predominantly concerned with the 'structural components of shopping centres and increasing knowledge about retail hierarchies'.<sup>3</sup> Whilst their observation was made in the early sixties, this trend in focus remained within the literature and can be seen to characterise J. A. Dawson's 1983 work on the development of shopping centres.<sup>4</sup> This focus on shopping structures and spatial hierarchies has been paired with specific locational case studies of shopping areas and impact studies.<sup>5</sup> Despite a conceptual shift in the discipline in the 1970s to a focus on behavioural models and consumer patterns, much of the work has still been influenced by an underlying methodological approach which sought to forecast and predict future trends in the spatial dynamics of retailing.<sup>6</sup> Although the work of geographers in the field of retail development is rich in data it has been criticised by academics in the field of planning, particularly Clifford Guy. He contended that whilst the existing literature on the topic facilitated a greater appreciation of where stores were being built and to what effect, it failed to engage with the processes that shaped such developments. Guy sought to rectify such an omission in his 1994 study of the retail development process.<sup>7</sup> The role of planning in shaping retail geography at this time has since received greater attention.<sup>8</sup> Guy's 2007 publication, *Planning for Retail Development*, in particular addresses the evolution of policy instruments designed to influence retail development and couples this with an assessment of retail and consumer behaviour in an effort to consider the validity

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<sup>2</sup> See R. L. Davies, *Marketing Geography: with Special References to Retailing* (Corbridge: Retailing and Planning Associates, 1976); G. Rowley, 'Databases and their Integration for Retail Geography: A British Example', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, New Series, 9:4 (1984), 460-476; G. Rowley, *Let's Talk Shop: Relocational Trends in British Retailing* (Old Hatfield, England: Goad, 1985).

<sup>3</sup> P.T. Kivell and G. Shaw, 'The Study of Retail Location', in *Retail Geography*, ed. by John A. Dawson (London: Croom Helm, 1980), pp. 95-155.

<sup>4</sup> Dawson, *Topics in Applied Geography*.

<sup>5</sup> See *Shopping Centre Development: Policies and Prospects*, ed. by J. A. Dawson and J. Dennis Lord (New York: Nichols Publishing Company, 1985); Paul Whysall, 'Regenerating inner city shopping centres: The British experience', *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 2:1 (1995), 3-13; D. J. Bennison and R. L. Davies, *The Impact of Town Centre Shopping Schemes in Britain: Their Impact on Traditional Retail Environments* (Oxford: Pergamon Press Ltd., Progress in Planning Series, 1980). All provide examples of the case study approach concerning specific types of shopping centre development and impact narratives.

<sup>6</sup> See Potter, *The Urban Retailing System: Location, Cognition and Behaviour*.

<sup>7</sup> Guy, *The Retail Development Process: Location, Property and Planning*.

<sup>8</sup> See Guy, *Planning for Retail Development*; Alan W. Evans, *Economic and Land Use Planning* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004).

of policy assumptions and objectives regarding retail planning. Guy observed that retail planning policy often appeared 'over-protective of existing retail systems', but that in the *laissez faire* planning climate of the 1980s this gave way to 'a lack of coherent retail planning policy'.<sup>9</sup> However, how such factors shaped the trajectory of individual companies with respect to store development has received less concerted attention.

As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, Shaw and his co-authors identified that studies grounded in a concerted use of retail archives, when addressing trends in retail development, have been less evident.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, it is clear that retail operations had a significant impact on the urban environment and retailers were centrally placed to mediate the changes taking place at this time. A number of concerns and difficulties presented themselves to retailers as they began to develop decentralised developments and these would benefit from a more thorough investigation. There is a particular need to acknowledge the specificity of individual company experiences, which increasingly shaped the approach and subsequent impact of a company's store development strategy. Indeed, relatively little assessment has been made within the existing literature as to how retail expansion into decentralised areas was navigated and discussed by retailers. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the lack of company specific analysis has partially been addressed by the work of Russell Schiller.<sup>11</sup> Schiller assessed the impact of Marks and Spencer's decision to develop in out-of-town locations on broader retail trends, claiming that this move by the company and the establishment of Enterprise Zones precipitated an increase in store proposals for decentralised locations.<sup>12</sup> However, there has yet to be a detailed assessment of the company based on a thorough investigation of the sources contained within the company's archive. As such this chapter seeks to provide this by building on the analysis of Chapter Four and addressing the difficulties inherent in pursuing out-of-town retailing at this time as experienced by Marks and Spencer. Internal company correspondence, assorted press cuttings, company speeches and press releases, as well as its company magazine, *St Michael News*, will be used to highlight the increasingly complex nature of store development at this time, shaped as it was by broader trends and attitudes and the specific realities of Marks and Spencer's position within UK retailing. Marks and Spencer's relationship with out-of-town retailing was characterised by a desire to protect its hegemonic position on the British high-street and to realise the increasing competitive advantage of out-of-town retailing. Whilst such a dual focus characterised the operations of a number of retailers at this time, Marks and Spencer's image and position

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<sup>9</sup> Guy, *Planning for Retail Development*, pp. 235, 236.

<sup>10</sup> Shaw et al., 'Structural and Spatial Trends in British Retailing: The Importance of Firm-Level Studies', p. 91.

<sup>11</sup> Schiller, 'Retail Decentralisation - The Coming of the Third Wave'.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15, col. 3.

undoubtedly added an additional dynamic to the company's store development activities which set it apart from its competitors. It will be shown that concerns regarding off-centre development were influenced by environmental considerations in a variety of physical and abstract guises as Marks and Spencer sought to balance its high-street image with its foray into out-of-town retailing and the commercial and environmental implications that that presented.

### Planning and Development Context

The planning system played a notable role in shaping the retailing landscape at this time as retail development became a more contested issue. Consumption levels grew due to rising levels of affluence and the spatial incursion of retailing into local and national landscapes became a central topic of conversation. As Schiller observed, the retail multiples 'expanded to accommodate increasing affluence, and...gained market share through their greater efficiency, [which subsequently] placed demands on the British planning system'.<sup>13</sup> Despite the new demands from retailers and consumers explored in the previous chapter, the planning attitudes towards decentralised retailing in the 1970s remained cautious and at times, hostile. John Fernie observed, 'the British planning system ... [was]...geared to presumptions against new development, that is, the *status-quo*'.<sup>14</sup> The desire for bigger and more dispersed retailing outlets by some companies was heavily decried as it was feared that such developments would disrupt established retailing areas and precipitate unplanned urban sprawl. It was these fears which shaped many of the attitudes and concerns of the local and national planning bodies throughout the 1970s and early 1980s. In light of these fears, as D. J. Bennison and R. L. Davies observed in 1980, 'Britain...sought to graft the new pressures for growth onto a traditional pattern of shopping locations'.<sup>15</sup> To a certain extent this worked, eighty-one per cent of enclosed shopping centre schemes (over 50,000 square feet) between 1975 and 1980 were accommodated in established town centres.<sup>16</sup> It was evident that planners 'sought to preserve [the] established spatial order and protect the trading health of the existing high street'.<sup>17</sup> Central areas were environments which planners keenly sought to protect.

The desire on the part of local and national planning departments to limit out-of-town development was starkly evident in the rate of planning refusals handed down to

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<sup>13</sup> Schiller, 'Vitality and Viability: Challenge to the Town Centre', p. 46.

<sup>14</sup> John Fernie, 'The coming of the fourth wave: new forms of retail out-of-town development', *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 23:1 (1995), 4-11 (p. 10).

<sup>15</sup> Bennison and Davies, *The Impact of Town Centre Shopping Schemes in Britain*, p. 11.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

retailers. Sainsbury's efforts to develop in decentralised areas were met with a significant number of planning refusals during the 1970s. In 1975 alone the company reported fifteen planning application refusals in a variety of locations. In part the high number attested to the company's persistent efforts to develop in decentralised locations. Nevertheless, the planning refusals conveyed the rigidly conservative and cautious atmosphere present within the planning system at this time. In 1976, following the final refusal of a joint development proposed by itself and BHS for a hypermarket in Colchester, Sainsbury's lamented, 'the local council has shown little enthusiasm for this type of development'.<sup>18</sup> The fact that the proposal had the added concern of being a large hypermarket proposal did little to allay the fears of local planners. Sainsbury's were similarly met with refusal in 1980 when proposing a development in the Gloucester area. The company observed that 'the city council...ha[d] set its face against out-of-town shopping'.<sup>19</sup> In September 1975 Sainsbury's appealed a local planning decision which ruled against its proposal to build a store in the St Albans area. The inspector chairing the subsequent enquiry ruled that there were three main reasons for the proposal's lack of success, firstly that 'the site fulfils "a proper green belt function" and he saw no reason to change it; secondly, the "economic impact on the town centre was likely to be critical"; and thirdly "the additional traffic generated would be unacceptable"'.<sup>20</sup> Sainsbury's had countered by claiming that the new development would actually relieve traffic congestion and complement the existing central shopping area. However, despite Sainsbury's protestations, the appeal was dismissed. The inspector's remarks echoed the key planning concerns voiced at this time regarding new off-centre retail development. The potential impact of new developments on the economic wellbeing of established shopping areas and the threat to the integrity of the green belt, whilst complex issues, became routine justifications for the denial of planning permission. Subsequently, although Sainsbury's and other retailers at this time had some successes, it was clear that the planning authorities had an agenda which sought to protect the established retail order.

### **Green Belts**

Planners sought to maintain the integrity of urban boundaries whilst simultaneously trying to ensure the continued economic viability of established urban landscapes. The balance between these two endeavours emphasised the underlying

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<sup>18</sup> '...and hypermarket withdrawn', *JS Journal* (February, 1976), The Sainsbury Archive: JS Journal Online. Web. [accessed 17 October 2013], p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> 'Second try at Gloucester', *JS Journal* (June, 1980), The Sainsbury Archive: JS Journal Online. Web. [accessed 17 October 2013], p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> 'St Albans appeal turned down...' *JS Journal* (February, 1976), The Sainsbury Archive: JS Journal Online. Web. [accessed 17 October 2013], p. 3.

pressures of continued commercial growth and increasing environmental concern. This tension was particularly highlighted by the efforts of local and national planners to preserve green belt areas. As outlined by the planning guidance note issued by the government in 1995, 'the fundamental aim of a Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open'.<sup>21</sup> Such a policy had long existed within the doctrines of planning. Indeed, green belts had come to be viewed as emblematic of efforts to contain and tame urban encroachment on rural areas.<sup>22</sup> With increasing demands on urban spaces and rising land costs in central areas the perceived sanctity of the green belt was increasingly tested. Green belt allowances ranged in size but were often located on the outskirts of established urban areas and for many embodied a sense of restraint or moderation in terms of society's environmental impact. They acted as a natural barrier to the excesses of the urban landscape and cultivated a sense of compromise between a desire for open spaces and the pressures of economic advancement. The existence and preservation of green belts was a central environmental issue when debating development in peripheral urban areas at this time.<sup>23</sup> Conversely, green belts cultivated a climate of environmental complacency, a belief that continued expansion could take place within the urban landscape as long as the green belt remained as a symbol of environmental restraint. Decentralisation threatened to question the efficacy of such a policy. The demand for out-of-town developments highlighted the arbitrary and restrictive nature of the environmental limits imposed by green belts. The urban landscape, characterised by central shopping areas, could only develop and expand for so long without coming into direct conflict with green belt policy. As Gayler argued, 'the most important problem is the clash between the out-of-town centre and the strong tradition of protecting the countryside against urban encroachment'.<sup>24</sup> Out-of-town retailing and the pressures it placed on green belt land was a prime example of the extent to which the relationship between retailers and the environment was a negotiation dependent on external actors, in this instance the planning profession.

Retailers showed a keen awareness of the sensitive nature of green belts as a broadly held orthodoxy within planning circles and in the court of public opinion. Sainsbury's made repeated references in public speeches and publicity pieces about its efforts to avoid green belt land in its developments. During a paper delivered by Sir John

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<sup>21</sup> Department of the Environment, 'Green Belts, PPG2 (Revised)', *Planning Policy Guidance 2* (London: HMSO, January 1995) [n.p].

<sup>22</sup> Martin J. Elson, *Green Belts: Conflict Mediation in the Urban Fringe* (London: Heinemann, 1986), p. xxiv.

<sup>23</sup> Bennison and Davies, *The Impact of Town Centre Shopping Schemes in Britain*, p. 37.

<sup>24</sup> Gayler, *Retail Innovation in Britain*, p. 66.

Sainsbury in 1981 to the Oxford Preservation Trust, entitled 'Food Retailing and the Environment', he asserted:

The edge-of-town locations I am advocating are not in the Green Belt. They are where you might otherwise find industry or commercial development close to a good road.<sup>25</sup>

Sir John Sainsbury's statements indicated an awareness of the significance of green belt sites, not only in terms of retail planning and development but also in relation to wider conservation and preservation concerns which were growing at this time. His speech was undoubtedly tailored to coalesce with the outlook and attitudes of his audience, the Oxford Preservation Trust. However, the retailer highlighted a similar commitment in other company literature which was aimed at more general, less specialist, audiences. In a series of promotional information sheets issued in 1993 Sainsbury's reported that 'of all the sites developed over the last five years 95% have been on land previously developed or land already designated for development'.<sup>26</sup> Sainsbury's sought to present itself as a sensitive actor in its urban developments, although such a stance to some extent was as much a product of planning refusals as it was a deep-seated conviction to preserve the green belt. Sainsbury's were not the only retailer to openly proclaim its aversion to green belt development. Marks and Spencer asserted in a 1989 press release entitled 'Conservation of the Countryside' that it 'will not get involved with any developments that infringe on the green belt'.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, such a statement was again shaped more by a desire to present a conscientious and environmentally sensitive image than a devout commitment to the protection of green belt areas. In both instances it was at times the lack of opportunity to do so which shaped the restraint of both retailers. Lee Donaldson observed in 1986, 'that proposals located in Green Belts or countryside not scheduled for urban development were unlikely to succeed'.<sup>28</sup> Retailers were governed by a pragmatic outlook where green belts were concerned. Such an approach also appeared to characterise the practical implementation of green belt policy by planners. Despite upholding the integrity of green belt land as a key planning consideration and underpinning this with planning refusals, there was still 'a lack of consistency' according to Gayler.<sup>29</sup> In over 50 per cent of cases where green belt existed, the detailed boundaries of such areas were 'never...formally approved in development plans'.<sup>30</sup> Subsequently, whilst there existed a desire to publicly preserve green belts, the

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<sup>25</sup> SA, SA/CR/GRE/9, Sainsbury, 'Food Retailing and the Environment', p. 8.

<sup>26</sup> SA, SA/CO/11/2, 'Sainsbury's Environment Policy', p. 10.

<sup>27</sup> MSCA, *Papers of Philip Symes 1989-1996*, A04/117A, 'Environmental Update from Mark & Spencer - Conservation of the Countryside' (September, 1989).

<sup>28</sup> Cited in Guy, *Planning for Retail Development*, p. 39.

<sup>29</sup> Gayler, *Retail Innovation in Britain*, p. 59.

<sup>30</sup> Elson, *Green Belts*, p. xxiv.

system itself was not conducted with any finesse. In practice retailing's approach to green belt development was governed by the whims of the planning authorities and commercial opportunity, rather than a deep seated conviction. Nevertheless, the desire on the part of both Sainsbury's and Marks and Spencer to publicly present themselves as sensitive to such matters, attested to the perceived significance they believed green belts and environmental considerations held for wider audiences.

### **The Impact on Established Retail Areas**

When discussing the processes and concerns surrounding the advancement of out-of-town retailing at this time not only did the survival of green belts feature as a key debate but so too did the environmental quality of towns and city centres. Increasingly town centres and high-streets had joined the British countryside as areas of environmental concern. Retailing underpinned the "urban ecosystem" and many feared that if retailers began to establish themselves elsewhere, then the knock on environmental, social and economic implications would be catastrophic. A number of impact studies regarding out-of-town development 'focused primarily on trading deflections from established centres'.<sup>31</sup> Fears regarding the potential trading impact on established shopping areas in the wake of decentralised development were encapsulated in the statements made by the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers, based in South Wales, in a *Draper's Record* article in 1972. The Union stated that they feared 'traditional shopping centres becoming "ghost areas", with many smaller shops [being] forced to close'.<sup>32</sup> The notion that out-of-town developments would have a parasitic effect on established shopping areas, drawing trade and investment away, pervaded. There was an underlying assumption that consumer demand was not sufficient to support multiple retailing sites in the centre and on the edge of urban areas and that the more spacious and convenient shopping experience offered by decentralised retail stores would hold the greater appeal to consumers. The pre-eminence of established central locations as premier shopping destinations was no longer guaranteed and this was thought to not only affect retail provision but also the fabric of the towns themselves. Potter remarked that 'retailing facilities often bestow centrality on specific locations or...alternatively reflect the existence of such centrality'.<sup>33</sup> As a result Potter contended that 'retailing facilities may be regarded as constituting focal reference points in our awareness and organisation of space, both in rural and urban

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<sup>31</sup> *The Effects of Major Out-of-town Retail Development*, p. 38.

<sup>32</sup> MSCA, *Copy of a speech by Marcus Sieff given at the Western Counties Association*, Jun 1971-Mar 1972, CR/B/4/1/31, copy of an article 'USDAW opposition to spread of out-of-town hypermarkets', *The Drapers' Record* (20 January 1972) [n.p].

<sup>33</sup> Potter, *The Urban Retailing System: Location, Cognition and Behaviour*, p. 1.

environments'.<sup>34</sup> Thus, the identity of central areas was defined by a commercial presence, to the extent that a town's social, cultural and economic cohesion were inextricably linked.

Despite the parasitic image of out-of-town retailing a number of commentators discerned less damning effects. In relation to the MetroCentre, a regional shopping centre opened in 1986 in Gateshead, a journalist remarked that, 'despite dire predictions of [the] decimation of surrounding shopping centres, these appear healthy enough'.<sup>35</sup> The same article reported that 'both BHS and M&S say their existing Newcastle Stores have been little affected'.<sup>36</sup> The manager of the Marks and Spencer store Russ Honey stated, 'We have had some defection...but Newcastle was grotesquely stretched and we would still take more space there if we could'.<sup>37</sup> According to Marks and Spencer's local store manager there was a surplus of consumer demand within the area sufficient to support central area trading and the new out-of-town development. The opening of the MetroCentre did not diminish the commitment of key retailers to central areas as both BHS and Marks and Spencer kept their existing stores open. The remarks made by Russ Honey, that the company would expand within the city centre if it was possible, further implied that Marks and Spencer's sales volume was such that it was the spatial limits placed in the urban centre of Newcastle, rather than any desire to abandon Newcastle's central shopping area, which influenced its decision to open in the MetroCentre.

Furthermore, research conducted in 1994 to assess the attitudes of local planning authorities and the impact of out-of-town developments found that:

80 per cent saw their town centres as vibrant, improving or stable and that the main problem encountered stemmed from the recession and powerlessness to counteract the effects of the recession, not from competition from out-of-town developments.<sup>38</sup>

Such comments emphasised the extent to which town centres were subject to a variety of forces which threatened their health and vitality. Yet the added impetus of commercial competition was not deemed to have adversely affected the majority of regions under analysis. Moreover, the research identified that in the Preston area 'consumers who used the out-of-town shopping facilities were more likely to do most of their shopping in the Preston area'.<sup>39</sup> This further highlighted the extent to which the negative impact of

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> MSCA, *Press Cuttings*, L/1/2/24, Folder: September 1987, 'Fiona Walsh reports from Europe's largest out-of-town complex - MetroCentre turns an old ash trip into gold', *Sunday Telegraph* (27 September 1987) [n.p].

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* [n.p].

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* [n.p].

<sup>38</sup> Alzubaidi et al., 'Town centre versus out-of-town shopping: A consumer perspective', p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.



decentralised retailing had been overstated by planners and small business leaders in an effort to galvanise opposition to such developments. Despite evidence to the contrary in some cases, an atmosphere of apprehension pervaded and did much to slow the rate of decentralised development, particularly in the restrictive planning climate of the 1970s.

Attitudes began to change in the 1980s and whilst the decade began in the same cautious manner towards decentralised planning applications, this was to give way to a more speculative atmosphere. New guidelines were introduced in the form of *Planning Policy Guidance 6* (PPG6: 1988) in the mid-to-late eighties which 'formally sanctioned this more liberal approach to out-of-town retail development'.<sup>40</sup> This shift in attitudes was undoubtedly influenced by the broader changes in the ethos of the national government at this time and the policies and principles of Thatcherism. The less than apocalyptic effects of out-of-town developments thus far had also alleviated some of the fears expressed by local authorities. Moreover, areas were beginning to realise the benefits offered by decentralised shopping developments. As Guy pointed out, 'the release of town and district centres from heavy delivery vehicles and car-borne shoppers was to be welcomed'.<sup>41</sup> In addition, such developments had initiated efforts to raise standards in traditional locations, bringing towns and high-streets out of their complacent stasis. The commercial competition led to efforts to improve the environmental quality and provision of towns and high-streets. Furthermore, a number of retailers simultaneously operated in established central areas and on peripheral sites with no signs that this was commercially damaging; consumer demand was sufficiently strident to support the growing trend of decentralised retailing.

Out-of-town developments also played a key role in a number of urban regeneration efforts. Schiller noted in 1985 that 'many local authorities [we]re faced with serious problems of derelict land and retailing in one form or another [wa]s often the only feasible commercial use for these sites'.<sup>42</sup> Commercial companies and private developers had the necessary capital to invest in such sites and the increasing demand for land on the part of the retailing sector ensured that they were a dynamic solution to a growing problem. Schiller identified the 'willingness of Government, both local and national, to use the pressure for out-of-town retail development as a means of bringing redundant industrial land into use'.<sup>43</sup> Decentralised development was influenced by environmental considerations within the urban environment and a number of retail projects took advantage of this. Lord Sainsbury reported in 1989 that 'over half Sainsbury's new supermarkets built in the past four years have used derelict or rundown

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<sup>40</sup> Jones and Hillier, 'Changing the balance – the "ins and outs" of retail development', p. 119.

<sup>41</sup> Guy, *The Retail Development Process*, p. 91.

<sup>42</sup> Schiller, 'Land Use Controls on U.K. Shopping Centres', p. 53.

<sup>43</sup> Schiller, 'Out-of-town Exodus', p. 71.

urban sites'.<sup>44</sup> It was evident that environmental needs had elicited a compromise in planning circles as commercial expansion, usually deemed a blight on the landscape, could in certain instances harmonise with wider environmental aims. This outlook and policy was formalised by the introduction of Enterprise Zones. These areas were devised by government in the early 1980s as a means to ensure development in deprived areas by reducing the planning restrictions within them.<sup>45</sup> The majority of the regional centres built at this time were built in such zones, including the MetroCentre, Merry Hill and Meadow Hall. In these cases 'approval hinged on the view that the benefits of employment growth and economic regeneration outweighed any harm that might be done to nearby town centres'.<sup>46</sup> The sites themselves had previously been used for industrial purposes and were categorised as 'Brownfield' sites.<sup>47</sup> There was a social and environmental need to bring such land back into use and retail projects facilitated the recycling of industrial urban land. Moreover, it was not a coincidence that such development took place in areas which had seen their industry diminish and unemployment rise, particularly in the old mining and industrial areas of the north of England. Retailing was seen by local councils as a solution to concerns regarding the environmental quality, social cohesion and economic viability of these areas. Whilst retailers were motivated by a desire to maintain commercial advantage it was increasingly clear that such considerations also had the ability to generate wider benefits beyond the commercial sphere.

The increasing realisation of the advantages to be garnered from a more flexible approach to retail development undoubtedly contributed to the Government's shifting stance in the mid-to-late eighties, regarding the desirability of decentralised retailing, at least in the areas in which it felt a greater environmental, social and economic need was being served. This shift in attitudes was evident not only in the increasing number of out-of-town stores and centres with planning approval, but also the changing power relationship between local authorities and developers. The outlook was increasingly altering in favour of the latter, particularly during Nicholas Ridley's tenure as Environment Minister. Peter Scott noted that refusals at the local level during this period were often over turned on appeal to Whitehall.<sup>48</sup> Additionally, from 1987 local authorities could also find themselves having to pay costs to developers if it was deemed on appeal that initial refusal had been 'unreasonable' and planning permission was subsequently granted.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> SA, SA/CR/GRE/15, 'Saving the Ozone London Conference' [n.p].

<sup>45</sup> Barry Cullingworth, Vincent Nadin, Trevor Hart, Simin Davoudi, John Pendlebury, Geoff Vigar, David Webb and Tim Townshend, *Town and Country Planning in the UK* (Abingdon: Routledge, fifteenth edition, 2015), p. 32.

<sup>46</sup> O'Brien and Harris, *Retailing: Shopping, Society, Space*, p. 106.

<sup>47</sup> Guy, *Planning for Retail Development*, p. 217.

<sup>48</sup> Scott, *The Property Masters*, p. 219.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

Consequently, whilst the planning system retained some of the caution of the 1970s there was a perceptible shift in favour of market freedom and an encouragement of private sector development in the 1980s.

However, planning attitudes towards retail development, never known for consistency, altered in tone yet again in the early 1990s. A return to the cautious and restrictive atmosphere of the 1970s was discernible. Scott observed that the rate of successful planning appeals against local authority refusals reduced significantly.<sup>50</sup> Nicholas Ridley's departure from the Department of the Environment symbolised a broader shift away from the *laissez-faire* culture which had emerged in the mid-to-late eighties.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, the shift was not solely the result of changing personnel. Britain felt the onset of recession, as many other countries had done, in the wake of the financial crisis in the United States. The UK did not emerge from the downturn until 1993 and the voracious appetite for development and property speculation which characterised the 1980s, was much reduced. In addition, the environmental agenda entered a new phase internationally and this too began to filter into the planning dialogue between officials, retailers and popular opinion at this time. A number of key moves were made in the international arena which sought to place the environment at the forefront of discussion, as noted in Chapter One. The impact of the Brundtland Report (1987) in relation to development was borne out at the national level as the language and tone adopted by the Government in its planning guidance began to reflect the international shift towards dialogues of sustainability. In a policy guidance note issued by the Department of the Environment in 1992 it was affirmed that 'the sum total of decisions in the planning field, as elsewhere, should not deny future generations the best of today's environment'.<sup>52</sup> The sentiment of such a statement was very much in line with wider environmental opinion and ensured that such matters were placed front and centre of debates surrounding existing and future developments. Consequently, whilst the quality and nature of the urban environment had been a constant feature of planning discussions and decisions, it now had the potential to be acknowledged on a wider and more official platform that not only elevated its status but also changed its character. The environment in the context of planning was now beginning to be viewed as a component part of Environmentalism and the sustainability movement, whereas previously it had been characterised by a diverse and at times localised outlook. This is not to say that this transformed the local and national agendas inherent within the planning system, or that such varied environmental interests disappeared. Nevertheless, it did begin to slowly

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 236.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 236.

<sup>52</sup> Guy, *Planning for Retail Development*, p. 63.

alter the nature and tone of the debate concerning the relationship between development and the environment.

### **Marks and Spencer and Out-of-town Retailing**

Marks and Spencer's own store development portfolio (outlined in the previous chapter) was characterised by a delayed move into out-of-town retailing sites. Its outlook was conditioned by a conservative ethos and management culture, as well as a growing surfeit of self-confidence in its store strategies and operations as sales and profits continued to grow year on year.<sup>53</sup> Such an outlook was acknowledged by Richard Greenbury in 1987 who observed in relation to out-of-town retailing trends, 'if you're very big and very successful you tend not to respond, sometimes not ever, sometimes late'.<sup>54</sup> Greenbury's remarks succinctly highlighted the overriding commercial ethos of Marks and Spencer at this time, which was conditioned by the old adage 'if it ain't broke don't fix it'. Out-of-town retailing was a relatively unknown quantity in the late sixties and seventies and whilst there were success stories, it was evident that Marks and Spencer was reluctant to embrace a format which could have turned out to be no more than a passing fad. Furthermore, it was notable that Marks and Spencer's decision to enter into a partnership with Tesco to develop joint retail sites in out-of-town locations came after a management shift at the top of the two companies. Aris argued in 1986 that the appointment of Lord Rayner (the first non-family member to be appointed chairman) and the waning power of Sir John Cohen at Tesco played a significant part in paving the way for the partnership between the two companies and in the development of off-centre sites. Aris claimed:

The result is that both companies are in their cautious way repositioning themselves in the market place to take advantage of the enormous changes in shopping habits that have occurred over the past few years.<sup>55</sup>

The internal politics and attitudes of Marks and Spencer at this time influenced its store development and its evaluation of the commercial benefits of different retail environments. Marks and Spencer's own store development trajectory, prior the opening of its first out-of-town store at the MetroCentre in 1986, certainly acted as a physical manifestation of the company's own internal culture of caution and traditionalism.

High-street stores in tried and tested locations was the bedrock of Marks and Spencer's success. The leadership style and outlook of Simon Marks throughout his time in charge of the company ensured that such key tenets of the company's physical operation were maintained and pursued with vigour. Such a stance was evident when

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<sup>53</sup> MSCA, L/1/2/23, Faith, 'What the Marksmen have in their sights', p. 58, col. 2.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59, col. 1.

<sup>55</sup> MSCA, AO4/77OH, Aris, 'The Out-of-town Shopping Boom', p. 24, col. 1.

looking at Marks' attitude to the development of new towns and the possibility of Marks and Spencer utilising them. James McComb, General Manager of Cwmbran Development Corporation in the early 1970s, wrote to The New Towns Association London in December 1971 with regards Simon Marks' attitude to New Town developments. McComb had known Simon Marks before the war and having been in touch with Marks over the issue in 1949 reported that Marks 'had issued an edict that no Marks and Spencer would go into a New Town'.<sup>56</sup> McComb also stated, 'Simon Marks told me that he had no intention of going into a New Town and sitting around waiting for shopping goodwill to build up'.<sup>57</sup> Marks' attitude towards New Towns highlighted the overall operational culture of Marks and Spencer in the post-war period. There was an innate reluctance by those at the top to alter too drastically the established formula of the retailer's success. Moreover, Marks and Spencer was very much a company ruled from the top down. The edicts of Simon Marks were to have a lasting impact on Marks and Spencer's development. As McComb observed, Simon Marks' co-directors were stuck with his decision regarding New Towns until his death in 1964.<sup>58</sup> There was evidence that Marks and Spencer was changing its outlook with regards store placement as early as 1968. Edward Sieff, the then Chairman, remarked in the 1968 annual report that:

While we will continue our policy of enlarging existing stores in traditional locations, which has proved so profitable, we are planning to build new stores in certain peripheral districts of major cities as well as in some of the new towns.<sup>59</sup>

Thus, the company did show an awareness of the changing geographies of retailing but such an acknowledgement came at a much slower and more cautious rate than some of its contemporaries. Whilst Sieff referred to peripheral locations in 1968, the company did not begin to develop in such areas in any significant way for another decade or more. It took time to counter the conservatism of the past as the vestiges of caution exhibited during Marks' tenure remained the order of the day long after his passing.

The restrictive planning ethos in the 1970s and early 1980s towards out-of-town developments to some degree confirmed the commercial expediency of Marks and Spencer's initial reluctance. The efforts of local authorities to contain developments within existing areas harmonised with Marks and Spencer's own calls to protect and

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<sup>56</sup> TNA, FJ 2/487, *New Towns Association: New Towns that should have a Marks and Spencer store; correspondence and papers*, 1971 Dec 16-1972 Jun 22, correspondence from James McComb C.B.E - General Manager of Cwmbran Development Corporation, to G. Philipson, Esq. - The New Towns Association, London, 'Marks and Spencer' (16 December 1971).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> MSCA, *Annual Reports*, CR/D/43, Marks and Spencer Ltd, 'Annual Report' (1968), p. 7.

maintain high-street and town centre retailing areas and vice versa. Marks and Spencer found that the planning system still provided resistance when it did begin to seek out-of-town sites. A 1987 *Daily Mail* article reported that ‘the company expects to open nearly 1/2m. square feet of new space in 1987/88 even though the out-of-town programme is being delayed by planning permission’.<sup>60</sup> However, such delays were as much the result of an over stretched and bureaucratic planning process as they were lasting planning reservations regarding out-of-town development at this time. As planning cultures began to alter a change in Marks and Spencer own policy was easier to realise, despite the often lengthy and protracted nature of planning applications.

Marks and Spencer’s approach to its own store development was also shaped by the prevailing economic climate of the 1973 oil crisis and subsequent recession. According to Liam Martin such an unfavourable economic picture ‘had a major effect on the pattern of store development’ undertaken by the company, as costs rose and inflation levels increased.<sup>61</sup> Martin recalled that this led to a new approach in the company’s store development plans. Marks and Spencer began to convert what had previously been stockroom areas into sales footage. Martin reported that this technique ‘enabled the reduction of stock area within the stores from 60% to 20% of the sales area’.<sup>62</sup> The approach taken by the company was undoubtedly conservative. Development in established shopping areas was a safer and more preferred option for the company, allowing them to develop existing and tested consumer catchment areas in town centre locations, particularly in the uncertain economic climate. Moreover, the decision to convert stockroom areas into sales footage illustrated not only Marks and Spencer’s response to the wider economic pressures placed on store development but also the spatial restrictions increasingly encountered by retailers in central areas.<sup>63</sup> Economic and environmental factors, in this instance the availability of land resources, influenced Marks and Spencer’s store development strategy.

Marks and Spencer’s rhetoric and actions regarding decentralised retailing were far from straightforward. It declared in 1984 that ‘it would pursue a locational strategy which would seek to develop sites on both traditional high-streets and new out-of-town developments’, despite a number of other retailers having adopted such a strategy many years earlier.<sup>64</sup> Prior to that statement Marks and Spencer had been keen to position itself as a bastion of high-street retailing. Company Chairman Marcus Sieff stated in a speech to the Western Counties Association of Chambers of Commerce in 1972, ‘I do

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<sup>60</sup> MSCA, *Press Cuttings*, L/1/2/24, Folder: September 1987, ‘Marks and Spencer a buy-chase’, *Daily Mail* (7 September 1987) [n.p].

<sup>61</sup> MSCA, HO/10/3/1/1/15, Martin, *Design for success*, p. 117.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>63</sup> MSCA, L/1/2/23, Faith, ‘What the Marksmen have in their sights’, p. 58, col. 3.

<sup>64</sup> Fernie, ‘The coming of the fourth wave: new forms of retail out-of-town development’, p. 4.

not say that there is no place for the peripheral shopping centre or the out-of-town hypermarket development but it is important to get our priorities right'.<sup>65</sup> There was a clear inference within his remarks that, Marks and Spencer did not see out-of-town development as an immediate priority. Sieff went on to elucidate on what he considered the aforementioned priorities to be:

The first is to develop to their best advantage our existing assets in this densely populated and relatively small country and only go out-of-town for new shopping developments when it is clear that the redeveloped town centres cannot cope efficiently, conveniently and comfortably with existing and likely demands.<sup>66</sup>

Sieff's speech was intended to convey Marks and Spencer's continued commitment to the high-street and the company was keen to promote this fact to local business figures. The company's agenda was characterised by a desire to stabilise and reassure investors that the high-street was still the place to focus investment and attention.

Such a desire to ensure the continued prosperity of traditional retail locations was undoubtedly governed by Marks and Spencer's substantial investment in central retailing areas. In the wake of the Second World War Marks and Spencer had bought up large amounts of land in the areas that, according to the Marks and Spencer source (previously quoted in Chapter One), were 'slap back in the middle of traditional city centres because that's where we thought the growth would come'.<sup>67</sup> The source further stated that the company simply 'hadn't seen increased urban growth and mobility' coming.<sup>68</sup> Such a supposition illustrates the commercial imperatives behind Marks and Spencer's efforts to reinforce perceptions of the high-street as a site of continued importance and relevance. It also implied that Marks and Spencer missed the mark with regards changing retailing trends and that it was this which contributed to Marks and Spencer's delayed response to out-of-town retailing. Marks and Spencer envisaged a different retailing landscape and conducted its land purchases accordingly. The company's efforts to campaign for the high-street and town centres, in the opinion of the Marks and Spencer source, was 'post event rationalisation'.<sup>69</sup> The implication being that the company's efforts to champion the high-street were not the result of a deep-seated conviction that out-of-town retailing was wrong but rather it was a venture which Marks and Spencer was not in a position to capitalise on until much later. The location of Marks and Spencer's land investment undoubtedly influenced its response to out-of-town retailing.

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<sup>65</sup> MSCA, *Copy of a speech by Marcus Sieff given at the Western Counties Association*, CR/B/4/1/31, 'At the Inaugural Dinner of the Western Counties Association of Chambers of Commerce' (March, 1972), p. 8.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>67</sup> Interview conducted at Marks and Spencer headquarters between author and Head Office source, 17 July 2013.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

Marks and Spencer's discussion of its store development increasingly showed a preoccupation with the health and survival of the high-street. Jan de Somogyi, head of Marks and Spencer's Economic Information Department, remarked in 1971:

The high street...is a living, changing, organic social unit. If a major store closes down, this leaves a wound. Shopping centres, wherever situated, must preserve the quality of [the] human environment. They must be carefully planned, in cooperation with both local and national authorities. Both town and country must be protected!<sup>70</sup>

Somogyi's statement drew a link between the survival of the high-street and the nation and in doing so highlighted the strength of opinion with regards such matters at this time. Somogyi's words brought the high-street to life, not only as a site of commercial exchange but also as a key social facilitator and site of environmental concern. Somogyi had intentionally drawn a link between the countryside as a traditional site of environmental concern and the commercially driven environment of towns. The latter in Somogyi's view was as much an environment which needed protection and stewardship as the former. In many respects commercial provision and the social and environmental needs of an area were co-dependent. Whilst such a definition of environmental protection and concern was a long way from that promoted by the environmental agenda at this time, it does offer an insight into the nature of retailing's relationship with the environment and the commercial forces which shaped it. It is this connection which heightens the relevance of the out-of-town debate within the wider growth of environmental concern and emphasises the specific and nuanced ways that retailers engaged with their operating environments.

The Department of the Environment and retailers both showed an awareness of the interrelated nature of commercial and environmental wellbeing. It was observed in a 1992 literature review for the Department of the Environment, concerning the effects of out-of-town development, that 'without the shopping function town centres would, undoubtedly, fall into decay - at least in part - to the detriment of the environment'.<sup>71</sup> Marks and Spencer sought to directly influence official opinion on the subject and in 1971 the chairman, J. Edward Sieff, wrote to Peter Walker who was Secretary of State for the Environment. The correspondence concerned the draft Development Control Policy Note regarding new out-of-town developments and shopping centres more broadly. Sieff made it clear that whilst Marks and Spencer accepted that such developments could be deemed desirable in certain circumstances, the overriding concern should be the future protection of central areas. Sieff stated:

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<sup>70</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Tomorrow's Shopping', 18:7 (September, 1971), p. 4.

<sup>71</sup> *The Effects of Major Out-of-town Retail Development*, p. 92.



It [i]s of critical importance that existing Town Centre shopping centres, which have developed over the years along with the commercial, business, cultural and other activities which combine to make a Town Centre, should be preserved and protected from deterioration and blight.<sup>72</sup>

Such remarks placed emphasis on the multifaceted role of town centre areas, of which commercial amenities were just one. By drawing attention to this, Sieff strengthened the case for concerted efforts to protect such areas by not only professing the need to protect the commercial role of central shopping areas (and thus protect Marks and Spencer's investment), but also ensure the survival of the other aspects of the town centre landscape.

Sieff went on to proclaim that any policy which might be to the detriment of town centres 'is to be deplored since the pursuit of such a policy would have serious social and economic consequences'.<sup>73</sup> Sieff continued by outlining that:

Marks and Spencer submit that any policy note should give encouragement to local authorities and developers to improve architectural standards within existing town centres and to introduce amenities and new development and to preserve or restore such existing development as merits retention with a view to improving the environmental attraction of...the town centre.<sup>74</sup>

Consequently, it was evident that Marks and Spencer was vocal in its efforts to outline the necessity of town centres and the potential consequences if such areas were ignored in favour of new decentralised developments. Sieff made specific reference to the conservation and preservation of architectural standards and existing developments in the wider town centre area. As such, although the most direct concern for the company was its own high-street and town centre investment, it was apparent that the continued health of its investment was dependent on the wider environmental and social character of such areas. Marks and Spencer's relationship with central areas was complex and the company's desire to maintain the status-quo was characterised by a belief in the importance of centralised retailing both to the survival of established areas and for the continued prosperity of its commercial interests. Nevertheless, it must be noted that a number of major retailers at this time similarly had substantial investments in central retail locations and, in contrast to Marks and Spencer, undertook a number of out-of-town developments much earlier than the company. Consequently, it was evident that

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<sup>72</sup> MSCA, *Copy of a speech by Marcus Sieff given at the Western Counties Association*, CR/B/4/1/31, correspondence from J. Edward Sieff to Right Hon. Peter Walker, 'Development Control Policy Note – New Out-of-town and other Shopping Centres: Representations by Marks and Spencer Limited upon the draft Development Control Policy Note concerning new out-of-town and other shopping centres' (29 June 1971), p. 1.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Marks and Spencer's approach to out-of-town retailing was not only influenced by the location of its existing investment.

Marks and Spencer's predominant position as a clothing retailer at this time also influenced its out-of-town retailing strategy. A number of food retailers, most notably Sainsbury's, had made a strong case in support of food retailers developing in decentralised locations. As was suggested in the previous chapter, the delivery needs of a leading supermarket were much greater and more frequent than their clothing counterparts. Similarly the marriage of car and food shopping appeared to be holding strong and presented a significant problem to central locations. These factors increasingly made the decentralisation of food retailing more appealing. However, in paving the way for food retailing to move into out-of-town locations, companies like Sainsbury's did so by drawing a distinction between themselves and other retailers. As supermarkets built a case to move out-of-town they simultaneously strengthened the clamour for comparison goods retailers to remain in. Comparison goods retailing was seen to be the last dam against the wave of decentralised retailing. As clothing retailers did begin to develop in out-of-town locations the rhetoric espoused by contemporaries was almost apocalyptic in its forecast for the survival of high-streets and town centres. Schiller proclaimed that 'the large durable town centre will no longer sit at the apex of a hierarchy' as previously envisioned under the tenets of CPT.<sup>75</sup> Efforts to retain comparison-goods retailing in towns and high-streets appeared all the more essential to the survival of central shopping locations. This belief was conditioned by a linear understanding of out-of-town development, based on the supposition that once comparison goods retailers began to move out, this process of decentralisation would continue until central retail locations became ghost towns akin to their American counterparts. Retail development at this time was invariably much more complex than a steady and progressive move out-of-town. Both in relation to food retailing and clothing, the store location decisions of retailers showed no clear effort to fully abandon traditional retailing locations.

Whilst food retailers catered to consumers who increasingly desired the convenience of a one-stop shop, clothing retailers found that shopping practices dictated a different dynamic. Consumers sought to shop around for the best fit when it came to clothing and other non-food items and as such retailers were often deemed to benefit from being in close proximity to their competitors. The spatial configuration and environment provided by town centres and high-street locations was better able to cater to such shopping practices and habits. On the surface this appears to further explain the initial caution exhibited by Marks and Spencer in moving into out-of-town locations. However, not all comparison goods retailers were as tentative in their engagement in

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<sup>75</sup> Schiller, 'Retail Decentralisation', p. 15, col. 2.

decentralised retailing. British Home Stores (BHS) showed a clear desire in the 1970s to develop in non-traditional retailing locations. Sainsbury's announced as early as 1975 that they were entering into a partnership with BHS. This amounted to the formation of a 'separate hypermarket company to trade as an independent organisation with its own management team' and was to be backed by the resources of both Sainsbury's and BHS as the parent companies.<sup>76</sup> The partnership operated under the new Savacentre trading name and led to the development of a number of out-of-town hypermarkets, the first opening as early as 1977 in Washington near Newcastle-Upon-Tyne.<sup>77</sup> By 1981 the Sainsbury's/BHS partnership had launched five Savacentre sites.<sup>78</sup> Subsequently, whilst the type of retailing engaged in did play a part in influencing commercial decisions to decentralise, this did not elicit the same degree of caution in all comparison-goods retailers. Sainsbury's contended in its in-house journal in 1975 that BHS had been interested in hypermarket trading for some time.<sup>79</sup> The type of retailing that Marks and Spencer engaged in may have compounded its reluctance to venture out as early as Sainsbury's. However, it was not prohibitive, as was evidenced by the successful move by BHS into new decentralised sites in partnership with Sainsbury's. BHS' willingness to engage in out-of-town retailing as early as 1975 highlighted the extent to which Marks and Spencer's own reluctance to do so, whilst influenced by its status as a comparison-goods retailer, was dependent on a variety of factors.

### **Marks and Spencer and the British High-Street**

Marks and Spencer's position and image within commercial retailing was unique amongst its competitors and went some way to shaping the company's presentation of its out-of-town developments. Whilst the other factors explored clearly played a role in influencing Marks and Spencer's store development trajectory, the company's attitude to out-of-town retailing cannot be solely explained through those alone. A number of other retailers who came up against planning restrictions, economic uncertainty and a desire to safeguard established investments, all managed to negotiate the move to decentralised locations much earlier than Marks and Spencer. Marks and Spencer's stores were more than simply a physical entity but rather their location was married to the company's overall image. Marks and Spencer increasingly showed an awareness of

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<sup>76</sup> 'Colchester Hypermarket Plan', *JS Journal* (July, 1975), The Sainsbury Archive: JS Journal Online. Web. [accessed 17 October 2013], p. 1; 'Hypermarket partnership hits the headlines', *JS Journal* (May, 1975), The Sainsbury Archive: JS Journal Online. Web. [accessed 17 October 2013], p. 8.

<sup>77</sup> 'Savacentre takes shape', *JS Journal* (January, 1977), The Sainsbury Archive: JS Journal Online. Web. [accessed 17 October 2013], p. 3.

<sup>78</sup> 'Savacentre No. 5' *JS Journal* (September, 1981), The Sainsbury Archive: JS Journal Online. Web. [accessed 8 September 2015], p. 1.

<sup>79</sup> 'Hypermarket partnership hits the headlines', *JS Journal*, p. 8.

this in its presentation of its attitudes towards out-of-town developments. Marks and Spencer marketed itself as a high-street retailer and consciously sought to present its reluctance towards out-of-town developments as a decisive commitment to town centres. *St Michael News* reported in 1971:

Marks and Spencer further established the tradition of being in the centre of activity, either in the High Street or in a shopping precinct, when two new stores were opened this month.<sup>80</sup>

Such a statement was accompanied by the title 'Not for M&S the lonely hypermarket', a reference which sought to not only distance Marks and Spencer from out-of-town sites, but also to draw on wider fears regarding the out-of-town format. The use of the word 'lonely' invoked human connotations and played on the idea that out-of-town stores were corrosive to the wider sense of community believed to be facilitated by town centre retailing. The company made repeated references in its annual reports and *St Michael News* regarding the need to preserve high-street retailing for the good of not only the commercial but also social, cultural and environmental character of local areas. Marks and Spencer's 1972 annual report proclaimed:

There is a pressing national need to improve and preserve the existing centres in towns which have developed over the years along with commercial, business, cultural and other social activities.<sup>81</sup>

This statement highlighted the company's desire to present the economic provision within a town as part of a wider network of social and cultural amenities. Marks and Spencer, by presenting it as a national concern, drew attention away from its own commercial interest in maintaining town centres. The latter undoubtedly gave Marks and Spencer a clear impetus to foster a sense of purpose and a need to act to protect town-centre locations. Nevertheless, Marks and Spencer's framing of the situation showed an astute understanding of the importance of the overall town-centre environment to the continued success of its own commercial investment.

Furthermore, for many the company had come to represent the very spirit and identity of British high-street retailing. In the wake of Marks and Spencer's move into out-of-town retailing Aris remarked in 1986 that 'only a few years ago the suggestion that M&S should expand outside the High Street would have been greeted with horror'.<sup>82</sup> He further contended that 'their whole image was as a high-street store'.<sup>83</sup> Marks and Spencer's commercial identity had become wedded to the geographies of traditional

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<sup>80</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, Jenny Kean and Carol Leach, 'Not for M&S the lonely hypermarket', 18:9 (December, 1971), p. 1.

<sup>81</sup> MSCA, CR/D/47, 'Annual Report' (1972), p. 8.

<sup>82</sup> MSCA, AO4/77OH, Aris, 'The out-of-town shopping boom', p. 24, col. 1.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24, col. 3.

town-centre and high-street retailing. When Marks and Spencer opened a new store in the town of Poole in 1971 it was made clear that officials thought this would add both economically and socially to the area. The mayor of Poole, Alderman James Steptoe proclaimed that 'after 40 years in the town, M&S were a vital part of the community, and their decision to be part of the precinct would make a major contribution to the success of the Arndale Centre'.<sup>84</sup> The company's longevity on the high-street had ensured that the name 'Marks and Spencer' had come to represent stability and continuity for consumers. So much so that in some instances petitions were established in an effort to persuade Marks and Spencer to open a store in a particular location. In 1970 *St Michael News* published an article entitled '10,000 petition for store in Woking' in which Mrs. Sugden, a long-standing customer, stated that 'people don't think a place is a town until it has a Marks and Spencer'.<sup>85</sup> Whilst a bold statement, the 10,000 signatures on the petition appeared to attest to the strength of feeling regarding the demand for a Marks and Spencer store in the town. As such the company's relationship with consumers amounted to more than an exchange of goods; Marks and Spencer seemed to inhabit the spirit of the high-street. The stores were a common sight even for those that did not frequent them and were increasingly viewed as part of the social and physical fabric of a town centre.

The perceived importance of a Marks and Spencer store to central areas was also evident when the company closed a store. Marks and Spencer closed its Edmonton store in 1987 and the decision was met with an outcry from local officials and the public. The company claimed that the site was too small and that the investment needed to bring the store up to scratch was too great. Nevertheless, a number of commentators felt that the retailer was abandoning the area. A member of the St Alphege Ratepayer's Association, Jackie Niner, stated that 'the firm was letting down its regular customers and deserting Edmonton when the shopping centre was just starting to revive'.<sup>86</sup> A similar sentiment was expressed in a *Hackney Gazette* article entitled 'Marks and Sparks closure bombshell'. The article declared:

High street giants Marks and Spencer dealt a blow to plans to rejuvenate Dalston shopping centre this week when they announced the closure of their Kingsland High Street store.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'New Stores open at Poole and Hereford', 18:3 (April, 1971), p. 6.

<sup>85</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, '10,000 petition for store in Woking', 17:1 (February, 1970), p. 1.

<sup>86</sup> MSCA, *Press Cuttings*, L/1/2/24, Folder: August 1987, 'Sparks fly over shop closure', *Enfield Gazette* (6 August 1987) [n.p].

<sup>87</sup> MSCA, *Press Cuttings*, L/1/2/24, Folder: August 1987, 'Marks and Sparks closure bombshell', *Hackney Gazette* (7 August 1987) [n.p].

Not only was it felt that Marks and Spencer was damaging the town centre but that the company's departure was going to have a deflating effect on efforts to bring new investment and retailing provision to the area. Such sentiment was clarified by Michael Freegard, chairman of the Hackney and Tower Hamlets Chamber, who observed that it was a 'sad day' for the high-street as he explained:

"I'm sure any new business considering a move to Dalston will be a success, but having a store with a quality name like Marks and Spencer adds prestige to a shopping centre."<sup>88</sup>

The discontent expressed at the decision stemmed from a belief that Marks and Spencer brought more to the area than simply a site of commercial exchange but rather it spoke to the vitality and health of the high-street and its absence would have a detrimental effect. Subsequently, it is arguable that the company, conscious of its image, was initially reluctant to embrace new store location policies which had the potential to destabilise or rupture this connection with consumers and local communities and consequently affect its established investment. The commercial textuality of central town and high-street areas was to some extent based on an abstract sense of communal ownership of a store or brand. Indeed, the placement of stores spoke to a retailers' image and identity. The often isolated and distant nature of out-of-town stores communicated a different commercial identity to that traditionally cultivated by Marks and Spencer.

The nature and perception of out-of-town retailing was something which Marks and Spencer sought to address in light of its own professed values and image. There was concern at this time regarding the environmental impact of out-of-town retailing on established shopping centres and on those sites on which such stores were being built. There was an uncertainty attached to out-of-town retailing and the image of such stores as soulless and isolated pervaded. Southampton City Council made it clear that they saw out-of-town developments as corrosive to the social, economic and environmental well-being of areas when they published a pamphlet in 1986, intended to warn against out-of-town developments. The council's animosity towards decentralisation was based on the perception that out-of-town developments were akin to 'placing a large shed in a field!'<sup>89</sup> They further alluded to the damaging environmental implications of such sites being built 'within the collar of "urban" countryside that surrounds our towns and cities' and warned against 'concreting over our countryside'.<sup>90</sup> Such emotive, forthright language and imagery, was clearly intended to rally popular opinion against such developments. The pamphlet conveyed a sense of environmental degradation as a result

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid. [n.p].

<sup>89</sup> Southampton City Council, *Out-of-town Shopping Centres: Some Key Questions* (Southampton: Southampton City Council, 1986) [n.p].

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. [n.p].

of out-of-town developments, in the countryside as traditionally conceived as a site of environmental concern, but also the British high-street, whose economic, social and physical environment was perceived as being under threat. The attributes attached to out-of-town developments were the antithesis of Marks and Spencer's commercial image as a traditional and reassuring high-street presence. Marks and Spencer's image was cultivated around the notion of the company as an ever present figure, a British institution and its stores as a result were perceived as amounting to more than a commercial entity. Marks and Spencer stores were seen as a validation of an area's status and the relatively new and faceless nature of out-of-town retailing had the potential to ring a discordant note with customers and local commentators.

Marks and Spencer used the issue of out-of-town retailing to bolster its image as a socially responsive and environmentally aware retailer. The company presented its efforts to preserve the quality of towns and high-streets as a social necessity. Marcus Sieff, Deputy Chairman at the time, claimed in 1971 that:

Although we are a national company centrally directed, we take our local responsibilities seriously and try, within our limitations, to play a useful part in the life of the local community.<sup>91</sup>

Sieff's remarks conveyed the notion that Marks and Spencer was a socially conscious retailer. The language used by Marks and Spencer to promote the use and viability of town centres was also heavily laden with the lexis of wider debates concerning the impact of out-of-town retailing on the urban environment. In the company's 1972 annual report it asserted that:

Haphazard shopping centre development out-of-town must not be allowed to cause urban decay in town centres and add to the erosion of green belts or agricultural land.<sup>92</sup>

The direct references to urban decay and the erosion of green belts showed an acute awareness of the wider climate of opinion regarding out-of-town retailing. Despite the variety of reasons which influenced the company's reluctance to move out-of-town, it was presented by the retailer as a response to a social and national need. This image, cultivated by Marks and Spencer, endorsed notions of the company as more than just a retailer, but rather as an instructive entity in the social and national landscape. Marks and Spencer stores became synonymous with the British high-street. They existed as a physical reminder that the company wished to establish itself at the heart of British society not only as a commercial retailer, but also a social actor. The degree to which it ardently promoted the preservation of town centres at a time when the issue was

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<sup>91</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Tomorrow's Shopping', p. 4.

<sup>92</sup> MSCA, CR/D/47, 'Annual Report' (1972), p. 8.

generating significant debate was testament to this. The company presented it as its duty to get involved. Such a national and social presence, whilst actively cultivated by Marks and Spencer, also resonated with wider society. *The Sunday Times* pronounced in 1969 that Lord Marks 'offered goods that were so universally acceptable that Marks and Spencer has come to be regarded as much an agent of social change as it is a business'.<sup>93</sup> Such an endorsement highlighted the status afforded the company. Moreover, Marks and Spencer was actively aware of the position the company held in the minds of contemporaries and consumers and this awareness influenced its presentation of its own store development.

The significance of Marks and Spencer's image as a mainstay of the British high-street was all the more apparent when the company did start to diversify its store portfolio. The language and tone adopted by the retailer emphasised the degree to which its commercial image had come to be linked heavily with more traditional forms of store placement. When reporting on the progress of its first out-of-town development at the MetroCentre in 1987 the company's annual report stated, 'sales have been encouraging and the experiment has demonstrated the potential for large single floor stores with adequate car parking'.<sup>94</sup> Whilst the report noted the relative success of the venture, reference to it as an 'experiment' implied that the store was the exception at this stage rather than the rule with regards store location. The company further stated that out-of-town stores were 'intended to supplement our high-street stores'.<sup>95</sup> Marks and Spencer went on to note that it remained 'committed to the city and town centres where...the bulk of our business will remain'.<sup>96</sup> Such sentiments were reiterated in Marks and Spencer's 1988 report as the company proclaimed, 'our store development policy continues to concentrate investment in city and town centres' and decentralised stores remained supplementary to its core business in high-streets and town centres.<sup>97</sup> Marks and Spencer's 1990 annual report noted its commitment yet again to such areas and further declared that such a commitment was 'illustrated by the addition of some 250,000 square feet in traditional locations'.<sup>98</sup> It was clear that the company was keen to play down the move into out-of-town developments and reaffirm its traditional identity as a high-street retailer. Such an effort to retain its dependable and ever present image, whilst seeking to reassure its customers and shareholders, arguably sought to dispel fears within the retailing community in central locations. It was remarked in a 1984 *Property Monthly Review* article that the 'proximity to an M&S store in a High Street is almost the classic

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<sup>93</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Top 1,000', 16:7 (October, 1969), p. 1.

<sup>94</sup> MSCA, CR/D/62, 'Annual Report' (1987), p. 11.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>97</sup> MSCA, CR/D/63, 'Annual Report' (1988), p. 14.

<sup>98</sup> MSCA, *Annual Reports*, CR/D/65, Marks and Spencer Ltd, 'Annual Report' (1990), p. 21.



definition of a prime property'.<sup>99</sup> Thus, the perception of Marks and Spencer as being at the centre of existing retail hierarchies pervaded and the potential ramifications of its decision to develop in out-of-town locations would have been keenly watched by many of its competitors. It would not have been in Marks and Spencer's interests, or to the benefit of its substantial investment in town centres, if retailers began to lose faith in central areas as a result of Marks and Spencer's announcement to develop decentralised sites. Consequently, its constant reaffirmation of its commitment to traditional retailing locations, whilst central to maintaining its commercial image, was also key to ensuring the stability of its existing investment.

In the wake of Marks and Spencer's decision to begin to explore out-of-town sites, the company took the step of releasing a circular to the managers of all its stores and distribution centres in 1984. In the circular Director John Sacher stated:

There has been much press speculation on the possibility of Marks and Spencer trading in selected out-of-town locations. It is appreciated that this might appear to conflict with our well-publicised commitment to town centre shopping areas, and it is important that you and your staff understand clearly the Board's thinking in this area.<sup>100</sup>

Sacher went on to outline:

It is important that all staff appreciate the need for the company to respond to changing times and social habits. They should also understand clearly that its doing so, does not imply a lessening of our commitment to the local communities within which we have traded profitably for so many years.<sup>101</sup>

The company's decision to explain its decision to its staff further highlighted the complexity inherent in Marks and Spencer's decision to consider out-of-town developments, particularly in light of its previous position as a staunch advocate of central shopping locations. The reference to press speculation confirmed the sense of gravitas attached to the announcement and its potential implications for Marks and Spencer's commercial image and its established investment. The fact that the company felt the need to clarify its position and to, in some respects, justify its out-of-town developments, illustrated the perceived importance of the decision for the company.

Marks and Spencer's precarious position in balancing its image as a stalwart of the high-street with its own commercial expansion into out-of-town locations, was typified by its Sprucefield development in Northern Ireland. The company caused a media storm

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<sup>99</sup> MSCA, *Marcus Sieff: articles and press cuttings relating to Marks and Spencer, 1980-1996*, R/4/7/1, 'Man of the Month: The man who believes in Britain', *Property Monthly Review* (July, 1984), 12-13 (p. 13).

<sup>100</sup> MSCA, *Memos, minutes and relating papers regarding store developments, 1915-1988*, HO/10/2/3/6, Correspondence from Mr. John Sacher, to The Manager, all U.K. Stores & Distribution Centres, 'Out-of-town superstores' (30 May 1984).

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

when it announced its intentions to build an out-of-town store at Sprucefield in 1987 on a site near the town of Lisburn and 10 miles outside of Belfast. *Fashion Weekly* reported in January 1987 that 'widespread fears about the future of Belfast's shopping centre have followed news that Marks and Spencer are to move to an out-of-town site ten miles south of the city at Sprucefield'.<sup>102</sup> The site, situated just off the M1 and with substantial road links with other towns such as Lisburn, Banbridge and Dungannon, as well as the centre of Belfast, was seen to pose a substantial threat to existing trading centres. It was believed by those opposing the site, that if the Marks and Spencer plan was accepted it would 'signal the start of a steady exodus from the heart of Belfast by major retailers'.<sup>103</sup> Other companies, such as the Co-operative, MFI and Habitat also began to show interest in the out-of-town area. Despite this Marks and Spencer's proposal was approved. As *The Guardian* noted in July of that year, 'the company was given the green light yesterday when outline planning permission was granted by the Northern Ireland Environment Department'; the store opened in March 1989.<sup>104</sup> Yet the widespread opposition to the development was well known ahead of approval being given. The Business Editor for *The Irish News*, Terry McLaughlin, noted in March 1987 that 'opposition to the Marks and Spencer plans has been spearheaded by the various chambers of commerce and trade who feel that the livelihood of their members will be jeopardised by development of the strategically placed Sprucefield'.<sup>105</sup> It received both local and national press attention as protesters called for a dismissal. Some of the criticism was so vehement that it made comparisons with the threat posed by the Irish Republican Army (IRA). *Fashion Weekly* reported that 'one critic even went as far as suggesting that the effect would be worse than the IRA's city centre bombing campaign during the 70s'.<sup>106</sup> Whilst a polemical and somewhat hyperbolic statement, the critic was not alone in making these comparisons. *The Independent* published an article by its Ireland Correspondent David McKittrick with the heading, 'Belfast terrorism threat pales beside M&S move'.<sup>107</sup> Such emotive language emphasised the strength of feeling and level of emotion which such matters generated. Whilst *The Independent's* headline was arguably crafted to generate maximum attention it was clear that it was not an isolated sentiment.

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<sup>102</sup> MSCA, *Press Cuttings*, L/1/2/23, Folder: January 1987, 'Ulster M&S Row', *Fashion Weekly* (8 January 1987) [n.p].

<sup>103</sup> MSCA, *Document Photocopies: Lisburn Store proposal event, Belfast*, S392/7/2, Terry McLaughlin, 'Now "the Co" plans Sprucefield move', *The Irish News* (Monday 2 March 1987) [n.p], col. 4.

<sup>104</sup> MSCA, *Press Cuttings*, L/1/2/23, Folder: July 1987, Bob Rodwell, '£20m plan for M&S', *The Guardian* (25 July 1987) [n.p].

<sup>105</sup> MSCA, S392/7/2, McLaughlin, 'Now "the Co" plans Sprucefield move' [n.p], col. 3/4.

<sup>106</sup> MSCA, L/1/2/23, 'Ulster M&S Row' [n.p].

<sup>107</sup> MSCA, *Press Cuttings*, L/1/2/23, Folder: January 1987, David McKittrick, 'Belfast terrorism threat pales beside M&S move', *The Independent* (5 January 1987) [n.p].

The fact that the Sprucefield project was approved confirmed the wider climate of planning liberalism evident in the latter half of the 1980s. The desire for such a development to go ahead, irrespective of the usual concerns with regards such a proposal, was also highlighted by the fact that the development infringed on the green belt, despite Marks and Spencer's earlier protestations that it would not develop on such sites. The company was aware of the sensitivity of the green belt issue and when presenting its case to the public enquiry decided not to draw attention to the infringement. This was alluded to in a letter from P. Monaghan from Marks and Spencer's Estate Department to Mr. J. Stanley in Marketing Services in January 1987. Monaghan stated, 'one point we are not highlighting in our enquiry presentation...is that the site falls outside the development limit of Lisburn and within the Green Belt'.<sup>108</sup> Monaghan did also point out in the correspondence that the green belt area did already contain a storage depot and some offices and as such informed Stanley that 'the visual character of the site is neither attractive nor in conformity with the Green Belt designation'.<sup>109</sup> As such, it seemed the environmental quality of the green belt designation was somewhat questionable and the company was led to believe that this would assist its proposal. Monaghan outlined that the consultants had advised that 'the zoning can be over-ridden if we can demonstrate...that the scale of development proposed is appropriate in terms of physical size, accessibility and retail impact'.<sup>110</sup> The proposal was scrutinised but the Northern Ireland Environment Department ruled in favour of the development and the incursion into the green belt appeared to be deemed permissible. This was more than likely offset by the fact that minor infringement had already taken place with the aforementioned buildings and the value of the site as a green belt area was deemed not sufficient to prevent further development. However, Marks and Spencer's decision to downplay this aspect of its proposal undoubtedly illustrated the potential significance of the green belt as an environmental issue and the need for sensitivity. It did not wish to be seen to be contravening the legitimacy of such areas. Although the planning permission itself readily highlighted the degree to which environmental considerations often remained a pragmatic consideration by commercial entities and local authorities and at times could be superseded by perceived economic need.

Marks and Spencer was keen to reassure the public and the local trading organisations that its commitment to Belfast City Centre remained strong and this was a central point in the company's publicity with regards the Sprucefield proposal. At a

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<sup>108</sup> MSCA, *Lisburn Store Enquiry*, S392/7/12, correspondence from P. Monaghan, Estates Department, to Mr J Stanley, Marketing Services, 'RE: Lisburn, Belfast: Proposed Edge of Town Development' (14 January 1987), p. 2.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

reception held in Belfast in February 1987 ahead of the public enquiry in March, Mr. Spriddell reassured the local audience:

We are not going to close, or even stop investing in our store here in the centre of Belfast. In fact, we have already in the last 2/3 years invested over £20m and are continuing to invest to keep the store up to date.<sup>111</sup>

Spriddell stated that the company's present trading area in the centre of Belfast took 'nearly twice the average per sq. ft.' and that this had led to overtrading.<sup>112</sup> Marks and Spencer clearly sought to promote the commercial case for trading simultaneously in both areas, in an effort to placate and stabilise popular opinion with regards the development. The company further substantiated its image as a committed town centre trader with a press release issued in February 1987 which promoted the fact that Marks and Spencer's Belfast store manager had been awarded an O.B.E. 'for services to the community, having played a key note in revitalising Belfast City Centre'.<sup>113</sup> Nevertheless, despite the obvious investment and continued support Marks and Spencer gave to Belfast's city centre it remained a contentious issue.

The company's efforts to portray the Sprucefield site as an addition rather than a replacement of existing shopping provision, were hard to sustain in light of the company's intention to provide 'a bus service from Lisburn town centre to the new shopping centre'.<sup>114</sup> Moreover, Marks and Spencer's funding of a bus service highlighted the often contradictory nature of off-centre development in relation to environmental concerns. Whilst the bus service offered an alternative to car use which brought an environmental benefit, it also had the potential to attract a greater number of patrons who may otherwise have shopped in the established town centre, thus risking the sustainability and environmental quality of the central area. The situation typified the interrelated and complex nature of commercial considerations in relation to the environment. In addition, it illustrated the extent to which environmental protection in its broadest sense was a continual negotiation of various environments; an environmental benefit in one respect may have precipitated an environmental concern elsewhere. Indeed, the study of the placement of retail stores highlighted the fundamental compromise at the heart of society's interaction with the environment. The success of the Sprucefield proposal was determined primarily on its perceived economic benefits. Nevertheless, the application highlighted the sensitive nature of commercial development at this time in relation to its

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<sup>111</sup> MSCA, *Lisburn Store Enquiry*, S392/7/4, P H Spriddell, 'Belfast Reception' (10 February 1987), p. 3.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>113</sup> MSCA, *Lisburn Store Enquiry*, S392/7/19, Press Release, 'Marks and Spencer Doubly Honoured' (9 February 1987).

<sup>114</sup> MSCA, *Document Photocopies: Lisburn Store proposal event, Belfast*, S392/7/2, John McGurk, 'Planners blasted over Sprucefield', *Irish News* (11 March 1987) [n.p], col. 3.

potential impact on established urban environments. Out-of-town developments generated an underlying fear as to the sustainability of existing urban areas. It was a commercial agenda which at its core dealt in environments and environmental survival, as urban areas and decentralised sites became retailing's environmental battle ground. Marks and Spencer's framing of its Sprucefield proposal and its subsequent remarks concerning its role in Belfast's city centre highlighted the increasing need for balance and negotiation as the expansion of retailing provision called on retailers to consider their role in the character and life-cycle of urban areas.

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The chapter has explored Marks and Spencer's move into out-of-town locations with respect to the changing planning climate, wider concerns regarding the survival of the green belt and central retailing areas and Marks and Spencer's established position as a high-street retailer. It was clear that store development was an increasingly negotiated process during this time as retailers navigated the sea of wider local and national opinion as to the location of retailing provision. Town centre and high-street environments were highly sensitive to commercial trends and practices. The growth in out-of-town retailing generated fears about the potentially destructive and parasitic effects on the social and physical environment, of decentralised retailing. Whilst the impact of such developments was often not as severe in reality, such concerns significantly shaped the rate and extent of the changes taking place. The planning system provided a framework which sought to preserve existing environments both in the urban and rural context. It was increasingly evident that urban areas were as much sites of environmental concern as the more idyllic British countryside.

In other respects the desire for urban renewal stimulated further retail development; in these cases commercial investment offered tangible environmental benefits. The potential for environmental improvement, evident for example in the MetroCentre development, aided the plight of retailers and developers who sought to invest in decentralised retailing. Rather than presenting an environmental problem in these instances, they were able to fill a wider need in the urban landscape for improved conditions and aesthetic standards, as well as the economic and social benefits usually associated with such schemes. As the opportunities grew, access improved and the planning climate became intermittently more amenable, the prospect of out-of-town retailing became more commercially inviting.

Marks and Spencer's initial reluctance was undoubtedly influenced by its categorisation as a comparison goods retailer, its substantial investment in central locations, the conservative nature of its own internal culture and management outlook, as well as its image as a high-street retailer. Such a mosaic of contributing factors

highlighted the interrelated nature of commercial and environmental considerations. The latter was not simply a physical consideration in Marks and Spencer's store strategy but also a matter of image; central shopping environments were imbued with their own commercial value and identity. As a result the urban environment enjoyed its fair share of unlikely protectors as the development of out-of-town retailing precipitated a more conscious assessment of the relationship between retailers and the areas in which they operated. Moreover, the importance of the quality and character of retail environments was increasingly realised not only in the placement of stores but in the design of the stores themselves and their surroundings. Consequently, the following chapter explores the growing concern for the conservation of local environments and architecture at this time and its impact on the provision and character of retail stores.

## Chapter Six

### The Aesthetics of Commerce

The British town centre had long been the battlefield for a mosaic of competing agendas which sought to construct the urban landscape in their own image. The aesthetic of retail stores was undoubtedly influenced by this wider climate. Store design was a negotiation of commercial and environmental considerations that was mediated by retailers, planners and local interests. Not only were store buildings themselves a focus of attention but also their surroundings, as landscaping was increasingly introduced into the store development process. Such considerations were heightened by the growing significance of the environment at this time, the demand for increased aesthetic standards and the shifting locational trajectory of retail stores. Development was also influenced by a reinvigorated conservation agenda. The excesses of the 1960s gave renewed buoyancy to a conservation movement which sought to stem the perceived flow of architectural destruction and homogenisation. The previous orthodoxies of modernism were increasingly being questioned. As David Pearce observed, 'the brief thrill of the new...had rapidly given way to pain at the all-too-visible destruction of historic fabric and loss in environmental quality'.<sup>1</sup> Individuals had come to doubt the much vaunted benefits of modernism as an efficient and progressive form within the urban landscape, capable of eradicating the social ills of previous centuries.

To many, modernism, and its architectural imprint, began to represent the physical and social desolation it was intended to rectify. Consequently, as noted by Simon Gunn, 'a political and popular consensus around urban modernism that seemed firm in the early 1960s had disintegrated ten years later'.<sup>2</sup> Sandbrook contended that the resurgence in the appeal of conservation was characteristic of an overall nostalgia for the past in the 1970s as society clamoured for a more 'stable' and 'idyllic' time: 'White heat was passé; rustic romanticism was the latest thing'.<sup>3</sup> This shifting tone was evident in the attitudes of retailers, planners and consumers, to retail development in the period covered by the thesis. The interplay between the demands of commercial retailing, conservation and efforts to assimilate retail stores into local environments, did much to shape urban retail areas between the late sixties and early nineties in both central and out-of-town locations. The urban environment was undergoing a process of metamorphosis and retailers were uniquely placed to mediate and shape the forces at play.

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<sup>1</sup> David Pearce, *Conservation Today* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1989), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Simon Gunn, 'The Rise and Fall of British Urban Modernism: Planning Bradford, circa 1945–1970', *The Journal of British Studies*, 49 (2010), 849–869 (p. 864).

<sup>3</sup> Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, pp. 196–200.

The conservation movement has been the focus of a number of studies which have charted its evolution and impact.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the impact of conservation on the design of retail stores has also received academic attention, although this has often remained part of wider studies of conservation or of general histories of the period.<sup>5</sup> Where the aesthetic of retail stores has been looked at more broadly the focus has been on flagship stores and the status implications of store design.<sup>6</sup> The present chapter seeks to build on this further by placing the aesthetics of stores within a wider assessment of Marks and Spencer's and Sainsbury's attitudes to store development and their surroundings. Furthermore, there has at times been a tendency for academic studies to focus on the perceived negative environmental impact of retailer stores on local landscapes. Carl Gardner and Julie Sheppard in their study of retail culture and the 'high street "revolution"', argued that multiples were guilty of 'designing out diversity' and 'obliterating local and regional differences'.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, multiple retailing has undoubtedly had an impact on the extent to which urban areas can lay claim to a distinct visual identity. Nevertheless, Gardner and Sheppard's contention obscures the efforts of retailers to acknowledge local needs and environments and the forces which made this necessary.

The growing appeal of conservation spoke to the same issues regarding the impact of economic growth and commercial expansion evident within concern for the environment more broadly. Conservation allowed retailers an opportunity to address such anxieties, whilst maintaining the appeal and profitability of their stores, in terms of design and location. Consequently, the chapter addresses the local and national planning context and the store projects of Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury's in relation to conservation. It explores the influence of outside organisations and the attention afforded store design and the surrounding environment by retailers and the reasons for this. The chapter highlights the significance of retailers in facilitating conservation efforts where conservation would otherwise not have taken place and the impact of the growing scarcity of suitable retail sites in central areas. The assessment of conservation within the chapter refers to concerns regarding architecture, designated conservation areas

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<sup>4</sup> See John Pendlebury, *Conservation in the Age of Consensus* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009); Miles Glendinning, *The Conservation Movement: A History of Architectural Preservation* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> See Peter J. Larkham, *Conservation and the City* (London: Routledge, 1996) - the study briefly addresses three store developments undertaken by Sainsbury's and shopping centre developments in Worcester City Centre in the late 1980s; Harrison, *Finding a Role? The United Kingdom, 1970-1990*, p. 81.

<sup>6</sup> *Flagship Marketing: Concepts and Places*, ed. by Tony Kent and Reva Brown (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009) explores the flagship stores of a number of leading retailers and their architectural significance.

<sup>7</sup> Carl Gardner and Julie Sheppard, *Consuming Passion: The Rise of Retail Culture* (London: Unwin Hyman Limited, 1989), pp. 1, 129.



and nature conservation and is interpreted as acts which sought to conserve aspects of the local architectural and environmental landscape. The chapter explores building design, landscaping and store location to assess the ways in which retailers negotiated local environments, the forces which influenced this, and the consistency of such considerations. Two case studies, concerning Marks and Spencer planning applications to build stores in Rickmansworth and Twickenham, will be used to illustrate the factors which affected the aesthetic characteristics and placement of retail stores. The attitudes of local individuals and consumers, as well as that of organisations and local officials will be explored in an effort to illustrate the wide base of interest afforded such matters. Indeed, store developments were invariably the result of a process of negotiation as a plethora of agendas sought to influence the trajectory of the urban environment at this time.

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Conservation in all its various facets was far from a new idea. Nevertheless, the scope and intensity of the conservation movement emerged transformed by the architectural devastation of the Second World War and the reconstruction efforts of the fifties and sixties, as well as the growing environmental uncertainty borne of increased consumption and technological innovation. Terry O' Rourke observed in 1987:

The major social and economic changes of the inter-war years were destined to accelerate at a considerable pace, bringing forth a torrent of change which has had fundamental effects on almost all of our urban fabric.<sup>8</sup>

O'Rourke's comments highlighted the long standing sinews of change which had given rise to transformations in the urban landscape. Increased consumption, greater mobility and the increasing reduction of household sizes, put greater demands on the environmental fabric of society in terms of its built infrastructures, natural resources and physical environment. O'Rourke went on to claim that such trends 'produced a massive groundswell of unrest'.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, this period also saw a growing clamour for greater retail provision and an ever increasing pressure for bigger stores with greater accessibility. The seemingly divergent claims on town centres made by these two agendas gave rise to a multifaceted dynamic which did much to shape the urban landscape at this time.

The protection of buildings deemed to have cultural and architectural merit was greatly advanced by 'the advent of modern planning legislation' which, according to

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<sup>8</sup> Terry O'Rourke, 'Conservation, Preservation and Planning', *The Planner, Town and Country Planning Summer School (TCPSS) Report of Proceedings* (February, 1987), 13-18 (p. 13).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

O'Rourke, brought 'about a...major step forward for conservation'.<sup>10</sup> The Town and Country Planning Act 1944 initiated the listing of buildings deemed to have notable architectural merit.<sup>11</sup> Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 the infrastructure of modern day town and country planning was established. Local Planning Authorities were given powers to control outdoor advertising and to protect buildings with architectural or historical worth. In addition, attention was increasingly given to areas of particular natural beauty. The Civic Amenities Act 1967 (later superseded by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990) introduced the concept of conservation areas.<sup>12</sup> Such ideas had long been discussed by ministers and interested parties. A number of these earlier measures were at times limited and arbitrary in their designations. Nevertheless, the codification of conservation efforts within national legislation, not only towards buildings but also surrounding environments, validated the claims of a burgeoning conservation and environmental agenda. The extent to which conservation was increasingly being given greater attention within planning circles also highlighted the shifts taking place. Phil Lomax observed in 1987:

In recent years, an increasing number of local authorities have begun to employ nature conservation expertise "in house" and often within the planning department.<sup>13</sup>

Lomax went on to highlight that in urban areas in particular, local authorities utilised nature conservationists within 'the plan, preparation and development control processes'.<sup>14</sup> Conservation was no longer considered a fringe idea; it was being brought to bear to a much greater extent on the planning climate of the 1970s and 1980s.

There was a growing movement within planning circles to combat the perceived monotony of architectural style to be found in high streets across the country. Such a preoccupation received significant attention at this time as planners and conservationists feared the irrevocable decimation of local landscapes and environments. The need of towns and cities to embrace their regional differences was likened to the needs of an ecosystem. In a 1975 article entitled 'Urbanism in the age of Ecology' it was claimed:

It is accepted in ecology that the greater the diversity, the greater the stability and adaptability of ecosystems, and the greater their capacity for feedback and response to emergency.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>11</sup> Charles Mynors, *Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Monuments* (London: Sweet & Maxwell Limited, Fourth Edition, 2006), p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> Dame Jennifer Jenkins, 'Protecting our Heritage', *The Planner, TCPSS, Report of Proceedings* (February, 1990), 3-6 (p. 3).

<sup>13</sup> Phil Lomax, 'Nature Conservation in Planning: Promoting the opportunity', *The Planner*, 73:5 (May, 1987), p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>15</sup> Max Nicholson, John R. Herbert, Mark Lintell and Carys Swanwick, 'Urbanism in the Age of Ecology', *The Planner*, 61:2 (February, 1975), 57-62 (p. 58).

The language of ecology and environmentalism was increasingly used to give voice to the exigencies and needs of urban areas as sites of environmental concern. The desire to maintain a diverse and vibrant architectural and environmental landscape was deemed to be of increasing importance, yet the often dominant presence of retailing within urban areas was seemingly antithetical to this. It is often considered that the success of a retailer is dependent on instant consumer recognition of its brand. The store as a conduit for a retailers' commercial identity arguably relied on a uniform architectural character irrespective of place and surrounding environment. Guy observed in 1994 that 'Woolworth and Marks and Spencer both developed characteristic architectural styles to facilitate immediate recognition, irrespective of location'.<sup>16</sup> The perceived need for a cohesive architectural thumbprint on the urban landscape and the consequent fears at this time that such a commercial strategy would wreak havoc on the sensitive environmental and architectural profiles of various towns and high-streets, is echoed within present day discourses surrounding the plight of the high-street. Studies have lamented the impact of large-scale retailers on the adaptability of towns and cities to withstand economic shocks and changing retail patterns. A government study entitled, *The Changing Face of the High Street* noted that 'studies such as Clone Towns (2005) and the Portas Review (2011) reflect a growing desire to establish a framework to understand the issues facing town centres'.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, despite the cyclical nature of such fears the reality is somewhat less stark and whilst the brand name never changed, the physical nature and design of retail stores were much more sensitive and amenable to changing tastes and attitudes than is often acknowledged. There was clear evidence that the growing preoccupation throughout the 1970s and 1980s for greater differentiation across urban areas was being brought to bear on the actions of retailers.

Planning attitudes and decisions undoubtedly shaped the character of retail store developments. Raymond Michael contended in 1984 that 'planners are centrally placed to take a catalytic role in the greening of the inner city'.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, this link was outlined as early as 1975 by Timothy Cantell, who noted that 'conservation of the built environment is a large and growing part of planning in this country'.<sup>19</sup> Various small planning decisions shaped Marks and Spencer's development projects. In 1975, following an application to East Staffordshire District Council concerning the erection of signage above the store's fascia in Burton upon Trent, Marks and Spencer was informed that:

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<sup>16</sup> Guy, *The Retail Development Process*, p. 115.

<sup>17</sup> English Heritage, *The Changing Face of the High Street: Decline and Revival* (London: Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners, June, 2013), p. 7.

<sup>18</sup> Raymond Michael, 'Greening the Inner City - The Pivotal Role of the Planner', *The Planner*, 20:7 (July, 1984), 17-18 (p. 18).

<sup>19</sup> Timothy Cantell, 'Why Conserve?' *The Planner*, 61:1 (January, 1975), 6-10 (p. 6).

The siting of the illuminated advertisements above fascia level would be detrimental to the appearance of the building and would be unduly prominent and detract from the pleasant character of the shopping precinct.<sup>20</sup>

The decision was in line with the council's general policy regarding the use of signs and indicated a desire to preserve the aesthetic value of the area. This was again displayed in 1977 when Marks and Spencer applied to the Council of the Borough of St. Edmundsbury to build an extension on High Baxter Street, Bury St. Edmunds, to the rear of its existing store. The council ruled that the extension could go ahead if the company complied with the following stipulations:

Before any development takes place samples of the facing bricks, slates and...panels to be used shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority [and] precise details of the colour and texture of external render to be used shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.<sup>21</sup>

Such conditions were deemed necessary by the council 'in the interests of visual amenity'.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, it was clear that aspects of the external aesthetic of Marks and Spencer's stores were constrained by local planning decisions. The influence of the planning apparatus was remarked on by Liam Martin of Lewis and Hickey Architects. Martin contended that the impact of planning legislation 'in respect of conservation...was in many instances to influence the elevational design of many of these extensions in this period resulting in departures from the parameters established in the preceding years'.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, Marks and Spencer's store development was negotiated in the context of these broader planning forces.

Nevertheless, it would be inaccurate to portray retailers as simply cajoled or forced into adapting their store aesthetics to take account of local environments. There was evidence that the physical characteristics of store developments were given consideration in relation to their surroundings. A growing awareness existed amongst retailers that attention to visual characteristics not only placated those calling for greater environmental stewardship, but that it also ensured continued economic prosperity and commercial success. Marks and Spencer undertook a number of store development projects which harmonised with wider conservation efforts. Its store projects frequently embraced existing local architectural and environmental features. This was evident in

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<sup>20</sup> MSCA, *Planning Applications and Permissions*, A05/138 C, East Staffordshire District Council, Application No. AD00675/06, 'Erection of two illuminated signs - St. Modwens Walk, Burton upon Trent' (22 October 1975) [n.p].

<sup>21</sup> MSCA, *Planning Applications and Permissions*, A05/138 C, Council of the Borough of St. Edmundsbury to M&S and Lewis & Hickey, 'Extension at rear of existing shop and new equipment shed - High Baxter Street, Bury St. Edmunds' (6 May 1977) [n.p].

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* [n.p].

<sup>23</sup> MSCA, HO/10/3/1/1/15, Martin, *Design for success*, p. 105.

Marks and Spencer's Yeovil store development (figure eight). The company reported the opening of the store in the April 1975 edition of *St Michael News*. The article stated:

The two-floor store is situated in a very old part of Yeovil, indeed right next door is St. John's Church - known as the "lantern of the west" because of its glorious windows - which dates back to before the Domesday Book. With this in mind the architects designed a store which blends in with its surroundings. It has a modern brick front but a more appropriate stone finish on the sides which face the church. The stone sides have also been designed to look like a row of properties rather than just one large one.<sup>24</sup>

The company was eager to present itself as an ally of conservation and whilst such endeavours were arguably governed by commercial calculations, the actions of Marks and Spencer were not antithetical to broader conservation efforts. It is unclear whether Marks and Spencer voluntarily accommodated local surroundings in its Yeovil development, or whether this was dictated by planning conditions. However, Marks and Spencer's efforts to promote the store by highlighting these aesthetic characteristics illustrated the company's awareness of the growing interest afforded conservation and the environment.

In 1976 Marks and Spencer published an article in its magazine focusing on the work of the Building Group, which dealt with its store development programme. The Building Group stated that the broader considerations concerning store projects 'must then be merged together to produce a design which is not only pleasing to customers and staff, but also to nearby residents, the local authority and any local conservation group in the area'.<sup>25</sup> Such a stipulation emphasised the significance of external factors on the store trajectory of the company. It also indicated an awareness within the company that the appearance of its stores mattered not only in communicating its brand, but also in being seen to acknowledge the local area. A 1978 article in *St Michael News* stated:

We like our stores to be noticed! But not to stick out like the proverbial sore thumb! And that's why we take a lot of care and trouble with our building works ensuring that they blend in with their surroundings.<sup>26</sup>

The article went on to refer to Marks and Spencer's extension in Andover (figure nine) the previous year. It noted that the company 'made clever use of brickwork in the new frontage in order to harmonise with the village character of the High Street'.<sup>27</sup> Based on the planning decisions concerning brickwork referenced earlier, it was plausible that Marks and Spencer's decision to utilise materials in-keeping with the established surroundings was dictated by local planning dictates. Nevertheless, the company

<sup>24</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'New Stores with style, Sutton Coldfield' (April, 1975), p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'The Men Behind the Scenes', 1 (February, 1978), p. 6.

<sup>26</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Character Building', 1 (February, 1978), p. 7.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.



**Figure Eight: Yeovil Store Front (1975)**



**Figure Nine: Andover Store Extension (1985)**

actively sought to present itself as a sensitive commercial actor in relation to local environments. Marks and Spencer's statements cultivated the notion that its stores were not an imposition on local landscapes but a contribution.

Marks and Spencer referred to the need to harmonise with existing surroundings in its 1991 annual report. The document stated, 'in our stores and offices we ensure that building design blends harmoniously with its environment'.<sup>28</sup> The overall concern for greater assimilation of retail stores with the immediate environment was a recurrent motif within Marks and Spencer's dialogue surrounding its development efforts. When promoting its new Holmbush Farm development in Shoreham, as part of its partnership with Tesco, Marks and Spencer proclaimed that 'the two stores will be built to the highest standards, using materials which are sympathetic to the surrounding environment and to existing buildings bordering the site'.<sup>29</sup> Such a proclamation appeared to be borne out of an awareness of wider attitudes at this time which were sensitive to out-of-town developments. This was again evident in Marks and Spencer's publicity material for its edge-of-town store in Warrington. The company divulged that it was 'being advised by specialist landscape and ecology consultants on how to achieve the best possible visual effect with trees and shrubs'.<sup>30</sup> As previously mentioned, this was also a practice increasingly used by local planning authorities and indicated an effort on the part of the company to appear sympathetic and responsive to prevailing planning attitudes. The development of stores in non-traditional locations had a clear impact on Marks and Spencer's approach to certain aspects of its store developments. Indeed, the appointment of an ecology expert occurred after it began to develop stores in decentralised locations. The growing attention afforded the environment, coupled with changes in the character and qualities of the environments in which Marks and Spencer operated, combined to ensure a greater attention to such matters on the part of the company. Marks and Spencer's decision to employ ecology experts within its organisation, with the sole purpose of advising the company on environmental and conservation issues, marked a significant shift in the dynamic between commercial retailing and the environment.

Marks and Spencer's changing approach to external store landscaping was evident in its Hedge End development in Eastleigh in June 1989. Marks and Spencer outlined that 'the design will minimise its visual impact on the site by means of a sensitive choice of materials and detailing'.<sup>31</sup> The company further declared:

We are developing a landscape strategy which by investigating the land science aspects of the site in depth and adopting a policy of conservation as part of our

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<sup>28</sup> MSCA, CR/D/66, 'Annual Report' (1991), p. 31.

<sup>29</sup> MSCA, S392/29/2, 'Holmbush farm Shoreham' [n.p].

<sup>30</sup> MSCA, S/1/2/3, 'A proposal for an Edge of Town Store in Warrington', p. 6.

<sup>31</sup> MSCA, ACC/11/461, Box 2, A275, 'Marks and Spencer, Hedge End, Eastleigh' [n.p].

planning will create a high quality landscape...The design involves the conservation and retention of existing woodland, transplanting trees where possible and strengthening the birch wooded character of the landscape.<sup>32</sup>

Marks and Spencer showed a clear awareness of the dual importance of the built and natural environment in maintaining a site's visual character. The language used and the actions identified by Marks and Spencer highlighted the extent to which conservation could also be "green". The company's reference to 'land science' and the development of a 'landscape strategy' indicated a more technical assessment of the environment. Indeed, the company's consideration of the ecology of the site highlighted the influence of the ecology expert hired by the company, as well as the growing significance attached to the physical characteristics of existing environments when seeking planning approval. Environmental considerations were increasingly presented as being a natural and significant part of the store development process.

### **Consultation and Co-operation**

There was a climate of consultation and co-operation between retailers and the burgeoning cohort of environmental and conservation pressure groups which gained in influence and number at this time. A variety of Marks and Spencer's projects were undertaken in co-operation with outside groups. When the company drew up plans for a new store in Ayr (figure ten) which opened in 1974, it joined forces with the Town Council and the Royal Commission for Fine Arts. Marks and Spencer stated that the aim of such a partnership was to 'retain the character of the town centre'.<sup>33</sup> This was deemed particularly significant as the store was to be constructed 'between the Auld Kirk where Scotland's poet, Robert Burns was christened, and the Auld Brig which has spanned the River Ayr for six centuries'.<sup>34</sup> The decision taken by Marks and Spencer to bring in outside advice showed a sensitivity and an awareness of the crucial, and at times delicate, role retailing played within an historic area. Marks and Spencer was keen to promote not only the new store but also the extent to which it was intended to complement, not dominate, the local landscape. During the opening reception a company director, Harold Freeman, remarked 'that it was important that a building the size of the new store should be in character and enhance the High Street'.<sup>35</sup> Such a collaborative approach was arguably a pragmatic move on the part of Marks and Spencer, designed to ensure planning approval for its development in the area and to harmonise with wider concerns regarding the impact of new developments on the quality of the urban landscape. Nevertheless, the commercial advantages of such an approach did not negate the environmental

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid. [n.p].

<sup>33</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Ayr Store Opens', 7 (December, 1974), p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 3.



benefits, nor the impact it had in establishing a precedent for further collaboration between commercial retailers and outside organisations.

The influence of outside groups was a recurrent feature of Marks Spencer's store developments. This was noted by the architect Liam Martin in relation to the company's Oxford store (figure eleven) which opened in 1978. Martin remarked that 'the facades were of individual design and were greatly influenced by the numerous pressure groups which dominated the period'.<sup>36</sup> Although Martin gave no details of the specific groups which brought their influence to bear on this particular development, it was evident that the company was not immune to pressure from outside organisations who sought to minimise the visual impact of commercial retailing on local areas. Marks and Spencer asserted in its company magazine that the Oxford store had 'been designed to blend in with the character of Queen Street'.<sup>37</sup> The company made no reference to any outside pressure having conditioned its approach to the store development. Nevertheless, its reference to blending in implied that the environmental characteristics of the area were taken into account. The result was a negotiation between the company's commercial image and the wider environmental sensitivities championed by outside groups. The company's acquiescence towards those forces which sought to protect the environmental quality of towns and cities was commercially prudent, often ensuring an expedient and successful store development. The visual aesthetics of an area were increasingly viewed as a commercial commodity, as important to the consuming process as the store itself. An alliance between retailers and those calling for greater conservation and environmental stewardship was to some degree, mutually beneficial.

The launch of the Groundwork Foundation (later to become Groundwork UK) in the early 1980s, highlighted the growing propensity of organisations to begin to view business and the environment as interrelated issues to be addressed in tandem. The organisation was established in the wake of the Countryside Commission's efforts in the late 1970s to ensure greater environmental quality in the urban fringe. In 1984 John Davidson outlined that Groundwork was 'a new mechanism for bringing together public, private and voluntary organisations in a co-ordinated effort to upgrade the environment'.<sup>38</sup> The organisation began to gain traction in the early 1980s and a number of regional trusts were established, concerned with a variety of issues deemed central to improving the environment. Davidson asserted:

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<sup>36</sup> MSCA, HO/10/3/1/1/15, Martin, *Design for success*, p. 122.

<sup>37</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, 'Oxford Graduates with Honours' (March, 1978), p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> John Davidson, 'The Groundwork Approach to Environmental Improvement', *The Planner*, 20:7 (July, 1984), p. 22.



**Figure Ten: Ayr Store Front (1974)**



**Figure Eleven: Oxford Store Front (1978)**

The essential feature of Groundwork is a partnership between all those who control, fashion and care for the environment. Above all it is an approach that is sensitive enough to see problems through the eyes of local people.<sup>39</sup>

Davidson's assessment of Groundwork's purpose illustrated the extent to which business was increasingly viewed as an essential component of issues concerning the environment. Marks and Spencer have had a long history of working with the foundation, which continues to the present day. The company first made reference to its relationship with the organisation in its 1989 annual report. It stated that 'Marks and Spencer provided £37,500 to initiate a project with the Groundwork Foundation which encourages young people in deprived areas to improve their environment'.<sup>40</sup> Whilst the amount of the donation was dwarfed by the £3,706,000 given in charitable donations for that year, it was significantly more than that given to political concerns, which amounted to £25,000.<sup>41</sup> Marks and Spencer's financial commitment to the Groundwork Foundation highlighted a growing change within the company, which saw a greater concern for, and awareness of, environmental issues. The company's 1990 annual report provided some indication as to the factors behind this apparent shift. The report contended:

Concern for environmental issues has led us to support a range of projects including five for groundwork in the North West where young people are encouraged to participate in the improvement of their own environment.<sup>42</sup>

Marks and Spencer's support for the organisations was directly attributed to a growth in popular concern for the environment and the company's support for an organisation which addressed the urban fringe was arguably influenced by the company's move into such locations. Changes in Marks and Spencer's store development strategy led to a widening of its environmental focus and approach. The company was now linked to the urban fringe, albeit to a lesser degree than the traditional high-street, and it had widened its environmental interest accordingly. Indeed, decentralised retail developments more broadly had led to a shift in the established parameters of environmental concern and the areas which warranted it. Marks and Spencer's commitment to Groundwork indicated the possibility of a co-operative and collaborative relationship in which commercial retailers could play a key role in supporting environmental activities. Marks and Spencer's policy of implementing employee secondment to various outside groups was also evident in its relationship with the Groundwork Foundation. This emphasised the company's efforts at this time to offer not only monetary support, but also management and private sector skills, to organisations concerned with the environment.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>40</sup> MSCA, CR/D/64, 'Annual Report' (1989), p. 29.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>42</sup> MSCA, CR/D/65, 'Annual Report' (1990), p. 47.

Marks and Spencer was keen to promote its relationship with Groundwork, referring to it in its 1989 press release entitled 'Environmental Update from Marks and Spencer: Conservation of the Countryside'.<sup>43</sup> In addition, the company made further reference to its link to the Groundwork Foundation in its 1993 publication regarding Marks and Spencer's environmental efforts. The piece outlined:

One of the organisations receiving support is the Groundwork Foundation which encourages local communities to take responsibility for improving their own area by tackling problems of dereliction and making positive use of local wastelands.<sup>44</sup>

The pronouncement emphasised the extent to which Marks and Spencer increasingly inserted itself within a wider local and national framework of environmental initiatives. This was similarly evident in the company's support for the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV). In 1989 Marks and Spencer declared that '£25,000 was granted to the [BTCV] which trains volunteers to tackle a wide range of projects'.<sup>45</sup> The company elaborated in its 1993 environmental policy that the BTCV offered 'the opportunity to become involved in conservation projects nationwide, through short term schemes and longer term involvement'.<sup>46</sup> Marks and Spencer also provided funding for the Royal Society for Nature Conservation, which was used by the organisation to assist 'urban wildlife groups and trusts around the country to develop specific local projects'.<sup>47</sup> This support was sustained over a period of time; Marks and Spencer received a framed medallion from the organisation 'in recognition of the generous support given to the Royal Society for Nature Conservationist's British Wildlife Appeal 1985-1990'.<sup>48</sup> The company's efforts with regards the environment were further acknowledged in 1990 at the Civic Trust Awards where Marks and Spencer was presented with a certificate in light of its 'contribution to the quality and appearance of the environment'.<sup>49</sup> Whilst the certificate gave no details of the company's specific contribution, it was evident that Marks and Spencer was deemed to have played a notable role within wider environmental and conservation endeavours. The company increasingly began to make a concerted effort to proclaim its credentials as an advocate for conservation and heritage. In 1993 Marks and Spencer stated that it was 'concerned with the preservation of Britain's heritage' and subsequently gave 'assistance to a variety of projects which train[ed] young people in

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<sup>43</sup> MSCA, A04/117A, 'Environmental Update from Mark & Spencer - Conservation of the Countryside'.

<sup>44</sup> MSCA, HO/11/1/1/32, 'M&S The Environment' [n.p].

<sup>45</sup> MSCA, CR/D/64, 'Annual Report' (1989), p. 29.

<sup>46</sup> MSCA, HO/11/1/1/32, 'M&S The Environment' [n.p].

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. [n.p].

<sup>48</sup> MSCA, *Framed Medallion*, A05/509D, 'Royal Society for Nature Conservation' (1990s).

<sup>49</sup> MSCA, *Certificate*, A05/278D, 'Civic Trust Awards' (1990).

restoration and conservation skills'.<sup>50</sup> Consequently, not only did Marks and Spencer's interaction with outside pressure groups and interested parties ensure that its own store development increasingly began to be influenced by the prevailing orthodoxies of conservationist thought, but it also influenced the spread and adoption of such activities in other areas.

### **The Store: A physical extension of the retail brand**

Popular opinion was not indifferent to aesthetic considerations in relation to the environment. This was increasingly recognised by Marks and Spencer. The company's recurrent references to its links with conservation groups, as well as its reiteration of its efforts to assimilate stores into local environments, highlighted the extent to which Marks and Spencer saw commercial value in appearing to be responsive to such issues. The retail store and its surroundings were becoming a central facet of the consuming process. The architectural aesthetic of stores advertised more than the simple presence of a company in a town or city, but rather its attitude towards, and awareness of, that area. Store development was invariably used as a branding tool to further cultivate and propagate a sensitive and responsive corporate image. Moreover, conservation offered commercial retailers the opportunity to foster such an identity. Whilst planning decisions, pressure groups and popular sensibilities, to varying degrees shaped the rhetoric and actions of Marks and Spencer, this was not without commercial benefit. The company actively utilised the growing local and national dialogue surrounding conservation to further cement its image as a much loved and stable institution. The company's conservation efforts, and its promotion of the need to protect local environments and heritage, arguably anchored it beyond its immediate commercial sphere. The company's stores were more than just a conduit through which to sell products, but rather were a commercial statement in and of themselves.

The image of the company's stores as an extension of its brand as a sensitive and locally aware retailer, was also fostered by the remarks of Liam Martin in his history of the company's store development. Martin contended that his account was 'the story of the company's store buildings and their unrivalled contribution to the architectural and social fabric of our towns and cities'.<sup>51</sup> Such a declaration cultivated the notion that Marks and Spencer was a key presence within the urban landscape. Martin further asserted:

Its buildings are a mirror of its retailing philosophy and care for its customers and staff and constitute an individual architectural and interior style that fits as easily and naturally into the fabric of our towns, cities and landscapes as do the people who shop in them.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> MSCA, HO/11/1/1/32, 'M&S The Environment' [n.p].

<sup>51</sup> MSCA, HO/10/3/1/1/15, Martin, *Design for success*, p. 14.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

Marks and Spencer's stores were presented as a familiar and almost natural feature of the urban landscape. The reference to 'individual architectural and interior style' posited the idea that Marks and Spencer's decisions with regards the external store aesthetic were conditioned by a regional and local outlook which facilitated a sensitive and assimilationist approach to the visual aesthetic of stores. Martin undoubtedly had a vested interest in crafting such a well-oiled narrative of the company's store development as he worked for Lewis & Hickey, who had designed a number of Marks and Spencer's stores at this time. Nevertheless, Martin's comments chimed in accordance with the wider shift in attitudes towards retail development at this time. As A.E. Kirby and A.M. Kent noted:

The standard "big box" design became less acceptable to planners and the public, and gave way to buildings which communicated a visual identity, but also corporate responsibility towards the local environment through logos and signage on the one hand and contextual architectural features on the other.<sup>53</sup>

Marks and Spencer's image to some extent amounted to the sum of its varying parts, as difference and variation within its external store design was increasingly as commercially marketable as the previously held orthodoxies of a standard one size fits all design portfolio. Conservation, and a sensitivity to local landscapes, became a means of conveying a certain brand identity which was presented as a natural ally of Marks and Spencer's established retailing identity as a socially conscious, culturally significant and environmentally aware, retailer.

The role of retail stores in communicating a brand identity, was explored by Kirby and Kent. They observe that viewing 'the "store as brand" has come to relate appearance and identity to core brand values'.<sup>54</sup> They continued by affirming that 'the three-dimensional, sensory microcosm of the retail store represents the brand as a "brandscape"'.<sup>55</sup> Conservation efforts not only provided retailers with a stable and reassuring link to established heritage and landscapes but in some instances conveyed upon retailers an air of innovation and excellence which heightened their brand identity. Marks and Spencer was keen to be recognised for such efforts, and in the wake of its Exeter store development (figure twelve and thirteen) the company actively sought to cultivate wider endorsement. Marks and Spencer revealed in a 1981 press release that the Exeter store had:

Been entered for a number of architectural awards, including the prestigious Ambrose Congreve award, which reflects the pride in the completion of the

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<sup>53</sup> A.E. Kirby and A.M. Kent, 'Architecture as brand: store design and brand identity', *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 19:6 (2010), 432–439 (p. 433).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 433.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 433.



**Figure Twelve: Exeter Store Front (1981)**



**Figure Thirteen: Exeter Store Side View (1981)**

building, designed to harmonise with the diverse styles of one of Exeter's most historic streets.<sup>56</sup>

The development therefore had the potential to yield greater commercial significance than simply a site in which to sell goods. Marks and Spencer's efforts to draw attention to its endeavours to compliment the established surroundings offered an opportunity for the retailer to display its store as an environmental and architectural achievement, as opposed to a solely commercial project.

Marks and Spencer was not the only retailer to realise the value in such promotion. Sainsbury's made frequent references to its own activities to limit the environmental impact of its store development. In a press release circulated by the company in 1989 Sainsbury's contended that it believed 'in a comprehensive approach to landscape design, which not only caters for the functional needs of retailing but also recognises the obligation of a new development to its local environment'.<sup>57</sup> It was clear that Sainsbury's sought to exude a similar image of sensitive and aware retailing, which was underpinned by a sense of responsibility to communities beyond the basic provision of goods. Lord Sainsbury further confirmed the company's efforts at the World Ozone Conference, at which he stated that Sainsbury's attached 'great importance' to 'sympathetic architecture and considerate landscaping'.<sup>58</sup> Lord Sainsbury outlined that in a number of cases, 'land has been given for nature conservancy, and care taken to retain local wildlife and its habitat'.<sup>59</sup> As such it was evident that in relation to both the built and natural environment, Sainsbury's embraced conservation as a credible and worthwhile endeavour.

In addition, as with Marks and Spencer, Sainsbury's actively sought to propagate its image as a responsible architectural and environmental force by entering its store efforts for a number of awards. In 1989 Sainsbury's compiled a dossier of its environmental initiatives for the Environmental Awards. Within that document Sainsbury's highlighted that it 'aims to design schemes that integrate a development into its immediate surroundings, often using styles of architecture and materials local to a particular area'.<sup>60</sup> In the same year the company released a press statement regarding its environmental credentials. Sainsbury's stated that it, 'recognises the obligation of a new development to its local environment'.<sup>61</sup> Whilst it was doubtful that either retailer

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<sup>56</sup> MSCA, *Press Release*, HO/3/1/3/1/22, 'Exeter New Store for Old', Publicity Group (May, 1981).

<sup>57</sup> SA, SA/PR/1/94/2/3, 'Sainsbury's and the "Green" lifestyle', Public Relations Department document (May, 1989).

<sup>58</sup> SA, SA/CR/GRE/15, 'Saving the Ozone London Conference' [n.p].

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* [n.p].

<sup>60</sup> SA, SA/CR/GRE/2/1, *The 1989 Environment Awards: A Submission by J Sainsbury plc* (1989), p. 1.

<sup>61</sup> SA, SA/PR/1/94/2/4/1, "'Green" Policies Keep Sainsbury's Ahead', Public Relations Department (September, 1989).



embarked upon its conservation initiatives solely for the purposes of gaining such awards, this was not to say that they did not hold some secondary commercial benefit in terms of branding. Both Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury's sought to cultivate a reputation as an environmentally aware retailer and the ways in which they promoted their store development efforts highlighted this.

Sainsbury's development at Green Park Station in Bath (figure fourteen) was a notable example of the benefits and wider attention to be garnered from developments which were viewed to be sensitive to local landscapes; the development not only involved a substantial conservation effort but the site was the subject of fierce development competition. Sainsbury's proposed in 1977 to build a store behind the old station. The development would use the remaining Victorian train shed as a car park and turn the rest of the station building into a museum.<sup>62</sup> The Sainsbury's application, due to its intention to retain the existing buildings, was heavily supported by the Bath Preservation Trust, as well as other local and national amenity societies such as the Bath Environment Campaign.<sup>63</sup> The Sainsbury's scheme was also favourably received by the press. The trade magazine *Supermarketing* stated:

Store development plans need not always mean harm to the environment. After all...Bath had not thought of turning Green Park station into a museum until Sainsbury suggested it. Retailers are not all demolition experts.<sup>64</sup>

The article referred to wider attitudes which doubted the ability of retail efforts to show sensitivity to local environments, only to admonish them. Conservation efforts were directly associated with greater care and attention towards the environment. *Supermarketing* clearly sought to praise Sainsbury's for its proposal. Sir John Betjeman also weighed in on the local planning matter, throwing his full support behind Sainsbury's application and even going so far as to offer the retailer 'general conservation advice'.<sup>65</sup> Despite the clear desire from local groups to retain the Victorian train shed, Bath City Council pushed for the building to be demolished in favour of a hotel development on the site.<sup>66</sup> Some councillors deemed the proposed supermarket to be of a greater threat to the city in terms of its impact on existing businesses, than the harm done in the event that the train shed was destroyed.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>62</sup> 'Plans to preserve Bath's age and station', *JS Journal* (August, 1977), The Sainsbury Archive: JS Journal Online. Web. [accessed 19 March 2015], p. 7.

<sup>63</sup> Bath Preservation Trust (BPT), *Green Park Road - Green Park Station, Press Cuttings 1967-1977*, 2/6/166/1/1, 'Superstore: Traders undecided', *Evening Chronicle* (11 July 1977) [n.p], col. 3/4.

<sup>64</sup> 'Plans to preserve Bath's age and station', *JS Journal*, p. 7.

<sup>65</sup> BPT, *Green Park Road - Green Park Station, Press Cuttings 1967-1977*, 2/6/166/1/1, 'Sir John joins the old station lobby', *Western Daily Press* (8 July 1977), p. 5.

<sup>66</sup> BPT, *Green Park Road - Green Park Station, Press Cuttings 1967-1977*, 2/6/166/1/1, 'Green Park bid', *Evening Chronicle* (5 July 1977) [n.p].

<sup>67</sup> BPT, *Green Park Road - Green Park Station, Press Cuttings 1967-1977*, 2/6/166/1/1, 'Sainsbury scheme waits for survey', *Evening Chronicle* (15 July 1977) [n.p], col. 2.



**Figure Fourteen: Sainsbury's Green Park Development (1983)**

The Sainsbury's supermarket sits in the top left corner of the picture behind the restored Green Park Station building.

Sainsbury's were not the only retailer to petition for the site, Tesco had long been in negotiations to develop on the site before Sainsbury's put its proposal forward. The appeal of the site was heightened by its prime location near Bath City Centre and good access links. The development would also have a substantial customer base being the only major supermarket of a substantial size on that side of the town. Consequently, there was a key commercial motive in taking on the Bath site, despite the added complexity. Both retailers made much of their efforts to protect local heritage and the surrounding environment, within their applications. Tesco proclaimed in its application that the company 'can make [a] significant contribution to the social, economic and environmental welfare' of the area.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, Dennis Johnson wrote in 1977, in a piece for *The Guardian*, that if the council were to go ahead with plans to demolish the train shed Tesco had painted itself as 'there in the role of eager guardian of the environment'.<sup>69</sup> Undoubtedly Tesco's position was artfully crafted to garner greater local support for the retailer's proposal and thus served an innately commercial motive. Sainsbury's were also keen to point out that a retail development 'at Green Park Station is the only possible solution to financing the retention and restoration of the train shed', an opinion shared by many local commentators.<sup>70</sup> It was clear that both retailers understood the weight of sentiment within Bath concerning the area's heritage. Both shrewdly ensured that such matters were not only at the centre of their applications, but also that the retailers themselves were presented as earnestly protecting the quality and history of the local environment.

Due to the competition for the site and the Council's request to demolish the train shed, which was a listed building, the Secretary of State for the Environment received a number of impassioned pleas from local groups, including the Bath Preservation Trust, The Victorian Society and the National Trust, to call in the application.<sup>71</sup> Following the public inquiry in 1979 the Secretary of State for the Environment, Michael Heseltine, came out in favour of the Sainsbury's development.<sup>72</sup> The Sainsbury's proposal was smaller in size than that proposed by Tesco and was a food-only store as opposed to a

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<sup>68</sup> BPT, *Green Park Road - Green Park Station 1976-1978 Correspondence Inc. Reports*, 2/6/166/1/4, 'Green Park Shopping Precinct for Tesco Stores Limited', Bound Booklet, Tesco Ltd. [n.d], p. 4.

<sup>69</sup> BPT, *Green Park Road - Green Park Station, Press Cuttings 1967-1977*, 2/6/166/1/1, Dennis Johnson, 'The hyper-row that erupted over a train shed', *The Guardian* (February, 1977) [n.p], col. 4.

<sup>70</sup> BPT, *Green Park Road - Green Park Station 1976-1978 Correspondence Inc. Reports*, 2/6/166/1/4, J Sainsbury's Plc 'Preservation of Green Park Station Bath', Bound Booklet [n.d] [n.p].

<sup>71</sup> BPT, 2/6/166/1/1, Johnson, 'The hyper-row that erupted over a train shed' [n.p], col. 1.

<sup>72</sup> 'Bath station looks to be on the right lines', *JS Journal* (February, 1980), The Sainsbury Archive: JS Journal Online. Web. [accessed 19 March 2015], p. 15.

mix of food and non-food merchandise which characterised the Tesco scheme.<sup>73</sup> The Sainsbury's plans also made provision for the complete restoration of the existing buildings. The company opened a store on the site in 1982. Not only had Sainsbury's sensitive store proposal ensured that it secured the site ahead of its competitors, but the publicity both locally and nationally which the process had generated created a lot of positive press for the company; Sainsbury's had managed to draw maximum attention to its new store opening without having to spend a penny to do so. In this regard conservation was not an imposition which was tolerated by retailers due to the strictures of a more environmentally conscious planning culture, a more aware populace, and a more militant climate of pressure groups. Conservation was increasingly a commercial tool which enabled retailers to navigate the complex demands of modern day retailing and the growing calls for greater sensitivity towards environments, both man-made and natural.

### **Negotiation and Compromise**

When addressing retailers and those concerned with conservation and the environment in urban areas, it was apparent that it was in the interests of both sides to negotiate, despite the fact that this invariably meant compromise. Whilst the continued investment in, and expansion of, retailing provision threatened to undermine the visual amenities and historical heritage of an area, it was increasingly realised that without it the plight of the urban environment was all the more stark. This dependency was outlined by English Heritage in its 2005 study entitled *Retail Development in Historic Areas* which was funded by the Planning Advisory Service. The document stated that 'shops and retailing form the lifeblood of many historic areas, providing vitality, vibrancy and an essential economic base'.<sup>74</sup> Steven Bee, Director of Planning and Development at English Heritage, also contended that 'there has always been a direct relationship between the cultural and physical character of our towns and cities, and the commercial activity they accommodate'.<sup>75</sup> Retailers provided funding to organisations and initiatives and undertook conservation efforts which otherwise may have been abandoned, as was evident with Bath Council's proposal to demolish the existing Victorian train shed. The presence and prosperity of retailing within urban areas also ensured continued development and investment. Andrew Ogg of the British Council for Shopping Centres further alluded to this cycle of investment. Ogg proclaimed:

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<sup>73</sup> BPT, 2/6/166/1/1, 'Sainsbury scheme waits for survey' [n.p], col. 2.

<sup>74</sup> English Heritage, *Retail Development in Historic Areas* (London: English Heritage, 2005), p. 4

<[http://www.historictownsforum.org/files/documents/free\\_download\\_publications/Retail\\_Development\\_in\\_Historic\\_Areas.pdf](http://www.historictownsforum.org/files/documents/free_download_publications/Retail_Development_in_Historic_Areas.pdf)> [accessed 23 February 2015].

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

Maintaining the economic prosperity of historic towns is vital to their future sustainability...they must acknowledge that if they do not successfully incorporate planning for modern retail requirements into their existing fabric that their competitiveness will decline.<sup>76</sup>

The fortunes of the architectural and environmental quality of central areas was directly linked to the economic security provided by a strong retailing presence. It was the middle ground between economic prosperity and physical and cultural value, which was increasingly sought and negotiated by both sides during the 1970s and 1980s.

The propensity for retailers to continue to engage in efforts to conserve both local landscapes and buildings emphasised their own changing situation during this time. The variety and quantity of sites available within central areas was diminishing, as space in such areas became scarce. Indeed, Sainsbury's noted in its 1996 *Environment Report* that it was 'difficult to find suitable sites in town centres'.<sup>77</sup> Nevertheless, Sainsbury's did continue to develop sites in central areas despite the growth in its out-of-town developments. The company undertook the conversion of an old church dating back to the 19th century in Wolverhampton (figure fifteen), which opened in 1988. The development retained much of the outer aesthetic of the church, whilst its interior was used as the store entrance.<sup>78</sup> Larkham noted that the 'only alternative' proposal for the site came from the Local Planning Authority (LPA).<sup>79</sup> The LPA's proposal would have removed much of the old church and left only the remains in a redesigned public open space.<sup>80</sup> Consequently, similar to Sainsbury's Bath store, its Wolverhampton development ensured the conservation of the existing architecture where otherwise it would have been lost. The increasing lack of suitable retail sites of the size desired by retailers within central areas, as noted by Sainsbury's in its *Environment Report*, arguably influenced the propensity for retailers to undertake developments which included a conservation element. In addition, particularly in the 1970s when planning officials sought to restrict the number of out-of-town developments, retailers found themselves having to look for options within town and city centres that may not have been their first choice. A number of Marks and Spencer's store projects which involved the conservation of existing buildings, took place in the 1970s or early 1980s. This was before the company began to develop in decentralised locations. As such, there was a clear commercial motive in taking on projects which could be accommodated within established retailing locations. Moreover, applications which were seen to be in-keeping with existing architecture, or sought to preserve an area's heritage, arguably ensured

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>77</sup> J Sainsbury Plc, *Environment Report*, p. 9.

<sup>78</sup> 'Branch opening Wolverhampton', *JS Journal* (March, 1988), The Sainsbury Archive: JS Journal Online. Web. [accessed 10 September 2015], p. 5.

<sup>79</sup> Larkham, *Conservation and the City*, p. 241.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 241.



**Figure Fifteen: Sainsbury's Wolverhampton Store Front (1988)**

less resistance from residents and local planning authorities. This was a significant commercial advantage at a time when some planning applications, and often the resulting enquiries, could last years, not months. The growth in conservation efforts amongst retailers emphasised the changing retail landscape at this time, as well as the increasing pressure on the urban environment. Retailers were far from altruistic conservationists; commercial considerations and planning attitudes significantly shaped their decisions and the way in which they presented and discussed their store developments. Nevertheless, the contribution of Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury's to the conservation agenda by way of funding, sensitive store development and an overall promotion of the need to conserve and protect both the architectural and natural qualities of the urban landscape, cannot be ignored. It signalled the continuing assimilation of environmental considerations into the heart of modern retailing.

### **Rickmansworth and Twickenham**

The adoption of environmental considerations by retailers was far from a consistent process. Whilst retailers were increasingly being brought face to face with the environment and those that sought to preserve and protect it, this did not eschew the driving commercial motivation of greater store expansion. Such a reality invariably placed retailers on the front line of debates concerning the nature of appropriate urban developments and land use policies. Marks and Spencer's planning proposals for stores in Rickmansworth and Twickenham in the late eighties and early nineties highlighted the extent to which this was the case. The reaction and outcome of the two planning applications illustrated the broad spectrum of opinion with regard retail store developments at this time and the degree to which environmental considerations played a role in determining the success or failure of such schemes; both sites were in designated conservation areas. The company's proposal for a neighbourhood food store in central Rickmansworth in 1989 received significant opposition from local people. Marks and Spencer undertook information sessions with two 'principal Resident Associations and the local Chamber of Commerce'.<sup>81</sup> Ray Sewell of Raymond Sewell Chartered Surveyors, who were working on behalf of Marks and Spencer to assist with the planning application process, also compiled a dossier of press cuttings and letters from locals. In a company news bulletin in July 1989 it was stated that the proposed store 'will be sympathetic to the immediate environment with landscaping and screening by trees'.<sup>82</sup> It was also emphasised by Marks and Spencer that 'the existing character of the High Street will be retained without resorting to wholesale demolition of existing

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<sup>81</sup> MSCA, *Rickmansworth Store*, S392/27/19, 'news from Marks and Spencer Rickmansworth', Public Affairs Group (July, 1989).

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

properties'.<sup>83</sup> Notwithstanding such assurances from the company the scheme did in fact involve the demolition of a number of the existing buildings, although this was not an objection raised by those against the project; the buildings themselves were not considered to be of significant value. However, some questioned whether the proposed development would in fact be sensitive to the existing environment. Richard Myers, the Director of Environmental Services at Three Rivers District Council, stated in November 1990, whilst considering the application, that in his view 'there should be a greater recognition of the character and architectural detail of existing buildings in the locality'.<sup>84</sup> Such a sentiment was also expressed by other organisations. The Herts Building Preservation Trust also became involved in the application and a number of meetings occurred between all parties in which amendments to the design were suggested and were subsequently incorporated. It was clear that the store design was very much the result of negotiation. Myers similarly stipulated that the Marks and Spencer scheme 'should be supported by professional landscape advice'.<sup>85</sup> This suggests that the environmental quality of the scheme was deemed by the council to be sufficiently significant as to require the input of experts. The environment was no longer an ad hoc and amateurish consideration, but a key feature of planning applications.

Nevertheless, despite the importance given to the environmental aspects of the Rickmansworth scheme by planners, popular opinion was more concerned with the costs of shopping at Marks and Spencer. Although the company tried to appease local opinion regarding the proposed development, a number of individuals were vocal in their disdain for the project. For some this was a question of the suitability of Marks and Spencer itself to meet the needs of the local people. Mr. Colin Eastman, a member of the Rickmansworth and District Residents' Association Committee highlighted in the *Watford Observer* in 1989 that the cost of shopping at Marks and Spencer was significantly more when compared like for like to other food retailers. Eastman proclaimed, 'Marks and Spencer have never been in the market to supply the daily need of the average family'.<sup>86</sup> Such a supposition was reiterated by other locals. Elaine Marks, a single parent from a low income family wrote to the *Watford Observer* stating that whilst 'Marks and Spencer

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Three Rivers District Council, 8/731/90, *Planning Document - Retail food store and associated car parking*, correspondence from Richard Myers Director of Environmental Services, to Messrs Debenham, Tewson & Chinnocks, 'Retail Store for Marks and Spencer, High Street, Rickmansworth' (27 November 1990).

<sup>85</sup> Three Rivers District Council, 8/731/90, *Planning Document - Retail food store and associated car parking*, correspondence from Richard Myers Director of Environmental Services, to Messrs Debenham, Tewson & Chinnocks, 'Marks and Spencer Store, High Street, Rickmansworth, Herts.' (6 December 1990).

<sup>86</sup> MSCA, *Rickmansworth Store*, S392/27/18, Mr Colin Eastman - Rickmansworth and District Residents Association Committee, 'Scuttle Marks' plan for the town's sake', *Watford Observer* (22 September 1989) [n.p].



sell many attractive items...they simply do not offer the basic range of food items'; Marks believed that 'their prices would be beyond the majority of people in Rickmansworth'.<sup>87</sup> Despite Marks and Spencer's efforts to cultivate its image as a convenience food retailer, this did not translate into the minds of consumers. Moreover, in response to claims that the Marks and Spencer development would visually contribute to the local environment, Councillor Richard Struck (a Democrat on the Three Rivers Council) lamented, 'what on earth is the use of the "better environmental and aesthetic features" ...if it does not meet the basic needs of the residents of Rickmansworth...'<sup>88</sup> The inference was clear, the environmental aspects of the design were secondary in the eyes of some to the economic implications of the store to the household economy. The latter had a direct impact on the standard of living of local residents whereas the environment remained a more peripheral consideration. In this regard Marks and Spencer appeared out-of-step with popular attitudes. A local resident in correspondence with the company noted, 'your presentation laid great stress on the environmental aspect'.<sup>89</sup> Although this was key to garnering greater planning support for the project, it seemed that popular opinion was diverse and the environmental aesthetic of the proposal was far from their primary concern.

This was not to say that the residents were not conscious and mindful of the environmental impact of the proposed scheme. There was an effort to gauge popular opinion about the new traffic system plans for Rickmansworth, in connection with the planning application, in a survey carried out by a local residents' association. As mentioned in Chapter Four, two hundred individuals were canvassed and 'a massive 85 per cent said they preferred the High Street minus the traffic, noise and fumes'.<sup>90</sup> The environmental impact was more immediate and it required no sacrifice on the part of individuals to alter it. If greater environmental stewardship was deemed to come at the expense of something else, for example more expensive products, individuals were less likely to value the environmental considerations. If however, the added environmental benefits were deemed to hold no immediate economic drawbacks, as in the case of the traffic system, popular opinion was much more enthusiastic. This important

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<sup>87</sup> MSCA, *Rickmansworth Store*, S392/27/20, document compiled by Ray Sewell of Raymond Sewell Chartered Surveyors (1989), copy of an article, Elaine Marks, 'Concern over store plan', *Watford Observer* (18 August 1989) [n.p], col. 3.

<sup>88</sup> MSCA, *Rickmansworth Store*, S392/27/20, document compiled by Ray Sewell of Raymond Sewell Chartered Surveyors (1989), copy of an article, Councillor Richard Struck, 'Meeting the needs of the residents', *Watford Observer* (11 August 1989) [n.p], col. 1.

<sup>89</sup> MSCA, *Rickmansworth Store*, S392/27/20, document compiled by Ray Sewell of Raymond Sewell Chartered Surveyors (1989), correspondence from Mrs P. A. M. Cooper (resident of Rickmansworth), to Mr Pennington Marks and Spencer plc (26 July 1989), p. 1.

<sup>90</sup> MSCA, S392/27/20, Councillor Martin Trevett, 'Not even a vote was asked for' [n.p], col. 3.

differentiation was central to understanding the dynamic between society and the environment at this time and the continued compromise that had to be sought. Despite popular misgivings regarding the scheme, the council voted to grant planning approval to Marks and Spencer in February 1991. The objections raised by locals were not land use planning issues and as such were not central to the council's planning considerations. The existing site housed a number of commercial properties and as such Marks and Spencer's proposal for the site was not too far removed from its existing land use designation. The fact that the site was in a designated conservation area appeared to be a peripheral consideration as it was barely referenced in the final planning report, or in the correspondence and press material; this was in marked contrast to the company's Twickenham proposal.

In 1990 Marks and Spencer put forward a proposal to open a neighbourhood food store in Twickenham. The scheme was to consist of a food store, a YMCA community centre, seventeen small flats, an underground car park consisting of 78 spaces, a series of public conveniences and a public open space, all to be funded by Marks and Spencer.<sup>91</sup> The site was on the River Thames Embankment and inside Twickenham Riverside Conservation Area. The protected status of the Twickenham site was a central and defining issue and a fundamental reason as to why the scheme was rejected by the Department of the Environment in 1991, following a national enquiry. The Marks and Spencer proposal was backed by the council and in the inspector's report following the planning enquiry the council stated that they 'would have been minded to approve the proposal if it had been free to make a decision'.<sup>92</sup> The council and Marks and Spencer drew attention to the fact that the site had remained unused for a number of years as the public swimming pool on the site had been closed for some time. Moreover, the council emphasised the fact that four separate schemes had been considered for the site but, after consideration and efforts to canvas popular opinion, it was deemed that Marks and Spencer's proposal offered the most to the site. Both the council and the retailer asserted that the existing site 'was sad, tired and neglected, and detrimental to the conservation area'.<sup>93</sup> Having acknowledged that the site was a 'highly sensitive location' they argued that 'the existing buildings had little architectural value' and as such they proclaimed, 'the development would bring about major improvements to the physical fabric and environment of this part of the town'.<sup>94</sup> Marks and Spencer and the council were keen to

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<sup>91</sup> London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, 90/1213, Stephen Marks, *Inspector's Report: Twickenham Swimming Pool, The Embankment, Twickenham Application by Marks and Spencer PLC* (1991), p. 1.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

present the scheme as an improvement, rather than a detraction from the local environment.

The company and the council were not the only ones in favour. The local Chamber of Commerce also came out in support of the development. They openly stated within the inspector's report that 'the Chamber represented four hundred businesses and tradesmen in the area; its committee and the majority of members were wholeheartedly in favour of the scheme'.<sup>95</sup> Their support may have been due to the fact that Twickenham at this time lacked the presence of large multiple retailers within the high-street. Consequently, the commercial boost which a Marks and Spencer development was expected to have on the retailing atmosphere in Twickenham would have appealed to local businesses. Subsequently, there was arguably a vested interest in the chamber's support for the development. Moreover, the council themselves were criticised for having a dual interest in the application as they acted as both planner and landowner. Whilst the council refused to divulge the details of the financial arrangements, it was clear that they were well placed to benefit financially from selling the land to Marks and Spencer. Consequently, the support proffered by the council was seen by some to be highly subjective and as such its ability to objectively rule on the planning issues at hand was called into question. This, coupled with the location of the site on the embankment, led to ardent calls for the Secretary of State for the Environment to call the planning application in.

Secretary of State Chris Patten subsequently called in the application on the grounds that it was of 'national importance' in November 1990, under Section 77 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.<sup>96</sup> The ensuing enquiry was held in February 1991. During the course of the inspector's investigation a number of issues were raised which illustrated opposition towards the scheme. The site was designated for leisure, as opposed to commercial, use and many perceived the potential change of land use as counter to the community's best interests, as well as environmentally damaging. In addition, the development deviated from the key tenets of the council's own statutory plan which was still deemed to be an active and well thought out planning guideline for the area. However, the issue which appeared to generate the greatest condemnation of the proposed scheme was its place on the embankment, within a conservation area. A number of locals claimed that whilst they would welcome the arrival of Marks and Spencer into the area, they were steadfastly opposed to the retailer developing on this site due to its environmental significance. One Twickenham resident wrote to the *Richmond and Twickenham Times* lambasting the scheme as 'a cynical and short sighted project that takes no account whatsoever either of wider planning

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<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

implications...or of the council's own promises to protect and enhance the environment'.<sup>97</sup> There was a clear perception that, despite Marks and Spencer's and the council's protestations to the contrary, the scheme was environmentally damaging and that this was a key concern for local residents. The site was deemed to be of 'exceptional environmental importance' and 'an area of greatest visual interest' by the Eel Pie Island Association Planning Sub-Committee (EPIA).<sup>98</sup> It was suggested by the council that the EPIA had a vested interest in the refusal of the scheme due to the island's proximity to the site and the fact that residents of the island who enjoyed free parking provision would lose this if the site were to be developed. Nevertheless, the EPIA were not alone in emphasising the environmental quality of the area. Professor Sir John Hale, who was well known in the local area and active in environmental issues, also contended that 'the site was part of the riverscape and river frontage, not part of the town centre waiting to be tied into it by commercial development'.<sup>99</sup> Hale's observation spoke to fears regarding urban sprawl at this time and a growing desire to protect areas that were perceived to be unspoiled by the demands of urban living. Whilst in this instance the site itself already contained an open air public bath, this was a far cry for many from the commercial imposition of a food store. It was this perceived overdevelopment of the site which residents sought to resist. There was also a desire to maintain a degree of separation between the commercial locus of the Twickenham high-street and the river bank itself. Many thought that rather than achieve this the Marks and Spencer development would bring the high-street onto the doorstep of the river and thus weaken its isolated and separate identity as an area of environmental value.

The overall design of the proposed Twickenham store was deemed unsatisfactory. This was a recurring complaint throughout the enquiry and within the press material concerning the application. The Borough of Twickenham Local History Society described it as 'a development of inappropriate and mediocre design of a scale too large towards the river' and 'not suitably landscaped into the area'.<sup>100</sup> Such a sentiment was echoed by the Strawberry Hill Residents' Association who were canvassed during the enquiry; the Association lamented that 'the style of architecture was uninspiring and merely adequate' and failed to pick 'up any of the many clues about the quality, character or history of the riverfront'.<sup>101</sup> Thus, the physical attributes of the proposed store in Twickenham received considerable attention. This was arguably due

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<sup>97</sup> MSCA, *Proposed Twickenham Store*, S392/35/7, copy of letters from *Richmond and Twickenham Times*, letter from Sheila Hale, Twickenham (Friday 26 October 1990), col. 1.

<sup>98</sup> London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, 90/1213, Marks, *Inspector's Report*, p. 26.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

to the perceived gravitas of the environment in which it was intended to be placed. Whilst in the case of Rickmansworth a process of negotiation occurred between outside groups and Marks and Spencer with respect of the final store design, it seems that no such dialogue was present in Twickenham. It would appear that the problems with the latter scheme were considered to be too fundamental to be rectified by ad hoc changes. The inspector presiding over the enquiry stated in his concluding remarks that he 'saw the design as boring, poorly related in its parts, alien to its situation and quite unacceptable in this important location'.<sup>102</sup> He further acknowledged that in his view the scheme would 'have a...seriously harmful effect on the character and appearance of the conservation area'.<sup>103</sup> It was primarily on the basis of these two observations that the inspector deemed it necessary to refuse planning permission. He concluded that the environmental concerns engendered by the application far outweighed the potential benefits of the Marks and Spencer scheme.

The Twickenham refusal illustrated the limits put on commercial advancement when the environmental cost was deemed to be too great. In addition, it validated the importance of the local environment, albeit one which was deemed to have national significance. The proposal and subsequent enquiry also displayed the desire of a variety of local and national entities, as well as individuals, to become actively engaged with the environment and its protection. As was emphasised by the Rickmansworth case, this was still very much a fickle endeavour. However, both the Rickmansworth and the Twickenham store proposals illustrated that the environment was a component part of the national and local planning agenda and in many respects actively shaped Marks and Spencer's development efforts.

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The chapter has explored the ways in which Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury's store developments were influenced by wider concerns for the environment and a resurgent conservation agenda. Marks and Spencer's and Sainsbury's store developments were undoubtedly influenced by an ad hoc negotiation of local and national interests and landscapes. Retail stores were increasingly viewed with a more critical eye in relation to their impact on the environmental aesthetic of local areas, as local and national planning departments became more receptive to the need to conserve the architectural and environmental qualities of an area.

Local interest groups similarly weighed in on the design and placement of retail stores as the planning process facilitated discussion and debate regarding the character of the urban environment. This was not simply imposed upon retailers, as the

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

collaborative approach adopted by Marks and Spencer in relation to its Yeovil store development and its Rickmansworth proposal highlighted; a pragmatic relationship between conservation interests and commercial retailers was increasingly evident. Moreover, retail stores were a physical brand statement which, whilst particular to each individual retailer, showed an appreciation of changing tastes and attitudes. Indeed, to cater to the architectural and environmental characteristics of an area was to indicate a responsive and environmentally aware commercial image.

Marks and Spencer's planning proposals in Rickmansworth and Twickenham illustrated the extent to which store development was at times a contested and far from straightforward process. Local attitudes towards conservation were often inconsistent and influenced by a variety of concerns, not least the economic impact of a proposed scheme on the local area and, for the consumer, on the purse strings. In addition, retail developments by their very nature were not always the answer to a conservationist's prayers. Stores were a clear commercial footprint on the urban landscape, even if their design was often mediated through a variety of channels. Nevertheless, it was evident that conservation and retailing could cohabit within the urban environment to achieve commercial and environmental benefits. Retailers themselves were far from committed conservationists. However, the pragmatism required of retailers to function within a rapidly changing urban landscape ensured that conservation was a force which could not be ignored.

## Chapter Seven

### Commercial Efforts to Control Retail Environments

The environmental aesthetic increasingly began to be seen by retailers as an essential component of the shopping experience, both in terms of the external surroundings of the retail store and the internal conditions of modern shopping spaces. There existed an overall desire for greater environmental control on the part of retailers, fostered by a more pronounced awareness of the value of the environment to the prosperity and image of central shopping areas and those retailers who operated within them. The impact of greater car ownership precipitated efforts to alleviate the new and growing pressures of traffic congestion. Pedestrianisation schemes were proposed as the much needed answer to the questions posed by increased car use. Furthermore, the growth of TCM schemes illustrated the increasingly holistic attitude taken by certain retailers to the immediate environments in which their stores operated. Commercial efforts to exert greater control on external environments were similarly realised within internal consuming spaces. The growth in controlled indoor shopping centres which utilised nature through water features, natural lighting and plant designs, juxtaposed with the increased use of technology in stores designed to enhance the shopping “experience”, illustrated the complex and seemingly contradictory interaction of retailing and the environment.

Academic attention regarding TCM has addressed the activities, configuration and funding of schemes, and the role played by retailers in advancing the TCM agenda.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, pedestrianisation schemes have been explored in relation to their impact on town centres, although this has often taken the form of geographical case studies, or as an extension of TCM analysis.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, there has been academic interest in the impact

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<sup>1</sup> See Gary Warnaby, Andrew Alexander and Dominic Medway, ‘Town centre management in the UK: A review, synthesis and research agenda’, *The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research*, 8:1 (January, 1998), 13-31; Gary Warnaby, David Bennison and Barry J. Davies, ‘Marketing Town Centres: Retailing and Town Centre Management’, *Local Economy*, 20:2 (May, 2005), 183-204; D. Medway, A. Alexander, D. Bennison and G. Warnaby, ‘Retailers’ financial support for town centre management’, *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, 27:6 (1999), 246-255; D. Medway, G. Warnaby, D. Bennison and A. Alexander, ‘Reasons for retailers’ involvement in town centre management’, *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 28:8 (2000), 368-378. Marks and Spencer has featured prominently in the above studies due to its significant support of TCM schemes.

<sup>2</sup> Tim Whitehead, David Simmonds and John Preston, ‘The effect of urban quality improvements on economic activity’, *Journal of Environmental Management*, 80 (2006), 1-12; Graham Parkhurst, ‘Regulating cars and buses in cities: the case of pedestrianisation in Oxford’, *Economic Affairs* (June, 2003), 16-21; Jones and Hillier, ‘Changing the balance - the “ins and outs” of retail development’, pp. 121-122.

of store environments on consumer behaviour.<sup>3</sup> Pedestrianisation, TCM and the attention afforded internal store environments by retailers, points to an awareness of the importance of environmental quality to retail operations. Such developments and initiatives are particularly significant in light of the wider concerns surrounding the environment at this time. However, this connection has yet to be explored in the academic literature. Consequently, the present chapter seeks to address pedestrianisation schemes, TCM initiatives and the changes in retail store environments at this time and what they highlighted about the relationship between commercial retailing and the environment. They were undoubtedly commercial responses to the changing urban landscape and the shifting nature of retail competition at this time. However, they were also understood and promoted by retailers in relation to concerns over environmental quality in a variety of ways. Despite a growing popular and commercial clamour to be sensitive to the environment at this time, it was evident that this did not always exhibit itself in the form of protection. There were increasing attempts made by retailers to control the environments with which they and their consumers were engaged on a day-to-day basis.

As such the chapter addresses the involvement of Marks and Spencer and other retailers in the promotion and support of pedestrianisation and TCM schemes. It will then discuss Marks and Spencer's efforts to modernise its store environments by utilising escalators and air conditioning to create a modified store environment. The chapter's assessment of these retail activities provides an important insight into not only the needs and demands of commercial retailing, but also the ever present tension between modern society and the environment. A retailer's quest to provide greater levels of comfort and convenience was arguably borne of a desire to convey an image of modernity and progress which was equally increasingly defined by an awareness of, and a concern for, the natural environment. As noted in the thesis introduction and Chapter One, increased living standards and levels of affluence gave rise to a shifting appreciation of the environment. This resulted in increased efforts to protect it even as society seemed to more readily consume it. This chapter seeks to highlight the inherent tension amid society's concern for the environment and its desire to achieve new levels of comfort and convenience. Nowhere is this tension between the environment and the demands of modern society more evident than in the ever evolving operations of retailers.

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<sup>3</sup> Kristina Bäckström and Ulf Johansson, 'Creating and Consuming experiences in retail store environments: comparing retailer and consumer perspectives', *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 13 (2006), 417-430; Robert J. Donovan, John R. Rossiter, Gilian Marcolyn and Andrew Nesdale, 'Store Atmosphere and Purchasing Behaviour', *Journal of Retailing*, 70:3 (1994), 283-294; Doreen Chze Lin Thang, Benjamin Lin Boon Tan, 'Linking consumer perception to preference of retail stores: an empirical assessment of the multi-attributes of store image', *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 10 (2003), 193-200.



### **Pedestrianisation**

The competitive threat of out-of-town retailing, the growth in car use and the importance of the environment to the consuming process, did much to alter the physical landscape and the commercial approach to retailing in town centres. It was also clear that retailers played a central and innovative role in this process of change. The most notable alteration wrought on the urban landscape of central trading areas was the advent of pedestrianisation. Initially it had been a scheme which retailers had feared due to the entrenched belief that if motorists were prevented from having direct access to stores profits would suffer. However, as the impact of the motor car became an ever greater blight on the urban landscape, retailers were forced to readdress their earlier reluctance. The use of pedestrianisation schemes proliferated in the 1960s as the benefits of such initiatives were gradually understood and realised. Guy noted in 1994 that pedestrianisation brought 'major environmental benefits at relatively little cost' and 'retail turnover improves after pedestrianisation, despite retailers' common fears that it will inhibit trade'.<sup>4</sup> There were clear commercial advantages to removing vehicles from central shopping areas, as well as the subsequent environmental benefits of reduced emissions and noise pollutants. Pedestrianisation schemes attested to the growing realisation that the environmental quality of an area was wedded to its economic vitality. The promotion of such schemes by retailers was the result of a desire to improve and protect their own commercial stake in the urban environment.

Marks and Spencer made a number of references to the benefits of pedestrianisation. In the company's 1973 annual report it highlighted that 'many of the traffic-free precincts have been successful and, properly managed, they provide safe, clean and attractive shopping centres'.<sup>5</sup> The company reiterated such sentiments almost word for word in its 1987 annual report, indicating the longevity of Marks and Spencer's belief in the value of traffic free shopping areas. Indeed, even as the company called for greater provision and accommodation of the motor car within town and city centres, it promoted schemes which distanced the shopping experience from the intrusion of increased vehicle use; this is particularly true in relation to comparison goods retailing, for which the high street remained a dominant and much frequented location. Retailers and consumers seemingly wanted the advantages provided by greater car use whilst wishing to distance themselves from the environmental consequences that threatened the visual aesthetic of the consuming process. Pedestrianisation schemes provided just such a compromise by reconfiguring central urban areas and consequently altering society's use of the environment. Whilst there was a greater clamour for environmental

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<sup>4</sup> Guy, *The Retail Development Process*, p. 110.

<sup>5</sup> MSCA, CR/D/48, 'Annual Report' (1973), p. 8.

quality and stewardship this remained heavily negotiated by the demands and predilections of modern society.

Marks and Spencer was not the only retailer to outline the benefits of vehicle-free zones. D. M. Gransby who worked within the Asda organisation equally proclaimed their value in 1988. He stated:

High levels of vehicle penetration into the centre are both unnecessary and environmentally undesirable. Pedestrianisation is very important both in terms of customer movement and the ambience of the centre, particularly in areas where the historic fabric of the centre forms an important backdrop to shopping.<sup>6</sup>

Gransby made a clear connection between the environment and shopping. Indeed, the environment was given greater resonance and importance because of its link to shopping, rather than as a going concern in its own right. This highlighted the degree to which the traditional commercial concerns of retailers very much governed their acceptance of, or actions towards, the environment. Asda was relatively new to the UK food sector at this time and its presence on the high-street was limited due to the company's preference for decentralised stores akin to the American model of its parent company, Walmart. Gransby's apparent efforts to promote pedestrianisation as a means of improving the competitive edge of high-streets was to some degree an effort to nullify the hostility towards out-of-town developments. The motivation behind Gransby's promotion of pedestrianisation was arguably economic, yet the means of securing commercial success were environmental. A free-flowing, traffic-free environment complimented to a much greater degree the notion of shopping as a form of leisure to be enjoyed and anticipated rather than tolerated and endured. The value of pedestrianisation schemes was in cultivating a consumer haven which isolated individuals from the more visible environmental consequences of modern living. Indeed, retailers often made explicit reference to the environmental improvements which such initiatives brought to central areas. There was an awareness at the time not only of the importance of the environment, but also in the value of being seen to acknowledge it. Gransby's specific reference to the 'historic fabric' of centres chimed directly with calls for greater awareness and care for the established heritage of town and city centres made by conservationists and planners. It also emphasised the desire on the part of retailers to be seen to be responsive and sensitive to wider attitudes and trends. Nevertheless, the environment in question was not defined as a national or global issue but a local concern. Pedestrianisation provided a remedy for local environments which increasingly appeared to be under siege from increased car use and a reduction in environmental quality. Indeed, despite the proliferation of more wide ranging

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<sup>6</sup> D. M. Gransby, 'The Coexistence of High Street and Out-of-Town Retailing from a Retailing Perspective', *The Geographical Journal*, 154:1 (March, 1988), 13-16 (p. 15).

environmental concern by the late eighties and early nineties, the day-to-day environments which individuals and retailers inhabited remained central.

The desire to appear sensitive to local environments was evident in Marks and Spencer's work in Bath. The city was steeped in history and architectural heritage and conservationists and locals were keen to retain the area's reputation and visual aesthetic, as evidenced by Sainsbury's Green Park Station development. Marks and Spencer showed an acute awareness of this climate of opinion when promoting a pedestrianisation scheme in the area. Bristol's *Western Daily Press* reported in 1972 that, 'the praises of pedestrian shopping precincts were sung to conservation-conscious Bath citizens by Marks and Spencer's...Sir Marcus Sieff last night'.<sup>7</sup> Sieff spoke at the inaugural dinner of the Western Counties Association of Chambers of Commerce. He proclaimed:

Bath is one of our most beautiful cities and I am sure that I do not have to suggest to anyone the importance in retaining in Bath's redevelopment the lovely features which have made this city world famous.<sup>8</sup>

Sieff's remarks were made to an audience filled predominantly of business men from the local area and in his effort to gain momentum and support for pedestrianisation he spoke not to the explicit commercial benefits of such a scheme but rather implied that the needs of business would be served by retaining Bath's highly valued visual aesthetic and character. Sieff's comments regarding the visual environment further illustrated that it was no longer a topic which was deemed to be the sole preserve of conservation groups and environmental organisations, but also now a credible business concern. Sieff's decision to directly refer to the environmental significance of the scheme, rather than the economic incentives, was noteworthy. It highlighted the belief that a pleasant and hospitable environment could ensure the continued health and vibrancy of central shopping areas, as well as an awareness of the centrality of Bath's heritage to its continued prosperity. Sieff further remarked that such 'developments lead to better use of available resources and prevent wastage of existing assets'.<sup>9</sup> Sieff, in his efforts to secure the commercial benefits of pedestrianisation within Bath, verbally engaged with the issue of resource conservation and environmental stewardship. As the availability of suitable sites in central locations and the continued appeal of such areas as primary shopping locations appeared to be under threat from increased out-of-town development by the late 1980s, the urban environment was increasingly a resource which had to be

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<sup>7</sup> MSCA, *Copy of a speech by Marcus Sieff given at the Western Counties Association*, CR/B/4/1/31, copy of article, 'Shape of things...for Bath of future', *Western Daily Press* (10 March 1972) [n.p].

<sup>8</sup> MSCA, CR/B/4/1/31, 'At the Inaugural Dinner of the Western Counties Association of Chambers of Commerce', p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

consciously negotiated by commercial interests. Concern for environmental quality actually inspired greater efforts to control urban areas on the part of retailers. The promotion and proliferation of pedestrianisation schemes emphasised this changing reality.

Retailers not only promoted the implementation of pedestrianisation schemes but also contributed funds in an effort to bring such initiatives to fruition. In 1972 the *Yorkshire Evening Post* reported on a project to pedestrianise the city centre of Leeds; the newspaper referred to it as the 'most extensive...of its kind in Western Europe'.<sup>10</sup> The scheme was funded and carried out by the joint efforts of seven interested parties, four of which were retailers operating in the area (Marks and Spencer, The Burton Group, H. Samuel Ltd. and C&A Modes). The primary motivation behind such support was largely economic as, as previously stated, there were proven benefits to pedestrianisation in central shopping areas. Nevertheless, the commercial advantage was largely derived from environmental improvement; whilst retailers were driven by economic stimulus this was increasingly intertwined with environmental factors. The ambience and characteristics of a successful shopping environment could no longer be seen as a secondary consideration, but were rather a central component of a retailer's operation. The propensity for retailers to fund pedestrianisation initiatives further confirmed the elevated status of the shopping environment in the matrix of commercial retailing priorities at this time.

### **Town Centre Management Schemes**

In an effort to enhance the appeal of town centres in light of the changing dynamics wrought by out-of-town developments and changing consumer demands, retailers sought greater environmental control. Town centres were increasingly perceived as under threat. This climate of concern was further strengthened by the Brixton riots (previously discussed in Chapter Four) and the wave of violence which erupted in a number of areas across England in 1981, as social and economic decline and grievance appeared to lay its mark on the physical character of urban areas; a sense of instability and decline seemed to permeate. The desire on the part of retailers and other local actors to address the commercial impact of such wider trends was evident in the concept of TCM. It was defined by Wells as 'a comprehensive response to competitive pressures, which involves development, management and promotion of both public and private areas within town centres'.<sup>11</sup> Such schemes began to gain traction in

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<sup>10</sup> MSCA, *Copy of a speech by Marcus Sieff given at the Western Counties Association*, CR/B/4/1/31, copy of article, 'Shops precinct on the move', *Yorkshire Evening Post* (13 January 1972) [n.p].

<sup>11</sup> Cited in Stephen J Page and Rachel Hardyman, 'Place marketing and town centre management: A new tool for urban revitalisation', *Cities*, 13:3 (1996), 153-164 (p. 154).

the 1980s, and particularly the 1990s. They were retailing's response to the comfort and control offered by the internal environments of the modern indoor shopping centre. TCM was envisioned to bring these qualities to town centres as it was increasingly realised that to maintain a competitive retail environment retailers had to offer more than functionality. High street retailers needed to rival the shopping "experience" offered by new centres as modern shopping became as much about the shopping "environment" as the products on sale.

The concept of TCM was first referred to at a 1980 conference entitled, *Town Centres of the Future* organised by the Unit for Retail Planning Information (URPI). A 'retail-led definition' emerged from this conference (crafted by P. H. Spriddell who was Director of Estates Building and Store Operations at Marks and Spencer at the time), which conceived of TCM as a means of improving the standard of shopping in town centres.<sup>12</sup> Spriddell made reference to the need for new approaches again in 1982 at the annual Town and Country Planning Summer School. Spriddell contended that there must be greater 'community awareness and involvement with social problems, traffic problems, environment problems like cleaning, and customer safety'.<sup>13</sup> His remarks confirmed the interwoven nature of social, economic and environmental concerns. Moreover, Spriddell's comments and presence at such events again underlined Marks and Spencer's wider influence and role, as well as the extent to which companies sought to engage with private and public sector audiences in an effort to further ensure the optimisation of commercial operating environments. TCM schemes were conditioned by a fundamental belief in the need for increased co-operation amongst local actors. The pressure for these schemes did not solely come from retailers, although the initial impetus given to such ideas did originate from this sector. The Department of the Environment noted in 1992 that, 'Chambers of Commerce together with local interest groups and politicians have gradually come around to thinking that a coordinated approach to improving the health of the High Street is the best way forward'.<sup>14</sup> There were a variety of actors that both acknowledged the need for some form of management and also sought to promote schemes which provided this. Nevertheless, the implementation of TCM was 'slow and piecemeal'.<sup>15</sup> The Department of the Environment observed in 1992 that what seemed 'like a good idea has, in practice, been applied in very few locations'.<sup>16</sup> Such a supposition was to some extent borne out in the initial number of schemes actually established. Despite the idea having been suggested as

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Spriddell, 'Retailing in our cities - the role and the challenge', *The Planner, TCPSS, Report of Proceedings*, 69 (1983), 71-74 (p. 74).

<sup>14</sup> *The Effects of Major Out of Town Retail Development*, p. 130.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

early as 1980, the first Town Centre Manager was not appointed until 1987.<sup>17</sup> By 1990 there were still only seven such schemes in operation.<sup>18</sup> As noted by the Department of the Environment, 'this was still a small number set against the enormous challenge posed by so many local high streets'.<sup>19</sup> However, the number of TCM Schemes did increase, with over fifty town or city centre managers appointed by 1993. According to a study undertaken in 1996 there were a total of 182 town centre managers in post in the UK.<sup>20</sup> By 1999 the Association of Town Centre Management (ATCM) reported 230 schemes in operation.<sup>21</sup>

The increase in TCM schemes was reliant on a variety of factors, not least the growth in out-of-town development in the late eighties and early nineties. In addition the Government's decision to acknowledge, and thus validate, the existence of TCM Schemes in PPG6 in 1988 was also significant. Nevertheless, it was clear that input from retailers was fundamental to the advancement of TCM. The funding of such schemes was often dependent on the interest and support of the private sector and this invariably dictated the number of schemes established and where. Guy stated in 1994, TCM 'success to date appears to have been modest, partly because the level of financial participation by the private sector has been disappointing'.<sup>22</sup> The reluctance on the part of many in the private sector to actively cultivate and provide financially for such schemes undoubtedly hindered the proliferation of TCM as a means of economic and environmental improvement. Whilst public sector support was provided by local government, retailers dominated private sector contributions. As observed by Medway et al. 'other private sector actors, particularly property owners and developers, still appear to play a comparatively minor role'.<sup>23</sup> However, there were a number of key commercial actors which played a notable role in promoting and funding such schemes. Both Marks and Spencer and Boots contributed funds and human resources in an effort to foster the spread of TCM. The centrality of these two retailers in strengthening the TCM agenda was observed in a 1999 study addressing the financial support given to TCM Schemes. The research identified that out of thirty-nine companies found to contribute financially, the greatest support came from five of the seven retailers identified. These five retailers (Marks and Spencer, Boots, Sainsbury's, the Burton Group and W.H. Smith) were categorised as having 'a major, corporate level commitment to TCM'.<sup>24</sup> It

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<sup>17</sup> Warnaby et al., 'Town centre management in the UK', p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> *The Effects of Major Out of Town Retail Development*, p. 132.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>20</sup> Warnaby et al., 'Town centre management in the UK', p. 16.

<sup>21</sup> Medway et al., 'Reasons for retailers' involvement in town centre management', p. 368.

<sup>22</sup> Guy, *The Retail Development Process*, p. 112.

<sup>23</sup> Medway et al., 'Reasons for retailers' involvement in town centre management', p. 368.

<sup>24</sup> Medway et al., 'Retailers' financial support for town centre management', p. 248.

was noted that they were 'among the top five contributors in ten or more of the respondent schemes'.<sup>25</sup> The data when broken down further highlighted that Boots and Marks and Spencer contributed to '56 and 49 [out of 82] of the schemes respectively, and were the largest contributors in about half' of those.<sup>26</sup> Such a finding emphasised the degree to which TCM in a number of cases was heavily dependent on a small group of retailers who provided the majority of the funding. Support for such schemes was far from guaranteed or widespread and it appeared to be governed by the ethos and interests of individual organisations and companies.

Marks and Spencer made continued references to the state of town centres and the need for greater co-operation. Marcus Sieff, only a year after Spriddell's influential involvement in spearheading the concept of TCM at the URPI workshop, made much of the need for wider efforts to improve links between stores and their local environments. In a Chairman's address to a meeting of store managers, Sieff asserted that 'it is important for local management to become involved with the environment of the store'.<sup>27</sup> Such a pronouncement echoed the emerging sentiments regarding notions of TCM at this time. Furthermore, the seeming need for such a renewed focus stemmed from Sieff's own experiences of Marks and Spencer stores; Sieff reported that conditions outside some stores 'have been very bad'.<sup>28</sup> Within his speech Sieff urged managers to report such conditions to local councils and outlined that it was essential that they 'obtain good service for the rates' being paid.<sup>29</sup> Managers were told to involve head office if a positive response from local councils was not forthcoming, such was the perceived importance of local conditions to the overall success of the company's retailing operation.

The importance attributed to the external environment of stores was again reiterated in Marks and Spencer's 1989 annual report. In it the company declared that it was 'particularly active in a campaign for cleaner and safer town centres'.<sup>30</sup> The claim was underpinned by the financial contributions made by Marks and Spencer to TCM schemes. Marks and Spencer's endorsement of TCM as a viable and productive way of improving town centres, became a common feature of subsequent annual reports. In 1990 the company stated:

We consider that comprehensive and co-ordinated town centre management is a key method of improving the appeal of town centres. The company has given support to a number of local authority and commercial sector initiatives and we are committed to increasing this programme.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248.

<sup>27</sup> MSCA, CR/B/4/1/195, Sieff, 'Guide notes for the Chairman's address at the Managers' meetings', p. 9.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>30</sup> MSCA, CR/D/64, 'Annual Report' (1989), p. 27.

<sup>31</sup> MSCA, CR/D/65, 'Annual Report' (1990), p. 22.

Marks and Spencer expressed similar sentiments in its 1991 report. Such a declaration clearly sought to promote the profile of TCM and the commercial need for it. The fact that Marks and Spencer felt the need to do so illustrated its own awareness that such schemes were not getting the desired level of support and attention. Marks and Spencer's continued public support of such schemes, through its annual reports, showed an effort to lead by example. The company undoubtedly held an influential position on the high-street and its propensity to see the value of such schemes had the potential to influence others to do so as well. Certainly Marks and Spencer's own view of its position within retailing, and nationally, would suggest that such references to TCM were designed with the hopes that they would encourage others to get involved. With regards Marks and Spencer's financial contributions to TCM Schemes, no specific figures have been forthcoming in the company's own records. As such it remains impossible to gauge the perceived level of importance the company attached to TCM schemes as a percentage of overall turnover. Nevertheless, the company's secondment of Marks and Spencer employees to TCM initiatives, and the involvement of personnel (namely Spriddell) at the inception of ideas surrounding TCM, indicated more than a passing commitment on the part of the retailer. Additionally the propensity, as highlighted by Medway et al., for Marks and Spencer to be involved in a number of TCM schemes and in many cases to be a primary source of funding, illustrated a notable degree of investment and conviction on the part of the company with regards the viability and validity of TCM projects.

The reasons for retail involvement in TCM initiatives were various. As previously stated, the impact of decentralised retailing was key in driving the TCM agenda forward. Retailers deemed to have a 'substantive corporate involvement in TCM' (Boots, Marks and Spencer, NatWest, Sainsbury's, Sears, W.H. Smith and the Burton Group), were asked as part of a study in 2000 the reasons behind their company's involvement; out-of-town retailing was a recurrent theme.<sup>32</sup> Anonymised within the study, one head office TCM representative explained:

There was a recognition that we had to defend our position on the high street...this meant putting time, effort and money, not only into...stores, but also into the external trading environment. So one of the main reasons for becoming involved...has been to carry through our quality in the store and translate that into the outside environment, with the belief that that in turn would help defend and sustain our profit, and in a lot of instances limit the damage that out-of-town retailing has caused.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Medway et al., 'Reasons for retailers' involvement in town centre management', p. 369.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 371.



Engagement in TCM by retailers was a reactive endeavour, highly motivated by economic considerations. The dialogue concerning TCM was borne of a desire on the part of retailers to protect their commercial interest and to ensure continued footfall in central shopping areas. Nevertheless, the development of broad management schemes which took account of the importance of the external store environment emphasised the growing realisation on the part of retailers of the centrality of the environment to commercial success. Whilst this invariably amounted to a purely aesthetic and often restrictive environmental landscape, such efforts provide an insight into the perceived relevance of the environment to the processes of consumption. This shift was not characterised by a desire to protect the environment as a goal in and of itself, as petitioned for by the wider environmental agenda. It was a more circumspect, pragmatic environmental stewardship, directly linked to continued commercial prosperity. Yet, it is this environmental concern which conveyed a more intrinsic and enduring awareness and appreciation of the environment at this time by commercial retailers. It also appeared to a certain extent to echo the underlying characteristics of popular environment concern at this time. Whilst the appetite for environmental protection was undoubtedly growing, it remained at times a gradual and ad hoc consideration based on personal circumstance and driven by material considerations.

The extent and nature of the property interests many retailers had in central areas spurred attempts to facilitate TCM Schemes. In the case of Marks and Spencer the majority of its retailing interests remained in the high-street despite its development of out-of-town stores. Additionally, the bulk of the company's retailing sites, and that of Boots, were subject to a freehold lease. As such both companies had a keen commercial interest in not only the immediate prosperity of town centres but also the long-term survival of such locations. The fact that both Marks and Spencer and Boots were among the most avid and active supporters of TCM in terms of funding and promotion, appeared to be motivated by a strategic awareness that to do nothing would incur greater cost to their commercial viability than to invest in TCM. The corporate level commitment shown by those companies that did engage in TCM schemes was not the result of legislative intervention. As noted by Medway et al., as of the year 2000 there were 'no legislative or statutory mechanisms compelling retailers (or other urban stakeholders) to contribute to and actively engage in TCM'.<sup>34</sup> Despite emphasis within various planning policy guidelines that the Government was keen to promote the 'vitality and viability' of central locations, the mechanisms for achieving this remained ad hoc and voluntary.<sup>35</sup> It appeared that the commercial imperatives behind maintaining cohesive and vibrant town centres were sufficient to drive the TCM agenda forward.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 376.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 372.

The perceived purpose and scope of TCM schemes was often characterised by a desire to promote individual town centres as sites of commercial and environmental merit. However, the allocation of funds within TCM schemes whilst highlighting this endeavour, also displayed a degree of tension between the public and private sector organisations involved. Whilst retailers were keen to see the environmental standards within a given town improve, they deemed this to be the responsibility of the local authority. Retailers were less inclined to provide money via TCM schemes for maintenance and improvement to physical infrastructure such as, street furniture, landscaping, planting and pedestrianisation. It was their collective belief that these were the remit of the public sector and were funded by local business rates. Medway et al. observed that such an outlook led many retailers to favour 'ring-fenced' payments when funding TCM Schemes, which were directed towards projects perceived to have 'a more immediate impact on attracting shoppers into the town centre'.<sup>36</sup> Whilst this attitude was to some degree evident in the language used by retailers - Sieff as mentioned above was particularly keen to ensure that Marks and Spencer was securing a fair service for the rates paid - such a supposition did not give a full impression of the efforts gone to by retailers at this time to secure town centre improvements. As previously stated, Marks and Spencer, amongst others, financed pedestrianisation schemes. The company were also involved with, and provided funding for, the Keep Britain Tidy Group who campaigned and sought to provide greater numbers of public bins to reduce the incursion of litter.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, whilst there was a clear sense that retailers considered local authorities to be responsible for environmental improvements within town centres, this was not to say that they themselves were not increasingly taking ownership of the town centre environment.

Marks and Spencer's interest in the wider town environment was illustrated by a collaborative initiative undertaken by the company in the early 1990s entitled 'Going to town is coming to town'. The project, jointly funded by Marks and Spencer, local authorities and local business groups, was designed to gauge public opinion regarding the quality of town centres, the issues which they deemed to be important and the changes that they wished to see. The exhibition toured the country and according to Marks and Spencer's report, attracted 150,000 visitors and generated 16,000 suggestion slips. The company identified:

Greater public awareness of green issues was prevalent. Many of the suggestions were both simple and inexpensive to implement. Most were felt to be simple common sense. Suggestions included: More litter bins – improved

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<sup>36</sup> Medway et al., 'Retailers' financial support for town centre management', p. 249.

<sup>37</sup> MSCA, *World in Action: Litter*, P11/5/110, 'from the North Granada Presents World in Action' [n.d.] [on DVD] [8:37].

street cleaning services and refuse collection – more trees and flowers – less pollution – more recycling bins.<sup>38</sup>

The popular response to the initiative displayed the growing importance attached to the quality of the local environment. When individuals were asked what they thought would make their town a better place, the report noted that the environment 'was the biggest single issue raised, and it was mentioned on most entries'.<sup>39</sup> This highlighted the growing attention afforded the environment as an issue upon which people were keen to see improvements. There was a clear sense of priority attached to the visual quality and overall character of local shopping areas. As highlighted by the initiative, the environment was seen as an area in which common-sense played a key role. Individuals viewed local improvements as a natural and unquestioned necessity in ensuring the overall quality of a town centre. It was arguably on this level that people felt most able to act and shape environmental outcomes and as such it was these characteristics and solutions which epitomised popular outlooks concerning the environment. The rising concern for global environmental issues did not replace local concerns, which had a more immediate and direct impact on an individual's interaction with, and appreciation of, the environment.

The joint funding of the 'Going to town is coming to town' venture which included local authority involvement, suggested that there was a degree of receptiveness in local authority circles in facilitating and responding to the perceived failings in environmental quality found in central areas. Moreover, Marks and Spencer's efforts to facilitate a dialogue between various local actors and the public not only illustrated its own interest in improving town centres, but also its sense of itself as a mediator of public opinion. The company's approach to TCM conveyed Marks and Spencer's belief in its own responsibility and role within the economic, social and aesthetic character of an area. This sense of wider responsibility and influence was arguably underpinned by the size and dominance of the company during this period, as well as its own commercial investment which necessitated the continued viability of town centre and high-street shopping. TCM emerged as a response to significant shifts in the operating environment of retailers in central areas. The schemes symbolised the increasing belief amongst retailers of a need to co-opt ownership of the external store environment and exert a greater control, as the aesthetic and environmental quality of central areas came to be seen as vital to the consuming process. The shopping environment was as much a product to be marketed and sold to consumers as the products on the shelves.

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<sup>38</sup> MSCA, *1950-1990 Estates Records, Box 3 of 3, ACC/11/461*, 'Achievement: Going to town is coming to town' (1990s) [n.p].

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* [n.p].

### Internal shopping environments

The prominence given to the environment within the processes of consumption was not limited to external spaces, but was increasingly a central consideration in cultivating the internal ambience and aesthetic of the retail store itself. Increased levels of affluence and a broader cultural shift which prioritised material acquisition and hedonistic consumption, gave rise to a greater concern for the appearance and visual quality of retail spaces. As consumers became more aspirational in their tastes and more discerning, the shopping “experience” was all the more central to attracting shoppers. This ensured that ‘style, ambience, service and reputation...became more important variables in the retail mix’.<sup>40</sup> As competition in retail provision grew and retailers had to compete for the loyalty of consumers, they increasingly began to realise the branding potential of the store environment. As Bäckström and Johansson noted in their 2006 study, this shift did not negate the significance of traditional factors such as product selection, store layout and the attitude of personnel.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, retailers increasingly sought to go beyond such traditional considerations to develop new standards by which modern retail stores were to be judged and experienced. This was undoubtedly evident in Marks and Spencer’s approach to store development. As early as 1971 the company proclaimed that ‘the public too enjoy well-designed stores with good lighting - all of which helps to make St Michael shopping a pleasant experience’.<sup>42</sup> The company made a direct link between the realisation and promotion of the St Michael brand and the environmental characteristics of its stores. The statement implied that ‘St Michael shopping’ was more than a mark of product quality but rather a shopping experience set apart from others due to the design and lighting of the store. Indeed, retail efforts to cultivate an appealing store environment have been shown to have a notable influence on the amount of time and money spent by consumers in stores.<sup>43</sup> Thus, there was commercial advantage to be derived from enhanced store environments. Marks and Spencer’s commitment to ensuring improved store environments was more fully realised through its substantial modernisation programme launched in the 1980s. According to the company’s 1986 annual report this amounted to ‘a more attractive, comfortable and convenient shopping environment’.<sup>44</sup> This, the company noted, had led to substantial sales increases in the stores which had been modernised. Within Marks and Spencer’s promotional material for its Holmbush Farm store proposal it was keen to state that ‘greater customer comfort

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<sup>40</sup> O’Brien and Harris, *Retailing: Shopping, Society, Space*, p. 109.

<sup>41</sup> Bäckström and Johansson, ‘Creating and Consuming experiences in retail store environments: comparing retailer and consumer perspectives’, p. 417.

<sup>42</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, Kean and Leach, ‘Not for M&S the lonely hypermarket’, p. 2.

<sup>43</sup> Donovan et al., ‘Store Atmosphere and Purchasing Behaviour’, p. 291.

<sup>44</sup> MSCA, CR/D/61, ‘Annual Report’ (1986), p. 8.

and convenience is ensured with the provision of wider aisles, improved displays and a relaxed environment in which to shop'.<sup>45</sup> Marks and Spencer's modernisation programme was designed to aid the company in maintaining its commercial image and profits through the enhancement of its store environment. This commercial effort for greater quality and distinction can be seen to drive interaction with environments, whether this be natural or manmade. People expected a higher environmental standard both internally and externally. Indeed, controlled, safe, sanitised environments, increasingly came to be seen as the bench mark of progress and modernisation.

The store improvement programme undertaken by Marks and Spencer saw the increasing introduction of technology within its stores, in an effort to ensure greater convenience and comfort within the shopping environment. The company made it clear in 1972 that the installation of escalators and air conditioning were a key part of its development programme. By 1974 Marks and Spencer noted that it now had ninety-one escalators in fifty stores and that fifty-five stores now had air conditioning.<sup>46</sup> With regards the latter the company stated that it made 'a direct contribution to environmental health by adding to the comfort and well-being of our customers and staff'.<sup>47</sup> Such developments appeared to contradict wider "green" aims and Marks and Spencer's own energy conservation efforts. However, the use of such technology highlighted a growing preoccupation with environments generally. Consumer demand for a controlled environment with all the latest in store conveniences was all the more evident as sales in shopping centres were growing 'at a faster rate than retail sales' generally.<sup>48</sup> The primary distinction at this time between more traditional shopping areas and indoor shopping centres was the environmental control and management offered by the latter. Marks and Spencer was not immune to the commercial allure of such retail ventures and opened a number of stores in indoor centres. The company showed a keen awareness of the nature of the appeal of such shopping destinations for the consuming public.

Marks and Spencer published an information brochure entitled 'Shopping on a new level', to coincide with the opening of its store within the MetroCentre. The brochure stated:

The light and airy shopping malls are lined with trees and bathed in natural sunlight. Fountains, flower baskets, glass lifts and rich, green foliage help to

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<sup>45</sup> MSCA, S392/29/2, 'Holmbush farm Shoreham' [n.p].

<sup>46</sup> MSCA, *Memos, minutes and relating papers regarding store developments, 1915-1988*, HO/10/2/3/6, correspondence from Mr H. B. Freeman, distributed to all areas of head office, 'Store Development' (January, 1974).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* [n.p].

<sup>48</sup> John A. Dawson and J. Dennis Lord, 'Introduction', in *Shopping Centre Development: Policies and Prospects*, ed. by John A. Dawson and J. Dennis Lord (New York: Nichols Publishing Company, 1985), pp. 1-5 (p. 2).

create a unique back drop to numerous fascinating shops which are interspersed with colourful mini market stalls, draped in pretty parasols.<sup>49</sup>

Shopping centres were marketed as providing a 'new level' of consumer experience, as implied by the brochure title, through the protection they offered from the environmental variables which beset outdoor retail areas. Retailers promoted indoor centres as sites of environmental "perfection", they contained the aesthetic appeal of the natural environment without the inconvenience of changeable weather and sprawling streets. Retailers increasingly sought to manipulate and control an individual's experience of the environment by bringing the outside in. Such an approach was far from a straightforward renunciation of the natural environment. As was evident from the brochure produced by Marks and Spencer, there was an entrenched connection between the internal aesthetic of shopping centres and the continued use of nature. It was this use of natural environmental features, such as trees and foliage, through which centre planners and retailers were able to convey the sense of tranquillity and luxury desired to cultivate an enhanced consuming environment. As O'Brien and Harris observed, 'water features and lavish planting schemes add to the overall ambience and aura of elegance'.<sup>50</sup> Subsequently, just as landscaping was increasingly taking on a greater importance to the overall external store aesthetic, so too did the natural environment find its place and prominence within the controlled shopping centre.

The development of internal shopping environments which incorporated an ever growing use of technology and cultivated a manufactured substitute for the external environment, appeared on the surface to contradict the wider trends in environmental concern which characterised the period. Indeed, the control and comfort afforded consumers in stores and shopping centres invariably came at an environmental cost. Nevertheless, such developments were not so far removed from wider trends as the materialism on display in retail spaces at this time was as much a product of mass popular awareness of the environment as the growth in environmental concern - they were two sides of the same coin. Whilst both concerns exhibited themselves in different ways, they both spoke to society's changing interaction with the natural environment. Popular opinion ran the gamut of environmental preoccupation at this time, from self-involved "nimbyism", to paid up active members of Greenpeace. However, people's predilection for manmade aesthetics and materialistic consumption, which equally dominated the period, whilst seemingly contradictory to the very tenets of environmentalism, increasingly illustrated the complex and imperfect nature of the relationship between society and the environment. Concern for the environment was to

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<sup>49</sup> MSCA, *MetroCentre*, S392/13/1, 'Shopping on a new level', Marks and Spencer Ltd (1986) [n.p].

<sup>50</sup> O'Brien and Harris, *Retailing: Shopping, Society, Space*, p. 96.

some extent borne of a desire to project excellence and progress, to safeguard the wealth and quality of life many had come to enjoy. The headlines concerning environmental degradation and damage and the pressing question of resource sustainability, increasingly cast a shadow over such fervent desires. Just as greater environmental awareness led to efforts to control the external environment as much as protect it, so too can such a relationship be seen within the artificial realm of retail store spaces. The environment, whether natural or manmade was no longer inconsequential. Both environmental protection and environmental control were products of retail efforts to readdress its relationship with, and use of, the environment.

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This chapter has shown that TCM schemes, pedestrianisation and internal store conditions were not isolated considerations, but were developments characterised by an urban landscape that was increasingly changing. Retailers sought to influence the character of shopping areas as they realised the significance of the environment to the competitive and commercial profile of town centres, high-streets and stores. Marks and Spencer responded to the changing operating environment of town centres in the wake of growing car use and the rising threat posed by decentralised retailing, through its ardent support for pedestrianisation and TCM schemes. Both were characterised by a desire on the part of Marks and Spencer to make key changes to the environment of central shopping areas in order to better serve the commercial needs of the company. This was similarly realised in the company's store modernisation programme and in its promotion of the MetroCentre as a new consuming experience. Pedestrianisation, TCM and internal store dynamics showed the environment to be a key commercial issue, not in a straightforward way but rather mediated through material considerations. Whilst such activities ran counter to the overall ethos of the growing environmental movement, they highlighted to a much greater extent the varied and complex nature of the relationship between retailers and the environment. The pragmatic and contradictory use and manipulation of the environment to meet commercial needs echoed the inconsistency and self-interest evident within popular attitudes towards environmental issues discussed in Chapter One. Moreover, this final chapter, as those before it have, has illustrated the extent to which the relationship between retailing, the environment and resource use was a highly negotiated and constructed issue, defined as much, if not more so, by retailers and individuals on a day-to-day basis, than environmental groups and activists.

## Conclusion

The thesis' primary concern has been to address the relationship between Marks and Spencer as a mainstream retailer and the environment, the degree to which this evolved in the period covered by the thesis and the factors which influenced this. It has sought to move away from an advocacy of "greener" business models and how these can be achieved, to highlight more specifically the realities of retailer engagement with the environment.<sup>1</sup> In doing so it has emphasised the degree to which commercial considerations at various times both heightened and limited Marks and Spencer's efforts to ameliorate its impact on the environment. It has explored a wider time period than is often evident within the literature pertaining to business and the environment, which has tended to focus on the late eighties and early nineties as a period worthy of attention.<sup>2</sup> As a result of the wider time scale explored the thesis has been able to offer an historical assessment of Marks and Spencer's awareness of, and response to, the environment, resource use and the evolution of environmental concern. This has highlighted the extent to which Marks and Spencer's operations engaged with and acknowledged environmental factors before the considerable attention the latter received in the late eighties. In addition, the thesis has eschewed a traditional business history approach by placing the activities and attitudes of Marks and Spencer within a wider social and political context regarding matters of the environment. This approach has facilitated a wider appreciation of the ways in which Marks and Spencer's activities were influenced by broader trends as well as how far its response was conditioned by its own outlook and internal culture. The structure of the thesis has been devised around the key policies contained within Marks and Spencer's environment policy: CFCs, packaging and recycling (Chapter One), energy conservation efforts (Chapters Two and Three), store placement (Chapters Four and Five), store design (Chapter Six) and the provision of TCM and pedestrianisation schemes (Chapter Seven).<sup>3</sup> Additionally, Chapter Seven also explored the changing character of internal store environments in an effort to foreground the contradictions inherent within the evolving operations of retailers and efforts to protect the environment. The individual chapters have sought to provide a detailed

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<sup>1</sup> An advocacy of "greener" business and a focus on business models is evident in: *The Earthscan Reader in Business and the Environment*, ed. by Richard Welford and Richard Starkey and *Business and the Environment: Implications of the New Environmentalism*, ed. by Denis Smith.

<sup>2</sup> See for example: Eden, *Environmental Issues and Business*; Eden, *Green Consumerism and the Response from Business and Government*.

<sup>3</sup> JLPA, 4411/j, Marks & Spencer Ltd, 'The Environment' (1993); MSCA, A04/117A, 'Your World Our World' (July, 1990); MSCA, A04/117A, 'Environmental Policy Statement' (2 April 1990).



assessment of each concern, outlining the company's approach, the significance of wider attitudes and external forces, and the environmental and commercial factors involved.

The thesis has identified a number of key findings which illustrate the extent to which a consideration of the environment and resource use became a significant commercial concern for Marks and Spencer and its competitors in the period 1968-1992.

Firstly, Marks and Spencer was affected by the heightened climate of concern surrounding the environment in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Companies began to consolidate and build upon their pre-existing initiatives concerning the environment and resource use. This in many respects confirmed Eden's assessment of that time as a period of 'consolidation'.<sup>4</sup> Marks and Spencer devised its first environment statement in 1990 and made changes to its management structures to incorporate an Environmental Focus Group at Head Office which dealt with such matters across the business. This marked a shift in how the company viewed the environment as a business concern; it endeavoured to initiate a more holistic company response to environmental issues. Such a move was supported by numerous press releases from 1989 onwards detailing the company's commitment to various environmental issues from CFCs, and tropical hardwoods to its attitude towards conservation and the wider environment.

Secondly, Chapter One's assessment of Marks and Spencer's response to environmental issues, in comparison to the approaches adopted by Sainsbury's and the John Lewis Partnership, has illustrated the extent to which the response from retailers was far from uniform. Marks and Spencer, whilst keen to respond to shifting societal expectations regarding the environment, did not exhibit the dynamism and proactive ethos of Sainsbury's, who actively sought to shape policy and regulation with regards alternatives to CFCs. The supermarket's involvement with Porritt similarly spoke to a keener appreciation of the wider environmental movement due to Porritt's profile as a leading environmentalist. To some extent Sainsbury's robust response was influenced by its predominant position as a food retailer; the sector felt the environmental wave much more acutely at this time than its clothing counterpart as the environmental consequences associated with food were more readily observed. Excess packaging spoke to social concerns regarding waste and was highly visible. Moreover, whilst both clothing and food were social necessities, the latter had the potential to elicit greater personal harm; fears regarding food additives and pesticide use caught the popular imagination. Marks and Spencer remained more reserved in its support for the more obviously "green" elements of the environmental agenda. Instead, whilst not ignoring the new wave of environmental issues, the company favoured traditional concerns. Its connection with the Groundwork Foundation, which supported environmental improvement in urban fringe areas, and its links to the BTCV spoke to such an outlook.

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<sup>4</sup> Eden, *Environmental Issues and Business*, p. 8.

However, the process of 'consolidation' identified by Eden in the late eighties and early nineties did not characterise the outlook of all retailers. In contrast to Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury's, the John Lewis Partnership was reserved in its engagement with the environment and isolated itself from efforts to address environmental concerns as a cohesive and credible agenda. The Partnership's response was the result of an underlying belief that it was not its place to educate or influence its customers and that to do so would be to overstep its commercial remit. The difference in how Marks and Spencer and the John Lewis Partnership conceived of their role as retailers had a notable impact on how each company acknowledged the environmental challenge and as such, is key to understanding the relationship between retailers and the environment; it was shaped as much by the internal ethos of companies, as it was by external forces.

The work of Smith, Welford and others has advocated a need for wholesale change in the outlook and culture of companies to elicit real and meaningful "green" business approaches.<sup>5</sup> The present research has sought to highlight the characteristics and outlooks which existed within Marks and Spencer and other retailers which influenced its appreciation of, and appetite for acknowledging, the environment and the various issues which emerged in relation to it. It is clear that Marks and Spencer and its competitors had not undergone a fundamental reappraisal of their operations and approach to business at this time, which in many respects echoed the limitations of business approaches identified by Smith and Welford. However, a gradual process of greater environmental awareness and action was identifiable and was in some regard influenced by Marks and Spencer's desire to maintain its position and image as a responsive and socially responsible retailer. Its corporate culture bolstered its inclination to address and respond to environmental issues and shaped the nature of the engagement. Marks and Spencer's sense of itself as a prominent social actor was tempered by a corporate conservatism which ensured, as previously mentioned, that in contrast to Sainsbury's it eschewed the seemingly more radical figures and groups associated with the "green" turn at this time. Consequently, the existing features of corporate cultures and the extent to which they elicited change should not be dismissed, they are central to understanding the relationship between business and the environment. Moreover, the differences in approach adopted by Marks and Spencer, Sainsbury's and the John Lewis Partnership identified within the present thesis highlights the usefulness of firm level studies and validates the need within literature concerning business and the environment to begin to adopt a more detailed case study approach, rather than focusing primarily on general shifts and broad trends which has conditioned much of the literature to date. The various facets of Marks and Spencer's corporate culture illustrated the complexity inherent in company responses to wider trends and the

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<sup>5</sup> Cited in Eden, *Environmental Issues and Business*, pp. 15, 62-63.

importance of understanding individual company outlooks and approaches to better assess the relationship between business and the environment.

Thirdly, the thesis has identified an evolution in Marks and Spencer's environmental focus and in the language used by the company when discussing the environment in relation to its operations. Throughout the 1970s and early eighties the company had primarily shown a concern for the trading environments of its stores and its resource use. By the late 1980s a broader appreciation of global environmental issues was evident on the part of the company. This was undoubtedly influenced by the growth in attention afforded issues such as the plight of the rainforest, pollution and animal welfare, as well as the pressure applied by environmental groups. As identified in Chapter One, the latter was seen to have been felt by both the John Lewis Partnership and Marks and Spencer who identified the need for caution in their interaction with, and response to, FoE in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It was evident that as the range of environmental issues which concerned society widened, so too did the parameters of retail involvement. The extent of such a diversification and its implications for commercial retailers can be seen in Marks and Spencer's Environment Policy which outlined a mixture of long-standing concerns and emergent considerations with regards the company's approach to the environment and resource use. In addition the language utilised by the company similarly evolved to ensure that it reflected present concerns and fears. Whilst in the early 1970s it discussed its energy conservation efforts in terms of the finite nature of the Earth's resources, by the late eighties and early nineties this had broadened to include language which referred to 'harmful emissions' and the 'greenhouse effect'.<sup>6</sup> The shift evident in the language used by Marks and Spencer implied a sensitivity on the part of the company to wider issues. The concerns identified by environmental groups and commentators, political figures and popular pressure, permeated the outlook and commercial consciousness of the company throughout the period addressed within the thesis.

Fourthly, the thesis' assessment of the seventies and eighties has illustrated that the changing needs and demands of retail operations in connection with wider national concern, such as the 1973 oil crisis, had a marked impact on the nature of commercial approaches and attitudes to energy use. The growing use of refrigeration and the development of in-store technology to enhance the shopping experience for consumers, all added to the energy demands of modern retail stores; this had the potential to place ever greater strains on profitability. Coupled with this, the 1973 oil crisis and subsequent price rises hastened the realisation within commercial organisations that energy usage could no longer be an unregulated and largely ignored facet of retail operations. Marks and Spencer's nationally recognised energy conservation campaign marked a conscious

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<sup>6</sup> MSCA, R/4/3/9, 'Watts-on', pp. 1, 3.

effort on the part of the company to alter its operations and outlook regarding energy usage and highlighted the capacity for change within the company. Whilst energy conservation was first and foremost a commercial consideration, undertaken to reduce operating costs, it also meant that the company and a number of its competitors found themselves advocating and practically implementing policies which moderated the impact of commercial retailing on the environment.

Fifthly, business considerations furthered the dissemination of environmental practices as seen above. The thesis' assessment of Marks and Spencer's environmental efforts confirms the validity of Sheail's assertion that 'a mixture of altruism and self-interest' motivated businesses to more readily engage with environmental issues.<sup>7</sup> The environmentally beneficial practices like recycling and reduced packaging adopted by Marks and Spencer, had a clear commercial as well as environmental benefit. The social perception of waste had fundamentally shifted. It was increasingly perceived of as an anti-social and environmentally damaging consequence of modern society; retailers could not be seen to wantonly ignore such a change in attitudes. However, companies had also discovered that waste was worth something. Recycling waste generated financial gains for Marks and Spencer. The company repeatedly made references to its 'war on waste', promoting the environmental and commercial benefits derived from it.<sup>8</sup> The extent to which environmentally aware practices were found to be commercially rewarding influenced the degree to which they were adopted and promoted. Recycling, energy conservation and reduced packaging were the palatable side of the environmental message, they did not speak to reduced consumption but rather presented an "environmentally friendly" way of carrying on as normal. Whilst retailers adhered to regulation and appeased popular opinion, a fundamental change in attitude was derived from self-interested commercial considerations. Marks and Spencer adopted these environmental practices because it made financial sense to do so.

Sixthly, the thesis' assessment of Marks and Spencer's store development and the growth of out-of-town retailing illustrated the trade-offs evident between retailing and the environment. Retail expansion meant the increasing physical incursion of retail stores on the environment. The growth in out-of-town retailing led to the infringement of designated green belt land, although retailers showed an astute awareness of the sensitivity regarding concerns over urban sprawl within company literature and new store promotion. Nevertheless, it also engendered a greater awareness on the part of retailers of the need to negotiate the environment. Marks and Spencer's store development efforts brought the retailer into continual contact with the environment and the growing concerns

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<sup>7</sup> Sheail, *An Environmental History of Twentieth-century Britain*, p. 11.

<sup>8</sup> MSCA, *St Michael News*, Wedge, 'Waging War on Waste', pp. 4-5; 'Bin brigade wage war on waste', p. 4.

which resulted from society's increasing demands upon it. Its decision to hire an ecology expert for the first time in the mid-eighties to assist in its store development efforts was a clear indication that Marks and Spencer's move into decentralised areas brought with it a need to acknowledge a wider variety of environments and to embrace new commercial approaches. The retail led initiatives promoted by Marks and Spencer, such as TCM and pedestrianisation schemes, further highlighted the acknowledgement on the part of the retailer that the environmental quality of urban retail areas was a key commercial consideration. In addition, Sainsbury's undertook a number of developments on derelict urban land. This was no doubt influenced by the shortage of appropriate sites in central areas to accommodate the increasing size of modern retail stores and the desire of local planning authorities to see disused land redeveloped. In this instance both the commercial demand for space and the need to improve the environmental quality of an area, facilitated the advancement of both agendas. Such developments illustrated the extent to which commercial retailing placed both demands on, and facilitated improvements to, the environment.

Consequently, the importance of the built environment 'as part of the physical context in which society evolves', as noted by Rosen and Tarr, is borne out in the thesis' exploration of Marks and Spencer's store development activities; store location and design both had commercial and environmental implications which increasingly had to be reconciled.<sup>9</sup> Retail stores had a transformative effect on many local areas and generated more immediate environmental consequences for the day-to-day lives of individuals than a number of other environmental issues which gained ground in the late eighties and early nineties. The changing realities of commercial retailing at this time greatly changed how retailers thought of and used the environment. The limitations of urban environments to effectively contain the increased pressures placed on them by greater car use and bigger retail stores in the 1970s and 1980s had notable environmental consequences: in the spread of decentralised retailing, in how retailers viewed and operated in central areas and in how society interacted with and used both central and peripheral urban sites.

Seventhly, although there has been an overriding perception that retailers simply responded to external pressure from government, pressure groups and popular scrutiny, it was evident that they themselves exerted a degree of influence in shaping habits and conditioning behaviour which had the potential to elicit environmental improvements. Marks and Spencer made a clear effort to draw a similarity between its own needs and activities and that of the domestic household within its promotion of energy conservation. The company showed an awareness of the importance of altering day-to-day habits in

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<sup>9</sup> Rosen and Tarr, 'The Importance of an Urban Perspective in Environmental History', p. 301.

the pursuit of effective and long-term change in the relationship between society and the environment. Whilst this served the company's own commercial aims it similarly illustrated the central role retailers could play in augmenting wider awareness and change. Marks and Spencer was more accessible to people, a more immediate presence within people's lives, than national and international governments and environmental pressure groups, which appeared removed from the day-to-day lives and priorities of individuals. The retail store was a familiar and non-threatening arena in which to address environmental issues and retailers had the benefit of being able to present themselves as understanding the competing needs of the individual. Environmental action was as much a financial consideration for individuals as it was for retailers. This parity between the two in terms of outlook afforded retailers a platform from which to model and promote environmental practices.

Finally, the thesis has taken a broad approach to its investigation, to include both natural and man-made environments. Through such an assessment it is apparent that the increasingly modernised stores utilised by retailers and the quest for greater environmental control in the form of air conditioning, as well as the sanitised use of environmental features in shopping spaces, whilst seemingly at odds with the growth in concern and awareness at this time, spoke to the fundamental characteristics of society's attitude towards, and perception of, the environment. Increased affluence laid the foundations for society's growing concern for the environment and in turn conditioned the nature of the response from retailers. Marks and Spencer was not challenged at this time to fundamentally refashion its operations and outlook as a result of environmental concern, but instead found itself having to modify its approach, to smooth its edges in relation to the perceived environmental impact of its activities. The commercial needs and demands of the business, rather than popular concern for the environment, often ensured that Marks and Spencer's policies were more far reaching and long-term in their mediation of resource use and the quality and protection of the environment. The company's energy conservation campaign initiated in 1974 and its efforts to improve the environmental quality of shopping areas to ensure continued profit and competitiveness, highlighted the commercial expediency of such endeavours and the extent to which it drove Marks and Spencer's engagement with environmental issues.

Marks and Spencer as a commercial retailer highlighted the enduring and complex trade-off between society and the environment. This thesis is intended to be a contribution to the developing literature on business organisations and the environment. It has tried to illustrate the ways in which Marks and Spencer and its competitors responded to the environment and resource use and how and why this evolved over the period 1968-1992.

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**Appendix One**

## Marks and Spencer Chairmen

Edward Sieff	1967-72
Marcus, Lord Sieff of Brimpton	1972-84
Derek, Lord Rayner	1984-91
Sir Richard Greenbury	1991-99