

HOLMFIRTH TOWN CENTRE

ANNUAL STATEMENT OF KEY ECONOMIC INDICATORS

OCTOBER 2007

INTRODUCTION

The health and vitality of shopping centres in the Kirklees District is monitored on an annual basis through the Town Centre Audit Programme undertaken by the Council's Planning Service. Performance data is collected and analysed to allow the role of individual town centres to be assessed and to identify scope for change, renewal and diversification.

Since 2000, the performance of Holmfirth Town Centre has been assessed against the following 6 key economic indicators:

- Shop unit and floorspace occupancy
- Vacancy rates
- Pedestrian footfall
- Development activity
- Demand for representation
- Prime retail rental levels

The accessibility of the town and the use of car parks within the study area have also been addressed in this document.

FLOORSPACE, SHOP UNITS AND VACANCY RATES

A shop unit occupancy survey was undertaken within the Holmfirth study area in August 2007. This recorded 6,425 sq.m (69,133 sq.ft) of net retail floorspace and 152 shop units. Figure 1 shows the breakdown of units and floorspace in the town compared to 2006.

Figure 1: Holmfirth shop unit and floorspace statistics

	2006		2007		% change 06-07	
	Sales floor space sq.m	Shop units	Sales floor space sq.m	Shop units	Sales floor space	Shop units
Convenience (food)	1,509 (22.8%)	9 (5.8%)	1,509 (23.5%)	9 (5.9%)	0	0
Comparison ¹ (non-food)	4,000 (60.5%)	86 (55.8%)	3,991 (62.1%)	86 (56.6%)	-0.2	0
Service	N/A	45 (29.2%)	N/A	43 (28.3%)	N/A	-4.4
Vacant	467 (7.1%)	11 (7.1%)	343 (5.3%)	10 (6.6%)	-26.6	-9.1
Under refurbishment	639 (9.7%)	3 (1.9%)	582 (9.1%)	4 (2.6%)	-8.9	+33.3
TOTAL	6,615 (100%)	154 (100%)	6,425 (100%)	152 (100%)	-2.9	-1.3

Convenience goods provision has remained the same within the study area during the last 12 months. Although the number of comparison units has also remained the same, there has been significant movement within the study boundary. A number of new independent retailers have opened since the 2006 survey including Occasions, on Victoria Street and Bikes for All at Stable Court.

The number of units under refurbishment has increased by 1. However, floorspace has decreased as units which were under refurbishment at the time of last years survey are now trading. These include the Indya Restaurant, Stable Court and Chillout Therapies, Huddersfield Road.

The 2007 vacancy rate within the study boundary is well below the national average for that of an average UK town as demonstrated by figure 2. Other town centre uses represented in Holmfirth such as financial services have fallen below the national average this year. However, other comparison goods retailers, which includes gift shops and arts & crafts, remains well above the national average reflecting the nature of Holmfirth as a tourist destination.

Figure 2: Comparison with national averages and trend since 2006²

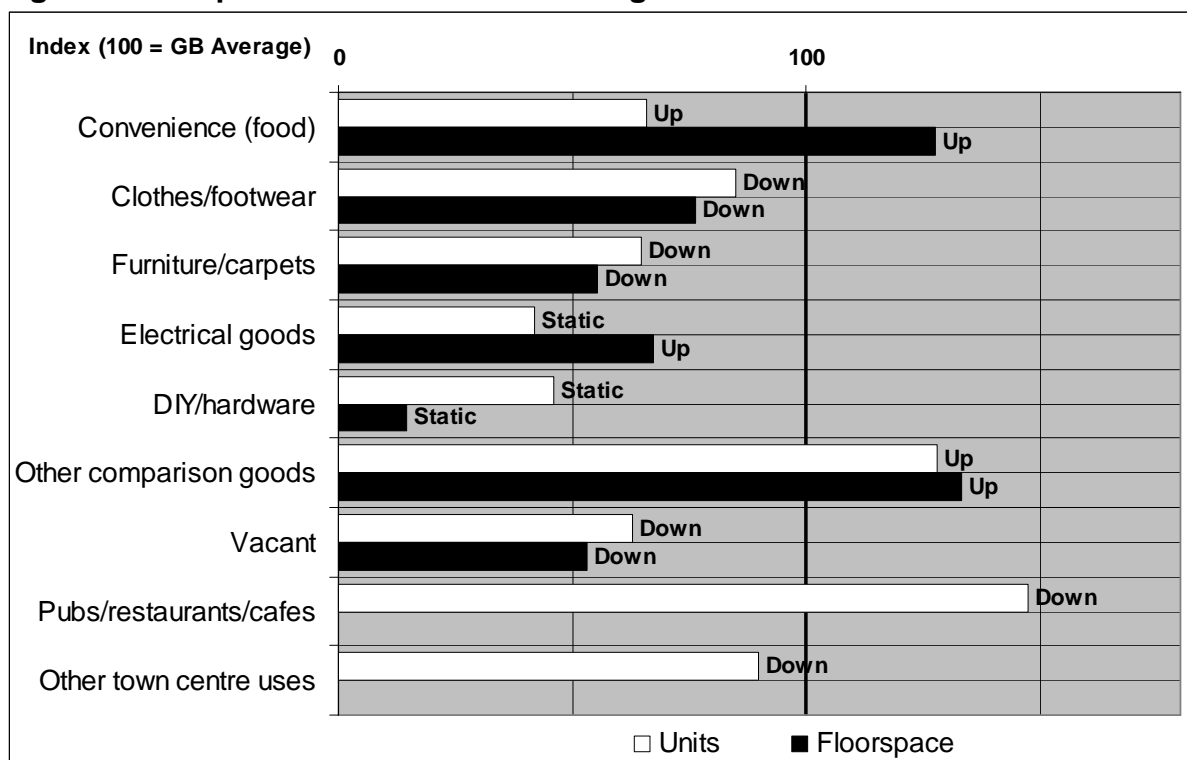


Figure 3: Comparisons with other Kirklees towns³

	Holmfirth	Batley	Heckwike	Dewsbury	Cleckheaton
Convenience	1,509 (23.5%)	7,420 (25.9%)	4,914 (44.2%)	9,923 (20.4%)	1,927 (23.4%)
Comparison	3,991 (62.1%)	19,692 (68.8%)	4,543 (40.8%)	33,220 (68.1%)	5,085 (61.9%)
Vacant	343 (5.3%)	1,441 (5.0%)	1,549 (13.9%)	5,520 (11.3%)	1,211 (14.7%)
Under refurbishment	582 (9.1%)	76 (0.3%)	118 (1.1%)	94 (0.2%)	0 (0%)
Total retail floorspace	6,425 (100%)	28,629 (100%)	11,124 (100%)	48,757 (100%)	8,223 (100%)
Vacant units	10 (6.6%)	20 (9.6%)	36 (23.7%)	49 (14.2%)	20 (12.1%)
Units under refurbishment	4 (2.6%)	1 (0.5%)	1 (0.7%)	3 (0.9%)	0 (0%)
Total no. of units	152 (100%)	209 (100%)	152 (100%)	344 (100%)	165 (100%)

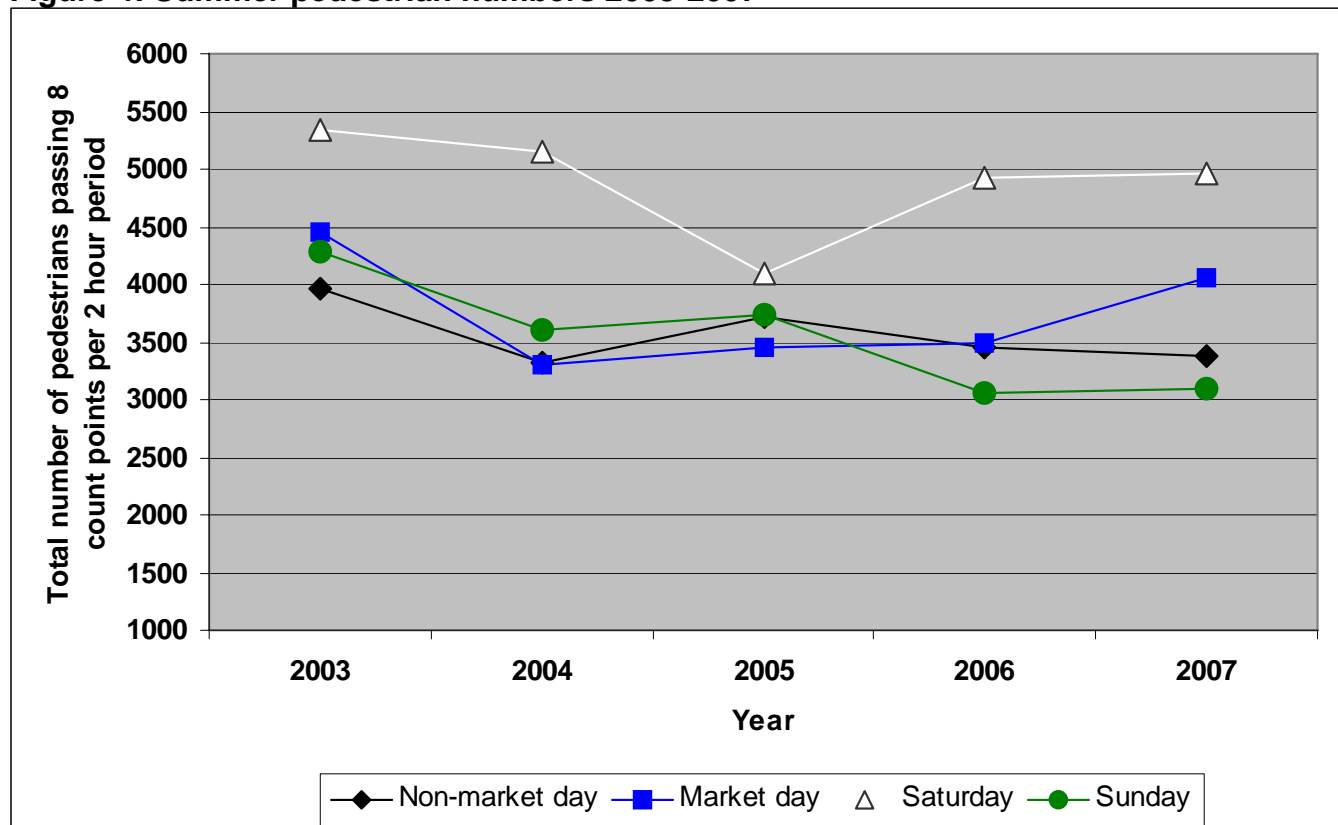
The floorspace, shop unit and vacancy figures for Holmfirth have been compared to other towns in the Kirklees District and are shown in figure 3. This highlights that within the town centre study boundaries, Holmfirth has the highest number of buildings under refurbishment and the lowest unit vacancy rate. This suggests that there is a good level of investment in the town. However, the old Lodges building on Towngate has been under refurbishment for over 12 months. Its progress will continue to be monitored.

PEDESTRIAN FOOTFALL

The volume and pattern of movement of visitors and shoppers in Holmfirth town centre have been monitored twice annually since 2000. Nine count locations (including a new point introduced in 2004) are assessed covering primary and secondary shopping frontages, key pedestrian routes and access points into the town. These are shown on the map on page 7. Assessments of pedestrian numbers are undertaken during March and August in order to compare the summer tourist season with the 'normal' visitor patterns generated by local residents. Pedestrian numbers are measured on 2 weekdays (including a Thursday market day), a Saturday and a Sunday.

Overall, 2007 summer pedestrian numbers recorded an increase of 3.9% on the previous year. Only slight changes in visitor numbers were recorded for Saturday and Sunday which registered small increases, with a small decrease noted on non-market day. Market day recorded a significant increase in pedestrian numbers compared to those recorded over the last three years as shown in figure 4.

Figure 4: Summer pedestrian numbers 2003-2007 ⁴



Figures for the individual count locations in both winter and summer over each 4 day period are detailed in figure 5. This highlights the most popular street in Holmfirth during both the winter and summer counts is Victoria Street as in previous years. Victoria Street is in the centre of the main shopping area and links Huddersfield Road with Towngate. The pedestrian numbers recorded on a weekday in winter are significantly less than those recorded on weekday in summer. This can be contributed in part to tourists visiting Holmfirth. It is interesting to note that the Sunday count in March recorded a higher number of pedestrians than the Sunday count in August, however, the weather may have been a contributing factor.

Figure 5: Street by street pedestrian numbers 2007 ⁵

Day	Non-Market Day		Market Day		Saturday		Sunday	
Month	March	August	March	August	March	August	March	August
Weather	Dry/ Cold	Dry/ Sunny	Dry/ Cold	Hot/ Sunny	Dry/ Cold	Hot/ Sunny	Dry/ Cold	Showers
1. Co-op (in only)	356	219	420	905	607	597	557	378
2. Cooper Lane jct.	446	567	554	802	954	1080	506	576
3. Upperthong Lane jct.	245	449	322	338	470	444	323	469
4. Victoria Street	658	1021	598	909	886	1266	665	617
5. Hollowgate	407	595	343	487	843	707	624	521
6. Dunford Road	78	78	64	159	204	293	165	115
7. Towngate (in only)	50	101	105	94	71	185	27	154
8. Station Road	192	340	198	360	430	397	368	270
TOTAL	2432	3370	2314	4054	4465	4969	3235	3100
9. Footbridge (Hotel)	224	374	241	482	498	550	206	346

ACCESSIBILITY

Town centres should be well served by a choice of means of transport including public transport, provision for pedestrians and cyclists and access to car parking as set out in Government guidance, Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres.

Public Transport and Cycling

Holmfirth bus station is centrally located in the town centre adjacent to the main shopping area. Regular bus services connect the centre to Huddersfield, Penistone and Barnsley. A rural bus service also operates Mondays to Saturdays linking the town centre to villages in the surrounding local area. On Sundays and bank holidays, buses run from Holmfirth to Sheffield, Glossop and Buxton in the peak district.

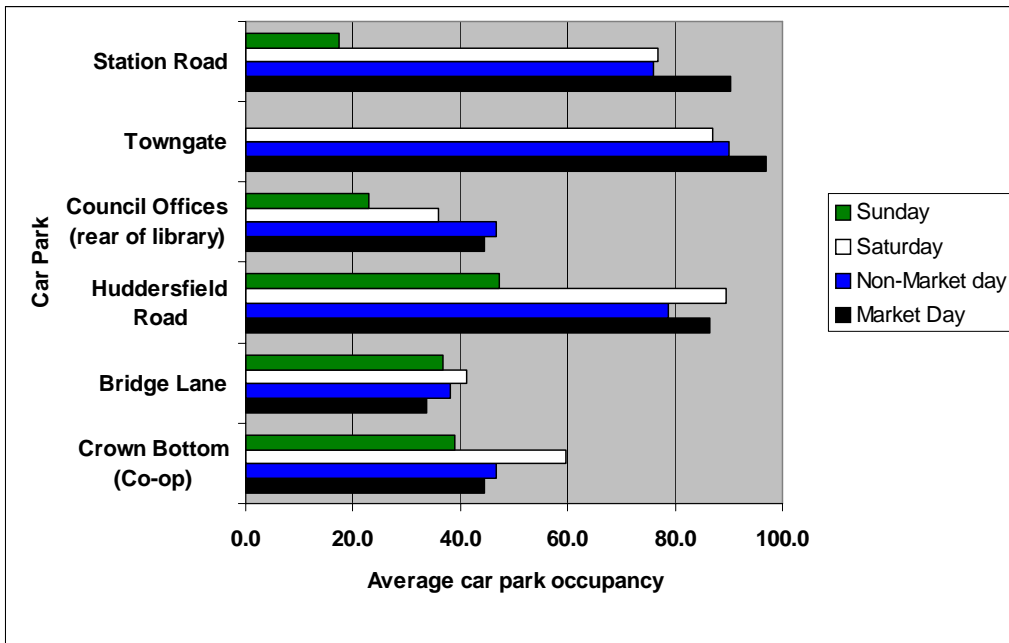
A long distance on-road cycle route, National Cycle Network 68 (the Pennine Cycleway) is routed through Holmfirth town centre. Free cycle parking facilities are available at the Bus Station and on the corner of the junction of Hollowgate/Victoria Street.

Car parking

Within the town centre study boundary, there are 6 council car parks available for use providing 400 spaces. Of those, 21 are disabled bays. Car parking charges range from a minimum of 20p for 30 minutes to £2.80 for all day. Disabled drivers can use any of the car parks free of charge. Coach parking is available at Sands car park, Huddersfield Road, approx 1km. walking distance from Victoria Street in the centre of Holmfirth.

A snapshot of car park use in Holmfirth is undertaken on the same days as pedestrian footfall. In August 2007, the short stay car parks at Towngate and Huddersfield Road within the main shopping area recorded a high percentage of occupancy on all the days surveyed, with the exception of Sunday as shown in figure 6.

Figure 6: August 2007 Car Park Occupancy



It was noted that Sunday car park occupancy rates significantly increased during the afternoon. Towngate car park is currently used to site a general open market on Sunday and is therefore unavailable for car parking during this time.

Station Road long stay car park recorded high levels of use during the weekdays and on a Saturday. This may suggest the car park is used by people working in the town.

DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENT ACTIVITY

During the last 12 months, Holmfirth has seen little development activity. However, various forms of investment are currently in the pipeline. Planning permission has been granted for a change of use from retail (A1) to restaurant (A3) at both 5 and 9 Upper Bridge, Huddersfield Road. The former laundrette on Rotcher Road has also been granted planning permission for a change of use to a coffee bar (A3). When these permissions have been implemented, it will increase the service uses within the town. The existing ice cream parlour on Huddersfield Road has had a planning application approved to extend into the adjacent premises at each side of the retail outlet. These buildings were previously used as a dental surgery and a takeaway.

In August of this year, work had started on a 3 storey mixed use development on Huddersfield Road at the junction of Cooper Lane which was granted planning permission in September 2006. The development will comprise of 4 units at ground level accommodating 2 shop units (A1), 1 for financial services (A2) and 1 office unit (B1). The first and second floors will provide 8 dwellings with car parking at the rear of the building.

The Nook public house in Victoria Square has been granted planning permission for the erection of a small micro brewery at the rear of the premises.



DEMAND FOR REPRESENTATION

A general assessment of demand for retail and leisure floorspace in Holmfirth town centre was undertaken in October 2007. There are currently 4 registered interests in the town, comprising of 2 convenience goods retailers, 1 clothing/footwear retailer and 1 in the personal retail services sector. This is an increase of 1 from last year's assessment. All the interests would be new to the town and would occupy approx 1030 sq.m. of sales floorspace.

It is worth noting that further requirements may exist from other retailers who wish to be represented in the town or who are already present and require larger or improved premises. Furthermore, this assessment does not take account of demand from financial, professional or other commercial uses.

PRIME RETAIL RENTAL LEVELS

During the 12 months to May 2007, the average UK prime retail rent rose by 2.9%. This rate of growth represents a weakening of the market which has seen slowing growth rates for 3 consecutive years. In the Yorkshire and Humber region, rental gain during the same period reached only 1.5% compared to the 4.0% of the previous year.

A 2007 review of the rental levels in Holmfirth Town Centre has been undertaken by Colliers CRE on behalf of the Council. This has identified that the prime retail rental level on Victoria Street has remained the same as the previous year at £294 per sq m. (£27.30 per sq. ft). However, there are indications that one of the vacant units on Victoria Street may reach a rental level that equates to £323 per sq.m (£30 per sq.ft) once let.

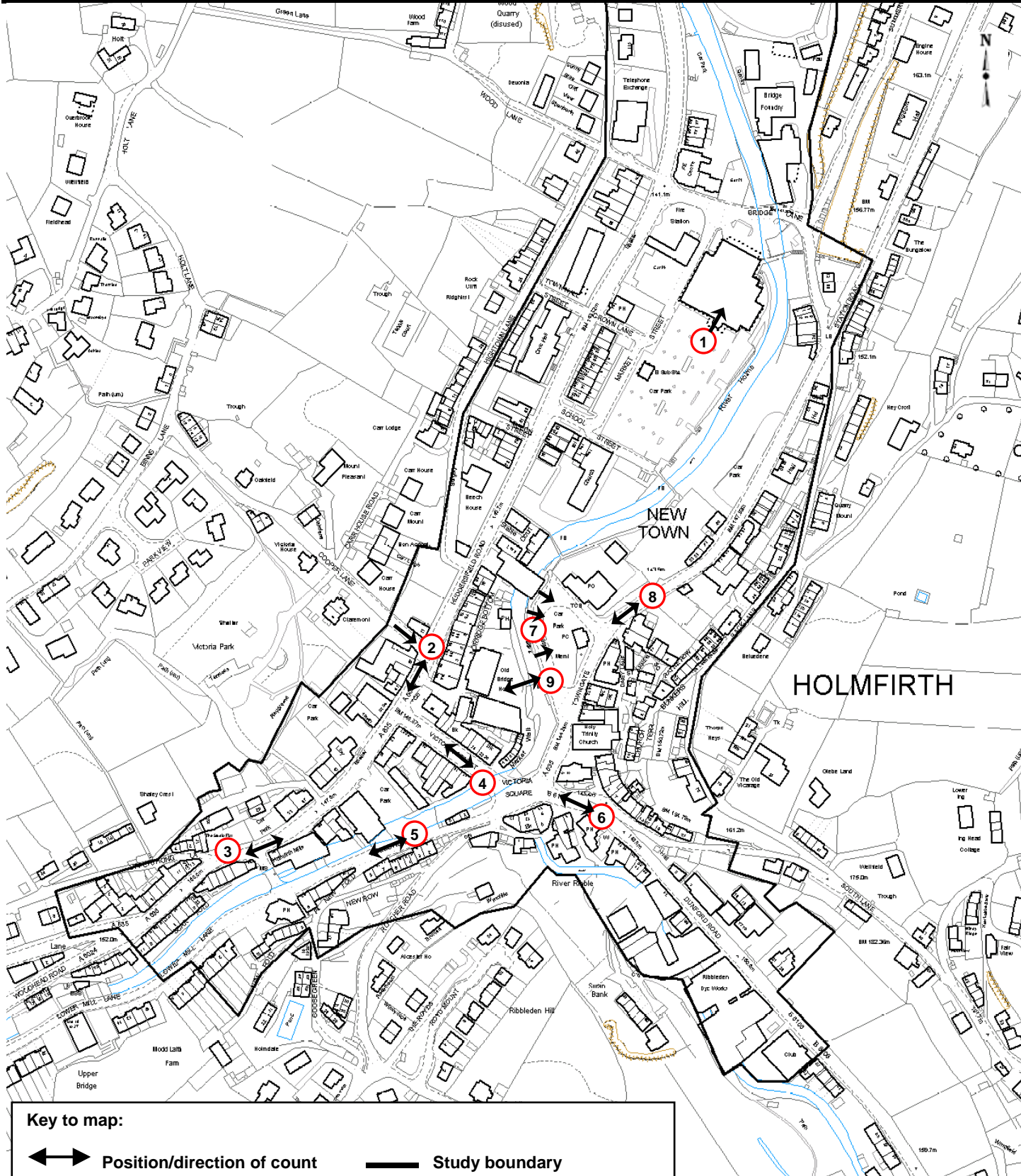


Notes:

- ¹ The comparison goods (non-food) category includes A1 uses such as opticians, travel agents and hairdressers etc.
- ² Based on the UK average, where 100 represents the average proportion of floorspace or number of units for certain categories of use in a UK town, not including markets.
- ³ Figures relate to activity within the Town Centre Audit Study Boundary of each centre at the most recent published date.
- ⁴ These figures include snapshots of only count points 1 to 8 for historical comparison.
- ⁵ Showing total numbers over 2 hour-long samples taken in the morning and afternoon including movement in all directions unless otherwise stated. The hotel footbridge is excluded from the total due to being new in 2004.

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

HOLMFIRTH TOWN CENTRE PEDESTRIAN COUNT POINTS



Key to map:

↔ Position/direction of count — Study boundary

- 1 – Co-op main entrance (in only)
- 2 – Huddersfield Rd/Cooper La jct (3 ways)
- 3 – Upperthong La/Huddersfield Rd jct
- 4 – Victoria St
- 5 – Hollowgate
- 6 – Dunford Rd
- 7 – Towngate (people entering town by bus/coach)
- 8 – Station Rd
- 9 – Footbridge (new in 2004)

NOT TO SCALE

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