

HOLMFIRTH TOWN CENTRE ANNUAL STATEMENT OF KEY ECONOMIC INDICATORS AUGUST 2002

Introduction

Since 1996, Planning Services of Kirklees M.C. has carried out a series of town centre audits to monitor the health and performance of shopping centres in the District. The time series data enables the role of individual town centres to be assessed, identifying the scope for change, renewal and diversification.

This document is the second annual publication which briefly examines 6 indicators of health and vitality as they relate to Holmfirth town centre. The indicators covered are:

- retail occupancy in terms of floorspace and shop units,
- vacancy rates,
- pedestrian footfall,
- retail development pipeline,
- retailer demand, and
- prime retail rents.

Retail floorspace, shop units and vacancy

A survey of occupancy, undertaken in August 2002 recorded that Holmfirth town centre provides a total of 6,843 sq.m. of net retail floorspace (73,631 sq.ft). The following tables illustrate changes in retail floorspace and shop unit occupancy over the last 3 years.

Retail floorspace in Holmfirth town centre (sq.m. net)

	Convenience ¹	Comparison ²	Vacant	TOTAL
2000	1,880 (26.9%)	4,100 (58.7%)	1,006 (14.4%)	6,986 (100%)
2001	1,841 (24.5%)	3,988 (53.2%)	1,674 (22.3%)	7,503 (100%)
2002	1,834 (26.8%)	4,096 (59.9%)	913 (13.3%)	6,843 (100%)
% change 2001 - 02	-0.4	+2.7	-45.5	-8.7%

It can be seen that the total retail floorspace in the town centre has decreased by 8.7%. This is largely attributable to the opening of a restaurant in Victoria Arcade (off Dunford Road) which occupied what was previously vacant retail floorspace.

Holmfirth records a decline in shop unit vacancy to a position that is well below the national average. However, the continued vacancy of the former Lodges building (483 sq.m.), which straddles the River Holme in Towngate, contributes to a more pessimistic image of floorspace vacancy within the town. The reduction in the total number of shop units in the town centre is due to a number of new retailers/services amalgamating shop units to provide larger premises.

Of the few national multiples present in Holmfirth, the Co-op food store in Crown Bottom is by far the largest. The town mainly consists of small independent shops and services, many of which rely on the trade generated from tourism. Reflecting this, there is an above average representation of services such as cafes and restaurants as well as retailers specialising in crafts, antiques and gifts.

Shop units in Holmfirth town centre

	Convenience	Comparison	Service ³	Vacant	TOTAL
2000	14 (8.1%)	91 (53%)	51 (29.6%)	16 (9.3%)	172 (100%)
2001	14 (8.3%)	86 (51.2%)	45 (26.8%)	23 (13.7%)	168 (100%)
2002	13 (8.1%)	87 (54.4%)	47 (29.4%)	13 (8.1%)	160 (100%)
% change 2001 - 02	-7.1	+1.2	+2.1	-43.5	-4.8

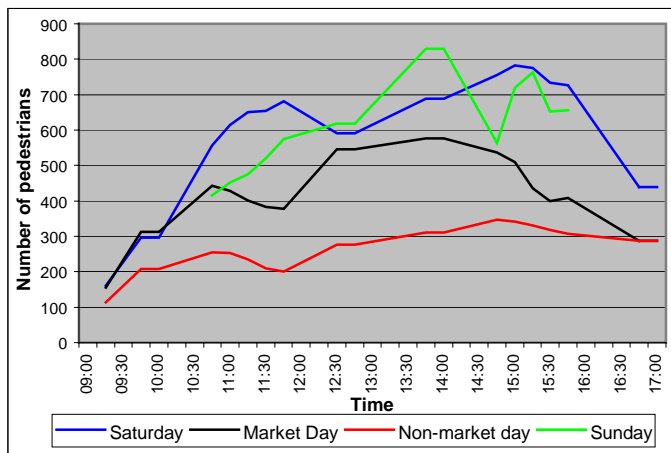
Floorspace comparisons (sq.m. net)

	Holmfirth	Cleckheaton	Heckwike	Mirfield
Convenience	1,834 (26.8%)	1,691 (19.9%)	5,068 (42.7%)	2,100 (32.3%)
Comparison	4,096 (59.9%)	5,940 (69.9%)	5,264 (44.3%)	3,700 (56.9%)
Vacant	913 (13.3%)	862 (10.2%)	1,538 (13.0%)	700 (10.8%)
Total retail floorspace	6,843 (100%)	8,493 (100%)	11,870 (100%)	6,500 (100%)
No. of vacant units	13 (8.1%)	18 (10.3%)	32 (19.4%)	7 (7.6%)
Total no. of units	160 (100%)	174 (100%)	165 (100%)	92 (100%)

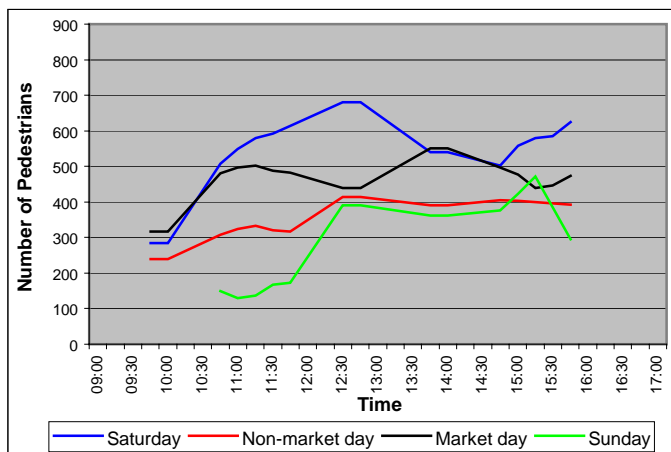
Pedestrian footfall

The pedestrian footfall count is designed to measure the volume and pattern of pedestrian flow through the town centre. Hour sample counts were conducted at 10:30am and 2:30pm along with a series of 15 minute "pinch counts" throughout the day. Eight locations were chosen and these are identified on the map overleaf. They include shopping frontages, important pedestrian links and the entrance to the Co-op supermarket.

Total pedestrians: Daily profile: February 2002



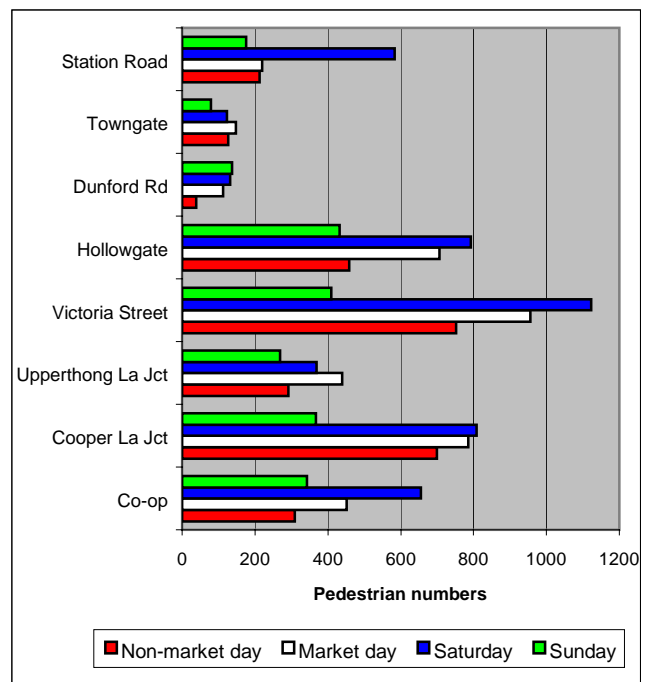
Total pedestrians: Daily profile: August 2002



The weekend pedestrian numbers in August were well down on previous years, largely due to extremely bad weather during the counts and localised flooding in the week prior to the study. The reduction in visitor/tourist numbers is likely to have adversely affected business trade during the peak season. Whilst Saturday still recorded higher pedestrian numbers than either Sunday, market day or non market day, the difference (unlike previous counts) was not significant.

Market day continues to attract a greater number of shoppers/visitors to Holmfirth than a non market day. However, the difference observed during August is not as pronounced as that recorded during February.

Total Pedestrian Numbers (2 hour counts)

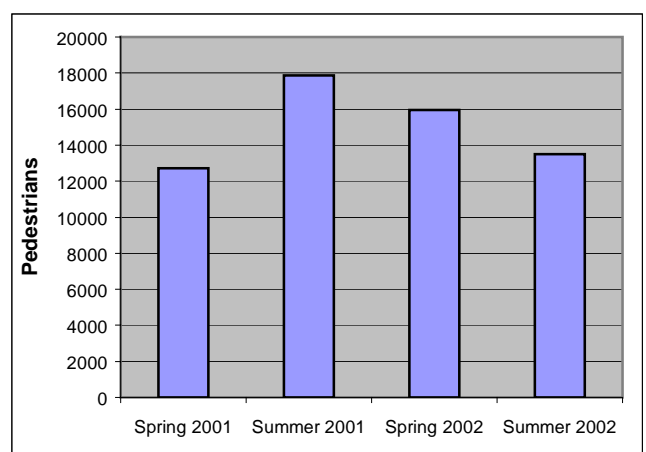


Victoria Street, the town's primary shopping frontage, still records the highest pedestrian footfall. Significant pedestrian numbers were also monitored on Huddersfield Road near Cooper Lane and Hollowgate, especially on a market day and Saturday. The Co-op foodstore (and in particular its surface level car park) continues to have a strong draw and many of the shoppers using the store visit other shops and services in the town centre.

Similar to 2001, the pedestrian footfall exercise reveals that few people use public transport to access the town centre.

Seasonal comparisons of the data up to February 2002 reveal a pattern showing higher summer footfall than spring. However, very bad weather conditions deterred visitors during the summer count, resulting in low pedestrian numbers.

Total footfall seasonal comparison



Development pipeline

Development since 1990

The town centre of Holmfirth has witnessed a number of significant developments over the last 12 years. These include the relocation of the market from Market Street to refurbished premises in Holmfirth Mills on Huddersfield Road, the construction of a purpose built foodstore for the Co-op on Market Street in 1996 and the conversion of the old "Valley Theatre" on Market Walk to provide a cinema (the "Picturedrome").

New developments in the pipeline include the former Lodges building at Towngate. Although this has stood vacant for many years, planning permission has now been granted for a scheme involving refurbishment to provide 7 retail units and a café/restaurant, which would represent an important investment in Holmfirth. There have also been a number of smaller schemes for change of use to retail and service occupancy within the shopping area.

The Victoria Street improvement works have now been completed strengthening the bridge and enhancing the streetscape of this area of the town. The temporary footbridge linking the bus station with the Old Bridge Hotel car park remains, and it is proposed to erect a permanent structure, subject to funding being made available.



Although every care and effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the data and statements contained in this publication, Planning Services does not accept responsibility for any errors or inaccuracies which may have occurred therein.

¹ Convenience goods figures include food, drink and tobacco, newspapers and magazines and household goods such as matches, soap and cleaning materials.

² Comparison goods figures include A1 uses such as opticians and travel agents etc.

³ Service uses are those that offer services rather than goods to the public. Examples include banks, estate agents and restaurants.

Retailer demand

An assessment of retailer demand was undertaken in July 2002. This identified that there are two businesses which have expressed a requirement for representation in Holmfirth. These include a public house with a maximum floorspace requirement of 558 sq.m (6,000 sq.ft.) and a variety/discount store with a requirement for 465 sq.m. (5,000 sq.ft.).

This list should not be treated as definitive. There may be other retailers who have a requirement for Holmfirth or who may wish to relocate within the town centre to larger and/or better quality premises but have not registered their interest. Furthermore, the assessment has not addressed the demand that may exist from financial and professional services for office accommodation within the town centre.

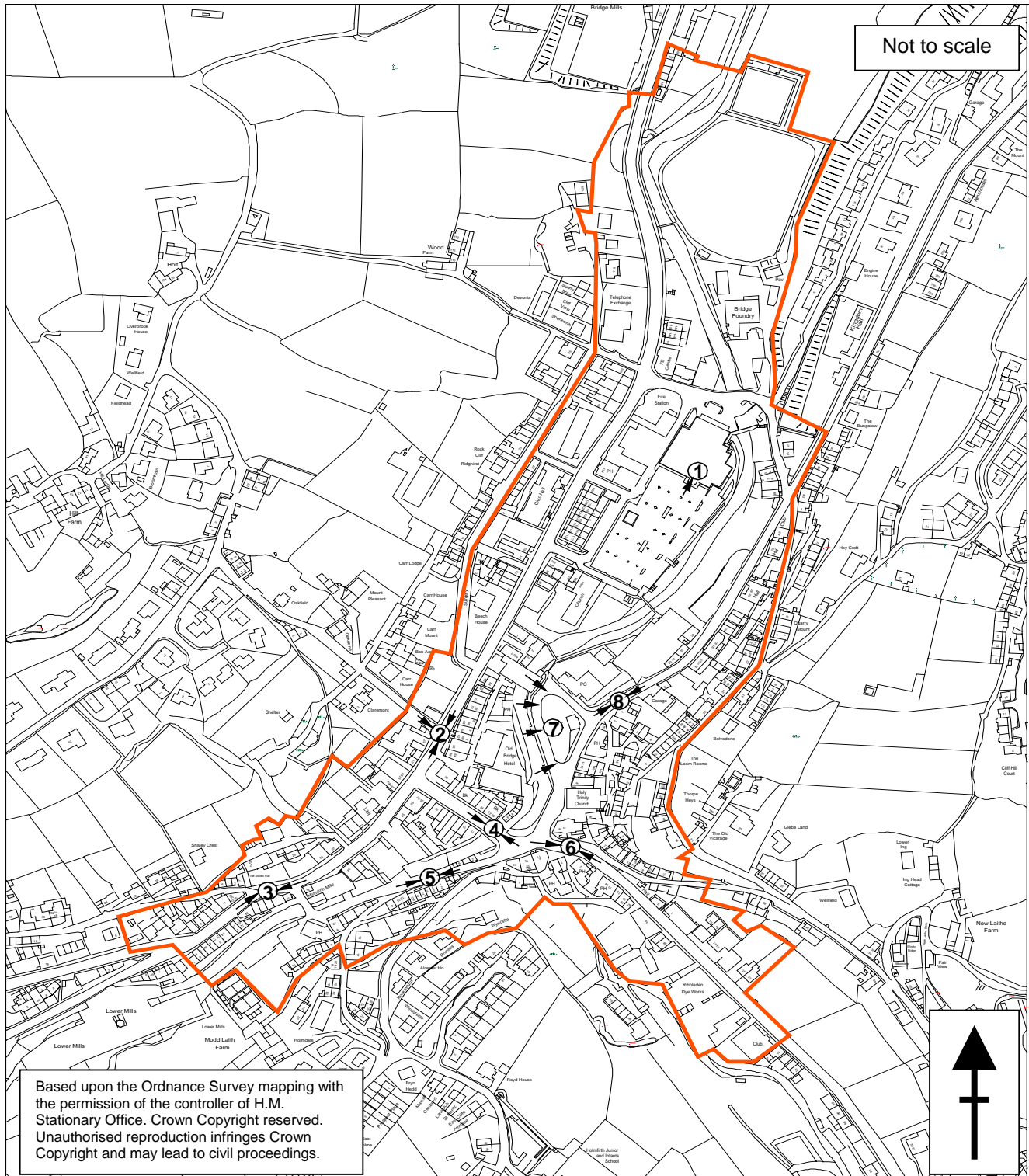
Prime retail rental levels

Due to the size of the town centre, the nature of occupancy and the few property transactions that have taken place, information on rental levels is difficult to obtain. Nevertheless, it would appear that for shop premises in Victoria Street and around the Victoria Street/Huddersfield Road junction rents remain in the region of £12 - £16 per sq.ft. (£129 - £172 per sq.m.). In peripheral shopping locations, rents can fall to just £5 per sq.ft. (£54 per sq.m.).

Rents are very much influenced by the quality of accommodation provided and, in the case of premises outside the shopping core, by the proximity of specific "attractions" such as "Nora Batty's steps" and the market.



Holmfirth study area boundary and pedestrian count locations



- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 Co-op main entrance (in only) | 5 Hollowgate (2 ways) |
| 2 Huddersfield Road/Cooper Lane (3 ways) | 6 Dunford Road (2 ways) |
| 3 Upperthong Lane/Hudds Road (2 ways) | 7 Towngate (people entering town by bus) |
| 4 Victoria Street (2 ways) | 8 Station Road (2 ways) |



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