



Vision for Retford

This document is a supplement to the Retford Town Centre Neighbourhood Plan (RTCNP) published by the Management Committee of the Retford Town Centre Neighbourhood Planning Group (RTCNPG) in 2023. A legend can be found at the end.

During the process of constructing the Neighbourhood Plan (NP), consultations were carried out with members of the public which raised important subjects lying outside the legal framework of the NP. These areas and initiatives were felt to be important in delivering a safe, attractive, and prosperous Town Centre with a more positive relationship to our environment that the growing population of Retford and the surrounding district require and deserve.

It is important to identify specific groups best placed to deliver each initiative so that an action plan can be constructed which would enable their successful investigation and potential delivery.

There are two significant developments outside the Retford Town Centre Neighbourhood Planning Area which will have impact during the plan timescale:

As identified in the Bassetlaw Local Plan, a housing development of around 1200 new houses in the Ordsall area, plus additional housing in the surrounding villages, will increase the volume of visitors to Retford Town Centre. This could be good news for businesses but needs to be handled well to ensure critical services are available and traffic movement is optimised, future proofed and accessible to a range of users (including electric transport, cycling, walking, public transport and connectivity to Retford railway station).

A major investment is underway at West Burton Power Station to decommission the coal-fired unit (by EDF) and to build the STEP Fusion Reactor (by United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority – UKAEA). This is expected to attract large numbers of workers to construct the new facility and, over time, additional supply-chain and specialist workers. Retford, as the nearest town in Bassetlaw to West Burton, welcomes this investment which will establish it nationally and allow it to exploit its excellent transport links to support the STEP investment.

There is scope for additional railway stations in the area to support the site and its workers as well as road developments to improve access to the A1. The development of a relationship with UKAEA is important and transport, housing and facilities are issues to be addressed early within planning.

Town Centre Manager

It is recommended that a specific post of Town Centre Manager be created, with the responsibility of managing services and promoting Retford town centre. This person would liaise with and support businesses; promote tourism; identify opportunities to improve the town centre environment; identify and develop opportunities to reduce carbon emissions; participate in the planning of events; support the markets; and liaise with the Police, Retford Civic Society, Retford Business Forum (RBF) and other key groups as appropriate (e.g. Retford Charter Trustees). It will also be important for a manager to foster and facilitate volunteering in relation to the development and upkeep of the town centre. (BDC/NNBID)

Parking

As population numbers increase in the surrounding areas during the plan period, this will increase the potential for businesses in the Town Centre. To optimise the parking facilities, which are largely fixed during this time, the existing facilities will require innovative new approaches to methods of charging for parking; for example – pay-for-time-used rather than prepayment; free days on low volume days; and/or electric-only car parking for some or all of the car parks. This will encourage visits off peak and therefore reduce peak traffic flows. If traffic flows are not managed effectively, visitors will seek other locations.

Existing parking spaces require development during the plan period to facilitate the expected increase in electric vehicles. Preferring electric vehicles will assist in reducing pollution in the Town Centre.

Cycle parking facilities are also inadequate at present with no covered spaces being available and poor connectivity to cycling infrastructure. Modifications to improve the cycling connectivity and parking should be addressed.

Businesses, shops & cafes

Start-up spaces should be made available at preferential rates to encourage new businesses.

The temporary takeover of long-term vacant sites and the standard of visual presentation of all vacant site should be investigated.

The Buttermarket is currently only lightly utilised and could be made available to pop-up start-up businesses with promotion.

Links to local secondary schools should be developed and initiatives developed to encourage young people to start up businesses in the town centre.

The Vision cannot, and should not, prescribe the types of businesses developed in the Town Centre. However, it is important to note the view amongst our younger respondents that, for example, they would like clothes shops, an ice cream parlour, and a café/bar exclusively for young people. Interestingly, an escape room was requested and there already is one in Retford Market Square, highlighting the need for improved communication of facilities. Encouragement by the local authority and related bodies for the development of new enterprises would be welcomed.

In order to avoid issues in the future with BDC Planning, a guide for commercial agents and landlords advising early consultation with BDC and RTCNPG is recommended (BDC).

Active frontage: the front of a building with openings onto the space that generate activity and engagement between the building interior and the space outside, particularly entrances. Active frontages should be developed that afford residents and people working in the Town Centre a safe and engaging public realm.

In developing the plan, the Management Team of the Planning Group were inspired by more active high streets with, for example, stalls and spaces for cafes/bars to use the main street and market square for business. Any redesign of the public realm should include flexibility for businesses. This should also accommodate green spaces within the Town Centre which could be expanded to create a more vibrant and attractive public space (as identified in the two environmental studies) (BDC).

Markets and public events

The consultations provided a clear public appreciation of the value of The Market Square as a public resource. These referred to the visually attractive appearance of the square without the markets and also to the markets themselves.

Markets are wanted and attract people from outside of the Retford area. Live events are very popular and appreciated. There are two proposals in relation to these findings. First, an imaginative investment strategy to optimise markets should be developed by RBF/BDC. Themed markets, pop-up stalls and many other innovations should be considered, taking into account the experiences of other small towns with a regular market.

Secondly, a programme of live events should be held in The Square. The Square should be developed as a place where Retford's events are held and its image as such advertised. The government's Task Force on the High Street found that where such events are held in a town centre trade increases and visitors are attracted to them. Retford is very well placed to implement and benefit from this recommendation (NNBID/BDC).

A Greener Town Centre

The existing trees in the Town Centre will be evaluated and managed to increase the overall leaf coverage, better supporting local bird life and being resilient to the local climate. The existing and proposed trees will help mitigate climate effects through local cooling. These measures will enhance the visual amenity. Numerous positive interventions for ecology and environment have been identified in the two environmental reports commissioned for the town centre and the measures identified have generally been positively received within the planning group (RBF/RCS/BDC/NCC)

It is recommended that a holistic/joined up approach be taken to creating a greener town centre. This includes:

- Changes as appropriate to the existing trees as identified in the reports.
- Enhancements to walking and cycling (including safer and more accessible connectivity from North to South through Kings Park).
- Creation of a 'green corridor' across the Town Centre linking Kings Park to Spa Common.

- Identification of existing green spaces of value, including all of the planting areas managed by NCC and BDC.
- Provision of separate recycling bins throughout the town centre.

New and existing buildings should provide bird and bat boxes (where possible), which encourage local species suitable for the Town Centre. Existing developments should be provided with guidance on installing these and appropriate organisations approached to provide the correct equipment. (Notts Wildlife, Notts Wildlife Trust/BDC)

Green verges and hedging should be developed on the roads surrounding Retford Town Centre and, where possible within the Town Centre around car parks without landscaping, and other barren spaces. The possibility of 'green corridor' through the Town Centre linking to Kings Park should be evaluated. (BDC/NCC)

The installation of solar panels will be encouraged and facilitated subject to conservation area approval. Starting with the larger roof spaces, businesses will be encouraged to install solar panels and batteries where appropriate to make savings on their costs and reduce the climate impact of the town. RTCNPG and RBF will attempt to identify and access funding to support these installations and businesses. Donations will also be sought from the savings made to invest in and help maintain the town centre improvements.

Subject to energy audits being undertaken there may be contributions towards the costs of solar panels available from BDC in 2023-2025 – RBF/RTCNPG will encourage

Some of the building stock in the town centre is generally old with low energy efficiency ratings - measures to reduce thermal losses and improve efficiency would be encouraged.

Public Safety

Concern about public safety was the most mentioned subject during the consultations. In particular, people cited disorderly behaviour, especially begging, and bicycle riding along Carolgate and, separately, the lack of a visible police presence in the town centre. Enhanced feelings of public safety would be one benefit from addressing these problems. Confidence in the safety of the Town Centre would improve the well-being of the people of Retford and add to the retail and hospitality experience. (Nottinghamshire Police/BDC)

A potential solution to the perceived and actual threat of anti-social behaviour on Carolgate is to find funding to employ Street Ambassadors. This would also require a legal framework within which these ambassadors could operate effectively. Alternatively a recruitment campaign for special constables in the Retford area could provide appropriate resources. (Nottinghamshire Police/BDC/NNBID)

Currently trees on Carolgate prevent the effective use of CCTV. There are proposals to increase the CCTV coverage; funding however, is an issue. As plans for the increased tree coverage in the Town Centre are developed, these should ensure that CCTV can fulfil its purpose.

This must not lead to a loss of green space as designs should and could be identified which allows green space, preservation of trees and CCTV (as has been done in other areas). Increased levels of CCTV surveillance have been requested for the access route to the Chapelgate car park from Grove Street and the access routes to Bridgegate and Sports Direct from the Market Square (BDC/NCC)

A further aspect of public safety is adequate street lighting. In liaison with Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC), Nottinghamshire Police should be encouraged to undertake a review of street light provision within the NP area, to ensure that it meets the expectations of residents, especially women and young girls (NCC/Nottinghamshire Police)

Transport and Movement

All car parks should contain electric vehicle (EV) charging units with numbers increasing across the plan period. One of the smaller car parks or a section in one of the larger car parks should be considered for electric vehicles only by 2030 with further expansion during the plan period. (BDC)

Facilities to encourage increased cycle use should also be developed eg cycle hire, young person's cycle vouchers. (BDC)

All new developments should include adequate EV charging where this is physically possible, and investigations into street-lighting supplied chargers for existing residential streets should be carried out during the plan period.

RBF will work with NCC and BDC to seek a creative solution to the traffic issues on Bridgegate, Market Place and Grove Street as well as on Cannon Square and New Street. Access is required to allow businesses to trade and have visibility. To facilitate this, traffic speeds on these roads need to be controlled to acceptable levels (possibly 20mph in line with growing practice on inner-urban roads). New Street specifically does not have adequate signposting regarding the one-way section. The use of road surfacing to identify these areas more closely with the pedestrian space would also be helpful in achieving a harmony between different space users. (RBF/NCC)

Bus services to local villages do not currently allow people to work in the Town Centre and return home forcing them to drive into town or not work there at all. There is a low degree of reliability on these services as well. This is especially relevant to young people on low wages. Improved timings for the last buses from Retford to the villages around should be delivered with higher levels of reliability (NCC)

The possible re-investment in a “ride to work” scheme for young people from the surrounding area should be examined, as well as a broadening of the on-demand bus service. (BDC/NCC)

Rail services to Nottingham currently stop at Worksop and would benefit from extending to Retford (and possibly Gainsborough to avoid parking in Retford station) There is currently no easy public transport access to Nottingham from Retford. The late rail service returning from Sheffield currently stops at Worksop which means people in Retford are prevented from seeing the full show at Sheffield theatres. The late service should be extended to Retford. (RBF/BDC/NNLCRP)

The recent evening economy research carried out on behalf of NNBD identified the lack of taxis as an issue in Retford. This affects travellers arriving at the railway station as well as people returning from nights out in the Town Centre. Investigations into how improved provision of taxi services could be facilitated. (BDC)

Recent information presented at the examination of the Bassetlaw Local Plan identified pinch point junctions around the perimeter of the RTCNPA – North Road roundabout, Arlington Way/Amcott Way junction and London Road traffic lights. There are potential proposals being examined to provide a pedestrian access under Amcott Way at the Arlington Way junction which would reduce the number of calls on the pedestrian crossing lights there. The lights-based pedestrian crossing on Amcott Way just to the East of the North Road roundabout can cause traffic delays at the junction. This has the potential to be alleviated if a ramped bridge could be put in place, removing the need for the lights-based crossing; also, the roundabout could be increased to three lanes to allow dedicated lanes. Peak time traffic light access to the North Road roundabout might also reduce overall waiting times. (NCC)

Cycling (plus scooters, wheelchairs etc)

A significant increase in cycle racks/storage should be encouraged within the public spaces to encourage the use of cycles by people from outside the Town Centre.

A cycle route from Bridgegate through Kings Park should be created to provide a safe north-south route away from Carolgate.

Within Carolgate, signage should be improved to encourage cyclists to dismount in pedestrian areas, and this should be reinforced by police action.

The findings of the BDC accessibility study, when reported, should be implemented to improve access around the public space.

A cycle rental offer and children's cycling voucher scheme should be investigated to encourage people to try cycling in Retford.

Health and Wellbeing

With the increasing population within and around Retford, there will be a need for increased levels of health and wellbeing provision.

There are a number of Health and Wellbeing services throughout the Town Centre. The Churchgate & Chapelgate area includes the main doctor's surgery, a pharmacy, a dentist, physiotherapist, Pilates, and yoga practitioners, and the main vet's. Other provisions dentists, opticians etc are located across the Town Centre.

Applications for the development of space relating to health and wellbeing facilities within the Town Centre, especially in the Churchgate and Chapelgate should be supported and encouraged. (BDC)

The BDC Cabinet Lead for Health and Wellbeing has agreed to represent this view to the appropriate NHS bodies. (BDC)

Retford Town Centre is an environment that supports policies and initiatives promoting good health and well-being – e.g., Healthy Sunday events and Santa Run and these can be further encouraged and delivered. (RBF/NNBID)

All commercial premises must be accessible for people with physical and other disabilities. This includes entrances to premises and space to move around them. An accessibility report has been commissioned by BDC and when this reports, its recommendations should be followed wherever feasible. (BDC)

Murals

Retford's Town Centre has four murals illustrating its history. There is scope for more murals, throughout the town and these could become a key feature of the town's cultural personality. The Civic Society will be encouraged to continue its work in this area, hopefully helping to attract visitors to the town centre and, therefore, to improve its reputation and grow Retford's retail sector. (RCS)

Hospitality

Retford has a considerable number of pubs, cafes, and restaurants. Some have licences to place seating outside in designated places. More cafes and restaurants are to be encouraged to develop in this way. Therefore, more cafes and bars should be permitted to utilise designated spaces outside their premises.

Retford is a 'leisure-focused' Town Centre where visits mix social activities with shopping and accessing services. The introduction of parking provisions which allow people to pay-for-time used will encourage longer visits in the town, increasing the spend per visit.

Also, promotional use of parking fees (eg free Mondays, money off vouchers on tickets, etc) to help spread demand and traffic flows should be investigated. (BDC)

Tourism

Retford is a central location in the story of the Mayflower Pilgrims, the founders of the Baptist Church and Congregational Church, and the first Quaker Martyr originated there.

Bassetlaw Museum hosts the Pilgrims Gallery which tells the story of the Mayflower and its origins in the non-conformist movement in Bassetlaw.

These provide major opportunities to attract visitors to the town and the district from local, national and international locations. There are sufficient locations of interest in the district to promote overnight stays and a joint approach across the hotels locally would be effective.

Bassetlaw has suffered from a lack of tourism promotion for a number of years and needs to develop its own public relations strategy to achieve success in this area. There are major annual events in Retford – e.g. Charter Day, Party in the Square, Heritage Open Day, and Christmas Market. There are also monthly Retford Big Market promotions featuring the markets and retailers. These events and others could be marketed outside of the area.

Tourism needs to be supported through a unified public relations and marketing campaign, including a Retford website. (RBF/RCS/BDC/NCC)

Street Furniture and the Public Realm

The Design Code Report, supporting the RTCNP, states that the colour and style of street furniture should be coordinated and should reflect the nature of the Town Centre. The style of furniture in, for example, the Market Square and Carolgate, should also be retained and any that does not accord with it should be replaced.



Black and gold remains the majority design and is the most suitable colour scheme for Retford's Georgian heritage, which the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to promote. All bins, benches, decorative lighting, and signage, and other street furniture, should be repainted or replaced to accord with the colours and styles proposed.

All waste bins should have separate recycling spaces, with an aim of achieving more than 90% of waste recycled.

In light of its historic importance to Retford, Bridgegate Bridge should be restored, with its four lanterns and accompanying architectural forms (RCS/BDC)

Legend

BDC – Bassetlaw District Council

NCC – Nottinghamshire County Council

NNBID – North Notts BID

NNLCRP – North Notts & Lincs Community Rail Partnership

RBF – Retford Business Forum

RCS – Retford Civic Society

RTCNP – Retford Town Centre Neighbourhood Plan

RTCNPG – Retford Town Centre Neighbourhood Planning Group

Websites for information

[Neighbourhood Planning | Bassetlaw District Council](#)

[Bassetlaw Local Plan 2020-2038: Examination Library | Bassetlaw District C...](#)

www.retfordbusinessforum.org.uk/rtcnpng