Cleckheaton Town Centre Health check

2026

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Cleckheaton Town Centre

Cleckheaton provides for 161 retail, leisure and service units amounting to 17,471 sq.m gross. The town centre is focussed around Northgate and Bradford Road, which run north to south, with Albion Street, Cheapside and Market Street running east to west between these two main thoroughfares. The King Edward VII Memorial Park provides greenspace to the south-east of the town centre.

Convenience provision is dominated by the town centre's Tesco supermarket, which fulfils many of the day-to-day grocery shopping needs of local residents. The majority of the centre's retail offer, however, comprises smaller-scale independent operators. Cleckheaton's indoor market hall adds further diversity and local distinctiveness to this provision.

The town centre benefits from its own theatre and a relatively well-developed evening economy, all set within a historic shopping environment containing some attractive heritage assets.

Figure 1 Northgate provides for some attractive traditional shopfronts



Figure 2 Tesco is the town centre's anchor convenience operator



Figure 3 Victoria Court benefitted from a £2.5m refurbishment in 2019



Figure 4 Cleckheaton's Grade II Listed Town Hall and Theatre is a landmark historic asset



Table 1 Cleckheaton Town Centre Floorspace Composition

GOAD Category	Floorspace at 2013 (sq.m)	Floorspace at 2013 (%)	Floorspace UK Average at 2013 (%)	Floorspace at 2025 (sq.m)	Floorspace at 2025 (%)	Floorspace UK Average at 2025 (%)
Comparison	4,420	27.3	36.4	3,227	18.5	28.7
Convenience	3,370	20.8	14.4	3,501	20.0	15.3
Financial & Business	2,580	15.9	8.3	1,448	8.3	6.1
Leisure	3,020	18.7	22.7	4,471	25.6	27.7
Retail Service	2,140	13.2	7.2	2,365	13.5	7.2
Vacant	650	4.0	10.1	2,458	14.1	14.5
Total	16,180	100.0	100.0	17,471	100.00	100.00

Source: Composition of town centre based on boundary as defined by Experian Goad and derived from Nexus Planning Survey of April 2025; 2013 data from WYG's Retail Capacity Study for Kirklees District (February 2014); UK Average from Experian Goad Report of May 2025.

Table 2 Cleckheaton Town Centre Unit Composition

GOAD Category	Units at 2013 (no.)	Units at 2013 (%)	Units UK Average at 2013 (%)	Units at 2025 (no.)	Units at 2025 (%)	Units UK Average at 2025 (%)
Comparison	31	24.2	33.0	30	18.0	26.1
Convenience	13	10.2	8.0	21	12.6	9.3
Financial & Business	13	10.2	11.0	7	4.2	7.9
Leisure	21	16.4	21.9	54	32.3	26.5
Retail Service	27	21.1	13.6	27	16.2	15.8
Vacant	23	18.0	12.2	28	16.8	14.1
Total	128	100.0	100.0	167	100.0	100.0

Uses

Convenience provision in Cleckheaton is dominated by the town centre's Tesco supermarket, which fulfils the majority of the day-to-day grocery shopping needs of local residents. This anchor store is supported by a Heron Foods frozen food specialist and a range of smaller, largely independent food retailers including bakers, butchers, confectioners, convenience stores, and health foods shops.

The large size of the Tesco results in Cleckheaton's proportion of convenience floorspace being well above the UK average, whereas in terms of units its level of provision is broadly in line with (and in fact slightly below) the national average. These trends are broadly consistent with those recorded in 2013.

The levels of comparison representation in Cleckheaton town centre have fallen since 2013 and remain substantially below the relevant UK averages, although this is in the context of broader market changes which have seen non-food retail provision reduce across the country. These trends include short-term economic shocks such as the lockdowns associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, together with long-term trends such as the rise of online shopping.

The largest comparison unit in the town centre by far is the Home Bargains store on Horncastle Street, which measures approximately 1,144 sq.m gross. There is also limited representation from other national multiples including Hallmark, Specsavers and several charity shop operators (Age UK, Oxfam, RSPCA).

The rest of the non-food retail offer predominantly comprises small-scale independent retailers, all of which are less than 250 sq.m in size. These are dispersed throughout the centre and provide for a good variety of products including antiques, cards and gifts, clothing, DIY goods and domestic appliances, flowers, hearing aids, household goods, jewellery, mobile phones and accessories, pharmaceuticals, second-hand goods, and toys and games.

Cleckheaton's indoor market adds diversity and distinctiveness to its retail offer. Its traders sell a variety of often locally sourced products including fresh fruit and vegetables, delicatessen goods, pet food and supplies, household lighting, handbags and luggage, and ladies clothing. There is also a popular café which offers outdoor seating in the summer months. However, the market hall itself is tired and unwelcoming in appearance, and its refurbishment is identified as a key priority in the Cleckheaton Blueprint (explained in more detail below in the 'Opportunity Sites' section).

The leisure offer in Cleckheaton has expanded considerably since 2013, and is well-developed for a centre of its relatively modest size. While the town centre's level of leisure floorspace is below the national average, it has a greater proportion of units in leisure use than a typical centre in the UK.

Provision includes a theatre, located in the Grade II Listed Town Hall building, which serves as an important destination for hosting local amateur dramatic, dance and drama productions. The remaining leisure operators in the town centre are predominantly in food and drink use, and these include a number of bars, pubs, restaurants, and takeaways which all contribute to a vibrant and growing evening economy.

Like other town centres at this level in the Kirklees hierarchy, Cleckheaton is fairly service-focussed, with its proportions of retail service and financial & business service floorspace and units exceeding the relevant national averages. The variety of operators in the town centre is reasonably good and, as expected, geared towards meeting everyday needs.

Most operators in the retail services sector are independent health & beauty traders, which account for 71.1% of these units, but there is also representation from clothing alterations services, an events planner, opticians, a petrol filling station, post office, and travel agents.

Importantly, there is representation from a bank (Virgin Money), two building societies (Skipton Building Society and Yorkshire Building Society), and a Post Office, which prevent local residents having to travel to destinations beyond Cleckheaton to fulfil their need for financial

services. Other financial & business operators in the town centre include an accountant, several estate agents, an insurance office, a pawnbroker, and a number of solicitors firms.

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Daytime/Evening Economy

Cleckheaton town centre contains a good selection of shops and services open during the day, with its daytime economic offer based around its role as a destination for convenience, comparison, retail service and financial service uses. These facilities generally operate from 9 am to 6 pm.

However, the larger national multiple units, including the Home Bargains, Heron Foods, have opening hours that extend into the evening (8pm, excluding Sundays). The Tesco superstore opens until 10pm daily (excluding Sunday).

Cleckheaton also benefits from a well-developed evening economy, with a good number of pubs, restaurants and takeaways

Scattered throughout the town centre. These uses ensure that much of the centre draws footfall and activity until late into the night.

Vacancies

Town centre vacancy rates have increased in Cleckheaton since 2013 but remain below UK averages, particularly in terms of units.

The floorspace vacancy rate is more in line with the national average, and has risen considerably since 2013. However, we consider that this finding reflects larger structural changes in the UK commercial market rather than any particular deficiency with Cleckheaton that has emerged over the past decade or so.

Notably, three of the town centre's most prominent vacant units, with a combined floorspace of 441 sq.m gross, are former banks (i.e. the former Barclays branch at Northgate, the former HSBC on Bradford Road, and the former Lloyds on Albion Street). As a somewhat service-led centre, Cleckheaton is more vulnerable to trends such as the growth of online banking at the expense of brick-and-mortar facilities. However, it should be noted that the floorspace vacancy rate remains below average, and we consider the diversification of the town centre towards more leisure uses in recent years to be a positive sign that the centre is well-placed to adapt in response to wider UK market forces.

The largest individual vacancy recorded by our survey was the Horncastle Autos unit on Horncastle Street, which measures approximately 469 sq.m gross, but this was under alteration on the day of our visit. There are also two prominent adjacent vacancies, measuring 242 and 199 sq.m gross, at the corner of Northgate and Serpentine Road to the south-west of the Home Bargains store. Both of these were being actively marketed on the day of our fieldwork.

The remaining unoccupied premises are generally small in scale, well-maintained and dispersed throughout the centre, all of which limits the extent of their adverse impacts on the look and feel of the street-scene.

Opportunity Sites

The Cleckheaton Blueprint lays out the Council's long-term plans for the town centre and establishes a masterplan for £1.5m worth of investment.

The Blueprint identifies a number of key projects which seek to build on Cleckheaton's heritage while looking toward its future. These projects include:

- Cleckheaton Market Redevelopment – While the market is an important component of the town centre's retail offer and driver of footfall, the market hall itself is tired and unwelcoming in appearance. The Blueprint states that a refurbishment of the market could help secure its future, and also seeks to improve linkages between the market and the soon-to-be-enhanced Savoy Square.
- Savoy Square Transformation – Savoy Square is an existing area of greenspace that lies opposite the Town Hall. The Blueprint includes plans to transform this area into beautiful outdoor space, with a natural amphitheatre created by a small green mound separating the space from Bradford Road in order to make the space feel separate from the busy road and reduce noise. The better public square could create lots of new possibilities for the town centre, with space for games and/or deckchairs, and opportunities for events like outdoor cinema, theatre or live music.
- New Public Square – Closing the road on the north side of Market Square create an opportunity for new accessible outdoor space, with greenery, seating and opportunities for new street cafés. The Blueprint envisages that south-facing buildings will be connected to the new square, and there will also be the opportunity to add a new living space above one of the existing buildings on the north side of the square.
- Netherfield Works – Netherfield Works could become the new home for Cleckheaton's creative arts. Small business units, workshops and exhibition space could provide a new area in the north of the town. The main yard would be semi-covered to create a central meeting space.
- Church Street – Church Street is an existing residential street to the east of the town centre. The Council is exploring opportunities for new developments, and ways to reduce traffic which will improve safety and air quality. A new, high quality housing development adjacent to the park entrance will bring more activity and footfall to the area, making it feel more safe and secure.
- Greenway Connections – The Council will pedestrianise Cheapside and Cross Crown Street. This will connect the Spen Valley Greenway with Spen Bottoms. On Cheapside, the Council will create a new play park and encourage pavement cafés. It will also implement traffic calming measures to make travel by road near the Greenway smoother and safer. In addition, removing parking in the underpass and improving lighting will make this route safer for those travelling on foot.
- Spen Bottoms – The existing Spen Bottoms greenspace to the east of Bradford Road will be extended to meet the town centre. The Council will also install a new playground and a track for running and walking, along with a bridge crossing Spen Beck to complete the loop. This route will help connect the playground, tennis club, football pitch, picnic spaces and fishing lakes. The Council will also create better access to the dam and a cycle link onto the Mann Dam Viaduct, which is being repaired to improve the surfacing and lighting. This cycle link will provide a safe route between the Greenway, the Ringway and neighbouring villages.

The Blueprint projects represent an important opportunity for Cleckheaton to build on its strengths (including its quality built heritage), address some of the existing issues highlighted in this healthcheck, and support local businesses by encouraging footfall and catalysing further investment.

In addition, there are currently two extant planning consents for locations at northern periphery of the town centre, which will provide supporting uses that also have the potential to bring more footfall and spending to Cleckheaton, these being:

- 2025/CLASS MA/90833/ (approved in May 2025), which grants prior approval for the change of use of the vacant former commercial buildings 37 Bradford Road and 2-4 King Street to form 8 dwellinghouses; and
- 2022/62/91730/E (approved in March 2023), which allows for the demolition of the former dairy, snooker centre and storage buildings on land adjacent to 60 Northgate and the construction of nine new light industrial units. The demolition element of this permission had been implemented on the day of our fieldwork visit.

[1] Kirklees Council, Cleckheaton Blueprint [accessed 20th October 2025].

Pedestrian Flows

We observed a reasonably high level of pedestrian activity throughout Cleckheaton town centre, particularly along the main shopping and leisure street of Northgate and at the adjacent Tesco store. While the location of the Tesco is somewhat peripheral, there is a tunnel which provides pedestrian access between the supermarket and the remainder of the town centre to its east. This tunnel appeared well-used on the day of our visit but may be off-putting at night or at quieter times.

There was also a notable concentration of footfall and customers sitting outside the Wetherspoons pub near Savoy Square and the Town Hall, a reflection of the good weather on the day of our fieldwork.

There was a strong flow of pedestrians between Northgate and Bradford Road, particularly along the Market Street route where the main frontage to Victoria Court is situated.

Bradford Road itself, however, did attract a fairly high level of traffic which proved something of a barrier to pedestrians looking to cross from east to west in this part of the centre. We note that some of the measures proposed in the Cleckheaton Blueprint are aimed at calming and reducing the impacts of traffic.

Accessibility

Unlike some of the other town centres in Kirklees, Cleckheaton lacks a dedicated railway station. However, it is accessible by car, being located at the junction of two A-roads (A638 and A643) and close to Junction 26 of the M62.

The town centre also benefits from its own bus station, located to the south of the King Edward VII Memorial Park, which provides frequent services to destinations including Heckmondwike, Huddersfield, Bradford and Leeds. In 2023, Cleckheaton Bus Station averaged 1,747 departures per week.

Bus accessibility to the town centre is also set to improve as a result of planned upgrades to the A638 Dewsbury - Cleckheaton Sustainable Travel Corridor (STC), a collaborative project between the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, Kirklees Council and the Walk, Wheel and Cycle Trust. A key element of the scheme will be the creation of a 0.7km bus lane on the Bradford Road approach to Chain Bar, allowing services to bypass congestion and improving journey times for both public transport users and motorists.

In terms of pedestrian accessibility, including for those with impaired mobility, Cleckheaton's topography and narrow streets due to its historic nature can prove challenging in places. As noted, traffic along Bradford Road in particular can at times prove a barrier to movement on foot. However, the pavements are generally well-maintained and free of clutter and crossing points are provided. We therefore consider that the town centre performs reasonably well in terms of this healthcheck indicator.

As noted above in the 'Opportunity Sites' section, a number of enhancements are also planned to improve cycling and pedestrian linkages between Cleckheaton town centre and the Spen Valley Greenway to its east, which forms part of the National Cycle Network. Works are expected to be completed by summer 2026 and include:

- Resurfacing and widening 2km (1.5miles) length of greenway, giving it a smoother finish for a better experience for everyone.
- New signage and lighting to improve safety.
- Easier and more accessible access points on and off the greenway.
- Improved cycle links to Spen Greenway.
- New controlled puffin crossing at Market Street to improve pedestrian safety.
- New and upgraded footways along the new segregated cycle lane.
- Multiple new signal-controlled crossings installed, including toucan crossings along the cycle lane section.
- Speed limit reduced from 40mph to 30mph along the bus lane section of Bradford Road to support pedestrian safety.
- Retaining wall constructed to support highway widening and accommodate the new bus infrastructure.

[1] West Yorkshire Metro, Cleckheaton Bus Station [accessed 21st October 2025].

[1] Kirklees Council, A638 Dewsbury - Cleckheaton Sustainable Travel Corridor (STC) [accessed 21st October 2025].

Perception of Safety

At the time of our visit, Cleckheaton felt largely safe and secure. A good level of pedestrian activity was observed throughout the town centre, reducing any perceived threat of crime.

Street lighting was observed throughout and, as noted above, evening uses are scattered around the centre, which will increase the perception of safety and activity for evening users.

Overall, the centre feels safe and well-monitored throughout and is largely free of evidence of anti-social behaviour such as graffiti or vandalism.

Environmental Quality

Cleckheaton's environmental quality is one of its strengths, with the town centre boasting several high-quality heritage assets including its Grade II Listed Town Hall, Post Office and George Hotel buildings. Greenspace is provided through the King Edward VII Memorial Park and the soon-to-be-enhanced Savoy Square.

However, in places prominent vacancies and the impacts of traffic can detract from the otherwise high-quality environment of the centre. Despite its importance to the offer and appeal of the centre, the market hall is also in need of refurbishment, being tired and unwelcoming in appearance.

As explained in the 'Opportunity Sites' section, the planned improvements set out in the Cleckheaton Blueprint will help to alleviate some of these issues and make better use of the town centre's-built heritage and its attractive setting close to the Spen Valley Greenway.

Conclusions

Overall, Cleckheaton is considered to be a reasonably healthy town centre that performs an important role in serving the day-to-day shopping, service and leisure needs of its local community. The centre benefits from an attractive built environment with a strong convenience offer anchored by Tesco, supported by a good range of independent retailers and a long-established indoor market which adds variety and local distinctiveness.

Leisure provision is well developed for a centre of this size, with a good variety of food and drink outlets and a locally important theatre contributing to an increasingly vibrant evening economy.

Vacancy levels have risen since 2013 but remain below national averages, and many of the unoccupied units are small, well-maintained, and dispersed, limiting their adverse impact on the look and feel of the centre.

The environmental quality of Cleckheaton is generally high, reflecting its heritage character and greenspaces, although traffic impacts and a small number of tired or vacant frontages detract slightly from the wider experience.

The ongoing delivery of the Cleckheaton Blueprint represents a major opportunity to enhance accessibility, improve public spaces, and make better use of the town's built and natural assets. The proposed investments, particularly those relating to the market, Savoy Square and improved Greenway connections, are well-placed to strengthen the centre's vitality and viability in the years ahead.