

**Report to** Sustainable Development Panel  
19 October 2016  
**Report of** Head of Planning  
**Subject** Retail Monitor 2016

**Item**

**5**

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**Purpose**

To report the findings of the 2016 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 taking into consideration market demands and trends.

**Recommendation**

To note the findings of the 2016 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:** None directly

**Wards:** All wards

Cabinet member: Councillor Bremner – Environment and sustainable development

**Contact officer(s)**

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**Background documents**

None

## **Report**

### **Introduction**

1. This report presents the findings of the 2016 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 in June 2016. This report updates members from the last monitor produced in September 2015.
4. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states in paragraph 23 that planning policies should be "positive, promote competitive town centre environments... provide for customer choice and a diverse retail offer, and reflect the individuality of town centres".
5. 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 (GNPD). The plan covers the period from 2008 to 2026.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. 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 DM 21 which apply specific thresholds for retail uses in each retail area of the city.
9. These policies are also supported by the main town centre uses and retail frontages supplementary planning document which was adopted concurrently with the plan.

### **Main findings of the 2016 Retail Monitor**

10. The Norwich City Centre Shopping Floorspace Monitor and Local and District Centres Monitor (June 2016) is attached as Appendix 1. The main findings of the monitor are that:
  - a) Vacant floorspace in the city centre has risen to 5.8% from 2015's figure of 4.9%. This is still a relatively low figure;

- b) Vacant units in the city centre has risen slightly from 11.1% to 11.4% but this is still a relatively low figure and compares favourably to the national city centre average of 11.7% (Local Data Company, September 2015);
- c) The percentage of vacant units is highest in the primary area (14.0%) but this figure is affected by the refurbishment works going on at Castle Mall;
- d) Most of the primary area retail frontage zones are performing well in terms of their retail function (the proportion of shops being similar to or higher than 2015) except PR01: Back of the Inns/Castle Street and PR02: The Lanes East (Bedford St/Bridewell Alley) which have shown a reduction in the proportion of shops in the retail frontage since 2015;
- e) Retail vacancies have also increased in the secondary retail areas and the large district centres since 2015, but the vacancy rates are low when compared with the situation at the start of the plan period in 2008;
- f) In the rest of the city centre (streets outside the defined areas), vacant unit rates have fallen slightly since 2015 and across the whole plan period. Vacant floorspace has increased, though, suggesting that it is the larger units which are struggling to find and retain retailers in these areas; and
- g) Vacancy rates in the ten existing district centres have increased on average from 6.8% to 9.6% since 2015. Vacancy rates in the 28 local centres have slightly increased on average from 7.2% to 7.4% since 2015. Vacancy rates vary considerably within each of the district and local centres but generally the centres continue to perform their function and to offer an appropriate range of local services and facilities, with food stores being most important to their success.

## Conclusions

11. The 2016 monitoring figures show that the city's retailing offer remains healthy and is relatively positive when compared with previous years' monitors and national averages. There has been a notable rise in vacancy rates in district centres this year. Whilst this appears to just be a one-off blip, the council will continue to closely monitor the performance of district centres in order to protect and enhance their value.
12. 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.
13. It is therefore important that the council investigates other possible ways to cultivate and support the retail offer of Norwich. One such possibility would be to develop a City Centre Strategy. Such a strategy would need to consider additional ways to bolster the city's retail offer. This option is currently being considered and officers will brief members at the earliest opportunity.



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



Survey of June 2016



# Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Policy Context .....	4
Retailing in Norwich .....	5
<b>Main Findings .....</b>	<b>6</b>
City Centre Overview .....	6
The Primary Area: Retail Vacancy .....	8
The Primary Area: Retail Frontages.....	10
The Secondary Area .....	12
Large District Centres .....	14
Rest of the City Centre.....	17
District and Local Centres .....	19
<b>Conclusions.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Supporting Maps .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Contact Information .....</b>	<b>29</b>

## Introduction

### Policy Context

1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states in paragraph 23 that planning policies should be “positive, promote competitive town centre environments... provide for customer choice and a diverse retail offer, and reflect the individuality of town centres”.
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)<sup>1</sup>, 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 Augustines 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 the prior notification procedure and permanently. Of particular impact is the removal of the need for planning permission for change of use from A1

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<sup>1</sup> 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



retail to A2 professional services (i.e. banks). 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.

8. This document presents the results of the most recent survey of the city centre and district and local shopping centres. It provides monitoring details for 2015/2016 on these thresholds and on retail vacancy rates. This monitoring data is used both to assess the performance of policies and to assist their implementation.

### **Retailing in Norwich**

9. Norwich city centre is a thriving retail and visitor destination in terms of retail spend and attractiveness and has maintained its position as 13<sup>th</sup> best performing retail centre nationally (source: CACI). The city centre is the most accessible and sustainable location in the greater Norwich area for retail, leisure, office, cultural and tourism related development.
10. Retail uses are critical in underpinning the city centre's continued vitality and viability. However, an appropriate diversity of other town centre uses such as restaurants, cafés, financial services, leisure, cultural uses and offices help to support the economic vitality and health of the city centre for the community and visitors throughout the day and evening.
11. Regular monitoring of change in retail frontages ensures that any thresholds applied remain relevant and necessary. The survey data reported here was collected in June 2016 over a 1 week period. The data reported is based on the frontages as defined in appendix 4 of the Development management policies plan.

## Main Findings

### City Centre Overview

12. City centre retail vacancy rates have increased slightly since the last survey in September 2015.
13. The vacant available *floorspace* in the city centre as a whole is 5.8%, a rise from 2015's figure of 4.9%. This has reduced significantly from the worst figure in the plan period of 12.4% in 2010. While the long-term picture appears healthy, this survey shows a rise in vacant floorspace within the city centre with vacancy rates increasing year-on-year since 2014.
14. The percentage of vacant *units* has risen to 11.4% which is one of the highest figures in the plan period but compares favourably to a national city centre average of 11.7% (Local Data Company, September 2015). However, direct comparison with national rates is difficult due to methodological differences between surveys.
15. Overall retail floorspace in the city centre has essentially remained stable with an increase of 0.01% since September 2015. There have been no significant retail developments within the city centre in the past 12 months.
16. Recent years have seen a trend towards a diversification of uses within the city centre with a particular increase in the number of cafes and restaurants on offer. There has been a 2.2% decrease in retail floorspace since the start of the plan period. Although this runs counter to the aims of JCS policy 11 (to increase the amount of retailing in the city centre), it is 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.
17. The city centre is undergoing some major traffic changes 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. The works to the public realm on Westlegate are now complete and improve access to the Ber Street and All Saints Green areas.
18. 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 2.2% loss in retail floorspace is nevertheless considered favourable against the national picture. An updated retail study to assess Norwich's current retail needs is an early priority to inform the emerging Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP).
19. Recent figures from the Norwich Business Improvement District (BID) report that the shopping centre is experiencing an increase in footfall and that there are a number of major retailers looking to open new stores in the city.
20. Table 1, below, provides city centre overview data on retail floorspace, enabling comparison over the time period of the plan.

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

Retail floorspace (use class A1)				
	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
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
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><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>	
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 Sept 2015	Increased by 225 sqm (0.01% increase)			
Since July 2008	Decreased by 5,133 sqm (2.2% decrease)			

## The Primary Area: Retail Vacancy

21. 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.
22. The *floorspace* vacancy rate is 5.7% in the primary retail area. This is a significant decrease in vacant floorspace from the peak vacancy rate of 11.7% in 2010, but is a slight increase on 2015's figure of 5.0%.
23. The current vacancy rate for retail *units* is 14.0%, down slightly from 2015's figure of 14.1% which was the highest figure in the plan period. This figure being higher than the floorspace vacancy figure implies that the smaller shops continue to be more difficult to let in the primary area. Changes to permitted development rights at a national level are intended to encourage a wider range of uses in smaller shops, although there has been little evidence of a widespread take up of these rights in the primary area. It may therefore be an issue related to rental values or the viability of small businesses in general.
24. The figures have been affected by the fact that Castle Mall is at the latter stages of a comprehensive refurbishment. Many of the units are currently being refitted and are expected to be occupied in the near future.
25. Some current and upcoming works are expected to have a positive effect on vacancy rates in the primary area. Such works include the pedestrianisation of Westlegate and the refurbishment of parts of Castle Mall. As such, vacancy rates may fall in the long term.
26. Table 2, below, provides retail floorspace data for the primary area.

**Table 2: Primary shopping area**

Retail floorspace (use class A1, sqm, net)				
	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
<b>June 2016</b>	<b>155,389</b>	<b>143,867</b>	<b>8,883</b>	<b>2,639</b>
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
<b>June 2016</b>	<b>562</b>	<b>484</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>7</b>
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><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>	
<b>June 2016</b>	<b>7.4%</b>	<b>5.7%</b>	<b>14.0%</b>	
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**

28. 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).
29. Table 3 provides data on the percentage of retail uses in the primary area retail frontage zones in June 2016. 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 healthy.
30. Changes to the percentage of A1 retail in these retail frontages over the past year have been mixed.
31. The percentage of A1 retail frontage within the primary retail area core frontage zones has remained unchanged. The percentage within two of the frontage zones (PR01 and PR02) has fallen slightly since 2015 due to a few changes of use from retail to cafés and restaurants but these retail frontages still remain at safe levels and well above their minimum thresholds.

**Table 3: Primary Area Retail Frontage Zones - Retail frontages in September 2015 (green denotes increase in A1 retail since 2015, red denotes decrease)**

Frontage zone <sup>2</sup>	Total frontage (m)	Total non-retail frontage June 2016	% A1 retail June 2016 (frontage)	% A1 retail Sept 2015 (frontage)	Minimum threshold (from 2014 SPD)
<b>Primary retail area core frontage zones</b>					
PC01: Gentleman's Walk/ Haymarket/Brigg Street	872.9	101.4	88.4%	88.4%	80%
PC02: Castle Mall (Levels 1 & 2)	875.1	38.3	95.6%	95.6%	80%
PC03: Chapelfield, upper & lower Merchants Hall and St Stephens Arcade	686.0	19.5	97.2%	97.2%	80%
<b>Frontage zones in the rest of the primary retail area</b>					
PR01: Back of the Inns/Castle Street area	729.6	220.0	69.8%	70.5%	65%
PR02: The Lanes east (Bedford Street/Bridewell Alley)	1125.4	231.9	79.2%	79.8%	70%
PR03: St Stephens Street/Westlegate	784.6	105.6	86.5%	86.1%	80%
PR04: Castle Meadow north	N/A <sup>3</sup>				
PR05: Chapelfield Plain	N/A <sup>4</sup>				
PR06: Timberhill/Red Lion Street	434.2	129.8	70.1%	70.1%	60%

<sup>2</sup> See Section 9 for definitions and maps.

<sup>3</sup> There is no defined frontage in this zone

<sup>4</sup> There is no defined frontage in this zone

## The Secondary Area

32. Map 3 shows the extent of the secondary area.
33. In the secondary area the vacant *unit* rate is 7.0%, up from 6.0% in 2015. The *floorspace* vacancy rate in the secondary area is 2.8%, up from 2.7% in 2015. The 2016 figures compare favourably across the whole monitoring period and are significantly lower than the 2008 figures of 7.7% and 5.7% respectively. Vacancy rates are lowest in the secondary area compared to all other areas of the city.
34. The secondary area includes some streets which provide a specialist mix of shops and have remained resilient to the economic downturn. For instance, Upper St Giles Street has retained an interesting mix of independent shops, bakeries, art galleries, restaurants and hairdressers. This survey reports that all 22 units are occupied.
35. 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, sqm, net)				
	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
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
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>	
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

36. Limited direct comparison in changes over the plan period is possible for the Large District Centres (LDCs) as there have been changes to the areas covered with the re-designation of Riverside. Map 4 shows the extent of the LDCs.
37. Vacant floorspace in the LDCs now stands at 5.4%. This is an increase on 2015's figure of 3.2%. The 4 surveys which have been carried out since the re-designation of Riverside in 2013 show an upward trend in vacancy rates but nevertheless 5.4% is still a relatively low figure for shopping areas which do not form a central part of the city's retail offer.
38. 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 Annes Quarter' development will provide new retail units and cafés creating a more attractive walking and cycling link between Riverside and the city centre.
39. The Magdalen Street, Anglia Square & St Augustines LDC has a moderate floorspace vacancy rate of 10.5% which is still relatively low when compared to similar fringe areas in other towns and cities. This figure of 10.5% is also significantly lower than the vacancy rates in the early part of the plan period (16.6-18.4%). This centre has repositioned itself as a thriving area of speciality/ethnic retailers and restaurants. A new traders association has been established and the Magdalen Street Celebration events have been ongoing since 2010. 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".
40. Anglia Square is under new ownership and as such, proposals for a comprehensive development are expected to emerge soon.

**Table 5: Large District Centres (Magdalen Street, St Augustines Street, Anglia Square & Albion Way Riverside<sup>5</sup>)**

Retail floorspace (use class A1)				
	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
<b>June 2016</b>	<b>32,353</b>	<b>30,534</b>	<b>1,750</b>	<b>69</b>
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
<b>June 2016</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1</b>
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><math>\frac{\text{Vacant} + \text{Refurbishment}}{\text{All}}</math></i>	As a proportion of retail floorspace excluding space being built or refitted  <i><math>\frac{\text{Vacant}}{\text{All}}</math></i>	As a proportion of all retail units  <i><math>\frac{\text{Vacant} + \text{Refurbishment}}{\text{All}}</math></i>	
<b>June 2016</b>	<b>5.6%</b>	<b>5.4%</b>	<b>10.0%</b>	
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%	

<sup>5</sup> 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

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

41. 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.
42. In the rest of the city centre the vacant *unit* rate is 8.8%, down from 9.4% in 2015. The *floorspace* vacancy rate in the secondary area is 12.2%, up from 11.6% in 2015. This suggests that the smaller units are faring well but that the larger units are 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**

Retail floorspace (use class A1, sqm, net)				
	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
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
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><math>\frac{Vacant+Refurbishment}{All}</math></i>	As a proportion of retail floorspace excluding space being built or refitted  <i><math>\frac{Vacant}{All}</math></i>	As a proportion of all retail units  <i><math>\frac{Vacant+Refurbishment}{All}</math></i>	
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**

43. Policy DM21 of the Development management policies plan establishes A1 retail use thresholds of 60% for district centres and 50% for local centres.
44. Vacancy rates in district and local centres have increased from 2015 and are now 9.6% and 7.5% respectively. This follows the overall upward trend of vacancy rates within the city but district and local centre vacancy rates still remain at fairly healthy levels.

## **District Centres**

45. A new district centre opened at DC09 Hall Road earlier this year with a new Asda superstore and a number of smaller retail and community units. Due to the establishment of large retail stores, two new district centres were included in 2015's retail monitor (DC08 & DC10 used to be local centres). As such, it is not possible to make direct comparisons with previous years.
46. Vacancy rates in the district centres have increased from 6.8% to 9.6% in the past year but this vacancy figure still remains at a fairly healthy level. Out of the 198 units in the 10 district centres, 19 units are vacant.
47. The three poorest performing district centres in terms of vacancy rates in 2016 were DC06: Earlham House, DC09: Hall Road and DC01: Bowthorpe. DC01 has had 2 further units become vacant this year so its total vacancy rate has increased from 5.9% to 17.6%. Vacancy rates within DC06 have continued to increase from 17.6% to 23.5%. The new district centre (DC09 Hall Road) has only recently opened and 2 of the 7 units are yet to be occupied and so the vacancy rate is 28.6%.
48. Two of the district centres (DC03: Eaton Centre & DC07: The Larkman) have all of their units occupied.
49. Of the 190 units in the district centres, the percentage of non-retail units is 42% which is very similar to the 2015 figure of 42.1%. Seven of the ten district centres have exceeded the 40% non-retail threshold set out in Development management policy DM21:
  - DC01: Bowthorpe
  - DC03: Eaton Centre
  - DC04: Plumstead Road
  - DC05: Aylsham Road/Mile Cross
  - DC07: The Larkman
  - DC09: Hall Road
  - DC10: Sprowston Road/Shipfield
50. This is unchanged from the 2015 retail monitor which identified the same 6 centres exceeding the threshold (DC09 is new to this list but only opened this year). However, many 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. In any case, it is recognised that some

non-retail units such as restaurants and cafes 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	3	17.6%		8	47.1%	
DC02	Drayton Road	15	1	6.7%		4	26.7%	
DC03	Eaton Centre	19	0	0.0%		10	52.6%	
DC04	Plumstead Road	31	2	6.5%		15	48.4%	
DC05	Aylsham Road/ Mile Cross	22	1	4.5%		10	45.5%	
DC06	Earlham House	17	4	23.5%		4	23.5%	
DC07	The Larkman	13	0	0.0%		6	46.2%	
DC08	Dereham Road/ Distillery Square	37	4	10.8%		14	37.8%	
DC09	Hall Road	7	2	28.6%		3	42.9%	
DC10	Sprowston Road/ Shipfield	20	2	10.0%		9	45.0%	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>198</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>9.6%</b>		<b>83</b>	<b>42%</b>	

### 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

51. Table 8, below, shows vacancy rates and percentage of non-retail units for the 28 local centres.
52. Of the 324 units, the number of vacant units is 24, representing a vacancy rate of 7.4% compared to the 2015 figure of 7.2%. Over half of the local centres are now fully occupied (16 out of 28).
53. LC10: Aylsham Road/Glenmore Gardens is now fully occupied and has performed particularly well with a decrease in vacancy from 16.7% to 0.0%.
54. LC19: Colman Road/The Avenues had a particular sharp growth in vacancy with an increase from 6.3% to 18.9%.
55. The percentage of non-retail units across all of the centres has decreased from 44.7% in 2015 to 43.4% this year. This average figure is well below the 50% threshold.
56. The DM21 policy threshold of not less than 50% retail has been exceeded in the following five local centres:
  - aLC06: Unthank Road;
  - LC07: St Augustine's Gate;
  - LC17: Bishop Bridge Road;
  - LC26: UEA; and
  - LC29: Aylsham Road/Copenhagen Way.
57. These are the same five centres which had exceeded the threshold in last year's monitor.
58. The following local centres are recorded as having exactly 50% non-retail. Any changes of use to non-retail uses will cause the policy threshold to be exceeded:
  - LC02: Hall Road/Queens Road
  - LC12: Woodcock Road
  - LC15: Sprowston Road/Silver Road
  - LC28: Magdalen Road/Clarke Road
59. Overall, the district and local centres continue to be 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. The Retail and Leisure Topic Paper (2013) states that "averaged over the period 2006-2011, vacancy rates are lower (5%) in those centres with convenience stores (of over 250 m<sup>2</sup>) compared to 6.5% in those without."

**Table 8: Local Centres<sup>6</sup> 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	2	28.6%		2	28.6%	
LC02	Hall Road/ Queens Road	28	3	10.7%		14	50.0%	
LC03	Hall Road/ Southwell Road	7	0	0.0%		3	42.9%	
LC04	Grove Road	14	0	0.0%		5	35.7%	
LC05	Suffolk Square	9	0	0.0%		4	44.4%	
LC06	Unthank Road	42	3	7.1%		22	52.4%	
LC07	St Augustine's Gate	7	1	14.3%		5	71.4%	
LC08	See footnote							
LC09	Aylsham Road/ Junction Road	8	2	25.0%		0	0.0%	
LC10	Aylsham Road/ Glenmore Gardens	12	0	0.0%		5	41.7%	
LC11	Aylsham Road/ Boundary Road	12	0	0.0%		3	25.0%	
LC12	Woodcock Road	6	0	0.0%		3	50.0%	
LC13	Catton Grove Road/Ring Road	12	1	8.3%		3	25.0%	
LC14	Magdalen Road	12	2	16.7%		5	41.7%	
LC15	Sprowston Road/ Silver Road	8	2	25.0%		4	50.0%	
LC16	See footnote							
LC17	Bishop Bridge Road	7	0	0.0%		4	57.1%	
LC18	Earlham West Centre	20	1	5.0%		9	45.0%	
LC19	Colman Road/ The Avenues	16	3	18.6%		4	25.0%	

<sup>6</sup> 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	
LC20	Colman Road, The Parade	11	2	18.2%		5	45.5%	
LC21	Woodgrove Parade	9	0	0.0%		3	33.3%	
LC22	St John's Close/ Hall Road	10	0	0.0%		3	30.0%	
LC23	Tuckswood centre	5	0	0.0%		1	20.0%	
LC24	Witard Road, Heartsease	9	0	0.0%		3	33.3%	
LC25	Clancy Road, Heartsease	5	0	0.0%		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	15	2	13.3%		10	66.7%	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>318</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>7.4%</b>		<b>138</b>	<b>43.4%</b>	

## Key

Vacancy rate is **unchanged** since last  
 Vacancy rate is **up** since last survey  
 Vacancy rate is **down** since last survey



Proportion of A1 retail units is **ABOVE** 50%  
 Proportion of A1 retail units is **BELOW** 50%  
 Proportion of A1 retail units is **AT** 50% policy

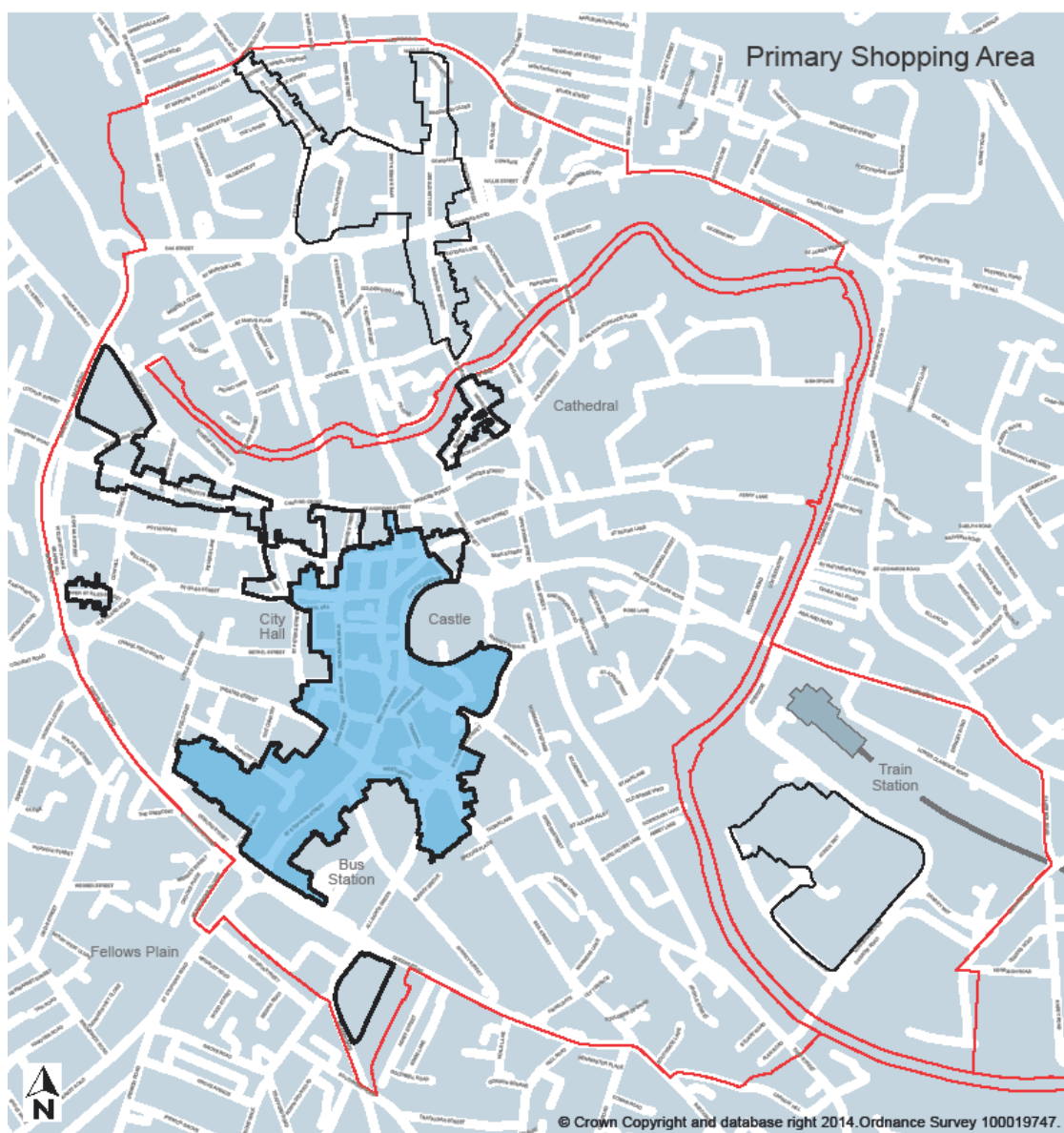


## **Conclusions**

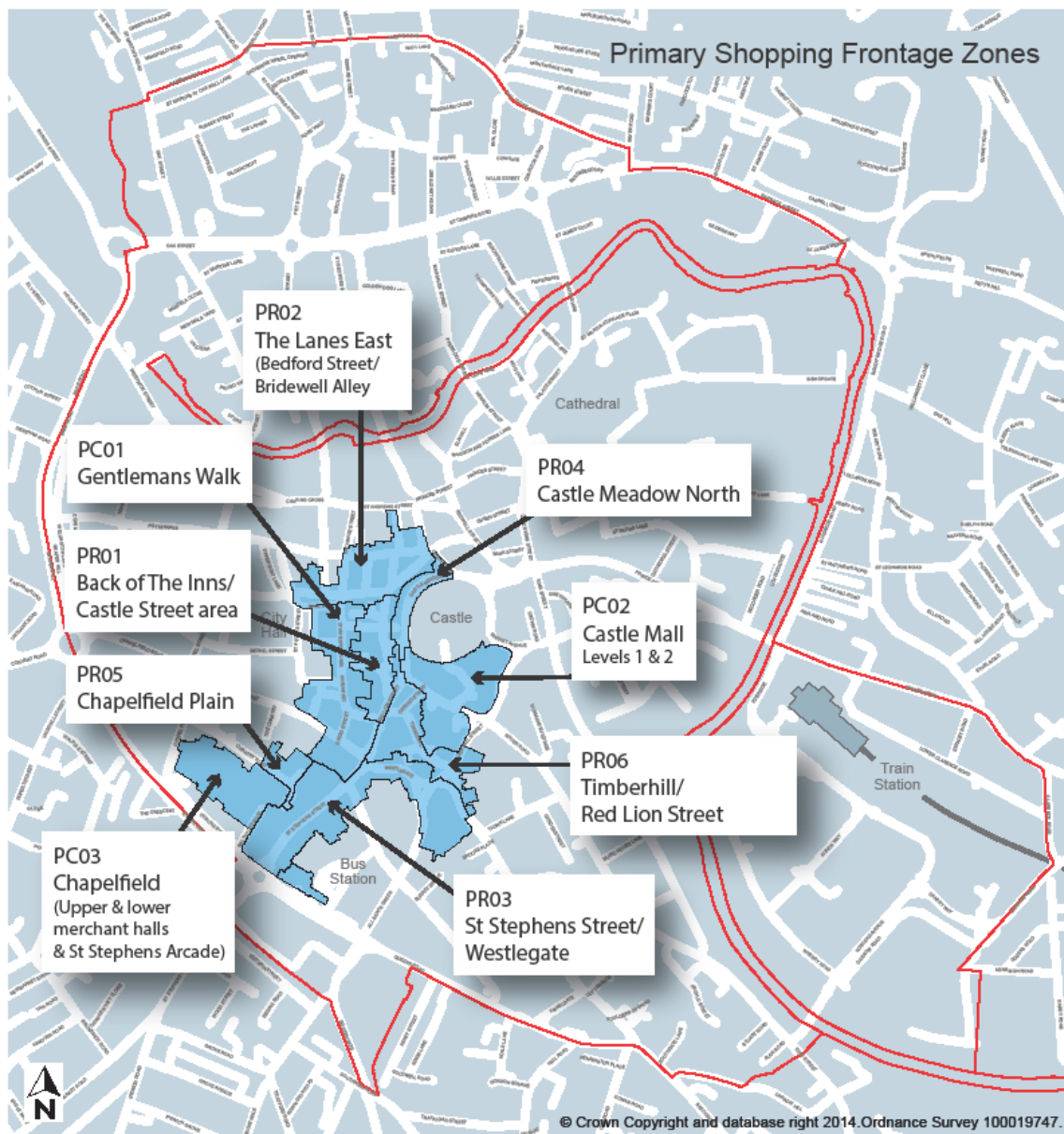
1. Overall, the survey suggests that retailing in Norwich has had a relatively successful year in parts of the city (most notably the secondary areas) but that the majority of the city has seen small rises in vacancy rates. Nationally, and in fact internationally, the growing popularity of online retailing is affecting the viability of traditional retail shops.
2. There has been a notable rise in vacancy rates in district centres this year. Whilst this appears to just be a one-off blip, the council will continue to closely monitor the performance of district centres in order to protect and enhance their value.
3. At this time of deregulation, it is important to acknowledge the changes that could take place within retail centres without the direction of the council (i.e. temporary 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. Despite modest increases in vacancies, Norwich remains a thriving retail centre and would not necessarily benefit from this deregulation.
4. As such, the council needs to identify other ways to influence and cultivate the retail offer of Norwich. The council is considering the potential benefits of developing a City Centre Strategy, possibly with the assistance of other interested parties such as the Business Improvement District (BID). Such a strategy would offer additional ways to bolster the city's retail offer.

## Supporting Maps

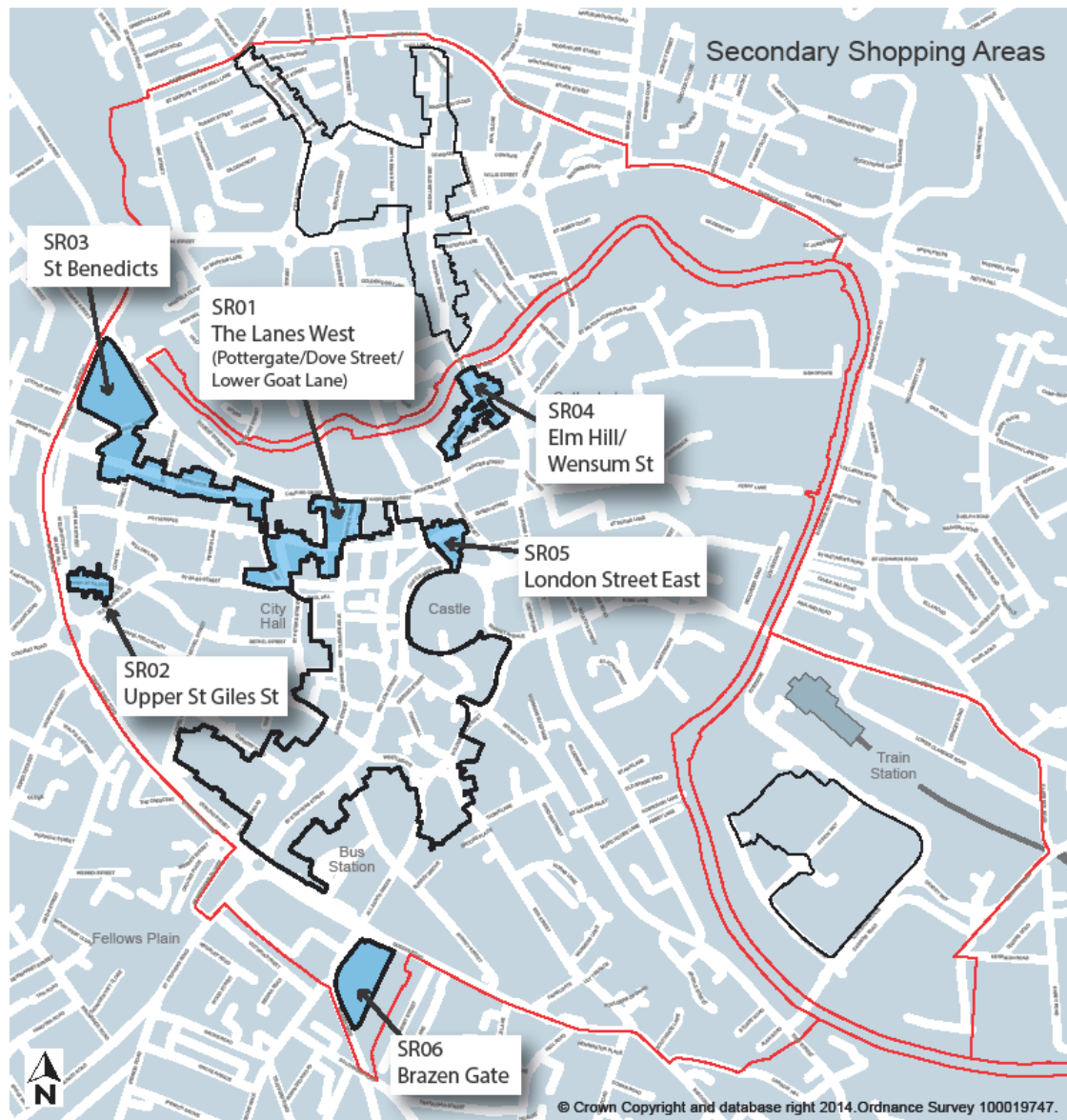
**Map 1: Primary shopping area**



**Map 2: Primary area frontage zones**

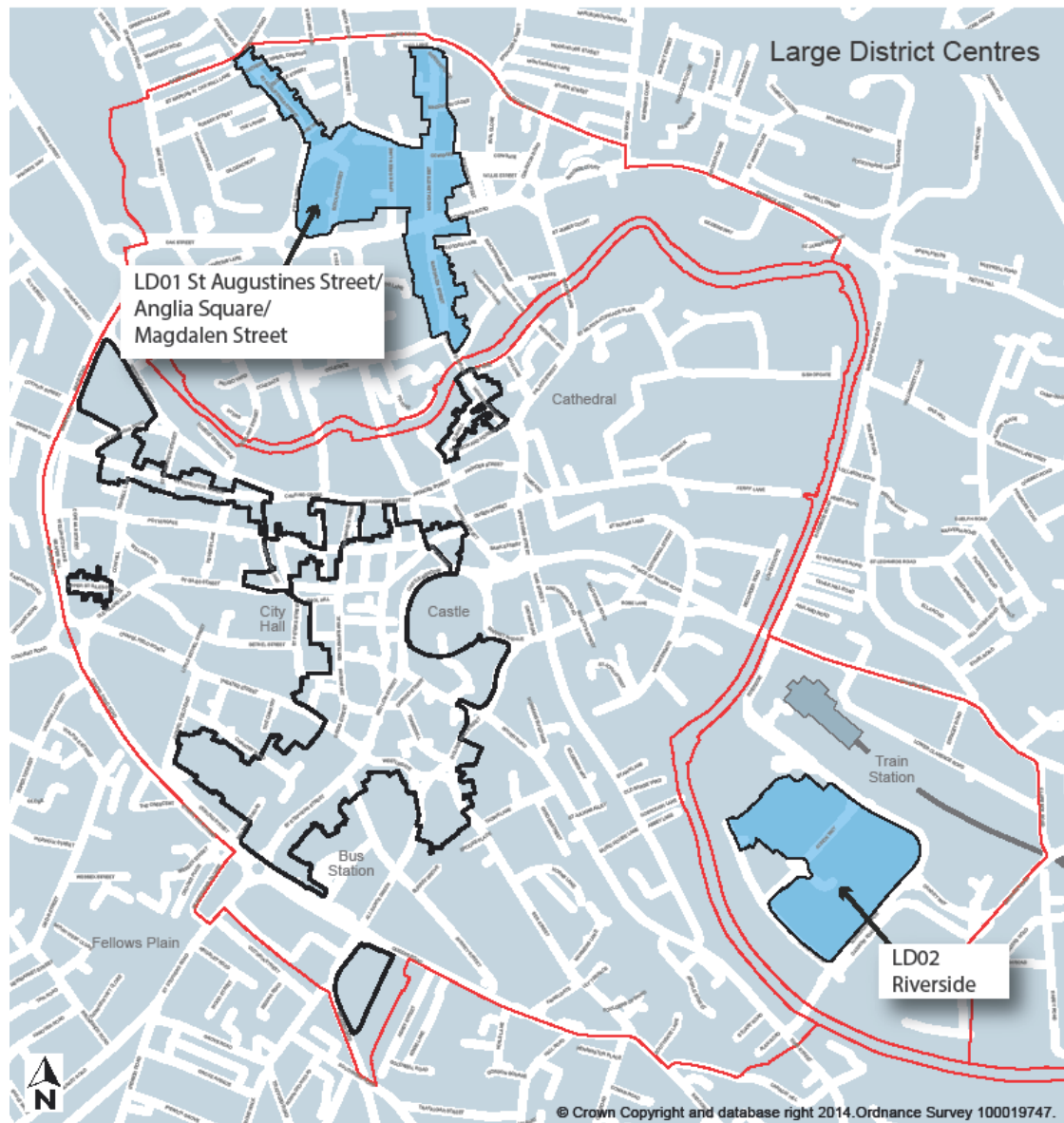


**Map 3: Secondary shopping areas**





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





## Contact Information

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