

## BOROUGH OF KETTERING

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<b>Report Originator</b>	Head of Development Services	<i>Fwd Plan Ref No:</i> -	
<b>Wards Affected</b>	Burton Latimer, Desborough St, Giles, Desborough Loatlands, and Rothwell Wards	21 <sup>st</sup> July 2016	
<b>Title</b>	<b>REPORT ON FOCUSED CONSULTATION COMMENTS TO TOWN CENTRE BOUNDARY UPDATE</b>		

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise Members of the outcome of the focused consultation on draft town centre boundary changes for Burton Latimer, Desborough and Rothwell, and seek endorsement of subsequent town centre boundaries to be included within the draft full Site Specific Part 2 Local Plan.

### 2. PROGRESS STATUS

- 2.1 At Planning Policy Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2016, members were presented with outputs from the Burton Latimer, Desborough and Rothwell Town Centre Health Check update work.
- 2.2 Members noted the health check findings. Members also agreed to undertake focused consultation on further changes to town centre boundaries in Burton Latimer, Desborough and Rothwell. Consultation with the respective Town Councils, neighbourhood plan groups and local chamber of trade and town centre partnerships, was agreed in order to enable their views to be considered in the final draft town centre boundary update, prior to public consultation commencing. A summary of the focused consultation responses is provided in section 7 of this report.

### 3. Town Centre Boundary Reviews

#### **Policy Implications**

- 3.1 Saved Policy 64 (Established Shopping Areas) of the Local Plan for Kettering Borough, provides the starting point for defining town centre boundaries within the borough, which are defined on the accompanying proposals maps to the Local Plan. These require update in order to reflect changes which have taken place in the town centres since they were defined in 1995, and to address issues which may have been identified through the town centre health check work, as well as local aspirations. The resulting town centre boundary update will comprise part of the evidence base for the Part 2 Local Plan.
- 3.2 The market towns of Burton Latimer, Desborough and Rothwell are defined within the emerging Joint Core Strategy (Policy 11) as market towns which

provide a strong service role for their local communities and surrounding rural areas, which should be taken into account when considering the rate of growth within their town centres.

- 3.3 The emerging Joint Core Strategy (JCS) states that the Part 2 Local Plans will define the extent of town centres. In addition, planning policies should allocate a range of suitable sites to meet the scale and type of retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural, community and residential development needed in town centres. New development sites can therefore directly affect town centre boundaries, which in turn underpins the health check update work by providing focus on a defined area of the town.
- 3.4 Annex 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework defines main town centre uses to include *'retail development, leisure, entertainment facilities and the more intensive sport and recreation uses, offices; arts culture and tourism development'*.
- 3.5 Where proposals for main town centre uses come forward in areas outside of defined town centres, Policy 2 (NPPF) requires a sequential test to be applied. This is a measure used to help strengthen town centres by focusing only appropriate development within the defined town centre boundary. Impact assessments are also required under Policy 2 (NPPF) for proposals not in accordance with an up-to-date Local Plan where proposals meet or exceed a floor space threshold of 2,500m<sup>2</sup>.
- 3.6 Where proposals for main town centre uses come forwards in locations falling within defined town centre boundaries, proposals are considered acceptable in principle. As part of this work to review the town centre boundaries, consideration needs to be given to whether it is desirable to locate town centre uses in areas where the defined town centre boundaries may be altered, and whether this would have the desired effect of enhancing the vitality and health of the town.
- 3.7 It is generally accepted that places which are typically well connected and have compact centres, and provide greater focus for concentrated street activity and are more likely to succeed as vibrant and vital places. As a result, linear and widely spread town centres may be less likely to benefit from the multiplier effects of particular use magnets as there is greater scope for them to be less concentrated.

#### **4. Previous Town Centre Boundary Updates**

- 4.1 The methodology for defining town centre boundaries and primary shopping areas is set out in the background paper "Defining town centre boundaries for Burton Latimer, Desborough and Rothwell (February 2012)" attached as Appendix 1. The report recommends that identified [through use class surveys] concentrations of main town centre uses located outside of defined town centres and adjacent to established shopping areas [also town centre boundaries] be included within revised town centre boundaries.

4.2 Consultation responses to the Site Specific Proposals Local Development Document (SSPLDD) Issues Paper were also taken into account when proposing town centre boundary changes. A summary of the changes are provided in table 1 of pages 3 and 4 of this background paper. As a general rule, strong residential areas have been excluded, whilst concentrations of town centre uses have been included, together with ancillary uses such as public car parks, and gateway locations where environmental enhancements may be possible.

## **5. Proposed Town Centre Boundary Update**

5.1 Draft town centre boundaries for Burton Latimer, Desborough and Rothwell were presented to Members on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2016, which were to be used for the focused consultation.

5.2 In addition, Members also noted the following matters with respect of the town centre boundary review, which have been included (where possible) in the amended town centre boundaries:

- Inclusion of the doctors' surgery at Desborough in the town centre boundary
- Parking in the town centres needed to be addressed
- Town centre dynamics had changed since electronic payment of pensions

## **6. Links with Town Centre Health Checks**

6.1 The previous methodology for town centre boundary review was primarily led by updated use class surveys. However, it is also considered that rental yields, vacancy rates and unit take up rates are all indicators of town centre health and vitality. Where there is excessive supply of land uses, rental yields and take up rates are likely to be depressed, and vacancy rates are likely to be higher, indicating that town centre enlargement may not be appropriate in terms of enhancing town centre health and vitality, and vice versa.

6.2 Enquiries made to local land agents to seek data on town centre health issues including rental yields and unit take up rates has been unsuccessful as no responses have been received to a number of requests for information. However, the recent town centre health check update provides an indication of vacancy rates and is show in Table 1 below. Overall, vacancy rates are below national average rates, and have recently decreased in Burton Latimer and Desborough. Rothwell shows a slight increase in vacancy levels, but is the lowest of the three towns.

Table 1: Summary of Town Centre Vacancy Rates 2011 – 2016

Town / Year	Vacancy Rate			
	2011	2012	2016	2014 National Average
Burton Latimer	12.10%	12.10%	5.63%	12.49%
Desborough	15.91%	21.81%	9.21%	
Rothwell	12.06%	3.13%	5.33%	

6.3 The National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) states that town centre strategies should take into account the lifetime of the Local Plan. It is considered appropriate to take account of the aforementioned additional information, together with the use class survey information and policy implications of town centre boundary changes, in deciding carefully, how and where to amend the town centre boundaries in advance of full public consultation.

## **7. Summary Of Focused Consultation Responses**

7.1 Table 1 below summarises comments received through the focused consultation on further potential town centre boundary changes.

Table 1. Summary of Focused Consultation Responses:

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Desborough Town Council	Desborough Town Council proposed no additional changes to the amended town centre boundary proposed by Kettering Borough Council.
Desborough Town Centre Partnership	No comment received.
Chair of Desborough Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group	No comment received.
Rothwell Town Council	Proposed boundary changes supported, together with inclusion of a section of High Street and Sun Hill* to incorporate Ram's Supermarket and Ken Sing Chinese Takeaway and associated public parking spaces. Manor House, Squires Hill is informally stated to be in use as offices and also proposed for inclusion, together with the car park serving Rowell Charter Inn.  *See Appendix 2 for a copy of the submitted proposals map.
Rothwell Town Centre Partnership	As per Rothwell Town Council.

Burton Latimer Town Council	Proposed boundary changes supported, with 5 additional areas to be included. These include 1) car sales on corner of station road; 2) telephone exchange land accessed from Pioneer Avenue; 3) Land west of Churchill Way car park; 4) Primary school and associated land; 5) South end of the High Street to include Britannia Club and Golden Gate Chinese Takeaway. See Appendix 3 for a copy of the map and reference sheet they submitted.
Rothwell / Desborough Chamber of Trade	No comment received to date.
Burton Latimer Chamber of Trade and Town Centre Partnership	No comment received to date.
Chair of Desborough Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group	No comment received to date.
Burton Latimer Parish Plan Steering Group Chair	As per Burton Latimer Town Council.

## **8. Assessment of Focused Consultation Responses**

### **Burton Latimer**

- 8.1 No formal justification has been provided with sites proposed to be included within the revised town centre boundary. However, it is broadly understood that the approach to inclusion of the proposed sites is to deliver a continuous town centre frontage which incorporates existing main town centre uses which currently fall outside of the existing town centre boundary. In addition, development of a number of sites proposed for inclusion in the town centre boundary will improve the appearance of the sites and reinforce gateways at either end of the town centre.
- 8.2 A number of the proposed sites (sites 1, and 3) were presented within the Burton Latimer Urban Design Framework, as sites for a catalyst and supporting project. This framework requires higher standards in design (as previously set out in Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1) - Delivering Sustainable Communities but now superseded by the National Planning Policy Framework), and identifies a number of principles and proposals in order to help create a more sustainable and successful town centre. The urban design framework is a material consideration which was endorsed at Planning Policy Committee on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2006.
- 8.3 In terms of achieving a compact town centre, the inclusion of areas 1 and 5 are incompatible as they reinforce a further linear spread of the town centre. Although Table 1 demonstrates that there has been a decline in vacant units

since 2011, despite an increase in available units, there has also been a decline in the percentage of convenience goods, comparison goods and service uses within the town centre; the town centre is also performing below the national average. This is due to the range of uses present in the town reducing overall.

8.4 Compared with Desborough and Rothwell, Burton Latimer also demonstrated lower levels of footfall. Taking these matters into account, although main town centre uses are located within area 5, enlarging the town further to the north and south at this moment in time, is not considered to be in the long interests of town centre's vitality and viability.

8.5 Area 4: St Mary's C of E Primary School and Playing Fields

This site comprises the primary school and associated playing fields, which are not main town centre uses. Whilst centrally located, and fronting on to the High Street, there are no plans to relocate the primary school and so the site is not available for re-development for main town centre uses. As a result, whilst it provides frontage to the town centre, it is recommended that Area 4 remains outside of the defined town centre boundary.

8.6 Area 2: Telephone exchange

8.7 The telephone exchange site and associated land has a primary access from Pioneer Avenue which is a quiet residential side street. Whether the site is available or has scope to be reconfiguration would need to be confirmed, but it has not previously been put forward through a call for sites.

8.8 There is a potential for some form of access from Orbit Mews, although this would not offer a through route solution, or necessarily a vehicular access. The site also comprises land associated with 44 High Street (grade II listed residential building), 15 Pioneer Avenue (residential), and 42 High Street (retail).

8.9 The Burton Latimer Urban Design Framework (2006) acknowledges the extent of the residential areas and frontages, which includes Pioneer Avenue, and should be excluded from the Town Centre Boundary for this reason. Within the framework, this site has not been identified as a catalyst or supporting project.

8.10 Orbit Mews offers the only alternative access point, and is residential in character with no through route, and providing sole access to the maisonettes above the shops facing Churchill Way.

8.11 The site itself is surrounded by residential properties; as a result, residential development of the site would be more appropriate, as new main town centre uses in this location are likely to give rise to adverse neighbour impacts. In addition, main town centre uses would require sufficient access for deliveries, servicing, and customers which is relatively constrained at this site. For the above reasons, it is recommended that the site is not included at this stage within the town centre boundary.

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### 8.12 Area 3: land west of Churchill Way Car Park

8.13 This site is centrally located adjacent the designated town centre and car park serving it. The site comprises an informal car park area currently used by the bowling club for club parking, associated club house, and children's play area.

8.14 This site has been proposed to offer enhanced vehicular parking for the town centre. The 2016 Health Check update identified 'more secure parking' as one of the top three issues for suggested improvement within the town.

8.15 Development of this site for a town centre use, would require the reconfiguration of the existing children's play area (which may coincide with identified upgrades) if it is not to be displaced. Displacement of the play area would require full justification to demonstrate why it is no longer needed at this location and details of its replacement in an accessible location elsewhere within the town if it is to be supported.

8.16 It is noted that the site includes the bowls club building and land used as informal car park, but excludes the bowling green itself. The bowling green and club is not considered to be a main town centre use, but is an important community facility and are mutually dependent. Separation of the club house from the bowling green would not be appropriate as they are mutually dependent. As a result, it is considered that the club house and bowling green should both be excluded from the amended town centre boundary.

8.17 Subject to inclusion of a Part 2 Local Plan policy to address enhancement of the existing recreational play area, given its central location, the site offers suitable scope for incorporation into the town centre boundary and provides the opportunity to address a potential need identified through the recent town centre health check survey.

8.18 In conclusion, it is considered that only area 3 (land west of Churchill Way Car Park) should be considered for inclusion within the revised town centre boundary, due to its central location. Areas 1 and 5 may adversely affect the health of the town by overly extending its linear plan form. Area 4 is not a main town centre use and not available for development and is excluded, whereas area 2 is more suited to residential development due to access and its location, if it becomes available in the future.

### **Desborough**

8.19 No additional suggestions were provided by Desborough Town Council or the Rothwell / Desborough Chamber of Trade, Desborough Town Centre Partnership, or Chair of Desborough Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group with respect of changes to the town centre boundary already proposed by Kettering Borough Council.

### **Rothwell**

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8.20 Rothwell Town Council made no objection to the amended town centre boundary proposed by Kettering Borough Council. A number of additional sites were proposed to enlarge the town centre boundary, where existing main town centre uses are already located as set out in table 1 (above). These include the following:

8.21 Manor House, Squires Hill

8.22 This site sits adjacent existing retail units and the former medical health centre, and the vehicular access to Holy Trinity Church. The site is stated to be in use as offices and is therefore a main town centre use. Due to the high level of permeability in this part of the town, and its position between high street and market hill, its inclusion within the town centre boundary would not adversely impact on the town centre's compactness. The level of office provision within the town was not covered in the previous health checks, so there is no baseline to compare with, however, overall vacancy rates have increased since 2012, but remains below the national average.

8.23 On balance, greater weight is given to the location of the site in relation to the existing town centre and the fact that compactness of the town centre would be retained by inclusion of this site within it. It is therefore recommended that this site be included within the town centre boundary prior to public consultation commencing.

8.24 Units 1 – 7 Sun Hill

8.25 The site includes Ram Supermarket and Ken Sing Chinese takeaway, both of which are main town centre uses with residential use above. They are located opposite the Rowell Charter Inn (public house) which has been recommended for inclusion in the town centre together with 11 High Street (retail) and White House which is a large residential use.

8.26 Whilst Units 1 – 7 are currently used for main town centre uses, inclusion of these sites within the Rothwell town centre boundary was previously considered through the Site Specific Proposals Local Development Documents (SPPLDD) Issues Consultation and excluded from the town centre boundary on the basis that they offer a localised shopping function separate from the town centre. This was reported through the Background Paper: Defining Town Centre Boundaries for Burton Latimer, Desborough and Rothwell. On reflection, it is also considered that inclusion of this site within the town centre boundary may adversely affect the long term vitality and health of the town by reducing its compactness, and due to the increase in vacancy rates reported during the last town centre health check.

8.27 Rowell Charter Inn Car Park

The car park serving the pub comprises a large tract of land, and if included within the town centre boundary would extend it further westwards, behind existing residential development not located within the town centre boundary. The potential development of this site for a main town centre use, in a back land location to the rear of the existing pub, would have a harmful impact on the



health and vitality of the town centre, and may also likely to give rise to unacceptable impacts on neighbouring land uses. As a result, whilst it would normally be appropriate to secure ancillary land uses under the same designation, in this instance it would not considered appropriate.

8.28 In conclusion, it is considered that units 1 – 7 Sun Hill should be excluded from the updated town centre boundary, to maintain focus on a compact town centre. Similarly, whilst the Rowell Charter Inn car park is intrinsically linked to the pub itself, it is recommended to be excluded from the town centre boundary as it is not positioned in a logical location for extension of the town centre. Inclusion of Manor house, Squires Hill within the updated town centre boundary will not detract from a compact town centre, and recognises the existing main town use of the site as office accommodation and its location adjacent existing town centre uses and town centre boundary.

8.29 The following information has been considered in the update of the town centre boundaries for Burton Latimer, Desborough and Rothwell.

- Site Specific Proposals Local Development Document Issues Paper (March 2009)
- Site Specific Proposals Local Development Document Options Paper Consultation (March 2012)
- Background Paper: Defining town centre boundaries for Burton Latimer, Desborough and Rothwell (February 2012)
- Members comments made at Planning Policy Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2016
- Comment received through the focused consultation (town councils, etc) discussed in section 7 and 8 of this report.

8.30 Copies of the resulting plans showing the proposed town centre boundaries (and existing town centre boundaries) for Burton Latimer, Desborough and Rothwell are attached as Appendix 4. If endorsed, these plans will form the basis of subsequent public consultation on potential changes to the town centre boundaries for the respective market towns.

## **9. CONSULTATION AND CUSTOMER IMPACT**

9.1 A set of plans showing the suggested town centre boundaries, incorporating changes recommended in this report (taking into account the focused consultation responses) shall be included within a full draft of the Site Specific Part 2 Local Plan, which is due to be published for full public consultation later this year

## **10. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 The work undertaken to review the town centre boundaries for Burton Latimer, Desborough, Rothwell will be used to assist in the policy formulation for the Site Specific Part 2 Local Plan.

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## 11. USE OF RESOURCES

11.1 There are no direct costs as a result of this report.

## 12. RECOMMENDATION

That Members note and agree the findings of this report, and endorse recommendation to commence public consultation on revised town centre boundaries simultaneously with the Part 2 Local Plan.

### Background Papers:

Title of Document: Site Specific Proposals Local Development Document – Health check updates for Burton Latimer, Desborough and Rothwell Town Centres  
Date: 6<sup>th</sup> June 2013

Title of Document: Site Specific Proposals Local Development Document  
Background Paper: Defining town centre boundaries for Burton Latimer, Desborough and Rothwell.  
Date: February 2012

Title of Document: Burton Latimer Urban Design Framework  
Date: 2006

### Previous Reports/Minutes:

Title of Document: Site Specific Part 2 Local Plan – Updates For Burton Latimer, Desborough And Rothwell Town Centres  
Date: 15<sup>th</sup> March 2016

Title of Document: Planning Policy Committee Minutes: Item 6  
Date: 15<sup>th</sup> March 2016

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