Heckmondwike Town Centre Health check

2026

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Heckmondwike Town Centre

Heckmondwike is served by two supermarkets, which provide for a broad spectrum of day-to-day food shopping needs, these being the Morrisons superstore on Union Street (5,187 sq.m gross) and the Lidl at Northgate Retail Centre (1,339 sq.m gross). Due to the presence of these larger units, the town centre's provision of convenience floorspace is more than double the UK average despite declining slightly since 2013.

However, the proportion of convenience units is roughly in line with the national average, a position that has remained consistent since 2013. The remaining town centre convenience operators are small in scale, ranging from 33 sq.m gross to 241 sq.m gross, and mostly independent. These primarily comprise convenience stores and vape shops, but there is also representation from bakers, a health foods shop, and a shoe repairs business.

Interestingly, Heckmondwike's shares of both comparison retail floorspace and units have increased since 2013, despite a decline across the rest of the UK over the same period. Heckmondwike's overall level of provision remains below the national average, although the gap has narrowed considerably over the past twelve years. The comparison offer is anchored by national multiples such as Superdrug, alongside a strong presence of independent comparison retails like charity and discount shops.

The town centre's non-food national multiples are concentrated in Northgate Retail Centre, which provides for operators such as Peacocks, Card Factory and Poundstretcher. The rest of the comparison offer comprises a good variety of operators, scattered across the centre and trading from a range of sizes and formats of units. Provision is somewhat skewed towards the lower or budget end of the market, but the town centre does offer a reasonably broad range of products including beds and furniture, cards and gifts, clothing, DIY supplies and hardware, domestic appliances, household goods, electronics, flowers, jewellery, second-hand items, toiletries, pet products, and pharmaceuticals.

Proportions of leisure floorspace and units have fallen slightly in Heckmondwike since 2013, but this is in the context of significant rises across the rest of the country. As a result, the town centre's shares of leisure uses are now significantly below the relevant national averages. The present offer is somewhat dominated by fast food and takeaway operators, which account for 60.7% of Heckmondwike's leisure units. The other leisure traders comprise two betting offices, two cafes, two social clubs, three public houses, a restaurant, and a solarium.

Levels of retail service provision in Heckmondwike have remained fairly consistent since 2013 and continue to surpass UK averages, reflecting the centre's size and its role in the hierarchy. The majority (69.7%) of these operators are health and beauty outlets, all of which are independents. These are complemented by a range of other service units which are able to meet residents' day-to-day needs, including a dog groomer, opticians, a petrol filling station, a photographer, post office, and travel agents.

Financial and business service representation in Heckmondwike town centre continues to surpass the UK average in terms of units, but remains below average in terms of floorspace. Provision has declined since 2013, although we consider that this finding largely reflects national trends such as the move to online banking which has resulted in widespread closures of high street banks nationwide.

Importantly, there are now no banks or building societies present within the town centre, following the closure of its Yorkshire Bank and HSBC branches in 2016 and its Santander in 2021 (all formerly located at Market Place). While Post Office on Market Street offers some services traditionally provided by brick-and-mortar banks, Heckmondwike's local residents must now travel further afield to access the full range of banking services.

The range of other financial & business service operators in the town centre is reasonably good, with representation in all of the following sub-categories: accountant, auctioneers & valuers, building contractor/services, business equipment, business services, employment agency, estate agent, insurance office, printing & photocopying, and solicitors.



Figure 1: Westgate forms one of the main shopping and leisure streets in Heckmondwike



Figure 2: Morrisons is the town centre's largest individual commercial unit


Figure 3: New Square opened in April 2025 on the site of the former indoor market hall



Figure 4: The Green provides an attractive area of greenspace at the heart of the town centre

Table 1 Heckmondwike 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	5,130	20.7	36.4	5,490	23.5	28.7
Convenience	8,410	34.0	14.4	7,501	32.2	15.3
Financial & Business	1,790	7.2	8.3	1,082	4.6	6.1
Leisure	4,250	17.2	22.7	3,684	15.8	27.7
Retail Service	2,940	11.9	7.2	3,143	13.5	7.2
Vacant	2,220	9.0	10.1	2,417	10.4	14.5
Total	**24,740**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**23,317**	**100.0**	**100.0**

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 Heckmondwike 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	29	20.4	33.0	31	22.5	26.1
Convenience	10	7.0	8.0	13	9.4	9.3
Financial & Business	18	12.7	11.0	12	8.7	7.9
Leisure	32	22.5	21.9	28	20.3	26.5
Retail Service	34	23.9	13.6	33	23.9	15.8
Vacant	19	13.4	12.2	21	15.2	14.1
Total	**142**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**138**	**100.0**	**100.0**

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.

Uses

Heckmondwike is served by two supermarkets, which provide for a broad spectrum of day-to-day food shopping needs, these being the Morrisons superstore on Union Street (5,187 sq.m gross) and the Lidl at Northgate Retail Centre (1,339 sq.m gross). Due to the presence of these larger units, the town centre's provision of convenience floorspace is more than double the UK average despite declining slightly since 2013.

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services traditionally provided by brick-and-mortar banks, Heckmondwike's local residents must now travel further afield to access the full range of banking services.

The range of other financial & business service operators in the town centre is reasonably good, with representation in all of the following sub-categories: accountant, auctioneers & valuers, building contractor/services, business equipment, business services, employment agency, estate agent, insurance office, printing & photocopying, and solicitors.

Daytime/Evening Economy

In the daytime, Heckmondwike primarily functions as a retail and service destination geared towards meeting the day-to-day needs of its local residential catchment. The opening times of the town centre's shops and service operators are generally limited to normal business hours, although there are some exceptions. Notably, Morrisons closes at 10pm daily and Lidl closes at 9pm daily, both with the exception of Sundays. The daytime economy is also supported by the monthly farmers market, which is held on the third Saturday of each month, where residents have access to a range of fresh produce, artisan treats and bakery items.

As noted above, the town centre has a relatively limited evening economy, denoted by three scattered pubs and one restaurant, along with a plethora of takeaway operators dispersed throughout.

Whilst takeaways do in some ways support an evening economy, they do not encourage people into a centre to stay for a duration of time. Furthermore, in recent years, the rise of food delivery services, such as JustEat and Deliveroo, has meant that visits to takeaway restaurants have reduced which has had a knock-on effect to evening economies of town centres.

The introduction of more diverse evening economy uses, such as family restaurants, would be a welcome addition to Heckmondwike's offer and encourage longer dwell times to bring footfall and activity to the town centre after daytime hours. Such uses could also help to build on the success of the popular local events hosted at The Green, which include the annual Heckmondlight Festival, as well as the new event space at New Square (discussed in more detail below in the 'Opportunity Sites' section).

Vacancies

Heckmondwike's vacancy rate is above the national average in terms of units but below average in terms of floorspace, a finding which is consistent with 2013.

This trend reflects the relatively small-scale nature of much of the town centre's commercial stock. The largest individual vacancy is the former Fultons Foods store at 105-107 Market Street, which measures approximately 330 sq.m gross. The majority of vacancies, however, are under 200 sq.m, with the average size of a vacant unit in Heckmondwike being 115.1 sq.m gross.

While vacancies are found in most parts of the centre, there are few concentrations or clusters. The modest sizes of many of the empty units and the surrounding active frontages limit their adverse impacts on the look and feel of the centre.

Opportunity Sites

The Heckmondwike Blueprint was adopted in 2024 and will guide £1.5m investment into Heckmondwike town centre over the next decade.[1] The blueprint identifies six key projects that seek to build on the heritage of the town centre while creating a vibrant place where people are proud to live, work and relax.

The six key projects are shown on the plan below (which is reproduced from page 13 of the Blueprint) and are summarised as follows:

- **Algernon Firth Park Refurbishment**, which will involve the extension of the park, a new crossing linking it to The Green, improved signage and a stronger sense of place, and the creation of a new walking and running track with better lighting;
- **Bus Station Redevelopment** which will introduce better and safer connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists, new landscaping and comfortable seating areas, reduced vehicle dominance, and the addition of public toilets.
- **New Square**, which will also result in reduced vehicle dominance through the creation of a new public square with seating and planting, providing more space for flexible uses, and refurbishing underused buildings.
- **A Connected Green Park**, which will involve re-routing traffic to extend The Green and reduce vehicle dominance and noise, introducing a high-quality public realm, and adding new landscaping, planting, and seating areas.
- **Reworked Market Square**, which will include relocating parking, softening the edges of the space with greenery to improve the pedestrian and shopper experience, enhancing the public realm with seating and protected footways, and creating space for market stalls.
- **Greenway Link**, which will involve widening and improving access to the Greenway, installing new signage and lighting, and adding a new cycle lane to create a safe connection into Market Square.



[1] Kirklees Council and Arup, Heckmondwike Blueprint [accessed 20th October 2025].

On the day of our visit, Heckmondwike's former indoor market hall had been demolished, with the site now occupied by the completed New Square. The Square comprises new flexible space including containers to support pop-up markets and seasonal events, as well as public seating and sculptures. The space appeared well-used and provided a welcome respite from the traffic which can dominate other parts of the town centre.

Progress was also evident with the Bus Station redevelopment, which will see the transformation of the now-demolished bus hub into a fully accessible bus station, providing better transport links from the town centre. Construction was underway at the time of our fieldwork, and the new facility is expected to open to passengers in Spring 2026.

The Blueprint projects represent an important opportunity for Heckmondwike to build on its strengths (including its rich heritage, greenspaces and accessibility), address many of the existing issues highlighted in this healthcheck, and support local businesses by encouraging more footfall and catalysing further investment.

Pedestrian Flows

On the day of our visit, footfall in Heckmondwike was concentrated around the peripheral large-format retail units at Northgate Retail Centre and the Morrisons store, and along the central part of Market Street. As noted, the New Square appeared well-used, with a number of pedestrians using the new seating area to rest, and we observed a number of linked trips along Blanket Hall Street between customers of Morrisons and the rest of the town centre.

Owing to its layout, which is bisected by the relatively wide and busy roads of Westgate/High Street and Market Street, traffic congestion did at times inhibit pedestrian flows in Heckmondwike, particularly between the north and south of the centre. We note that this issue was also highlighted in the community feedback which informed the development of the Heckmondwike Blueprint, which recorded concerns with 'traffic congestion, poor walking and cycling infrastructure, lack of connection between green and insufficient recreational spaces in the town centre'.

As set out above, a number of the interventions identified in the Blueprint are targeted at reducing vehicle dominance in the town centre, with New Square already having a positive impact by introducing a secluded seating area away from the traffic.

Accessibility

Heckmondwike is easily accessible by car and does benefit from bus links to nearby destinations such as Dewsbury and Ossett as well as the higher order centres of Leeds, Wakefield, Huddersfield, and Bradford.

However, unlike some of the other town centres in Kirklees, Heckmondwike lacks its own dedicated railway station and the Heckmondwike Blueprint identifies a number of opportunities to improve the public transport accessibility of the town centre.

The ongoing Bus Station redevelopment seeks to address some of these issues by creating a more welcoming facility that provides better and safer connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists. The Blueprint also includes the creation of new town centre cycle lanes to take better advantage of Heckmondwike's proximity to the Spen Valley and National Cycle Network Route 66.

In terms of accessibility for pedestrians, including those with mobility impairments, we have already highlighted that traffic can create something of a barrier to movement through the town centre, another issue that the Heckmondwike Blueprint projects seek to address. Aside from this issue, however, the centre is generally easily traversable, with a relatively flat topography, well-maintained paving, and plentiful benches allowing people to stop and rest when needed.

Perception of Safety

While Heckmondwike felt largely safe and secure on the day of our visit, we did observe that some of the town centre's vacant units are poorly maintained and adjacent to takeaways which are shuttered during the daytime. These created some areas that lacked activity and surveillance, particularly at the eastern end of High Street.

As previously noted, the majority of the centre's smaller operators close after normal business hours and the evening economy is limited. These factors can also contribute to a lack of safety. Indeed, the Heckmondwike Blueprint states that the crime rate in Heckmondwike is 14% higher than the West Yorkshire average. We have already highlighted the need to introduce a more diverse range of evening economy uses to encourage footfall in the centre after dark. In addition, the Blueprint projects include the provision of safer pedestrian routes with better lighting, which would be another welcome addition.

Environmental Quality

The environmental quality of Heckmondwike is mixed. A key strength is the heritage quality of its built environment, which contains a number of attractive Grade II Listed buildings including the drinking fountain located in the Market Place car park. The town centre is also fairly rich in greenspace, benefitting from both The Green and Algernon Firth Park.

However, weaknesses include the aforementioned traffic dominance, poorly-maintained vacant buildings, and the relatively high number of takeaways that are shuttered during the day.

The Blueprint projects intend to offer high-quality public realm through the incorporation of new landscaping, planting, seating areas and community amenities. This was already evident on the day of our visit, with the New Square encouraging people to dwell longer in the centre than they otherwise might have. We consider that the recent and ongoing investment in the town centre provides an opportunity to build on its existing strengths and enhance its overall environmental quality.

Conclusions

Heckmondwike functions primarily as a retail and service centre catering for the essential shopping and service needs of its local residential catchment. Convenience provision is a notable strength, with Heckmondwike benefitting from anchor Morrisons and Lidl stores, and the comparison offer is reasonably diverse for a centre of this size. There is a good range of services that fulfil many of the day-to-day needs of local residents, though the town centre no longer provides for any banks or building societies due to broader market trends such as the move towards online banking.

The environmental quality of the centre is mixed; while the historic townscape, greenspaces and recent investment in New Square provide attractive focal points, issues such as traffic dominance and some poorly maintained frontages detract from the overall experience.

The existing evening economy is limited both in scale and diversity, and there are opportunities to introduce new uses such as family restaurants which would encourage longer dwell times and help to reduce the risk of crime in the town centre after dark.

In this context, the ongoing implementation of the Heckmondwike Blueprint represents a significant opportunity to enhance the centre's accessibility, appearance, and overall sense of place. The early delivery of projects such as New Square and the Bus Station redevelopment has already demonstrated tangible benefits in terms of public realm quality and footfall. Continued investment in these projects will be key to sustaining the town centre's vitality and viability over the longer term.

Overall, therefore, we consider Heckmondwike to be a reasonably healthy centre, with strong potential for its vitality and viability to be significantly enhanced in the short to medium term.