



### 3.2.6 EDGES

#### Absorb the 'big-box' into the mix

Sustainable development requires that:

- out-of-town development, often mono-functional in nature, such as industrial, office and retail parks, is curtailed;
- these elements are brought back into urban centres, to become part of the urban mix.

This has fundamental implications in terms of form, density and parking, particularly how to accommodate 'big-boxes' (whether multiplexes, superstores or retail warehouses) - as developers will often be reluctant to change their standard approaches.

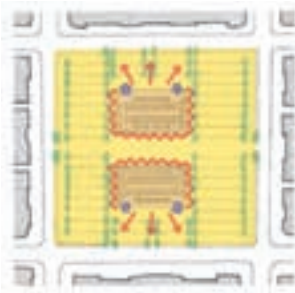
It is important to establish that the provision of such facilities must be appropriate to the needs of the locality, and must not impose socio-economic costs on the community in terms of traffic generation, visual blight and undermining established centres. A preferred approach is to:

- absorb 'big-boxes' into the transition area on the edge of the retail core. The presence of larger development blocks in these locations can provide sufficient land to wrap the main perimeter of the box with a skin of smaller buildings - concealing its bulk and creating active frontage (see 5.2.1). Siting within the walkable catchment from a public transport node (see 3.1.2) also encourages more sustainable customer transport patterns;
- select 'cul-de-sac locations' where at least one site edge requires no frontage (such as adjacent to a railway line). This lessens the amount of exposed blank walls and servicing.

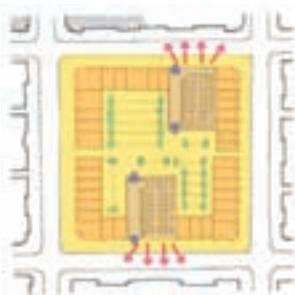
#### Wrap and cap the 'big-box'

Large stores and other large 'big-box' units that are often stand-alone, with exposed 'dead' frontages, create particular problems for active and attractive streets (see 5.2.1). However, such building types can be modified to become compatible with fine-grained urban settings by mixing horizontally and/or vertically with other uses, which may involve:

- wrapping the perimeter on the street faces with smaller units (such as Sainsbury's supermarket, Clapham High Street);
- building other uses on the air space above the box (Tesco's supermarkets, Sheffield and Earls Court);
- incorporating a well designed upper façade for roof top parking (such as Safeway's supermarket in Fulham);
- externalising more active uses (such as cafés and boutiques) and increasing their 'transparency' to the street.



Big box sheds surrounded by parking: potential active frontage is projected into the car park, rear elevations exposed and the streetscape undermined



By turning the sales floor 90° and inserting the building into a perimeter block, access is provided from both sides but active street frontage is ensured



Wrap big boxes with smaller units to create active frontage



Ocean Village cinema, Southampton



Furniture showroom, Newbury  
(Architect: Sutton Griffin & Morgan)