NORWICH
City Council

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

Survey at October 2022

Contents

Introduction

1. Norwich city centre is the pre-eminent regional centre in the East of England, focused on a historic city centre with a wealth of heritage assets and an unrivalled historic and natural environment. It accommodates the majority of jobs, key services and economic, leisure and cultural facilities serving much of Norfolk and north Suffolk. It is within the top 15 retail destinations in the UK. The established approach to planning for Norwich city centre has been cited as an example of best practice by Government[1].
2. In order to get a picture of how our high street has changed over time and to help assess the performance of our planning policies and assist in their implementation, regular retail surveys are carried out of the city centre and Norwich's District and Local Centres. The last full retail floorspace monitor was carried out in July 2021 with surveys done of both the City Centre and the District and Local Centres. A report was written entitled Norwich City Centre Floorspace Monitor & Local & District Centres which reported how retail vacancy rates had risen significantly since October 2019 which was not a surprise given there had been three lockdowns and for much of the period footfall within the city was extremely low with people choosing to either shop locally or turning to online retailing.
3. Due to Norwich city centre seeing unprecedented change the decision was taken by Members to increase the frequency of monitoring and in order to gain some indication as to how our high street was recovering from the pandemic a survey was also carried out in March 2022 of the city centre retail area. A full report was not written although an update to the July 2021 was produced which was published on Norwich City Council's website. Surveys were not carried out of the District and Local Centres in March 2022 due to this being too resource intensive.
4. The key finding of the March 2022 survey was that there was a slight overall improvement in the number of vacant shop units and other than within the Large District Centre, the city was moving in a positive direction. In terms of vacant floorspace, parts of the city centre saw a reduction in vacancies whilst other areas continued to see an increase. This further supported the findings of the July 2021 survey that generally it is the smaller retailers (of which many are independents) that were performing better and were more resilient whereas many of the larger units remained vacant.
5. As has been the case nationally, it is clear that the covid pandemic impacted upon our high street and this report seeks to understand if and how the city has recovered since the final stage of easing covid restrictions on 19th July 2021.
6. The July 2021 report also for the first time gave vacancy rates for all town centre uses (such as financial and professional services, restaurants and cafes, drinking establishments, hot food takeaways, offices, medical and health services, sport and leisure uses and betting shops) as previous to this the main purpose of the reports had been to measure vacancy rates for retail only (formerly Use Class A1) and to provide data on the total amount of retail floorspace within the city centre. Particularly due to the changes in the Use Classes Order and the General Permitted Development Order (which are

[1] Greater Norwich Local Plan, Publication Draft Plan paragraph 309

explained later within this section), it is considered important to include other town centre uses as there is a general acceptance, including in government policy that high streets do need to evolve in order for them to thrive.

7. With the amount of total retail floorspace reducing year on year we now need to look at what contribution other town centre uses are making to the long-term vitality and viability of Norwich City Centre and it is hoped that this wider scope provides an improved understanding of the 'health' of the city centre overall and the impacts of current relaxations both on the city centre and more widely. Overtime we will be able to start to look at trends for all town centre uses as well as retail which should help assist with policy monitoring and help inform/ support initiatives such as a city centre strategy. This will enable us to look at our high street much more holistically.

Policy Context

Existing policy framework

8. The National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF 2021) states in paragraph 86 that planning policies and decisions should "supportthe role that town centres play atthe heartof 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 and instead it promotes flexibilityand diversification. It recognises the changing face of the high street and the need to take a different approach to retail planning policy in order to reinvigorateand 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. 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).[2] The plan covers the period from 2008 to 2026 and will be superseded by the Greater Norwich Local Plan which is due to be adopted in early 2024.

10. 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.

11. 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.

[2] 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

12. 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. The existing DM policies seek to retain a certain threshold of retail units within defined centres; however given changes to the Use Classes Order, General Permitted Development Order and the NPPF we acknowledge that a more flexible approach is going to be needed both when implementing the policies and during any future review. Nonetheless it is important to still monitor our existing policies going forward.

13. 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.

14. 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.

Recent government changes

15. Over the past couple of years changes have taken place to both the Use Classes Order and General Permitted Development Order which could have significant impacts upon Norwich's retail and town centre provision.

16. Firstly the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 puts uses of land and buildings into various categories known as 'Use Classes'. On 1st September 2020 a significant update to the Use Class Order took place. The changes saw a number of existing use classes replaced by a new 'Class E' (Commercial, businesses and services) which means that buildings used for any purposes within Class E can now change to any other use within Class E without the need for planning permission.

17. The government's aim is to simplify the system and to allow greater flexibility to both landlords and tenants to adapt to changing needs and to reflects the diverse range of uses in town centres. The following uses have now been revoked and have been replaced by Class E

    - A1 (retail)
    - A2 (Financial and Professional)
    - A3 (Café and Restaurant)
    - B1 (Business)
    - D1 (Clinics, Health Centres & Creches)
    - D2 (Leisure)

18. Not included within Class E are Drinking Establishments (A4), Hot Food Takeaways (A5), Cinemas and Bingo Halls (D2) which become 'sui generis' and will require full planning permission to change to any other use.

19. Class D (both D1 and D2) has also been revoked and uses that do not now fall within class E now fall within F1 and F2 which are as follows:

- F1 Learning and non-residential institutions
    - F1(a) Provision of education

    - F1(b) Display of works of art (otherwise than for sale or hire)
    - F1(c) Museums
    - F1(d) Public libraries or public reading rooms
    - F1(e) Public halls or exhibition halls
    - F1(f) Public worship or religious instruction (or in connection with such use)
    - F1(g) Law courts
- F2 Local community
    - F2(a) Shops (mostly) selling essential goods, including food, where the shop's premises do not exceed 280 square metres and there is no other such facility within 1000 metres
    - F2(b) Halls or meeting places for the principal use of the local community
    - F2(c) Areas or places for outdoor sport or recreation (not involving motorised vehicles or firearms)
    - F2(d) Indoor or outdoor swimming pools or skating rinks

20. A further important change that has occurred is the introduction of Class MA which is a new permitted development right to allow for the change of use from Class E (commercial, business and service use) to residential (class C3). This came into force on 1st August 2021. There are some limitations and conditions but in effect it means that many commercial premises in our retail centres can now change to residential without considering all material planning considerations. The government's intention is that this will help high streets to adapt and thrive; however the Council has concerns that this will mean that the Council has no ability to consider the impact that the loss of town centre uses will have upon the viability and vibrancy of our centres. The piecemeal loss of retail and town centre units could be a huge threat to the vitality and vibrancy of our high streets as once units are lost to residential they are unlikely to ever revert back to a town centre use.

Emerging policy

21. The Greater Norwich Local Plan is due to replace the Joint Core Strategy in early 2024 (subject to a successful examination). The policies within the GNLP seek to provide flexibility and recognises the trend for changing uses and functions in city centres. The aim of the plan is to ensure the centre provides an attractive location in which people can experience a complementary range of different uses which support the retail function as well as promoting diversification of services and facilities to ensure that vitality and vibrancy can be maintained throughout the day and evening.

22. Policy 6 places the city centre retail area at the top of the retail hierarchy, with the Large District Centres of Riverside and Anglia Square, Magdalen Street and St. Augustines providing a complementary role and meeting more day-to-day needs. The extent of, and more detailed policies for, the city centre retail area, and the primary and secondary retail areas within it, along with the Large District Centres, will continue to be set out in the existing development management policies.

23. In light of the rapidly changing retail picture, and based on recent trends, no sites have been reserved for retail development and it is anticipated that any additional comparison retail floorspace will primarily be accommodated through

the intensification of retail use on existing sites. The policy also prioritises vibrancy, activity and diversity of uses in defined retail areas outside of the defined primary retail area, permitting the use of redundantfloorspace for other uses, including the re-use of upper floors. The policy encourages the development of new leisure and cultural facilities, hotels and other visitor accommodation to support the delivery of a broader range of activities in the city centre and strengthen Norwich City Centre's role as a visitor and cultural destination.

24. This flexible long-term approach seeks to continue to promote a vibrant city centre in the context of the decline of high street shopping and the growth of online retailing which has been furtherimpacted by COVID-19 and its economic consequences.

25. The Norwich City Centre Future Strategy[3] prepared by the Norwich Business Improvement District endorses this approach. It acknowledges that a vibrant, diverse and accessible offer providing a range of different experiences for the visitor, alongside promotion of a strong and distinctive sense of place and identity, will be key to the long-term economic success of Norwich city centre.

[3] Norwich City Centre Future Strategy, The Retail Group on behalf of Norwich BID, November 2020

National picture

Headline figures	Retail and leisure vacancy rate	Retail only vacancy rates	Leisure only vacancy rates
National figures	14.0%	15.4%	10.6%

26. The Local Data Company provides regular analysis of town centres across Great Britain and they have recently published the retail and leisure market analysis for the first half of 2022 (H1 2022 retail and leisure trends analysis, published September 2022). This sets out how the country was beginning to return to normality after the pandemic and with all restrictions being lifted and with two years' worth of disposable income saved over the past couple of years, it was the ideal environment for a consumer. However with mounting costs, widespread inflation and supply chain issues it looks like H2 2022 will be unpredictable. The key findings from their most recent publication are as follows:

    (1) The latest data tells a story of continued recovery across all areas of the retail and leisure sector, with positive sentiment woven throughout the latest numbers.

    (2) H1 2022 saw fewer retail casualties compared to previous periods. The net change in units was -923 which is the best this figure has been since 2017 and well above pre pandemic levels. H1 2019 for example saw a net loss of -4,402. This reduction in net ch ange of units was largely down to a fall in closures (down 7% year on year) and openings were up 7.4% (their highest level for any H1 period since 2014).

    (3) A fall in all vacancy rates of 0.5% since H1 2021 marks the largest decline in vacancies since records began in 2013 (reduction from 14.5% in H1 2021 to 14.0% in H1 2022). The leisure vacancy rate dropped from 11.3% in H1 2021 to 10.6% in H1 2022 and the retail rate also saw a significant improvement reducing from 15.8% in H1 2021 to 15.4% in H1 2022.

    (4) Shopping centres still have the largest vacancy rate of any location type. They struggled in the last two years amid closure from several big-name brands and 18.9% of units still sit empty. High street vacancy rates on the other hand are 14.0% with retail parks having only 10.2% vacant units.

    (5) Independents continued to grow in H1 2022. Across Great Britain, independents experienced a net increase of 1,335 units, up from a net growth of 804 in H1 2021. Multiples saw an improvement in this period with 2,993 fewer units lost than in H1 2021 however there was still a net decline of -2,258 units in H1 2022.

    (6) Fast food takeaway was the fastest-growing subcategory for the second consecutive H1 period. Beauty salons come in second. Bars have also experienced a revival following the end of restrictions and the return of office workers. Convenience stores are also one of the top fastest growing categories. This continues to benefit from consumers shopping locally and more frequently. Pet shops made an entry into the top 10 for the first time

as pet ownership increased over the pandemic. The fastest declining categories include hairdressers, bookmakers, charity shops, banks and estate agents.

(7) Independents continued to be more resilient than multiples. This is encouraging for the independent sector particularly given initial fears about how the end of business rates relief and the commercial rent moratorium would affect independent occupiers. However with high inflations, rising fuel and energy costs and higher supply costs, independent retails will be under immense pressure to survive H2 2022.

(8) The Local Data Company predicts that vacancy rates will continue their downward trajectory, with the national vacancy rate reaching 15.1% for retail and 13.7% for retail and leisure combined in H1 2023. There is likely to however be a slow down in recovery as occupiers become more cautious with expansion.

(9) There are several factors which will impact upon net change in units. Households will need to rein in their spending as inflation outstrips wage growth. Retailers are also under pressure from supply-side factors, increasing energy costs and increase in the cost of products.

Main Findings for Norwich

City Centre Overview

Headline figures	Vacant floorspace	Vacant available floorsp ace (excluding refurbs)	Vacant units	Retail floorspace change (since March 22)
City Centre (Retail only)	14.2%	12.2%	12.6%	1.7% decrease

27. The retail monitor survey has traditionally measured vacancy rates in three different ways:

    a. Retail vacancy rate (Use Class A1) as a proportion of retail floorspace.

    b. Retail vacancy rate (Use Class A1) as a proportion of retail floorspace, excluding space being built or refitted.

    c. Retail vacancy rate (Use Class A1) as a proportion of retail units.

28. However due to changes to the Use Classes Order and to government policy and with our emerging polices identifying that there is a need for greater flexibility to allow our high streets to evolve in order for them to thrive, the report also now gives vacancy rates for all town centre uses too. This is measured in two ways, vacancies as a proportion of all floorspace and vacancy rates as a proportion of all units.

29. The vacant available retail *floorspace* in the city centre is 12.2% which is quite a significant decrease from July 2021's figure of 14.5% although it is still high when compared to a pre pandemic figure of only 5.5%. The July 2021 figure was the highest vacancy rate that we have seen in the plan period. Previously the highest figure in the plan period was 12.4% in 2010 which compares to the lowest figure of 4.2% which was experienced in 2014.

30. City centre retail vacancy rates 'as a proportion of all retail floorspace' have also decreased from 15.2% in July 2021 to 14.2% in October 2022. The pre pandemic level was 10.0%.

31. The percentage of vacant *units* has decreased from 14.1% in July 2021 to 12.6% in October 2022. This fall of 1.5% is significantly better than the decrease in vacancy rates that has taken place nationally. In H1 2021 national retail vacancy rates stood at 15.8% whereas in H1 2022 they had decreased by 0.4% to 15.4% (Local Data Company, September 2022[4]). Norwich therefore still compares very favourably to the average GB retail vacancy rate. However, direct comparison with national rates is difficult due to methodological differences between surveys and due to the surveys covering different areas i.e. national figures include high streets, shopping centres, retail parks and standalones in local neighbourhood parades.

32. In terms of all town centre uses, vacant floorspace currently stands at 15.4% (down from 16.2% in July 2021) and vacant units at 13.0% (down from 15.2% in July 2021). Compared to retail only this is 1.2% higher for floorspace and

[4] Local Data Company, "H1 2022 retail and leisure trends analysis" (September 2022)

0.4% higher for units. This suggest that by adding leisure uses (including cafes, restaurants, bars and takeaways) as well as financial, professional and other services the percentage of vacant units and floorspace increases. Whilst it is very difficult to compare with national figures due to the difference in surveys and methodology, the national picture is that leisure vacancy rates are lower than retail vacancy rates which does not necessarily seem to be the case in Norwich.

33. Overall the amount of retail floorspace in the city centre continues to decrease. Between July 2021 and October 2022, it reduced by nearly 6,000 sqm which is a 2.9% decrease. This is significantly more than between October 2019 and July 2021 where it reduced by only 1,534m² which was a 0.7% decrease. Over previous monitoring periods we have seen similar levels of reduction with for example between June 2018 and October 2019 the overall retail floorspace reduced by 6,231m² which was a 2.8% decrease.

34. The total number of retail units also reduced significantly from 971 in July 2021 to 947 in October 2022 which is a 2.5% decrease. Between October 2019 and July 2021 there was no change in the number of units despite floorspace decrease which suggested that it was the larger units that were changing away from retail whilst some of the smaller units were actually reverting back to retail use. Now it would appear that some of the smaller units are changing away from retail too.

35. Between July 2021 and October 2022 the loss of retail floorspace and units can largely be attributed to the change of use of several former shops within Castle Quarter to the job centre and other chan ges of use within Castle Quarter to leisure uses such as to escape rooms and indoor crazy golf. Other changes across the city centre have also contributed to the loss of retail and these include; a former retail unit changing to Burger King on Brigg Street, a lazer clinic opening in Chantry Place, a games room opening on Elm Hill, a climbing café opening on Magdalen Street, aesthetic clinics open ing on St Benedicts Street and St Giles Street and tattoo parlours opening on Rose Lane and St Benedicts Street. Generally over the past few years the loss of retail has largely been due to changes of use to other town centre uses rather than to residential or due to demolition.

36. In terms of refurbishment, there has been a significant increase in under construction/refurbishment floorspace since the last monitoring report which indicates that investment is taking place within Norwich. Currently 13 retail units (4,108sqm floorspace) are under construction/ refurbishment which compares to 5 units (514 sqm) in March 2022 and 7 units (1,384sqm) in July 2021. Schemes include the conversion of Topshop to a Morrisons at ground floor level and residential above, the closure of Tesco at Guildhall to build a hotel above and behind it and the conversion of a large unit in Castle Quarter to a virtual reality and gaming room. There is quite a lot of redevelopment/refurbishment also taking place within premises where the last use was not retail which are not picked up within these figures. Of particular note is the redevelopment of the former Jamie’s Italian in the Royal Arcade which whilst under construction at the time of survey has now opened as Yalm, an upmarket food hall. There are also three units at Riverside which are undergoing refurbishments.

37. Recent years have seen an increased diversification of uses within the city centre with a particular increase in the numberof cafes and restaurants on offer,

along with other 'service' type uses such as tattoo studios and beauty salons. Since 2018 there has also been a continued growth in leisure uses. Many of these leisure uses have been focused within the Castle Quarter with for example the opening of a bowling alley, gaming centres, indoor crazy golf and escape rooms but there has also been several hospitality and leisure uses opening in other places of the city centre such as Chantry Place and the Lanes. It is likely that this trend will continue especially with planning policies being more flexible and with the changes to the Use Classes Order which makes it much easier and quicker for landlords to offer their premises to a wider range of commercial businesses.

38. Change away from retail is clearly a trend that has been experienced nationally over the past few years although according to the Local Data Company over the past 12 months comparison retail has benefited from the return of domestic shoppers and international tourists which has meant that whilst there has still been a net loss of – 1,190 units, the net decline in comparison retail units has improved significantly from previous years (Local Data Company, 2022).The H1 2022 retail and leisure trends analysis (published September 2022 by the Local Data Company[5]) has also set out that the leisure sector saw significant growth over the past 12 months with a net increase of 643 units. This continues to be driven by an increase in takeaway outlets. The H1 2021 report set out that entertainment, restaurants and bars, pubs and clubs had all declined whereas this year there has been a growth in bars and restaurants due to the drive to bring workers back to the office as well as social events and nights out as many make up for lost time.

39. Since the July 2021 survey was carried out, some large national chains have been lost from the city centre. These have included Topshop/Topman, Millie's Cookies, Hamleys, Swarovski, Build and Bear, Nespresso, Patisserie Valerie, Jones Bootmakers and the Disney Store. There are also some stores such as Pizza Hut, TSB, Warren James, Pret, EE, Shoe Zone, Coral and the Perfume Shop that have rationalised the number of stores that they have but have kept a presence within the city. On a more positive note however there are a number of stores which nationally have rationalised over the past few years 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.

40. Furthermore there are a number of national chains that have recently opened in Norwich. This includes The Real Greek, Sevenoaks, Phase Eight/Hobbs/ Whistles, Rituals and B&M home store. This is a positive sign and suggests that Norwich is seen as a good place for investment. The Royal Arcade was also recently sold for £3.375m and a number of the previously vacant units have now been occupied which has helped work towards the new director's goal of having the Arcade full and bustling as soon as possible.

41. There has been an 8.3% decrease in retail floorspace since 2008 and 2.9% of this was in the past monitoring period (between July 2021 and October 2022). 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

[5] Local Data Company, "H1 2022 retail and leisure trends analysis" (September 2022)

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 is in line with government thinking in terms of creating a single Use Class for most town centre uses. It has been shown in the past 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 and as we move forward, this is likely to become ever more important.

42. Norfolk County Council (as highway and transport authority) and Norwich City Council (as local planning authority) recognise the importance of creating good quality public space in the city centre to attract visitors and investment and boost active travel. These objectives are captured in the Transport for Norwich Strategy (December 2021)[6] and the City Centre Public Spaces Plan (July 2020)[7]. The councils have worked together to secure funding from the government's Transforming Cities Fund, Towns Fund and Active Travel Fund to pay for capital projects within Transport for Norwich programme. Schemes have been completed in the last two years in Tombland, London Street, King Street, St Benedict's Street, Exchange Street, St Stephen's Street and around the Train Station. These schemes have created space for walking, cycling, sitting, events, outdoor hospitality and easier boarding and alighting for bus passengers. Schemes planned for implementation in 2023 will improve Hay Hill, St Andrew's Street and Duke Street. A new pedestrian wayfinding system is also being design and will be installed in early 2023.

43. Also of particular importance is the progress that has been made on Norwich's Town Deal projects over the past year or so. Norwich City Council established a Town Deal Board in Autumn 2019 to bid for £25m of government investment. Eight full business cases to deliver skills, enterprise infrastructure and urban regeneration into Norwich were developed and submitted to government with all of Norwich's Towns Deal Fund Business Plans being approved by MHCLG in August 2021. A summary of the eight projects is given in figure 1 below.

[6] Transport for Norwich Strategy - Norfolk County Council

[7] Norwich city centre public spaces plan | Norwich City Council

	Project	Summary	Funding	Timeline	Norwich 2040 Vision
Skills and Enterprise Infrastructure	Digital Hub	A new city centre workspace with **start-up & grow on space for digital businesses**	£2.5m	Refurbishment from **late 2020** to **summer 2022** with firms moving in thereafter	A Creative City A Fair City A Dynamic City
	Norwich Make Space at the Halls	**A state-of-the-art digital making space** for collaborative creative thinking and high value, cross-sector partnerships between culture, digital & tech	£3.65m	Procurement of new equipment during **2021** and final fit-out by **July 2022**.	A Creative City A Dynamic City
	Digi-Tech Factory	A **new skills facility** providing digital tech, engineering and design courses	£1.5m	Construction from **August 2020** to **autumn 2021** with training commencing in **autumn term of 2021**	A Creative City A Fair City A Dynamic City
	Advanced Construction & Engineering Centre	A **new technological advanced training facility** supporting construction & engineering	£3.1m	Planning to begin in **summer 2020** and construction from **May to December 2021** to open in **January 2022**	A Liveable City A Fair City A Dynamic City
Urban Regeneration	East Norwich Masterplan & Carrow House	A masterplan for a new **high-quality urban quarter** in East Norwich and repurposing **Carrow House** for professional services & knowledge industry office space	£5.1m	Completion of masterplan between **autumn 2020 & late 2021** and acquisition of site in **autumn 2020** and delivery by **summer 2021**	A Creative City A Fair City A Connected City A Dynamic City
	Revolving Fund	**Unlocked brownfield sites** to deliver modern homes and workspaces for the growing economy	£6.1m	Acquisition & development of sites on an ongoing basis. First three revolutions of the fund anticipated **within 7 years.**	A Connected City A Fair City A Dynamic City
	Public Realm	Enhanced **city centre public & urban spaces** and improved **connectivity & navigation**	£4m	Improvements made between **2021 & 2023**	A Liveable City A Fair City A Connected City A Dynamic City
	Branding	A commercial proposition for Norwich as **'the place'** for business and a city to live, learn and invest in	£180k	Project complete by end of **2021**	A Dynamic City

Figure 1: Towns Deal projects

44. Over the past year a huge amount of progress has been made on the projects including with for example the digi-tech factory project being completed and work on the East Norwich Masterplan progressing well. This is an incredible achievement and shows how committed Norwich City Council is to growing and supporting the city's economy. Of particular note are the public realm improvements and branding. The branding project has now been completed with the launch of the Work in Norwich (WiN) digital platform in October 2022 which acts as a gateway for new businesses and people to understand what the city offers. In terms of public realms improvement, the proposals for Hay Hill have now been revealed which includes planters, more seating, a water feature and increased space for cultural activities.

45. Furthermore whilst a number of the other towns deal projects are not directly related to our retail and leisure provision, through supporting the office economy this also supports the balance and symbiosis that exists between the business, retail, hospitality, leisure and cultural sectors in the city centre. This city centre vitality is an essential part of the wider "Norwich offer" to residents, businesses, visitors, workers and students; driving investment and growth to support the city's future economic wellbeing.

46. It should also be noted that Norwich was selected by Government in April as one of 70 places to work directly with the High Street Task Force (HSTF). Following a workshop session and tour of the city centre, the HSTF expert acknowledged that Norwich has many strengths, including a city centre that offers many things including retail, attraction, heritage, civic services, a thriving market, high quality public spaces and strong educational and commercial sectors. Speaking about the visit and the report's findings, the expert went on

to say 'Norwich City Centre is in many ways an exemplar of a successful approach to city centre transformation and there is a lot others could learn'. The main challenge that the HSTF picked up for Norwich was that of rebranding. Their report sets out that if Norwich wants to truly have a greater national or even international profile, then this branding effort requires more ambitious development in terms of not only approach and ideas but also the level of resources to do this. The branding approach needs to be further developed so that it is not only consumer facing but also aimed at bringing in major business investment and 'names' that would perhaps give it a similar profile to some of its regional and national competitors. As part of the Towns Deal project the Work in Norwich (WiN) digital platform has been launched and the High Street Task Force agree that this is positive with the main challenge now being how to sustain this new brand by growing recognition and awareness of it, in order to get as many people using it as possible. It is also going to be important to clarify how the 'Visit Norwich', 'Work in Norwich' and 'City of Stories' brands align, to ensure each achieves its desired outcome for the benefit of the city.

47. In terms of future retail growth, 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. 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 GVA[8] and a further update was produced in December 2020 by Avison Young[9] to take account of the impact of both the UK's exit from the European Union and the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2017 report 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 2020 report sets out that there has not been a significant change in the convenience goods floorspace forecasts and it remains the case that there is no quantitative requirement to plan for net additional convenience goods floorspace, although there may be qualitative reasons why a modest amount of convenience goods floorspace should be placed in new local centres to support the day to day needs of new communities.

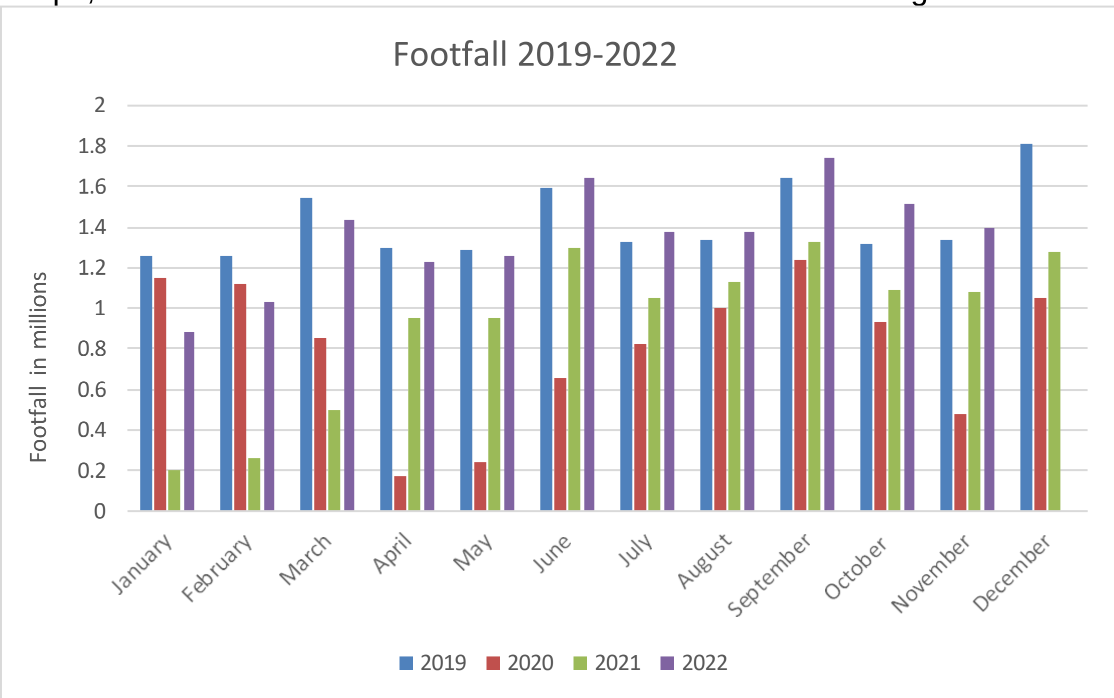
48. Where there are great differences between the 2017 and 2020 reports is around comparison goods floorspace. The 2020 report now sets out that there has been a material change in the level of retail expenditure available to support 'bricks and mortar' comparison goods floorspace and it now shows an oversupply in the Norwich urban area of circa -20,00sq m net. These levels of 'negative capacity' or over supply confirm the strategy for retailing in the GNLP which is not to allocate sites/locations for net additional comparison goods floorspace. Instead this would suggest that we should be concentrating on improving the quality of existing retail provision and it may actually be necessary to allow some units to be redeveloped for other uses which are appropriate within town centre

[8] GVA, "Greater Norwich Employment, Town Centre and Retail Study" (2017)

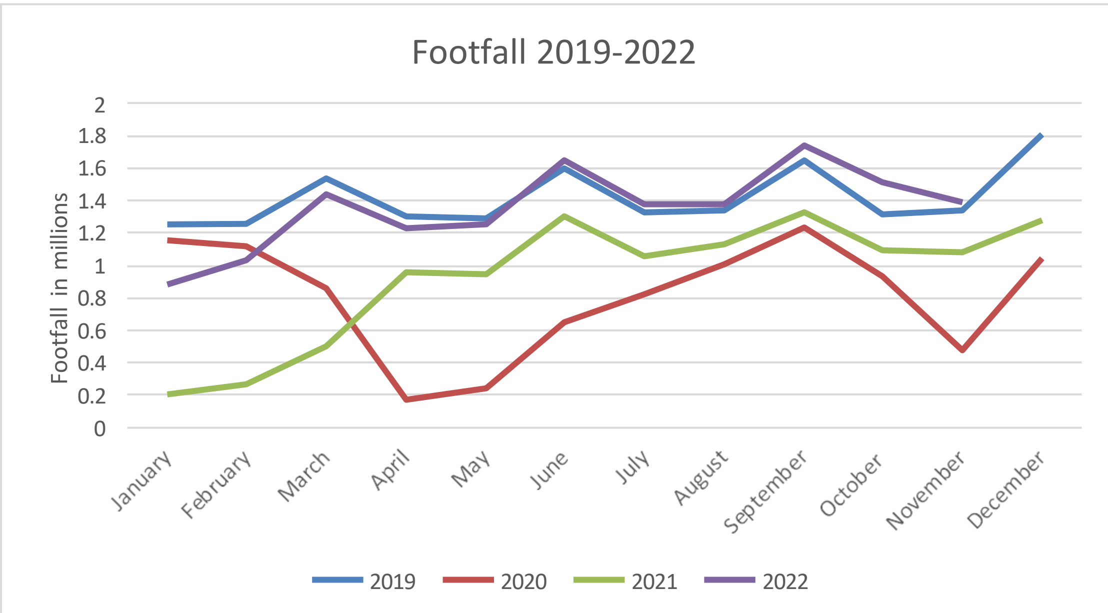
[9] Avison Young "Greater Norwich Town Centres & Retail Study Update" (December 2020)

environments.

49. Finally it is important to look at the footfall figures from the Norwich Business Improvement District (BID). The BID has supplied data for each month from January 2019 to November 2022 and as shown in the graphs below there have been significant fluctuations over the past few years which is unsurprising given the impact that three lockdowns has had on footfall within the city centre. However the month on month picture is very positive and as can be seen from the graphs below footfall in 2022 has largely returned back to pre pandemic levels and within the latter half of the year footfall has actually been greater than it was in 2019. It is really encouraging to see that people are returning to the shops, restaurants and leisure facilities and visitors are coming to Norwich.



Graph 1: Footfall in Norwich city centre 2019-2022



Graph 2: Footfall in Norwich city centre 2019-2022

50. **Summary:** The results of the survey for the city centre as a whole presents a very positive picture, particularly given the challenges faced over the past two to three years. The July 2021 report showed that there had been a significant increase in vacant floorspace and units largely as a result of the covid pandemic. However as can be seen from the current vacancy figures, the city has recovered well. The percentage of vacant retail units has reduced from 14.1% to 12.6% which compares very favourably to the average GB retail vacancy rate of 15.4% (down from 15.8% in 2021) (Local Data Company, September 2022[10]).

51. Footfall levels have also returned to pre pandemic levels in the city and there is clearly investment being made into Norwich. Whilst the next year or so is extremely uncertain and brings its own challenges, the Norwich city centre retail offering does appear to be fairly robust, largely due to the strength of independents. Careful consideration does 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, particularly in light of changes to the Use Classes Order, the NPPF and in terms of how we implement our current and future polices.

52. Table 1, provides city centre overview data on retail floorspace, enabling comparison over the time period of the plan. Table 2 provides an overview of vacancy rates for all town centre uses and Table 3 compares this to retail uses only.

[10] Local Data Company, “H1 2022 retail and leisure trends analysis” (September 2022)

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

Retail floorspace (use class A1)

	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
October 2022	**210,100**	**180,303**	**25,689**	**4,108**
March 2022	213,701	181,137	32,050	514
July 2021	216,005	183,211	31,409	1,385
October 2020	215,949	193,658	21,686*	605
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 2022	**947**	**828**	**106**	**13**
March 2022	966	833	128	5
July 2021	971	834	130	7
October 2020	976	833	140**	3
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 $\frac{Vacant+Refurbishment}{All}$	As a proportion of retail floorspace excluding space being built or refitted $\frac{Vacant}{All}$	As a proportion of all retail units $\frac{Vacant+Refurbishment}{All}$
October 2022	**14.2%**	**12.2%**	**12.6%**
March 2022	15.2%	15.0%	13.8%
July 2021	15.2%	14.5%	14.1%
October 2020	10.3%	10.0%	14.7%
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 March 2022	**Decreased by 3,601 sqm (1.7% decrease)**
Since July 2021	**Decreased by 5,905 sqm (2.9% decrease)**
Since July 2008	**Decreased by 19,020 sqm (8.3% decrease)**

* of which 998sqm appears to be closed due to COVID (still set up for trading).
** of which 13 appear to be closed due to COVID (still set up for trading).

Table 2: Summary of all town centre uses vacancy rates

	As a proportion of all floorspace $\frac{Vacant + Refurbishment}{All}$		As a proportion of all units $\frac{Vacant + Refurbishment}{All}$	
	March 2022	**October 2022**	**March 2022**	**October 202**
Norwich City Centre	15.8%	15.4%	14.3%	13.0%
Primary retail area	15.6%	14.7%	16.3%	12.9%
Secondary Retail area	20.3%	20.0%	10.0%	11.0%
Large District Centre	9.6%	8.0%	12.6%	14.0%
Rest of Centre	17.8%	19.3%	15.0%	14.1%

Table 3: Summary of retail only vacancy rates

	As a proportion of all retail floorspace $\frac{Vacant + Refurbishment}{All}$		As a proportion of all retail units $\frac{Vacant + Refurbishment}{All}$	
	March 2022	**October 2022**	**March 2022**	**October 2022**
Norwich City Centre	15.2%	14.2%	13.8%	12.6%
Primary retail area	15.1%	14.9%	14.6%	12.6%
Secondary Retail area	23.2%	23.3%	8.9%	10.7%
Large District Centre	9.4%	5.6%	12.7%	12.1%
Rest of Centre	17.8%	12.2%	18.5%	15.8%

The Primary Area: Retail Vacancy

Headline figures	Vacant floorspace	Vacant available floorspace (excluding refurbs)	Vacant units	Retail floorspace change (since March 22)
Primary Retail Area (Retail only)	14.9%	12.2%	12.6%	1.2% decrease

53. The extent of the primary area, containing the shopping centres and main comparison goods stores, is shown on Map 1.

54. The vacant available *floorspace* rate is currently 12.2% in the primary retail area which is a 2.3% reduction on 2021 rates where 14.5% of available floorspace was empty. This is still a significant increase in the percentage of vacant floorspace from before the pandemic when vacancy rates were at an extremely low rate of 4.1% in October 2019 but is shows that the primary area has started to recover. Previously the peak vacancy rate within the primary retail area was in 2010 when it was 11.7%.

55. Primary Area retail vacancy rates 'as a proportion of all retail floorspace' has remained stable since July 2021. The disparity between vacant +refurbishment (14.9%) and vacant (12.2%) can largely be attributed to the redevelopment of the former Topshop store into a Morrisons at ground floor level and residential at upper floor level and the wider redevelopment of Tesco site on Guildhall Hill into a hotel.

56. The percentage of vacant retail *units* in the Primary Area has also decreased from 15.2% in July 2021 to 12.6% in October 2022.

57. In the July 2021 it was reported that the vacancy rates were of concern particularly as they have increased so significantly over the last monitoring period and were getting close to the national average retail vacancy rate of 15.8%. The percentage of vacant units within the primary area has fallen by 2.6% over the past 15 months which is a significant improvement particularly when compared to the national average retail vacancy rate of 15.4% in H1 2022, which is only a 0.4% reduction from H1 2021 (Local Data Company, published September 2022[11]). This quite significant reduction in vacancy rates is encouraging and has shown that the city and its key shopping area has started to bounce back after the pandemic.

58. The overall amount of floorspace in A1 retail use within the primary area has decreased by 2,401m² between July 2021 and October 2022, and has reduced by 13 units. Between 2014 and 2018 the amount of retail floorspace has remained relatively constant however there was a significant reduction in retail floor space (5,461 m²) between 2018 and 2019 when a number of units within Castle Quarter changed use from A1 to other uses including a bowling alley, soft play, retro gaming centre, gym and other community/leisure facilities. This trend has continued with a number of further units changing away from retail to leisure and within the Castle Quarter a number of former retail units have

[11] Local Data Company, "H1 2022 retail and leisure trends analysis" (September 2022)

recently changed to a job centre.

59. The change of use of a number of units away from A1 did prevent a number of units in Castle Quarter sitting empty and has no doubt helped reduce vacancy rates as a few years ago over a quarter of floorspace was vacant. Currently 15.9% of A1 floorspace sits empty but taking into account all town centre uses only 11.3% is actually unoccupied. Several smaller units are however currently vacant as 15 out of 57 A1 shops are unoccupied (26.3%) and 21 out of 95 of all units are empty (22.1%). Longterm vacancies in Castle Quarter is still of concern but generally it is considered that the leisure uses that now occupy the Castle Quarter are preventing a number of particularly large retail units sitting empty and that although certain sectors are declining, they can be replaced with other success town centre business uses which will ultimately increase footfall. It is hoped that the newly refurbished foodcourt may also help increase footfall within the centre.

60. Chantry Place (formerly Chapelfield) on the whole remains well occupied and at the time of the survey only 10 units were vacant out of a total of 102 (9.8%) and in terms of floorspace vacancy rates are only 3.6%.This is well below the average for the primary retail area and whilst several shops have closed over the past year, these are often replaced very quickly with new tenants.

61. The 2019 retail report set out how the Royal Arcade has experienced a significant change with half of the units being vacant (8 out of 16 units). The Arcade was recently sold and at the time of the October 2022 survey only 3 units remained vacant. Since the survey was carried out Yalm (a new foodhall showcasing some of the best independent chefs and kitchens from the region) has opened and it is hoped that this historic arcade in a very prominent location will go from strength to strength.

62. If all town centre uses are taken into account the proportion of vacant floorspace (including refurbishments) is 14.7% (compared to retail only of 14.9%) and the percentage of vacant units is 12.9% (compared to retail only of 12.6%).

63. Table 4, below, provides retail floorspace data for the primary area.

Table 4: Primary shopping area

Retail floorspace (use class A1)

	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
October 2022	**145,862**	**124,146**	**17,838**	**3,878**
March 2022	147,573	125,219	22,136	218
July 2021	148,263	126,098	21,564	601
October 2020	148,498	135,424	12,469*	605
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 2022	**508**	**444**	**54**	**10**
March 2022	521	445	73	3
July 2021	521	442	76	3
October 2020	524	442	79**	3
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 $\frac{Vacant+Refurbishment}{All}$	As a proportion of retail floorspace excluding space being built or refitted $\frac{Vacant}{All}$	As a proportion of all retail units $\frac{Vacant+Refurbishment}{All}$
October 2022	**14.9%**	**12.2%**	**12.6%**
March 2022	15.1%	15.0%	14.6%
July 2021	14.9%	14.5%	15.2%
October 2020	8.8%	8.4%	15.6%
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

64. 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).

65. Table 5 provides data on the percentage of retail uses in the primary area retail frontage zones in October 2022. Previously all frontages were within the minimum thresholds set out in the SPD; however since March 2022 the percentage of non retail frontage within Castle Quarter has increased quite significantly which has resulted in the percentage of retail dropping below the minimum thresholds. This is largely a result of the job centre moving into former retail units. In addition a new yoga space has been created within a former retail unit as has a new gaming centre and spy mission. There have not been any other significant changes with the level of retail remaining stable in all other zones. It is however worth noting that the percentage of retail has actually increased within two of the seven zones (PR01: Back of the Inns/Castle Street area and PR02: The Lanes east).

66. This would suggest that Castle Quarter is continuing to see changes away from retail to service and leisure uses. Back in 2018 only 38.3m (4.4%) of the frontage was non-retail but this increased to 129.9m in October 2019. It has now increased to 246.1m (27.4%) which means that over a quarter of the frontage is now non retail. The other retail frontage zones however have not experienced this move away from retail.

67. Overall, whilst the percentage of A1 retail frontage within one of the primary retail area core frontage zones has declined, in other areas it has increased and with the exception of Castle Quarter retail frontages still remain at relatively comfortable levels above their minimum thresholds.

Table 5: Primary Area Retail Frontage Zones - Retail frontages in July 2021

Primary retail area core frontage zones

Frontage zone	Total frontage (m)	Total non-retail frontage Oct 2022	% A1 retail Oct 2022 (frontage)	% A1 retail March 2022 (frontage)	Minimum threshold (from 2014 SPD)
PC01: Gentleman's Walk/ Haymarket/Brigg Street	856.4	108.8	**87.3%**	87.3%	80%
PC02: Castle Mall (Levels 1 & 2)	898.1	246.1	**72.6%**	83.8%	80%
PC03: Chapelfield, upper & lower Merchants Hall and St Stephens Arcade	641.0	27.0	**95.8%**	95.8%	80%

Frontage zones in the rest of the primary retail area

Frontage zone	Total frontage (m)	Total non-retail frontage Oct 2022	% A1 retail Oct 2022 (frontage)	% A1 retail March 2022 (frontage)	Minimum threshold (from 2014 SPD)
PR01: Back of the Inns/Castle Street area	666.8	191.2	**71.3%**	70.2%	65%
PR02: The Lanes east (Bedford Street/Bridewell Alley)	1116.3	305.8	**72.6%**	71.5%	70%
PR03: St Stephens Street/Westlegate	821.5	114.9	**86.0%**	86.0%	80%
PR04: Castle Meadow north		N/A[12]			
PR05: Chapelfield Plain		N/A[13]			
PR06: Timberhill/Red Lion Street	434.2	151.35	**65.1%**	65.1%	60%

Key:
Green denotes no change or increase in A1 retail since 2019
Red denotes decrease in A1 retail since 2019.
Blue denotes frontage is within minimum A1 threshold.
Orange denotes minimum A1 frontage threshold has been breached.

[12] There is no defined frontage in this zone
[13] There is no defined frontage in this zone

The Secondary Area: Retail Vacancy

Headline figures	Vacant floorspace	Vacant available floorspace (excluding refurbs)	Vacant units	Retail floorspace change (since March 22)
Secondary area (Retail only)	23.3%	23.3%	10.7%	1.8% decrease

68. Map 3 shows the extent of the secondary area.

69. 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 2021 it rose further to 23.1% and over the past 12 months it has remained relatively stable at around 23.3%.

70. 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%. This has now increased to 10.7%.

71. The overall amount of floorspace in A1 retail use has decreased since the last full report in 2021 (by 416m²) and there has also been a reduction in units in the Secondary Shopping area from 183 in 2021 to 178 in 2022.

72. 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 in April 2018 which has an individual floor area of 3,222m² and the closure of a further unit at the Retail Park which has a floorspace of 632m². If these two unit are omitted from both the vacant floorspace and total floorspace, the vacancy rate within the secondary retail area would only be 6.5% 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 lowerin the secondary area than any other area within the city and whilst they have crept up to be just over 10% this is very competitive when compared to the GB national average retail vacancy rate of 15.4%[14].

73. Policy 11 of the Joint Core Strategy identifies that "other shopping areas within the centre will be strengthened to provide for retail diversity, with a particular focus on enhancing the character of specialist retailing areas and markets". The secondary retail area includes some streets which provide a specialist mix of shops and excluding the Cathedral Retail Park, is performing very well in providing independent retail diversity and by adapting rapidly it appears that it remained resilient during the pandemic.

74. The low vacancy rates in this area (excluding Cathedral Retail Park) also correspond to the Local Data Companies findings that independents continued to be more resilient than multiples with growth in independents being driven by the convenience (convenience stores, grocers, butchers and bakers) and leisure sector (restaurants, bars and fast food). Independents are also likely to have benefited from government support measures and business rates relief

[14] Local Data Company, "H1 2022 retail and leisure trends analysis" (September 2022)

which has enabled them to remain operational.

Table 6: Secondary area

Retail floorspace (use class A1)

	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
October 2022	**21,443**	**16,454**	**4,989**	**0**
March 2022	21,826	16,752	5,074	0
July 2021	21,859	16,775	5,060	24
October 2020	21,933	17,180	4,753*	0
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 2022	**178**	**159**	**19**	**0**
March 2022	179	163	16	0
July 2021	183	165	17	1
October 2020	185	169	16**	0
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 $\frac{Vacant+Refurbishment}{All}$	As a proportion of retail floorspace excluding space being built or refitted $\frac{Vacant}{All}$	As a proportion of all retail units $\frac{Vacant+Refurbishment}{All}$
October 2022	**23.3%**	**23.3%**	**10.7%**
March 2022	23.2%	23.2%	8.9%
July 2021	23.3%	23.1%	9.8%
October 2020	21.7%	21.7%	8.6%
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%

* of which 186 sqm appears to be closed due to COVID (still set up for trading).
** of which 2 appear to be closed due to COVID (still set up for trading).

The Secondary Area: Retail Frontages

75. Policy DM20 divides the secondary 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 3. 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).

76. Table 7 provides data on the percentage of retail uses in the secondary area retail frontage zones in July 2021. Out of the three secondary areas that have frontage zones, one (SR03: St Benedicts) is below the minimum threshold as set out in the SPD. During the monitoring period the proportion of retail has reduced slightly within two of the frontage zones (SR01: The Lanes West (Pottergate/Dove Street/Lower Goat Lane) and SR03: St Benedicts). Notwithstanding this, overall the retail frontages still appear relatively healthy and overall retail frontages remain at relatively comfortable levels above their minimum thresholds.

77. If all town centre uses are taken into account the proportion of vacant floorspace (including refurbishments) is 20.0% (compared to retail only of 23.3%) and the percentage of vacant units is 11.% (compared to retail only of 10.7%). Vacancy rates have fallen since July 2021 for all town centre uses.

Table 7: Secondary area retail frontage zones

Frontage zone	Total frontage (m)	Total non-retail frontage March 2022	% A1 retail October 2022 (frontage)	% A1 retail March 2022 (frontage)	Minimum threshold (from 2014 SPD)
Primary retail area core frontage zones					
SR01	391.3	94.5	**75.8%**	76.1%	70%
SR02	121.7	39.4	**67.6%**	67.6%	60%
SR03	638.0	271.1	**57.5%**	58.1%	60%
SR04	No defined frontage				
SR05	No defined frontage				
SR06	No defined frontage				

Large District Centres

Headline figures	Vacant floorspace	Vacant available floorspace (excluding refurbs)	Vacant units	Retail floorspace change (since March 22)
Large District Centres (Retail only)	5.6%	5.6%	12.1%	0.9% decrease

78. Map 4 shows the extent of the LDCs. Riverside was included in these statistics from August 2013 onwards, following the removal of it from the Primary Retail Area and its redesignation as part of the Large District Centre.
79. The vacant available floorspace in the LDCs is currentl y 5.6% which is significantly lower than in was in 2021 when 9.1% of floorspace was vacant but is still higher than it was in 2019 when only 3.3% of available floorspace was unoccupied. It is however still very low compared to both the city and national average and regarded as a low figure for a shopping area which does not form a central part of the city's retail offer.
80. The percentage of vacant retail *units* in the LDCs has increased since 2021 (from 10.9% to 12.1%) but has decreased since the last survey was carried out in March 2022 when 12.7% of shops sat empty. The difference between vacant floorspace and vacant units would have suggested that the larger units were faring well but that the smaller units were harder to find and retain retailers.
81. In terms of Riverside the closure of Mothercare,Outfit and CarphoneWarehouse in 2020/21 left three units empty which at 593m², 1,530 m² and 196 m² respectively had a significant impact on the vacancy figures for the Riverside Large District Centre with 13.7% of floorspace being vacant and 19.0% of units being vacant. Outfit has since been occupied by B&M Bargains which has expanded so it now occupies two units and this has resulted in the vacancy rate falling significantly to only 4.9% (and 8.5% for units). Riverside has largely been a car based destination but it is hoped that the routes established within the 'St Anne's Quarter' development will create a more attractive walking and cycling link between Riverside and the city centre.
82. The Magdalen Street, Anglia Square & St Augustine's LDC on the other hand had a relatively low floorspace vacancy rate of 7.0% in June 2021 and 10.8% for units. This has not changed significantly over the last year with the floorspace vacancy figure now being 6.3%. The number of vacant units has increased slightly to 12.1%. This is still competitive when compared to the GB national average retail vacancy rate of 15.4%[15]. This centre has repositioned itself as a niche area of speciality/ethnic retailers and restaurants. The relatively low vacancy rates in this area also correspond to the Local Data Companies findings that independents continued to be more resilient than multiples with growth in independents being driven by the convenience (convenience stores, grocers, butchers and bakers) and leisure sector (restaurants, bars and fast food).

[15] Local Data Company, "H1 2022 retail and leisure trends analysis" (September 2022)

83. 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 whilst the application for the redevelopment of Anglia Square was turned down by the Secretary of State in 2020 following a call in, a new application is now pending consideration. If permission is granted, this area may be subject to significant levels of change and regeneration over the coming years.

84. The overall amount of floorspace in A1 retail use has remained stable since Riverside was included as part of the Large District Centre in August 2013.

85. If all town centre uses are taken into account the proportion of vacant floorspace (including refurbishments) is 8.0% (compared to retail only of 5.6%) and the percentage of vacant units is 14.0% (compared to retail only of 12.1%).

Table 8: 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 2022	**32,385**	**30,561**	**1,824**	**0**
March 2022	32,695	29,623	3,051	21
July 2021	32,379	29,426	2,932	21
October 2020	32,015	29,974	2,041*	0
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 2022	**141**	**124**	**17**	**0**
March 2022	142	124	18	1
July 2021	138	123	14	1
October 2020	138	120	18**	0
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 $\frac{Vacant+Refurbishment}{All}$	As a proportion of retail floorspace excluding space being built or refitted $\frac{Vacant}{All}$	As a proportion of all retail units $\frac{Vacant+Refurbishment}{All}$
October 2022	**5.6%**	**5.6%**	**12.1%**
March 2022	9.4%	9.3%	12.7%
July 2021	9.1%	9.1%	10.9%
October 2020	6.4%	6.4%	13.0%
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%

* of which 25 sqm appears to be closed due to COVID (still set up for trading).
** of which 2 appear to be closed due to COVID (still set up for trading).

Rest of the City Centre

Headline figures	Vacant floorspace	Vacant available floorspace (excluding refurbs)	Vacant units	Retail floorspace change (since March 22)
Rest of City Centre (Retail only)	12.2%	10.0%	15.8%	10.3% decrease

86. 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.

87. The vacant available *floorspace* in the rest of the city centre increased significantly from 5.9% in 2019 to 13.7% in 2021 and reached 15.4% in March 2022. When including refurbishments the vacancy rate in 2021 reached a high of 19.2%. However since the last survey was carried out in March 2022, a number of vacant units have since been occupied with vacant available floorspace now being only 10.0% and when including refurbishments is now 12.2%. This is around 2% lower than the city centre averages.

88. Historically available vacancy rates have been fairly high in the rest of the city centre with for example in 2014 vacancies being 18.3%; however in October 2019 the rate was exceptionally low at only 5.9% which was a bit of an anomaly. Increased vacancies during 2020 and 2021 suggested that a number of new businesses struggled to survive during the pandemic but it is encouraging to see vacancy rates return to relatively low levels which suggests that the rest of the city centre is actually performing quite well in terms of retail floorspace.

89. The percentage of vacant retail *units* in the rest of the city centre has also fallen from 25 units (19.4%) in July 2021 to 19 units (15.8%) in October 2022. A higher vacancy rate for units compared to floorspace would suggest that some of the smaller units remain vacant.

90. The overall amount of floorspace in A1 retail use has decreased significantly within the monitoring period and has fallen by 10.3% (with the number of units reducing by 4).

91. The statistics from the past few years suggest that there has been a lot of change and turnover in the ‘rest of the city centre’ area which is expected within the more peripheral city centre shopping streets. Although a number of businesses closed over the pandemic, the ‘rest of the city centre’ seems to be bouncing back in a similar way to some of the more central shopping areas. The loss in retail floorspace however would suggest that there has been quite a bit of diversification with a number of retail units changing to other town centre uses.

92. If all town centre uses are taken into account the proportion of vacant floorspace (including refurbishments) is 19.3% (compared to retail only of 12.2%) and the percentage of vacant units is 14.1% (compared to retail only of 15.8%). These are significant decreases from 2021 where 22.0% of all town centre floorspace was vacant and 18.1% of all town centre units were empty.

Table 9: Rest of city centre

Retail floorspace (use class A1)

	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
October 2022	**10,410**	**9,142**	**1,038**	**230**
March 2022	11,607	9,544	1,788	275
July 2021	13,503	10,912	1,852	739
October 2020	13,503	11,080	2,423	0
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 2022	**120**	**101**	**16**	**3**
March 2022	124	101	22	1
July 2021	129	104	23	2
October 2020	129	104	25	0
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 $\frac{Vacant+Refurbishment}{All}$	As a proportion of retail floorspace excluding space being built or refitted $\frac{Vacant}{All}$	As a proportion of all retail units $\frac{Vacant+Refurbishment}{All}$
October 2022	**12.2%**	**10.0%**	**15.8%**
March 2022	17.8%	15.4%	18.5%
July 2021	19.2%	13.7%	19.4%
October 2020	17.9%	17.9%	19.4%
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%

* of which 145 sqm appears to be closed due to COVID (still set up for trading).
** of which 3 appear to be closed due to COVID (still set up for trading).

District and Local Centres

93. Policy DM21 of the Development management policies plan establishes A1 retail use thresholds of 60% for District Centres and 50% for Local Centres.

94. Vacancy rates in District and Local Centres focus on units only and have reduced significantly overall from 11.6% in 2021 to 6.5% in 2022. This follows the trend of decreasing vacancy rates within the city; however 6.5% is nearly half that of the 12.6% shop vacancy rate in the city centre which would indicate that despite the challenging circumstances Local and District Centres are faring extremely well. During the pandemic more people started to shop locally and this seems to be continuing.

95. Overall these figures would suggest that District and Local Centres are continuing to perform their function and to offer an appropriate range of local services and facilities and over the past 12 months or so Norwich's District and Local Centres have gone from strength to strength .

District Centres

Headline figures	Vacant units	Number of units change
District Centres	5.6%	2.0% increase

96. Vacancy rates in the District Centres have reduced significantly from 9.8% in 2021 to 5.6% in 2022. This is significantly lower than the city centre and also significantly lower than pre pandemic times where 11.6% of units within District Centre stood vacant in 2018. The total number of vacant units in the 10 District Centres is currently only 11 which compares to 19 in 2021 and 23 in 2018.

97. In term of total number of units, there has been an increase in two District Centres – DC05: Aylsham Road/Mile Cross and DC06: Earlham House which is a result of units subdividing. There has not been a reduction in units in any of the District centres.

98. The percentage of non-retail units currently stands at 43.4% which is 1.6% higher than in 2021. The increase in non-retail units continues the trend experienced since 2019. There has been an increase in non retail in five District Centres: DC03 Eaton Centre, DC05 Aylsham Road/Mile Cross, DC06 Earlham House, DC07 The Larkman and DC08 Dereham Road/Distillery Square. DC03, DC05, DC07 and DC08 already exceed the 40% non-retail threshold and DC06 Earlham Road despite increasing the percentage of non retail still sits comfortably under the threshold at 29.4%. However it is important to note that despite the overall percentage of non retail increasing, within two District Centres (DC01 Bowthorpe and DC10 Sprowston Road/Shipfield) the percentage of non-retail has actually decreased which means that the 40% non-retail threshold set out in Development Management Policy DM21 is no longer exceeded. In Bowthorpe the percentage of non retail was 47.1% in 2021 but now sits at 35.3% and in Sprowston Road/Shipfield the percentage of non retail was 42.1% in 2021 and is now 36.8%. Therefore the number of District Centres which fall within the threshold has increased from two to four which along with Bowthorpe and Sprowston Road/Shipfield also includes DC02: Drayton Road

and DC06: Earlham House where the percentage of non retail are 26.7% and 29.4% respectively. The District Centres which exceed the 40% non-retail threshold set out in Development managementpolicy DM21 are now as follows:

- DC03: Eaton Centre
- DC04: Plumstead Road
- DC05: Aylsham Road/Mile Cross
- DC07: The Larkman
- DC08: Dereham Road/Distillery Square
- DC09: Hall Road

99. A few of these centres have non-retail percentages not too much above 40% and as shown at Bowthorpe and Sprowston Road/Shipfield it only takes one or two units changing to retail to satisfy the policy ambition. However, applications locally and patterns nationally over recent years have shown that things are generally moving in the opposite direction with an increase in non-retail uses. This is also likely to be exacerbated with greater flexibility to change between any use within the new Class E and there may also be changes to residential as a result of new permitted development rights introduced last year. Whilst 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 there is concern that the change of use to residential would have a significantly detrimental impact upon District Centres and their ability to meet local need. This monitoring year has not shown any significant impacts as a result of changes to the Use Classes Order and Permitted Development Order; however it may not be until next monitoring year that the true impact of this starts to show. In terms of the pandemic, currently it would appear that this has actually had a positive impact on our District Centres with more people shopping locally; however it will be interesting to see what changes occur within the District Centres over the next monitoring period as a result of other economic factors such as the cost of living crisis.

100. In terms of the individual District Centres the following is of note:

101. There has been no change to the vacancy rate within Bowthorpe district centre DC01 during this monitoring period with 11.8% of units currently being unoccupied (two units). The percentage of non retail units has reduced below the 40% threshold. Whilst no changes actually took place this year, the fall in non retail units has been a correction to changes in the use class that took place during a previous monitoring period.

102. In 2019 Drayton Road district centre DC02 had the highest vacancy rate with 20% of units being unoccupied. This decreased to 13.3% in 2021 and has now decreased further to 6.7% (1 unit) in 2022. The non-retail percentage rate has not changed and is only 26.7% which is well clear of the 40% recommended maximum guideline.

103. Vacancies in DC03: Eaton Centre have reduced from three units in 2021 to two units in 2022 with the vacancy rate now being 11.8%. Wh ilst there has been a reduction this is still joint highest of all District Centres. The number of non-retail units has increased from nine to ten and with 52.9% of all units being non-retail this is the second highest of all District Centres.

104. There has been no change in terms of vacancy rate or percentage of non retail within DC04: Plumstead Road. Whilst the previous monitoring report suggested that this centre was performing well, it now has the third highest vacancy rate of all district centres.

105. DC05: Aylsham Road/Mile Cross has seen a significant fall in vacancies from 14.3% (three units) to only 4.5% (one unit). There has been an increase of one unit which is a new takeaway. A new Lidl opened adjacent to the District Centre several years ago which is just outside of the District Centre boundary (so not counted as a unit within this monitoring report). This appears to have strengthen the centre.

106. 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. It now only has one vacancy and has the highest proportion of retail units of all District centres although there has been an in crease in the non-retail percentage during this monitoring period from 20% to 29.4%.

107. There are three district centres which have all of theirunits occupied which are The Larkman (DC07), Dereham Road/Distillery Square (DC08) and Hall Road (DC09) centres. In 2021 Dereham Road/Distillery Square had four vacant units so this centre has seen significant change over the past year. All three of these fully occupied District Centres have over 40% non-retail.

108. There has been no change in vacancy rates or the percentage of non retail within Sprowston Road/Shipfield (DC10). This centre only has one vacant unit and 36.8% non retail.

Table 10: 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%	6	35.3%
DC02	Drayton Road	15	1	6.7%	4	26.7%
DC03	Eaton Centre	17	2	11.8%	10	58.8%
DC04	Plumstead Road	32	3	9.4%	14	43.8%
DC05	Aylsham Road/ Mile Cross	22	1	4.5%	11	50.0%
DC06	Earlham House	17	1	5.9%	5	29.4%
DC07	The Larkman	14	0	0.0%	7	50.0%
DC08	Dereham Road/ Distillery Square	37	0	0.0%	18	48.6%
DC09	Hall Road	7	0	0.0%	4	57.1%
DC10	Sprowston Road/ Shipfield	19	1	5.3%	7	36.8%
TOTAL		**197**	**11**	**5.6%**	**86**	**43.4%**

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

Local Centres

Headline figures	Vacant units	No of units change
Local Centres	7.1%	0.3% increase

109. Table 11 shows vacancy rates and percentage of non-retail units for the 28 local centres.

110. Of the 325 units, the number of vacant units is 23, representing a reduced vacancy rate of 7.1% in 2022 compared to the 2021 figure of 12.7%. Interestingly the percentage has now returned to exactly the same as it was in 2019. This is also significantly lower than the city centre. Half of all local centres (14 out of 28) are now fully occupied which compared to 10 in 2021). There has also been an increase of 1 no. unitsince 2021.

111. Improvements in vacancies since 2021 have taken place in 13 local centres which are LC01 Hall Road/Trafalgar Street, LC02 Hall Road/Queens Road, LC04 Grove Road, LC06 Suffolk Square, LC14 Magdalen Road, LC18 Earlham West Centre, LC19 Colman Road/The Avenues, LC24 Witard Road, LC25 Clancy Road, Heartsease, LC26 UEA and LC30 St Stephens Road. The local centres which have had increased vacancies during the monitoring period are LC07 St Augustine's Gate, LC20 Colman Road, The Parade and LC28 Magdalen Road/Clarke Road. There is less of a disparity in vacancy rates than in 2021. Back in 2021 LC01 for example had a vacancy rate of 42.9% whilst other Local Centres were fully occupied. Now the worst performing local centre is LC07 with only a quarter of units being empty.

112. The percentage of non-retail units across all of the centres is 50.8% up from 46.0% in 2021. Whilst there has been an increase in the percentage of non retail, this average figure remains below the 50% threshold. 14 of the 28 centres have a proportion of A1 retail units above the 50% policy target and are policy compliant, two sit at the recommended 50% threshold and twelve are below the threshold and are not policy compliant. The twelve local centres that have exceeded the DM21 policy threshold and have greater than 50% non-retail uses are listed below. The five centres that have been added to this list since 2021 are LC11, LC14, LC17, LC18 and LC28. LC12 (Woodcock Road) and LC20 (Colman Road, The Parade) on the other hand have increased the proportion of retail so have now been removed from this list.

- LC02: Hall Road/Queens Road
- LC06: Unthank Road;
- LC07: St Augustine's Gate;
- LC10: Aylsham Road/Glenmore Gardens
- LC11: Aylsham Road/Glenmore Gardens
- LC14: Magdalen Road
- LC15: Sprowston Road/Silver Road
- LC17: Bishop Bridge Road

- LC18: Earlham West Centre
- LC26: UEA; and
- LC28: Magdalen Road/Clarke Road
- LC29: Aylsham Road/Copenhagen Way.

113. 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:

- LC09: Aylsham Road/Junction Road
- LC20: Colman Road, The Parade

Table 11: Local Centres[16] 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	29	5	17.2%		19	65.5%	
LC03	Hall Road/ Southwell Road	7	0	0.0%		3	42.9%	
LC04	Grove Road	14	0	0.0%		6	42.8%	
LC05	Suffolk Square	9	0	0.0%		4	44.4%	
LC06	Unthank Road	43	0	0.0%		23	53.5%	
LC07	St Augustine's Gate	8	2	25.0%		6	75.0%	
LC08	See footnote							
LC09	Aylsham Road/ Junction Road	8	1	12.5%		4	50.0%	
LC10	Aylsham Road/ Glenmore Gardens	13	1	7.7%		7	53.8%	
LC11	Aylsham Road/ Boundary Road	12	1	8.3%		8	66.7%	
LC12	Woodcock Road	7	0	0.0%		2	28.6%	
LC13	Catton Grove Road/Ring Road	12	2	16.7%		4	33.3%	

[16] 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.

LC14	Magdalen Road	15	1	6.7%	8	53.3%
LC15	Sprowston Road/ Silver Road	8	0	0.0%	5	62.5%
LC16	See footnote					
LC17	Bishop Bridge Road	8	0	0.0%	6	75.0%
LC18	Earlham West Centre	22	2	9.0%	12	54.5%
LC19	Colman Road/ The Avenues	16	3	18.8%	5	31.3%
LC20	Colman Road, The Parade	10	1	10.0%	5	50.0%
LC21	Woodgrove Parade	9	0	0.0%	2	22.2%
LC22	St John's Close/ Hall Road	11	0	0.0%	5	45.5%
LC23	Tuckswood centre	5	0	0.0%	1	20.0%
LC24	Witard Road, Heartsease	9	0	0.0%	2	22.2%
LC25	Clancy Road, Heartsease	5	0	0.0%	2	40.0%
LC26	UEA	9	1	11.1%	7	77.8%
LC27	Long John Hill	5	0	0.0%	2	40.0%
LC28	Magdalen Road/ Clarke Road	8	1	12.5%	5	62.5%
LC29	Aylsham Road/ Copenhagen Way	5	1	20.0%	5	100%
LC30	St Stephens Road	11	1	9.1%	6	54.5%
TOTAL		**325**	**23**	**7.1%**	**165**	**50.8%**

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

Conclusions

114. Retail vacancy rates have reduced quite significantly since July 2021 and as shown in table 12 rates have decreased in all city centre areas except the secondary retail area where they have increased very slightly. Vacancy rates have also fallen within the District and Local Centres. High vacancy rates in July 2021 were unsurprising given the challenging circumstances faced by retailers during the pandemic and given that footfall had been so low for much of 2020 and 2021 with people working from home and choosing to either shop locally or turning to online retailing and it is encouraging to see how well Norwich has recovered and bounced back from this very difficult period.

115. It was quite uncertain whether shops would be able to survive the impact of the pandemic particular once business rates relief and other government support came to an end but within Norwich not only have the majority been able to survive but several new multiples and independents have also opened within the past 12 months or so.

116. Norwich's independent retailers have continued to be very resilient and have performed well and this can be shown by the low vacancy rates within both the secondary retail area (when excluding vacant units within the Cathedral Retail Park) and the Magdalen Street, Anglia Square & St Augustine's LDC where vacancy rates are only 6.5% and 5.6% respectively which is extremely low when compared to a national average retail vacancy rate of 15.4%. However one question often posed about the independent market is that of long-term sustainability. Many of these units have shorter average length of occupancy and a higher rate of churn across the market, due to a lack of infrastructure and financial backing so it will be interesting to see how these areas perform in the coming years, particularly as retailers facing increasing costs and consumers face a cost of living crisis.

117. This monitoring report now also looks at all town centre use vacancy rates as well as retail. Nationally leisure vacancy rates are lower than retail and whilst it is difficult to compare due to different methodologies of collecting and analysing data, the overall vacancy rate for the city centre does increase when other town centre uses are taken into account.

118. In terms of the total amount of retail floorspace within the city centre, it is continuing to decrease at quite significant rates. Within this monitoring period nearly 6,000sqm of retail floorspace was lost which is a 2.9% decrease. This now means that since 2008 Norwich city centre has lost around 8.3% of its retail provision. The retail however is generally not being lost to residential or being demolished; instead the city is experiencing diversification and with the floorspace generally changing to other town centre uses. Given the changes to the Use Classes Order and the General Permitted Development Order and the future change in policy approach that is likely to be brought in through the GNLP it is anticipated that this trend will continue, but we just do not yet know at what rate.

119. This trend of diversification can particularly be seen within Castle Quarter and during this monitoring period for the first time one of the retail frontages in the Primary area is no longer within the recommended minimum percentage of A1

use as set out in the ‘Main Town Centre Uses and Retail Frontages’ Supplementary Planning Document (2014). Other than the Castle Quarter frontage they all remain stable and comfortably within the recommended minimum percentage of A1 uses with the percentage of retail actually increasing in two of the zones. In terms of the secondary area retail frontage zones one out of three (SR03: St Benedicts) is below the minimum threshold and during the monitoring period the proportion of retail reduced slightly within two of the frontage zones although it would still appear that overall the retail frontages appear relatively healthy.

120. Vacancy rates in District and Local Centres have also decreased from 11.6% in 2021 to 6.5% in 2022. This follows the trend of decreasing vacancy rates within the city; however it is significantly lower than the 12.6% shop vacancy rate in the city centre which would indicate that despite the challenging circumstances local and district centres are faring extremely well. The July 2021 report suggested that more people were shopping locally and it would appear that this may still be case, despite less people now working from home.

121. 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 and as a result of the pandemic. Whilst it is likely that these challenges will have ongoing impacts for the viability of some retail businesses, the past 12 months have shown just how resilient the majority of our businesses are (especially Norwich’s independent businesses) and how successfully they have managed to recover. Whilst a number of multiples have ceased trading within Norwich, there is clearly investment happening with new chains arriving.

122. It is also encouraging how footfall has significantly increased and has now returned to pre pandemic levels. Furthermore with so many improvements taking place to the public realm, this should enhance the shopping and leisure experience and make it easier for people to get around and enjoy their time within the city.

123. It is however important to acknowledge that Norwich , as with all cities, faces an extremely uncertain time ahead. Whilst Norwich has largely recovered from the impacts of the pandemic, rising costs, inflations and interest rates will impact both retailers and consumers. The Local Data Company predicts that vacancy rates will continue their downward trajectory with the national vacancy rate reaching 13.7% in 2023. This seems very optimistic and with the challenges ahead, some shops and business will inevitable struggle and look to close stores so it would not be a surprise if vacancy rates do start to creep up again.

124. It is also important to acknowledge that there are many changes that can now take place within retail centres without the direction of the council which include the change of use to other town centre uses but also the change of use to residential without the need for full planning permission. The added flexibility within retail centres could reduce vacancy rates and provide a wider range of amenities and services but the Council have also identified several risks associated with this. Whilst we acknowledge that retailing and town centres are currently in a state of flux, this reinforces the need to protect and promote town centres to allow them to recover and evolve in a planned manner and we are concerned that extending the use of permitted development rights to change to

residential could be hugely detrimental to this. Without being able to consider the impact that the loss of town centres uses at ground floor level, we are concerned that there could be the piecemeal loss of town centre uses at ground floorlevel which willresult in residential interspersed with town centre uses. This will not only affect the way that our high streets function but it could reduce rather than increase footfall. For this reason the Council has concern that the uncontrolled and piecemeal loss of town centre uses could be a threat to the vitality and vibrancy of our high street and it is going to be very important to continue to monitor change over the coming few years.

125. Notwithstanding the above, given the circumstances Norwich has demonstrated that it remains robust and is a thriving retail centre in the East of England with vacancy rates being down and footfall being up. To continue this success, the council may need to identify other ways to influence and cultivate the retail offer of Norwich given the potential challenges faced ahead, including working closely with Norwich BID and other key stakeholders.

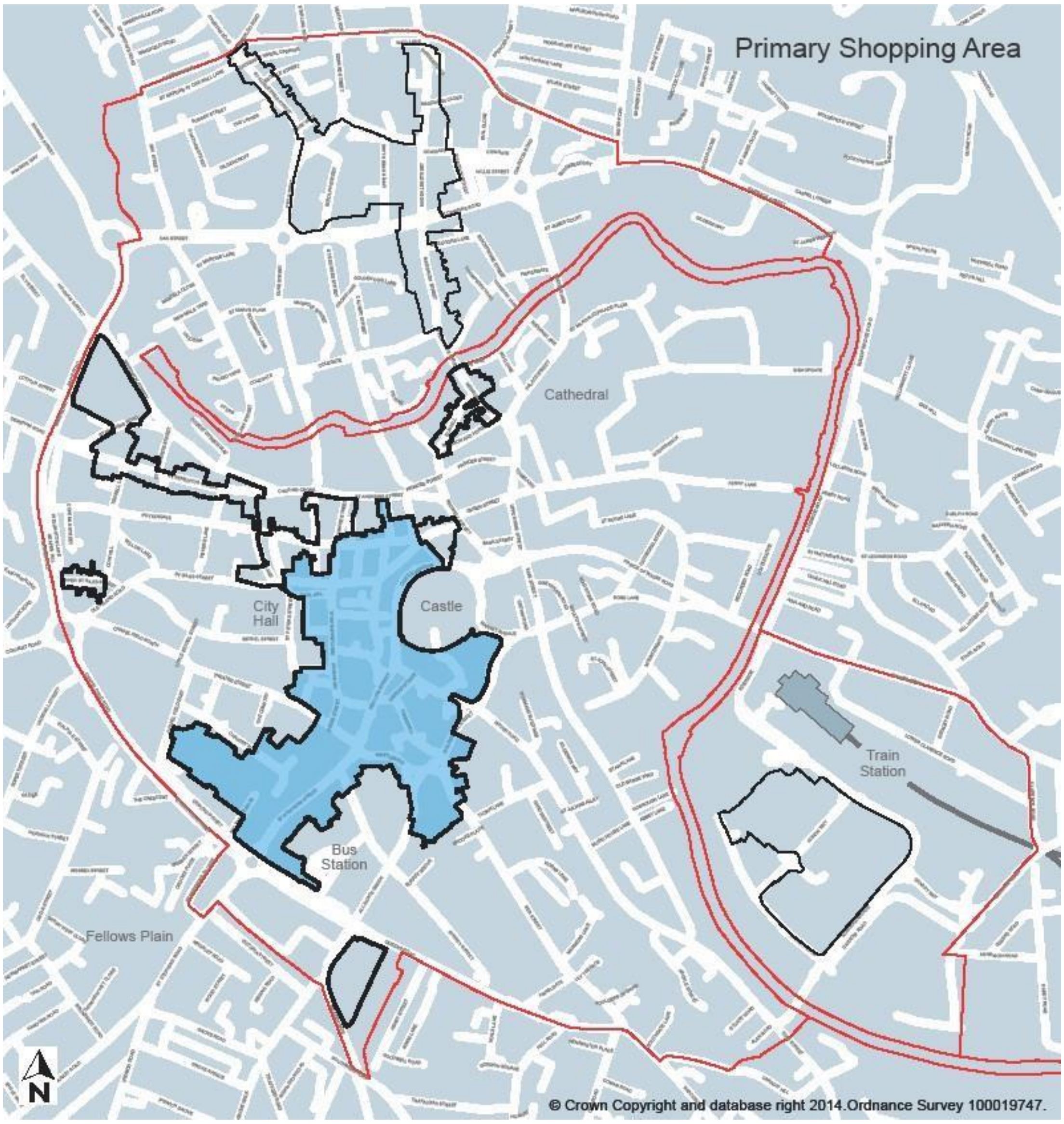
Table 12: 'At a Glance' The direction of travel of vacancy rates and retail floorspace in Norwich since March 2022

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	↑

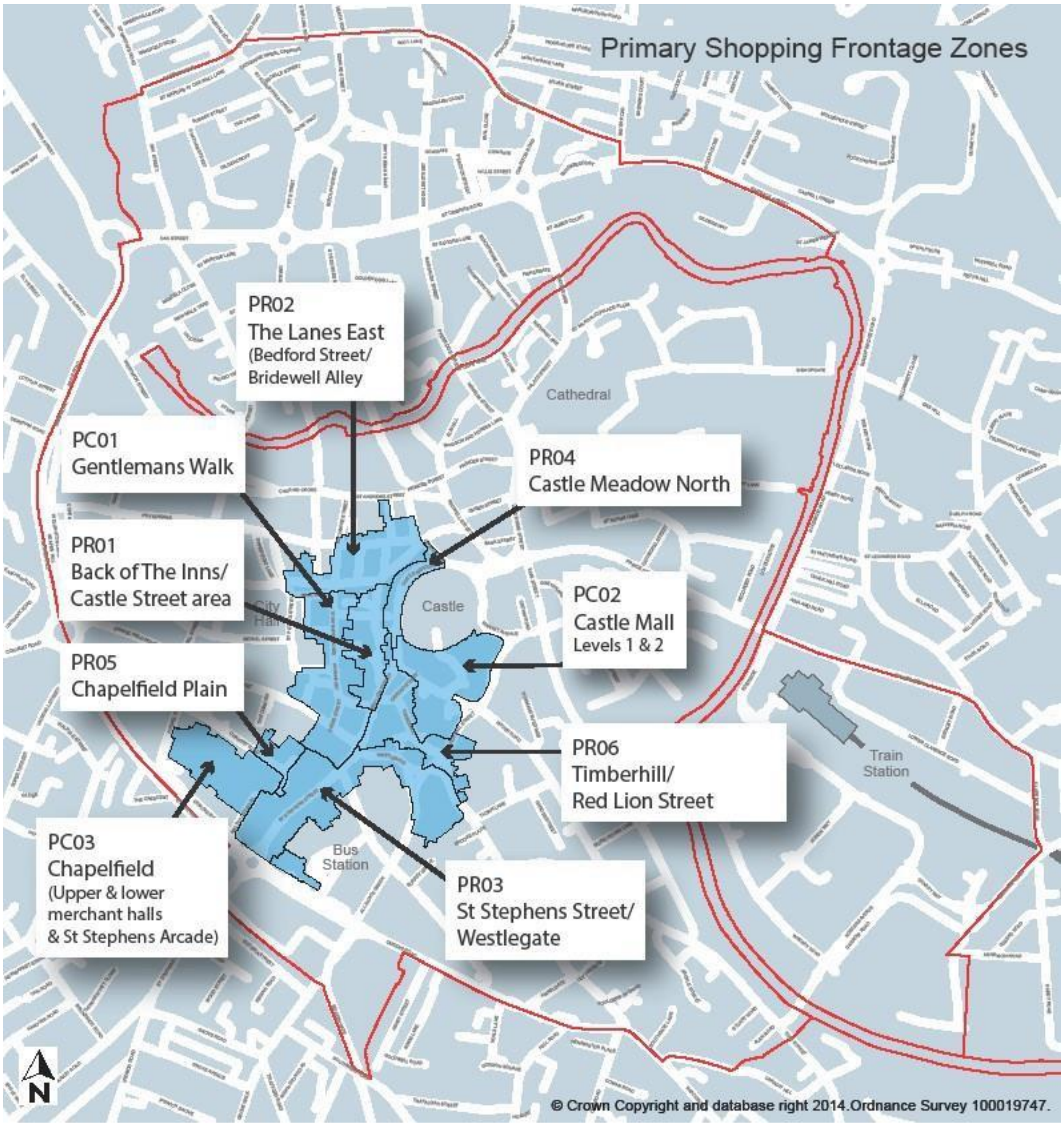
Key
↑ = increase
↓ = decrease
Red = Moving in a negative direction
Green = Moving in a positive direction
Grey = No change

Supporting Maps

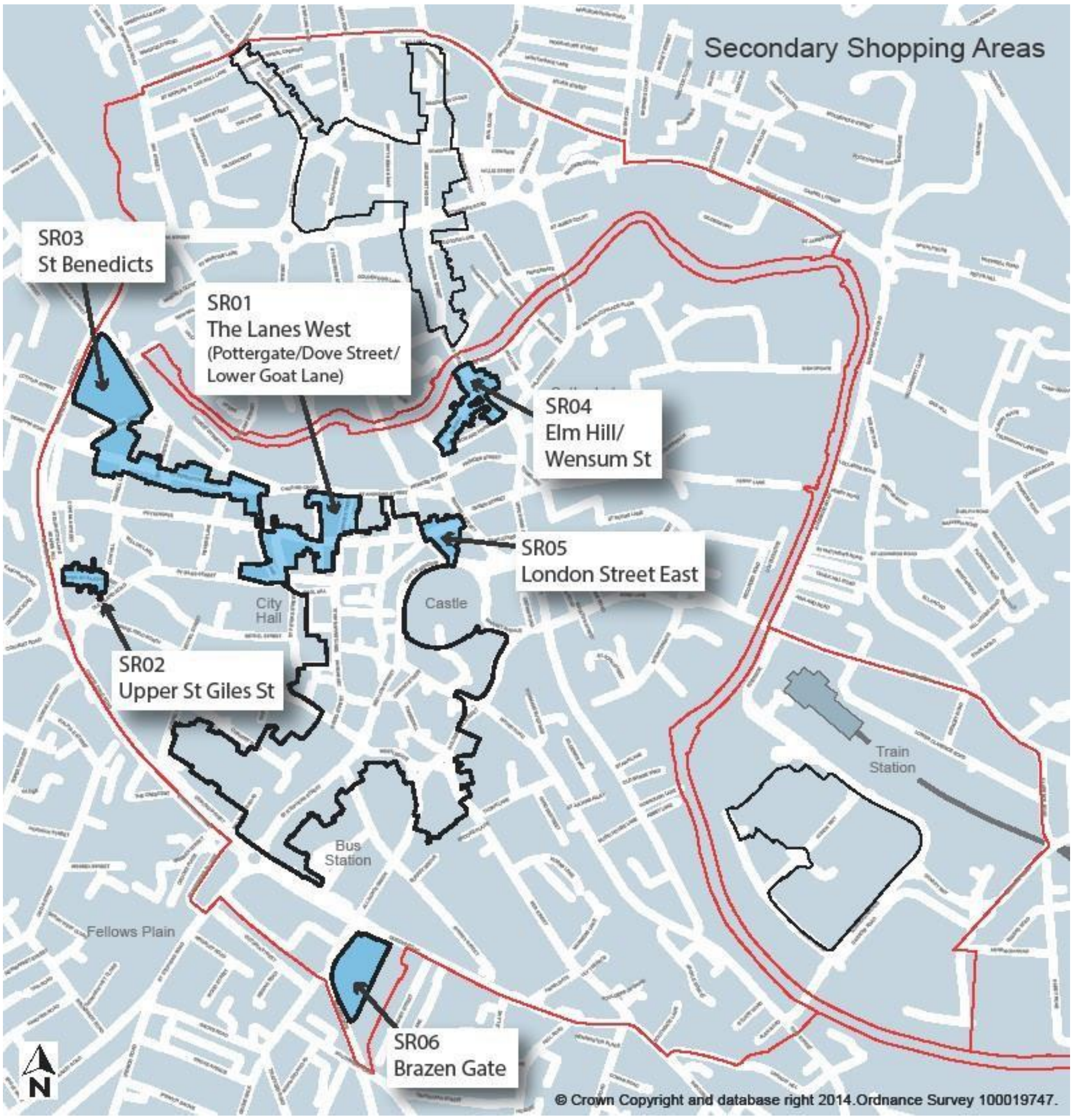
Map 1: Primary shopping area



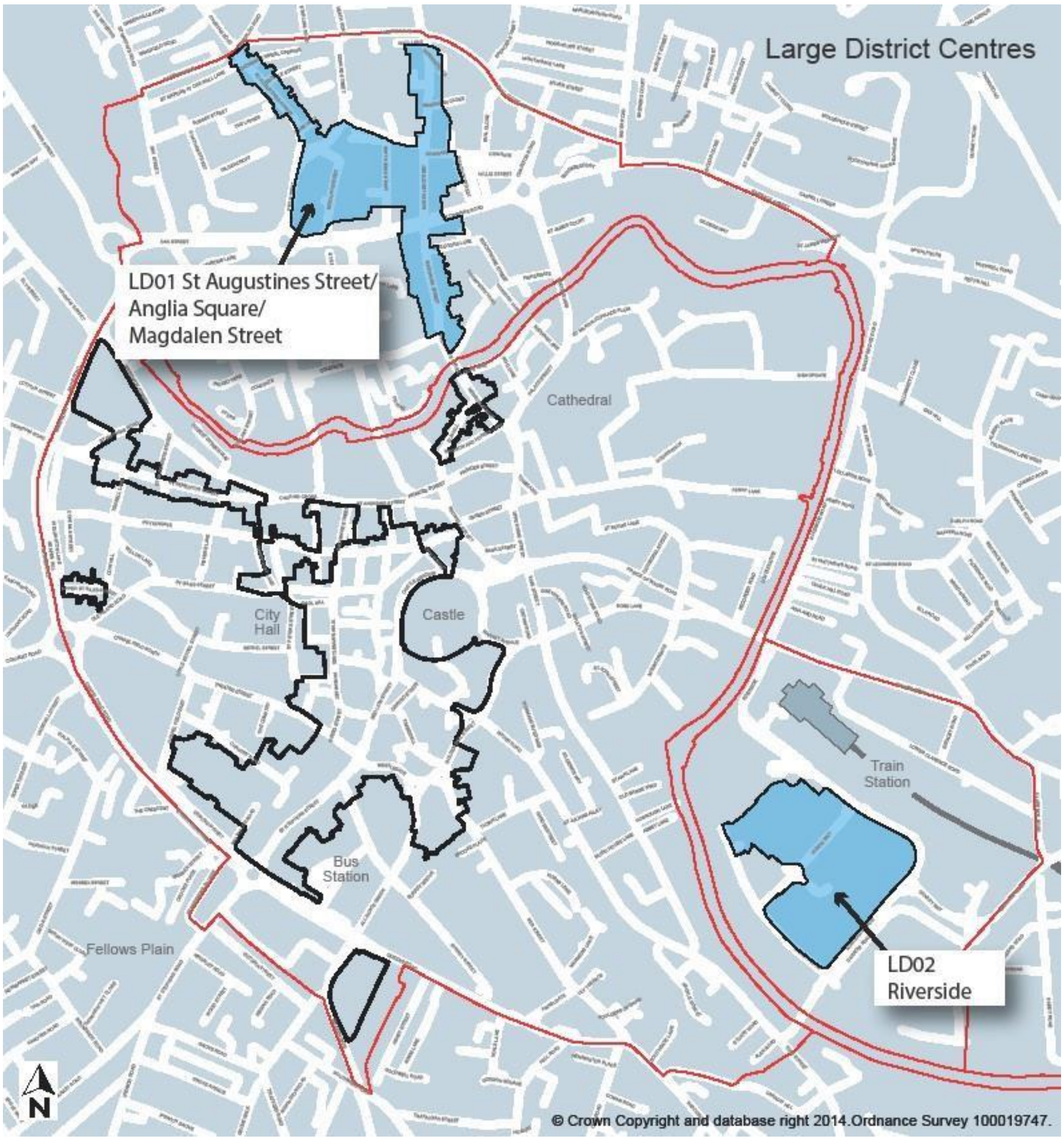
Map 2: Primary area frontage zones



Map 3: Secondary shopping areas



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



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