

DRAFT NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE LOCAL PLAN 2020 - 2040

TOPIC PAPER - TOWN CENTRE REVIEW



1 Introduction

- 1.1 The [National Planning Policy Framework \(2023\)](#) (NPPF) expects planning policies to support the role of our town centres and take a positive approach to their growth and management. It requires Local Plans to define a network and hierarchy of town and local centres and well as their boundaries, promote their long-term vitality and viability and apply the sequential test when determining planning applications for main town centre uses when they are not within a defined centre.¹
- 1.2 The NPPF also acknowledges that the retail sector and town centres can be affected by rapid changing circumstances in the retail and leisure industry and their diversity of uses is key to their long-term vitality and viability.² A broader mix of uses in our centres, providing daytime and activities, is likely to become increasingly important for our centres, with the need to compete with on-line shopping.
- 1.3 Also, since the adoption of the Local Plan there have been significant changes to the Use Classes Order (UCO). The UCO puts uses of land and buildings into various categories known as 'Use Classes' and the changes have introduced a greater flexibility for uses to change between these categories without the need for planning permission. In relation to main town centre uses, as defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF, the UCO now includes the following:
- Class E (Commercial, business and service)
 - Class F.1 (Learning and non-residential institutions)
 - Class F.2 (Local Community)
- 1.4 Class E now combines the former use classes of Shops (A1), Financial/Professional (A2), Cafes/Restaurants (A3), Indoor Sports/Fitness (D2 part), Medical health Facilities (D1 part), Creche/Nurseries and Office/Business Uses (B1) into the new single Use Class E. It also includes a number of uses that are not defined as 'main town centre use classes' in the NPPF, such as medical services and some light industrial uses. Planning permission is not needed to change uses within the single Class E use.
- 1.5 Conversely some changes have introduced more restrictions with no permitted change of use, including public houses, bars, and takeaways.
- 1.6 To support the preparation of the new Local Plan we have updated our evidence base. We commissioned a Retail and Leisure Capacity Study (RCLS) in 2019, followed by a Retail Study Update report (2020), which took account of more up to date population information and also assessed the potential impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The 2020 Update provides an estimate of how much additional shopping and leisure related floorspace is needed in the district.
- 1.7 We also undertook a survey of our defined Town and Local Centres, recording the number and range of uses. This provided an opportunity to consider the role of our

¹ Paragraphs 90 and 91 of the NPPF (2023)

² Paragraph 90 of the NPPF (2023)

centres and the function they perform as well as opportunity to re-categorise the uses taking into account the 2020 changes made to the Use Classes Order.

2 Hierarchy of Centres

- 2.1 Coalville and Ashby de la Zouch remain the principal shopping destinations in the District. Coalville is the largest centre, in terms of the number of town centre premises and retail sales floorspace, and supports a range of retail, service and community services. The centre serves shoppers from across the majority of the District, particularly for non-food shopping and includes a number of major national retailers. However, residents of Castle Donington and Kegworth tend not to travel to Coalville due to their location towards the periphery of the District and instead use shopping destinations located outside of the District. The regeneration of Coalville Town Centre is also a key Council priority with a number of key regeneration projects listed in the [Coalville Regeneration Framework 2023 \(NWLDC\)](#). Improvements to the public realm, an expanded leisure offer, improved connectivity and regenerated buildings are sought to help revitalise the town centre.
- 2.2 Ashby de le Zouch is the second largest centre in the District (based on the number of town centre premises and retail sales floorspace), albeit a similar size to Coalville and also supports a range of retail, service and community facilities. The centre also serves shoppers from across the majority of the District, particularly for comparison shopping. Although it has a smaller number of major national retailers it has a good choice of independent shops providing a unique offer for local residents and visitors.
- 2.3 The Local Centres of Castle Donington, Ibstock, Kegworth and Measham, although of differing scales, all predominantly provide local services and community uses, serving the needs of their residents.
- 2.4 Having considered the function and role of our centres, and their range of services, alongside the additional floorspace needed for shopping and related development in our District, we consider that the current hierarchy of centres remains appropriate.

3 Future floorspace needs

- 3.1 The Retail Study Update (2020) provides an estimate of how much additional shopping and leisure related floor space is needed in the District, based on projected population growth, future spending levels, the role of on-line shopping and the potential short and long-term implications of the Covid-19 pandemic. These floorspace projections are provided up to the period 2036 so that the Local Plan can plan to meet the scale of development likely to be needed for a period of at least 10 years ahead, in accordance with the NPPF.³
- 3.2 Retail needs are split between convenience⁴ requirements and comparison⁵ requirements and the 2020 Update identifies the following key issues:

³ NPPF – Para 86 (a) allocate a range of suitable sites in town centres to meet the scale and type of development likely to be needed, looking at least ten years ahead.

⁴ Consumer goods purchased on a regular basis such as food/groceries and cleaning materials.

⁵ Durable goods such as clothing, household goods, furniture, DIY and electrical goods.

- The need for new convenience floorspace is likely to relate to population growth and qualitative areas of deficiency. Surplus expenditure up to 2036 indicates that there is need for additional convenience goods space floorspace in the district of 6,473 sq.m gross.
- Higher levels of growth relating to comparison goods are expected in the future, alongside a growth in special forms of trading such as 'Click and Collect' and Home Delivery. A need of an additional comparison of good floorspace of 4,361 sq.m gross is indicated.
- Available surplus expenditure relating to food and beverage indicates an additional capacity/need of 2,560 sqm.

3.3 The three tables below summarise how much floorspace is needed to meet the likely level of growth in the District, whilst working to maintain the role of our centres, at a local level and sub-regional level, for the periods up to 2026, 2031 and 2036.

Table 1: Summary of floorspace projections up to 2026 (sq.m gross)

	Convenience	Comparison	Food/Beverage	Total
Ashby de la Zouch	103	553	128	784
Coalville	2458	501	75	3034
Other Leicestershire NW	625	177	90	892
Total	3187	1231	293	4710

Table 2: Summary of floorspace projections up to 2031 (sq.m gross)

	Convenience	Comparison	Food/Beverage	Total
Ashby de la Zouch	740	1191	724	2655
Coalville	3193	1077	425	4695
Other Leicestershire NW	944	379	514	1837
Total	4877	2647	1663	9187

Table 3: Summary of floorspace projections up to 2036 (sq.m gross)

	Convenience	Comparison	Food/Beverage	Total
Ashby de la Zouch	1342	1962	1114	4418
Coalville	3888	1774	655	6317
Other Leicestershire NW	1243	625	791	2659
Total	6473	4361	2560	13394

3.4 A significant element of the future floorspace need could be accommodated through the re-use of existing vacant floorspace or by current operators using their floorspace more efficiently. In addition, since the publication of these projections, planning permission has been granted for an Aldi Supermarket at Castle Donington. This has subsequently been built and has taken up all of the future convenience floorspace requirements up to 2036, outside of Coalville and Ashby de la Zouch. The implication of this on the District's future floorspace requirements is detailed in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Summary of future floorspace requirements to 2036 (Account taken of recent permission and the use of existing premises)

	Convenience	Comparison	Food/Beverage	Total
Ashby de la Zouch	1342	1962	1114	4418
Coalville	3888	1774	655	6317
Other Leicestershire NW	0	625	791	1416
Total	5230	4361	2560	13394

3.5 Therefore, at this time, we consider that there is no pressing need for the Local Plan to identify site allocations for future retail and food and drink related development. However, it is necessary for the new Local Plan policy detail the future floorspace requirements during the plan period and the floorspace requirements are rounded to the nearest 100, for the purposes of Draft Local Plan Policy TC1.

4 Town centre and local centre boundaries

4.1 The NPPF expects planning policies to define town centre boundaries and provides a definition of a town centre.⁶ These boundaries are relevant for the application of both the sequential test⁷ and impact assessment⁸ test. The NPPF also expects Local Plans to define primary shopping areas and make clear the range of uses allowed in both of these locations.

4.2 The adopted Local Plan defines the town centres boundaries of Coalville and Ashby de le Zouch and the local centre boundaries of Castle Donington, Ibstock, Kegworth and Measham. It also defines the primary shopping area for all of these centres, a designation relevant to the application of the sequential test. The primary shopping areas for Coalville and Ashby de la Zouch are a separate designation to their respective town centre designations, whereas the primary shopping areas for each of the other centres are the same as their respective local centre boundary designations, given the smaller scale and characteristics of these centres.

4.3 In order to undertake a review of the town and local centre boundaries and primary shopping areas, and to consider whether a change to their boundaries should be explored, the following approach was followed.

- The defined town and local centres and primary shopping areas in the adopted Local Plan were the starting point with consideration to whether there was a change in circumstances to justify a change in the defined boundary.
- A survey of the existing ground floor uses of the currently defined town and local centres was undertaken. Each premises was placed within a use class,

⁶ Area defined on the local authority's policies map, including the primary shopping area and areas predominantly occupied by main town centre uses within or adjacent to the primary shopping area.

⁷ Main town centre uses should be located in town centres, then in edge of centre locations; and only if suitable sites are not available (or expected to become available within a reasonable period) should out of centre sites be considered

⁸ Local planning authorities should require an impact assessment if the development is over a proportionate, locally set floorspace threshold (if there is no locally set threshold, the default threshold is 2,500m² of gross floorspace).

in accordance with the 2020 update to the Use Classes Order. Should there be a vacant unit its last known use was recorded as its planning use.

- Survey work was used to make an informed judgement on the character of the various areas within the defined town and local centres, having regard to the following NPPF definitions:

Main town centre uses: Retail development (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres); leisure, entertainment and more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, nightclubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres and bingo halls); offices; and arts, culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities)

Town centre: Area defined on the local authority's policies map, including the primary shopping area and areas predominantly occupied by main town centre uses within or adjacent to the primary shopping area. References to town centres or centres apply to city centres, town centres, district centres and local centres but exclude small parades of shops of purely neighbourhood significance. Unless they are identified as centres in the development plan, existing out-of-centre developments, comprising or including main town centre uses, do not constitute town centres.

Primary shopping area: Defined area where retail development is concentrated.

- Desk top review of any planning permissions granted within and adjacent to the defined town and local centre boundaries.

Coalville

- 4.4 The defined primary shopping area comprises the Belvoir Shopping Centre, the northern section of Belvoir Road and the south side of High Street. This remains the area where shopping uses are concentrated. Therefore, no changes are proposed to the extent of the Primary Shopping Area.
- 4.5 However, a number of changes are proposed to the defined town centre boundary, as set out below and shown on Map 1:

Hotel Street: The southern side of Hotel Street comprises a mix of main town centre uses, including some retail, and the majority of the premises are occupied. However, the northern side of Hotel Street comprises a large area of vacant land, a children's nursery and a motor sales premises. The vacant land has not been redeveloped nor occupied by main town centre uses for a number of years. Hotel Street is detached from the primary shopping area and is also physically separated from the town centre due to the presence of the rail line and its crossing. It was also observed that footfall is significantly lower here. A lower concentration of main town centre uses occupy this area and it provides a transition between main town centre uses and residential areas to the east. It is recommended that Hotel Street is excluded from the defined town centre boundary.

Ashby Road: A number of the properties (1-9 Ashby Road) at the junction with Belvoir Road comprise part of the Primary Shopping Area and are occupied by a range of main town centre uses. This area is well related to the Belvoir Road.

However, when looking at Ashby Road, to the west of Nos 1-9 Ashby Road, the character of the area changes. There is a reduction in the proportion of main town centre uses and the introduction of other uses such as a place of workshop, petrol station, car repairs and residential premises. This area is more transitional in character with more non main town centres present. It was also visually observed that the footfall in this area is noticeably lower. It is recommended that the western part of Ashby Road is excluded from the defined town centre boundary.

Belvoir Road: This road can be split into three identifiable sections. The area adjacent to the Belvoir Shopping Centre forms part of the Primary Shopping Area and contains a mix of shops and other main town centre uses. It has a strong relationship with the Belvoir Shopping Centre and performs the role of a town centre.

The second part of Belvoir Road is identified as the area adjacent to Marlborough Square. This area also contains a strong mix of shops and other main town centre uses and sits within the context of Marlborough Square. It is the home of Newmarket, Coalville's indoor market, and improvements are planned to Marlborough Square for it to serve as a hub for an outdoor market, events, retail and leisure activity. It performs the role of a town centre.

The final section of Belvoir Road is to the south of Melbourne Street and Owen Street. This area is more transitional in character with the introduction of residential properties. Footfall is also noticeably lower, and the area feels more physically remote from the other areas of the town centre. This change in nature and its relationship with those areas where there is a higher presence of main town centre uses, suggests that this southern part of Belvoir Road be removed from the town centre boundary.

Ashby de la Zouch

- 4.6 The defined primary shopping area comprises Market Street, and its courtyard developments, Bath Street and Bath Street Corner as well as small sections of Derby Road and Brook Street. This remains the area where shopping uses are concentrated. Therefore, no changes are proposed to the extent of the Primary Shopping Area.
- 4.7 The majority of the main town centre uses, are located within the defined town centre boundary. There has not been a significant change in the overall character of this centre since the adoption of the current Local Plan. There has been a change in the number of vacant units and also the nature of the type of main town centre uses that occupy premises. However, we have seen recently the number of vacant units slightly decrease as well as the reoccupancy of vacant units progress at a slightly quicker pace. It is appreciated North Street has a stronger residential character than other parts of the centre, but it does contain a number of main town centre uses and is connected to Market Street through the courtyard and mews style developments.
- 4.8 Therefore, no changes are proposed to the defined town centre boundary for Ashby de la Zouch (Map 2).

Castle Donington

- 4.9 The majority of the main town centre uses, are located within the defined local centre boundary, focused along the length of Market Street and Borough Street. There are a

range of shop uses alongside other local services. A number of residential properties remain located throughout the defined local centre boundary.

- 4.10 There has not been a significant change in the character of this local centre since the adoption of the current Local Plan, mainly changes in the type of main town centre use that occupies a number of the premises. In addition, vacancy levels remain low. Planning permission has been granted for a retail convenience store on Delven Lane, however this is outside of the local centre and not within the main concentration of main town centre uses.
- 4.11 The defined local centre boundary and primary shopping area is occupied by predominantly main town centre uses, including shopping uses and no changes are proposed to the boundary of these designations. (Map 3).

Ibstock

- 4.12 The majority of the main town centre uses, are located within the defined local centre boundary, dispersed along the length of the High Street and laid out as a number of small groupings with residential uses in between. There are a range of shop uses alongside other local services.
- 4.13 There has not been a significant change in the character of this local centre since the adoption of the current Local Plan, mainly changes in the type of main town centre use that occupies a number of the premises or a change to the retail service on offer. In addition, vacancy levels still remain comparatively low.
- 4.14 The defined local centre boundary and primary shopping area is occupied by predominantly main town centre use, including shopping uses and no changes are proposed to the boundary of these designations. (Map 4).

Kegworth

- 4.15 The majority of its main town centre uses are located within the defined local centre boundary, within Market Place, Church Gate and parts of High Street and Derby Road, along with a few residential properties. The mix of uses is more limited when compared to other Local Centres, but this centre does provide a number of shop uses alongside other local services.
- 4.16 There has not been a significant change in the overall character of this local centre, since the adoption of the current Local Plan, mainly a change in the services on offer and a change in the vacancy of properties although the overall vacancy level remains low. However, a former restaurant premises on High Street is now in residential use, leading to a row of residential properties located at the edge of the defined local centre boundary.
- 4.17 Therefore, a small change is proposed with Nos 2,4,6 and 10 High Street removed from the defined local centre boundary and primary shopping area, in light of their use and position on the edge of the area where main town centres uses are located (Maps 5a and 5b).

Measham

- 4.18 The majority of the main town centre uses are located within the defined local centre boundary, along High Street, and alongside a number of residential properties. There are a range of shop uses alongside other local services.
- 4.19 There has not been a significant change in the character of this local centre since the adoption of the current Local Plan, mainly changes in the type of main town centre use that occupy a number of the premises, sub-division of a unit and a change in the properties vacant. Overall, the vacancy level remains low. However No 79 High Street has changed to residential use and is located at the edge of the defined centre, and next to another residential property.
- 4.20 Therefore, a small change is proposed, with Nos 79 and 81 High Street removed from the defined local centre boundary and primary shopping area, in light of their use and position on the edge of the area where main town centre uses are located (Maps 6a and 6b).

5 Threshold for Impact Assessments

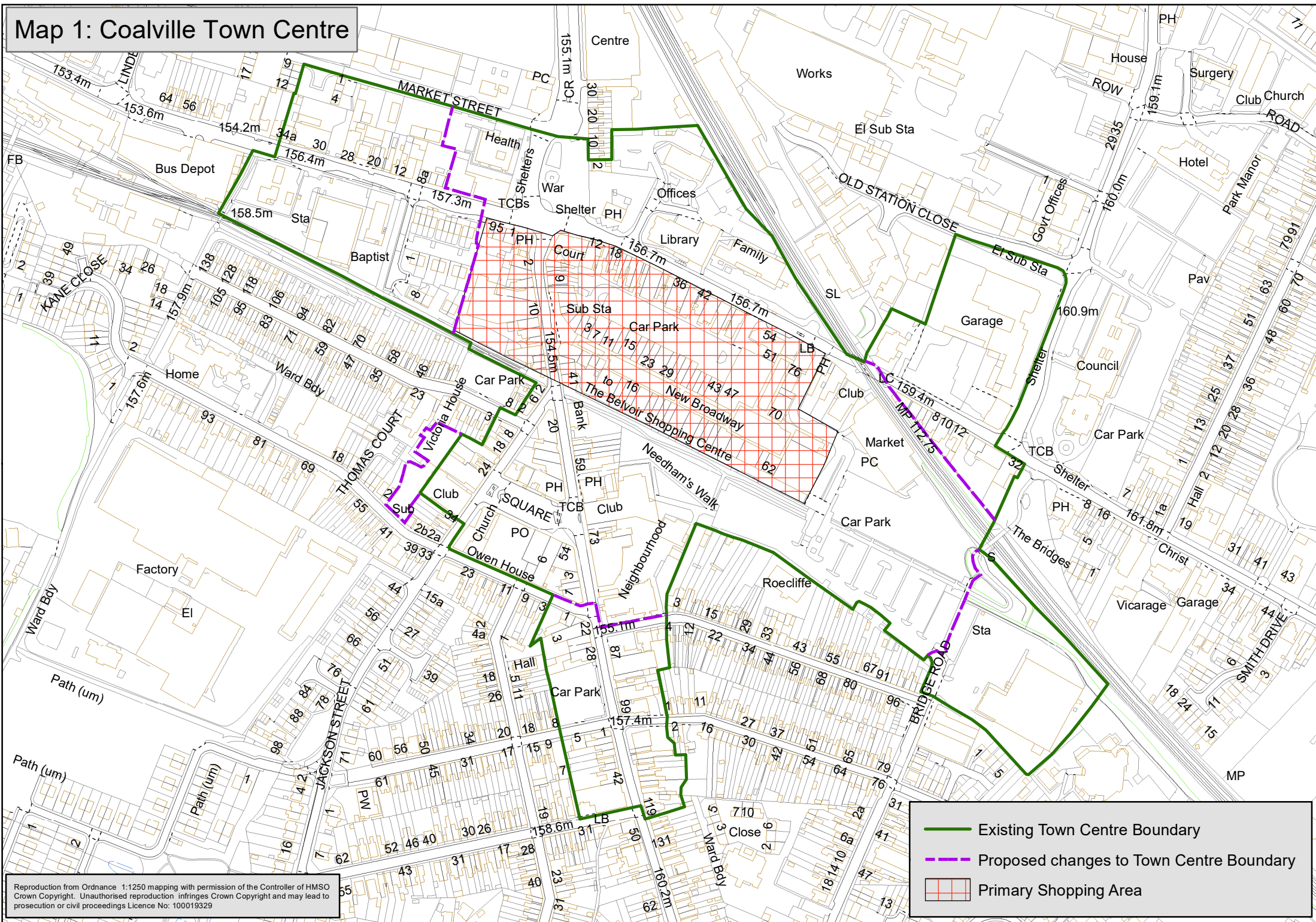
- 5.1 As detailed within the NPPF, planning policies should require an impact assessment of retail and leisure applications outside of a town centre, if they are over a specific size. Local Plans are able to set locally size thresholds for when an impact assessment would be required.⁹
- 5.2 The adopted Local Plan requires an impact assessment for retail, leisure and office development located outside of our defined town and local centres and sets a local size threshold. The threshold for Coalville and Ashby de la Zouch is 1000sqm gross. The threshold for Castle Donington, Ibstock, Kegworth and Measham is 500sqm gross. Firstly, to ensure conformity with the NPPF, we propose to amend the policy to require impact assessments for retail and leisure developments only.
- 5.3 The locally set thresholds within the Local Plan were informed by a Retail Capacity Study undertaken in 2012. The Retail Study Update report (2020) reviews these thresholds and supports the conclusion that the NPPF minimum threshold of 2.500 sqm continues to be an inappropriate blanket threshold to be applied across the district. A threshold of this scale would represent a significant proportion of the overall retail projections for all of the centres in the District. The current adopted thresholds of 1000 sqm gross for Coalville and Ashby de la Zouch and 500sqm gross for the smaller centre remain appropriate and are also supported by the updated floorspace capacity projections and recent market conditions.

6 New Local Plan

- 6.1 Draft Policy TC1 of the New Local Plan has been prepared to take into account our updated evidence base and to ensure conformity with the NPPF, in light of changes that have taken place since the adoption of the current Local Plan. Policy TC1 also provides an opportunity to amalgamate the existing Local Plan policies which address development within the District's town and local centres.

⁹ Paragraph 94 of the NPPF (2023)

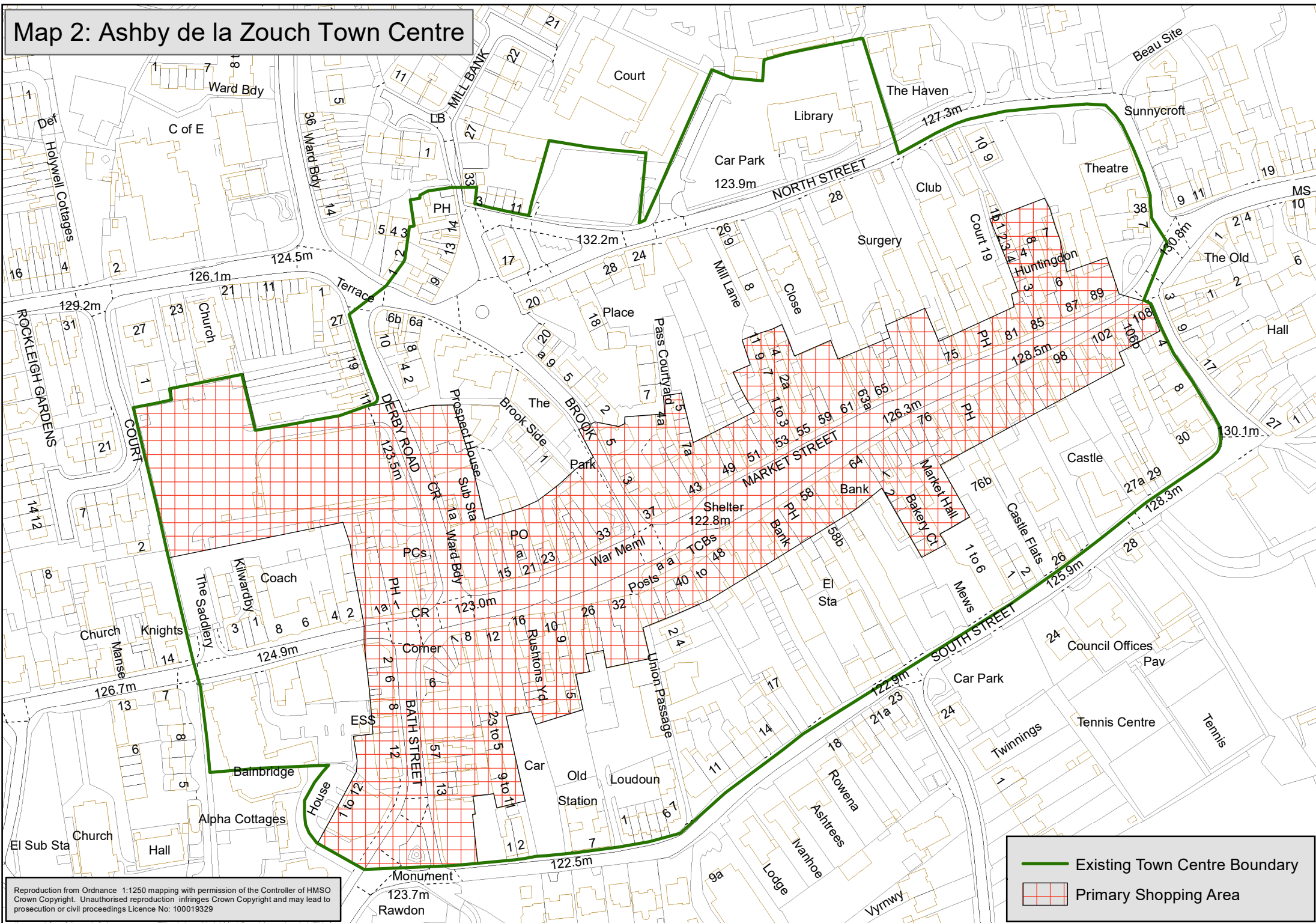
Map 1: Coalville Town Centre



— Existing Town Centre Boundary
- - - Proposed changes to Town Centre Boundary
 Primary Shopping Area

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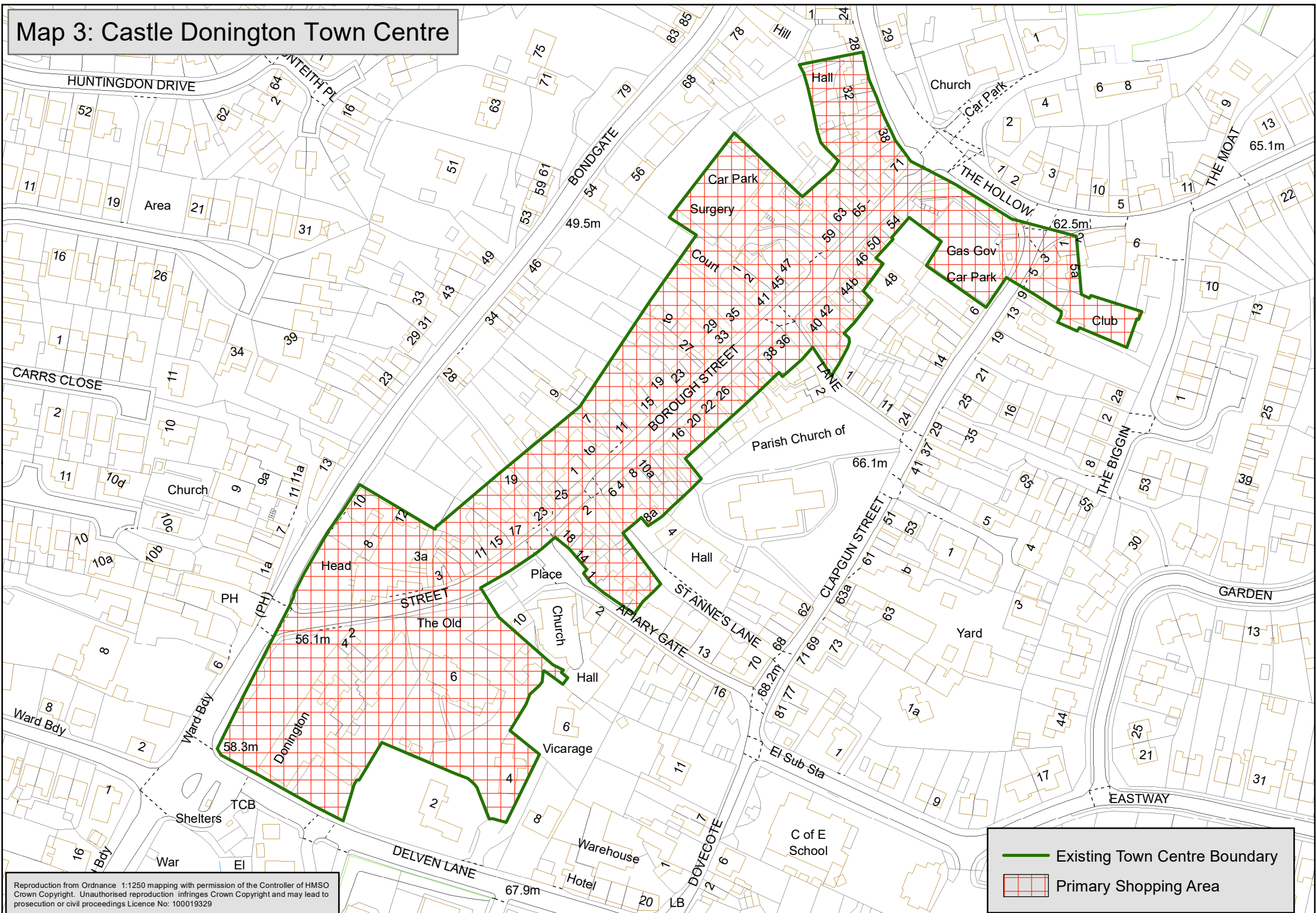
Map 2: Ashby de la Zouch Town Centre



— Existing Town Centre Boundary
 Primary Shopping Area

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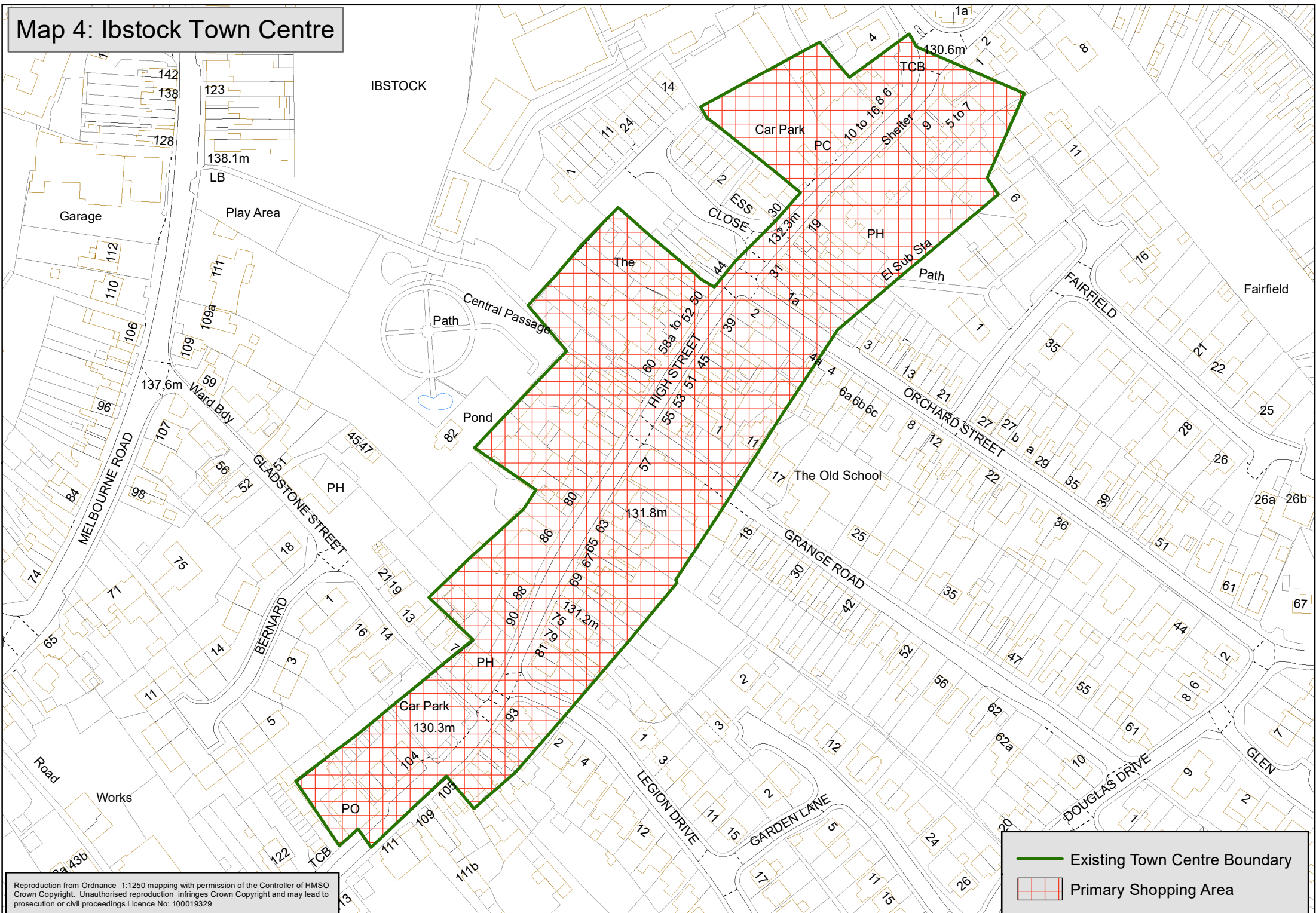
Map 3: Castle Donington Town Centre





- Existing Town Centre Boundary
- Primary Shopping Area

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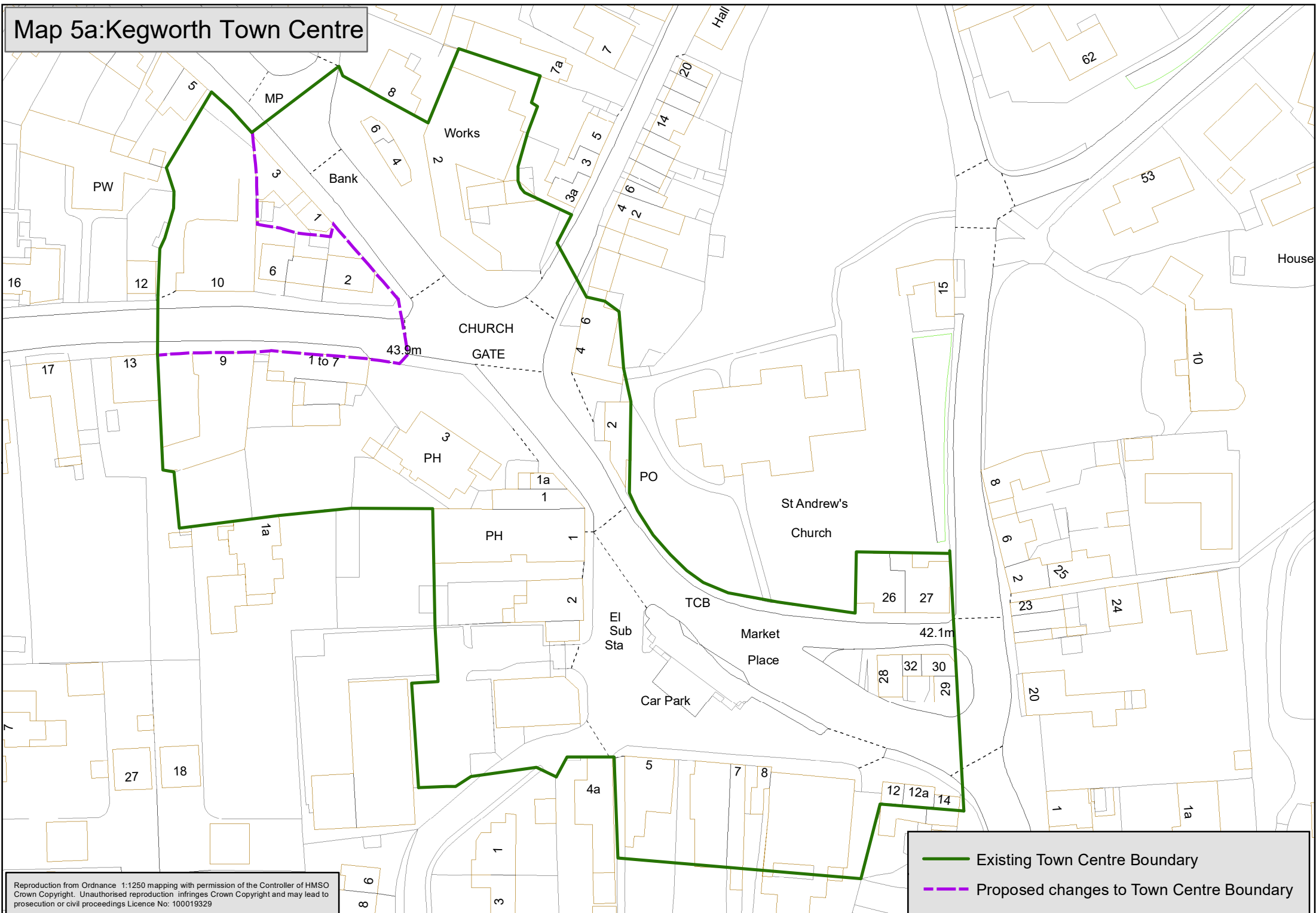
Map 4: Ibstock Town Centre



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-  Existing Town Centre Boundary
-  Primary Shopping Area

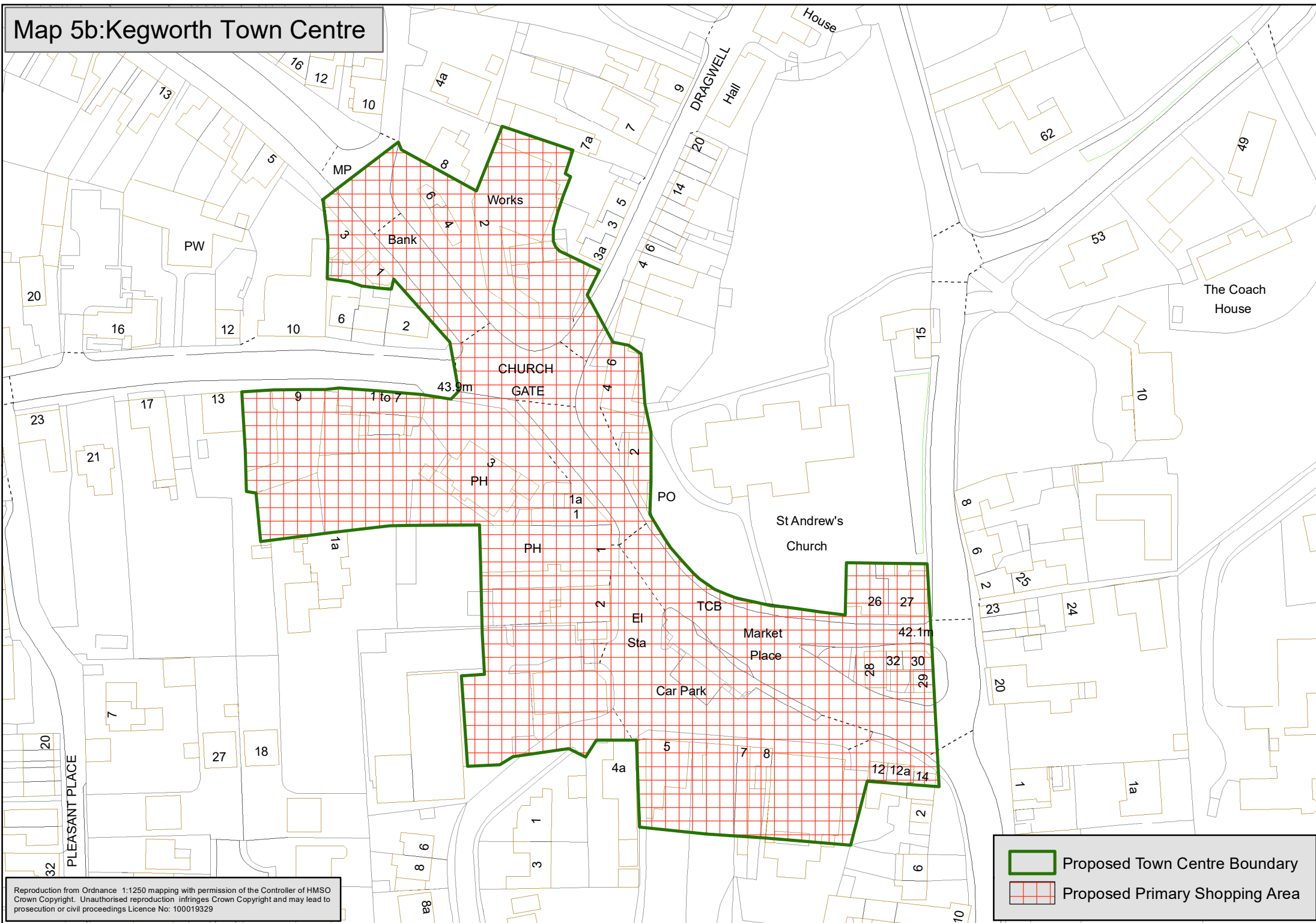
Map 5a:Kegworth Town Centre





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- Existing Town Centre Boundary
- Proposed changes to Town Centre Boundary

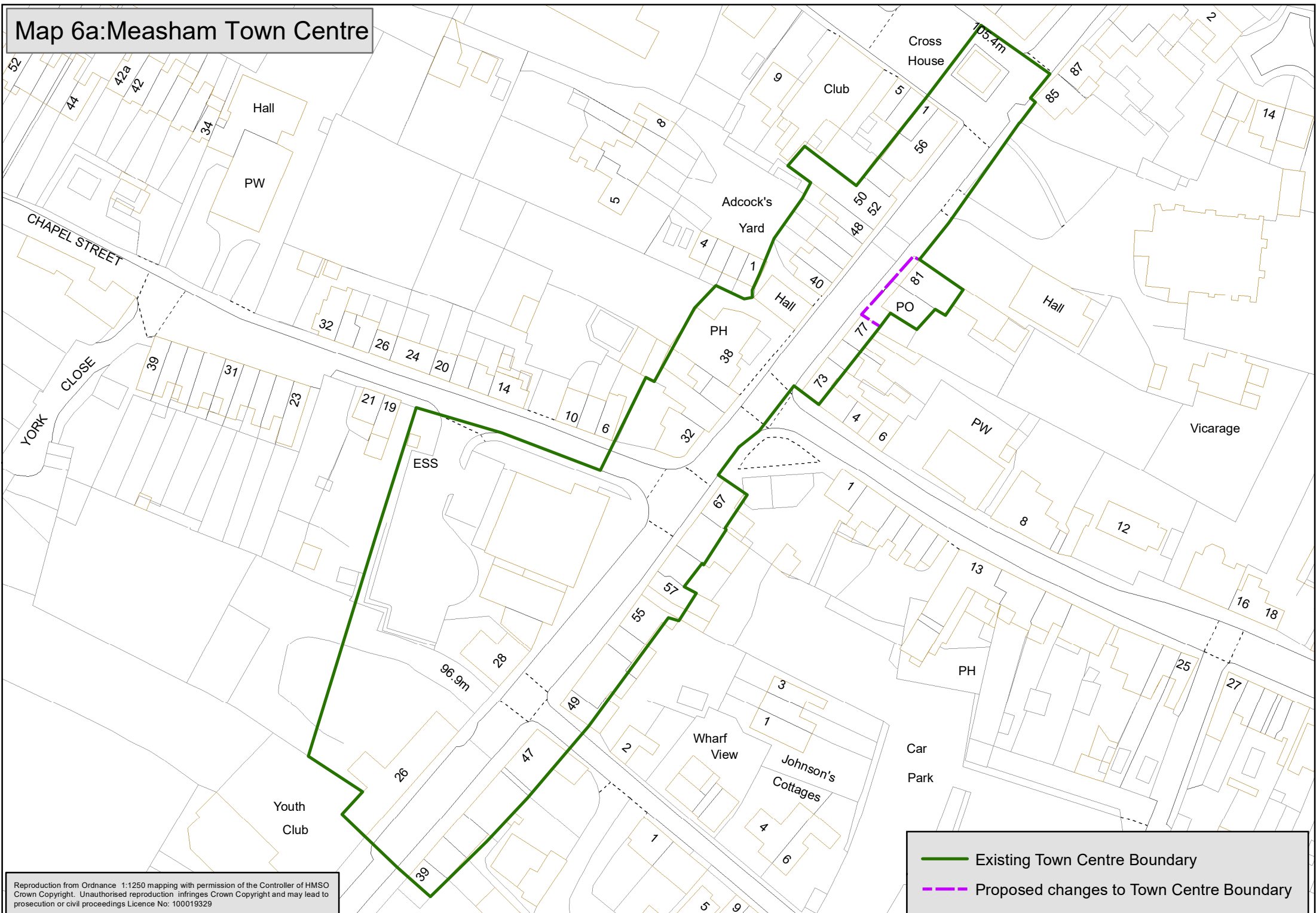
Map 5b:Kegworth Town Centre



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-  Proposed Town Centre Boundary
-  Proposed Primary Shopping Area

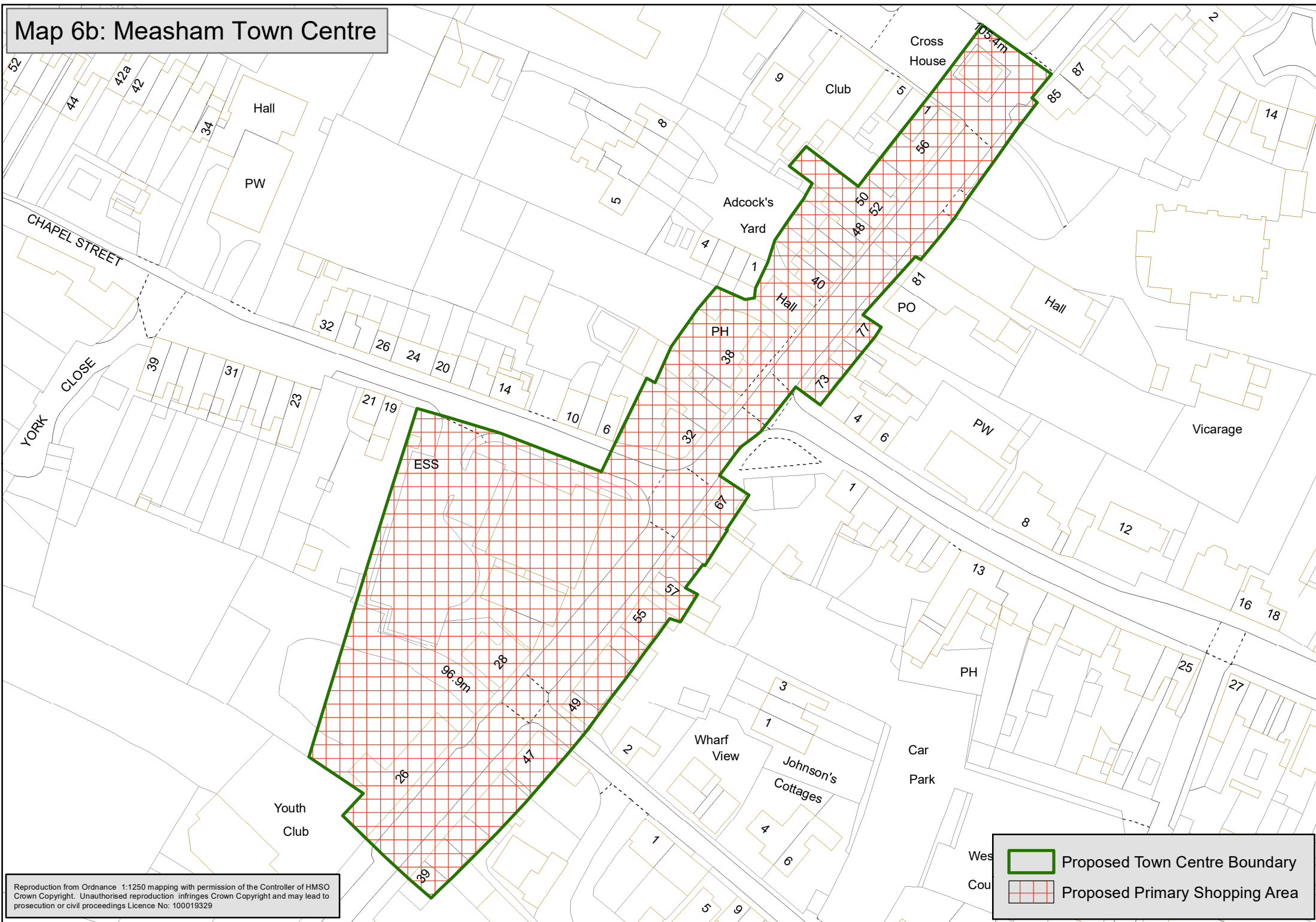
Map 6a: Measham Town Centre



— Existing Town Centre Boundary
- - - Proposed changes to Town Centre Boundary

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Map 6b: Measham Town Centre



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West
Coun

- Proposed Town Centre Boundary
- Proposed Primary Shopping Area