



HOLMFIRTH TOWN CENTRE ANNUAL STATEMENT OF KEY ECONOMIC INDICATORS SEPTEMBER 2003

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 third 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.

FLOORSPACE, SHOP UNITS AND VACANCY

A survey of occupancy, undertaken in August 2003 recorded that Holmfirth town centre provides a total of 6,612 sq.m. of net retail floorspace (71,145 sq.ft.). The following tables illustrate changes in retail floorspace and shop unit occupancy over the last 4 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%)
2003	1,834 (27.7%)	4,091 (61.9%)	687 (10.4%)	6,612 (100%)

The total retail floorspace in the town centre has decreased by 3.4% during the last 12 months. This is largely due to the change of trade counter retail to industrial uses on Dunford Road and other small scale changes to service use occupancy.

Holmfirth now records a shop unit vacancy rate that is well below the national average. The former Lodges building (483 sq.m.), which straddles the River Holme in Towngate, accounts for as much as 70% of the vacant floorspace in the town centre. There are proposals to refurbish the building to provide a large restaurant. Implementation of such a scheme would dramatically reduce the town's vacancy rate and tidy-up what is an "eye-sore" building.

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

Shop units in Holmfirth town centre

	Convenience	Comparison	Service ³	Vacant	TOTAL
2000	14 (8.1%)	91 (53.0%)	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%)
2003	13 (8.2%)	89 (56.3%)	48 (30.4%)	8 (5.1%)	158 (100%)

Floorspace comparisons (sq.m. net)

	Holmfirth	Cleckheaton	Heckwike	Batley
Convenience	1,834 (27.7%)	1,629 (20.0%)	4,896 (42.8%)	4,479 (19.4%)
Comparison	4,091 (61.9%)	5,315 (65.3%)	4,892 (42.8%)	15,652 (68.0%)
Vacant	687 (10.4%)	1,196 (14.7%)	1,641 (14.4%)	2,904 (12.6%)
Total retail floorspace	6,612 (100%)	8,140 (100%)	11,429 (100%)	23,035 (100%)
No. of vacant units	8 (5.1%)	17 (10.0%)	35 (21.6%)	30 (14.0%)
Total no. of units	158 (100%)	170 (100%)	162 (100%)	214 (100%)

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

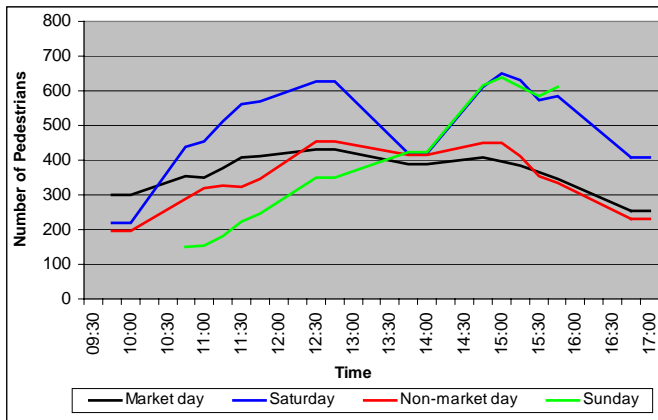
² Comparison goods figures also include A1 uses such as opticians/travel agents etc.

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

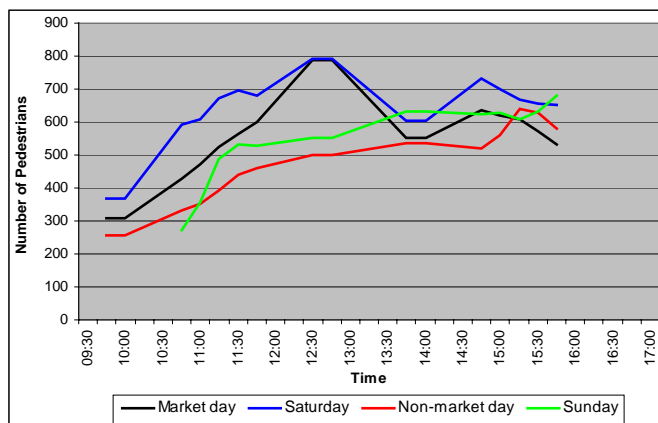
PEDESTRIAN FOOTFALL

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

Total pedestrians: Daily profile: February 2003



Total pedestrians: Daily profile: August 2003



The weekend pedestrian numbers in August have improved on the poor numbers recorded last year, possibly as a result of better weather conditions experienced on the days of the survey. Whilst Saturday still recorded the highest pedestrian numbers, the market day counts also show strong levels of activity.

Sunday pedestrian activity peaks in the afternoon, by which time numbers are comparable with those recorded both on a market day and on a Saturday. Market day attracts a greater number of shoppers/visitors to Holmfirth than a non market day during the Summer. However, there is little difference between the two days during the winter. Whilst shopper numbers in the town centre do peak at lunchtime, this pattern of activity is not as pronounced as many other town centres in the district.

Overall, it can be seen that pedestrian numbers are much higher during the summer, principally as a result of increased tourist activity.

Total Pedestrian Numbers (2 hour counts)

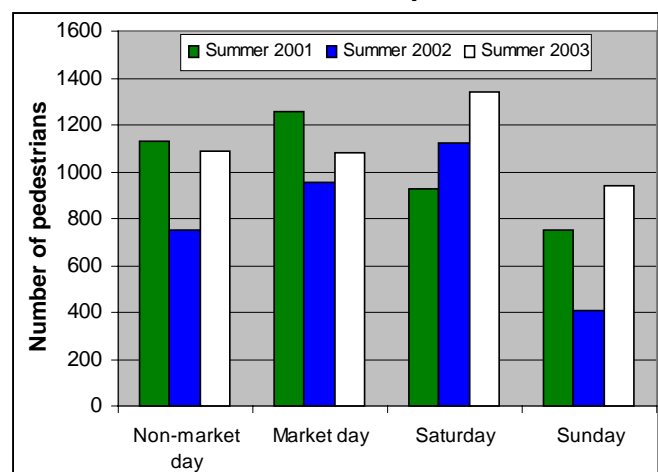
	Non-market 20/8/03	Market Day 21/8/03	Saturday 16/8/03	Sunday 17/8/03
Co-op	398	464	694	618
Cooper Lane Jct	772	764	1150	801
Upperthong Lane Jct	582	344	329	471
Victoria St	1089	1079	1341	941
Hollowgate	674	954	985	707
Dunford Rd	46	80	189	273
Towngate	195	240	89	67
Station Rd	205	536	556	414
TOTAL	3961	4461	5333	4292

The highest pedestrian numbers were once again recorded on Victoria Street, the town's primary shopping frontage. Significant pedestrian numbers were also monitored on Huddersfield Road near Cooper Lane (on a Saturday) and Hollowgate (on market day and Saturday). The Co-op foodstore (especially due to its large 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. There have also been increased pedestrian numbers using the Station Road entrance to the town centre.

The use of public transport to access the town centre remains relatively low, illustrated by the number of pedestrians recorded in Towngate. A recent shoppers survey revealed that only 24% of visitors to the town arrived by bus.

Pedestrian numbers on Victoria Street have increased since last summer when bad weather was a factor. There have been increases in weekend footfall since 2001, although weekday footfall has slightly decreased over this same period.

Victoria Street Footfall Comparisons



DEVELOPMENT PIPELINE

Development since 1990

The town centre of Holmfirth has witnessed a number of significant developments over the last 10 years. These include:

- a) The relocation of the market from Market Street to refurbished premises near Holmfirth Mills on Huddersfield Road,
- b) the construction of a purpose built foodstore for the Co-op on Crown Bottom in 1996,
- c) the conversion of the "Valley Theatre" on Market Walk to provide a cinema (the "Picturedrome"), and,
- d) the strengthening of the bridge on Victoria Street and enhancing streetscape in this area.

Local Public Service Agreement

Holmfirth is one of three towns identified in the Council's Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) with Central Government. In this agreement, the Council has committed itself to a series of 12 "stretched" performance targets aimed at improving the quality of life in the District.

One of the targets involves enhancing the health and vibrancy of Holmfirth, Dewsbury and Huddersfield town centres. As such, extensive streetscape works in Norridge Bottom, Huddersfield Road and Hollowgate are to take place in Holmfirth between now and April 2005 funded by £100,000 LPSA money alongside additional funding from the Council's Local Transport Plan.

Other works

The long-term vacant former Lodges building at Towngate has planning permission for a scheme involving refurbishment to provide 7 retail units and a café/restaurant. More recently plans are being drawn up to refurbish the building as a large restaurant. If this is implemented it would represent an important investment for Holmfirth. There have also been a number of smaller schemes for change of use to retail and service occupancy within the shopping area. The temporary footbridge linking the bus station with the Old Bridge Hotel car park remains. A permanent structure (costing £100,000 from Council funds) will be erected in its place later this year.



Footbridge replacement on Towngate

RETAILER DEMAND

An assessment of retailer demand was undertaken in March 2003. This identified that one business has registered a requirement for representation in Holmfirth. This is a public house with a maximum floorspace requirement of 558 sq.m. (6,000 sq.ft.).

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.

Further demand may also 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.

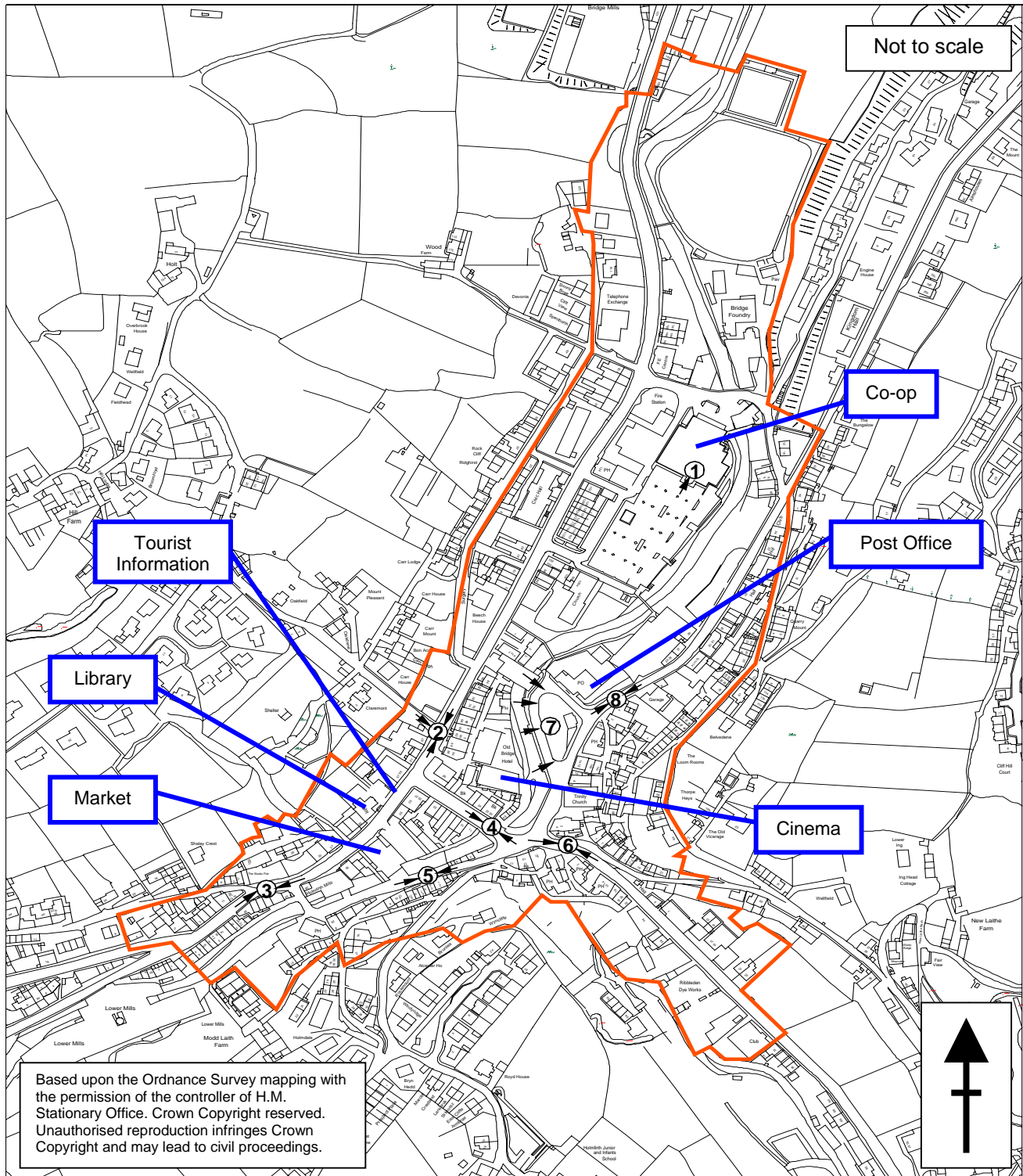
Nevertheless, as with 2002, it would appear that for shop premises in Victoria Street and around the Victoria Street/Huddersfield Road junction rents remain in the region of £12 - £16 per sq.ft. (£129 - £172 per sq.m.). In peripheral shopping locations, rents can fall to just £5 per sq.ft. (£54 per sq.m.).

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 the market and "Nora Batty's steps".



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.

HOLMFIRTH STUDY AREA BOUNDARY AND PEDESTRIAN COUNT LOCATIONS



KEY:

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)



Kirklees
METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

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