Melton Borough Retail Study

The full report is available to view and download at:
http://www.melton.gov.uk/downloads/download/632/melton_retail_study

Please Note: some appendices have been omitted from this version.

1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that Local Plans are supported by an evidence base to inform policy direction. In relation to retail provision the NPPF focuses on a town centre first approach, to ensure the continued vitality of town centres.

1.2 The study sets out retails needs in the Borough up to 2036 taking account of the current supply in convenience (food and beverages) and comparison (any other goods, including clothing, shoes and furniture) goods floor space and if projected population increases would require alterations to the current retail offer.

1.3 The study also classifies the Borough and its retail offer in accordance with the hierarchy of centres and definitions of the NPPF. It concludes that Melton Mowbray is the Main Town Centre, with Asfordby and Bottesford as Primary Rural Centres and Waltham on the Wolds and Long Clawson Secondary Rural Centres. The study also recognises that beyond this there is a wider network of other villages that fulfil service functions across the Borough.

Findings

1.4 The study identifies an over provision in convenience goods and on this basis suggests that retail allocations are not necessary in the Local Plan. The current convenience surplus was also recorded prior to the opening of the new Lidl store in June 2015.

1.5 The study identifies some shortages in the comparison goods sector from 2021 onwards; however the study also recommends exercising caution at this timeframe, as projections are usually only accurate over a 5 year period. The arising comparison goods need is detailed in the table below;

	2015	2021	2026	2031	2036
Comparison					
Net		1,020 sqm	3,020 sqm	5,080 sqm	8,870 sqm
Gross		1,450 sqm	4,310 sqm	7,260 sqm	12,670 sqm

1.6 Whilst a shortage of comparison goods floor space was identified. It is also evident during the assessment that convenience stores are under trading in their comparison goods offer. Due to the nature of comparison goods, and them not turning over as quickly as convenience goods, an element of over-trading is suggested and therefore the earlier years demand for comparison goods space could be met by the existing provision.

Recommendations and Opportunities

1.7 The report also sets out a series of recommendations and opportunities for meeting future retail provision. The Bell Centre is listed as an opportunity on the basis of its location within the Town Centre and current high vacancy rates. Furthermore, the Bell Centre could be utilised to offer larger units, as identified by the study as being in short supply and in demand from the more national retailers.

1.8 In relation to larger residential developments, the report concludes that any potential Southern Sustainable Urban Extension would sustain a new local centre or neighbourhood parade, restricted to A1-5 use classes. This would offer local level top-up shopping (convenience) to the new community. Also it was also noted in the study that the current offer for top-up convenience goods is more limited in the South of the Borough, therefore this provision would serve the existing community well.

1.9 In relation to a possible Northern Sustainable Urban Extension, there is no recommendation for a local retail offer, following a more comprehensive retail offer in the North generally. However, small retail (convenience) provision could be made in the Northern SUE, as part of an all inclusive new development, but such provision will likely be driven by the market and/or operator interest, rather than population forecasting. A zero threshold for impact assessments is recommended in relation to the SUEs.

1.10 In relation to Melton Mowbray a 200 square metre (gross) threshold is recommended. This takes account of the scale of existing retail and town centre uses. Applying this threshold level would also ensure that any proposed town centre uses are scrutinised in accordance with the NPPF tests, and ensures town centre uses are focussed in the town centre where possible.

1.11 It is further recommended that the threshold operates on a cumulative basis. This means that retail applications received throughout the year either individually or in total, that exceed the 200m2 threshold, would require a retail impact assessment.

1.12 In relation to the rural areas, the study recommends a flexible policy approach which seeks to retain existing provision and services, but also allows them to enhance their offer, moderately. A zero threshold for impact assessments is recommended here also.

1.13 It was noted by the study that provision in the South of the Borough is more limited generally and opportunities for improvements and enhancements to the Boroughs Southern Villages and settlements should be considered positively, so as to improve the existing offer to local residents and in turn reduce the rate of expenditure that leaves the Borough.

Development Management Policies

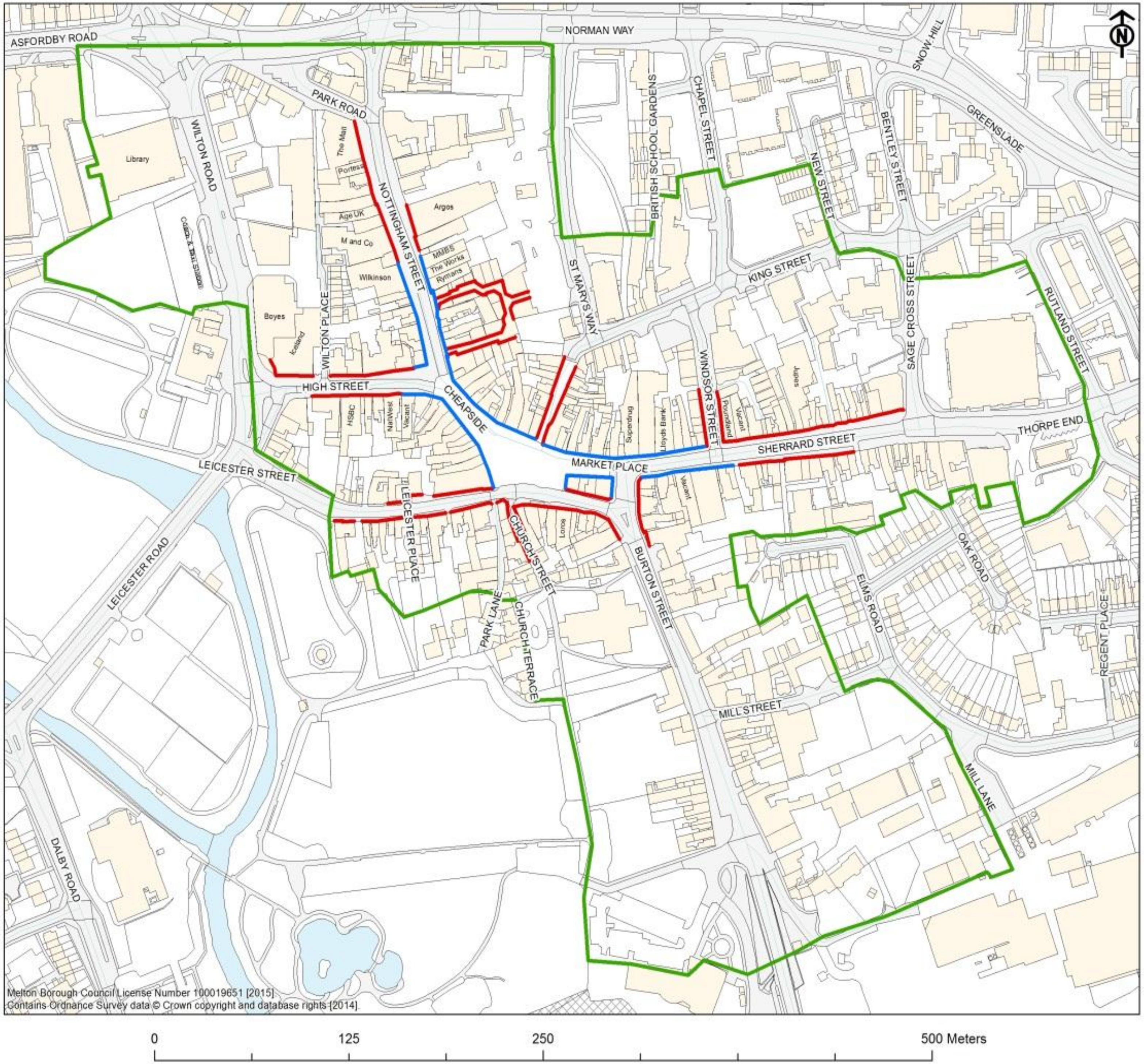
1.14 The NPPF requires town centre boundaries and shopping frontage to be defined on a policies map. The 1999 Local Plan does not contain a defined town centre, so therefore the study proposes one. It also suggests primary and secondary frontages where there are some changes to the shopping frontages in the 1999 Local Plan, but these are consistent with changes that have occurred organically in the town centre. These are detailed over the page.

1.15 It is recommended in the primary rural centres, that the current frontages are maintained. These were defined through Policy S7 of the 1999 Melton Local Plan.

1.16 Currently policy S3 and S4 of the 1999 Melton Local Plan restrict both primary and secondary shopping frontages, limiting A2 and A3 use classes floor space (A2 – Financial and Professional Services and A3 – Food and Drink Establishments). The restrictions limit A2 and A3 uses to no more than 12% of the whole primary frontage, or non-retail frontages to no more than 3 shop units or 15 meters, both primary and secondary frontages.

1.17 It is recommended that this policy not retained within the new Local Plan. This is on account of the town centre offer changing, but also the current permitted development rights regime, which allows greater flexibility between use classes in order to maintain the town centre first focus of the NPPF.

MELTON MOWBRAY TOWN CENTRE BOUNDARY AND SHOPPING FRONTAGES



Melton Borough Council

Key

- Primary Shopping Frontage
- Secondary Shopping Frontage
- Town Centre Boundary