

West Berkshire Council
Local Plan Review 2022-2039

Retail Background Paper
December 2022

Contents

1. Background	2
2. Planning Policy Context	2
3. Initiatives	6
4. Evidence Base	6
5. Permitted Development	8
6. Impact of COVID-19 and Brexit	8
7. Future supply and policies	8
8. Review of Primary Shopping Areas	10
9. Review of Town Centre Commercial Areas	11
10. Conclusion.	13

Appendix 1: Maps of town centres (primary shopping areas and town centre commercial areas)

1. Background

- 1.1. The purpose of this document is to explain the approach taken by West Berkshire Council to retail within the Proposed Submission West Berkshire Local Plan Review to 2039 (LPR). It has been prepared to support the LPR and to demonstrate how related national policy and guidance, as well as the relevant pieces of evidence base have informed the LPR and the policies concerning retail and town centres.
- 1.2. For the purposes of the LPR, 'economic development' encompasses employment generating uses, including main town centre uses. This is in addition to offices, industrial, storage and distribution (including warehousing), which are under the term 'employment land/site'.
- 1.3. This Retail Background Paper includes a section on national policy concerning retail and also refers to recent government proposals. It does not include details of sites that have been submitted or proposed for allocation as this is covered through the [Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment \(HELAA\)](#), and [Sustainability Appraisal \(SA\) / Strategic Environmental Assessment \(SEA\)](#).
- 1.4. A separate background paper on employment (offices and industrial land) has been prepared to support the overall justification for the economic development policies in the LPR.

2. Planning Policy Context

National Policy

- 2.1. The [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) 'sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally-prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced' (para. 1). The NPPF states that 'the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development' (para.7) and highlights economic development as an integral part of sustainable development in paragraph 8.
- 2.2. The NPPF outlines that 'main town centre' uses, as defined in the glossary, should be located in town centres. NPPF policies relating explicitly to issues of retail and town centres include:
 - Paragraph 86: to support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, taking a positive approach to growth, management and adaptation. A number of criteria are included, including defining a network and hierarchy of town centres and promote their long-term vitality and viability; define the extent of town centre and primary shopping areas; allocated a range of suitable sites to meet the scale and type of development likely to be needed; and ultimately recognising that residential development can play an important role in ensuring the vitality of centre.
 - Paragraph 87: Application of a sequential test for main town centre uses which are not in an existing centre or in accordance with an up-to-date plan.
 - Paragraph 90: For retail and leisure development outside of town centre, not in accordance with an up-to-date plan, to require an impact assessment if the development is over a proportionate, locally set threshold (or 2,500 sq.m if there is no set threshold).

- 2.3. The NPPF is also supported by more detailed guidance in the [Planning Practice Guidance](#) (PPG). The PPG outlines that local planning authorities can take a leading role in promoting a positive vision for town centres, to support sustainable economic and employment growth. Structural changes in the economy, with particular reference to changes in shopping and leisure patterns and formats, shall be considered. A wide range of complementary uses can, if suitably located, help to support the vitality of town centres, including residential, employment, office, commercial, leisure/entertainment, healthcare and educational development.
- 2.4. The PPG considers that the key way to set out a vision and strategy for town centres is through the development plan, and if needed, supplementary planning documents. Primary shopping areas are expected to be defined. A town centre strategy should establish the realistic role, function and hierarchy of town centres over the plan period. Given the uncertainty in forecasting long term retail trends and consumer behaviour this town centre strategy may need to focus on a limited period (e.g. 5 years). The vision for the future for each town centre should be outlined, as well as the ability of the town centre to accommodate the scale of assessed need for main town centre uses. Using existing land effectively, such as grouping uses, should be considered. Opportunities to improve accessibility and wider quality of town centre locations, including environmental issues, should be considered. Engaging with stakeholders and reviewing what complementary strategies may be necessary could inform the strategy.
- 2.5. The PPG recognises that it may not always be possible to accommodate all forecasted needs for main town centre uses in a town centre. Local planning authorities should plan positively to identify the most appropriate strategy for meeting the identified need, having regard to the sequential and impact tests. This is to ensure that town centre uses not in town centre locations are in the best locations to support the vitality and vibrancy of town centres.

Local Policy

The LPR will replace the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies 2007), West Berkshire Core Strategy DPD (2012), and Housing Site Allocations DPD (2017).

West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies 2007)

- 2.6. The [West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 \(Saved Policies 2007\)](#) contains a number of saved policies relating to retail use. These include Policy ECON5 (Town Centre Commercial Area), Policy SHOP1 (Non Retail uses in Primary Shopping Frontage), Policy SHOP3 (Retail Areas and Retail Warehousing), and Policy SHOP5 (The Encouragement of Local Village Shops).

West Berkshire Core Strategy (2012)

- 2.7. The West Berkshire [Core Strategy \(2012\)](#) was adopted in 2012 and was tested in examination for conformity with the policies in the original 2012 NPPF. The Core Strategy sets out the long term vision for West Berkshire to 2026 and translates this into spatial terms, setting out proposals for where development will go, and how this development will be built. It also provides an overall framework for the more detailed policies and site specific proposals to be contained in other documents of the Local Plan, such as the Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document. Policies

specifically relating to retail include Policy CS11 (Hierarchy of Centres), and as part of strategic planning, Policy CS3 (Sandleford Strategic Site Allocation) which seeks provision of retail facilities on the site.

Housing Site Allocations DPD (2017)

- 2.8. The [Housing Site Allocations DPD](#) does not contain any policies or allocations for retail.

Neighbourhood Development Plans

- 2.9. Elsewhere in the development plan there are two adopted Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP) within West Berkshire. They are the Stratfield Mortimer NDP (June 2017) and Compton NDP (February 2022), both of which set out policies for business uses/development within their NDP areas.
- 2.10. Burghfield, Cold Ash, Hermitage, Hungerford, Lambourn, Newbury and Tilehurst have all have neighbourhood areas designated, and work is progressing.

Other Strategies

- 2.11. The Government's ['Build Back Better High Streets'](#) strategy (July 2021) sets out the long term plan to support the evolution of high streets into thriving places to work, visit and live. The creation of vibrant high streets where communities are at the heart of place-making, where a mix of commercial and residential uses complement each other, and where businesses feel welcome, are all aims of the strategy. This builds on innovations seen over the pandemic and sets out that the Government will provide the regulatory flexibility that will enable high streets to be hives of economic and social activity.
- 2.12. The [Strategic Economic Plan \(SEP\)](#) (2015/16-2020/21) prepared by Thames Valley Berkshire. The overarching priority of the SEP is to 'secure better access to talented people and bright ideas, and to us both more effectively'. In terms of West Berkshire the SEP considers it essential that Newbury and Thatcham all function well as towns, and are vibrant centres. They need to have clear and distinctive roles that allow them to complement, rather than compete with each other. Funding is one mechanism of encouraging vibrant town centres.
- 2.13. The SEP reviews relevant evidence, including the Western Berkshire Retail and Commercial Leisure Assessment (2016), which sets out the need for comparison and convenience floorspace for the period 2016 to 2036. Town centre strategies which support the continued evolution of the high street are vital. Providing a high quality shopping experience, benefitting from the tourist trade and improving the mix of retail and non-retail outlets to increase length of stay and spend are all recommendations of the assessment. The nature of retail and high-street shopping continues to change over time, and the commercial leisure sector is becoming an increasingly important contributor to the vitality and viability of town centres.
- 2.14. The [Recovery and Renewal Plan](#) (2020) was published to support the SEP and provides a snapshot of the effects of COVID-19. The three priorities are a 'connected Berkshire', a 'collaborative Berkshire', and a 'skilled Berkshire'. The three stages to the achievement of these priorities is recovery in the immediate term, renewal in the medium term of 6-18 months, and growth in the longer term of 2-5 years. Renewal is focused on improvements to digital infrastructure, regeneration of town centres, and innovation to eco-systems.

- 2.15. [Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy \(BLIS\)](#) was prepared by the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) in October 2020. The BLIS has a vision that 'Berkshire should grow with ambition and intent to harness the best of both global and local'. For town centres the addition of flexible and managed workplace may be under-developed. Smaller towns in more rural parts of Berkshire need to function as economic hubs. Berkshire's towns need more profile, and need to develop a more consistently excellent cultural offer. The cultural offer makes a place distinctive and attracts high skilled workers.
- 2.16. [West Berkshire Council Strategy 2019-2023](#) sets out six priorities of which one is to support businesses to start, develop and thrive in West Berkshire. One of the Council's commitments is to support town centres to recover from the impact of COVID-19, and this commitment is linked primarily with the recovery agenda. The pandemic has had a 'catalytic' effect on an existing trend of changing town centres locally and nationally. Town Centre Masterplans will be prepared to provide a strategic approach to how the town centres will change. This will start with Newbury and Thatcham.
- 2.17. [The West Berkshire Vision 2036](#) outlines that West Berkshire remains firmly 'open for business' and this is a key theme running through both Council documents. The West Berkshire Vision 2036 promotes the District as a pro-business area, and a hub for creativity, which encourages entrepreneurial ideas of its people.
- 2.18. The Council's [Economic Development Strategy \(EDS\)](#) was originally drafted in 2019 and adopted in 2020. In response to the pandemic this was refreshed in 2021 and identified a revised set of actions. The EDS considers a fresh approach to place-making is needed, and this includes looking at town centres and masterplanning. The EDS comments that the pandemic has accelerated the changing role of the town centre, although Newbury town centre remains financially robust despite some losses. Town centre grants will be distributed in Pangbourne, Theale, Thatcham and Hungerford to generate footfall.
- 2.19. A draft [Newbury Town Centre Masterplan](#) (2022) has been prepared, and sets out a vision. 'Newbury will continue to be a successful, modern market town by ensuring it is a place that:
- Promotes its heritage and independent identity;
 - Is innovative and entrepreneurial, able to respond quickly to economic change;
 - Is social and welcoming, where people gather to meet and celebrate;
 - Is green in the widest sense, promoting sustainability, biodiversity and healthy living;
 - Listens to the needs of its urban and rural community.'
- 2.20. The Masterplan outlines a range of 'quick wins' and short, medium, and longer term proposals to create more activity and improve connections between six key areas. These are The Wharf; the Canal; Victoria Park and Parkway; Northbrook Street; Bartholomew Street and Market Place; the Lanes and Yards; and Broadway, Cheap Street and Bartholomew Street (South). Initiatives to draw in young people and encourage innovative uses and creative and cultural activities in underused space are being explored.

- 2.21. Place-Making Strategies for [Thatcham and Hungerford](#) has begun. These encompass visual plans for how the town centres can develop in the future to remain economically competitive and make the most of their unique character and strengths. Public consultation is underway, and will close on Monday 9th January 2023. The Strategies will be completed by the beginning of March 2023, followed by engagement with the Town Councils and other stakeholders.
- 2.22. The [London Road Industrial Estate](#) (LRIE) in Newbury is proposed to be regenerated. The Vision is for 'the delivery of a mixed-use site that delivers economic growth, an improved local environment within which to work, travel and live, and provides effective links to the town centre'.

3. Initiatives

- 3.1. West Berkshire Council supports the Newbury Business Improvement District (BID) which works to establish Newbury as a go-to destination for businesses and visitors. Projects include experiences such as specialist markets, seasonal events, visitor information services, digitalisation of information, and establishing partnerships with businesses and key organisations.
- 3.2. Welcome Back Business Grants were provided by the Council directly to local businesses for projects to encourage existing and new customers. Examples include a grant for new tables, chairs and parasols for a coffee shop in Newbury, and a grant to a home based business to enable the setting up of a market stall to sell products.
- 3.3. Welcome Back Funding has been distributed from central government by the Council to assist town and parish councils and business improvement districts in adapting high streets to meet Covid-19 safety requirements and attracting footfall.

4. Evidence Base

- 4.1. The [Berkshire Functional Economic Market Area Study](#) (FEMA) was carried out in 2016 on behalf of the six Berkshire authorities, including West Berkshire Council, and the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The FEMA established the various functional economic market areas that operate across Berkshire and the wider sub-region in order to understand the various economic relationships, linkages and flows which characterise the sub-regional economy.
- 4.2. Across the study area three core functional economic market areas were identified that represent a 'best fit' with local authority boundaries. It concludes that the 'Western Berkshire FEMA' comprises West Berkshire District with the key centre of Newbury. It states that this area is characterised by having a relatively self-contained Travel to Work Area and tends to operate within a westward facing commercial property market constituting a key node at the western end of the M4 corridor. Whilst there is some synergy in travel to work and property market terms between Newbury and Reading, these linkages are not considered sufficiently strong to include West Berkshire within the Central Berkshire FEMA.
- 4.3. Following on from the FEMA Study, the [Western Berkshire Economic Development Needs Assessment](#) (EDNA) considered the objectively assessed economic development needs of Western Berkshire over the period 2013-2036. Due to concerns about the assumptions within the study, the assessment has been superseded by the West Berkshire Employment Land Review (ELR) 2020 and Updated ELR 2022. It is important to note that the Western Berkshire EDNA does not form part of the evidence for the LPR.

- 4.4. To assess the employment needs of West Berkshire over the plan period the Council commissioned an [Employment Land Review](#) (ELR) which was published in 2020. The ELR assesses the future demand and need for different types of employment land, office and industrial, in West Berkshire over the plan period, which at the time of the study was 2020-2036. Retail is considered, in the context of commenting on the make-up of a place and the impacts of Brexit and COVID-19. The ELR comments that such events will lead to a paradigm shift in the role of retailing within town centres over the life of the Plan. The redevelopment of retail space into offices could be explored, as part of a regeneration strategy. There is general uncertainty surrounding the future of UK high streets, not West Berkshire specific, so such an approach to encourage offices could be possible. The ELR recommends that where Protected Employment Areas now include retail their boundaries should be reduced. Town Centre boundaries are generally appropriate, subject to minor changes in Newbury, Hungerford and Theale.
- 4.5. The ELR compares the demand with supply identified for employment uses, and advises accordingly on planning policy and development management to identify if existing employment sites are fit for purpose or suitable for other employment purposes, as well as advising if and where additional employment land should be identified for employment over and above the planning supply.
- 4.6. The ELR highlights that West Berkshire is a strong economic performer, second only to Reading in Berkshire in terms of jobs and economic activity, with strong recent job growth in high value sectors, but only marginally a net importer of labour.
- 4.7. The ELR was updated in 2022, and does not alter the findings in the 2020 ELR.
- 4.8. The [Western Berkshire Retail and Commercial Leisure Assessment](#) was completed in 2016, and covers Bracknell Forest Council, Reading Borough Council, Wokingham Borough Council and West Berkshire Council.
- 4.9. The Assessment finds that Newbury town centre's comparison goods turnover is performing well. The retail offering has improved since the opening of the Parkway scheme, and the centre benefits from a wide catchment being sited equidistant between Reading and Swindon. The town centre's catchment area extends to Thatcham, Hungerford, Wantage, and Pangbourne, as well as its own local zone. Newbury is well provided for in terms of retail parks, and these attract further strong market shares from the western side of the survey area.
- 4.10. The Assessment finds that Thatcham does not act as a significant comparison goods shopping destination. Residents tend to travel to Newbury for their comparison goods shopping.
- 4.11. The Assessment finds that Hungerford has a relatively limited comparison goods offer. Hungerford plays an important role as a more specialist comparison goods shopping destination, particularly in respect of antiques goods. Most residents travel to Newbury and Swindon for comparison goods.
- 4.12. In terms of convenience goods, Newbury is self-sufficient. The three most popular foodstores are located within the town, as well as other foodstores. The Tesco in Hungerford is dominant. Theale and Pangbourne are served by Co-Op stores, catering for 'top-up' shops. The Sainsburys in Calcot and Aldi in Bath Road provide services for these residents.

- 4.13. There is no quantitative need for additional convenience goods provision in the Newbury/Thatcham area over the period to 2036. There is a need for additional goods provision in Hungerford, to account for the overtrading of the Tesco store. There is a modest need for Theale and Pangbourne.
- 4.14. Overall, the Assessment identified an additional need of 26,600sqm of comparison goods floorspace to 2036 within West Berkshire.

5. **Permitted development**

- 5.1. The Use Classes Order was amended in September 2020, which allowed greater flexibility with the introduction of a new use class, Class E (Commercial, Business and Service). Class E replaced Classes A1 (shops), A2 (financial and professional services), A3 (restaurants and cafes), and B1 (business). Changes of use between the different uses within Class E, which includes typical high street uses, can take place without the need for planning permission. This is to help the high streets and town centres adapt quickly to changing demand and trends. This does allow changes of use of out-of-town centre locations without the need for approval from the Local Planning Authority. For example from offices to shops or to restaurants or cafes.
- 5.2. From August 2021 new permitted development rights under Class MA allowed the change of use to residential from Class E, subject to certain criteria. A unit must be vacant, so cannot be used for shops still in use, and does not apply in AONB locations or for Listed Buildings. Bringing empty buildings back into use could aid in increasing flexibility and vibrancy, though at the cost of losing retail space.

6. **Impact of COVID-19 and Brexit**

- 6.1. As detailed in the ELR and the Council's Economic Development Strategy the retail industry has faced a number of challenges, in part due to COVID-19 and the exit from the EU. In town centres consumer shopping behaviours have shifted towards online shopping and 'click and collect'. Retailers are adapting and responding to these macro-economic 'shocks' as well as the changes in shopping trends. The nature of retail and high streets continues to adapt, and the commercial leisure sector is becoming an increasingly important contributor to the vitality and viability of town centres.

7. **Future supply and Local Plan policies**

- 7.1. The Council is committed to a review of the District's retail needs in the first five year review of the Local Plan. This is in recognition of the age of the retail evidence, but also reflecting the changes to retail, locally and nationally since the Western Berkshire Retail and Commercial Leisure Assessment was undertaken in 2016. The Country is still emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, and is establishing itself after exiting the EU. The condition of the economy, inflation, and cost of living situation may also be having an impact on the High Street. Given the challenges and uncertainty being faced and the need for the retail sector to adjust and adapt it has not been possible to update the retail evidence in a meaningful way to feed into this LPR. Thus, an assessment of retail need will be made in the short term.
- 7.2. Until the retail evidence has been updated the LPR includes policies which will safeguard town centres, maintaining and enhancing their vitality and viability. The primary shopping areas (section 8) and the town centre commercial areas (section 9) have been reviewed and updated. Retail parks have been identified, where the

policy approach is to safeguard the retail uses. Work has commenced on identifying town centre strategies for Newbury, Thatcham and Hungerford, and will also feed into a review of planning policies. Such an approach is therefore considered to ensure town centres are safeguarded, whilst allowing them to grow and diversify.

- 7.3. The LPR does not allocate land solely for retail uses. Strategic Policy SP22 of the LPR outlines the Council's approach to town and district centres. This builds on the approach set out in the Core Strategy, in terms of identifying a hierarchy of centres. Upon review of the services offered within each centre, as well as the scale and character of the centre, the hierarchy remains the same as the Core Strategy.
- 7.4. Newbury is a major town centre. The development of Parkway, the comparison goods and retail offering, with independents, the cultural and leisure offerings, including green spaces, the accessibility, all contribute to Newbury being a major town centre. Many events are held in Parkway and the town centre, some events hosted by the Corn Exchange. Events include seasonal events, film and sport screenings, events for children and families, and art installations. The Kennet Centre benefits from a Vue Cinema and a cluster of restaurants, as well as retail units.
- 7.5. Thatcham and Hungerford are town centres. Both towns have distinct and functional centres, providing essential services to their residents, and choice of main town centre uses and convenience goods provision. Seasonal events occur in both towns. Hungerford also has specialist shop provision.
- 7.6. Lambourn, Pangbourne and Theale are district centres. These are smaller centres than Newbury, Thatcham and Hungerford with more limited provision than such centres, but all serve their community with day-to-day shopping needs as well as some leisure offerings.
- 7.7. The approach to retail in the LPR builds on what is set out in the Core Strategy, and in response to the NPPF. Policy SP22 seeks to direct main town centre uses to the town and district centres, specifically directing retail uses to the primary shopping areas.
- 7.8. Strategic Policy SP16, as part of the strategic residential site at Sandleford, Newbury, seeks the provision of retail facilities in the form of a local centre. This is also outlined in the Sandleford Park Supplementary Planning Document, seeking small scale retail facilities to provide at least one local shop/convenience store. Policy SP17, as part of the strategic residential site at North East Thatcham, seeks the provision of local centres providing local retail facilities. The additional population created by the two developments will assist in maintaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of the retail centres in Newbury and Thatcham, as well as the more local offerings.
- 7.9. As a development management policy, Policy DM34 of the LPR seeks to safeguard existing retail parts at Pincents Lane, Calcot; London Road (along the A4 between Newbury and Thatcham); and Newbury Retail Park. These are established retail parks, often with a mix of appropriate Class E, retail warehousing and leisure uses. The Western Berkshire Retail and Commercial Leisure Study 2016 highlights that retail warehousing within the District performs well, and in Newbury in particular attracts market shares from the western part of the District.
- 7.10. In recent years there has been much redevelopment in each of the retail parks. Ikea has been built in Calcot, redeveloped from a homestore warehouse and nightclub/bowling alley. The 'Savacentre' retains the core Sainsbury's, and contains

B&M and Sports Direct, both bulky goods stores usually found in out of centre locations. A gym has been provided. Additional Class E developments have been developed at London Road, Newbury, with the replacement of a public house with a Lidl food store. Costa Coffee has opened a drive-thru unit within the grounds of B&Q. Newbury Retail Park is a new addition to the policy for Retail Parks. The uses within the Park are considered to be consistent with the uses usually found in retail parks. Development has concentrated on the refurbishment of units, and subdivision. Food stores have been built, with the addition of M&S Foodstore and Lidl.

- 7.11. Development management Policy DM34 of the LPR recognises that as the Council's main priority is to ensure vibrant and viable town and district centres, any proposals within the retail parks would be subject to the sequential test, and should not have a significant detrimental impact either individually, or cumulatively on the vitality and viability of Newbury town centre or other nearby centres.
- 7.12. Development management Policy DM39 of the LPR supports new and/or expanded local community facilities, and protects against the loss of such facilities. Local community facilities include shops selling essential goods. Such a policy ensures the vitality of local communities, as well as reducing the need to travel by car for everyday essentials.

8. Review of Primary Shopping Areas

- 8.1. The NPPF requires planning policies to define primary shopping areas, and make clear the range of uses permitted in such locations. The Employment Land Review was used as a starting point for the review, and site visits were undertaken to assess what was 'on the ground'. Each of the settlements listed in the hierarchy has been assessed in terms of services offered, a desk based assessment of planning commitments, and changes made reflect the NPPF's position to take a positive approach to the growth, management and adaptation of town centres, and in consideration of the Class E Use Class. Maps are provided in the appendices to highlight the Core Strategy position and the proposed LPR position.

Newbury

- 8.2. Since the Core Strategy there have been developments in the town, most notably with the opening of Parkway at the northern end of the town centre in 2011. The primary shopping area should therefore extend around Parkway, as most units are retail, and all town centre uses. Changes are required for the Kennet Centre. One route goes through a unit, and is therefore unnecessary. It is proposed to reduce the extent of the primary shopping area at the Kennet Centre where the rear of units face Bartholomew Street, and to the south side where there is a cluster of restaurants and leisure uses. The Arcade is also removed as there is a concentration of non-retail uses.

Thatcham

- 8.3. The Kingsland Centre to the east of The Broadway is an active part of the town, though the primary shopping frontage does not currently extend into this area. As there is a concentration of retail uses, the primary shopping area should extend up to Waitrose. The primary shopping areas should be extended to the south side of the Broadway, on both the east and west sides, to the north of the Broadway, and the north side of the High Street, in recognition of the retail offerings.

Hungerford

- 8.4. Hungerford town centre retains a largely retail presence. There are small clusters identified in the High Street and Bridge Street, not currently in the primary shopping area, though are not considered to be viewed as part of the main core of the town centre, and are quite sporadic in location. It is therefore not recommended to include these areas in the primary shopping area. The primary shopping area should be increased to the south side of the High Street on the eastern side (south of Park Street) in consideration of the retail units available in this area.

Lambourn

- 8.5. The Core Strategy did not allocate a primary shopping frontage at Lambourn. As Lambourn is listed in the hierarchy the town centre has been visited and assessed. There is a small cluster of retail uses along the High Street, and it is therefore considered appropriate to designate a primary shopping area.

Pangbourne

- 8.6. Pangbourne town centre retains a strong core of retail and main town centre uses. The existing primary shopping frontage should be retained. It is proposed to increase the extent of the area to include units to the north and south of the High Street, nearest to the junction with Church Road. There are retail units clustered in this area.

Theale

- 8.7. Theale town centre retains its retail offering. It is proposed to reduce a small section on the south side of the High Street, as Angel Court, a residential development, breaks the continuity of the retail offering.

Other settlements

- 8.8. Mortimer and Burghfield Common were considered when allocating primary shopping areas. Both settlements do not have defined clusters of retail uses. Burghfield Common has areas with single shops or small parades of shops. The NPPF is clear that these are excluded from a 'town centre'. Mortimer has retail outlets, but they are quite sporadic in location, with residential housing located in between units. Primary shopping areas are not proposed for Mortimer or Burghfield Common.

9. Review of Town Centre Commercial Areas

- 9.1. The NPPF requires planning policies to define areas predominately occupied by main town centre uses within or adjacent to primary shopping areas. The Employment Land Review has been used as a starting point to the assessment, with site visits to assess what was 'on the ground'. A desk based assessment of planning commitments was undertaken to consider changes in use, new development, demolition, etc.

Newbury

- 9.2. There are changes recommended to reduce the town centre commercial area in Newbury. To the south, in Pound Street, a vacant builder's yard, residential property, and retail units should be removed. The area is disconnected from the town, and the builder's yard is not a town centre use. Owing to the residential development at West

Street (Avonbank Lodge retirement complex and conversion of Bayer House and car park) it is appropriate to remove these areas from the town centre commercial areas. To the north of the town centre Waitrose and Microfocus office building are considered to be separate from the town centre by areas of residential development. The commercial area northern boundary should therefore be brought in. London Road East, to the east of Aldi and office building has been changed to residential use. These do not function as town centre uses and should be removed.

- 9.3. An increase is proposed on the south side of Northcroft Lane adjacent to West Street as these accommodate offices.

Thatcham

- 9.4. The Thatcham town centre commercial area largely continues to fulfil its original purpose. The main alteration, and therefore reduction in area, is the removal of land where residential development has taken place on the corner of Station Road and The Moors (Turner House and William House). The area also excludes existing residential properties which do not function as town centre uses.

Hungerford

- 9.5. The majority of the Hungerford town centre commercial area continues to fulfil its original purpose. There are a number of areas for inclusion within the commercial area. To the north of the existing area in Charnham Street there is a row of town centre uses that ends with motor sales/repair garages on both the south and north side of the road. Given the nature of such uses it is appropriate to extend the commercial area to cover this area. The Tesco superstore is currently accessed from the town centre commercial area, and given its dominance in the convenience goods market, it is appropriate to extend the commercial area around it. It is noted that there are town centre uses to the south of the High Street. However, these are more sporadic and therefore it is not recommended to extend the town centre commercial area to cover such units.

Lambourn

- 9.6. The Core Strategy did not designate a town centre commercial area in Lambourn. There are a group of town centre commercial uses on the High Street and Market Place, which are in close proximity to one another. The main town centre uses include retail, café, takeaway, pubs, hotel, community facilities and some office. The town centre commercial area has been drawn around such uses.
- 9.7. There is an office space in Crowle Road, but due to the separation created by the residential properties it is considered that this is read as disconnected from the town centre. The pharmacy, pub and betting shop on the Broadway are disconnected to the other uses, and therefore both areas should not be included in the town centre commercial area.

Pangbourne

- 9.8. The Pangbourne town centre commercial area is increased to the east side to accommodate a row of buildings with retail. It is proposed to reduce the area at Pangbourne Place and land south of Reading Road as these areas include residential properties.

Theale

9.9. The concentration of town centre uses in Theale remains concentrated to the town centre. The Theale town centre commercial area to the south of the High Street is removed. Within this area there has been residential development, thus not serving a town centre need.

10. **Conclusion**

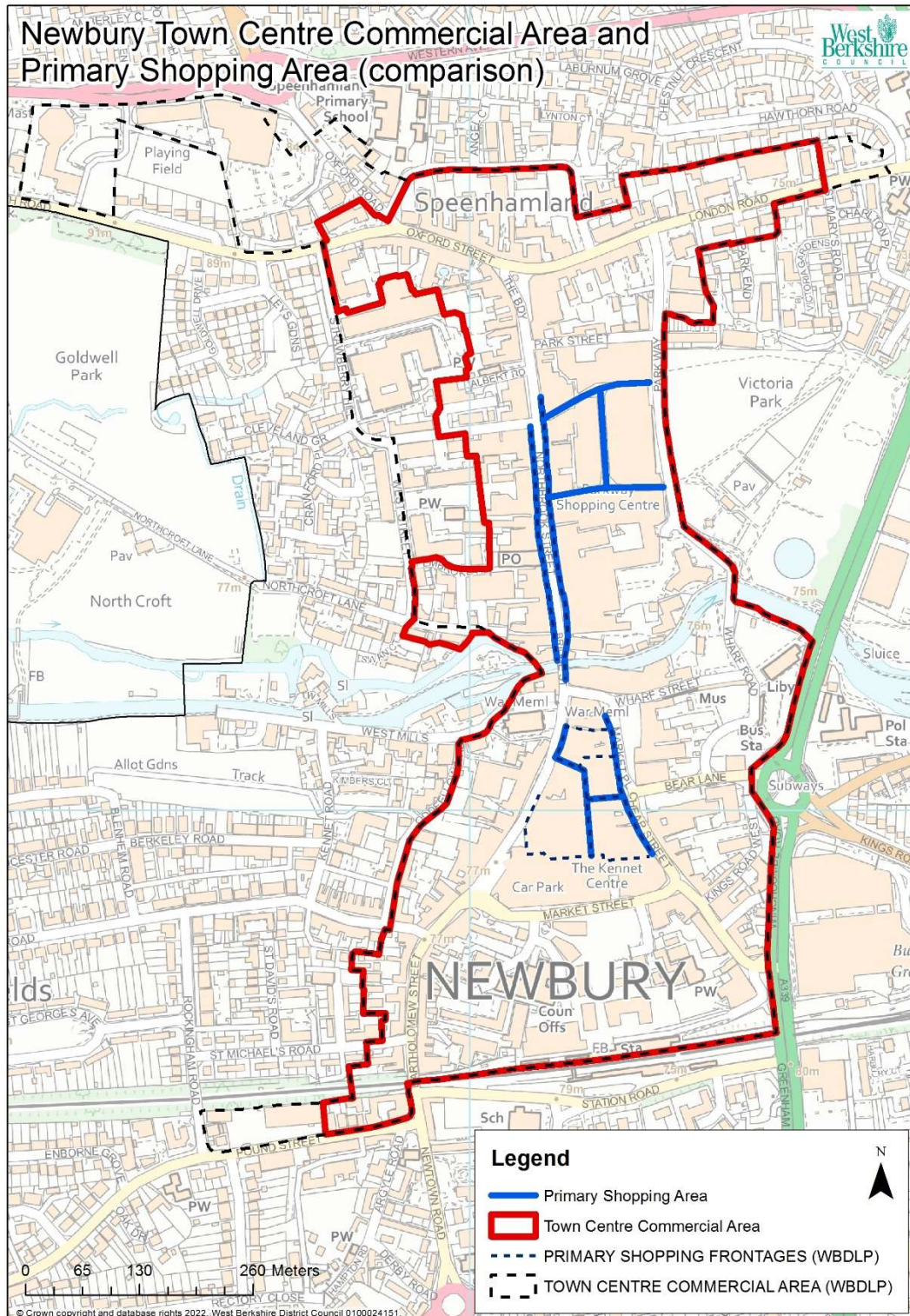
10.1. The LPR is considered to plan positively for retail provision, with a priority to ensure vibrant and viable town and district centres. The policies identify a hierarchy of centres with criteria to guide development and protect existing retail areas. The town centre commercial area boundaries and primary shopping areas have been reviewed and updated accounting for current uses, and reflecting the changes to the Use Classes Order. Such changes, particularly to the primary shopping areas aids in focusing retail uses within core areas of the town centres. The Policies Map has been updated accordingly. Strategic allocations for residential developments at Newbury and Thatcham whilst seeking to provide some retail offerings within local centres would also increase the population therefore aiding to maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of the two towns. There are initiatives at the local level with the West Berkshire Council Strategy, the West Berkshire Vision, and Council's Economic Development Strategy in place, and the Newbury Business Improvement District (BID). Such initiatives have lead into the visioning work and masterplanning, which has been undertaken for Newbury town centre and for London Road Industrial Estate. Work has commenced on a similar exercise for Thatcham and Hungerford.

10.2. In consideration of the challenges and uncertainty currently being faced within the retail sector and on the High Streets, with the effects of COVID-19, emergence from the EU, and the recent effects of the rise in inflation and subsequent cost of living impacts, the evidence relating to retail needs will need to be updated. This is committed to within the first five years of the LPR.

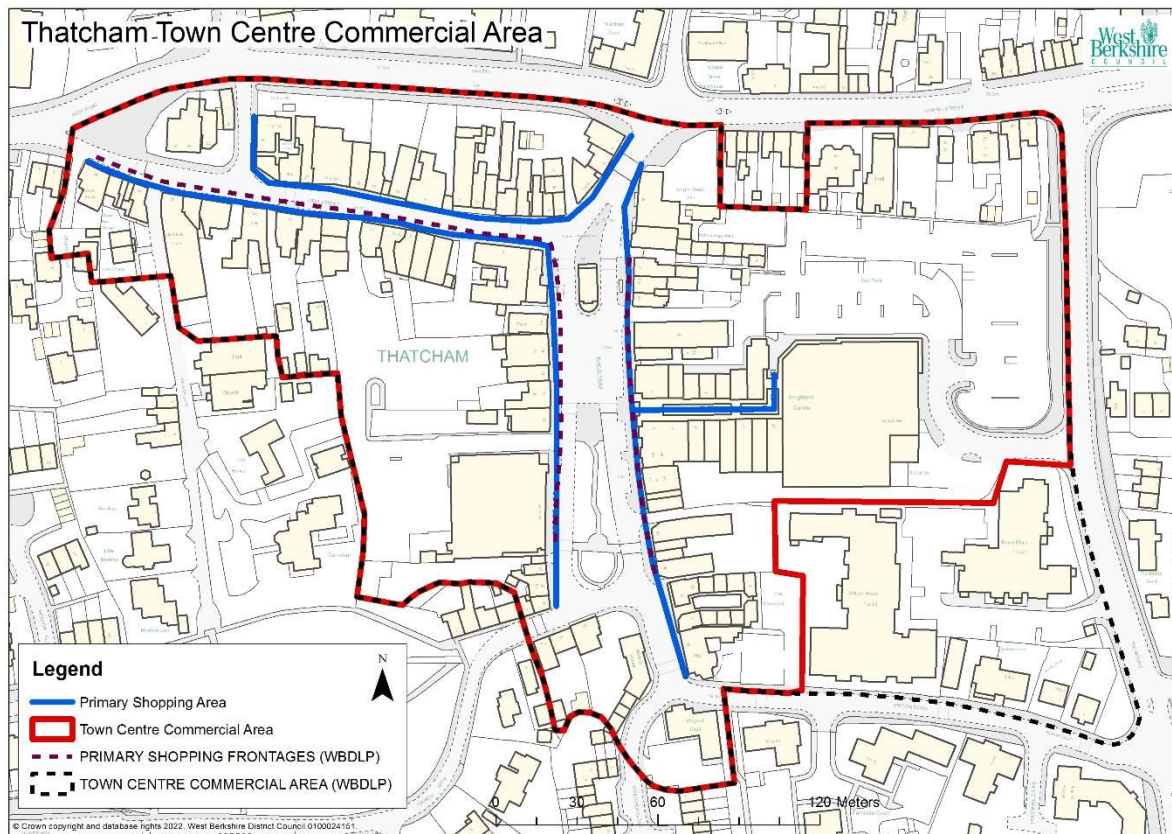
Appendix 1 – Maps

All maps illustrate the reviewed primary shopping areas and town centre commercial areas compared to the previous boundaries, with the exception of Lambourn which is new.

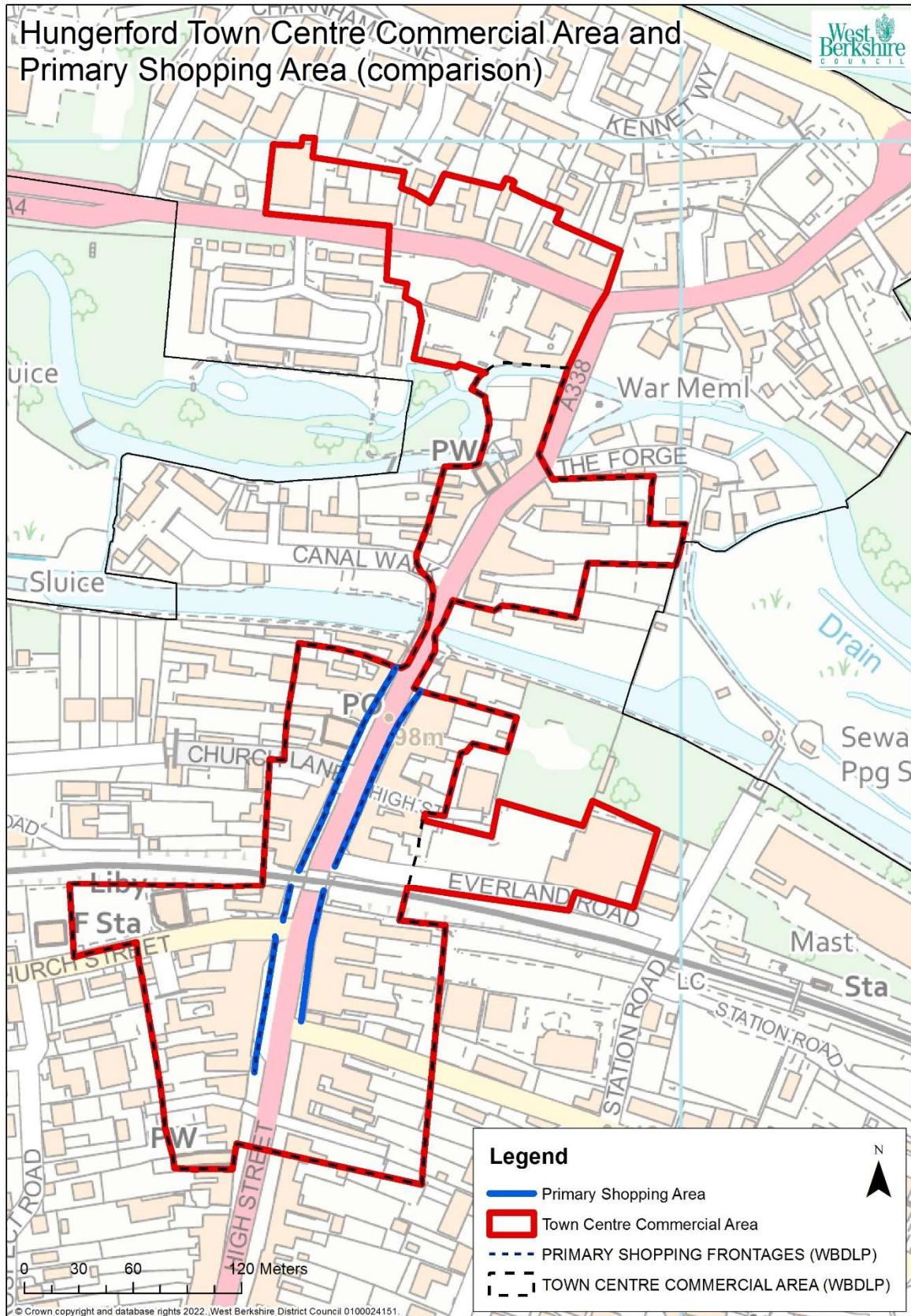
Newbury



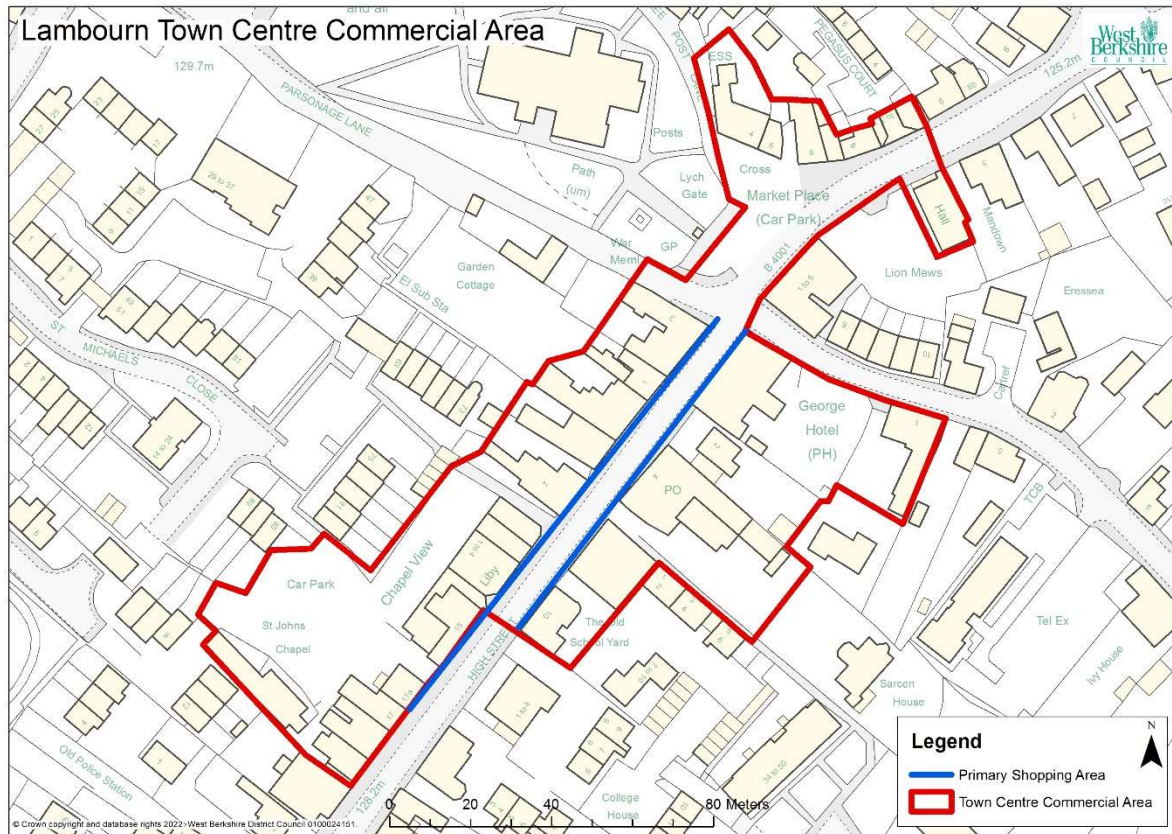
Thatcham



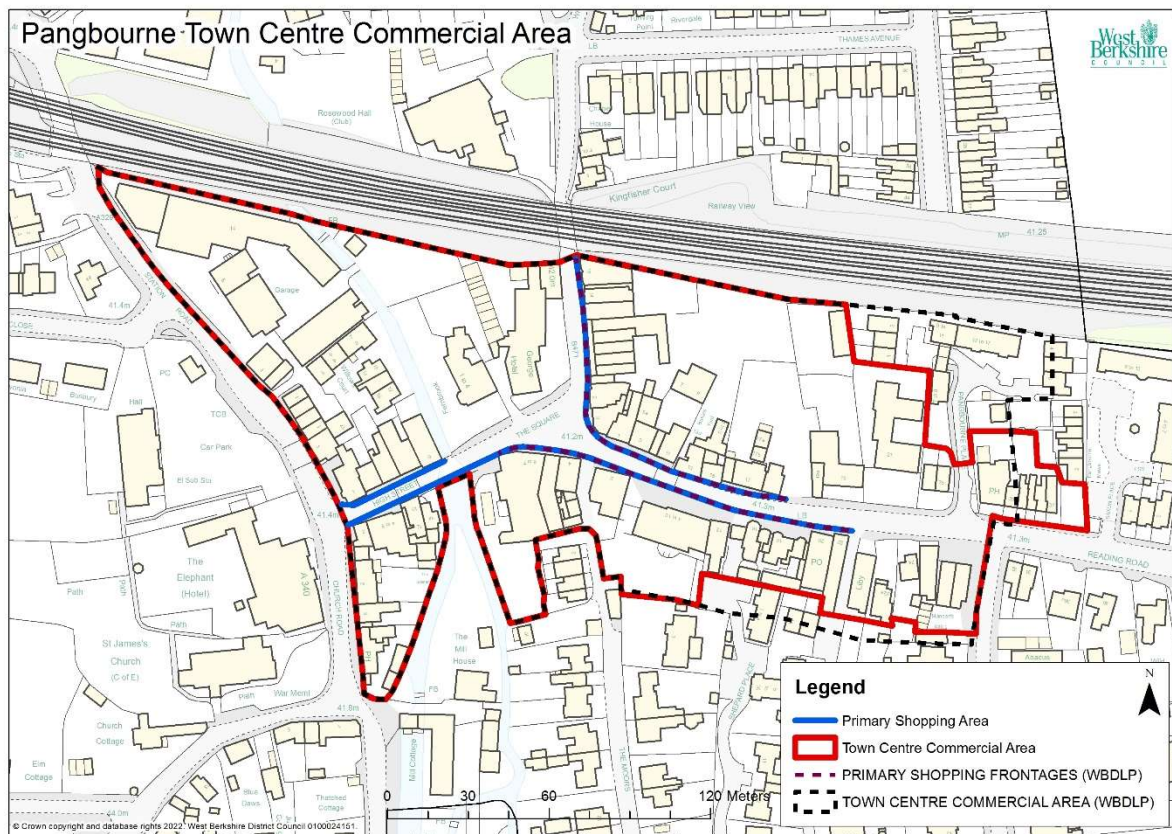
Hungerford



Lambourn



Pangbourne



Theale

