

City Centre, Primary Shopping Area and District and Local Centre Review

Evidence Report

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Exeter
City Council

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The NPPF at paragraph 90 states that planning policies should:
- a. *‘Define a network and hierarchy of town centres and promote their long-term vitality and viability – by allowing them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allows a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and reflects their distinctive characters’; and*
 - b. *‘Define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas and make clear the range of uses permitted in such locations, as part of a positive strategy for the future of each centre’.*
- 1.2 This report shows how the Exeter Plan responds to this requirement.
- 1.3 The adopted Exeter Local Plan First Review identifies a series of similar designations in Policy S1. These include:
- City Centre
 - Primary Shopping Area
 - Secondary Shopping Area
 - District and Local Centres
- 1.4 These centres are then reflected in Appendix 6 of adopted the Core Strategy.
- 1.5 Preparation of the Exeter Plan has reviewed these centres with the Regulation 19 Plan designating a City Centre, Primary Shopping Area, District and Local Centres. These are set out in Chapter 8 which covers retail and the future of our centres (paragraph 8.8 onwards, page 66). References to the centres are included in Policy RFC1: The future of our centres and Policy RFC2: Development in, and affecting, our centres.
- 1.6 This report sets out the evidence base and approach towards these designations.

2.0 Approach

- 2.1 The role of the city centre, district and local centres in the everyday life of residents has changed substantially since the previous Local Plan was adopted.
- 2.2 Due to the significant growth in online shopping, we have witnessed challenges to traditional retail in city centres providing more opportunities for a wider mix of uses including employment, residential, food and drink and more experiential uses. Nationally, this has had a profound impact on both the size and use of our centres and therefore this needs to be reflected in a new policy position covering these issues.
- 2.3 Government guidance in this area has also seen a substantial shift in focus towards a wider range of acceptable and diverse uses, to promote the long-term vitality and viability of the centres.
- 2.4 The glossary definition of main town centre uses is as follows:
- ‘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)’.*
- 2.5 This report assesses the various uses and facilities located in the city, district and local centres. It also considers other areas where clusters of retail and associated uses are located. This has enabled conclusions to be made to identify a list of centres for designation in the Exeter Plan.

3.0 City Centre

- 3.1 Although the role and face of the city centre is changing, it remains vital to the success of the city, providing streets and public spaces that contain a rich mix of historic buildings, thriving businesses, homes, shops and offices, making it a vibrant and bustling place to visit and work.
- 3.2 The NPPF glossary provides a definition of a town centre as follows:
- ‘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’.*
- 3.3 This definition, together with the existing boundary of the city centre in the CIL Charging Schedule¹ has been used to inform the identification of the city centre boundary in the Exeter Plan.
- 3.4 A desk-based review of city centre uses has been undertaken using GIS to identify business addresses in the city centre area using the Local Street Gazetteer. Through this work and as a result of local knowledge, it is clear that the area within the existing city centre boundary in the adopted Local Plan First Review should be amended due to its widespread inclusion of non-town centre uses.
- 3.5 The city centre boundary has therefore been reduced in size and redefined as set out in Appendix 1. This also shows business addresses for context.

¹ Available at: https://exeter.gov.uk/media/bzuiyzbo/231108_exeter-cil-review-charging-schedule_final-approved-version-2023.pdf

4.0 Primary Shopping Area

- 4.1 The NPPF glossary provides the following definition of a primary shopping area:

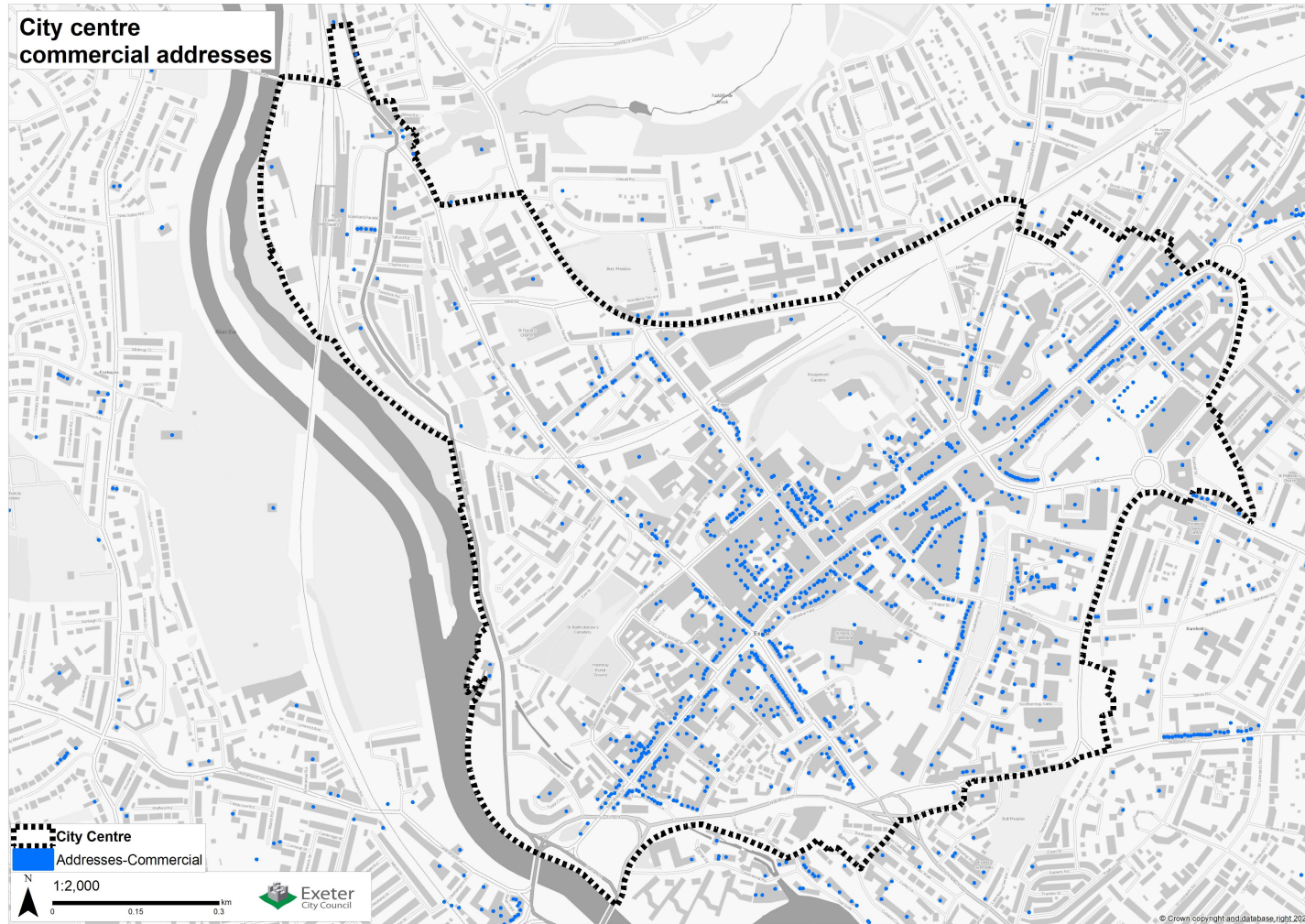
‘Defined area where retail development is concentrated’.

- 4.2 Following this definition, a desk-based study has been undertaken which identifies the location of concentrated retail addresses in the city centre using the Local Street Gazetteer. This, and local knowledge, has allowed the identification of a boundary for the primary shopping area. This area is smaller than that included in the current Local Plan First Review but more closely reflects the function of present-day primary shopping area of the city.
- 4.3 The primary shopping area is shown in Appendix 2 along with retail addresses for context.
- 4.4 The Local Plan First Review includes a secondary shopping area. The NPPF does not mention these and therefore the Exeter Plan does not designate a secondary shopping area.

5.0 District and Local Centres

- 5.1 In relation to town centres, the NPPF states at paragraph 90 that planning policies should:
- ‘Define a network and hierarchy of town centres and promote their long-term viability and vitality’.*
- 5.2 On this basis, a desk-based assessment of commercial uses outside the city centre has been undertaken using the Local Street Gazetteer to identify a series of District and Local Centres. The District Centres provide a larger number and range of higher order retail and commercial facilities with a larger catchment while the Local Centres provide lower order services serving a smaller local community.
- 5.3 The assessment reviewed the boundaries of the existing District and Local Centres as defined in the current Local Plan First Review but also looked at additional clusters of commercial properties to identify new centres.
- 5.4 A full list of District and Local Centres are included in the Regulation 19 version of the Exeter Plan and laid out in Appendix 3, along with commercial addresses for context.

Appendix 1: City Centre boundary



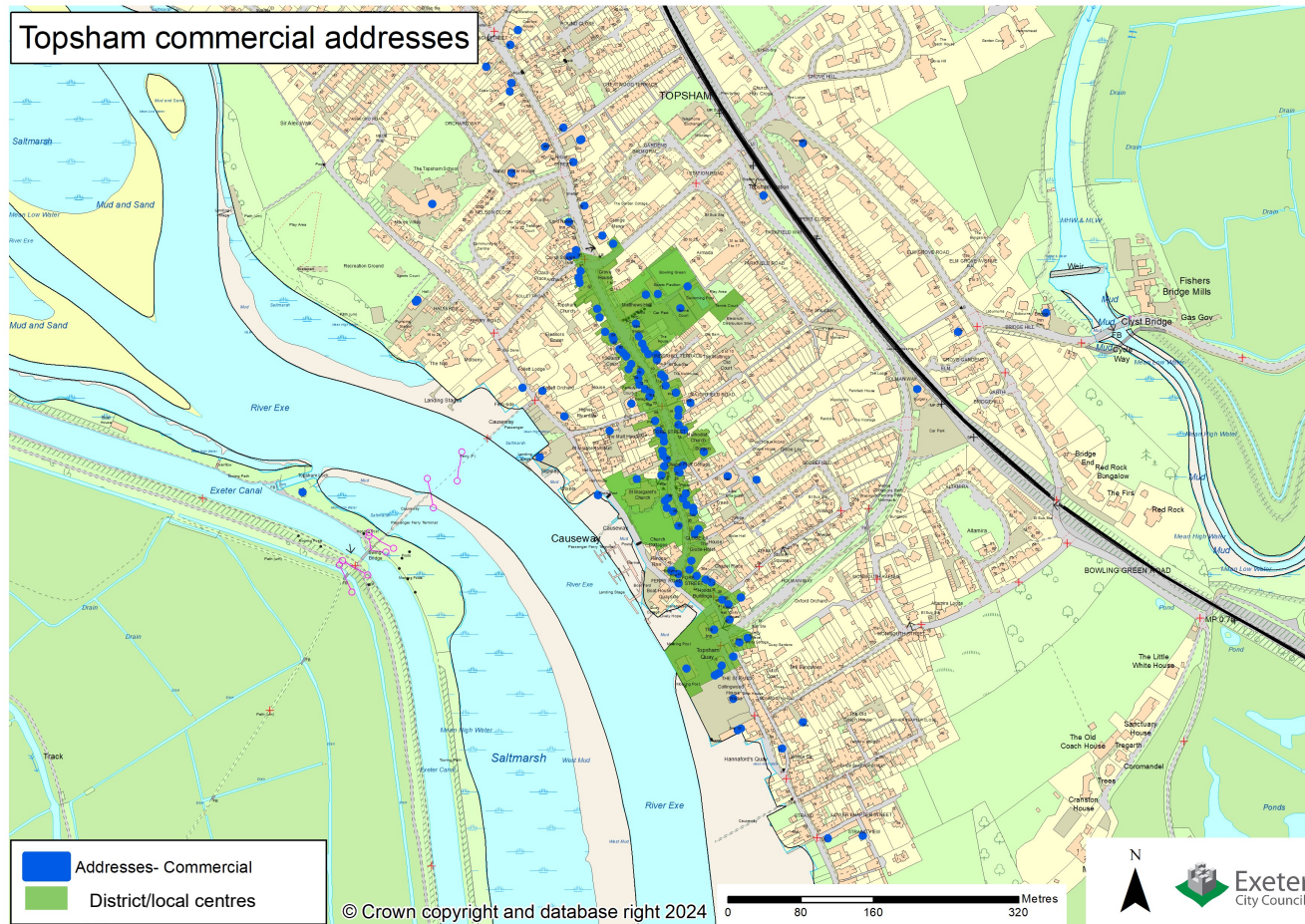
Appendix 2: Primary shopping area



Appendix 3: District and Local Centres

District Centres:

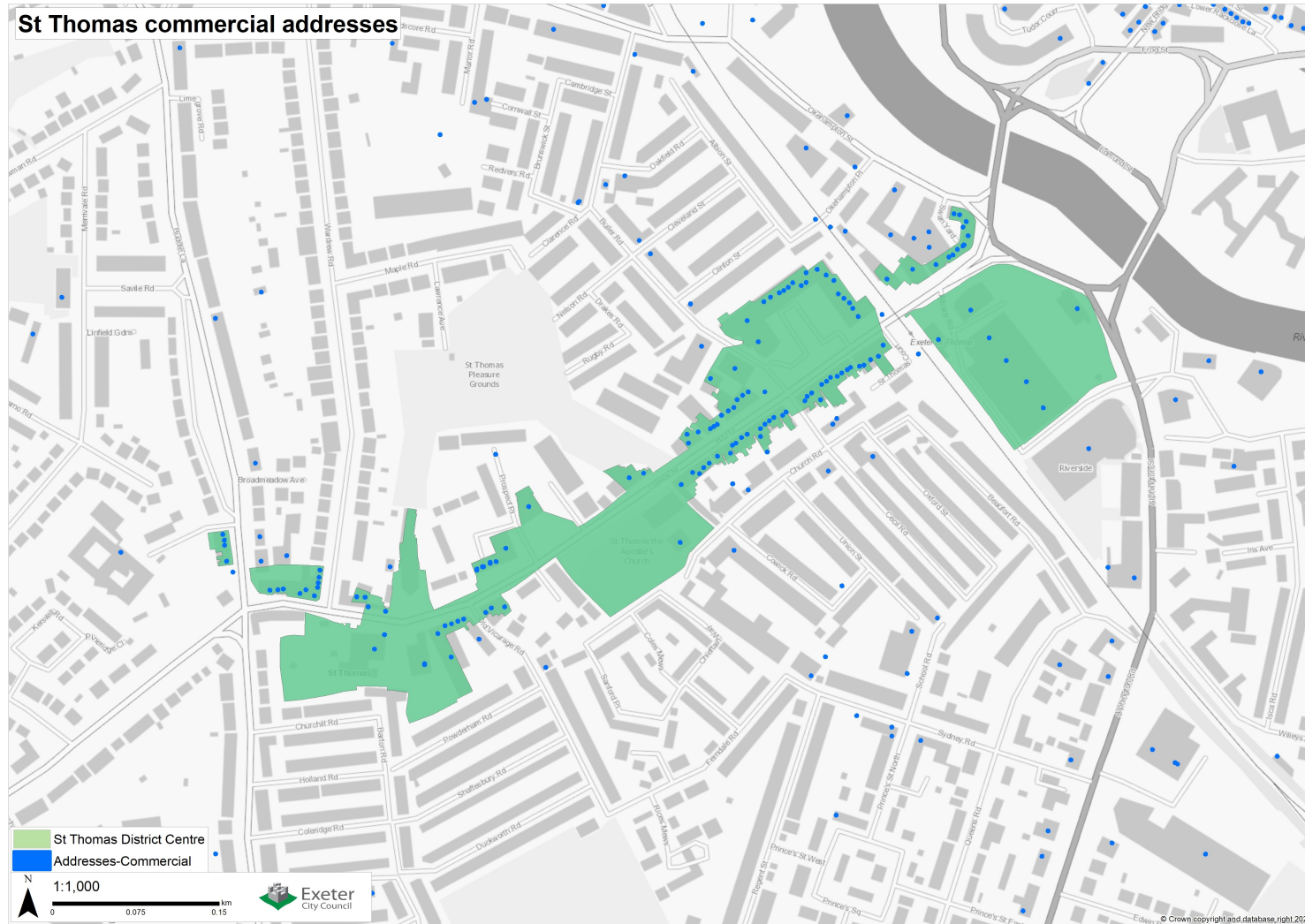
Topsham: Existing District Centre



Heavitree: Existing District Centre



St Thomas: Existing District Centre



Beacon Lane: Existing local centre



Exwick: Existing local centre



Isleworth Road: Existing local centre



Magdalen Road commercial addresses



Pinhoe: Existing local centre



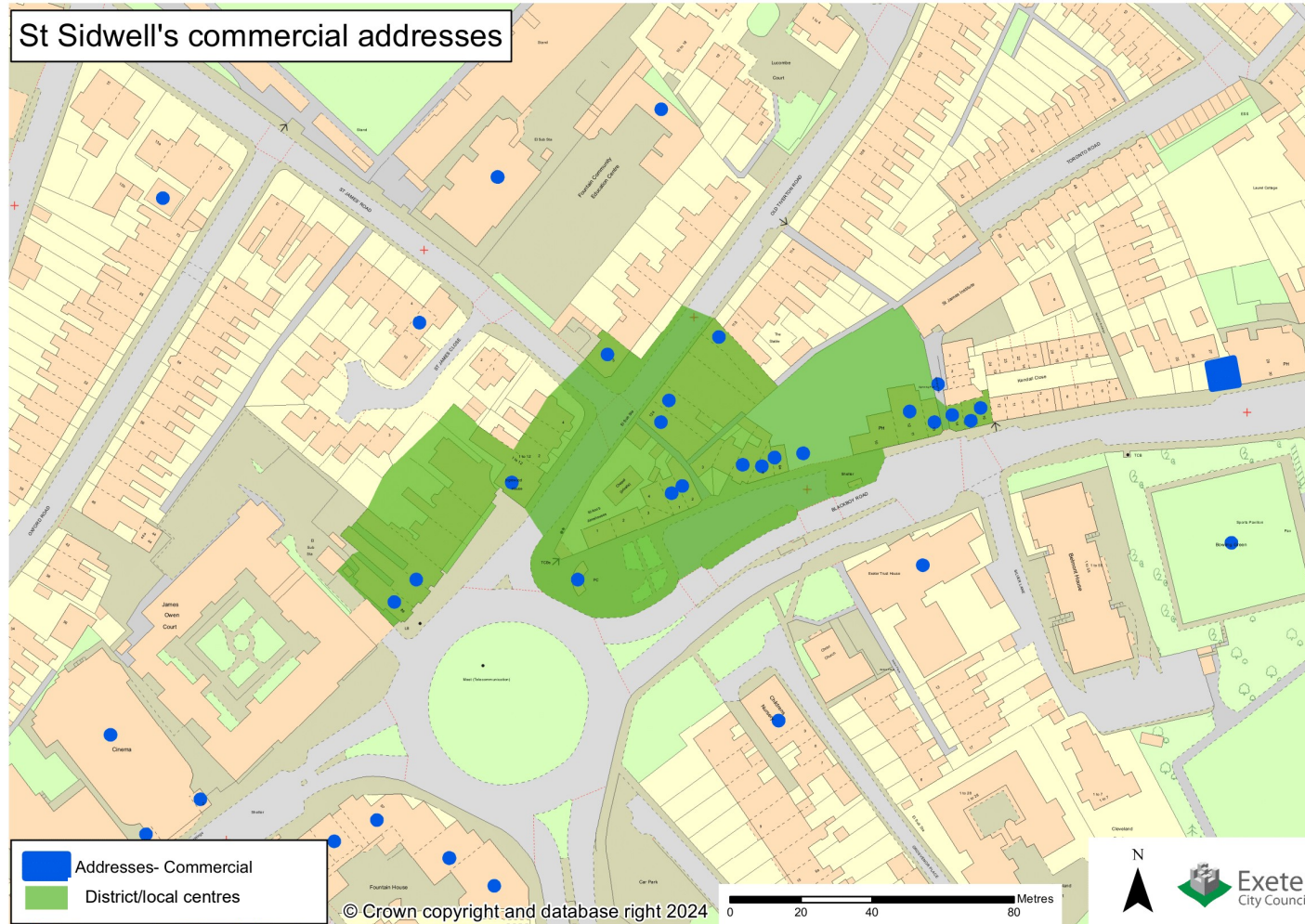
Polsloe Bridge commercial addresses



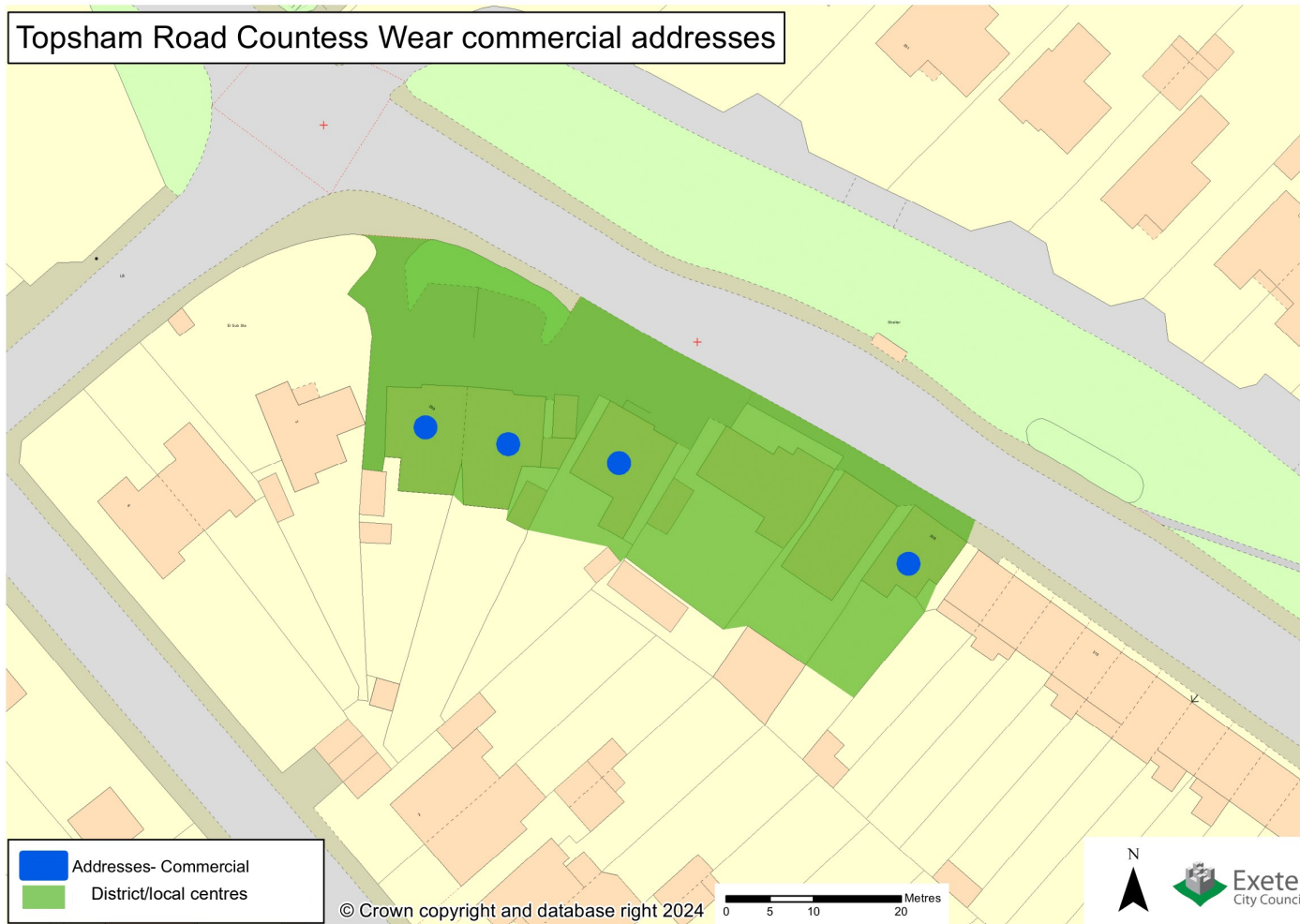
Mount Pleasant: Existing local centre



Northern end of Sidwell Street / Blackboy Road: Existing local centre



Topsham Road Countess Wear: Existing local centre



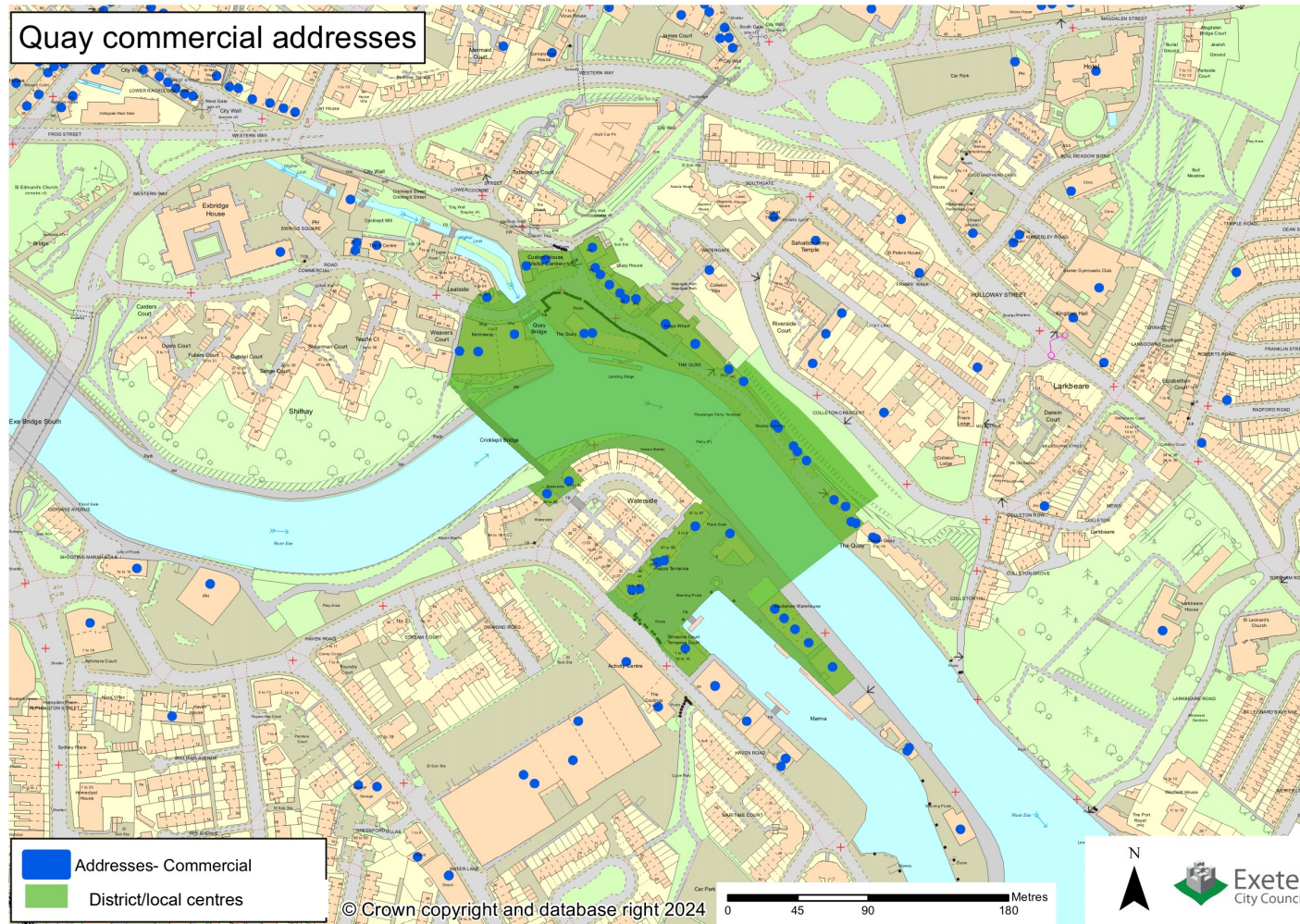
Whipton: Existing local centre



Alphington: New local centre



The Quay and Canal Basin: New local centre



Burnthouse Lane: New local centre



Topsham Road - St Leonard's: New Local Centre

Topsham Road St Leonard's commercial addresses



Countess Wear: New local centre



Appendix 4: Exeter Local Plan First Review/Core Strategy

District and Local Centres

District centres:

- Topsham
- Heavitree
- St Thomas

Local centres:

- Sidwell Street / Blackboy Road
- Mount Pleasant
- Magdalen Road
- Countess Wear (Topsham Road)
- Beacon Lane
- Polsloe Bridge
- Pinhoe
- Whipton
- Exwick / Winchester Avenue
- Isleworth Road

Appendix 5: Exeter Plan

Revised list of Centres

District centres:

- Topsham
- Heavitree
- St Thomas

Local centres:

- Northern end of Sidwell Street / Blackboy Road (name revised)
- Mount Pleasant
- Magdalen Road
- Topsham Road – Countess Wear (name revised)
- Beacon Lane
- Polsloe Bridge
- Pinhoe
- Whipton
- Exwick
- Isleworth Road (name revised)

Additional local centres:

- Alphington
- The Quay and Canal Basin
- Burnthouse Lane
- Topsham Road – St Leonard's
- Countess Wear