

BASILDON BOROUGH COUNCIL

SHOPPING FRONTRAGE REVIEW AND CHANGES TO TOWN CENTRE BOUNDARIES

DECEMBER 2015

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1 INTRODUCTION

Background

- 1.1 Traditionally, town centres provide a focus for retailing, civic and community activities and provide access to services. They are generally the most versatile, resilient and active locations with the greatest potential footfall and the greatest retail range. The Basildon Retail & Commercial Leisure Capacity Study 2015 suggests that town centres are facing unprecedented challenges, and there is a general consensus that many town centres will need to adapt in order to ‘future-proof’ to ensure their long-term vitality and viability.
- 1.2 Basildon as with many town centres across England is susceptible to the changes in the structure of retailing nationally. In recent years, insufficient financial returns on retail investment have led to shop closures and pressures on high-profile retailers, with a general trend towards discount retailers and non-retail uses replacing existing retail uses. It has also been widely documented that online shopping has increased at a rapid pace in recent, replacing traditional store-based shopping. While unfavourable economic conditions are forcing many retailers to scale back on physical retail space, their online operations allow them to reach a much wider customer base. Although new technologies are promoting an integration between these two shopping channels. Therefore, there is a renewed focus on the role and function of the high street, in the context of the recent, sustained economic downturn, continued attraction of out-of-town facilities as alternative shopping destinations, and the increasing popularity of online shopping.
- 1.3 Changes in planning policy also now allow retail units to be reused, without the need for planning consent, for a series of other uses outside retail provision. This has implications on the ability of planning authorities to control the mix of uses in town centres through the application of planning policies. In centres which are particularly susceptible to market conditions, and are at risk of decline, it may be that policies are ineffective at controlling the mix of uses, and consideration may need to be given to the use an Article 4 direction which limits these permitted development rights in order

to secure the provision of retail services that meet local needs. Such an approach would however need to be fully justified by evidence.

- 1.4 In order for the centres in the Borough to perform strongly and meet local needs, the centres will need to adapt to, and embrace these challenges. However, it is quite clear that there remains a role for store-based shopping and for town centres. Experian forecast that store-based shopping is still expected to expand at an average of 1.9% per annum in capita terms to 2030, and online sales will begin to plateau (Basildon Retail & Commercial Leisure Capacity Study 2015).
- 1.5 This review has been prepared to explore the options for defining a policy approach which will support the retail function of the Primary Shopping Areas (PSAs) in Basildon Borough's town centres. While each town centre has a separate identity, within the Borough there is a clear hierarchy of provision. The designation of primary/secondary frontages is an important planning tool to balance and support the diversification of uses in town centres as a whole. To provide the evidence base necessary to support the prospective retail policies in the New Local Plan, it is necessary to have a comprehensive review of the primary and secondary frontages currently designated in the Basildon District Local Plan 1998.
- 1.6 The extent of the town centres, and their primary shopping frontages is currently defined in the town centre inset maps for the Proposals Map for the Basildon District Local Plan which was adopted in 1998. A number of years have passed since this was adopted and there have since been a number of important changes to policy and regulations. In this context, the main purpose of the review of the Town Centre boundaries and Primary Shopping Areas (PSA) is to ensure that the approach adopted in the New Local Plan is based on up to date evidence, and is compliant with relevant policy frameworks.
- 1.7 In light of the above, the following report presents a review of the existing town centre boundaries and their primary shopping areas including the frontage locations, to inform policies that make clear what uses will be permitted in each area, and to establish new boundaries that reflect the current and future situation of the Borough.

Objectives of the Survey

- 1.8 The main purpose of the survey is to provide the evidence necessary to inform the New Local Plan with regard to defining the primary shopping areas, and the primary and secondary shopping frontages in order to promote healthy, vital and viable town centres, and to enhance their function as principal retail areas. This will be specifically achieved through the following:
1. Reviewing the extent of the existing shopping frontage designations within each town centre in order to consider their continued appropriateness.
 2. Defining new options for the extent of primary shopping areas within the Borough, including the primary and secondary shopping frontages within them.
 3. Identifying different proportions of retail uses within primary and secondary shopping frontages in order to determine their sensitivity to change and providing the evidence necessary to seek a protective approach to such frontages.
 4. Identifying vacancy rates within primary shopping areas and their shopping frontages to provide evidence regarding the level of risk to such areas from other uses, including residential redevelopment.
 5. Reviewing and re-defining the town centre boundaries to reflect the main extent of the commercial and/or community facilities of town centres, in order to ensure they are up-to-date and appropriate.
 6. Providing recommendations as to whether there are other policy approaches and options which may better achieve the objectives for town centre retailing.

Planning Policy Background

National Policy Context

- 1.9 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) encourages local planning authorities to pursue town centre policies which support their vitality and viability. Paragraph 23 of the NPPF states that planning policies should be positive, promote

competitive town centre environments and set out policies for the management and growth of centres over the plan period. It is expected that amongst other things local planning authorities will define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas when drawing up their local plans. This includes defining the primary and secondary frontages within these areas, and setting policies that make clear what uses will be permitted in such locations.

1.10 The NPPF defines a town centre as an :

Area defined on the local authority's proposal map, including the primary shopping area and areas predominantly occupied by main town centre uses within or adjacent to the primary shopping area.

The primary shopping area is defined as a:

Defined area where retail development is concentrated (generally comprising the primary and those secondary frontages which are adjoining and closely related to the primary shopping frontage).

It defines primary and secondary frontages as follows:

Primary frontages are likely to include a high proportion of retail uses which may include food, drinks, clothing and household goods. Secondary frontages provide greater opportunities for a diversity of uses such as restaurants, cinemas and businesses.

1.11 Whilst the NPPF encourages local planning authorities to set policies which manage the mix of uses that occur within PSAs, and within primary frontages, some changes of use are permitted development i.e. they can occur without the need for planning permission. Previously, these rights worked in favour of retail provision. However, these rights have been through a series of changes since 2010, and now retail units can be reused, without the need for planning consent, for a series of other uses. The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 allows for the following changes to occur, with some caveats related to the size of floorspace that may be changed:

- Part 3 Class C – allows for the conversion of a retail unit up to 150sqm in size into a restaurant or café;

- Part 3 Class D – allows for the conversion of a retail unit into a unit offering financial and professional services (no size restriction);
- Part 3 Class G – allows for the conversion of a retail unit into a mixed use development comprising either a shop or financial and professional services, and up to 2 flats;
- Part 3 Class J – allows for the conversion of a retail unit up to 200sqm in size into a unit for assembly and leisure (bowling, cinema e.tc);
- Part 3 Class M – allows for the conversion of a retail unit up to 150sqm in size into a residential unit.

1.12 While there is a clear aim of providing flexibility within frontage designations, as other class uses can support the core retail function of the town centre, similarly, evidence shows that an over-proliferation of non-retail uses can seriously fragment shopping frontages, damage pedestrian circulation, undermine the scale of retail activity and ultimately change the character of the shopping centre, and therefore undermine the vitality and viability of the town centre.

1.13 The NPPF requires planning policies to guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs (paragraph 70). Historically, shops and other Class A uses provide an active street frontage, contributing towards a lively street scene and often meet an important need whilst maintaining their primarily retail role.

Local Policy Context

1.14 Basildon Borough Council has historically made use of defined town centre areas for planning purposes, and the NPPF makes the requirement for continued identification of town centre areas. The NPPF does not however specify acceptable proportions of retail and non-retail in primary and secondary frontages, as this is a matter for local planning authorities to decide. Locally, there are two policies which are related to the use of buildings within these shopping frontages and town centre locations more broadly. These are BAS SH4 and BAS SH5. These read as follows:

Policy BAS SH4

Changes of Use from Use Class A1 (shops) to Use Class A2 (Financial and Professional Services) or Class A3 (Food and Drink) at ground floor level within the Primary Shopping Frontages will be allowed provided that material harm to the retail function of the Primary Shopping Frontage or the vitality and viability of the town centre as a whole does not result.

In assessing whether harm would result the Council will have regard to the following factors:-

- i. the generation of visitors;
- ii. pedestrian flows;
- iii. the retail appearance and character of the frontage;
- iv. whether a clear predominance of shops would remain in the Primary Shopping Frontage concerned; and
- v. if necessary, the cumulative impact of a proposed Change of Use, with other proposed or permitted changes of use, will be taken into account.

Changes of Use to Class A3 uses must avoid creating a significant detrimental impact upon adjacent occupiers by reason of noise, fumes and smell.

A condition may be imposed requiring a window display, in order to prevent a dead frontage.

For the purposes of this policy, the Primary Shopping Frontages are defined as follows, and shown on the Town Centre Inset Maps:-

- Basildon - The Eastgate Centre; South Gunnells; Town Square north and south sides;
- Billericay - 50 to 96 High Street (even numbers) and 53 to 127 High Street (odd numbers); and
- Wickford - High Street; the Ladygate Centre and the Willowdale Centre.

Policy BAS SH5

In the town centres but outside of the Primary Shopping Frontages changes of use at ground floor level from Class A1 (Shops) to Class A2 (Financial and Professional Services) and Class A3 (Food and Drink) plus other appropriate uses, will be allowed provided that:-

- i. the proposed use provides a service to visiting members of the public and contributes to the overall character, variety and activity of the town centre; and
- ii. the proposed use would not be significantly detrimental to the amenities of adjacent occupiers by reason of noise, smell and fumes.

A condition may be imposed requiring a window display in order to avoid a dead frontage.

1.15 These positively written, criteria based policies are more flexible than policies related to primary shopping frontages seen in local plans elsewhere. Normally, policies related

to primary shopping frontages stipulate a requirement for a certain proportion of units to fall within Class A1, and are not receptive to other uses. Despite this flexibility, policies BAS SH4 and SH5 are no longer relevant, as they refer to changes that may occur under permitted development, and fail to allow changes which are now permissible.

- 1.16 In the Core Strategy Revised Preferred Options Report 2013, Core Policy 8 sought to secure town centres' vitality, through a number of strategic objectives one of which is to '*review all centre boundaries, as well as primary and secondary shopping frontages in the Local Plan Site Allocations and Development Management Policies*'. It is expected that, consistent with the requirement of the NPPF, the New Local Plan will identify primary shopping areas, and the primary and secondary shopping frontages that fall within them. It is also expected that policies will be included within the New Local Plan which set out the uses that will be permitted in such locations, having regard to the permitted development rights which exist in relation to town centre uses.

Methodology

- 1.17 As part of the retail evidence base for the New Local Plan, on-site surveys and desk based analysis were carried out in order to build up a picture of what has been happening in recent years. The Town centre inset maps for the Proposals Map for the Basildon District Local Plan 1998 serves as the starting point for this survey. It identifies the five major town centres in the Borough including Basildon, Wickford, Billericay, Pitsea and Laindon town centres, and defines each boundary. The Town Centre boundary defines the area within which 'town centre uses' including retail, offices, leisure and cultural facilities, are to be located within Basildon.

- 1.18 Using the Town centre inset maps as the base map, a survey was undertaken of the town centres to ascertain the use class order for each existing unit within the designated frontages and shopping areas. On-site surveys considered the diversity of retail and other uses within the shopping area. Units were identified and labelled on the base map, using the name of the establishment. Additional notes were taken separately to describe the type of establishment according to the service being offered. Vacant units were also identified. This allowed the council to identify the uses currently occupying the ground floor units within each frontage. The uses were classified

according to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Order 2015 as shown in the table below:

Table 1: Planning Use Class Order, 2015

Use Classes	Indicative Types of Use
Class A1	Shops, retail warehouses, hairdressers, undertakers, travel and ticket agencies, post offices, pet shops, sandwich bars, showrooms, domestic hire shops, dry cleaners, funeral directors and internet cafes
Class A2	Financial services such as banks and building societies, professional services (other than health and medical services) and including estate and employment agencies. It does not include betting offices or pay day loan shops - these are now classed as "sui generis" uses (see below).
Class A3	For the sale of food and drink for consumption on the premises - restaurants, snack bars and cafes.
Class A4	Public houses, wine bars or other drinking establishments (but not night clubs).
Class A5	For the sale of hot food for consumption off the premises.
Other Uses:	
Class B1	Offices (other than those that fall within A2), research and development of products and processes, light industry appropriate in a residential area.
Class B2	Use for industrial process other than one falling within class B1 (excluding incineration purposes, chemical treatment or landfill or hazardous waste).
Class C3	Dwelling houses.
Class D1	Clinics, health centres, crèches, day nurseries, day centres, schools, art galleries (other than for sale or hire), museums, libraries, halls, places of worship, church halls, law court. Non-residential education and training centres.
Class D2	Cinemas, music and concert halls, bingo and dance halls (but not night clubs), swimming baths, skating rinks, gyms or area for indoor or outdoor sports and recreations (except for motor sports, or where firearms are used).
Class SG	Certain uses do not fall within any use class and are considered 'sui generis'. Such uses include: betting offices/shops, pay day loan shops, theatres, houses in multiple occupation, hostels providing no significant element of care, scrap yards. Petrol filling stations and shops selling and/or displaying motor vehicles. Retail warehouse clubs, nightclubs, launderettes, taxi businesses, amusement centres and casinos.

1.19 The data collected from the site visits was then used to update the attributes and physical location of shop units on the existing digital topographic map of the Borough. A ‘unit’ was taken as the floorspace occupied by one retailer or business, irrespective of whether this covered one or more individual shop front. For example, a shop occupying 27-29 Town Square would be counted as one unit. This information was then captured on the Council’s GIS system in order to allow for analysis to be undertaken. To ascertain where the boundaries for each of the primary and secondary frontages should be drawn, a plan of the town centre was created showing the use class order of the individual units. This process provided preliminary indications as to where the boundaries can be drawn, by demonstrating the percentage of retail uses across the town centre, and identifying those frontages where:

- There is a high proportion of shops (use class A1) at ground floor level, and may therefore represent a primary shopping frontage;
- There is a concentrated mix of shops (A1), financial and professional services (A2), restaurants and cafes (A3) and other uses such as pubs/bars (A4), takeaways (A5), businesses (B1a) or leisure facilities (D2), and may therefore represent a secondary shopping frontage; and
- The mix of shops and other town centre uses has eroded, and the frontage no longer fulfils a shopping function and should be reduced or de-designated.
- Frontage lengths were measured in order to allow analysis of the proportional length of frontages occupied by different use classes, as analysis of units alone can skew results where units are particularly large.

1.20 A sensitivity test was applied in analysing the shopping frontages in order that patterns, interactions, and evidence of change could be identified within each frontage. In determining their sensitivity to change, frontages have been differentiated, and the different proportions of retail and non-retail uses within the primary shopping areas have been considered and analysed. The different data sets obtained within each frontage provides the evidence necessary to seek a protective approach to such frontage depending on their sensitivity to change. Based on the results obtained, percentage thresholds have been considered for A1 uses within each frontage. The

results of the analysis are presented in subsequent sections of this report, as well as the recommended extent of the primary and secondary shopping frontage designations.

1.21 To set out a consistent and appropriate approach for the review of town centre boundaries, each town centre was assessed to ensure that boundaries are logical and easy to identify on the ground, as well as identifying what should and should not normally be included within a town centre. Town centre areas will normally include those uses and buildings with a clear social or economic function, and will include the main cluster of retail, professional and other service facilities. Town centres can also include some residential uses, although these are often housed above the ground floor commercial facilities, or might be associated with such use.

1.22 For each town centre, a map of the existing and then proposed designations is shown, followed by an explanation of the proposed changes to designations. This covers the town centre boundaries, the primary shopping areas and the primary and secondary shopping frontages. Further detail on the town centre, with regard to the composition of retail and other uses, and performance, is contained within the different research and analyses carried out for the Borough-wide evidence base studies, namely the Basildon District Retail Capacity Study (Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners for Basildon Council, 2007); the Leisure, Arts, Culture and Tourism Study (White Young Green for Basildon Council, 2010); and the Basildon Retail & Commercial Leisure Capacity Study 2015.

Limitations

1.23 The survey methodology is considered to provide an up-to-date evidence upon which to evaluate the Council's current approach to designating the PSA and the primary and secondary shopping frontages; and to make recommendations for future policy options. It is acknowledged that there are other factors which could show changes over the years. It is also recognised that the data included in this report does not provide full historic data in relation to past changes in occupiers of premises within the primary and secondary frontages. However, this review has focused on key criteria for which meaningful and comprehensive information is available.

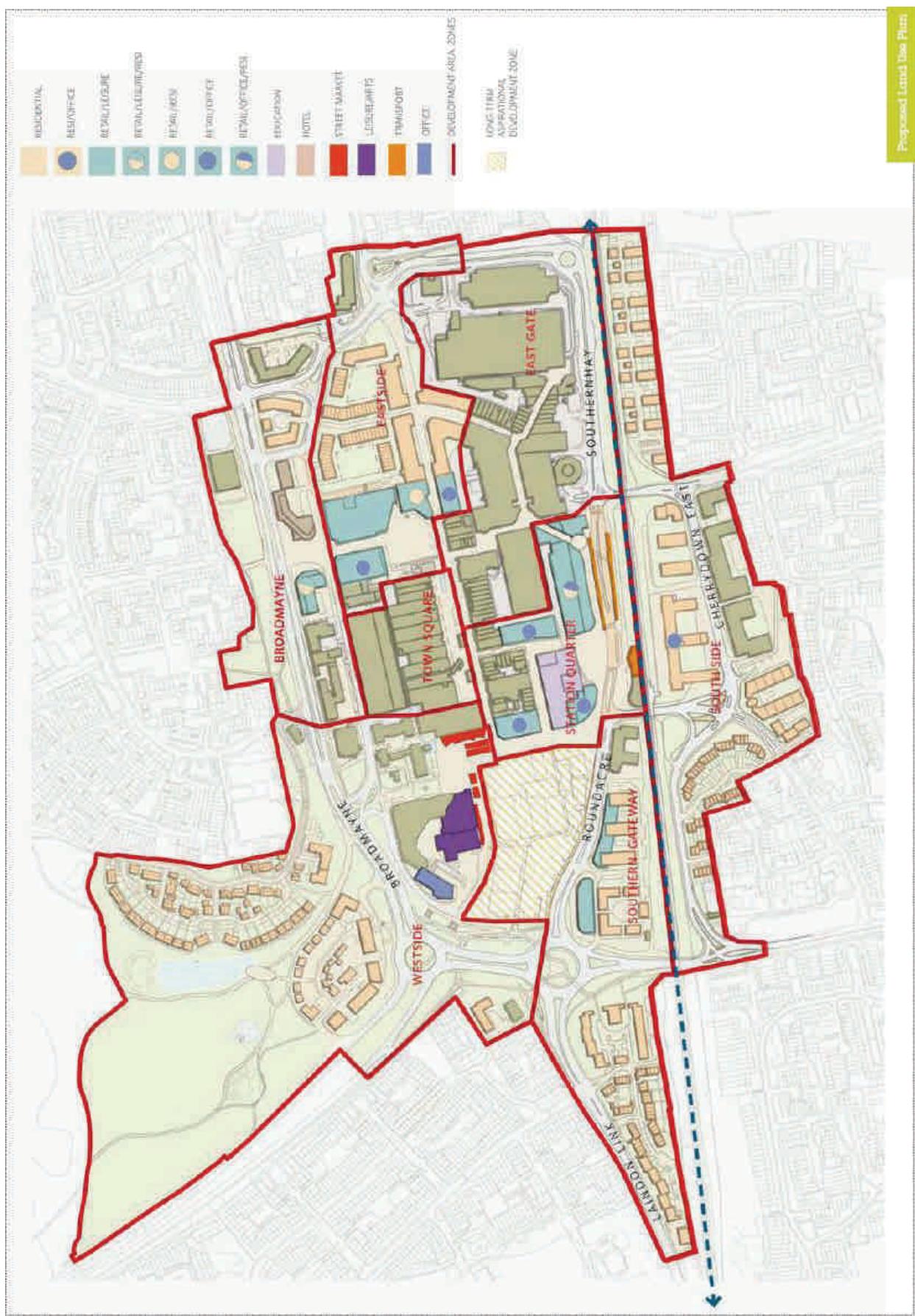
2 REVIEW OF FRONTAGE DESIGNATIONS AND TOWN CENTRE BOUNDARIES

Basildon

- 2.1 Basildon town centre is the highest-order centre within the Basildon Borough administrative area, and is designated as a regional town centre. It competes with major shopping centre destinations outside Basildon, including Chelmsford, Southend and Lakeside Shopping Centre. The Centre has a strong comparison retail offer and a wide catchment area beyond its urban settlement, which provides a range of services and cultural facilities in a largely pedestrianised environment. As a Regional Town Centre, it is the primary focus for future mixed-use town centre regeneration, including major retail and leisure development, alongside supporting education, cultural and employment uses. This recognises the functional role it plays to communities both within the Basildon Borough and in the wider sub-region.
- 2.2 Recent studies reveal that Basildon contains an overprovision of A1 retail, but is under provided for in terms of the other service, catering and leisure categories. There are very few bars and restaurants within the town centre, with many of these facilities located in the managed out of town facility, Festival Leisure Park. Though this has created a vibrant destination on the town's outskirts, the current town centre offer largely consists of cafes and fast food operators that do not trade in the evening which severely restricts the night time economy within the town centre. Therefore, providing a quality retail environment and significantly improving the casual dining, formal restaurant and leisure offer is a key driver for change to the ongoing vitality and viability of the town centre.
- 2.3 The existing primary shopping frontage in Basildon is defined in the Basildon District Local Plan Saved Policies 2007 as: The Eastgate Centre; South Gunnells; and Town Square north and south sides. The Basildon Town Centre Masterplan 2012, also divides the Town Centre into eight priority areas as outlined in Figure 1:
 - Eastside - a mixed use area with an emphasis on retail, leisure, office and residential;

- Town Square - refurbishment of existing retail units, car parks and public realm;
 - Eastgate Centre - continued retail and leisure, with enhancement over time to improve the quality and diversity of occupiers;
 - Westside - new residential community, replacement market, improvements to Gloucester Park and St Martin's Square;
 - Southern Gateway - a mixed use area for retail, office and residential;
 - Station Quarter - new mixed use development to include education, retail, community, leisure and a new transport interchange;
 - Southside - new residential community.
- 2.4 This masterplan priority areas, together with the evidence gathered from the site visits, has informed the designation of the primary shopping area, as well as primary and secondary shopping frontages. A breakdown by Use Class and vacancy levels for each frontage of the town centre is detailed in the following sections.

Figure 1: Basildon Town Centre Masterplan Priority Areas



Primary Shopping Frontage

- 2.5 The current primary shopping frontage (PSF) contains 95 units and performs well in terms of their retail function, with 73 (76.8%) units in retail (A1) use as shown in *Table 2* and *Figure 2* below. The representation of other town centre uses at ground floor level is very low with only 4 Banks; 4 restaurants/cafes; and 2 Sui Generis providing the variety of uses in the centre's core. Vacancy in the PSF is relatively high, at 12 units or 12.6% of the frontage units.

Table 2: Existing Primary Frontage Designation, Basildon

	A1	A2	A3	SG	Vacant	Total No. of Units
Eastgate Centre	47	-	3	1	4	55
South Gunnells	1	-	-	-	-	1
Town Square North	9	2	-	-	1	12
Town Square South	16	2	1	1	7	27
	73	4	4	2	12	95

- 2.6 It is important to retain an element of retail focus in the existing primary shopping frontages in order to keep a balance across the entire PSA in line with the Basildon Town Centre Masterplan. Within Eastgate Centre, the presence of popular retail outlets suggests that it is still an important retail area. The Town Square also forms the principal high street environment within the town centre and contains a number of anchor store and Major Shop Units (MSU). *Figure 2* indicates that there is still a large proportion of A1 uses clustered together in these locations. It is therefore proposed that the Eastgate Centre be maintained as the town's prime retail pitch, alongside Town Square, to promote its evolution and ensure the town centre can compete effectively.

Figure 2: Existing Primary Shopping Frontage, Basildon



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2.7 The PSF has been extended westwards on Westgate Park, Fodderwick as far as and including the current location of Wilko and Party Fiesta; and eastwards on East Walk to include the current locations of Metro Bank and Poundworld. This is due to the good performance of these areas, and the presence of popular retail outlets which enjoy constant heavy footfall. These areas have a vibrant feel and merit designation as primary frontage. In addition, the centre of the Town Square which also enjoys constant heavy footfall has been added to the primary shopping frontage. Based on the changing dynamic of the town centre, the following primary frontage is proposed to be re-designated from those of the 1998 Local Plan as outlined in *Figure 3*:

- The Eastgate Centre;
- Town Square North and South sides;
- West & East Pavilion Town Square;
- Glass Lift Tower, Town Square;
- South Gunnells;
- Units 2-20 East Walk (even numbers); and
- Units 11 & 12 Westgate Park, Fodderwick.

Table 3: Proposed Primary Shopping Frontage, Basildon

	A1	A2	A3	SG	Vacant	Total No. of Units
Eastgate Centre	47	-	3	1	4	55
South Gunnells	1	-	-	-	-	1
Town Square North	9	2	-	-	1	12
Town Square South	16	2	1	1	7	27
East Pavilion	-	-	1	-	-	1
West Pavilion	1	-	-	-	-	1
Glass Lift Tower	1	1	-	-	-	-
East Walk	1	1	-	-	-	2
Westgate Park	2	-	-	-	-	2
	78	6	5	2	12	103

Figure 3: Proposed Primary Shopping Frontage, Basildon



Basildon Borough Town Centre Designations

Drawn by: Planning Policy

Date: December 2015

Scale: Not to Scale

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Legend

- Existing Town Centre Boundary
- Primary Shopping Frontage (Proposed)



- 2.8 The proposed Primary Shopping Frontage in Basildon Town Centre currently consists of 103 units. Of these, 75.7% of units are in retail (A1) use; 5.8% in A2 use; 4.85% are in A3 use; and 1.9% classified as Sui Generis. It is evident that the different proportions of uses within the proposed PSF are not significantly different from those of the existing PSF. Thus, it can be argued that the proposed designation retains an element of retail focus within the town centre. Vacancy is however considerably high within the proposed PSF at 11.7%, especially along Town Square South side.
- 2.9 Given the relatively high vacancy rate, together with further evidence on the overprovision of A1 retail floorspace, it is necessary to seek a protective approach to the proposed primary shopping frontage designation. This will enable the Council to manage the different proportions of uses that can improve the vitality and viability of the PSF, having regard to the level of risk from other uses.

Recommendation: In view of the above, this review recommends that a 75% minimum threshold for A1 retail uses at ground floor level is necessary to support the continued retail function of Basildon's primary shopping frontage. This threshold is considered capable of delivering the required improvements that will encourage diversification of land uses and activities in the PSF in order to provide a broader range of attractions, and to reduce the overall level of vacancy.

Secondary Shopping Frontage

- 2.10 The Leisure, Arts, Culture and Tourism (LACT) Study, the Basildon Town Centre Masterplan, and the 2015 Retail & Commercial Leisure Capacity Study all identify a strong need for leisure facilities in the town centre, in order to extend the trading hours of the town beyond 5.30pm. It is expected that a vibrant night time economy within Basildon will supplement its comparison retail offer, and create an improved environment in which to shop, live, work and play. The enhanced provision is to focus particularly on a cinema, restaurants and cafes which are relatively under-provided for in Basildon compared to other towns of a similar size outside the Borough, such as Chelmsford, as well as Billericay.

2.11 Building on these aspirational land uses for the town centre, Eastside is recognised as a mixed use area with an emphasis on retail, leisure, office, and residential in the Basildon Town Centre Masterplan. While Station Quarter has been identified as a location for new mixed use development to include education, retail, community, leisure and a new transport interchange. These sites contain a clear retail element whilst offering greater opportunities for flexibility and a diversity of uses. Therefore, the proposed Secondary Shopping Frontage (SSF) has been designated to include those areas that have been identified in the Masterplan as ‘areas of mixed use development’ where these are considered suitable for designation.

2.12 At the western edge of the town centre, there is a cluster of retail warehousing at the Westgate Park offering a range of larger units. Built in response to the growing demand from retailers for greater floorspace and flexible units, these units have proved successful. Albeit a retail complex and a dominant attraction in its own right, a significant portion of Westgate Park has been excluded from the PSF due to its location at the edge of the town centre, with frontages onto the scheme’s car park and the main pedestrianised retail centre fronting onto Towngate. As such, the benefits that it could potentially bring in terms of spin off trade for the rest of the centre are not maximised. The unit currently occupied by Maplin has further been excluded from frontage designation, being a separate standalone unit at the entrance to the park.

2.13 To summarise, the proposed Secondary Shopping Frontage in Basildon comprises:

- Units 2-10 Westgate Park, Fodderwick;
- 1-3 Fodderwick (odd numbers);
- 1-71 Market Square (odd numbers);
- 2-12 Market Pavement (even numbers);
- 1-23 Market Pavement (odd numbers);
- 1-20 South Walk;
- Units 36B & 37A, Eastgate Centre;
- 51-85 Southernhay (odd numbers);
- 36-50 Southernhay (even numbers);
- The Property Centre, Southernhay;

- Toys R Us, Southernhay;
- Sports Direct, Southernhay;
- 6-34 Southernhay (even numbers);
- 1-47 East Walk (odd numbers);
- 26-62 East Walk (even numbers);
- 1-21 East Square (odd numbers);
- 25 East Square; and
- Great Oaks House.

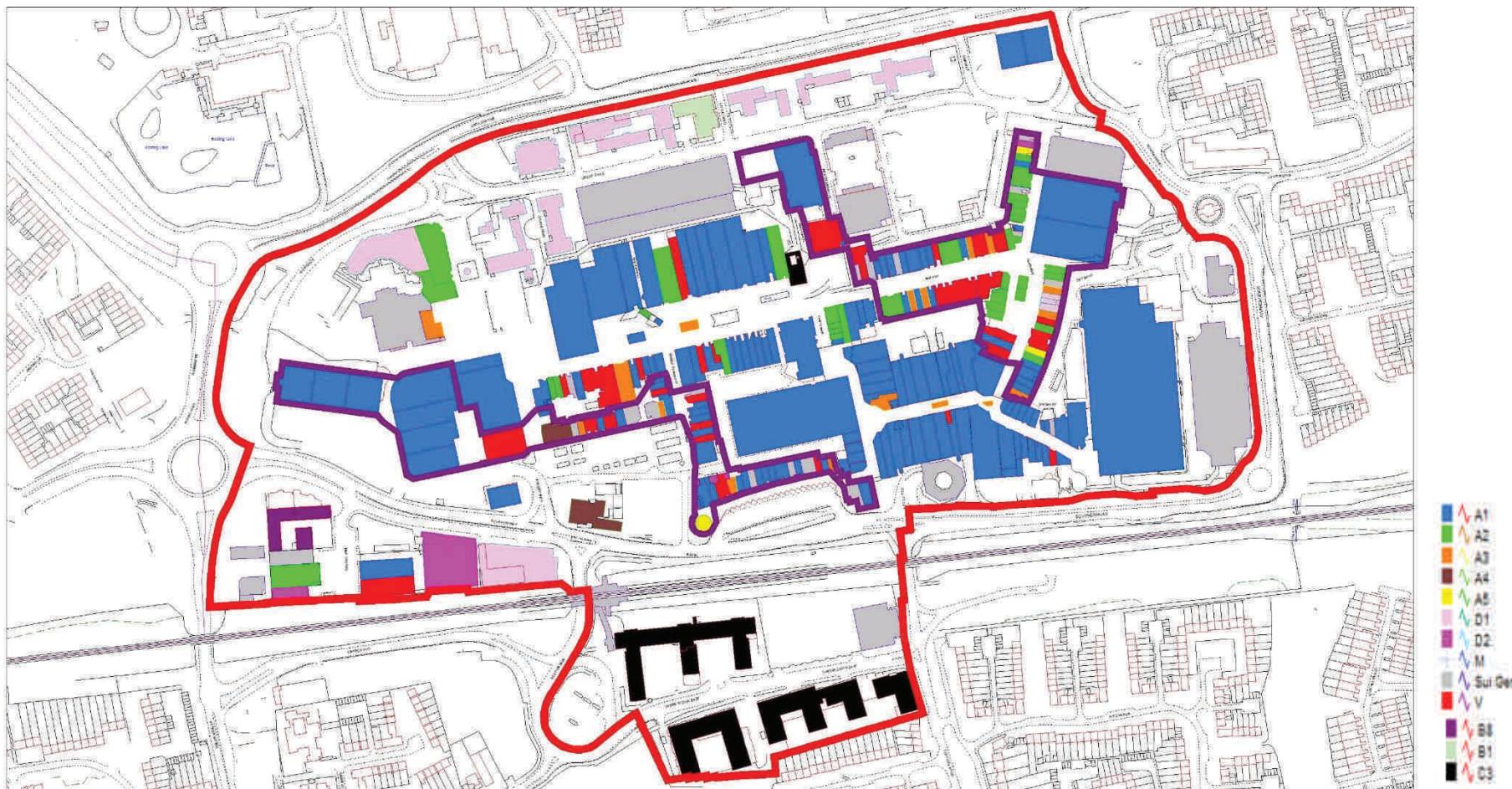
2.14 As with the PSF designations, a key element of the approach to managing Secondary Shopping Frontages is to maintain an active frontage so as to create pedestrian interest and footfall and assist in meeting the day-to-day needs of local communities.

Table 4: Proposed Secondary Shopping Frontage, Basildon

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	D1	D2	SG	Vacant	Total No. of Units
Fodderwick	8	-	-				-	-	2	10
Market Square	3	-	2	1			-	3	4	13
Market Pavement	6	-	-	-			1	2	4	13
South Walk	10	-	2	-	1		-	3	1	17
Eastgate Centre	1	-	-	-			-	1	-	2
Southernhay	9	15	3	-	2	1	1	4	5	40
East Walk	11	3	4	-	-	-	-	2	15	35
1-9 East Square	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	4
11-21 East Square	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	6
Great Oaks	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
	52	19	11	1	4	1	2	18	33	141

2.15 As shown in *Figure 4* and *Table 4*, there is a reasonable proportion of shops (A1) units), financial and professional services (A2 uses) - particularly estate agents, as well as cafes and takeaways in the proposed SSF, showing more diversity in secondary frontages. The secondary frontage is made up of 141 units and contains about 40% more units than the primary frontage. 36.9% of the units in the secondary frontage are currently in A1 retail use; 13.5% are in A2 uses; 11.3% in A3/A4/A5 uses; and 12.8% are classified as Sui Generis, often betting offices/shops.

Figure 4: Proposed Secondary Shopping Frontage, Basildon



Basildon Borough Town Centre Designations

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Legend

- Existing Town Centre Boundary
- Secondary Shopping Frontage



- 2.16 The vacancy rate is also highest in this part of the town centre at 23.4%, with the vacant units clustered together along Eastwalk and Southernhay as shown in *Figure 4*. As a result of this cluster, this part of the townscape maintains a relatively desolate appearance, with a lack of visual continuity along the street scene. The high proportion of vacant units within this area also serves to reduce footfall locally, to the detriment of remaining retailers.
- 2.17 An area specific review of the Leisure, Arts, Culture and Tourism (LACT) findings in 2011 which examined retail demands specifically in Basildon Town Centre suggests a reduction in the quantity of A1 retail floorspace (shops in particular), and an increase in A3 (restaurants) uses, with the intention to decrease the number of vacant units and improve the desirability of the centre to new retailers.
- 2.18 While the percentage of retail (A1) frontage in the proposed SSF designation is currently 36.4%, this review recommends that a 30% minimum threshold for A1 retail uses at ground floor level in the SSF is sufficient to support a continued retail function. The designation of the secondary shopping frontage is consistent with the remits of the Masterplan and Core Strategy to improve the variety and quality of Basildon Town Centre's leisure provision, with a view to enhancing the evening economy.

Recommendation: Given the aspirations for restaurant and leisure development in Basildon Town Centre, a 30% threshold has been taken forward for the purpose of this assessment, to ensure that non-retail development is appropriately located and benefits the centre as a whole.

Primary Shopping Area

- 2.19 This designation is new to the Local Plan. The primary shopping area is where retail uses are concentrated and forms the core of the town centre. In line with NPPF guidance, the proposed primary shopping area comprises the primary frontages and those secondary frontages which adjoin and closely relate to the primary shopping frontage. In order to maintain the viability of the Primary Shopping Area, it is important to prevent its dilution and maintain at least 50% of shopping units in A1 retail use.

2.20 The current retail provision within Basildon town centre includes a core of prime shopping centre and high street environments, although the uses and occupiers vary considerably as outlined in *Figure 5* below. This designated area comprises the bulk of the town centre, with 244 units at ground floor level as deduced from *Tables 3 and 4* above. A1 uses account for 53.3% of frontage units and functions well as a prime retail area.

Town Centre Boundary

2.21 Following the town centre surveys, it has been determined that a number of changes should be made to the Basildon town centre boundary. The town centre boundary is proposed to be drawn more tightly to encompass the town centre in a consolidated area, based on the locations of main town centre uses. This means that the residential properties to the south of the railway line, in the vicinity of Cherry Down East and Station Way, including Morello Quarters, Trafford House and the bus depot are removed from the town centre as their function and uses are not considered to merit town centre designation. This is because these streets are predominantly residential in nature, and are unlikely to be suitable for most types of town centre activity. Town centre boundaries should not include significant areas of exclusively residential development (although an overall mixture of uses comprising both retail, commercial and residential uses would be acceptable). To the north east, the new Axis Development on Southernhay, containing ground floor retail units is also proposed to be added within the town centre boundary, as this serves as an important gateway point into the town centre.

Figure 5: Proposed Primary Shopping Area, Basildon



Basildon Borough Town Centre Designations

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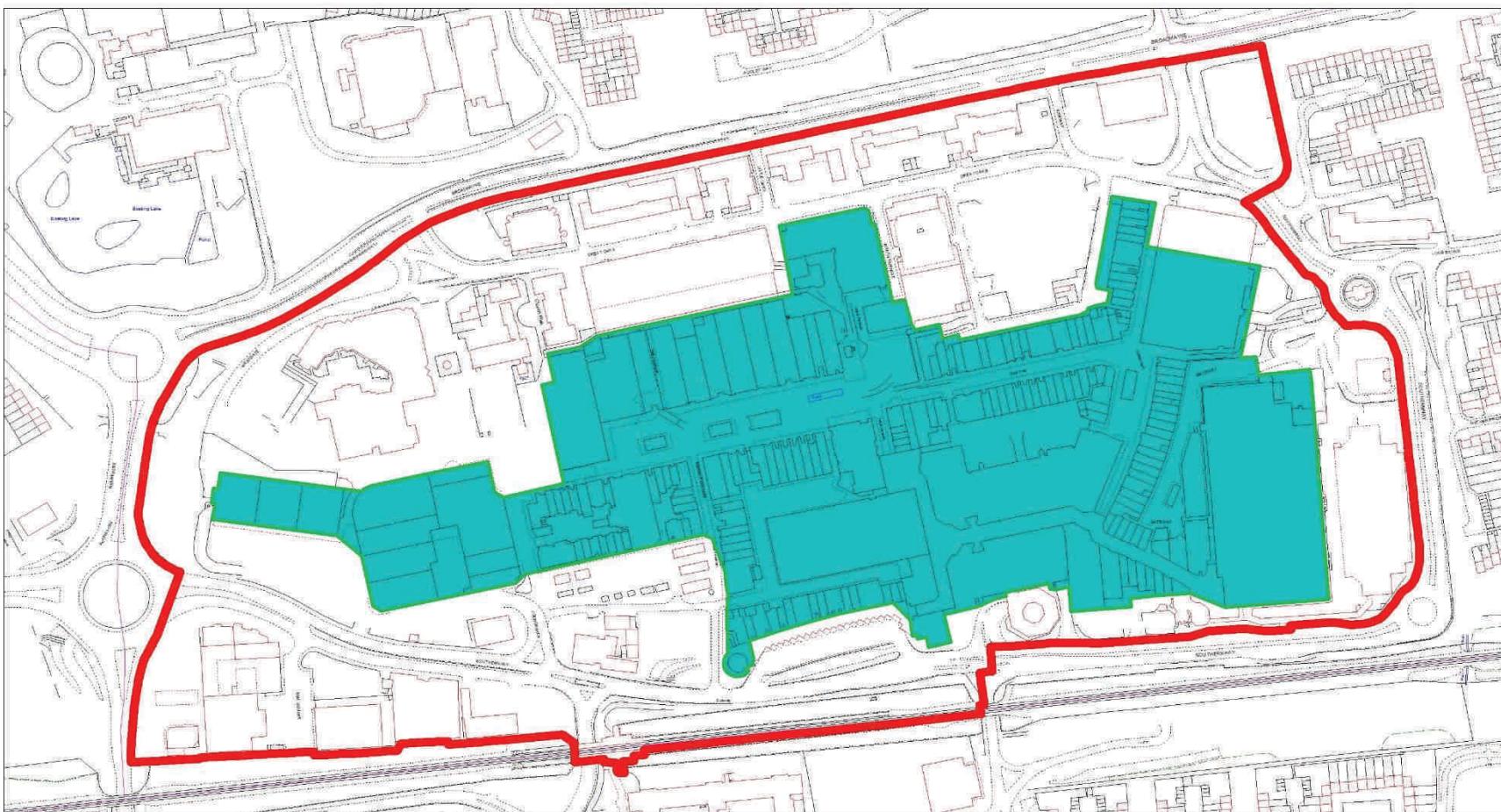
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Legend

- Existing Town Centre Boundary
- Primary Shopping Area



Figure 6: Proposed Town Centre Boundary, Basildon



Basildon Borough Town Centre Designations

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Legend

- Proposed Town Centre Boundary
- Primary Shopping Area



Billericay

- 2.22 Billericay is a smaller town centre which has a focus on higher-end national retailer and leisure operators, and appears to cater for a relatively affluent catchment area. The town centre is an attractive historic centre based around a traditional high street. The High Street combines a good range of retail, leisure and office premises in one location, and serves its local population as well as attracting visitors from a wider catchment area than would normally be expected for a town centre of its size. Billericay High Street retail offer meets everyday shopping needs, but also reflects, by comparison, the nature of market town centres, which have moved to cater for specialist health and beauty services, home wares, and crafts.
- 2.23 It is particularly strong in providing a lively evening economy, with a range of traditional pubs, contemporary bars and restaurants that offer a variety of international cuisine. It does, however, retain relatively little of its comparison retail trade, with a considerable amount leaking to Basildon and towns beyond the Borough, such as Chelmsford.
- 2.24 There are currently no planned additions to the retail provision in the town centre nor are there many sites that could provide such a physical increase. Opportunities to expand the floorspace in the Town Centre are limited, due to the close proximity of neighbouring residential areas. Therefore, alternative considerations will need to be given to opportunities to increase retail floorspace in the town centre.
- 2.25 Previous studies have suggested a need for additional convenience and comparison floor space in Billericay to improve its overall retail offer and to enable it to compete effectively with other centres. Nonetheless the more recent Retail & Commercial Leisure Capacity Study (2015) concludes that Billericay is performing well as a centre, and does not present any significant areas of concern.

Primary Shopping Frontage

- 2.26 The current defined Primary Shopping Frontage (PSF) in Billericay covers 50 to 96 High Street (even numbers) and 53 to 127 High Street (odd numbers), with a total of 57 units at ground floor level (*Table 5*). As shown in *Figure 6*, there is a good

representation of A1 retailers in the primary frontage at 40 units, which account for 70.1% of the primary frontage. The next most prevalent uses are A3/A4 uses, collectively accounting for 14% of primary frontage units, followed by financial and professional services (A2 uses) at 12.3%. There is no vacancy in the primary frontage, showing vitality in this part of the centre.

Figure 7: Existing Primary Shopping Frontage, Billericay

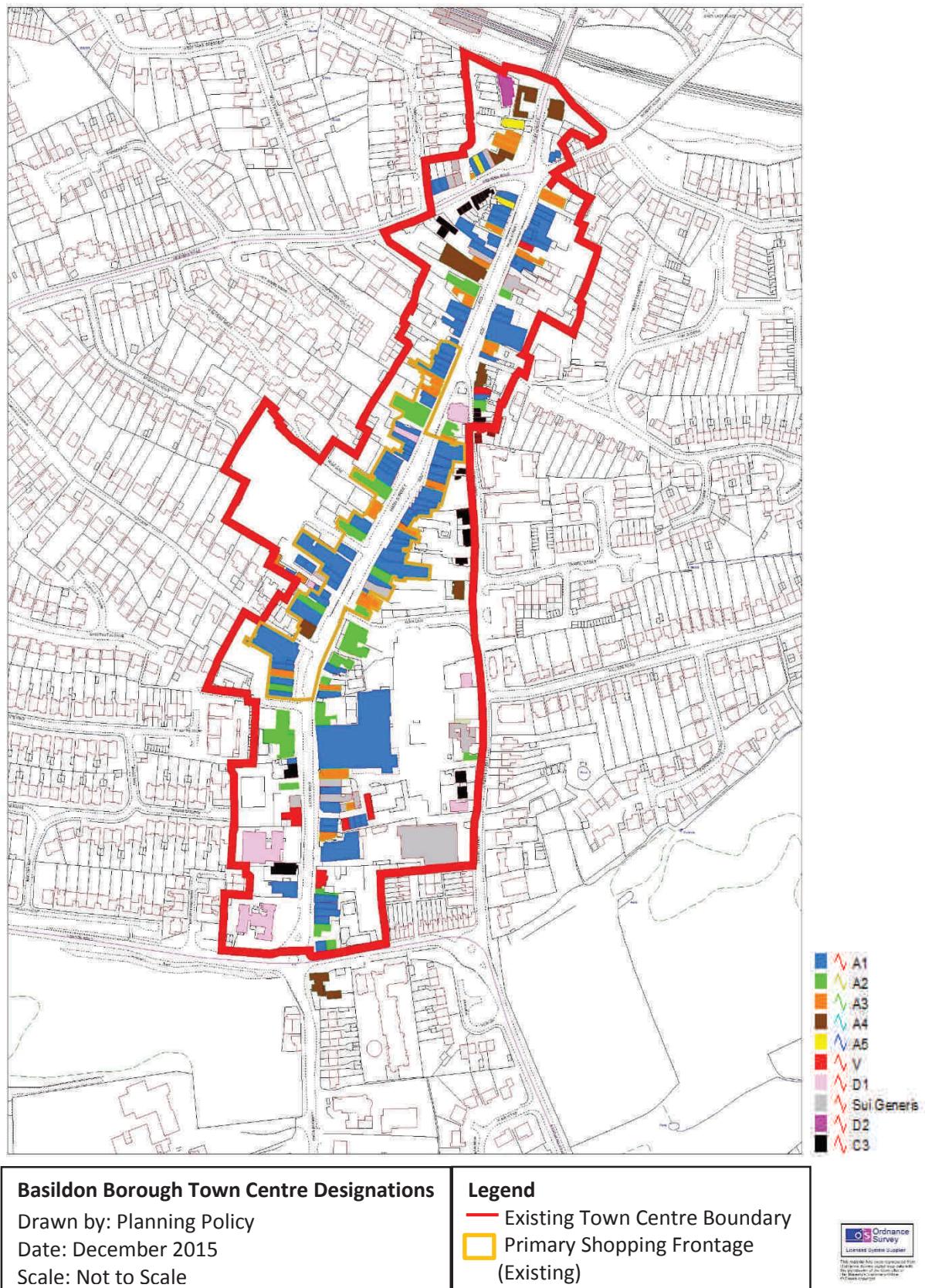


Table 5: Existing Primary Frontage Designation, Billericay

	A1	A2	A3	A4	SG	D1	Vacant	Total No. of Units
50 to 96	17	2	3	-	1	-	-	23
53 to 127	23	5	4	1	-	1	-	34
	40	7	7	1	1	1	-	57

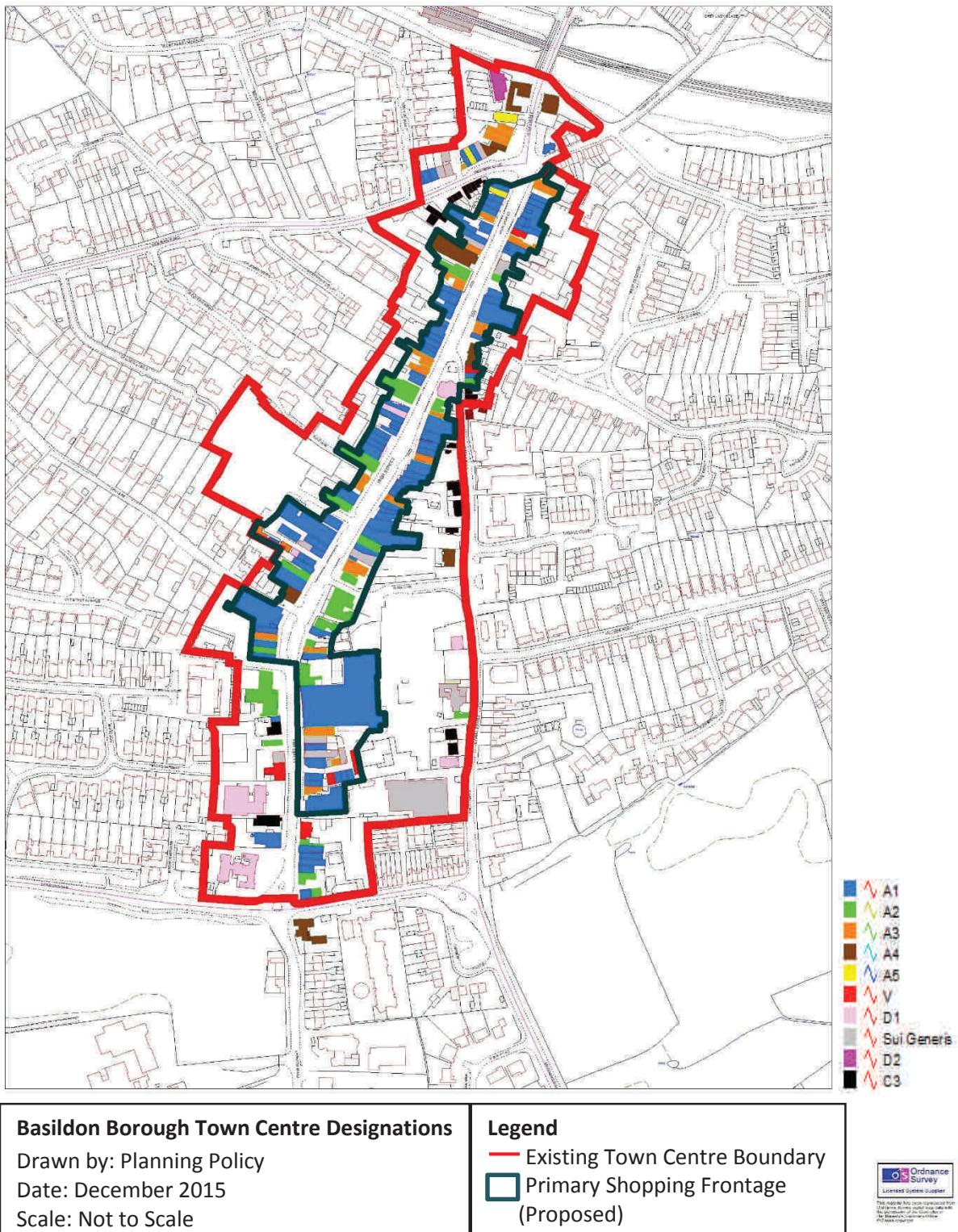
2.27 In order to improve the overall retail offer in Billericay as a shopping destination, it is proposed that the existing primary frontage be expanded, given the limited opportunities for further physical expansion of the town centre. The PSF on the High Street is proposed to be extended northwards and southwards, incorporating additional floorspace than was previously designated. This designated part of the town centre now contains the highest number of units. The new Primary Shopping Frontage in Billericay is proposed to include the following as outlined in *Figure 7*:

- 21-51 High Street (odd numbers);
- 53 to 127 High Street (odd numbers);
- 4-48 High Street (even numbers);
- 50 to 96 High Street (even numbers);
- 98-136 High Street (even numbers);
- Holly Court, High Street;
- The Walk, High Street; and
- 1-5 Chapel Street (odd numbers).

Table 6: Proposed Primary Shopping Frontage, Billericay

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	D1	D2	SG	Vacant	Total No. of Units
21-51 High Street	11	1	3	1	1	-	-	1	-	18
53 to 127	23	5	4	1	-	1	-	-	-	34
4-48	8	2	4	1	-	1	-	1	2	19
50-96	17	2	3	-	-	-	-	1	-	23
98-136	8	7	3	-	-	-	-	2	-	20
Holly Court	4	-	2	-	-	1	-	1	-	8
The Walk	3	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	2	8
1-5 Chapel Street	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3
	75	18	20	3	1	3	-	8	5	133

Figure 8: Proposed Primary Shopping Frontage, Billericay



2.28 The percentage of retail (A1) frontage in the proposed PSF designation is 56.4%, which is below the existing 70.1% threshold of the existing PSF. This is due to the increase in total length of primary frontage when compared to that currently designated within the Local Plan. However, the expansion of the PSF is expected to attract more retail outlets on the High Street in order to improve the retail offer of the centre. The next most prevalent uses are A3 restaurants/café at 15%, followed by financial/professional services (A2) at 13.5%. A3/A4/A5 uses collectively account for 18% of frontage units, with only 1 hot food takeaway. Sui Generis represents 6% of this frontage, most of which are beauty salons; while non-residential institutions account for 2.3%. Vacancy remains low within the proposed PSF at 3.8%, an indication that the centre is performing well.

2.29 While it is recognised that there are clusters of non-retail uses within the proposed frontage (e.g. 98-110 High Street (even numbers)), these have been included within the primary frontage in order to maintain a continuous PSF. Such clusters are acknowledged as anomalies, because excluding them from the PSF will either result in a fragmentation of the PSF, or the new PSF missing out on areas where there is currently a good representation of A1 uses.

Recommendation: Given the relative success of Billericay at 56% representation of A1 uses at present, a 60% threshold is recommended as the minimum target for A1 uses within the proposed PSF of the High Street. This threshold is appropriate and is not considered unrealistic as a target, and if achieved would help support a healthy town centre.

Secondary Shopping Frontage

2.30 The High Street presently offers greater opportunities for flexibility and a diversity of uses and it is important that the proposed secondary shopping frontages remain appropriate in terms of their extent and location. This is in acknowledgement that Billericay is not just a shopping destination, and that appropriate complementary uses can enhance town centres, often encouraging footfall beyond the working day. The

results of the survey suggest the following Secondary Shopping Frontage designations (see *Figure 8*):

- 2-22 Western Road (even numbers);
- 1-11 High Street (odd numbers);
- 2 High Street;
- 129-139 High Street (odd numbers); and
- 138-150 High Street (even numbers).

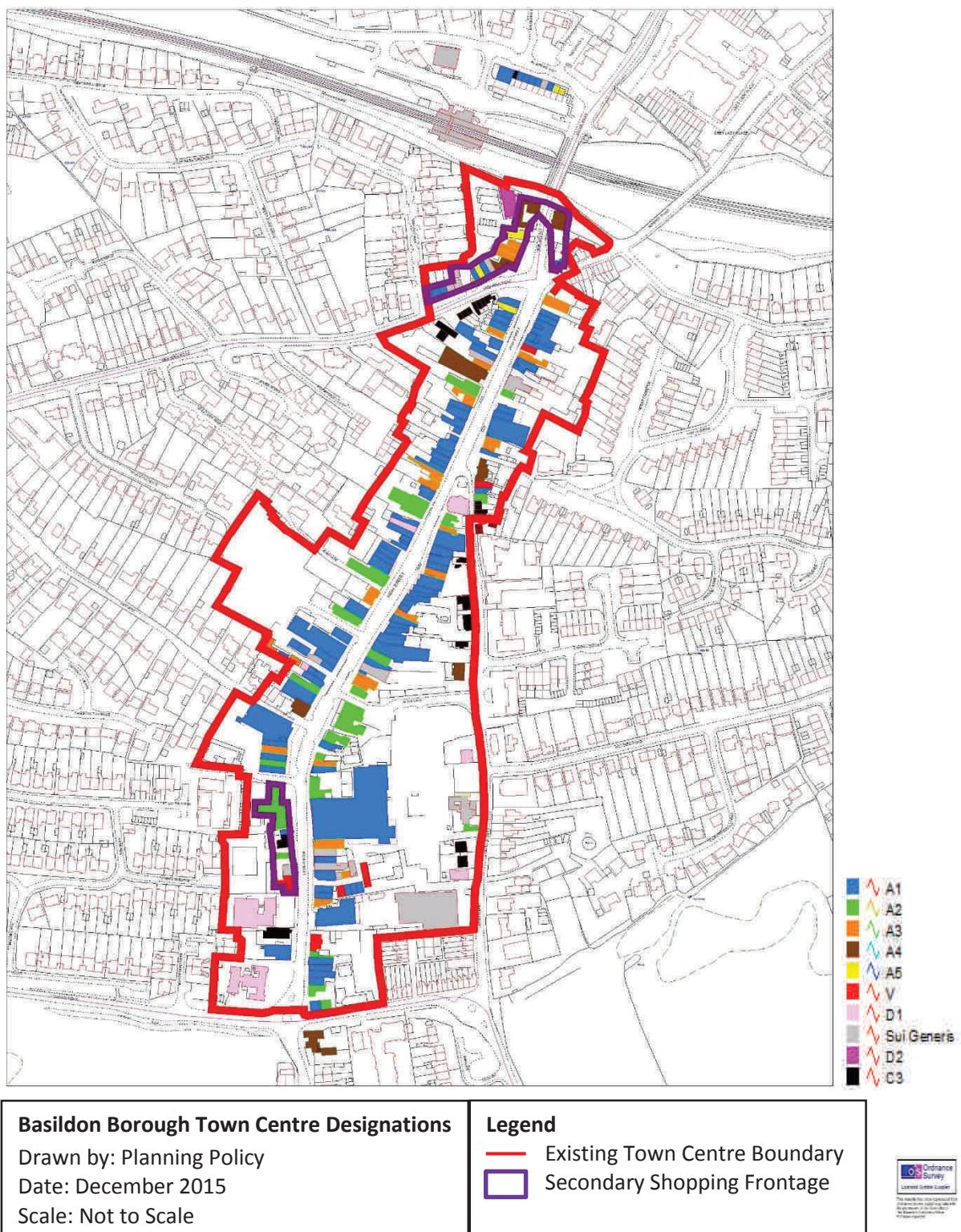
Table 7: Proposed Secondary Shopping Frontage, Billericay

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	C3	D1	D2	SG	Vacant	Total No. of Units
2-22 Western Road	5	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	3	-	11
1-11 High Street	-	-	3	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	5
2 High Street	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
129-139 High Street	1	5	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	9
138-150 High Street	5	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	9
	12	8	4	3	2	1	-	-	4	2	36

2.31 There is a considerable proportion of A1 units in the SSF at 33.3%, making it the most dominant use class within the existing SSF. Other notable use classes are: A2 uses at 22.2%; A3 uses at 11.1%; Sui Generis at 11.1%; A4 uses at 8.3%; and A5 uses at 5.6%. Vacancy in the secondary frontage is also very low, indicating a thriving secondary frontage.

Recommendation: It is recommended that a threshold of 30% be targeted as the minimum proportion of A1 retail uses within the proposed Secondary Shopping Frontage of Billericay.

Figure 9: Proposed Secondary Shopping Frontage, Billericay



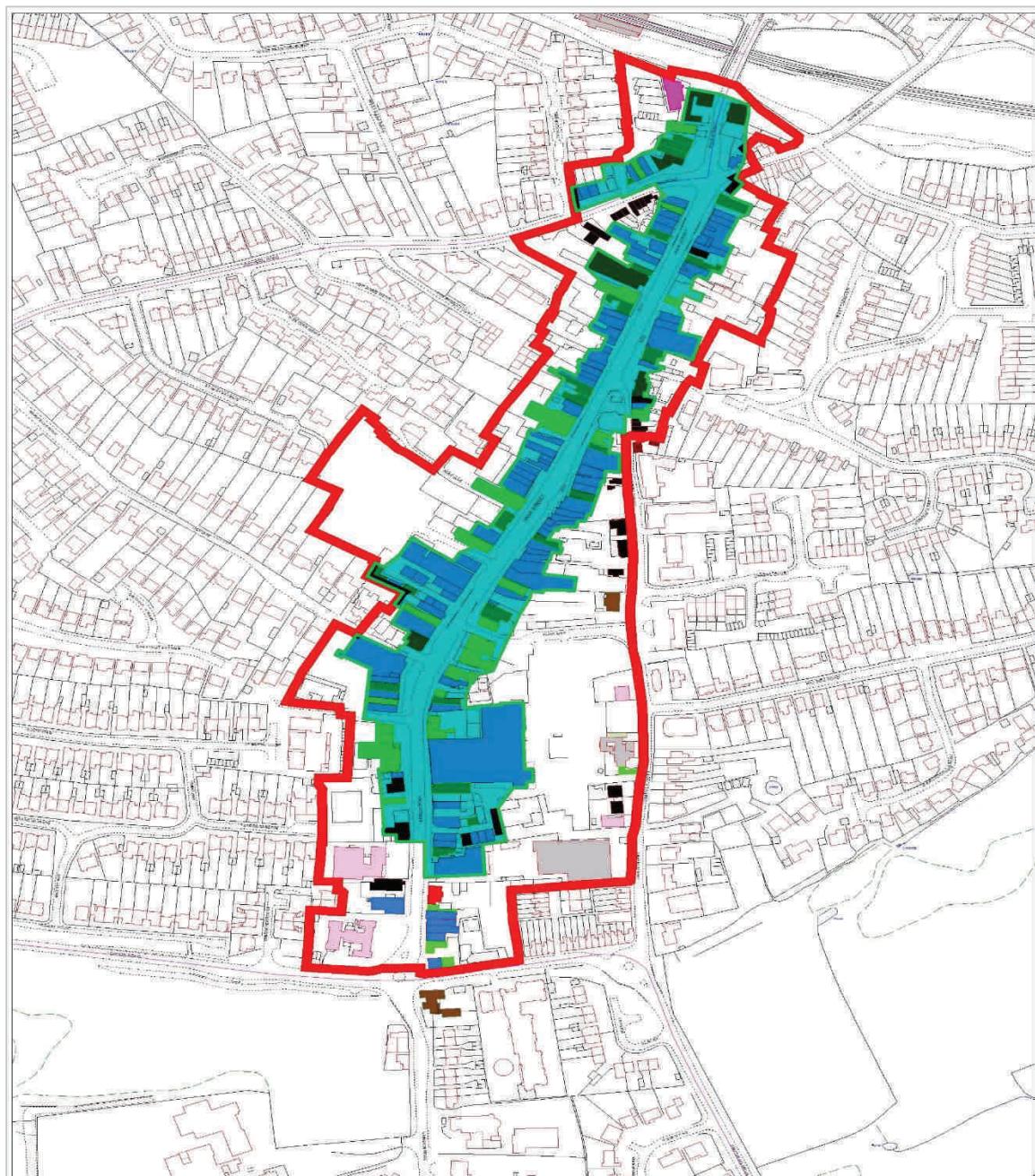
Primary Shopping Area

2.32 The proposed PSA comprises the primary frontages and those secondary frontages which adjoin and closely relate to the primary shopping frontage, and forms the core of the town centre as show in *Figure 9* below. From *Tables 6 and 7* above, the PSA of Billericay presently comprises 169 units at ground floor level, with A1 uses accounting for 51.5% of frontage units.

Town Centre Boundary

2.33 The existing town centre boundary in Billericay is considered to be performing satisfactorily, following the linear pattern of the traditional High Street. Opportunities to expand the town centre are further limited, due to its close proximity of neighbouring residential areas. It is therefore considered unnecessary to make any changes on the basis that the existing town centre boundary functions appropriately.

Figure 10: Proposed Primary Shopping Area, Billericay



Basildon Borough Town Centre Designations

Drawn by: Planning Policy

Date: December 2015

Scale: Not to Scale

Legend

— Town Centre Boundary

■ Primary Shopping Area



Wickford

2.34 Wickford is similar to Billericay in that it is one of the Borough's two centres that lie outside Basildon itself, with a reasonable range and choice of shops and services. Wickford Town Centre has market town origins and expansion of the centre has been a gradual process. The prime retail area of Wickford is defined by the High Street and The Broadway, with pedestrianised retail precincts offered in the form of The Willows and Ladygate Centres. Leisure options are limited to a small number of restaurants and takeaway establishments, and the town centre is unlikely to have a significant evening economy.

2.35 Wickford town centre can generally be considered to be performing adequately at present. The retail offer is satisfactory but limited in terms of variety. Studies highlight that Wickford experiences a loss of trade, being located on the fringe of the Borough and within close proximity of larger centres in neighbouring Authority areas. Representations made to the council over the emerging Local Plan seem to suggest that the town centre has reached its capacity and is therefore in need of expansion and improvement. The retail capacity assessment has identified a significant amount of retail floor space need for the town centre but, given the town's geographical location, it would benefit from a larger provision to meet its own needs and to act as a genuine alternative to larger centres in close proximity. In view of these, appropriate town centre policies will be required to facilitate future investment which will promote competitive town centre environments.

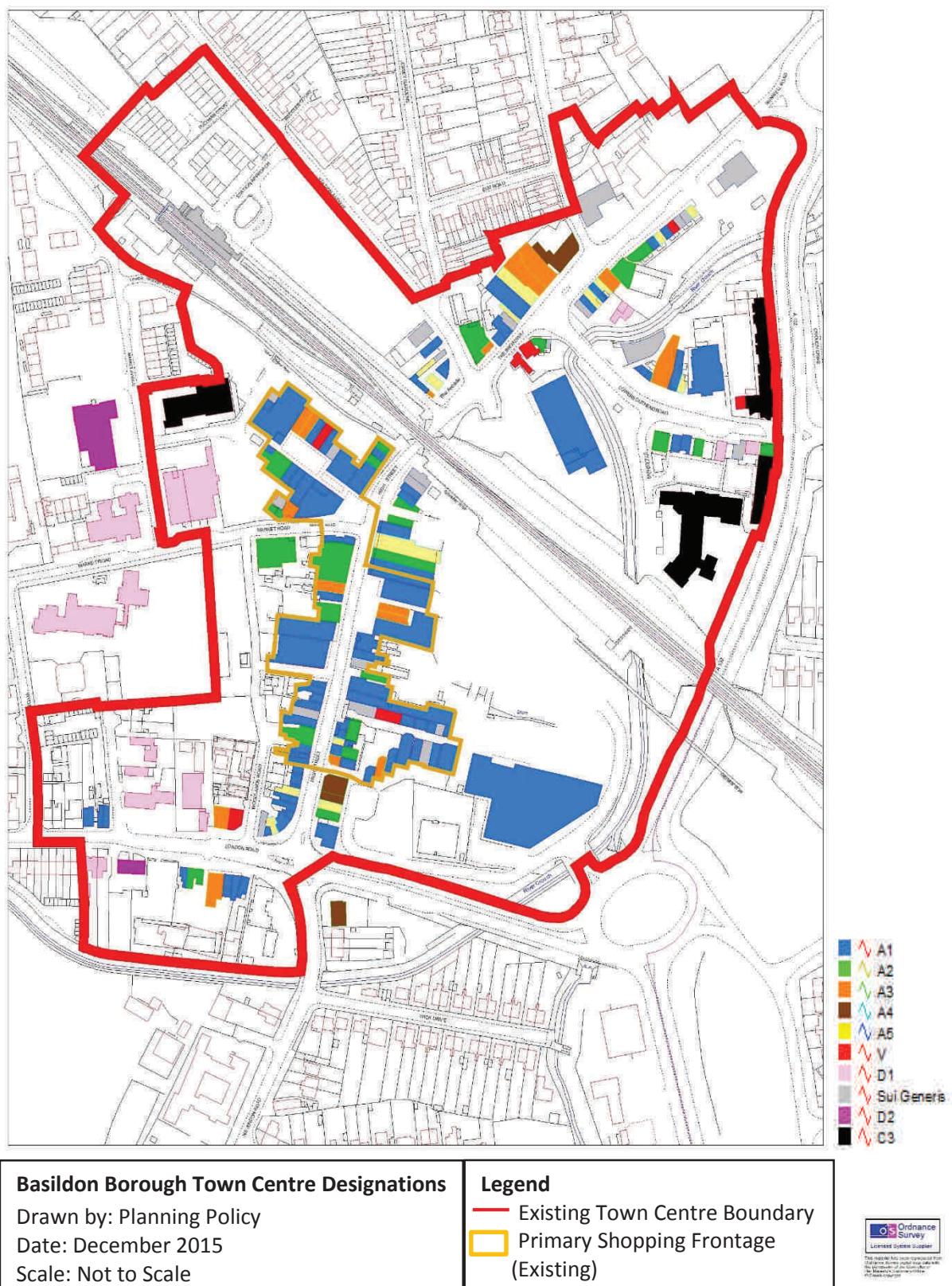
Primary Shopping Frontage

2.36 The existing primary shopping frontage in Wickford encompasses 23-65 High Street (odd numbers); 22-52 High Street (even numbers); the Ladygate Centre; and The Willows (formerly The Willowdale Centre) as shown in *Figure 10*. This primary frontage contains 77 units at ground floor level, comprising of 61% of A1 retail units. The next most prevalent uses are by financial and professional services (A2 uses) at 14.3%; followed by restaurants and cafés (A3 uses) at 10.4%, and Sui Generis also at 10.4%. Vacancy in the primary frontage is low at just 2 units or 2.6% of frontage units, highlighting vitality in this part of the centre.

Table 8: Existing Primary Frontage Designation, Wickford

	A1	A2	A3	A5	SG	Vacant	Total No. of Units
High Street	22	5	4	1	2	-	34
Ladygate Centre	12	2	1	-	3	1	19
The Willows	13	4	3	-	3	1	24
	47	11	8	1	8	2	77

Figure 11: Existing Primary Shopping Frontage, Wickford



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2.37 Wickford High Street has experienced a greater representation of A1 uses overtime, since the adoption of the 1998 Local Plan. The Wickford Town Centre Masterplan 2006 considered a variety of development opportunities which serves as a regeneration strategy for the town centre. The High Street is the subject of comprehensive retail regeneration, and as such, it is proposed that the existing PSF be extended in order to enhance the retail function of the High Street. Consequently, the proposed Primary Shopping Frontage is outlined in *Figure 11* below, and will include:

- 23-85 High Street (odd numbers);
- 2-52 High Street (even numbers);
- The Ladygate Centre; and
- The Willows.

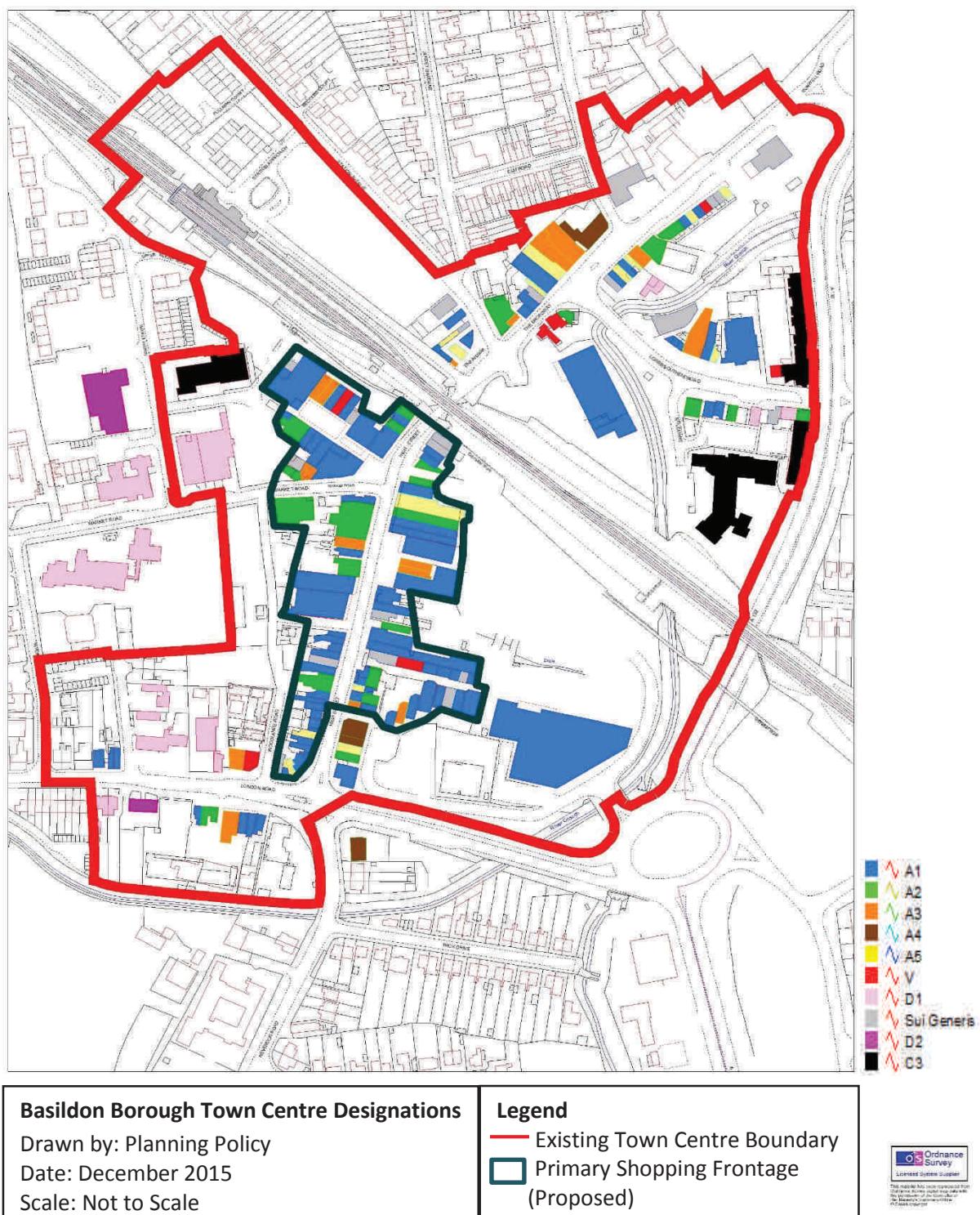
Table 9: Proposed Primary Shopping Frontage, Wickford

	A1	A2	A3	A5	SG	Vacant	Total No. of Units
High Street	34	8	4	4	4	-	54
Ladygate Centre	12	2	1	-	3	1	19
The Willows	13	4	3	-	3	1	24
	59	14	8	4	10	2	97

2.38 From Table 9 above, A1 uses account for 60.8% of the total frontage units within the PSF. A2 uses represent 14.4% of frontage units; Sui Generis account for 10.3%; A3 uses are at 8.2%; and A5 uses at 4.1%. There are only two vacant units within the proposed PSF as with the existing PSF. It is evident that the proposed PSF is comparable to the existing PSF in terms of its retail function, at 60.8% and 61% respectively. It can therefore be deduced that the proposed Primary Shopping Frontage will continue to perform well in terms of retail.

Recommendation: To prevent further risk of losing A1 shopping units within the proposed PSF to other uses, a 60% threshold is recommended as the minimum proportion of A1 retail uses to be allowed within the primary frontage of Wickford.

Figure 12: Proposed Primary Shopping Frontage, Wickford



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Secondary Shopping Frontage

- 2.39 One of the key principles of the Wickford Town Centre Masterplan 2006 is to transform shopping in Wickford into a leisure activity, by providing recreational activities such as eating and drinking. It is therefore considered that greater flexibility within secondary

shopping areas will enhance Wickford's regeneration potential. In line with the Masterplan, Broadway is identified as a secondary shopping area with potential development opportunities, and would require considerable improvements to its frontages and uses. Given the current and planned changes to Wickford town centre, the following SSF, outlined in *Figure 12*, are proposed:

- 5-9 Station Avenue (odd numbers);
- The Arcade, The Broadway;
- 1-35 The Broadway (odd numbers);
- 2-34 The Broadway (even numbers);
- 2-20 Runwell Road (even numbers); and
- 54-62 High Street (even numbers).

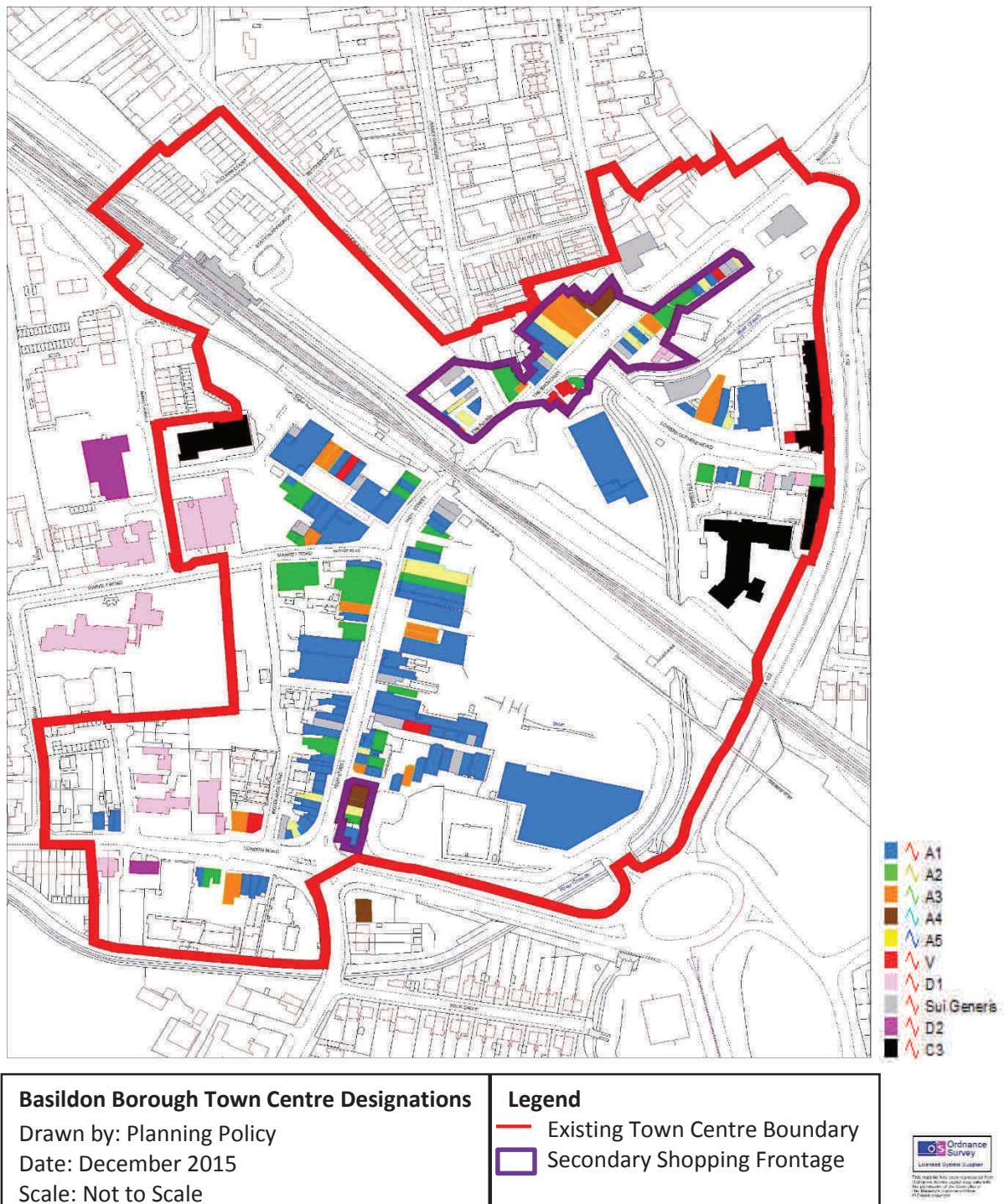
Table 10: Proposed Secondary Shopping Frontage, Wickford

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	SG	Vacant	Total No. of Units
Station Avenue	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	2
The Arcade	2	-	1	-	2	1	-	6
1-35 The Broadway	2	1	3	1	2	1	-	10
2-34 The Broadway	2	3	1	-	2	2	4	14
2-20 Runwell Road	2	1	-	-	2	2	1	8
54-62 High Street	1	1	-	1	1	-	-	4
	10	6	5	2	9	7	5	44

2.40 Retail currently represents 22.7% of the SSF. There is a good representation of other use classes within the SSF as shown in *Table 10* above. At 20.4%, hot food takeaways account for the next predominate uses; followed by Sui Generis at 15.9%; financial/professional services at 13.6%; restaurants/cafes at 11.3%; and pubs/bars at 4.5%. Vacancy is relatively high within the SSF at 11.4%, and this is clustered around the junction of The Broadway/Lower Southend Road. Improvements in the quality of the public realm may act to promote vitality in this area.

Recommendation: A 30% threshold is proposed as a target for A1 uses within the secondary frontage of Wickford Town Centre.

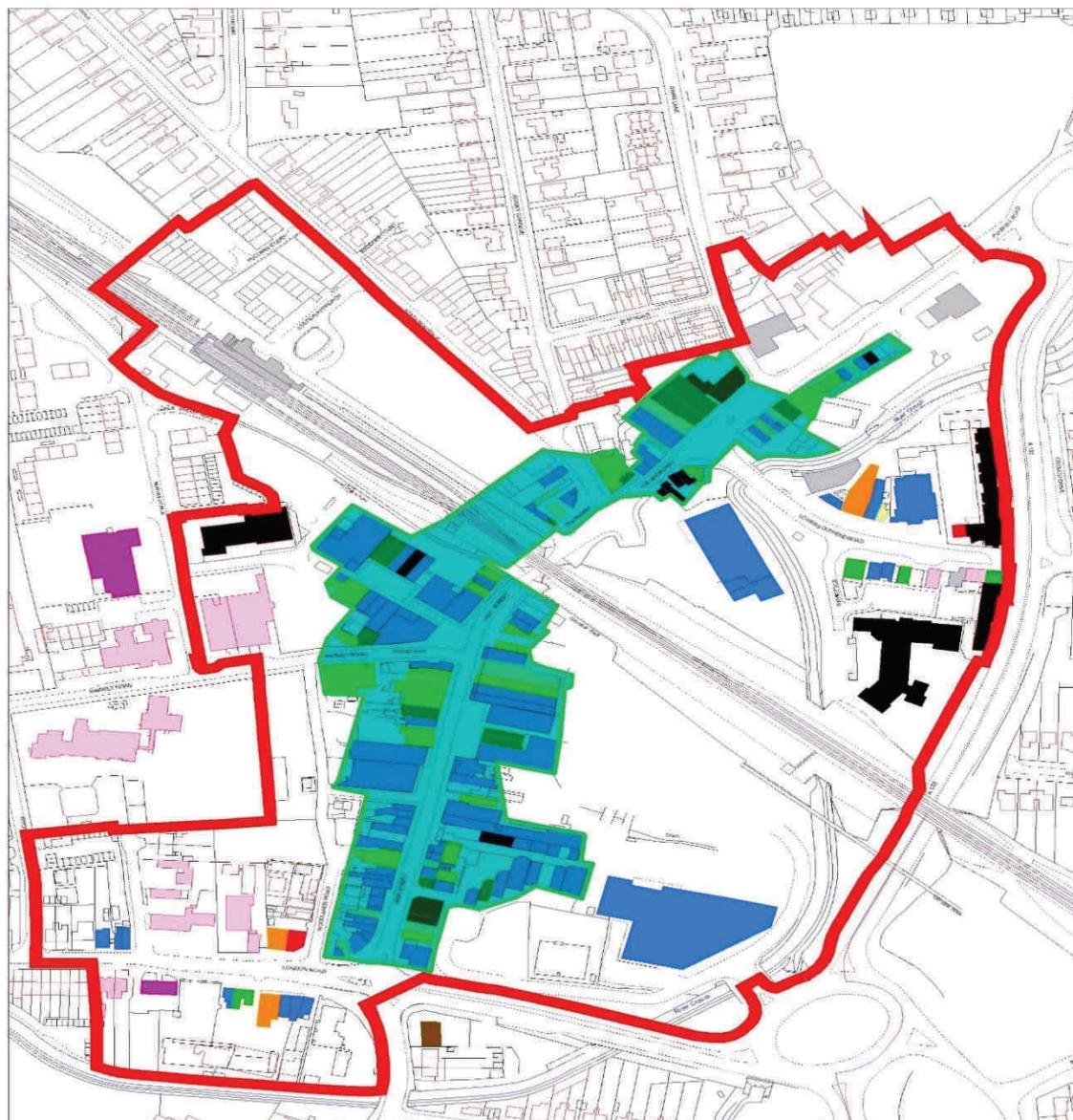
Figure 13: Proposed Secondary Shopping Frontage, Wickford



Primary Shopping Area

2.41 The proposed PSA comprises the primary frontages and those secondary frontages which adjoin and closely relate to the primary shopping frontage, and forms the core of the town centre as shown in *Figure 13* below. From Tables 9 & 10 above, the PSA comprises 141 units at ground floor level, with A1 uses accounting for 48.9% of frontage units which is below average. To compete effectively with other centres, provisions should be made for significant retail-led development in Wickford.

Figure 14: Proposed Primary Shopping Area, Wickford



Basildon Borough Town Centre Designations

Drawn by: Planning Policy

Date: December 2015

Scale: Not to Scale

Legend

— Existing Town Centre Boundary

■ Primary Shopping Area

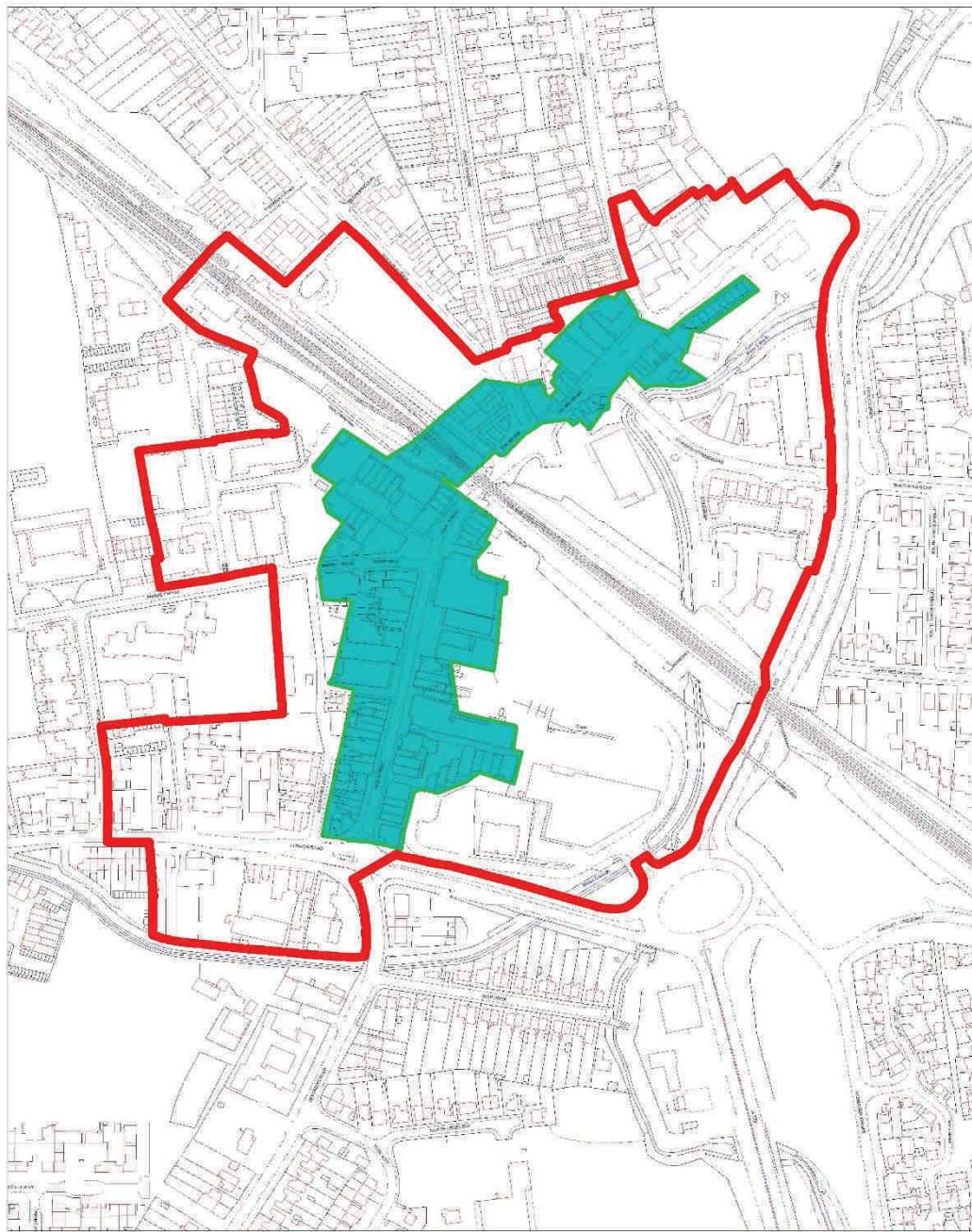


2.42 It should be noted that the Co-operative Food and ALDI supermarkets remain outside the primary shopping area as they are stand-alone stores, which generate a constant and often independent footfall from those experienced by retail units on the High Street.

Town Centre Boundary

2.43 The main changes proposed for Wickford town centre boundary include the addition of the area comprising Wickford Health Centre and Wickford Swim & Fitness Centre, to the west of the existing boundary. These facilities represent typical town centre uses, and are immediately adjacent the location of the existing town centre boundary. As such, it is considered appropriate to designate these within the town centre for planning and development purposes. To the north-west, Station Court and Pullman Court are proposed for exclusion from the town centre boundary, being predominately residential and office units, and further away from the main town centre uses.

Figure 15: Proposed Town Centre Boundary, Wickford



Basildon Borough Town Centre Designations

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Legend

— Proposed Town Centre Boundary

■ Primary Shopping Area



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Pitsea

2.44 Pitsea Town Centre is one of the smaller town centres in the Borough. Pitsea offers a more limited range and choice of shops and services, serving residential districts within Basildon urban area. According to the Town Centres and Retailing Topic Paper in 2012, Pitsea Town Centre has struggled to maintain growth despite a growing population, and does not provide a sufficient quality and range of services to meet the expectations of a thriving town in the Thames Gateway.

2.45 The close proximity of Tesco Extra store, one of the largest superstores in the country, has had a significant (and arguably detrimental) effect on the Town Centre as a whole. The Tesco is a dominant attraction in its own right, offering a range of goods and facilities that are more often associated with 'High Street' retailing. However, its location – separated from the town centre by the A132 – means that the benefits that it could potentially bring in terms of spin off trade for the rest of the centre are not realised.

2.46 Nonetheless, the town centre has a varied offer and a range of unit sizes, with very low vacancies. Pitsea town centre is clearly in transition as the regeneration works continue, but the completion of these works is expected to deliver an uplift to the overall vitality and viability of the town centre.

Primary Shopping Frontage

2.47 The designation of shopping frontages in Pitsea is new to the Local Plan. The Pitsea centre has been undergoing significant development and regeneration of its retail area and associated shops, providing modern facilities. As such, the current town centre is characterised by strong land use clusters which merit designation within the local plan. The following are proposed as the new Primary Shopping Frontage designation for Pitsea:

- 81 High Road;
- 1-12 Broadway North;
- Broadway Chambers, Broadway North;

- 1-7 Anne Boleyn Mansions, High Road;
- Aldi Northlands Pavement; and
- 1-13 Northlands Pavement.

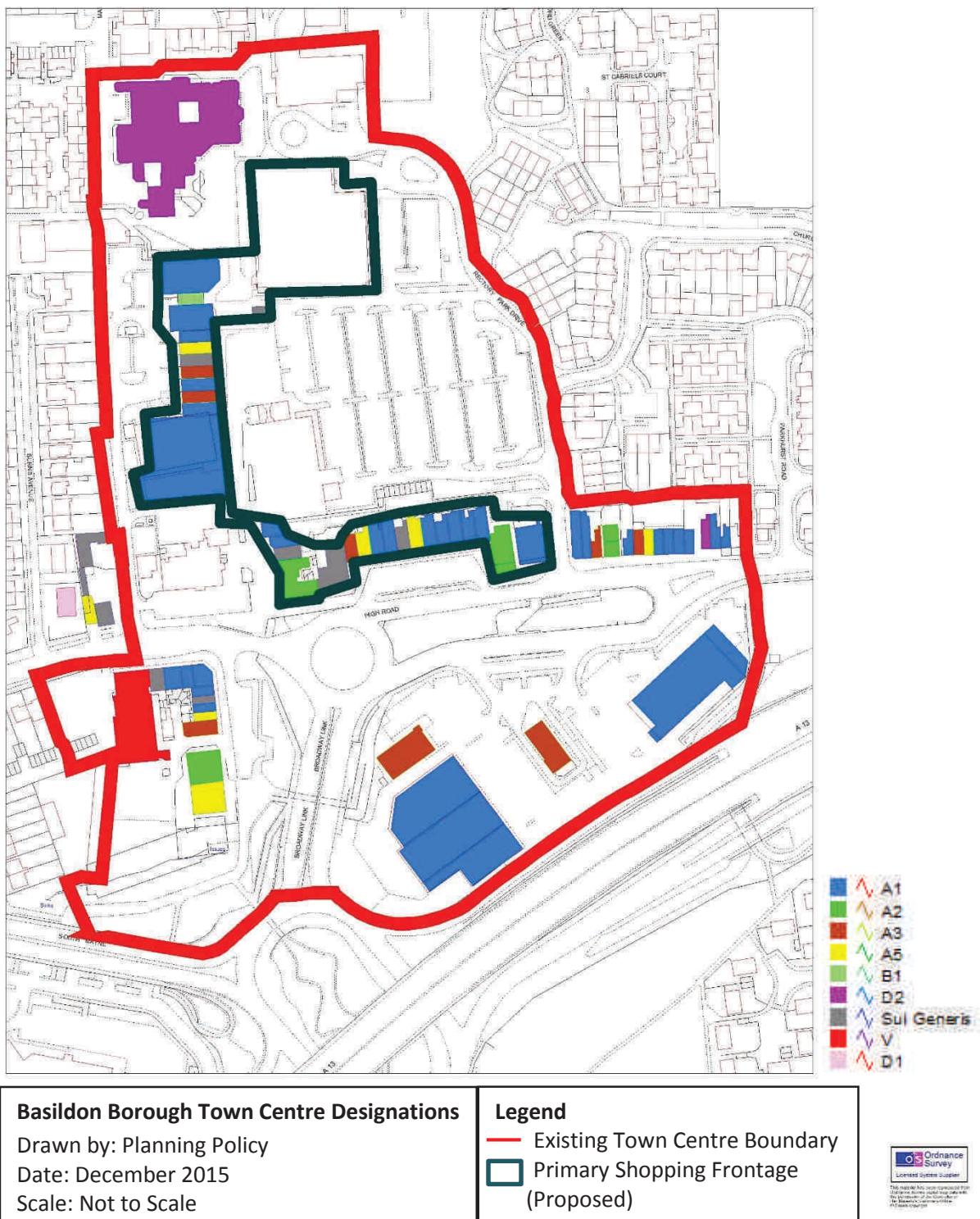
Table 11: Proposed Primary Shopping Frontage, Pitsea

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	B1	SG	Vacant	Total No. of Units
81 High Road	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
1-12 Broadway North	7	1	1	-	2	-	1	-	12
Broadway Chambers	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Anne Boleyn Mansions	2	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	4
Northlands Pavement	7	-	2	-	1	1	2	-	13
	17	2	3	-	3	1	5	-	31

2.48 Despite the size of Pitsea town centre, it is a thriving centre with no vacancy recorded within the designated primary frontage. The retail offer within the PSF is just above average at 54.8%, and is the most dominant use class within the frontage (see *Table 11*). Sui Generis is the next predominate use class at 16.1%; A3 and A5 uses each account for 9.7%; while A2 uses represent 6.5% of units.

Recommendation: Given the relatively small size of Pitsea and the presence of the Tesco superstore, the Pitsea centre does not presently have the necessary critical mass or town centre uses to sustain it as a principal retail destination. The current quality of the town centre, with its retailing and services, would suggest that a 60% threshold would be an appropriate target for A1 uses within the Primary Shopping Frontage.

Figure 16: Proposed Primary Shopping Frontage, Pitsea



Secondary Shopping Frontage

2.49 In line with the NPPF, the designation of secondary frontages within Pitsea town centre will provide opportunities for appropriate complementary uses that can enhance the

town centre. There are two broad cluster areas that have been identified as being suitable for secondary uses. These areas maintain an active frontage, while also creating pedestrian interest and footfall beyond retail shopping. The proposed Secondary Shopping Frontage designations as outlined in *Figure 15* include:

- 1-5 High Road;
- 53-79 High Road (odd numbers);
- 24-28 Station Lane (even numbers);
- 2, 6, 10, 14 & 18 Station Lane;
- 3-6 Broadway South, High Road; and
- Former Gala Bingo Hall, 1 High Road Pitsea

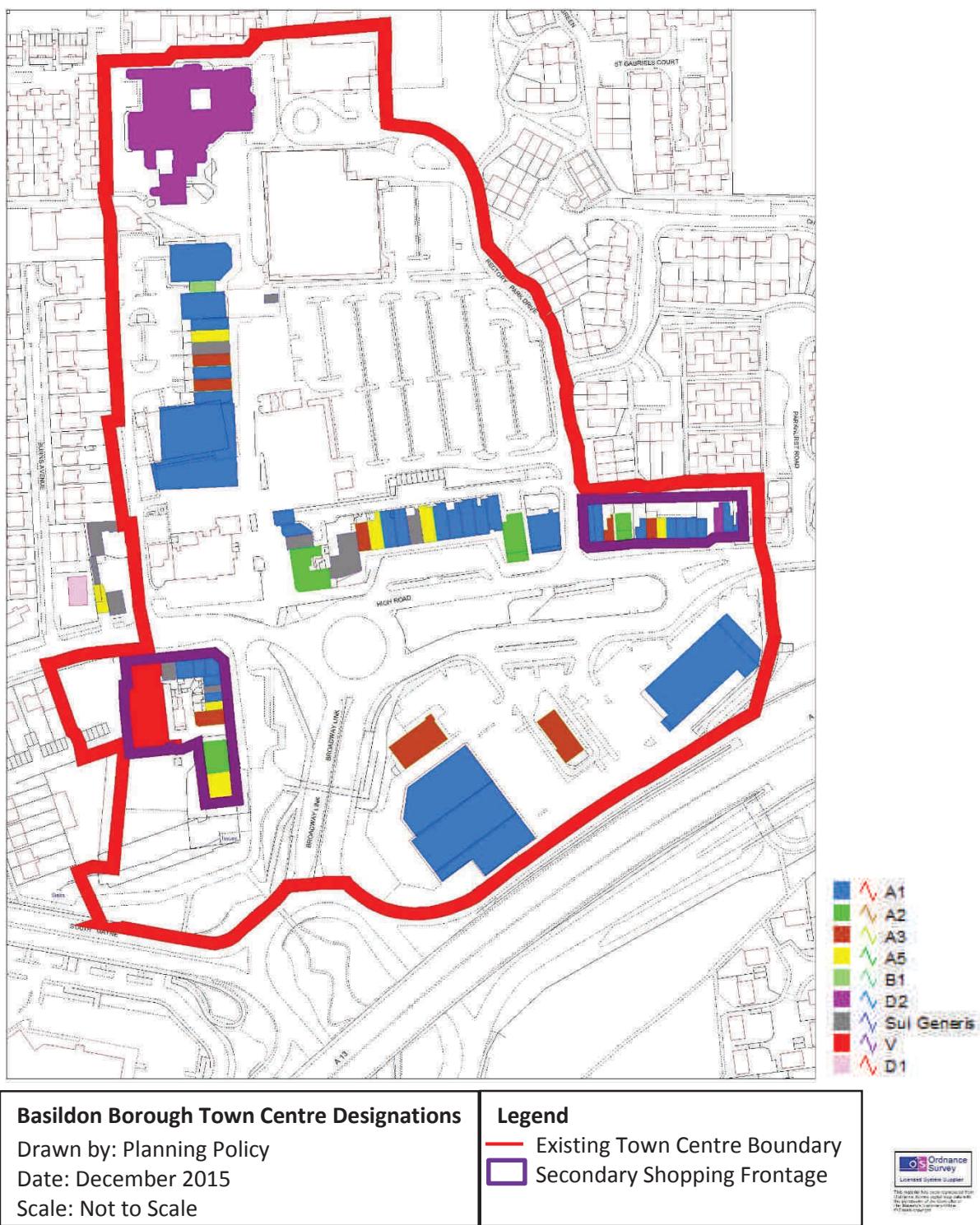
Table 12: Proposed Secondary Shopping Frontage, Pitsea

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	D2	SG	Vacant	Total No. of Units
1-5 High Road	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	4
53-79 High Road	4	-	1	-	1	1	-	-	7
Station Lane	2	1	1	-	2	-	1	-	7
Broadway South	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	3
1 High Road	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
	10	2	3	-	3	1	2	1	22

2.50 Within the proposed SSF in Pitsea, 45.5% of the frontage units are currently in A1 retail use as indicated in *Table 12* above. Restaurants/cafes and hot food takeaways make up 13.6% of the frontage units respectively; closely followed by A2 uses and Sui Generis, at 9% respectively. There is one existing leisure centre within the proposed SSF. The Former Bingo Hall is also within the proposed SSF, and represents the only vacant unit within this frontage designation.

Recommendation: To ensure that the centre continues to provide a retail offer with associated services and facilities expected of a sub-regional centre, a 40% threshold is recommended as the minimum proportion of A1 retail uses to be maintained within Pitsea's Secondary Shopping Frontage.

Figure 17: Proposed Secondary Shopping Frontage, Pitsea



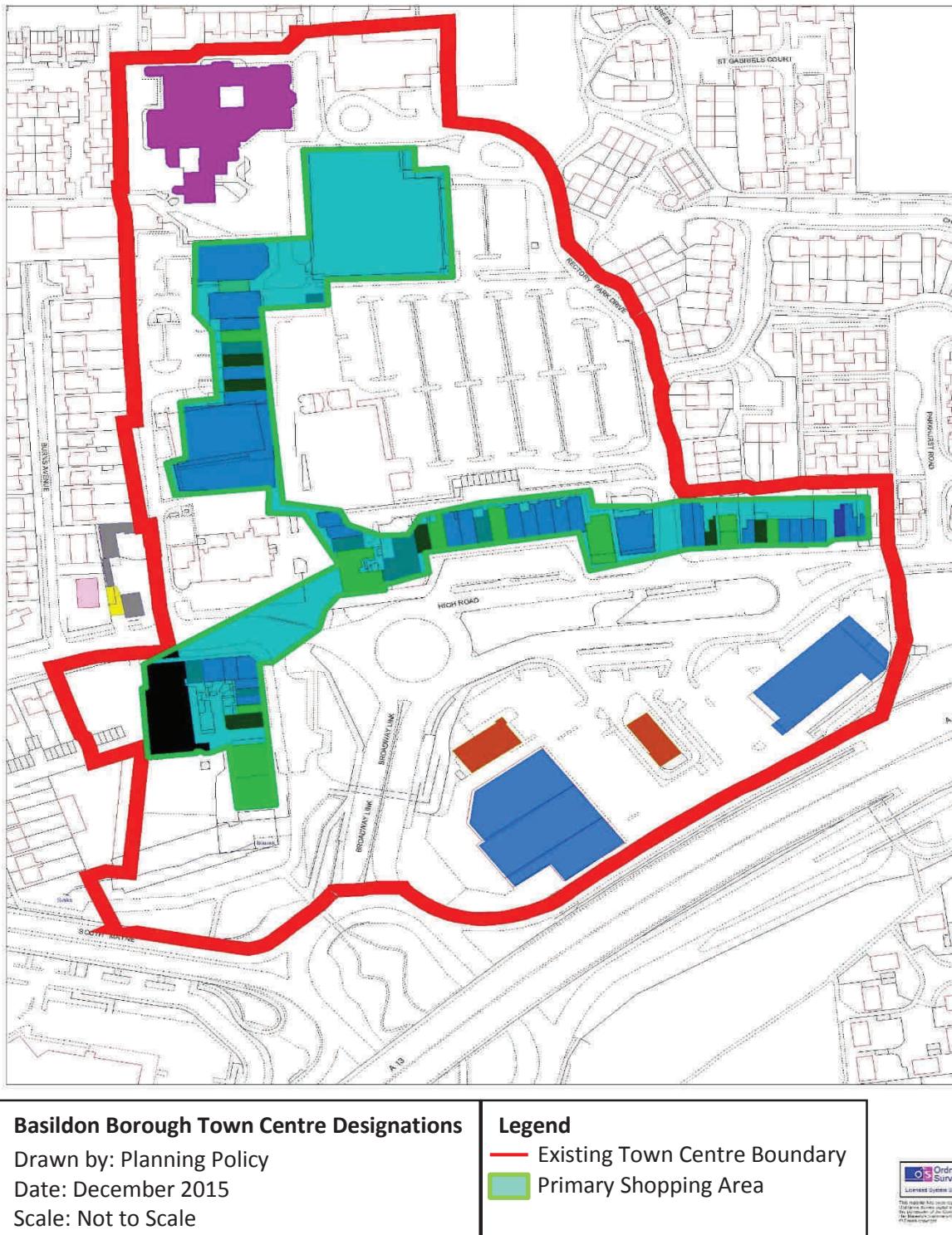
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Primary Shopping Area

- 2.51 The proposed PSA comprises the primary frontages and those secondary frontages which adjoin and closely relate to the primary shopping frontage, and forms the core of the town centre as shown in *Figure 16* below. From *Tables 11 and 12* above, it can

be deduced that the PSA comprises 52 units at ground floor level, with A1 uses currently accounting for 50% of frontage units. To ensure that Pitsea does not continue to struggle with growth and vitality, it is important to prevent a further loss of its retail offer.

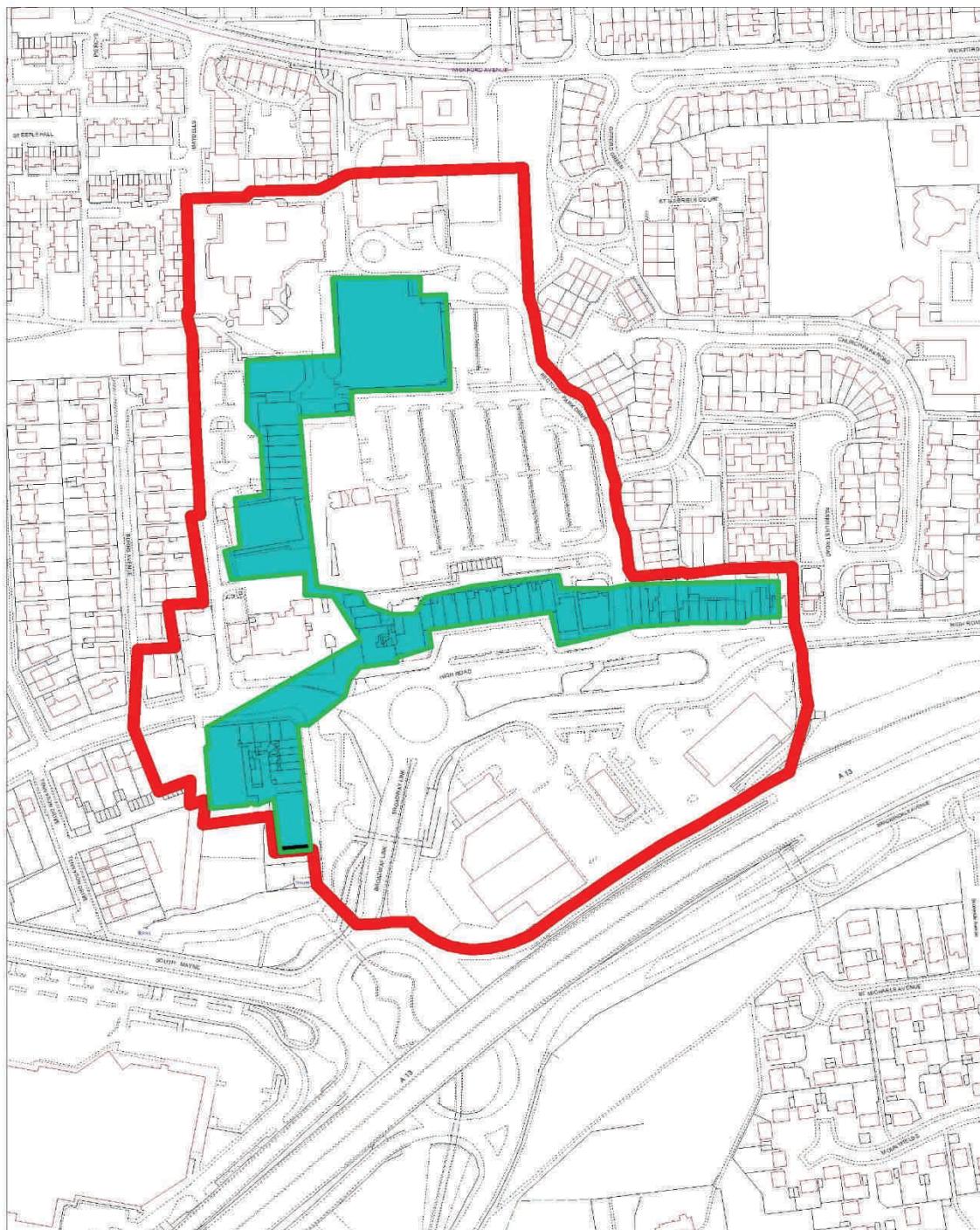
Figure 18: Proposed Primary Shopping Area, Pitsea



Town Centre Boundary

2.52 Some minor changes are proposed for Pitsea's town centre boundary. This mainly consists contracting the extent of the boundary to the south to exclude the Genesis Housing Group's apartment blocks on Station Lane which is considered out with the town centre due to its residential nature. A section to the west of the boundary has been extended along High Road and now includes Pitsea Dental Surgery, Delight Pizza & Kebab, Pitsea Motor Company, and Jet Wheel Tyre; and to the north east to include the entirety of Morrisons' floorspace.

Figure 19: Proposed Town Centre Boundary, Pitsea



Basildon Borough Town Centre Designations

Drawn by: Planning Policy

Date: December 2015

Scale: Not to Scale

Legend

— Proposed Town Centre Boundary

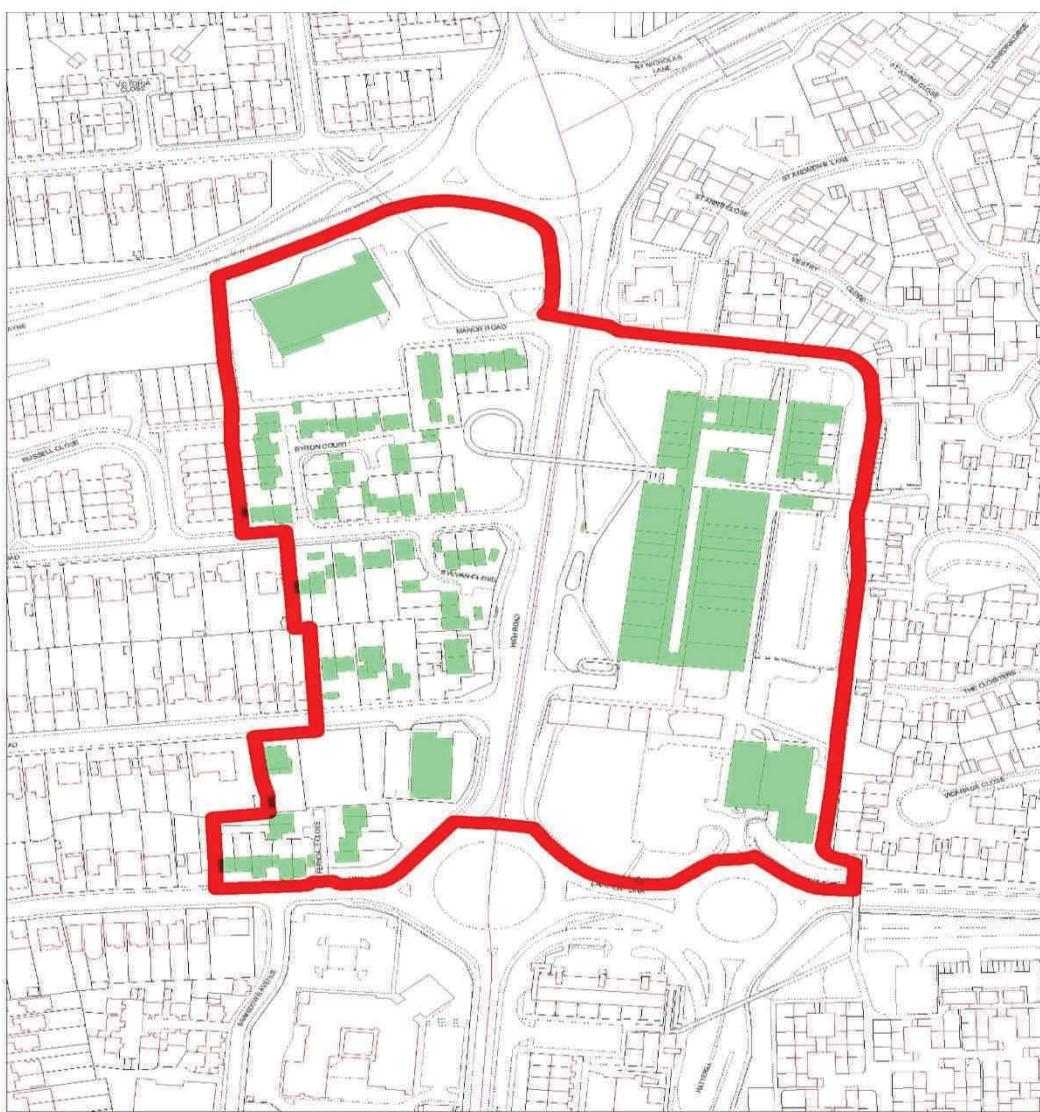
■ Primary Shopping Area



Laindon

2.53 Laindon Town Centre is the smallest of the Borough's Town Centres and is based around the Laindon Centre, a 1960's pedestrianised precinct located on Laindon High Road. The Laindon Centre's main role is in meeting local shopping needs, with the majority of units selling convenience goods. The centre was popular with residents when it first opened, and local residents continue to be satisfied with the range of smaller traders and the quality of the service they provide.

Figure 20: Laindon, Spatial Context



Basildon Borough Town Centre Designations

Drawn by: Planning Policy

Date: December 2015

Scale: Not to Scale

Legend

— Existing Town Centre
Boundary



2.54 The Laindon centre is now in a state of decline, and is in need of significant redevelopment to replace a poor quality building with a more appropriate retail scheme to better serve Laindon's communities. Despite the recognition to improve Laindon's centre, the future of Laindon as a centre is uncertain, and the level of vacancy remains high. The centre is affected by long standing, but as yet unrealised redevelopment plans and a corresponding lack of investment.

Figure 21: Photographs of Laindon Town Centre



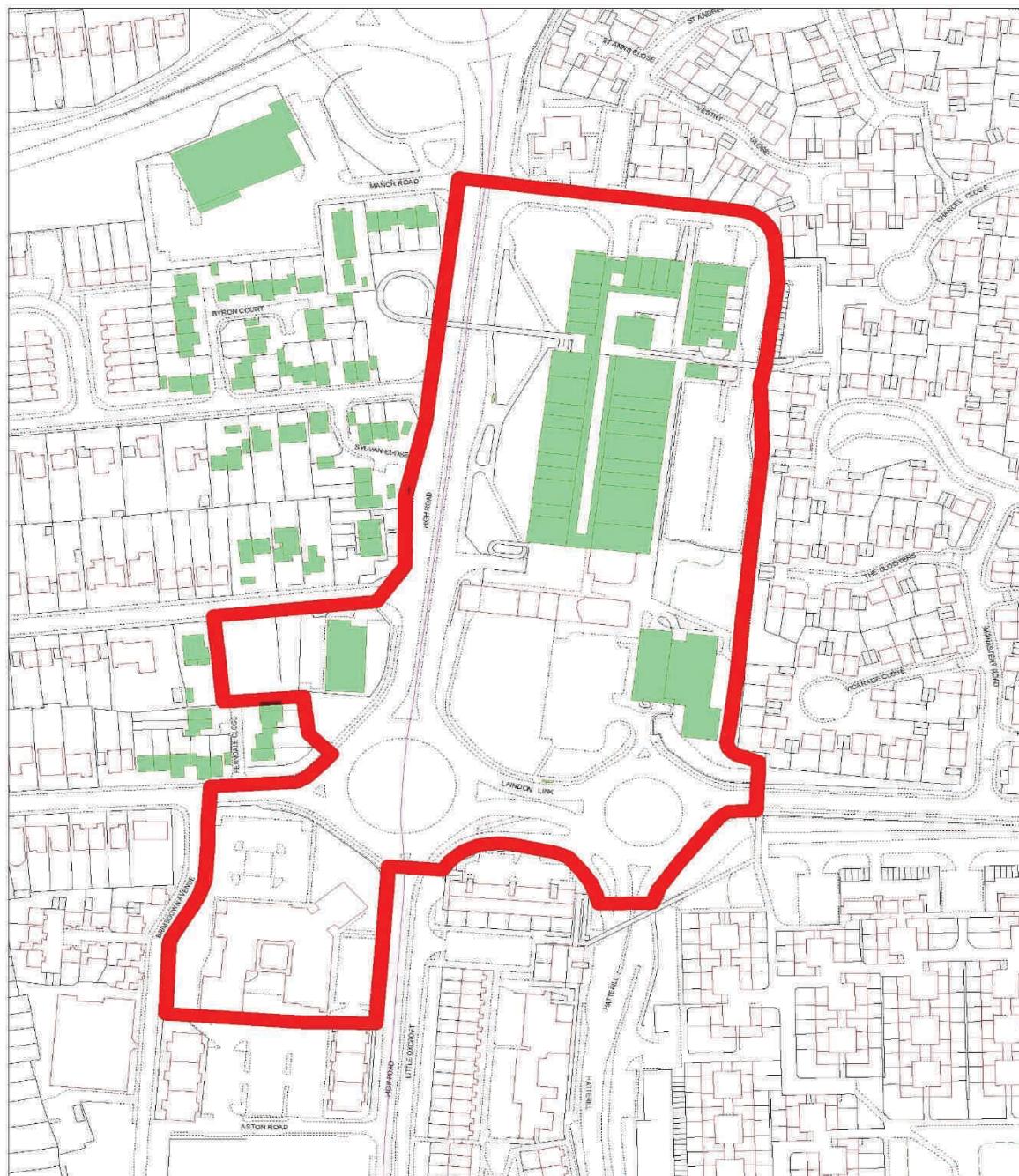
2.55 In order to improve the environment and appearance of the centre, future redevelopment plans will entail the complete demolition of the existing centre. As development details are yet to be determined through the planning application process, the designation of primary and shopping secondary frontages has not been carried forward by this review. In accordance with the strategic policies within the Core Strategy and the rest of the Development Plan, the regeneration of Laindon Shopping Centre will be central to the delivery of new homes, replacement comparison shopping, transport, health, and community facilities.

Recommendation: It is recommended that a flexible, but aspiring policy be adopted to support the core retail function of the Laindon centre, as planned regeneration programmes come forward during the plan period.

Town Centre Boundary

- 2.56 There have been substantial changes to Laindon's town centre boundary to reduce its size as the current designation is considered to spread the centre out away from its core. The proposed changes aim to consolidate and strengthen Laindon town centre, and help achieve the objectives that seek to ensure future vitality.
- 2.57 The first of the changes is on the west of the centre, where the existing boundary encompasses a large area of residential development. This area does not contain main town centre uses, and there are no immediate plans for redevelopment to build main town centre uses. It is therefore not appropriate to continue this area's inclusion within the town centre boundary. The existing Lidl Store is also proposed to be removed from the town centre. Despite this being a town centre use, it is not considered that its designation within the town centre is beneficial, as it is separated from the centre's core by residential development. Laindon Library is retained within the town centre boundary, as it fulfils a clear social function.
- 2.58 The section to the south of the boundary has been extended and now includes Laindon Community Centre in order to facilitate a better inter-relationship between the community centre and the town centre. This extended area is considered to have close links with future town centre regeneration proposals, and therefore merit inclusion within the town centre boundary.

Figure 22: Proposed Town Centre Boundary, Laindon



Basildon Borough Town Centre Designations

Drawn by: Planning Policy

Date: December 2015

Scale: Not to Scale

Legend

Proposed Town Centre
Boundary



3 CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion

- 3.1 Shopping patterns change over time and planning policy must respond to trends and growth. Maintaining a high concentration of retail uses ensures the attractiveness of town centres as accessible, diverse shopping areas; which is paramount to the vitality and viability of the local economy. Whilst maintaining the function of primary retail frontages is necessary to retain and enhance vitality and attractiveness, supplementing retail uses with a proportion of complementary non-retail uses can help support their primary function and encourage multi-purpose journeys. However, an over-concentration of non-retail uses can have a detrimental effect on a centre's shopping function, and create extensive lengths of dead frontages with a lack of proper shop window displays. The approach adopted by this review is to avoid any potential dilution of retail activity within the Borough's town centres, which could detract from their shopping function or prejudice vitality and viability.
- 3.2 This review undertook an assessment of the five town centres within the Borough, being Basildon, Wickford, Billericay, Pitsea and Laindon. Generally, four of the five, being Basildon, Pitsea, Wickford and Billericay, are fulfilling the role of a town centre. Basildon is by far the largest of the centres, fulfilling a district wide and regional role. It does, however, lack a high quality and vibrant evening economy and suffers by comparison with the restaurant offer available elsewhere in the Borough and the wider region. Billericay and Wickford are of similar size, and function as important services centres. Pitsea offers a more limited range and choice of shops, and services residential districts within Basildon urban area. Laindon however, is in clear need of redevelopment, and would benefit from some significant enhancements if it is to continue to fulfil its role and function in the retail hierarchy. That being said, all of the Borough's town centres require necessary improvements to enhance their prospects for the future, although the degree to which investment is required varies relative to their existing level of vitality and viability. This report has sought to address a number of issues that could contribute to the attractiveness of these centres, pending further development.

Primary Shopping Areas

- 3.3 Given the size, diversity and function of the town centres of Basildon, Billericay, Wickford and Pitsea, it is necessary to designate a Primary Shopping Area within the town centres, which contain both Primary and Secondary Shopping Frontages. Primary Shopping Areas are where retail activity is concentrated, often underpinned by larger anchor stores and popular chains. This report has been prepared to explore options for the Primary Shopping Areas in Basildon Borough's major centres, including the broad extent of the PSA and the approach to shopping frontages.

Primary Shopping Frontages

- 3.4 The existing Local Plan designated Primary Frontages perform well in terms of their retail function, predominately consisting of retail (A1) units, although this proportion varies between each centre. Where there is a need for additional comparison retail and convenience floor space, such as in Billericay and Wickford, the primary frontage has been expanded to improve the overall retail offer which will enable the centres to compete effectively. The proposed alterations to the existing Local Plan Proposals Map for the town centre, as well as the new designations being brought forward will help to strengthen, add continuity and consolidate shopping designations in Basildon Borough. The outcome will inadvertently result in a higher proportion of A1 retail use within the retail core of town centres.

Secondary Shopping Frontages

- 3.5 While the designation of Secondary Shopping Frontages is altogether new to the Local Plan, the intention of this review is to ensure that the proposed secondary frontage designations in the emerging Local Plan are appropriate in terms of their extent and location. The majority of the Secondary Shopping Frontage (SSF) designations as proposed by this review are characterised by a greater proportion of a mix of non-A1 uses, showing a clear distinction from the areas of high A1 uses in the primary frontages. The designation of secondary frontages is intended to introduce flexibility

within the Primary Shopping Area, by allowing for diversity and a mix of uses and encouraging footfall beyond the working day.

Vacancies

- 3.6 Vacant outlets can be found in even the strongest town centre for a variety of reasons including poor maintenance, inactive marketing or simply because the store is unsuited to modern retailing requirements. A low vacancy rate does not necessarily mean that a centre is performing well, whereas proliferation of low value uses such as charity shops may be a sign of the decline of a centre, particularly if they are in prime locations. Despite these issues, street level vacancies are a useful indicator of town centre performance. Table 13 below outlines the vacancy rate for each of the Primary Shopping Areas in the Borough.

Table 13: Vacancy Rates – Proposed Primary Shopping Areas

	No. of Frontage Units	No. of Vacant Units	% Units Vacant
Basildon	244	45	18.4%
Billericay	169	7	4.1%
Wickford	141	7	5.0%
Pitsea	53	1	1.9%
Laindon*	34	12	35.2%

* Basildon Retail & Commercial Leisure Capacity Study 2015

- 3.7 Based on the results of the survey, the proportion of vacant units within these areas is in general relatively low. The only exceptions are in Basildon and Laindon town centres. In Basildon Town Centre, the level of vacancy can be described as moderate and it may be inferred that prospective tenants particularly desire a location within the primary shopping frontage where exposure is maximised. Nonetheless, Basildon town centre and indeed all five town centres of the Borough, are the subject of comprehensive regeneration plans which is envisaged to make the Borough's town centres truly successful places where businesses will want to locate.

Town Centre Boundaries

- 3.8 The town centre boundaries for Basildon Borough was established some time ago and this needs to be reviewed for the New Local Plan. This report has provided a background to the review, and sets out proposals for new town centre boundaries and the reasons for the proposed changes. The defined boundaries form the preferred locations for retail and other town centre uses.

Non-designated Town Centre Uses

- 3.9 Within the town centre, there are portions of street frontages not considered suitable for designation as primary or secondary frontages. These frontages, often located at the edge of the centre, typically contain the lowest number of A1 units and offer greater flexibility for other non-retail town centre uses. In addition, this review excludes the occupiers of units on upper levels within the town centres as these typically do not influence perceptions of the appearance, accessibility and security of an area by pedestrians or other road users. Hence, upper levels are not considered to constitute active street frontages.
- 3.10 The designation of ‘areas outside the primary and secondary frontage’ is not considered necessary to be carried forward by this review. Non-designated frontages will however be available for various uses subject to the requirements of other policies within the emerging Local Plan.

Policy Approach

- 3.11 This report demonstrates that the existing saved Local Plan policies relating to shopping frontages have ensured that the existing Primary Frontages of the Borough’s Town Centres continue to retain a high percentage of retail uses. Despite this, it is acknowledged the absence of percentage thresholds within the body of current policy makes it difficult to monitor and manage the proportion of retail uses within each designated frontage. In addition, the flexible policies as currently contained in the Local Plan are no longer relevant, as they refer to changes that may occur under permitted

development, and fail to allow changes which are now permissible under the newly introduced permitted development rights.

- 3.12 The current policy approach to shopping frontage designations needs to be revised in order to ensure that the concentration of retail facilities contributes strongly to the vitality and viability of a centre. This could be achieved through the introduction of a restrictive, criteria-based policy approach to the change of use within defined frontages. In defining frontages and threshold limits within town centre policies, an opportunity exists for the Council to promote a diverse retail offer as well as introducing other complementary uses.
- 3.13 Going forward, it is recommended that policies which relate to the use of buildings within identified shopping frontages should seek to achieve a minimum target (measured in terms of ground floor frontage) of retail (A1) uses, considered appropriate to the Centre in order to maintain a high proportion of retail frontage as expected by the NPPF. The recommendations of this report should aid in informing the preparation of shopping frontage policies in the New Local Plan.