

Report to Sustainable Development Panel
15 January 2020
Report of Director of place
Subject Retail Monitor 2019

Item

5

Purpose

To report the findings of the 2019 Norwich Retail Monitor.

The Retail Monitor is the council's monitoring report advising of vacancy rates and changes of shop type across the city. Monitoring ensures that the council can measure the implementation of policies on retail monitoring and consider whether to implement them in a more flexible manner or to take an alternative approach taking into consideration market demands and trends.

Recommendation

To note the findings of the 2019 Retail Monitor.

Corporate and service priorities

The report helps to meet the corporate priority "A prosperous and vibrant city" and the service plan priority to implement the local plan for the city.

Financial implications:

No direct financial implications arising from this report

Wards: All wards

Cabinet member: Councillor Stonard – Sustainable and inclusive growth

Contact officer(s)

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Background documents

None

Report

Introduction

1. This report presents the findings of the 2019 Retail Monitor.
2. The Retail Monitor is the council's monitoring report advising of vacancy rates and changes of shop type in the city. Annual monitoring ensures that the council can assess the implementation of its retail policies and gauge their effectiveness.
3. The monitor is based on a survey of the city's retail offer carried out between July 2019 and October 2019. This report updates members from the last monitor produced in June 2018.
4. A revised edition of The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in February 2019 (NPPF 2019). It states in paragraph 85 that planning policies and decisions should "support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation". "Planning policies should define a network and hierarchy of town centres and promote their long-term vitality and viability – by allowing them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allows a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and reflects their distinctive characters."
5. The revised NPPF no longer has the requirement for definition of primary and secondary frontages.
6. The Joint Core Strategy (JCS) was adopted in March 2011, with amendments adopted in January 2014 by the three local planning authorities in the Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP). The plan covers the period from 2008 to 2026.
7. Policy 11 of the JCS for Norwich city centre states that its regional centre role will be strengthened and that the retail, cultural and leisure facilities offered in the city will be expanded and enhanced through intensification of retail uses in the primary retail area and its expansion if necessary. The policy also promotes the strengthening of specialist shopping areas in secondary areas of the city centre.
8. Policy 19 promotes the strengthening of the large district centres (LDCs) at Anglia Square/Magdalen Street/St. Augustine's and at Riverside, which are at the second level of the retail hierarchy headed by the city centre. The essential role of district and local centres in meeting everyday shopping needs is also supported.
9. The Development Management Policies Local Plan adopted in December 2014 (the DM plan) provides the detail to enable the strategic aims above to be implemented and to protect the vitality and viability of centres. This is done through policies DM20 and DM21 which apply specific thresholds for retail uses in each retail area of the city.
10. These policies are also supported by the Main Town Centre Uses and Retail Frontages Supplementary Planning Document which was adopted concurrently with the plan.
11. An updated retail study to assess Norwich's current retail needs was produced in December 2017 by GVA to inform the Council's response to these issues in

emerging Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP). This advocates continued support and growth of the comparison goods retail offering, commercial leisure and other 'main town centre uses' in Norwich City centre, including growth in retail floor area in the city.

Main findings of the 2019 Retail Monitor

12. The Norwich City Centre Shopping Floorspace Monitor and Local and District Centres Monitor (October 2019) is attached as Appendix 1. The main findings of the monitor are that:

- a) Vacant available floorspace in the city centre as a whole is 5.5% which is a reduction from the 2018 figure of 7.3%. This is significantly better than the worst figure in the plan period of 12.4% in 2010; but is still slightly higher than the lowest figure of 4.2% which was experienced in 2014. City centre retail vacancy rates 'as a proportion of all retail floorspace' have also reduced from 11.3% in June 2018 to 10.0% in October 2019.
- b) The percentage of vacant *units* in the city centre has also decreased from 10.8% to 10.1% and continues to compare favourably to the average GB retail vacancy rate of 13.0% in June 2019 (Local Data Company, September 2019).
- c) Overall the amount of retail floorspace in the city centre has decreased significantly since the last survey. Previously we have seen decreases of around 0.1% (between June 2016 and June 2018) however between June 2018 and October 2019 the overall retail floorspace has reduced by 6,231 sqm which is a 2.8% decrease. This has largely been attributed to the change of use of a number of retail units within Castle Quarter (formerly Castle Mall) to leisure uses.
- d) Most of the primary area retail frontage zones are performing reasonably well in terms of their retail function with all of them being within their recommended minimum percentage rate of A1 retail. Three of the seven monitored frontages have seen an increase in the proportion of shops in the retail frontage since 2018, although there has been a reduction in retail in 3 frontage areas including Castle Quarter where the percentage of retail frontage has reduced from 95.6% in 2018 to 85.2% in 2019. Vacancy rates in Castle Quarter are still high but have reduced from 26% to 18% during the monitoring period.
- e) Retail vacancies have continued to increase in the secondary retail areas since 2018 and in terms of available floorspace are now 18.3%. There was a dramatic rise from 2.8% in 2016 to 17.7% in 2018 primarily due to the closure of Toys R Us in Cathedral Business Park which had a significant floor area for a single retailer and continues to remain vacant. Vacancy rates 'as a *proportion of all retail units*' are however lower in the secondary area than any other area within the city.
- f) In the Large District Centres, vacancy rates have fallen for the first time since their designation in 2013. The vacant available floorspace is now 3.3% which is regarded as a low figure for shopping's areas which do not form a central part of the city's retail offer.
- g) In the rest of the city centre (streets outside the defined areas), vacant available floorspace has decreased significantly from 12% in 2018 to 5.9% in

2019. The rest of the city centre retail vacancy rates 'as a proportion of all retail floorspace' have also decreased significantly from 15% to 6.4% over the same period.

- h) Vacancy rates in the ten existing district centres have decreased on average to 9.7% from 11.7% in 2018. Vacancy rates in the 28 local centres have increased to 7.1% from 6.5% in 2018, however this is still lower than it was in 2016 where 7.5% of units were unoccupied. Vacancy rates vary considerably within each of the district and local centres but overall the centres continue to be relatively robust and to offer an appropriate range of local services and facilities, with food stores being most important to their success.
13. The 2018 retail monitor suggested that Norwich was experiencing a number of challenges in terms of vacancy levels, but the picture has been more positive over the past 12 months or so with vacancy rates decreasing in the city centre as a whole. Vacancy rates in particular have fallen in the Large District Centres and the rest of the city centre and although the number of vacant units within the primary retail area have increased, there has been a reduction in available vacant floorspace. The secondary area has seen slight increases in vacant floorspace. Local and district centres have also performed well during the monitoring period and although vacancy rates have increased in local centres they are still lower than they were in 2016.
 14. Over the past 12 months there has however been a significant reduction in the amount of retail floorspace within the city centre with retail floorspace decreasing by 6,231 sqm (2.8%). This decrease is greater than the last 10 years combined. The significant reduction in retail floorspace can largely be attributed to the diversification of the recently rebranded Castle Quarter (formally Castle Mall) where there has been the opening of a number of leisure uses which now occupy some of the larger units which were previously retail.
 15. Although this runs counter to the aims of JCS policy 11 (to increase the amount of retailing in the city centre), it can be regarded as in support of the policy's aim to increase other uses such as the early evening economy, employment and cultural and visitor functions to enhance vitality and viability. This has ultimately prevented a substantial increase in vacancy rates. It also conforms to paragraph 85 of the NPPF which allows for diversification in order to respond to changes in the retail and leisure industries and the Grimsey Review which considers that an appropriate diversity of other town centre uses such as restaurants, cafes and leisure uses can help support the economic vitality and health of the city centre.
 16. Overall the 2019 monitoring figures suggest that the retail performance across the city remains relatively robust and competitive and the results for the city centre as a whole present a fairly positive picture. Over the past few years the city has seen a trend of rising vacancies and nationally there has also been an increase in vacancy rates, so a reduction in vacancy rates has bucked the trend. It will be interesting to see whether a reduction in vacancy rates is a one off or whether vacancy rates will stabilise at this relatively low level or even continue to decrease further.
 17. It is also too soon to see how successful the new leisure uses will be within the Castle Quarter and to see what impact this has upon footfall and ultimately the

success of this recently rebranded shopping centre. At this stage, it does suggest that, although certain sectors are declining, diversification into the leisure sector has prevented a number of particularly large units sitting empty and diversification into the leisure industry is a trend, which is being experienced nationally. These are all changes which need to be monitored closely to inform emerging policies and guidance and also to inform future decision making at the planning application stage.

18. Over recent years, the government has made a substantial number of changes to permitted development rights, many of which affect A1 retail space. As such, smaller A1 retail units can change to other uses (such as professional and financial services, residential, leisure, restaurants and schools) on a permanent or temporary basis with either no planning permission or prior approval only. Shopping areas are therefore at risk of losing smaller retail units with the council having little or no control over these losses. The impact of these changes will need to be continued to be reviewed in future monitors. There have not been significant prior approval notifications since the last survey was carried out to cause concern at this time.
19. The retail sector, both nationally and within Norwich, has experienced many challenges in recent years brought about by changing consumer behaviour driven by technology and prevailing economic conditions. These challenges will have ongoing impacts for the viability of some retail businesses. It is therefore important that the council investigates other possible ways to cultivate and support the retail offer of Norwich, involving working in partnership with relevant organisations including Norwich BID.



Norwich City Centre Shopping Floorspace Monitor & Local & District Centres Monitor



Survey at October 2019

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Introduction

Policy Context

1. The National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF 2019) was published in February 2019. It states in paragraph 85 that planning policies and decisions should “support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation”. “Planning policies should define a network and hierarchy of town centres and promote their long-term vitality and viability – by allowing them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allows a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and reflects their distinctive characters.” The revised NPPF no longer has the requirement for definition of primary and secondary frontages.
2. The Joint Core Strategy (JCS) was adopted in March 2011, with amendments adopted in January 2014 by the three local planning authorities in the Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP)¹, since superseded by the Greater Norwich Growth Board (GNGB). The plan covers the period from 2008 to 2026.
3. Policy 11 of the JCS for Norwich city centre states that its regional centre role will be strengthened and that the retail, cultural and leisure facilities offered in the city will be expanded and enhanced through intensification of retail uses in the primary retail area and its expansion if necessary. The policy also promotes the strengthening of specialist shopping areas in secondary areas of the city centre.
4. Policy 19 of the JCS promotes the strengthening of the large district centres (LDCs) at Anglia Square, Magdalen Street & St Augustine’s and at Riverside, which are at the second level of the retail hierarchy headed by the city centre. The essential role of district and local centres in meeting everyday shopping needs is also supported.
5. The adopted Development management policies local plan (the DM plan) provides the detail to enable the strategic policies above to be implemented and to protect the vitality and viability of centres. In particular, policies DM20 and DM21 aim to protect retail function by managing the proportion of shops - as opposed to other services and facilities - in defined city centre shopping frontages (policy DM20) and suburban shopping areas (policy DM21). In both cases local policies seek to ensure that proposals for change of use will not result in the proportion of shops falling below a specified minimum level.
6. For the city centre retail frontages the applicable minimum thresholds for policy DM20 are set out in a separate supplementary planning document (the Main town centre uses and retail frontages SPD, adopted in December 2014). For district and local centres the thresholds are set out in policy DM21.
7. The government has incrementally increased permitted development rights and as such there is now the flexibility to change shops to a variety of different uses without the need for planning permission – both on a temporary basis through

¹ The GNDP is made up of Broadland District Council, Norwich City Council and South Norfolk Council, working in partnership with Norfolk County Council and the Broads Authority

the prior notification procedure, and permanently. The removal of the need for planning permission for change of use from A1 retail to A2 professional services (i.e. banks) and vice versa may have an impact through largely uncontrolled changes between shops, banks and other financial/professional services. These measures are undoubtedly helpful to encourage new uses into underperforming centres but they also make it increasingly difficult for local planning policy to influence directly the mix of uses in a centre, or prevent the incremental loss of shops in comparatively prosperous city centres such as Norwich where it is important to retain them. The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) (Amendment) (No. 2) Order 2017 extended protection of A4 drinking establishments by removing permitted development rights for their change of use.

8. The latest version of the NPPF (2019) recognises the changing face of the high street and the need to take a different approach to retail planning policy in order to reinvigorate and adapt the offering focused in primary centres/core areas to successfully prepare for future; this includes suitable provision of leisure uses and housing within town centres.
9. This document presents the results of the most recent survey of the city centre and district and local shopping centres which were undertaken between July and October 2019. This monitoring data is used both to assess the performance of policies and to assist their implementation.

Retailing in Norwich

10. Norwich city centre continues to be considered a thriving retail and visitor destination in terms of retail spend and attractiveness and has maintained its position as 13th in the 'Top Shopping Venues' Retail Rankings nationally (source: Javelin group Venuescore 2017²). The city centre is the most accessible and sustainable location in the greater Norwich area for retail, leisure, office, cultural and tourism related development.
11. Retail uses have generally been considered critical in underpinning the city centre's continued vitality and viability, however, as discussed in the Grimsey Review 2³ "dramatic structural changes to the retail industry have occurred over the last five years, brought about by the convergence of changing consumer behaviour driven by technology, an archaic business rates system and prevailing economic conditions". This independently commissioned report, produced in response to 2011's Government Commissioned Portas Review, considers that an appropriate diversity of other town centre uses such as restaurants, cafés, financial services, leisure, cultural uses and offices can help to support the economic vitality and health of the city centre for the community and visitors throughout the day and evening. It states: "The number of and type of shops being occupied in our towns has continued to change and at a quicker rate. The fundamental structure of Britain's town centres has changed from goods transaction to one of consumption of food and experiential services including health and beauty".

² Venuescore 2017, 'UK Shopping Venue Rankings (2017)'

³ Grimsey Review 2 'It's time to re-shape our town centres' (2018)

12. Regular monitoring of change in retail frontages ensures that any thresholds applied remain relevant and necessary. The survey data reported here was collected between July and October 2019. The data reported is based on the frontages as defined in appendix 4 of the Development Management Policies Plan.

Main Findings

City Centre Overview

13. The retail monitor survey measures vacancy rates in three different ways:
 - a: Retail vacancy rate (Use Class A1) as a proportion of retail floorspace, excluding space being built or refitted.
 - b: Retail vacancy rate (Use Class A1) as a proportion of retail floorspace.
 - c: Retail vacancy rate (Use Class A1) as a proportion of retail units.
14. The vacant available *floorspace* in the city centre as a whole is 5.5% which is a reduction from 2018's figure of 7.3%. This is significantly better than the worst figure in the plan period of 12.4% in 2010; but is still slightly higher than the lowest figure of 4.2% which was experienced in 2014.
15. City centre retail vacancy rates 'as a proportion of all retail floorspace' have also reduced from 11.3% in June 2018 to 10.0% in October 2019. This is a reduction of 1.3% from the last survey although it is still higher than vacancy rates experienced since the start of the plan period in 2014. This figure does however still include 4.5% of floorspace that is currently under construction/refurbishment so it is hoped that this shall be occupied in the near future, especially with the occupation of the new Primark Store on Haymarket in December 2019.
16. The percentage of vacant *units* has also decreased from 10.8% to 10.1% and continues to compare favourably to the average GB retail vacancy rate of 13.0% in June 2019 (Local Data Company, September 2019⁴) which equated to a +0.6% rise year-on-year. However, direct comparison with national rates is difficult due to methodological differences between surveys.
17. Overall the amount of retail floorspace in the city centre has decreased significantly since the last survey. Previously we have seen decreases of around 0.1% (between June 2016 and June 2018) however between June 2018 and October 2019 the overall retail floorspace has reduced by 6,231 sqm which is a 2.8% decrease. This has largely been attributed to the change of use of a number of retail units within Castle Quarter (formerly Castle Mall) to leisure uses.
18. The reduction in A1 retail units is however less than during the last monitoring period with there being a reduction of 21 units compared to 31 units previously. This would suggest that previously there was a change away from A1 in a greater number of smaller units whereas in the past 12 months or so the change is likely attributed to some of the larger units being occupied by different uses.
19. In terms of refurbishment, the most significant retail development currently underway within the city centre is the ongoing refurbishment and extension to Primark on Haymarket/White Lion Street, which constitutes a net increase of floorspace for the store of 1805m². This is due to be completed in December 2019. At the time of the survey New Look in Castle Quarter was also closed for

⁴ Local Data Company, "GB Retail and Leisure Market Analysis, H1 2019 Update" (2019)

refurbishment. This unit is 1,088m² but it is understood that it has now since reopened.

20. Recent years have seen an increased diversification of uses within the city centre with a particular increase in the number of cafes and restaurants on offer, along with other 'service' type uses such as tattoo studios and beauty salons. However over the past 16 months there has also been a significant growth in leisure uses with, for example, the opening of a bowling alley, soft play, gym and retro gaming centre within the Castle Quarter.
21. This is a trend that has been experienced nationally. The GB Retail and Leisure Market Analysis H1 2019 Update (published September 2019 by the Local Data Company⁵) has set out that independent leisure and service retail categories especially saw growth and the health and beauty sector continues to thrive with the growth categories being dominated by leisure uses.
22. Since the last survey was carried out, some large national chains have been lost from the city centre including Poundworld, Card Market, French Connection and Bang and Olufsen. There have also been a number of chain restaurants that have closed including Jamie's Italian and Carluccios as well as the loss of Norwich and Peterborough Building Society. Some large chain stores such as Rymans have reduced the number of stores that they have in Norwich but have kept a presence. There are also a number of stores which nationally have rationalised but have retained their presence in central Norwich which include New Look, Marks and Spencer and House of Fraser. This is a positive sign for the health and attractiveness of Norwich City.
23. There has been a 5.1% decrease in retail floorspace since 2008 and 2.8% of this was in the past monitoring period. Although this runs counter to the aims of JCS policy 11 (to increase the amount of retailing in the city centre), it can be regarded as in support of the policy's aim to increase other uses such as the early evening economy, employment and cultural and visitor functions to enhance vitality and viability and has ultimately prevented a substantial increase in vacancy rates. It also conforms to paragraph 85 of the NPPF which allows for diversification in order to respond to changes in the retail and leisure industries, and the Grimsey Review which considers that an appropriate diversity of other town centre uses such as restaurants, cafes and leisure uses can help support the economic vitality and health of the city centre.
24. As part of the Transport for Norwich Strategy, the city centre has undergone some major traffic changes over the past few years with a number of streets being closed to general traffic, being made one-way or being pedestrianised. This increases the attractiveness of the city to shoppers, particularly on streets such as Westlegate which were, until recently, difficult for pedestrians to navigate. A number of public realm improvements have been completed over the past couple of years including Westlegate and Golden Ball Street, which improve pedestrian access to the Ber Street and All Saints Green areas, and by making changes to the one way system it is now easier to access Norwich's car parks. Changes to Rose Lane and Prince of Wales Road also seek to

⁵ Local Data Company, "GB Retail and Leisure Market Analysis, H1 2019 Update" (2019)

improve traffic flow to make it easier to access Castle Quarter car park, which in turn will support Norwich's retail and leisure centre. Other initiatives to make the city centre accessible to all include the Coach Strategy⁶, which has now resulted in a coach drop off on Castle Meadow for day trippers and service enhancements for the Park and Ride. This includes a Sunday service from Thickthorn and more services into the evening. A new bike sharing scheme (Beryl bikes) will also be introduced in Spring 2020.

25. The level of floorspace growth promoted by JCS policy 11 was based on assumptions in a 2007 study and the retail market has changed radically since then. A 5.1% loss in retail floorspace is nevertheless considered favourable against the national picture.
26. An updated retail study to assess Norwich's current '*retail needs*' to inform retail policy in the emerging Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) was produced in December 2017 by GVA⁷. This advocates continued support and growth of the comparison goods retail offering, commercial, leisure and other 'main town centre uses' in Norwich City centre. The report recommends a need for an additional 11,000m² - 15,000m² comparison retail floor space to 2027. Further to the above, the report also supports continued improvement to the public realm in Norwich, following recent success of completed improvements. The report considers this approach appropriate to support and enhance its role as a centre of regional-scale shopping and leisure significance. The contents of GVA report will be reviewed by the GNLP team.
27. Recent figures from the Norwich Business Improvement District (BID⁸) indicate that the shopping centre is experiencing a decline in footfall; down 2.1% on the previous year. Footfall has declined on all days of the week with the biggest decline being on a Sunday. Fridays and Saturday have experienced the least amount of decline and Saturdays remain the most popular day for shopping.
28. **Summary:** The results of the survey for the City centre as a whole present a fairly positive picture with there being a reduction in both vacant available floor space and percentage of vacant units. Nationally there has been an increase in vacancy rates. There has been a significant reduction in retail floor space in the city centre which can be attributed to the change of use of a number of larger units from retail to leisure uses and this has been particularly apparent within the Castle Quarter (formally Castle Mall). The Norwich city centre retail offering appears to be fairly robust in the current climate although there has been a reduced footfall throughout the week. Consideration needs to be given to what the survey is telling us about the long-term health of retailing in Norwich in the context of the challenges facing the British High Street/Town Centre retail sector.
29. Table 1, provides city centre overview data on retail floorspace, enabling comparison over the time period of the plan.

⁶ <https://www.norwich.gov.uk/coaches>

⁷ GVA, "Greater Norwich Employment, Town Centre and Retail Study" (2007)

⁸ Norwich Business Improvement District "Footfall Report for: Norwich" (October 2019)

Table 1: Norwich city centre – provision of A1 retail floorspace

Retail floorspace (use class A1)				
	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
October 2019	217,539	195,891	11,992	9,656
June 2018	223,770	198,519	16,265	8,986
June 2016	223,987	208,342	13,006	2,639
Sept 2015	223,762	210,509	11,028	2,225
April 2014	224,653	213,652	9,513	1,488
August 2013	224,109	208,779	11,849	3,481
January 2011	227,377	203,948	21,035	2,394
July 2010	227,949	198,379	28,315	1,255
January 2010	228,432	206,379	21,810	243
July 2009	229,509	208,674	20,579	256
July 2008	229,120	213,902	14,248	970
Retail units (use class A1)				
	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
October 2019	971	873	88	10
June 2018	992	885	98	9
June 2016	1023	906	110	7
Sept 2015	1020	908	103	10
April 2014	1048	930	107	11
August 2013	1054	936	97	21
January 2011	1067	949	108	10
July 2010	1070	938	121	11
January 2010	1079	948	126	5
July 2009	1086	955	128	3
July 2008	1084	967	109	8
Retail vacancy rate (use class A1)				
	As a proportion of all retail floorspace <i>Vacant+Refurbishment</i> <i>All</i>	As a proportion of retail floorspace excluding space being built or refitted <i>Vacant</i> <i>All</i>	As a proportion of all retail units <i>Vacant+Refurbishment</i> <i>All</i>	
October 2019	10.0%	5.5%	10.1%	
June 2018	11.3%	7.3%	10.8%	
June 2016	7.0%	5.8%	11.4%	
Sept 2015	5.9%	4.9%	11.1%	
April 2014	4.9%	4.2%	11.3%	
August 2013	6.8%	5.3%	11.2%	
January 2011	10.3%	9.3%	10.1%	
July 2010	13.0%	12.4%	11.3%	
January 2010	9.7%	9.5%	11.7%	
July 2009	9.1%	9.0%	11.8%	
July 2008	6.2%	6.2%	10.0%	
Overall retail floorspace change				
Since June 2018	Decreased by 6,231 sqm (2.8% decrease)			
Since July 2008	Decreased by 11,581 sqm (5.1% decrease)			

The Primary Area: Retail Vacancy

30. The extent of the primary area, containing the malls and main comparison goods stores, is shown on Map 1. The boundaries have been amended slightly over time to reflect changes, so direct comparison with previous years is not always possible.
31. The vacant available *floorspace* rate is 4.1% in the primary retail area. This is a significant decrease in percentage of vacant floorspace from the peak vacancy rate of 11.7% in 2010, as well as a considerable decrease from 2018's figure of 5.3%.
32. Primary Area retail vacancy rates 'as a proportion of all retail floorspace' has remained at 10.5%. The large disparity between vacant + refurbishment (10.5%) and vacant (4.1%) can be attributed to the large scale redevelopment and extension to Primark which has a proposed floor area of 7,735m² and the refurbishment of New Look within the Castle Quarter which has a floor area of 1,088 m². The new Primark store is due to open on 11th December 2019 so within the next survey this will be occupied. However, the temporary store on St Stephen's Street which is 3,145 m² will be vacated by Primark and at this stage it is not known whether this will have new tenants. New Look within Castle Quarter has reopened since the survey data were collected.
33. The percentage of vacant retail *units* in the Primary Area has increased to 11.1% in 2019, up from 9.8% in 2018 but this is still considerably less than 2015's figure of 14.1% which was the highest figure in the plan period. As in recent years, this figure being higher than the floorspace vacancy figure implies that smaller shops remain more difficult to let in the primary area. This may therefore be an issue related to rental values or the viability of small businesses in general.
34. The overall amount of floorspace in A1 retail use has decreased by 5,461m², and reduced by 7 units in the Primary Area since 2018. Between 2014 and 2018 the amount of retail floorspace has remained relatively constant (a reduction of 329 m²) and therefore the reduction of 5,461 m² within a single year is significant.
35. The main reason for the reduction in retail floorspace is that a considerable number of units within the Castle Quarter have now changed use from A1 to other uses including a bowling alley and soft play (1,864 m²), retro gaming centre (752 m²), ping pong centre (194 m²), honesty library (159 m²), music lounge (128 m²), Kastle Kids (198 m²) and gym (1,880 m²). Some of the changes have taken place on a permanent basis whereas some other units are being used on a much more informal, temporary arrangement.
36. Within the last monitoring report (June 2018) it was reported that the comprehensive refurbishment of the Castle Mall had not been overly successful with the uptake of the refurbished units being slow and that there was a vacancy rate of 26%. Although the vacancy rate in Castle Quarter is still high at around 18% there has been a significant drop in vacancies which is attributed to the change of uses described above. Long term vacancies in Castle Quarter is still of concern and it is too soon to see how successful the leisure uses are that have recently occupied the Castle Quarter but this does show that although certain sectors are declining, diversification into the leisure sector has prevented a number of particularly large units sitting empty.

37. Chapelfield on the whole remains well occupied with 7 vacant units out of a total of 82 (8.5%) which is the same number as in 2018.
38. The Royal Arcade has experienced a significant change over the past year with half of the units now being vacant (8 out of 16 units). This includes the closure of Jamie's Italian. However, reports within the local press would suggest that Sonkai jewellers is due to relocate there from their current location on Dove Street. There are also plans to amalgamate three empty units to create a new restaurant. The restaurant is to be occupied by the winner of a competition and they will be given the space rent free for a period of time. It is understood that high rents in addition to an annual service charge and business rates have been partially responsible for the high vacancies in the Arcade.
39. Changes to permitted development rights at a national level are intended to encourage a wider range of uses in smaller shops. It is difficult to monitor changes that have taken place due to permitted development rights as the Local Planning Authority only needs to be notified of some changes of use. Since the last survey was carried out, the Council has been notified of six proposed changes in the City as a whole but not all of these have been implemented. Only two of six changes are within the primary retail area – one three year temporary change of use and one permanent prior approval. The other proposed changes are within the District and Local Centres.
40. **Summary:** In terms of vacant floorspace the primary area has performed well as an overall group since the last survey although there are areas such as the Royal Arcade which have experienced the loss of a number of shops/restaurants over the past year. The Castle Mall has been rebranded as Castle Quarter and vacant floorspace has dropped significantly following the opening of a number of leisure uses including a new bowling alley, soft play, gym and retro gaming arcade. This has however resulted in a significant loss of retail floorspace in the area. It is too soon to see how successful these new leisure uses will be in revitalising the shopping centre but the diversification has prevented a number of large units sitting empty and the increase of leisure and other services uses is a trend which is being experienced nationally.
41. Table 2, below, provides retail floorspace data for the primary area.

Table 2: Primary shopping area

Table 2.1 Primary shopping area

Retail floorspace (use class A1)				
	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
October 2019	150,094	134,405	6,148	9,541
June 2018	155,555	139,261	8,265	8,029
June 2016	155,389	143,867	8,883	2,639
Sept 2015	155,139	145,445	7,711	2,017
April 2014	155,884	149,059	5,865	960
August 2013	152,497	141,705	9,382	1,410
January 2011	173,789	157,817	13,967	2,005
July 2010	174,252	153,199	20,448	605
January 2010	174,525	160,541	13,909	75
July 2009	175,256	162,962	12,294	0
July 2008	175,028	168,511	6,434	83
Retail units (use class A1)				
	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
October 2019	523	465	50	8
June 2018	530	479	48	3
June 2016	562	484	72	7
Sept 2015	559	481	72	7
April 2014	579	499	74	6
August 2013	567	490	72	5
January 2011	574	524	45	5
July 2010	576	513	58	5
January 2010	578	524	53	1
July 2009	581	524	57	0
July 2008	584	537	46	1
Retail vacancy rate (use class A1)				
	As a proportion of all retail floorspace <i>Vacant+Refurbishment</i> <i>All</i>	As a proportion of retail floorspace excluding space being built or refitted <i>Vacant</i> <i>All</i>	As a proportion of all retail units <i>Vacant+Refurbishment</i> <i>All</i>	
October 2019	10.5%	4.1%	11.1%	
June 2018	10.5%	5.3%	9.8%	
June 2016	7.4%	5.7%	14.0%	
Sept 2015	6.3%	5.0%	14.1%	
April 2014	4.4%	3.8%	13.8%	
August 2013	7.1%	6.2%	13.6%	
January 2011	9.2%	8.0%	7.8%	
July 2010	12.1%	11.7%	10.1%	
January 2010	8.0%	8.0%	9.2%	
July 2009	7.0%	7.0%	9.8%	
July 2008	3.7%	3.7%	7.9%	

The Primary Area: Retail Frontages

43. Policy DM20 divides the primary area into a number of smaller 'frontage zones' (as defined on the policies map and as identified in appendix 4 to the DM policies plan). The frontage zones are shown on Map 2. The retail threshold applicable in each of these areas is set within the Main Town Centre Uses and Retail Frontages Supplementary Planning Document (December 2014).
44. Table 3 provides data on the percentage of retail uses in the primary area retail frontage zones in October 2019. None of the frontages have dropped below their minimum thresholds as set out in the Main Town Centre Uses and Retail Frontages Supplementary Planning Document (December 2014). Overall, the retail frontages appear relatively healthy but the most significant change has been the increase in non-retail frontage in frontage zone PC02: Castle Quarter from 38.3m (4.4%) in June 2018 to 129.9m (14.8%) in October 2019. This is due to the increase in leisure uses such as a bowling alley, soft play, gym and retro gaming centre which although has resulted in a reduction in retail has prevented a number of larger units standing empty. During the same period, the vacancy rate reduced from 26% in 2018 to 18% in 2019 in the Castle Quarter.
45. There has however been a slight increase in the percentage of A1 retail frontage in three frontage zones (PC01: Gentleman's Walk/Haymarket/Brigg Street, PR01: Back of the Inns/Castle Street area and PR03: St Stephens Street/Westlegate) which is a reversal from the previous year where the retail frontage decreased in all defined frontages except the Castle Quarter which remained at a constant level. This would suggest that in the past year there has been fewer changes away from retail to service and leisure uses (with the exception of Castle Quarter, PR02: The Lanes east and PR06: Timberhill/Red Lion Street) and some non-retail units have actually changed back to retail.
46. Overall, whilst the percentage of A1 retail frontage within some primary retail area core frontage zones has declined, in other areas it has increased and overall retail frontages still remain at relatively comfortable levels above their minimum thresholds.

Table 3: Primary Area Retail Frontage Zones - Retail frontages in October 2019

Frontage zone	Total frontage (m)	Total non-retail frontage Oct 2019	% A1 retail Oct 2019 (frontage)	% A1 retail June 2018 (frontage)	Minimum threshold (from 2014 SPD)
Primary retail area core frontage zones					
PC01: Gentleman's Walk/ Haymarket/Brigg Street	903.7	101.6	88.8%	87.3%	80%
PC02: Castle Mall (Levels 1 & 2)	875.1	129.9	85.2%	95.6%	80%
PC03: Chapelfield, upper & lower Merchants Hall and St Stephens Arcade	675.0	19.5	97.1%	97.1%	80%
Frontage zones in the rest of the primary retail area					
PR01: Back of the Inns/Castle Street area	710.6	215.2	69.7%	69.0%	65%
PR02: The Lanes east (Bedford Street/Bridewell Alley)	1094.7	313.2	71.4%	72.2%	70%
PR03: St Stephens Street/Westlegate	800.4	127.6	84.1%	83.7%	80%
PR04: Castle Meadow north		N/A ⁹			
PR05: Chapelfield Plain		N/A ¹⁰			
PR06: Timberhill/Red Lion Street	434.2	147.8	66.0%	67.7%	60%

Key:

Green denotes increase in A1 retail since 2018

Red denotes decrease in A1 retail since 2018.

Blue denotes frontage is within minimum A1 threshold.

Orange denotes minimum A1 frontage threshold has been breached.

⁹ There is no defined frontage in this zone

¹⁰ There is no defined frontage in this zone

The Secondary Area

47. Map 3 shows the extent of the secondary area.
48. The vacant available *floorspace* rate experienced a significant increase between 2016 and 2018 when it rose from 2.8% to 17.2%. Between 2018 and 2019 vacancy rates have remained high with a slight further increase to 18.3%.
49. The percentage of vacant retail *units* in the Secondary Area also increased between 2016 and 2018 with a rise from 7.0% to 7.7%. Between 2018 and 2019 there has been no change in the percentage of vacant retail units.
50. The overall amount of floorspace in A1 retail use has marginally decreased (by 161m²) with a reduction of 1 unit in the Secondary Shopping areas since the last survey in 2018.
51. The high vacancy rate in the secondary retail area is of some concern as the figure is at the highest level in this area since monitoring commenced in 2008. However the high floorspace vacancy rate can be attributed to the closure and subsequent vacancy of Toys R Us in Cathedral Retail Park which has an individual floor area of 3,222m². If this unit was omitted from both the vacant floorspace and total floorspace, the vacancy rate within the secondary retail area would only be 4.0% which is well below the national average and one of the lowest in the city centre. Furthermore vacancy rates '*as a proportion of all retail units*' are lower in the secondary area than any other area within the city.
52. The secondary area includes some streets which provide a specialist mix of shops and have adapted more rapidly and remained resilient to the economic downturn. For instance, Upper St Giles Street has retained an interesting mix of independent shops, bakeries, art galleries, restaurants, hairdressers and residential properties and in October 2019 all units were occupied.
53. The Retail and Leisure Topic Paper (2013) identified that "other shopping areas within the city centre should be strengthened to provide for retail diversity, with a particular focus on enhancing the character of specialist retailing areas and markets".

Table 4: Secondary Shopping

Retail floorspace (use class A1)				
	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
October 2019	21,611	17,651	3,960	0
June 2018	21,772	17,921	3,741	110
June 2016	21,858	21,243	615	0
Sept 2015	21,793	21,148	594	51
April 2014	21,958	21,569	273	116
August 2013	21,926	21,083	715	131
January 2011	17,785	16,612	878	295
July 2010	17,980	16,709	1,107	164
January 2010	18,076	16,788	1,189	99
July 2009	18,262	17,008	1,207	47
July 2008	18,167	17,604	1,022	81
Retail units (use class A1)				
	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
October 2019	181	167	14	0
June 2018	182	168	12	2
June 2016	185	172	13	0
Sept 2015	184	173	10	1
April 2014	185	177	5	3
August 2013	187	176	9	2
January 2011	190	174	13	3
July 2010	192	173	16	3
January 2010	194	173	18	3
July 2009	196	173	22	1
July 2008	194	176	15	3
Retail vacancy rate (use class A1)				
	As a proportion of all retail floorspace <i><u>Vacant+Refurbishment</u></i> <i>All</i>	As a proportion of retail floorspace excluding space being built or refitted <i><u>Vacant</u></i> <i>All</i>	As a proportion of all retail units <i><u>Vacant+Refurbishment</u></i> <i>All</i>	
October 2019	18.3%	18.3%	7.7%	
June 2018	17.7%	17.2%	7.7%	
June 2016	2.8%	2.8%	7.0%	
Sept 2015	3.0%	2.7%	6.0%	
April 2014	1.8%	1.2%	4.3%	
August 2013	3.9%	3.3%	5.9%	
January 2011	6.6%	4.9%	6.8%	
January 2010	7.1%	6.6%	9.3%	
July 2008	5.6%	5.7%	7.7%	

Large District Centres

54. Direct comparison in changes over the plan period is difficult for the Large District Centres (LDCs) as there have been changes to the areas covered with the re-designation of Riverside. Retail floorspace at Riverside is included in these statistics from August 2013 onwards, following the removal of Riverside from the primary shopping area in the adopted JCS (March 2011) and its re-designation as a Large District Centre. Map 4 shows the extent of the LDCs.
55. The vacant available floorspace in the LDCs is 3.3% which is a decrease from 2016 and 2018's figures of 5.4%. Since the current designation of LDCs in 2013 there has been an upward trend in vacancy rates and this is the first time since then that vacancy rates have fallen. 3.3% is regarded as a low figure for shopping areas which do not form a central part of the city's retail offer. LDC retail vacancy rates 'as a proportion of all retail floorspace' have also decreased from 6.7% in 2018 to 3.5% in 2019.
56. The percentage of vacant retail *units* in the LDCs has decreased since 2018 (from 11.4% to 10.2%) but this is higher than it was in 2016, 2015 and 2014. The difference between vacant floorspace and vacant units would suggest that the larger units are faring well but that the smaller units are harder to find and retain retailers.
57. The overall amount of floorspace in A1 retail use has decreased by 445m² and there has been a decrease in 3 units in the LDCs since 2018.
58. Encouragingly, Riverside is fully let and relatively close to the city centre but shopping trips remain largely car-based. The routes to be established within the emerging 'St Anne's Quarter' development will provide new retail units and cafés creating a more attractive walking and cycling link between Riverside and the city centre.
59. The Magdalen Street, Anglia Square & St Augustine's LDC has a relatively low floorspace vacancy rate of 6.7% (down from 11.6% in 2018) which is very competitive when compared to the GB national average retail vacancy rate of 13.0% (GB Retail and Leisure Market Analysis H1 2019 Update, Local Data Company, published September 2019¹¹). This centre has repositioned itself as a niche area of speciality/ethnic retailers and restaurants. This adheres to the recommendations within the Retail and Leisure Topic Paper (2013) which refers to "... specialist retail areas... in which the aim is to continue recent success by promoting smaller scale, independent retailers". The Magdalen Street and Anglia Square traders association (MATA) continues to operate in the area; however the annual Magdalen Street Celebration events have unfortunately been unable to run over the past few years, there are hopes that this may return in future years.
60. Anglia Square is subject to proposals for comprehensive re-development. A 10 year planning consent has been granted for the area underneath the flyover on Magdalen Street and the application for the redevelopment of Anglia Square itself will be determined by the Secretary of State in 2020 following a call in. If

¹¹ Local Data Company, "GB Retail and Leisure Market Analysis, H1 2019 Update" (2019)

permission is granted this area may be subject to significant levels of change and regeneration over the coming years.

Table 5: Large District Centres (Magdalen Street, St Augustine's Street, Anglia Square & Albion Way Riverside)

Retail floorspace (use class A1)				
	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
October 2019	32,164	31,043	1,071	50
June 2018	32,609	30,421	1,748	440
June 2016	32,353	30,534	1,750	69
Sept 2015	32,353	31,237	1,047	69
April 2014	32,647	31,594	784	269
August 2013	32,602	31,256	301	1,045
January 2011	18,314	14,934	3,311	69
July 2010	18,218	14,947	3,202	69
January 2010	18,239	14,811	3,359	69
July 2009	18,289	15,049	3,031	209
July 2008	18,139	15,017	3,031	91
Retail units (use class A1)				
	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
October 2019	137	123	13	1
June 2018	140	124	14	2
June 2016	139	125	13	1
Sept 2015	139	129	9	1
April 2014	140	130	8	2
August 2013	77	67	7	3
January 2011	135	107	27	1
July 2010	134	109	24	1
January 2010	135	106	28	1
July 2009	136	112	22	2
July 2008	135	111	22	2
Retail vacancy rate (use class A1)				
	As a proportion of all retail floorspace <i>$\frac{\text{Vacant} + \text{Refurbishment}}{\text{All}}$</i>	As a proportion of retail floorspace excluding space being built or refitted <i>$\frac{\text{Vacant}}{\text{All}}$</i>	As a proportion of all retail units <i>$\frac{\text{Vacant} + \text{Refurbishment}}{\text{All}}$</i>	
October 2019	3.5%	3.3%	10.2%	
June 2018	6.7%	5.4%	11.4%	
June 2016	5.6%	5.4%	10.0%	
Sept 2015	3.4%	3.2%	7.2%	
April 2014	3.2%	2.4%	7.1%	
August 2013	4.1%	1.0%	13%	
January 2011	18.5%	18.1%	20.0%	
July 2010	18.0%	17.6%	17.9%	
January 2010	18.8%	18.4%	20.7%	
July 2009	17.7%	16.6%	16.2%	
July 2008	16.7%	16.8%	16.0%	

Rest of the City Centre

61. This area covers all shops within the city centre which are not included in the defined areas discussed above. There have been some boundary changes which were first reflected in the 2014 monitor. As such, the figures prior to 2014 are not directly comparable with current figures.
62. The vacant available *floorspace* in the rest of the city centre has decreased significantly from 12% in 2018 to 5.9% in 2019. The rest of the city centre retail vacancy rates 'as a proportion of all retail floorspace' have also decreased significantly from 15% to 6.4% over the same period.
63. The percentage of vacant retail *units* in the rest of the city centre has more than halved from 25 units (18.5%) in 2018 to 12 units (9.2%) in 2019.
64. The overall amount of floorspace in A1 retail use has decreased by 164m², and reduced by 5 units in the 'rest of the city centre' since 2018.
65. These figures suggest that the larger units are faring well and although there has been a significant uptake in units over the monitoring period which has resulted in the lowest floorspace vacancy rates in this area since 2008 and lower than average vacancy rates for the city centre, some of the smaller units are still struggling to find and retain retailers in the lesser known shopping streets which lie outside of the defined areas.

Table 6: Rest of city centre

Table of Retail of City Centre

Retail floorspace (use class A1)				
	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
October 2019	13,670	12,792	813	65
June 2018	13,834	11,769	1,658	407
June 2016	14,387	12,629	1,758	0
Sept 2015	14,475	12,711	1,676	88
April 2014	14,164	11,430	2,591	143
August 2013	17,084	14,738	920	1,426
January 2011	17,400	14,495	2,880	25
July 2010	17,500	13,524	3,559	417
January 2010	17,593	14,240	3,353	0
July 2009	17,702	13,655	4,047	0
July 2008	17,786	13,310	3,761	765
Retail units (use class A1)				
	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
October 2019	130	118	11	1
June 2018	135	110	23	2
June 2016	137	125	12	0
Sept 2015	138	125	12	1
April 2014	144	124	19	1
August 2013	157	137	12	8
January 2011	168	144	23	1
July 2010	192	167	23	2
January 2010	172	145	27	0
July 2009	173	146	27	0
July 2008	171	143	26	2
Retail vacancy rate (use class A1)				
	As a proportion of all retail floorspace <i><u>Vacant+Refurbishment</u></i> <i>All</i>	As a proportion of retail floorspace excluding space being built or refitted <i><u>Vacant</u></i> <i>All</i>	As a proportion of all retail units <i><u>Vacant+Refurbishment</u></i> <i>All</i>	
October 2019	6.4%	5.9%	9.2%	
June 2018	15%	12%	18.5%	
June 2016	12.2%	12.2%	8.8%	
Sept 2015	12.2%	11.6%	9.4%	
April 2014	19.3%	18.3%	13.9%	
August 2013	13.7%	5.4%	12.7%	
January 2011	16.7%	16.6%	13.7%	
July 2010	22.7%	20.3%	12.0%	
January 2010	19.1%	19.1%	15.7%	
July 2009	22.9%	22.9%	15.6%	
July 2008	21.1%	22%	15.2%	

District and Local Centres

66. Policy DM21 of the Development management policies plan establishes A1 retail use thresholds of 60% for district centres and 50% for local centres.
67. Vacancy rates in district and local centres focus on units only and have decreased to 8.1% from 8.5% in 2018 which follows the overall trend of vacancy rates within the city and indicates that local and district centre vacancy rates are both at a fairly healthy level within Norwich.

District Centres

68. Vacancy rates in the district centres have decreased from 11.7% in 2018 to 9.7% in 2019 whilst the total number of units has also decreased from 197 to 196. There has been an increase in the total number of units in some of the District Centres with, for example, the opening of the community centre within DC09 Hall Road. Within other centres some units have merged (for example the number of units in DC06 Earlham House has reduced by two due to two lots of mergers). The vacancy figures for District Centres show an overall gradual decline over recent years although there was an increase in 2018. There has been no change in the total number of non-retail units since 2018 and no change in the number of District Centres which exceed the 40% non-retail threshold set out in Development Management Policy DM21.
69. Bowthorpe district centre DC01 has had 4 units occupied since 2018 which has reduced its vacancy rate from 35.3% to 11.8%. This means that it is no longer the worst performing district centre in terms of vacancy. It does still have one of the highest non-retail rates; however there have been no further changes away from A1 since 2018.
70. Drayton Road district centre DC02 now has the highest vacancy rate with 20% of units being unoccupied (although there has been no change to the vacancy rate since the last monitoring period). The non-retail percentage rate is only 26.7% which is well clear of the 40% recommended maximum guideline.
71. Earlham House district centre DC06 was previously recognised as one of the poorest performing district centres in terms of vacancy rates in 2016. However, since that time the centre has benefitted from some refurbishment. In 2018, 15 of the 17 units were occupied and now, in 2019, all units are now fully occupied with there being two lots of mergers within this District Centre taking place within the monitoring period. This is now one of the best performing retail centres with the non-retail percentage rate also being low at only 20%.
72. There are two other district centres which have all of their units occupied which are The Larkman (DC07) and Hall Road (DC09) centres. Hall Road district centre DC09 was regarded as poor performing in both 2016 and 2018. A community centre has however now opened and there are currently no vacant units within this centre. 50% of the units however are non-retail use. DC08 Dereham Road/Distillery Square has also witnessed a reduction in vacancies with 36 of the 37 units being occupied. 35.1% of units are in non-retail use which is below the 40% non retail threshold.
73. In 2018, DC03: Eaton Centre had no vacancies but 2 of the 19 units are now vacant and there have also been increased vacancies in DC04 Plumstead Road, DC05 Aylsham Road/Mile Cross and DC10 Sprowston Road/Shipfield

which are all District Centres where the 40% non retail threshold has been exceeded. A new Lidl has opened adjacent to DC05 (Aylsham Road/Mile Cross) which is just outside of the District Centre boundary (so not counted as a unit within this monitoring report). It will be interesting to see over the next few years what impact this has upon the centre.

74. Of the 196 units in the 10 district centres 19 units are vacant which is a reduction from 23 vacant units in 2018. The percentage of non-retail units is 40.8% which continues the gradual decrease (positive) from recent previous monitoring. There was a reduction in non-retail units within DC05 (Aylsham Road/Mile Cross) whilst there was an increase in DC09 (Hall Road). There has been no change in the number of district centres which exceed the 40% non-retail threshold set out in Development management policy DM21 and this remains at seven of the ten which are as follows:

- DC01: Bowthorpe
- DC02: Drayton Road
- DC03: Eaton Centre
- DC04: Plumstead Road
- DC05: Aylsham Road/Mile Cross
- DC07: The Larkman
- DC09: Hall Road
- DC10: Sprowston Road/Shipfield

75. A number of these centres have non-retail percentages only just over 40%, so in many cases it would just take one or two units changing to retail to satisfy the policy ambition. However, applications locally and patterns nationally over recent years have shown that this is considered to be moving in the opposite direction with an increase in non-retail uses. In any case, it is recognised that some non-retail units such as restaurants and cafes, along with community, service and leisure uses can add to the vitality and viability of a retail centre.

Table 7: District Centres defined in the adopted Norwich Local Plan 2014

Ref No	Centre name	Total units	Vacant units	% vacant/ annual change		Non retail units	% non-retail	
DC01	Bowthorpe	17	2	11.8%		8	47.1%	
DC02	Drayton Road	15	3	20%		4	26.7%	
DC03	Eaton Centre	19	2	10.5%		10	52.6%	
DC04	Plumstead Road	31	5	16.1%		14	45.2%	
DC05	Aylsham Road/ Mile Cross	21	3	14.3%		9	42.9%	
DC06	Earlham House	15	0	0.0%		3	20.0%	
DC07	The Larkman	13	0	0.0%		6	46.2%	
DC08	Dereham Road/ Distillery Square	37	1	2.7%		13	35.1%	
DC09	Hall Road	8	0	0.0%		4	50.0%	
DC10	Sprowston Road/ Shipfield	20	3	15.0%		9	45.0%	
TOTAL		196	19	9.7%		80	40.8%	

Key

Vacancy rate is **unchanged** since last survey

Vacancy rate is **up** since last survey

Vacancy rate is **down** since last survey



Proportion of A1 retail units is **ABOVE** 60%

Proportion of A1 retail units is **BELOW** 60%



Local centres

76. Table 8, below, shows vacancy rates and percentage of non-retail units for the 28 local centres.
77. Of the 323 units, the number of vacant units is 23, representing an increased vacancy rate of 7.1% in 2019 compared to the 2018 figure of 6.5%. The vacancy rate is however lower than it was in 2016 where 7.5% of units were unoccupied. Half of the local centres are fully occupied (14 out of 28) and there has been an increase of 1 no. units since 2018.
78. Improvements in vacancies since 2016 have taken place in LC01 Hall Road/Trafalgar Street, LC05 Suffolk Square, LC13 Catton Grove Road/Ring Road, LC28 Magdalen Road/Clarke Road and LC29 Aylsham Road/Copenhagen Way where the uptake of shops has now resulted in no vacancies. There has also been reduced vacancies within LC14 Magdalen Road, and LC30 St Stephens Road. The local centres which have had increased vacancies during the monitoring period are LC06 Unthank Road, LC11 Aylsham Road/Boundary Road, LC15 Sprowston Road/Silver Road, LC18 Earham West Centre, LC19 Colman Road/The Avenues LC24 Witard Road and LC25 Clancy Road.
79. The percentage of non-retail units across all of the centres is 45.2% which is the same as in 2018. This average figure remains comfortably below the 50% threshold. 22 of the 28 centres have a proportion of A1 retail units above the 50% policy target and are policy compliant. 5 sit at the recommended 50% threshold; 17 are below the threshold and are not policy compliant.
80. Six local centres have exceeded the DM21 policy threshold and have greater than 50% non-retail uses. These centres are listed below and are the same six centres as in 2018
- LC06: Unthank Road;
 - LC07: St Augustine's Gate;
 - LC12: Woodcock Road;
 - LC15: Sprowston Road/Silver Road
 - LC26: UEA; and
 - LC29: Aylsham Road/Copenhagen Way.
81. The following local centres are recorded as having exactly 50% non-retail. Any changes of use of existing A1 units to non-retail uses will cause the DM21 policy threshold to be exceeded:
- LC02: Hall Road/Queens Road
 - LC11: Aylsham Road/Boundary Road
 - LC14: Magdalen Road
 - LC17: Bishop Bridge Road
 - LC28: Magdalen Road/Clarke Road

82.LC02: Hall Road/Queens Road is a new addition; whilst LC10: Aylsham Road/Glenmore Gardens has dropped off the list of centres which has exactly 50% non-retail.

83.Overall, the district and local centres continue to perform their function and to offer an appropriate range of local services and facilities, with small food stores, where present, being most important to their success.

Table 8: Local Centres¹² defined in the adopted Norwich Local Plan 2014

Ref No	Centre name	Total units	Vacant units	% vacant/ annual change		Non retail units	% non-retail	
LC01	Hall Road/ Trafalgar St	7	0	0.0%		1	14.3%	
LC02	Hall Road/ Queens Road	28	1	3.6%		14	50.0%	
LC03	Hall Road/ Southwell Road	7	0	0.0%		3	42.9%	
LC04	Grove Road	14	1	7.1%		5	35.7%	
LC05	Suffolk Square	9	0	0.0%		4	44.4%	
LC06	Unthank Road	42	4	9.5%		22	52.4%	
LC07	St Augustine's Gate	8	2	25.0%		6	75.0%	
LC08	See footnote							
LC09	Aylsham Road/ Junction Road	8	2	25.0%		1	12.5%	
LC10	Aylsham Road/ Glenmore Gardens	13	0	0.0%		6	46.2% %	
LC11	Aylsham Road/ Boundary Road	12	2	16.7%		6	50.0%	
LC12	Woodcock Road	7	0	0.0%		4	57.1%	
LC13	Catton Grove Road/Ring Road	12	0	0.0%		4	33.3%	
LC14	Magdalen Road	14	1	7.1%		7	50.0%	
LC15	Sprowston Road/ Silver Road	7	1	14.3%		5	71.4%	
LC16	See footnote							
LC17	Bishop Bridge Road	8	0	0.0%		4	50.0%	

¹² Local centres at **Dereham Road/Distillery Square** (previously LC08) and **Sprowston Road/Shipfield** (previously LC16) were redesignated as district centres following the development of new anchor foodstores and renumbered as DC08 and DC10 respectively in the 2014 local plan. They are listed in table 7 above. The local centre at **St Stephens Road** newly designated in that plan (LC30) falls partly within and partly outside the city centre. The retail floorspace within that part of the local centre is included within the floorspace and unit totals in Table 6.

Ref No	Centre name	Total units	Vacant units	% vacant/ annual change		Non retail units	% non-retail	
LC18	Earlham West Centre	20	2	10.0%		9	45.0%	
LC19	Colman Road/ The Avenues	16	3	18.8%		3	18.8%	
LC20	Colman Road, The Parade	11	1	9.1%		5	45.5%	
LC21	Woodgrove Parade	9	0	0.0%		3	33.3%	
LC22	St John's Close/ Hall Road	11	0	0.0%		3	27.3%	
LC23	Tuckswood centre	5	0	0.0%		1	20.0%	
LC24	Witard Road, Heartsease	9	1	11.1%		3	33.3%	
LC25	Clancy Road, Heartsease	5	1	20.0%		2	40.0%	
LC26	UEA	9	0	0.0%		7	77.8%	
LC27	Long John Hill	5	0	0.0%		1	20.0%	
LC28	Magdalen Road/ Clarke Road	8	0	0.0%		4	50.0%	
LC29	Aylsham Road/ Copenhagen Way	5	0	0.0%		4	80.0%	
LC30	St Stephens Road	14	1	7.1%		9	64.3%	
TOTAL		323	23	7.1%		146	45.2%	

Key

Vacancy rate is **unchanged** since last survey

Vacancy rate is **up** since last survey

Vacancy rate is **down** since last survey



Proportion of A1 retail units is **ABOVE** 50% policy target

Proportion of A1 retail units is **BELOW** 50% policy target

Proportion of A1 retail units is **AT** 50% policy target



Conclusions

84. The 2018 retail monitor suggested that Norwich was experiencing a number of challenges in terms of vacancy levels, but the picture has been more positive over the past 12 months or so with vacancy rates decreasing in the city centre as a whole. Vacancy rates in particular have fallen in the Large District Centres and the rest of the city centre and, although the number of vacant units within the primary retail area have increased, there has been a reduction in available vacant floorspace. The secondary area has seen slight increases in vacant floorspace.
85. Over the past 12 months there has however been a significant reduction in the amount of retail floorspace within the city centre with retail floorspace decreasing by 6,231 sqm (2.7%). This decrease is greater than the last 10 years combined. The significant reduction in retail floorspace can largely be attributed to the diversification of the recently rebranded Castle Quarter (formally Castle Mall) where there has been the opening of a number of leisure uses which now occupy some of the larger units.
86. All of the retail frontages in the Primary area remain within the recommended minimum percentage of A1 use as set out in the 'Main Town Centre Uses and Retail Frontages' Supplementary Planning Document (2014). A number of the frontage zones have actually seen a small increase in the percentage of A1 frontage since 2018 but the most significant change has been within the Castle Quarter where the percentage of A1 frontage has reduced from 95.6% to 85.2%. Vacancy rates have however fallen within Castle Quarter from 26% to around 18% in the same period.
87. As can be seen from Table 9 below, between 2018 and 2019 the city centre has seen a trend of falling vacancies but has also seen a reduction in A1 floorspace and unit numbers. The 2018 report showed a continuation of a gradual increase in both vacancies and floorspace whereas this survey has shown a reversal in vacancy rates whilst an acceleration in the loss of retail floorspace. Local and district centres have also performed well during the monitoring period and although vacancy rates have increased in local centres they are still lower than they were in 2016.
88. The retail sector both nationally and within Norwich has experienced a lot of challenges in recent years brought about by changing consumer behaviour driven by technology and prevailing economic conditions. These challenges will have ongoing impacts for the viability of some retail businesses.
89. It is also important to acknowledge that there are many changes that can take place within retail centres without the direction of the council (i.e. temporary and permanent changes of use of small retail units). The added flexibility within retail centres could reduce vacancy rates and provide a wider range of amenities and services but this flexibility is most beneficial in areas which have experienced high long-term vacancy rates.
90. Despite a reduction in retail floorspace and footfall, Norwich remains a robust and thriving retail centre in the East of England. To continue this relative success, the council may need to identify other ways to influence and cultivate the retail offer of Norwich given the potential challenges faced, including working closely with Norwich BID and other key stakeholders.

Table 9: 'At a Glance' The direction of travel of vacancy rates and retail floorspace in Norwich since 2018

Area	Available vacant floor space	All vacant floor space including refurbishment	Number of vacant Units	Overall Floor Area	Overall units
City Centre	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Primary Area	↓	---	↑	↓	↓
Secondary Area	↑	↑	---	↓	↓
Large District Centres	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Rest of city centre	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
District Centres	N/A	N/A	↓	N/A	---
Local Centres	N/A	N/A	↑	N/A	↑

Key

↑ = increase

↓ = decrease

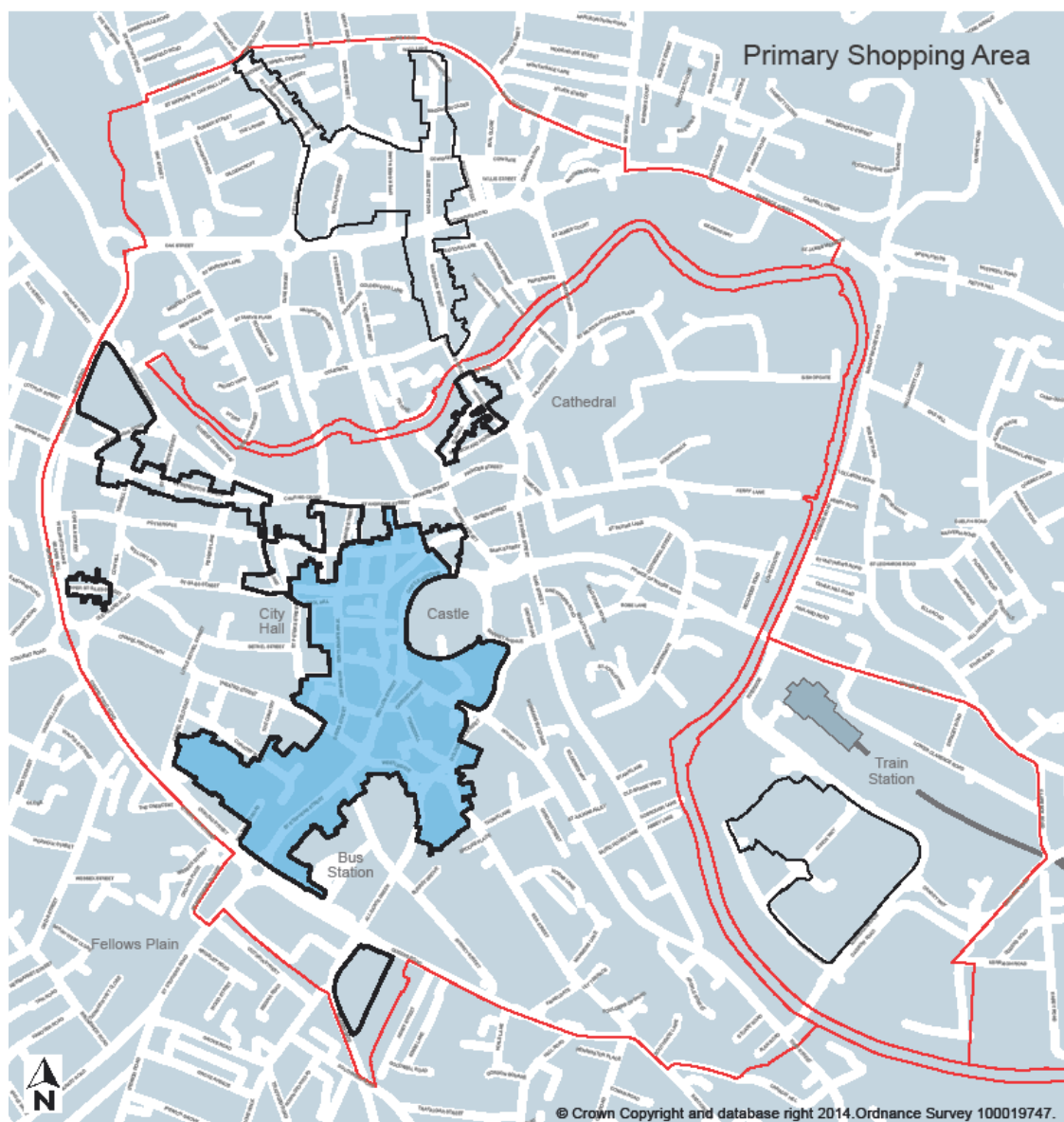
Red = Moving in a negative direction

Green = Moving in a positive direction

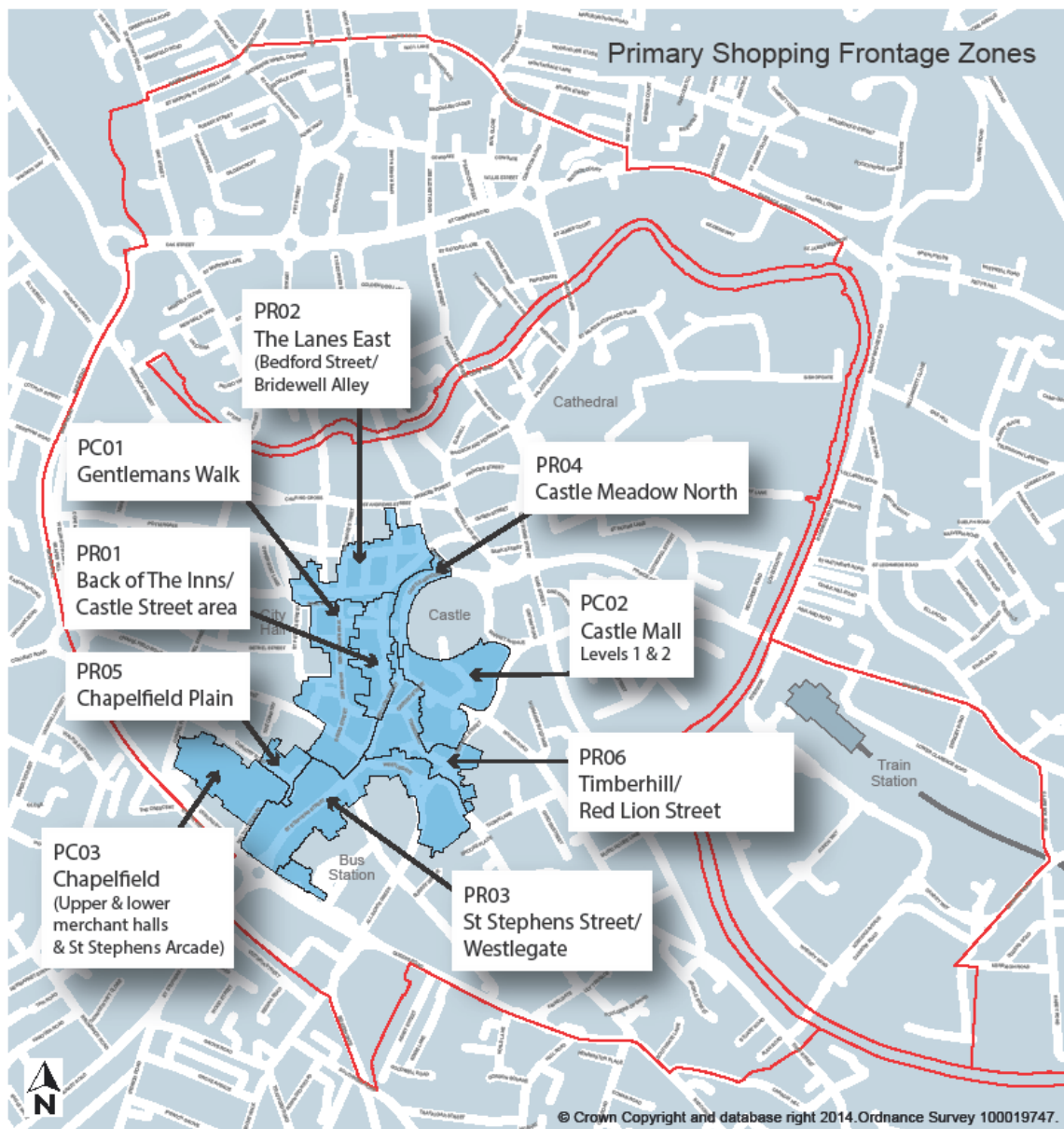
Grey = No change

Supporting Maps

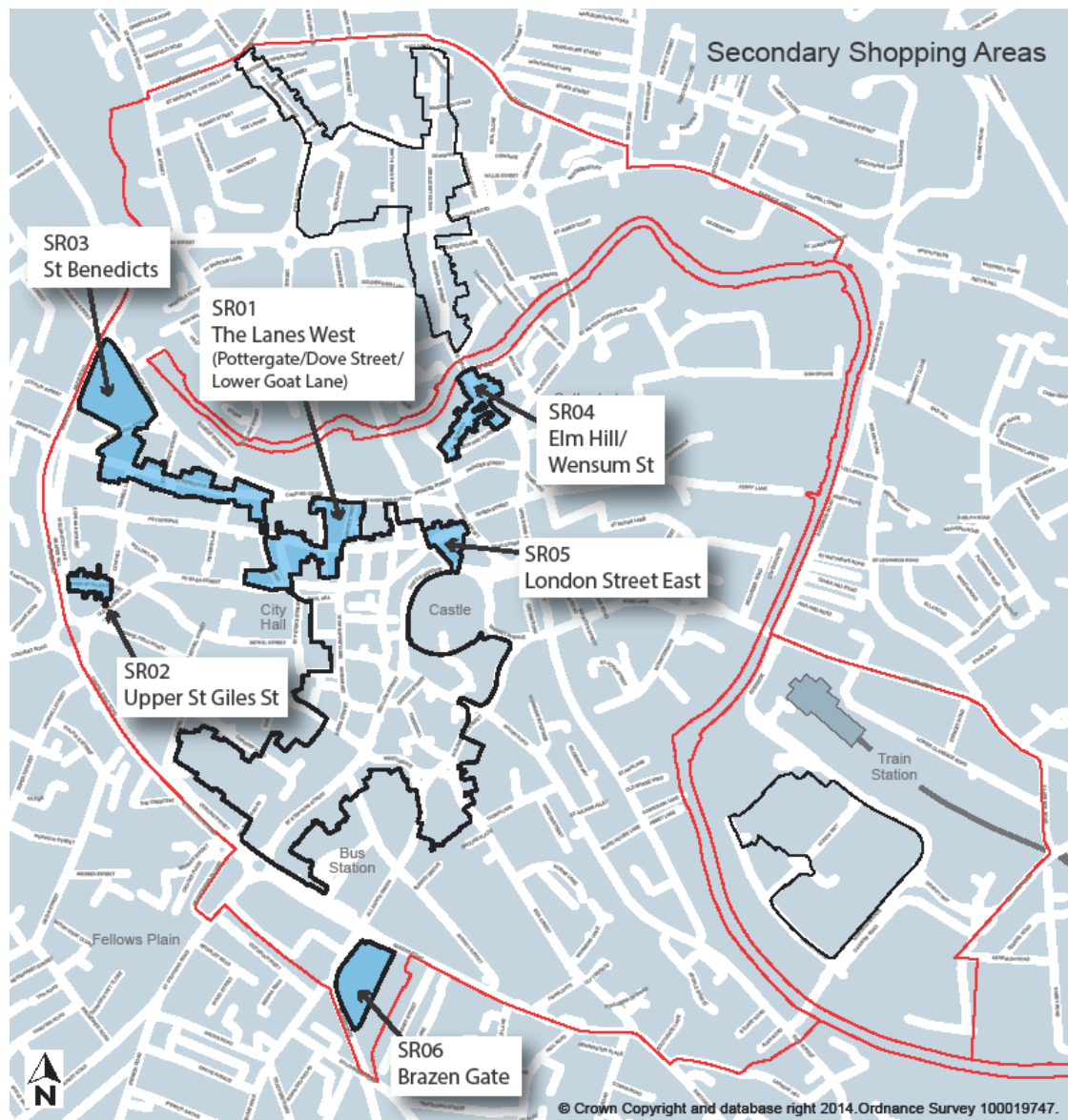
Map 1: Primary shopping area



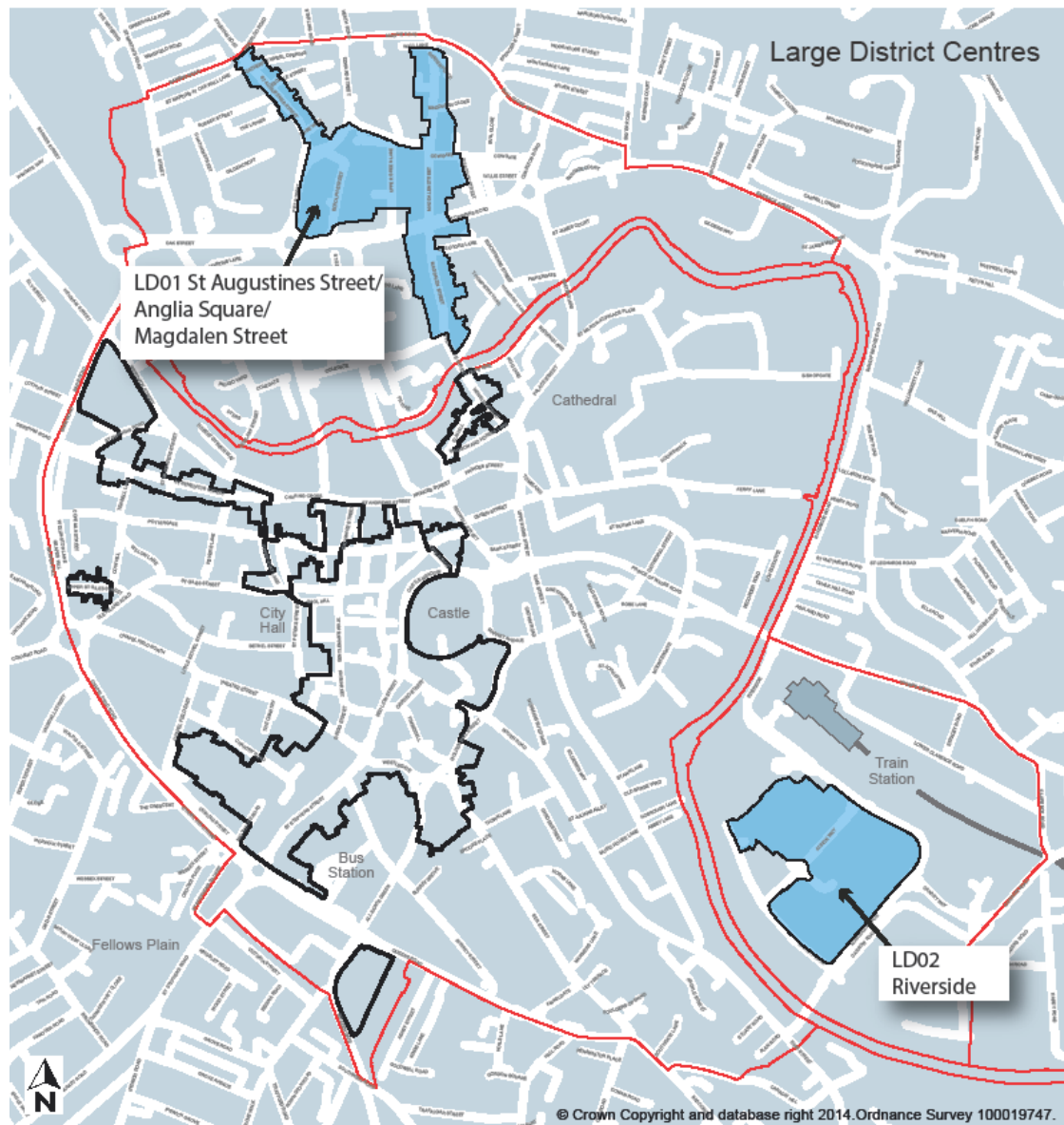
Map 2: Primary area frontage zones



Map 3: Secondary shopping areas



Map 4: Large district centres (Magdalen Street, Anglia Square, St Augustine's Street & Riverside)



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