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**Greater Nottingham Centres Study: Specification Brief – DRAFT FOR SMT**

**June 2023**

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**Contents**

[1. Background to the Greater Nottingham Centres Study 2](#_Toc138837822)

[2. Study Area 2](#_Toc138837823)

[3. The Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan 2](#_Toc138837824)

[4. Existing Hierarchy 3](#_Toc138837825)

[5. Previous Studies 4](#_Toc138837826)

[6. Issues 4](#_Toc138837827)

[7. Key Objectives and Scope of the Study 5](#_Toc138837828)

[8. Method 12](#_Toc138837829)

[9. Reporting and Deliverables 13](#_Toc138837830)

[10. Contract and Working Arrangements 14](#_Toc138837831)

[11. Budget Available 14](#_Toc138837832)

# Background to the Greater Nottingham Centres Study

Broxtowe Borough Council, Gedling Borough Council, Nottingham City Council and Rushcliffe Borough Council (“The Councils”) are currently preparing the Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan, which comprises ‘Part 1’ of the Local Plan for each council. The Councils require a Centres Study to form a key part of the evidence base and to inform policies and strategies to be included within the Regulation 19 Version of the Strategic Plan. Each of the Councils will be preparing a Part 2 Local Plan, following the adoption of the Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan.

The study should focus on strategic and policy issues affecting the Greater Nottingham centres. The Councils are mindful that there have been significant changes to town centres since previous studies, particularly in respect of retail and the introduction of ‘Class E’ and new permitted development rights. The Councils are therefore seeking a study which provides clear recommendations for how planning policies and strategies can be used to address the identified trends and can protect the long-term viability and vitality of the centres, particularly how they can function as “places to visit” rather than just retail destinations.

Full details of the scope are objectives of the study are provided in Section 7.

# Study Area

The study will cover the Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan area. The partner Councils are:

* Broxtowe Borough Council
* Gedling Borough Council
* Nottingham City Council
* Rushcliffe Borough Council

A plan of the study area is provided in Appendix 1.

# The Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan

The partner Councils are currently working together to prepare the Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan which will cover the period 2022 to 2041. This will be a Part 1 Local Plan document.

To date, the Councils have undertaken a Growth Options consultation in 2020 (with an additional consultation period in 2021) and a Preferred Approach consultation in January 2023. These have both been “Regulation 18” consultations. Further details of these consultations are available at [www.gnplan.org.uk/consultations](http://www.gnplan.org.uk/consultations)

The Councils currently have all adopted Part 1 Local Plans (Aligned Core Strategies) and Part 2 Local Plans. Information on the various Local Plans is set out in Appendix 2.

The Councils form part of the Nottingham Core Housing Market Area (HMA). The HMA also includes Erewash Borough Council. The Hucknall part of Ashfield District, whilst functionally part of Greater Nottingham, is part of the Nottingham Outer HMA. Erewash Borough and Ashfield District Councils do not form part of this study.

# Existing Hierarchy

The existing hierarchy of centres was defined in the Greater Nottingham Aligned Core Strategies (adopted 2014) with refinements in the Part 2 Local Plans, using evidence from shopping studies (such as those detailed in Section 5). Nottingham City Centre, which is at the top of the hierarchy, is the primary shopping destination within the East Midlands and is the main retail centre serving the Greater Nottingham area. Beyond the City Centre are a strong network of established Centres that have diversity of character and perform a range of roles for the communities within which they are situated.

In addition to the hierarchy of centres defined in the Greater Nottingham Aligned Core Strategies, the Greater Nottingham area also contains a number of Out-of-Town Retail Parks. The main issues relating to these are the extent to which they are diversifying into uses that were not originally permitted at these locations, for example for gyms and convenience uses, and the extent to which they are therefore now threatening the vitality of designated centres.

The retail hierarchy for the Greater Nottingham area, is as follows:

1. City Centre:

Nottingham City Centre

1. Town Centres:

Arnold, Beeston, Bulwell

1. District Centres:

Bingham, Clifton, Eastwood, Hyson Green, Kimberley, Stapleford, Sherwood and West Bridgford.

1. Local Centres (identified in Local Plans):

Broxtowe: (none)

Gedling: Burton Joyce, Calverton, Carlton Hill, Carlton Square, Gedling Colliery site, Gedling Village, Mapperley Plains, Netherfield, Ravenshead.

Nottingham City: Alfreton Road, Aspley Lane, Beckhampton Road, Bracebridge Drive, Bramcote Lane, Bridgeway Centre, Carrington, Mansfield Road, Nuthall Road, Robin Hood Chase, Sneinton Dale and Strelley Road.

Rushcliffe: Cotgrave, East Leake, Keyworth (The Square), Keyworth (Wolds Drive), Radcliffe on Trent and Ruddington.

1. Centres of Neighbourhood Importance (identified in Local Plans and the new centre at Edwalton Park, Rushcliffe).

f. Large Out-Of-Town retail parks:

* Broxtowe:

Chilwell Retail Park, Giltbrook Retail Park

* Gedling:

Madford Retail Park, Victoria Retail Park

* Nottingham City:

Castle Retail Park

Castle Marina Retail Park

Lady Bay Retail Park

Riverside Retail Park

Springfield Retail Park

Beechdale Retail Park

East Point Retail Park, Daleside Road

Clifton Triangle Site, Green Lane

* Rushcliffe:

Wilford Lane Retail Park

# Previous Studies

The [Broxtowe, Gedling, Nottingham City and Rushcliffe Retail Study 2015](https://www.broxtowe.gov.uk/media/3865/gnrs_final_report_15-09-22_with_appcs-1.pdf) provides an assessment of the need for new convenience and comparison goods floor space up to 2028 at the strategic City and Borough wide level. This study provides findings from a number of health checks of the various centres based on the performance indicators.

Nottingham City Council undertakes an annual survey of vacant units in the City Centre and has also recently surveyed all the other centres within the City Council area, and this information will also be available to the consultants. Gedling Borough Council also gathers data twice yearly on uses and vacancy levels in their centres.

# **Issues**

Centres are facing difficult challenges with the retail sector in particular undergoing major competition and change.

Nottingham City Centre is the regional centre, and competes with Derby and Leicester. The City Centre has a critical role in the function of the wider conurbation. The Town and District Centres are also essential parts of the local economy.

Since previous retail studies were undertaken, there have been a number of significant changes and challenges which have impacted the centres:

* **Growth of internet shopping**:
* **Covid-19**:
* **Use Classes Order and Permitted Development Rights**
* **Out-of-Centre retail**
* **Population growth**
* **Nottingham City Centre Broadmarsh Area:**

Paragraph 86 of the National Planning Policy Framework indicates that local planning authorities should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities. It provides a list of what planning policies should do which includes allocating a range of suitable sites to meet the scale and type of retail, likely to be needed, looking at least ten years ahead.

## The Planning Practice Guidance provides additional advice on how retail and town centre planning policy should be applied in respect of plan-making and decision taking.

## It is considered that there is uncertainty regarding how the requirements of national planning policy can be complied with following the introduction of Class E and the additional permitted development rights which significantly increase flexibility for uses, particularly retail, to change both within and outside of centres.

# Key Objectives and Scope of the Study

* To fulfil the requirements of national planning guidance in terms of retail planning and town centres. Whilst the commissioning authorities acknowledge that current national planning guidance does not fully reflect the consequences of the introduction of Use Class E, and recent changes in retail, the study should still be mindful of current planning guidance (and incorporate any changes to national planning policy or guidance that occur during the course of the study, or imminent changes thereafter) and ensure that the study analysis and outputs meet national guidance requirements so far as still relevant.
* An analysis of the existing hierarchy of centres in Greater Nottingham, comprising a general analysis of the trends and patterns in existence for all of the centres with a more in-depth analysis of the centres at the top of the hierarchy as detailed in the table below. The analysis should cover industry wide trends impacting on centres, including comparison and convenience retailing, leisure and food and drink uses etc.
* To provide clear recommendations on the scope and content of sound and robust planning policies for the Greater Nottingham centres for the Strategic Plan (Part 1 Local Plan) and any issues that should be resolved via Part 2 Local Plans, for each of the partner authorities. Policies should address issues such as the long-term viability and vitality of centres and reflect how centres can be “places to visit” rather than simply to shop. This may include identifying any restrictions (e.g., Article 4 Directions) or protection policies that may be required or opportunities to address the changes that have occurred and will continue to occur in the ‘shopping offer’ in these centres. It should also explore how centres can contribute towards implementing the 20-minute neighbourhood concept.
* A detailed final report (and Executive Summary), to be used as an evidence base for the Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan, which contains an analysis of the centres and identification of sound and robust policy recommendations for the Greater Nottingham centres in light of the study analysis and outcomes listed in the table below.

| **Point** | **Analysis Required** | **Output Required** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Identify whether the current overall hierarchy of retail centres (set out in Section 4) is appropriate and fit for purpose in the context of current and future retail trends. | Recommendation setting out any changes to the hierarchy of retail centres in terms of their appropriateness in the context of current and future retail trends.  Consequent policy recommendations for any suggested changes to the hierarchy of centres for the Strategic Plan. |
| 2 | An assessment of the Greater Nottingham Centres to cover two elements:   1. **Detailed analysis of the City Centre, Town Centres and District Centres (levels a-c in the hierarchy** **listed in Section 4)** to assess the current trends in closures, vacancies and openings of units, the use/appeal of centres, environmental factors and any external factors that may have a direct bearing upon the vitality of those centres in the future.   The assessments should include:   * an analysis of the role and function of each centre; * an analysis of how much Use Class E (and related sui generis uses) exist in the centres; * an analysis of vacancy levels in each centre; * an analysis of how much of Use Class E (and related sui generis uses) may be needed over the period to 2041 (to broaden the vitality and vibrancy of centres in the future to ensure that they are "places to visit" rather than simply "places to shop") and the key drivers and trends affecting this; * an analysis of the demand, role, opportunities, threats and impacts of provision of housing in centres (e.g. looking at specific sectors such as young professionals, student accommodation, older persons housing); and * an analysis on the adequacy of public transport accessibility and car parking provision in centres, including opportunities for improvements to transport links in and around centres.   Such assessments do not strictly have to be ‘health checks’ of the shopping centres but should use a range of data to assess the vitality and viability of centres.  The list above is not intended to be an exhaustive list of data requirements or to set the parameters of the assessment to be carried out. Tender documents will be expected to list the assessment methodology that will be used to fulfil NPPF/G requirements. Final datasets (including the range of sui generis uses to be analysed) will be agreed with the study team at or following the inception meeting.  In considering costings for the study, it should be noted that vacancy and use class surveys will have been undertaken for Nottingham City Centre and all centres within the Nottingham City and Gedling Borough administrative areas in May/June 2023.   1. **General trend analysis for the all the Greater Nottingham Centres (levels a-f in the hierarchy** **listed in Section 4)**   Investigate the changes impacting centres as a result of:   * Made/anticipated changes to planning legislation and policy (for example changes to the Use Classes Order and permitted development rights) that are likely to affect the trends in retail provision in centres and the ability of local planning authorities (and their partners) to realise their policy objectives. * Structural changes such as the growth of online shopping, changes to working patterns and places of work, Brexit, cost of living, changes to shopping needs and habits etc. * Trends in Out-Of-Centre Retail Parks (identified in Section 4) and other out-of-centre retail development to include an investigation of Use Class E (and related sui generis uses). * Identification of any locations where there are shortages of retail facilities | An analysis for each of the Greater Nottingham centres listed in levels a-c of the hierarchy (set out in Section 4) to include a SWOT analysis and practicable recommendations for each centre in line with the trends identified. The output should also include recommendations on the priority areas/sectors for each centre, general commentary on the appropriate size of the centre and a focus on improvements that the councils could take to manage each centre and include recommendations relating to accessibility, including public transport accessibility and car parking provision.  General commentary on and overview of current trends impacting all levels of centres listed in the hierarchy (set out in Section 4) which should include identifying potential changes in the relevant sectors based on the analysis undertaken. This should include an overview of trends in the Out-of-Centre Retail Parks or other out-of-centre retail development (e.g. in the convenience sector). Observations on the causes of vacancy trends within the centres, and steps that could be taken to addresses the causes, should also be detailed.  Policy recommendations are required for all level of centres in the hierarchy (i.e. including the Local Centres and Centres of Neighbourhood Importance) regarding the future role and function of the centres, including the type and mix of uses needed (e.g. the identification of opportunities at strategic and individual centre levels to provide more niche/specialist offer and the scope for meanwhile and flexible workspace uses) and to also enable them to contribute towards 20 minute neighbourhood aspirations. Account should be taken of any existing and emerging strategies that are being prepared by individual authorities, such as the Arnold Town Centre Masterplan by Gedling Borough Council.  Recommendations are also required regarding local plan policies and other measures, which can and should be implemented in Greater Nottingham, to guide the provision of housing in centres in the future and any policy recommendations to protect recognised centres in the future should also be given (particularly noting the analysis of the Out-of-Centre Retail Parks or other Out-of-Centre retail development).  A methodology to enable the partnership authorities to carry out future assessments of all centres in the hierarchy, and also the Out-of-Centre Retail Parks, using in-house staff, and taking into account data availability and limited resources. The methodology will enable the partnership authorities to continue to monitor the vitality and viability of all centres in the hierarchy to ensure consistency and identification of emerging trends and should identify key data indicators/sources to use.  Recommendations highlighting any locations where there are shortages of retail facilities, the scale of retail facilities required and any policy recommendations restricting the size of these retail facilities. |
| 3 | Review the local impact assessment thresholds implemented in each of the Council areas to assess whether they require amendment. | Recommend an appropriate threshold for local impact assessments in out-of-centre locations and the evidence required to ensure that they are found to be robust as a result of Local Plan Examination.  (It should be noted that Broxtowe Borough Council were not successful in implementing a threshold below the figure stated in the NPPF due to the evidence being challenged as part of their Local Plan Part 2 Examination). |
| 4 | Investigate the impact of the housing growth proposed in the Strategic Plan on retail and associated uses, paying particular regard to the strategic allocations. | Policy recommendations stemming from the analysis of the impact of housing growth in the Strategic Plan area on the centres and the uses required in them. |
| 5 | Key local stakeholder and business views on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the Greater Nottingham centres as well as future requirements (inputs are required from health, education, leisure, tourism and cultural sectors and should be agreed with the Commissioning Group). Please note that the councils do not require on street survey or household interviews as part of this study. | Outcomes of the key stakeholder views on future requirement for the centres in the plan area written up into the final report, with an explanation of how these have influenced any policy recommendations. |
| 6 | Analysis of the relevance and effectiveness of the Primary Shopping Areas, Frontages and Secondary Shopping Frontages designations in the adopted Greater Nottingham Aligned Core Strategies and the Local Plan Part 2 documents adopted by the Greater Nottingham authorities. | Recommendations on the desirability of maintaining or amending current Greater Nottingham planning policy designations of Primary Shopping Areas, Frontages and Secondary Shopping Frontages, bearing in mind the greater freedoms now allowed through the Use Classes Order 2020 and permitted development rights introduced during 2020 and 2021. Advice is sought on whether the Strategic Plan (and subsequent Part 2 Local Plans) should recognise a wider role and function for shopping areas presently covered by such designations, taking account of national advice and guidance on this matter. If these designations are deemed no longer useful, then alternative designations should be suggested, in accordance with the outcomes of the analysis undertaken as part of the study. |

# Method

The study will be overseen by a Commissioning Group of Greater Nottingham planning officers.

The consultants will consult with relevant planning officers and other stakeholders including business improvement districts, chambers of commerce and other local and regional business groups. They will draw both on locally generated evidence and wider literature and thinking on relevant issues. They will also have regard to relevant developments in national planning legislation and policy, including forthcoming changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill.

It is anticipated that the study will be based around the following key stages:

1. **Inception**

Meeting (virtual or face-to-face to be agreed) with the Commissioning Group to confirm the project scope and timelines and agreement of arrangements for stakeholder engagement and exchange of data.

1. **Quantitative assessment**

Completion of quantitative elements listed in the table above (e.g. quantification of relevant uses in and outside centres and agreement of benchmarks), with a Teams Meeting with the Commissioning Group to review findings.

1. **Review of trends**

Completion of trend analysis including the review of developments in town centre-based sectors and impacts of legislation/policy changes and proposed planning reforms.

1. **Policy recommendations**

Completion of the policy recommendations, identifying opportunities and making recommendations for the Strategic Plan and highlighting what Part 2 Plans will need to consider.

1. **Draft Report**

Teams Meeting with the Commissioning Group to recap the main findings and conclusions of the quantitative assessment, discuss the review of trends and policy recommendations and agree the finalisation of the report.

1. **Final Report**

Final report to include an Executive Summary and a presentation (virtual or face-to-face to be agreed) to the Greater Nottingham Planning Officer Group and/or the Joint Planning Advisory Board.

# Reporting and Deliverables

The study and its constituent elements will be the copyright of the Greater Nottingham authorities commissioning this work. It will be published on the Greater Nottingham Planning Partnership website and should be prepared with this in mind.

* A Powerpoint presentation of the study findings to an appropriate groupingi.e.the Greater Nottingham Planning Officer Group and/or the Joint Planning Advisory Board – to be agreed by the Commissioning Group;
* Production of a first draft report. This to be available in an electronic Word format;
* At least 3 meetings (using Microsoft Teams if virtual) with the Commissioning Group – at inception, concluding the quantitative assessment and draft report stages. The Inception meeting and presentation of final findings will be virtual or face-to-face according to availability of officers and timings.
* A fortnightly e-mail providing a project update;
* A readily accessible single point of contact from the consultant team accessible to any of the partner authorities;
* Electronic copies of final report (including an Executive Summary) and all appendices in a Word format. The final report to include evidence, assessment and conclusions. For clarity, findings or recommendations with a with particular relevance to a specific Council should be clearly stated;
* The final report should be in an accessible format, in accordance with the [Government’s accessibility guidance](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/publishing-accessible-documents) (format to be agreed with the commissioning body);
* Any raw data files including mapped data should be made available in a format agreed with the Commissioning Group.

The consultant team will be expected to demonstrate:

* An appreciation of the National Planning Policy Framework and Permitted Development/Use Classes Order rights and the implications around planning for centres, and an awareness of any forthcoming amendments to these;
* An understanding of relevant national planning practice guidance as well as best practice for such work;
* The ability to analyse data and generate robust economic forecasts;
* An understanding of issues around quantitative and qualitative assessment for main town centre uses;
* A track record of having successfully engaged with key stakeholders;
* A track record of undertaking such studies which have been considered robust at Examination;
* Effective primary data collection methods;
* Strong project management skills with a history of delivering projects on time and within agreed budgets; and
* A robust approach to Risk Management.

# **Contract and Working Arrangements**

Broxtowe Borough Council is the contracting organisation.

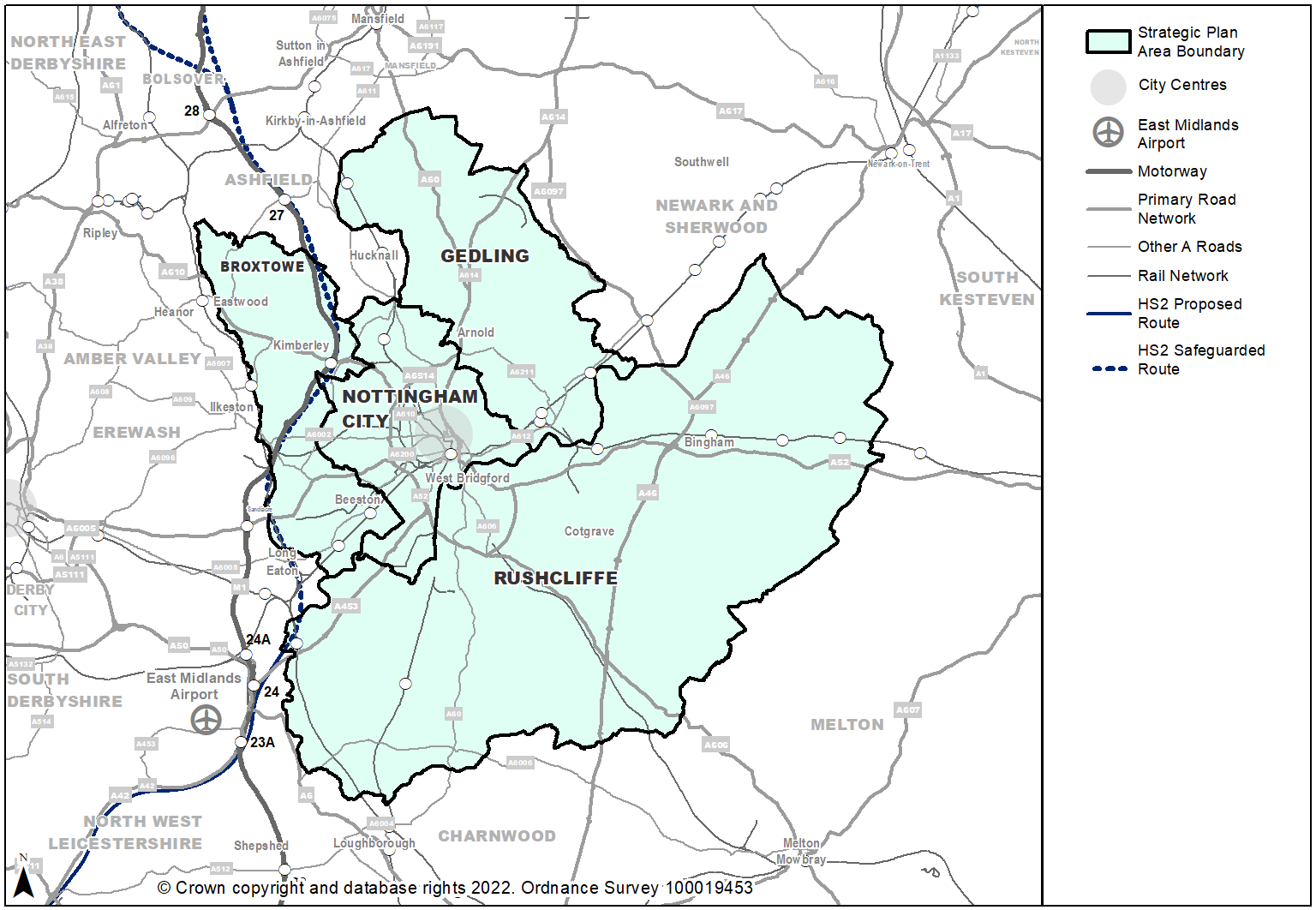
The study will be managed by a Commissioning Group selected from the participating Councils’ who will provide overall direction and input to the study. The Commissioning Group will also need to agree the methodology, data sources and indicators for the centre assessments.

There will be overall project lead officers within the Commissioning Group and the Greater Nottingham Councils will also provide a single point of contact for the Consultants to liaise with for each Council.

# Budget Available

Costs for these services cost isn’t expected to exceed £60,000 (excluding VAT).

**APPENDIX 1: Plan of the Study Area**

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**APPENDIX 2: Local Plans**

[**Aligned Core Strategy**](https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/media/3332772/the-nottingham-city-aligned-core-strategy-acs.pdf)

[**Broxtowe Part 2 Local Plan**](https://www.broxtowe.gov.uk/media/7088/part-2-local-plan-adopted-october-2019.pdf)

[**Gedling Part 2 Local Plan**](https://www.gedling.gov.uk/media/gedlingboroughcouncil/documents/planningpolicy/acsandlpd/LPD.pdf)

[**Nottingham City Part 2 Local Plan**](https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/media/3332773/land-and-planning-policies-document-lapp-2020.pdf)

[**Rushcliffe Part 2 Local Plan**](https://www.rushcliffe.gov.uk/media/s3cezsuy/rushcliffe-local-plan-part-2_adoption-version.pdf)

Copies of other relevant studies will be provided at the inception meeting.