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Telford Town Centre Topic Note January 2026 – Telford and Wrekin Local Plan Examination

This note is submitted on behalf of Telford Trustee No.1 Ltd and Telford Trustee No.2 Ltd (hereinafter 'the Client' or 'the Trustees') following the Inspector's request for a short topic paper on the overall approach to town centres within the Telford and Wrekin Local Plan Review ('the emerging Local Plan') which is currently undergoing examination.

The purpose of this note is to support Telford & Wrekin Council and the Inspector in providing clarity on how the emerging Local Plan addresses the role and function of town centres. It does so by presenting up-to-date evidence on the performance of Telford Town Centre, in accordance with Section 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF'), which seeks to ensure that town centres remain vital and viable as the heart of communities.

This note is intended to assist the Council and the Inspector in understanding the health of the Town Centre and demonstrates that whilst generally the Town Centre is doing well, this position is finely balanced and great care must be taken to avoid new out of centre retail and leisure facilities coming forward which would undermine the viability and vitality of the Town Centre.

Telford Trustees

This Representation Letter relates to the Trustees significant land interests within Telford Town Centre, which can help deliver the objectives of the emerging Local Plan. As shown within the Trustees Ownership Plan within Telford Town Centre (Appendix 1) and on the plan below (Figure 1), the Trustees own and manage most of the land within the Primary Shopping Area, including the Secondary Shopping Frontage.

The Trustees have been a major landowner within Telford Town Centre since acquiring land interests in 2012. The Asset Managers on behalf of the Trustees, have sought to improve the Town Centre through a number of development initiatives.

Most notably, in October 2013 Outline Planning Permission was granted by Telford & Wrekin Council for the erection of a mixed use development comprising of Retail and Food and Beverage units (Use Classes A1-A5), Leisure (Use Class D2), Hotel (Use Class C1), reconfiguration of petrol filling station including the demolition of existing buildings and footbridges with associated landscaping, car parking, public realm and access and service arrangements at Telford Shopping Centre (Ref. TWC/2013/0612).

Subsequently, major developments at the Southern Quarter, Northern Quarter and the Fashion Quarter (approved under Reserved Matter Applications) have been delivered, enhancing the Town Centre's offer. The Primary Shopping Area has been enhanced through the introduction of a range of food and beverage and leisure uses, but fundamentally it is a retail destination.

The mix of uses in the Town Centre is constantly evolving as the Asset Managers on behalf of the Trustees work with existing and new occupiers to ensure their needs are met.

It is the Trustee's intention that Telford Town Centre retains its role as a sub-regional shopping destination in future, albeit its offer should continue to be enhanced through the introduction of a range of other complementary town centre uses.

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Telford Town Centre

Telford Town Centre is identified as the Principal Town Centre within the borough, it is well connected by road and rail, and serves an established economic, social and environmental role across the wider region. It functions as a sub-regional destination for shopping and leisure activities, supported by significant recent investment by the Trustees in areas such as the Northern Quarter, Fashion Quarter and Station Quarter. These projects have been brought forward over the last 15 years, modernising the Town Centre and diversifying its offer.

The Local Plan defines the Town Centre boundary on the Policies Map, which includes the Primary Shopping Area ('PSA' - Blue) and Secondary Frontage (Pink). Beyond these areas but within the Town Centre, development is expected to support main town centre uses at ground floor level. The boundaries as per the submitted Policies Map (Document Ref. DC10) are shown in Figure 1 below:

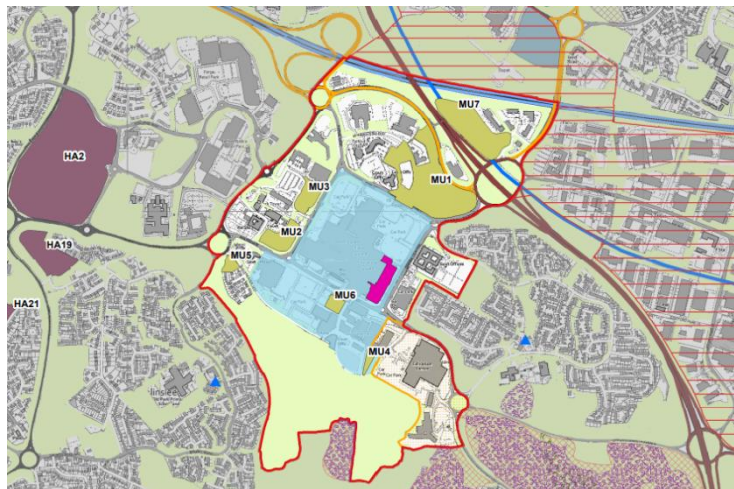


Figure 1- Emerging Local Plan Telford Town Centre Defined Boundary

Telford Shopping Centre

Telford Shopping Centre which is owned and managed by the Trustees, and which forms the large majority of the PSA, comprises a range of uses and unit sizes to meet occupier requirements. Broadly, the following floor areas apply:

- Comparison Retail: 682,787 sqft (NIA)
- Convenience Retail: 27,031 sqft (NIA)
- Food and Beverage: 72,687 sqft (NIA)
- Leisure: 135,950 sqft (NIA)
- Community: 38,232 sqft (NIA)
- Services: 65,757 sqft (NIA)

There is flexibility in the retail format throughout the Shopping Centre, and the Asset Managers, on behalf of the Trustees, have been successful in retaining occupiers and attracting new ones by creating units that meets occupier requirements - through increasing or reducing their size. However, there are practical limits to this flexibility and it can be challenging accommodate all requirements sought by some operators. In particular, the Centre cannot compete with the attractiveness offered by out-of-town retail parks, where occupiers require expansive units and extensive parking provision etc.

Telford Shopping Centre Vacancy

On the date of submission of this Technical Note, there are 11 vacant units within Telford Shopping Centre, representing approximately 4.46% of the total units, and 6.36% of floorspace. The national average vacancy rate is currently about 14% which shows that Telford Shopping Centre is performing better than average.

Historic data indicates that vacancy levels have fluctuated considerably over the past 10 years (being the period of Trustee ownership), reflecting ever changing market conditions and subsequent redevelopment that has required significant Trustee investment.

In terms of condition and marketability, the vacant properties are generally in good condition, with most considered readily lettable but considerable investment is still required to attract new occupiers and their associated capital contribution requirements.

Nature of Retail Occupiers

Telford Shopping Centre benefits from the presence of a good mix of occupiers, including many national retailers including M&S, Next, H&M, Aldi, Primark, Boots, Frasers and New Look, which account for approximately 46.54 % of NIA of total units.

Some of the most recent and successful changes in the Shopping Centre include the reletting of House of Fraser, BHS and Debenhams space which were significant voids due to national closure as well as redevelopment of an old Asda store and Northern, Southern and Fashion Quarter developments, while closures over the past 3 years have included Zara, Bodyshop and Bodycare, reflecting broader market trends. Where occupiers have left the Centre, these have largely been replaced by new occupiers seeking to locate in the successful Shopping Centre and wider PSA.

The introduction of a greater amount of food and beverage (e.g. Fridays and Wingers) and leisure uses (e.g. Flip Out, Inflata Nation and Putt Putt Social) has also been a very successful way of drawing people into the Town Centre and providing a wider offer for them into the evening when shops are generally closed.

Overall, the Shopping Centre demonstrates a good degree of retail diversity, combining national multiples with a varied independent offer, alongside a growing range of food and beverage and leisure activities that supports vitality and resilience.

Development Activity in the Town Centre

Below is a summary of recent planning activity within the Town Centre, including both planning application activity (Table 2) and local plan activity (Table 3).

Recent Consents (last 5 years)

Application Ref.	Site Address	Description	Decision
TWC/2025/0418	Unit 2, Rampart Way, Telford Town Centre, Telford, Shropshire, TF3 4AS	Change of use from Use Class E(a) (Retail) to Use Class B8 (Storage or distribution)	Approved subject to conditions 22/07/2025
TWC/2022/0914	Site of former Reynolds House/former Boyd House/Bishton Court/Addenbrooke House, Ironmasters Way/Boyd Close, Telford Town Centre, Telford, Shropshire	<p>HYBRID PLANNING APPLICATION –</p> <p>PART (A): Full planning application for a multi-phased and severable mixed-use development comprising the erection of 189 no. dwellings (Class C3), a Digital Skills & Enterprise Hub incorporating serviced office accommodation, a hotel, commercial units with flexible retail, leisure and food and drink uses permitted (Class E (a-b)), public realm improvements to Ironmasters Way and Lawn Central, layout of associated access roads, landscaping and parking following demolition of the existing Lawn Central footbridge.</p> <p>PART (B): Outline application with all matters reserved for a multi-phased and severable mixed-use development comprising dwellings (Class C3), and/or residential care units (Class C2), and/ or office floorspace (Class E (g[i])) and/ or educational floorspace (Class F1 (a)) in addition to commercial floorspace with flexible retail, leisure and food and drink uses permitted (Class E (a-b))</p>	Approved subject to conditions 27/09/2023

		and associated access, landscaping and parking, regrading of land associated with removal of Lawn Central footbridge, and demolition of Addenbrooke House and Bishton Court.	
TWC/2020/0518	Land adjacent NFU Mutual, Agriculture House, Southwater Way, Telford Town Centre, Telford, Shropshire	Erection of 46no. dwellings with landscaping and associated access	Approved subject to conditions 27/11/2020

Table 1: Recent Planning Application Activity in Telford Town Centre

Emerging Local Plan Site Allocations

Site Allocation Ref.	Location	Allocation Description
MU1	Land Off Ironmasters Way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimated Housing Numbers: 215 Estimated Commercial / Town Centre Uses: 2.53
MU2	Blue Willow Car Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimated Housing Numbers: 158 Estimated Commercial / Town Centre Uses: 1.02
MU3	Lime Green Car Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimated Housing Numbers: 138 Estimated Commercial / Town Centre Uses: 0.87
MU4	Land at Southwater Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimated Housing Numbers: 14 Estimated Commercial / Town Centre Uses: 0.21
MU5	Agriculture house, Southwater Way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimated Housing Numbers: 11 Estimated Commercial / Town Centre Uses: 0.31
MU6	Former Wilkinson Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimated Housing Numbers: 15 Estimated Commercial / Town Centre Uses: 0.34
MU7	Telford Station	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimated Housing Numbers: 0 Estimated Commercial / Town Centre Uses: 2.99

Table 2: Recent Local Plan Activity directed towards Telford Town Centre

Telford Town Centre has seen significant investment and development activity in recent years, reflecting strong confidence in its long-term role as the Principal Town Centre

As detailed above recent consents include:

- Change of use at Unit 2, Rampart Way (Ref. TWC/2025/0418) from retail to storage/distribution;
- Planning permission for a mixed-use scheme at Ironmasters Way (Ref. TWC/2022/0914); and
- Residential development adjacent to NFU Mutual, Southwater Way (Ref. TWC/2020/0518).

These schemes complement earlier regeneration projects such as the Southern Quarter, Northern Quarter and Fashion Quarter and will bring more footfall to the Town Centre as these are built out.

The emerging Local Plan identifies further opportunities through site allocations MU1 - MU7, which collectively provide capacity for over 550 new homes and approximately 8 hectares of commercial/town centre uses, including strategic sites at Ironmasters Way and Telford Station.

It is pertinent to note that Site allocation MU1 overlaps with the Ironmasters Way consent (Ref. TWC/2022/0914) - though the site boundaries are not identical, while MU5 is adjacent to the Southwater Way scheme (Ref. TWC/2020/0518), reinforcing a coordinated approach to growth.

Though activity is subdued as a result of macro-economic issues, private sector investment confidence in Telford remains strong, as evidenced by the above proposals being brought forward; and having regard to the enquiries that the Asset Managers for the Trustees are dealing with from new and existing occupiers seeking space in the PSA. This will support the continued evolution of Telford Town Centre as a vibrant, mixed-use destination. In accordance with emerging local plan policy.

Existing Market Indicators

The current market position within Telford Town Centre reflects steady demand.

As noted above, Telford Shopping Centre vacancy is at 4.46% which is better than the national average. Vacancy duration varies, with an average turnover period of 3-6 months, although some units have remained vacant for 10 years. Agent feedback indicates continued demand for grab & go Food & Beverage, alongside standard retail uses, supported by a broad leisure offer. There is evidence from operators of healthcare facilities that this remains a requirement for drop in facilities within town centres.

Overall, these indicators suggest a resilient market that continues to evolve and support adapting to changing consumer patterns.

Conclusions

The qualitative assessment of Telford Town Centre indicates that it remains a strong sub-regional destination with recent development activity and planned allocations supporting its long-term vitality and viability.

Emerging Local Plan policy highlights the Centre's ability to adapt through diversification, mixed-use development and improved public realm, while addressing challenges such as vacancies and evolving retail trends.

In conclusion, Telford Town Centre is performing well overall, though this success is due in no small part to the ongoing investment and active asset management undertaken by the Trustees. Notwithstanding this, the Town Centre remains sensitive to wider market forces, as evidenced by the rapid fluctuations in vacancy levels that occur in response to changing market conditions and continued pressure from out-of-centre retail development.

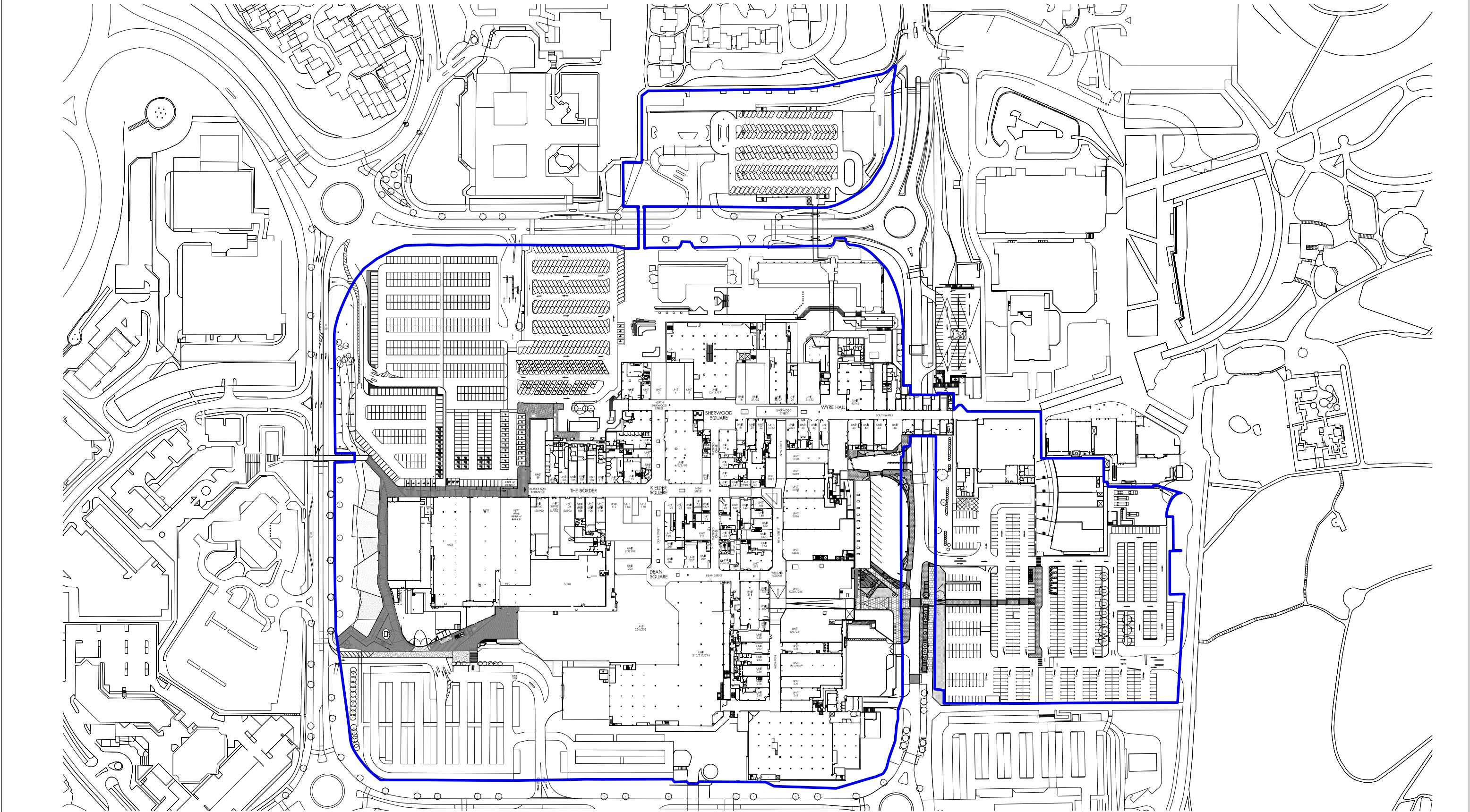
While this note provides additional detail on the current position, it is necessarily limited to the assets within the Trustees' ownership. As such, it further demonstrates the need for a comprehensive and up-to-date health check of Telford Town Centre and the defined Primary Shopping Area to establish a robust baseline to inform future planning applications.

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Appendix 1 - Telford Trustee No.1 Ltd and Telford Trustee No.2 Ltd Ownership Plan



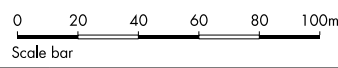

Drawing Record				
Rev	Date	By	Comments	Checked
P01	2024.07.	AV	First issue	LP

SIGNIFICANT HEALTH AND SAFETY RISKS (UNUSUAL AND DIFFICULT TO MANAGE ONLY)

It is assumed that all works will be carried out by a competent contractor working, where appropriate, to an approved method statement. In addition to the hazards/risks normally associated with the types of work detailed on this drawing, note the following:

KEY

- UNIT DEMISE
- OWNERSHIP BOUNDARY



This scheme is subject to town planning and all other necessary consents.

Dimensions, area and levels where given are only approximate and subject to site survey. All dimensions are to be checked on site. Any discrepancies or variations are to be reported to the architect before work commences. Figured dimensions only are to be taken from this drawing.

This drawing is to be read in conjunction with all relevant consultants and / or specialists drawings / documents and any discrepancies or variations are to be reported to the architect before the affected work commences.

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Client	TELFORD DEVCO
Consultants	
Job Title	TELFORD TOWN CENTRE

LEGAL			
Drawing Title			
SITE LOCATION PLAN			
Scale @ A3	Date	Drawn	Checked
1:2500	JULY 2024	AV	LP
Job No.	Drawing No.	Revision	
3 7 2 3	A T (0 3) 1 7 7 4	P 0 1	

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