Holmfirth Town Centre Health check

2026

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Holmfirth Town Centre

Holmfirth serves as an important retail, leisure and service centre within Kirklees, meeting the day-to-day needs of its local population while also attracting visitors as a cultural and tourist destination known as the filming location of the sitcom Last of the Summer Wine. The town centre accommodates 137 retail, leisure and service units with a total of 13,174 sq.m of commercial floorspace. The Goad survey focuses on the main cluster of retail and service uses, which form the commercial heart of the town.

The centre is compact and set within the valley of the River Holme, giving it a distinctive topography and character. The main commercial activity is focused along Victoria Street, Huddersfield Road and Towngate, with a network of smaller side streets providing additional retail, service and hospitality uses. Car parking is available at Huddersfield Road Car Park and smaller sites across the centre, supporting access for both residents and visitors.

Holmfirth is notable for its historic character and contains over ten Grade II listed buildings within the town centre boundary, including The Picturedrome (a live music venue that attracts visitors from across the region) and the Church of the Holy Trinity. The high proportion of listed buildings contributes to the architectural distinctiveness of the centre and reinforces its identity as a place with strong heritage appeal.

The combination of retail, leisure, and service uses alongside a strong heritage environment and cultural role means that Holmfirth functions as both a service hub for the local community and a visitor destination with wider regional significance.



Figure 1: Ongoing works constituting the redevelopment of former car park into community space



Figure 2: The Wrinkled Stocking Tearoom, one of the popular tourist attractions in the town centre, contributing to the vitality of the centre.



Figure 3: Holmfirth's setting in the Holme Valley provides an attractive backdrop to the town



Figure 4: The town centre benefits from good accessibility by bus and car. The town centre benefits

from good accessibility by bus and car

Table 1 Holmfirth 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	3,960	30.5%	36.4%	3,332	25.3%	28.7%
Convenience	2,910	14.4%	14.4%	2,315	17.6%	15.3%
Financial & Business	1,120	8.6%	8.3%	831	6.3%	6.1%
Leisure	3,680	28.3%	22.7%	4,146	31.5%	27.7%
Retail Service	1,040	8.0%	7.2%	1,240	9.4%	7.2%
Vacant	280	2.2%	10.1%	1,311	9.9%	14.5%
Total	**12,990**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**13,174**	**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 Holmfirth 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	49	40.5%	33.0%	39	28.5%	26.1%
Convenience	11	9.1%	8.0%	10	7.3%	9.3%
Financial & Business	12	9.9%	11.0%	12	8.8%	7.9%
Leisure	32	26.4%	21.9%	42	30.7%	26.5%
Retail Service	13	10.7%	13.6%	24	17.5%	15.8%
Vacant	4	3.3%	12.2%	10	7.3%	14.1%
Total	**121**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**137**	**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

Holmfirth town centre's overall composition demonstrates a strong leisure and independent retail focus, reflecting the town's dual function as both a service centre for the local community and a visitor destination. Compared to 2013, Holmfirth has seen a modest increase in total floorspace and number of units, alongside a shift towards more leisure and service-based uses in line with national trends favouring experiential and independent offers.

Comparison goods retailing has decreased in both absolute and proportional terms since 2013. Floorspace dedicated to comparison goods has reduced from 3,960 sq.m (30.5%) to 3,332 sq.m (25.3%), now falling below the UK average of 28.7%. The number of comparison units has declined from 49 (40.5%) to 39 (28.5%), which is slightly above the national average of 26.1%. The changes reflect a contraction in traditional non-food retailing, consistent with wider national trends. Nonetheless, Holmfirth maintains a healthy representation of independent non-food retailers, including gift shops, clothing boutiques, art galleries and homeware stores, complemented by a small number of national multiples. This mix supports both local shoppers and the town's visitor economy.

The convenience retail offer has remained stable and continues to perform strongly. Floorspace devoted to convenience uses has increased slightly from 2,910 sq.m (14.4%) in 2013 to 2,315 sq.m (17.6%) in 2025, now above the UK average of 15.3%. However, the number of convenience units has fallen marginally from 11 (9.1%) to 10 (7.3%), which is below the national average of 9.3%. The offer is anchored by moderately sized Co-op and Sainsbury's Local foodstores, supported by a range of smaller specialist independents, including butchers, bakers, delicatessens and local produce outlets. Together, these provide for day-to-day grocery needs while contributing to Holmfirth's reputation as a destination for local and artisan food.

Leisure uses have grown significantly over the past decade and now represent the largest single category within the town centre. Floorspace in this category has increased from 3,680 sq.m (28.3%) to 4,146 sq.m (31.5%), and the number of units from 32 (26.4%) to 42 (30.7%), both above the UK averages of 27.7% and 26.5% respectively. Most of these occupiers are food and beverage operators including cafés, restaurants, bars and public houses, reflecting the town's strong hospitality and tourism offer. This growth in leisure activity reinforces Holmfirth's identity as a cultural and visitor hub, supporting both the daytime and early evening economies.

The retail service sector has also expanded since 2013. Floorspace in this category increased from 1,040 sq.m (8.0%) to 1,240 sq.m (9.4%), and units from 13 (10.7%) to 24 (17.5%), both above national averages. This growth demonstrates a diversification towards personal care and support services, with a range of hairdressers, beauty salons, opticians and repair shops now well established. These small-scale independent operators add variety to the centre and provide important services for local residents, even if they do not typically generate high volumes of footfall.

Financial and business services have remained relatively stable, though showing a small decline in floorspace since 2013, from 1,120 sq.m (8.6%) to 831 sq.m (6.3%), aligning with the UK average of 6.1%. The number of units has remained consistent at 12 (8.8%), close to the national average of 7.9%. These occupiers include banks, estate agents, solicitors and insurance brokers, concentrated primarily within the core of the town centre. They continue to play an important role in supporting Holmfirth's service function.

In summary, Holmfirth's commercial composition has evolved from 2013 to 2025 towards a more leisure and service led offer, while retaining a solid foundation of convenience and

comparison retailers. The strong representation of independents, food and drink operators and specialist shops reflects the town's distinct identity and tourism appeal, while the low vacancy rate and balanced mix of uses demonstrate its continued vitality and viability as both a local service centre and a visitor destination.

Daytime/Evening Economy

Holmfirth Town Centre supports a multifunctional local economy, with daytime activity underpinned by independent retail, hospitality venues, and its role as a tourist and cultural destination within the Holme Valley. The town also functions as a service hub for surrounding rural communities, with essential services such as banks, pharmacies, and the post office helping to sustain a steady level of footfall throughout the day.

The daytime offer is focused on Victoria Street, Huddersfield Road, and Towngate, where a mix of boutiques, artisan shops, galleries, cafés, and restaurants contribute to the town's character and appeal. The food and drink sector are particularly strong, with a high proportion of independent operators catering to both local residents and tourists. Businesses benefit from the town's picturesque setting and the nearby River Holme, which encourages longer dwell times and linked trips.

Holmfirth's office and professional services market is modest, but includes a number of estate agents, legal and accountancy practices that bring in weekday trade. A notable proportion of the town centre's composition is devoted to financial and business services, which occupy upper floors and small units, helping to support economic diversity despite the town's rural scale.

The evening economy is relatively strong for a small town, driven by its reputation for food, drink, and culture. Restaurants, pubs, and wine bars are well-used in the evening, and the town's status as a visitor destination encourages weekend trade. The Picturedrome, a well-known live music venue, plays a central role in attracting evening visitors and brings significant footfall on event nights.

Nonetheless, outside peak periods, the town can feel quieter in the evening, particularly midweek. Opportunities exist to strengthen the early evening offer and support activities that extend trading hours for a wider variety of uses.

Vacancies

Vacancy levels in Holmfirth town centre remain relatively low compared to both historic levels and national benchmarks, indicating a generally healthy and resilient centre. As of 2025, vacant floorspace accounts for 9.9% of the total (1,311 sq.m), up from just 2.2% (280 sq.m) in 2013, but still below the UK average of 14.5%. Similarly, the number of vacant units has risen slightly from 4 (3.3%) to 10 (7.3%), remaining well below the national average of 14.1%.

While this increase represents a modest rise over the past decade, it reflects normal turnover and the structural changes affecting the wider retail sector, rather than a sign of long-term decline. Most vacant units are small in scale and dispersed throughout the centre, with no significant concentrations or clusters. Their limited number and even distribution mean that they have a minimal visual impact on the overall appearance and character of the town centre.

Many of the currently vacant premises are located along Victoria Street and within secondary frontages, where the units tend to be smaller and more suited to independent or specialist occupiers. The condition of vacant properties is generally good, with shopfronts well maintained and few signs of neglect or dereliction.

Holmfirth's low vacancy rate reflects the continued strength of demand from independent traders, leisure operators and service-based businesses, which have become increasingly important to the town's offer. The mix of retail, leisure and cultural uses continues to sustain steady footfall throughout the week and helps ensure that vacant space is typically reoccupied within a reasonable period.

Overall, Holmfirth's vacancy position is considerably stronger than national averages and indicative of a vital and viable town centre. While a small number of units remain unoccupied, these are largely temporary voids associated with tenant movement and sectoral change. The centre's strong independent character, diverse offer and role as a visitor destination provide a solid foundation for ongoing resilience and adaptability.

Opportunity Sites

Given the compact nature of Holmfirth, large-scale opportunity sites are limited. However, Holmfirth is undergoing a period of significant investment and change through the Holmfirth Blueprint, a long-term vision for the town centre. The first scheme being delivered under this programme is the Holmfirth Town Centre Access Plan (TCAP), which is being delivered in partnership between Kirklees Council and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

The TCAP involves the demolition of the former Holmfirth Market Hall and the redevelopment of the adjacent Huddersfield Road Car Park to create a new community space for markets and events, alongside improved pedestrian and cycle links. The scheme also includes the installation of electric vehicle charging points, the widening of the footbridge and pathways, new kerbing, resurfaced pavements and improved street lighting, signage and traffic signals. To improve accessibility and safety, the pedestrian crossing on Victoria Street is being signalised and pavements are being laid with Yorkstone in keeping with the town centre's character. At the time of our visit, we observed that works had commenced on the pathways along Victoria Street.

The planning application for the scheme (ref: 2021/48/92946/W) was approved in March 2022. The approved works include the demolition of the Market Hall, extension and redevelopment of the existing Huddersfield Road Car Park, improvements to the vehicular entrance on the A6024, the creation of a new vehicular access onto the A6024, the widening of the pedestrian bridge over the River Holme, and associated landscaping, lighting and drainage works within the Conservation Area.

This project represents a major opportunity to improve accessibility, reduce traffic congestion and carbon emissions, strengthen the town's cultural and visitor offer, and create a more attractive environment for residents, businesses and visitors.

Pedestrian Flows

Holmfirth benefits from steady pedestrian flows across much of the town centre, particularly during weekends, school holidays, and in connection with special events. The main shopping area around Victoria Street, Huddersfield Road, and Town Gate is easily navigable and pedestrian-friendly, with natural footfall routes between retail, leisure, and riverside areas.

Tourist attractions such as the Picturedrome, Last of the Summer Wine landmarks, and local walking trails contribute to weekend footfall. However, weekday activity is more modest and driven by routine shopping, school runs, and local service use.

Pedestrian flows become noticeably lighter on the outer edges of the centre, particularly beyond the Co-op and along some residential streets. Strengthening wayfinding and pedestrian connections to parking areas and the riverside could help rebalance movement across the centre.

Accessibility

Holmfirth is accessible primarily by road and local bus services, with regular connections to Huddersfield, Meltham, Honley, and other parts of the Holme Valley. The Holmfirth Bus Station is centrally located, providing convenient access for those arriving by public transport.

The town is served by several public car parks, including Town Gate, Crown Bottom, Huddersfield Road, and the Co-op car park. Clear signage for short- and long-stay parking is present, though improvements to pedestrian routes between car parks and the town centre could help improve integration.

Access for cyclists is limited by the town's topography, narrow roads, and lack of segregated infrastructure and there were no cycle parking spaces observed.

While much of the central area is pedestrian-friendly, accessibility for those with mobility impairments is more challenging in places due to steep gradients, uneven paving, and narrow footways, particularly along Upperthong Lane, Rotcher Road, and parts of Huddersfield Road.

Perception of Safety

Holmfirth generally has a positive perception of safety, particularly during the day. Its small scale, strong community identity, and regular footfall in central areas contribute to a welcoming atmosphere. The main shopping and hospitality areas are well-overlooked and benefit from natural surveillance.

In the evening, the town remains active around the Picturedrome and restaurant areas, especially on event nights. While lighting is present on key streets, some quieter areas, particularly back lanes and riverside paths, can feel less secure after dark. Occasional incidents of anti-social behaviour and vandalism have been reported, though these are limited in scale.

Maintaining a well-managed evening economy and enhancing lighting and activity in quieter areas will help to reinforce the town's safe and inclusive character.

Environmental Quality

Holmfirth Town Centre offers a high-quality public realm, with its distinctive stone architecture, riverside views, and heritage buildings contributing to a strong sense of place. The town's compact layout and historical features support a unique shopping and leisure environment.

The central shopping area is generally well-maintained and clean, with decorative planting, hanging baskets, and riverside walkways adding to the visual appeal. Areas such as Victoria Park and the River Holme embankment provide valued green spaces within and around the centre.

However, some areas including service alleys, car park edges, and parts of Co-operative precinct could benefit from public realm enhancements and more consistent maintenance. Opportunities also exist to increase green infrastructure, such as trees, rain gardens, or planting along Huddersfield Road and other paved areas to soften the environment and improve climate resilience.

Stakeholder responses

A stakeholder survey was undertaken in May 2025 to gather views from residents, businesses, and other local representatives regarding Holmfirth town centre's strengths, weaknesses, and future opportunities. In total, 16 responses were received, offering qualitative insights into the town centre's overall vitality, accessibility, and areas for improvement.

Respondents identified the town's leisure offer, including cafés and restaurants, and its active programme of community events as key strengths, each cited by 68.8% of participants. Cultural attractions and the variety of retail outlets were also viewed positively, highlighting Holmfirth's established identity as a small but distinctive visitor destination. The town's public spaces and general sense of safety were also noted as contributing positively to its appeal, alongside a perception of strong local character and community engagement.

In contrast, the most common weaknesses related to traffic congestion (81.2%), the condition and cleanliness of streets (56.2%), and limited or expensive parking (each mentioned by around half of respondents). A lack of public transport limited green and cycle infrastructure, and insufficient leisure options in the evening were also identified as areas for improvement.

Open-ended feedback emphasised the need for better maintenance and management of public spaces, continued support for independent businesses, and coordinated investment to enhance the town's accessibility, appearance, and overall visitor experience. Respondents also noted that collaborative working between the council, businesses, and local community groups will be key to maintaining Holmfirth's vibrancy and ensuring that planned improvements deliver long-term benefits.

Conclusions

Holmfirth town centre performs strongly in fulfilling a dual role as both a service hub for the local community and a cultural and visitor destination for the wider Holme Valley and beyond. The centre benefits from a diverse mix of independent shops, cafés, restaurants and service providers, supported by a Sainsbury's supermarket and a range of specialist food outlets. Leisure uses are particularly well represented, and the presence of venues such as the Picturedrome reinforces the town's appeal as a cultural destination.

Vacancy levels are relatively low, and the compact nature of the town ensures that activity is concentrated, helping to sustain a sense of vibrancy throughout the day. The town's historic

environment, with over ten Grade II listed buildings including the Church of the Holy Trinity, contributes greatly to its character and identity.

Pedestrian activity is steady, with peaks during weekends, school holidays and special events. The riverside setting, compact layout and mix of uses support walkability, though connections between car parks, the retail core and the riverside could be strengthened. Accessibility challenges remain for those with mobility impairments due to steep gradients and uneven footways.

The evening economy is underpinned by the town's strong hospitality and cultural offer, particularly the Picturedrome, but activity is uneven across the centre and can be quieter during midweek evenings. Improving lighting, wayfinding and a broader family-friendly food and leisure offer could help extend activity into the early evening.

Environmental quality is generally high, with attractive stone architecture, riverside views and planting contributing to a positive experience. The Holmfirth Town Centre Access Plan (TCAP), currently under construction, will deliver significant improvements, including a new public square on the former Market Hall site, widened footways, Yorkstone paving, improved lighting and safer crossings. These changes will reinforce Holmfirth's distinctive character while also improving accessibility and sustainability.

Overall, Holmfirth is a vital and viable town centre. Its strong independent retail and leisure base, cultural attractions, heritage assets and ongoing investment through the Blueprint provide a solid foundation for its long-term future as both a thriving community hub and a popular visitor destination.