

## **Bassetlaw District Council response to Inspectors Action List**

### **Action 61 and Action 63 - Matter 9 – ST14 Town Centres**

BDC to provide a note on what changes have been made to the boundaries in ST13, particularly for Retford town centre. This is to be evidenced with maps (old and new boundary) and explanation.

Mr Barnett to submit his observations regarding the primary shopping area in Retford Town centre. BDC to scan and upload this to the website as an OTH document. Council to make comments in light of this.

#### **BDC Response**

The adopted Core Strategy defines the town centre and primary shopping area boundaries [BG-022].

The Bassetlaw Retail and Leisure Study 2017 [SS-015] made the following recommendations relating to these boundaries. Map extracts from the Retail Study showing the proposed boundaries for each town centre is attached in Appendix 1 of this note:

- Worksop - maintain the current extent of the town centre boundary, contract the boundary of the primary shopping area to the south of the centre (Map 1).
- Retford - the town centre designations for Retford are appropriate (Map 4).
- Harworth & Bircotes - extend the town centre boundary to the south of Scrooby Road to include Asda and Aldi, as well as the current town square proposal. Recommend that the current Harworth Local Centre boundary extend eastwards from the Blacksmith Arms Public House, along Main Street, to incorporate the Harworth Post Office. The primary shopping area should be defined to match the town centre boundary (Map 7).

Since then, national policy for town centres has evolved, the Use Classes Order and General Permitted Development Order has changed, the national retail market has experienced a restructure and demand for online shopping has significantly increased. The function and role of town centres has changed as a result.

The NPPF defines a primary shopping area as an area where retail development is concentrated. A town centre is defined as the area including the primary shopping area and areas predominantly occupied by main town centre uses within or adjacent to the primary shopping area. Retail development is identified as being within Class E (a).

The primary shopping areas in the Local Plan are defined to serve the day to day convenience and comparison needs of their populations as well as those of nearby settlements. The extent of each primary shopping area is influenced by: the presence of anchor stores/national chains e.g. Argos, Poundstretcher; prime rental levels, which can be an indicator of consumer demand; and, the size and mix of retail units in each part of the area. The town centre boundary takes into account the location and concentration of other town centre uses e.g. library, theatre. Vacancy rates and change of use are also used as indications of market and consumer demand.

The Bassetlaw Retail and Leisure Study 2017 [SS-015] states that for a primary shopping area to operate successfully, it is necessary for shops (in Class E (a)) to group together in order to enable shoppers to make comparisons and also to enable multiple purchases in a trip.

As such, the Local Plan aims to direct most retail development to the primary shopping areas in order to retain a retail function in an accessible location, to maintain vitality and viability and to avoid the area being diluted by too many non-retail uses, thereby contributing to a stronger

town centre. To ensure that such uses are able to benefit from the primary shopping area’s accessibility by alternative means of transport and to facilitate linked trips between the primary shopping area and the wider town centre, the Council considers that both boundaries should not be drawn too widely.

The Council monitors the mix of uses and vacancy rates in the three town centres – for the Core Strategy boundaries - annually (within the Authority Monitoring Report [PUB-004]). This information, taken with the evidence in the Retail Study has led the Council to re-define elements of the existing boundaries in the Local Plan. By doing so, the Council is promoting a positive, responsive and effective approach to town centres management and has accepted the changing nature of more peripheral areas.

Table 1 below summarises the changes between the Core Strategy boundaries [in BG-022] and those in the Local Plan. These are shown on the maps for each town in Appendix 1 (Core Strategy – existing, Local Plan – proposed).

<b>Town</b>	<b>Primary Shopping Area boundary</b>	<b>Town Centre boundary</b>
<b>Workshop</b>	Contract the boundary in the north and south to focus on the area where retail development activity is.	Contract the boundary on the periphery to reflect NPPF definition of town centre uses and to discount sites no longer in town centre use.
<b>Retford</b>	Broadly align. Slight extension of the southern boundary, otherwise minor boundary amends to align more closely with building/plot boundaries.	Contract the south western boundary and expand the eastern and southern boundaries to reflect NPPF definition of town centre uses and to discount sites no longer in town centre use.
<b>Harworth &amp; Bircotes</b>	Proposed to align with the extent of units in retail use.	Northern boundary broadly aligns, expand the southern boundary to reflect NPPF definition of town centre uses.

To reflect current retail conditions and the emphasis in the planning system to provide a positive and flexible approach to town centres the Plan does not identify retail frontages. The other purpose of the primary shopping area in Local Plan Policy ST14 is to protect ground floor E(a) uses in larger units that require planning permission to change use. This is important given that various Permitted Development Rights apply to change of use of smaller units in specific classes to alternative uses.

This approach is consistent with the NPPF and supports the Council’s approach to ensuring that other main town centre uses such as leisure, offices and secondary shopping take place within the wider town centre boundary and complement the retail focus within the primary shopping area.

The Annual Monitoring Report monitors the changes within the primary shopping area overall. However, to enable the position at Cannon Square, Retford to be understood the following breakdown is provided from the 2021-22 monitoring (undertaken in September 2022):

- Market Place: 34 units, of which 17 are in Class E (a) – 50%
- 1-13 Churchgate/2-14 Chapelgate: 14 units, of which 5 are in Class E (a) – 35%

NB: Market Place – aligns with Market Street and The Square [in OTH-03], 1-13 Churchgate/2-14 Chapelgate – aligns with Cannon Square [in OTH-03]

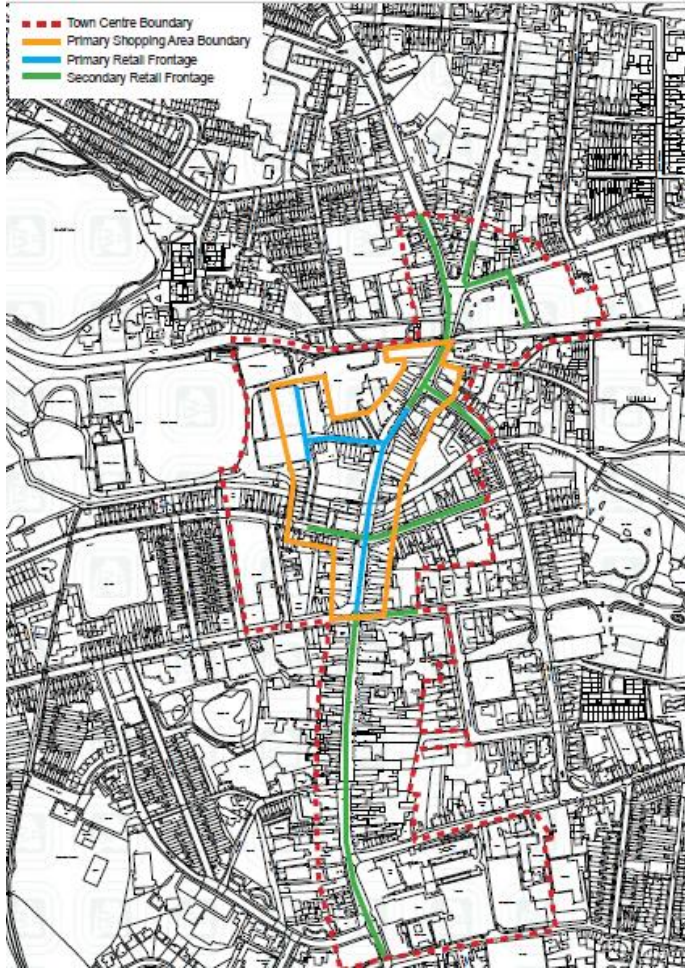
The Council’s view is that Cannon Square is a small area characterised by a mix of commercial uses, for example finance services and public houses as well as small-scale retail. Although not clear cut it is possible that this area may have lower rental levels than the primary shopping area. It also supports small-scale units which by definition may be able to change use without

the need for planning permission (subject to relevant legislation). Nevertheless it plays a valuable role in accommodating a diverse mix of town centre uses to support the role of the adjacent primary shopping area. This aligns with the Core Strategy and Retail Study which does not include Cannon Square within the primary shopping area.

In light of the survey results, the approach taken by the Retail Study, national policy and national legislation we're of the view that Cannon Square should remain within the town centre but outside the primary shopping area boundary.

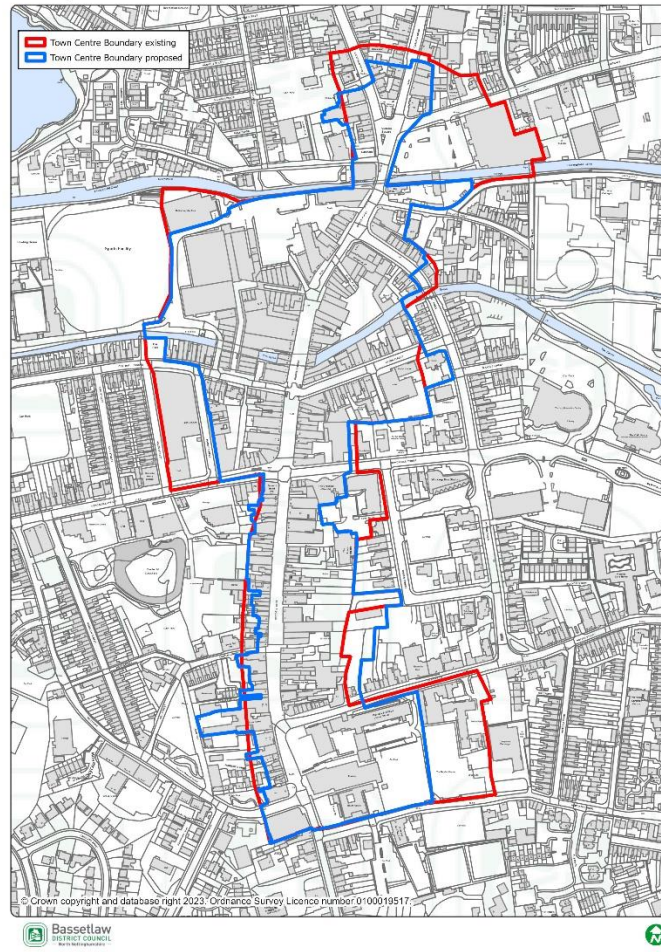


# Appendix 1 Workshop



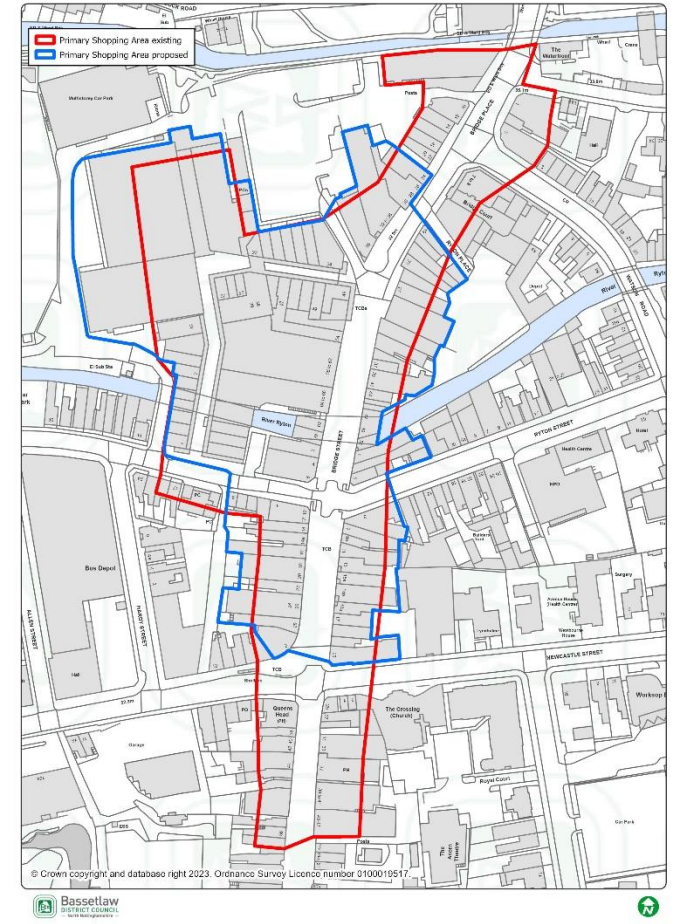
Map 1: Retail Study: proposed boundaries

Workshop



Map 2: Town Centre boundary: existing and proposed

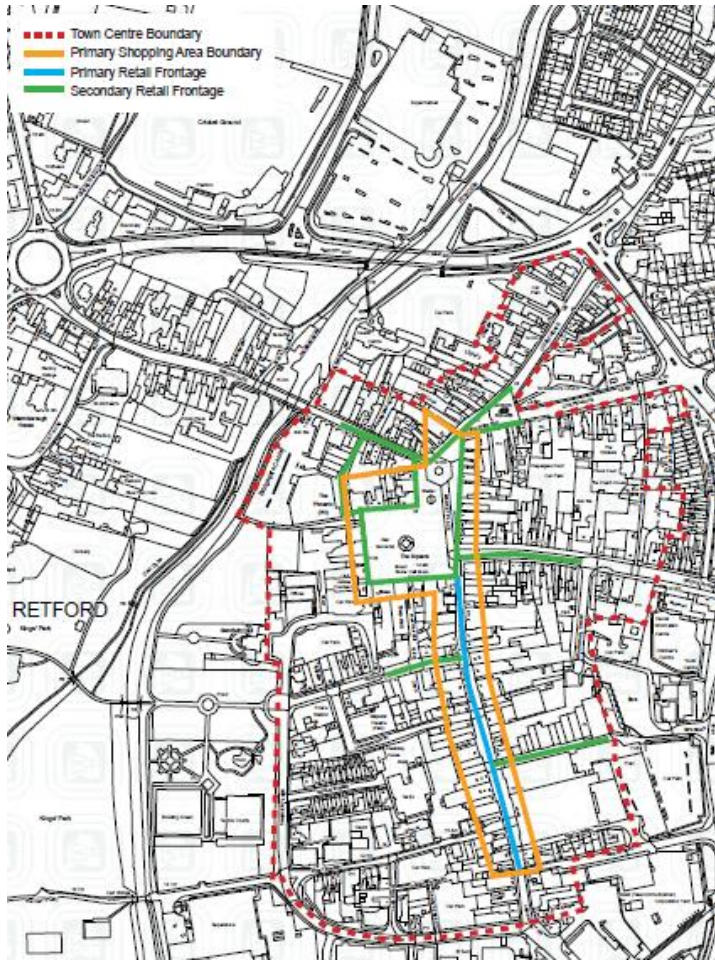
Workshop



Map 3: Primary Shopping Area boundary: existing and proposed

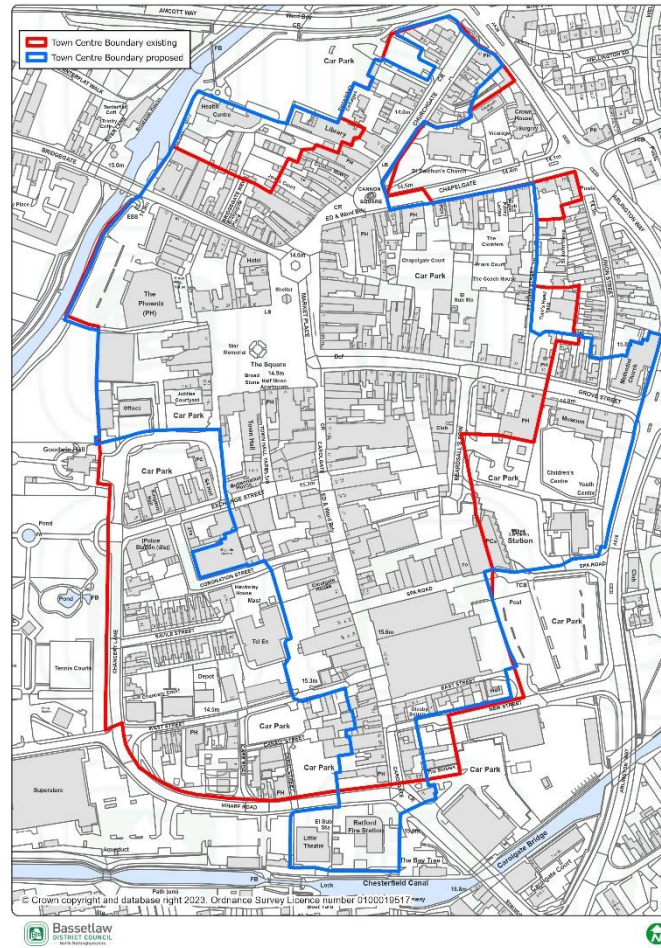


# Retford



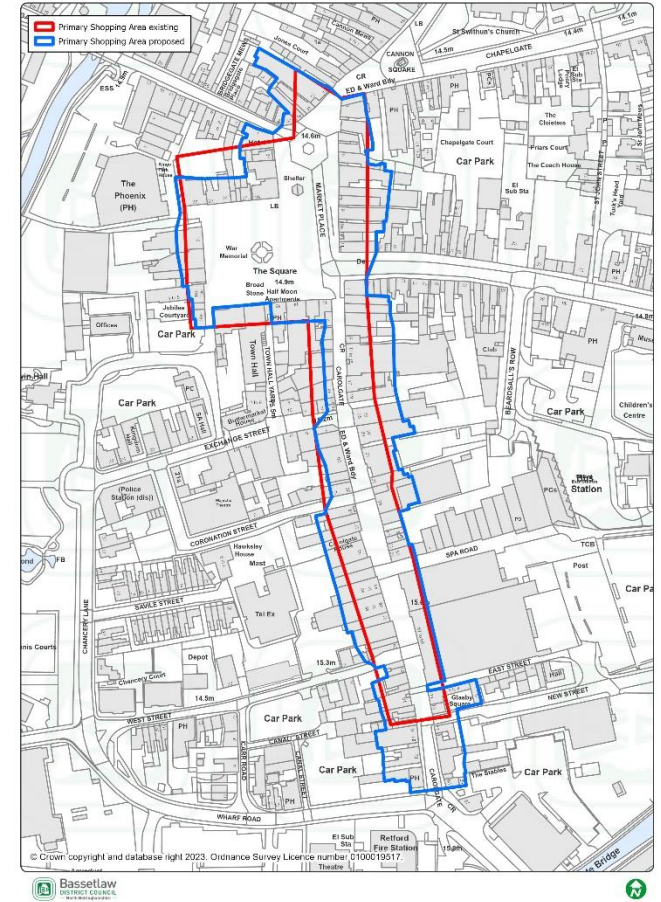
Map 4: Retail Study: proposed boundaries

## Retford



Map 5: Town Centre boundary: Core Strategy and Local Plan

## Retford



Map 6: Primary Shopping Area boundary: Core Strategy and Local Plan

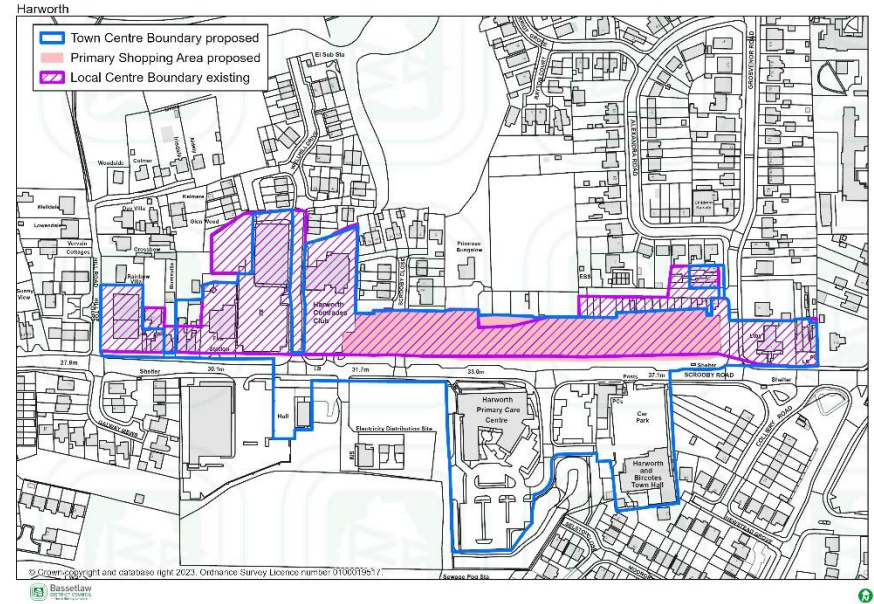


# Harworth & Bircotes



- Town Centre Boundary
- Local Centre Boundary
- Primary Shopping Area Boundary
- Primary Retail Frontage
- Secondary Retail Frontage

Map 7: Retail Study: proposed boundaries



Map 8: Core Strategy and Local Plan town centre and primary shopping area boundaries