SHREWSBURY BID

Rally weekend 2026: impact on Shrewsbury town centre

Evidence for Shropshire Council Scrutiny Committee

Summary

The rally's ceremonial start drew slightly more people than a typical Saturday into Shrewsbury town centre on 19 September, but they spent less per purchase and the rest of the weekend was weak. Across Friday to Sunday, town-centre card spend was 8% lower than the same weekend in 2025.

- **Footfall was up on last year but close to a normal Saturday.** The cameras recorded 46,511 visits, 23% more than the same day in 2025 (a weak day) but only 2% more than a typical Saturday this autumn. There was a small lift between 5pm and 9pm, but none after 9pm.
- **Saturday spend was up on last year but not on a normal Saturday.** Card sales were £668k, 13% higher than the same Saturday in 2025. Against a typical Saturday at this time of year, sales were 3% lower, customers 7% higher and the average transaction 11% smaller.
- **Sunday was the weakest Sunday of August and September.** Sales were £214k, 27% below a typical Sunday. It was sunny and dry, so weather does not explain the drop. The competitive stages ran in south Shropshire, so the rally gave visitors no reason to come into town that day.
- **Compared with other town events this year, the rally did less to lift town-centre trade.** Loopfest, the Folk Festival and the midweek Christmas events lifted sales by 28% to 94% on their best days. Rally Saturday was slightly below normal, at 3% under a typical Saturday.

Data and method

The report uses two independent datasets held by Shrewsbury BID.

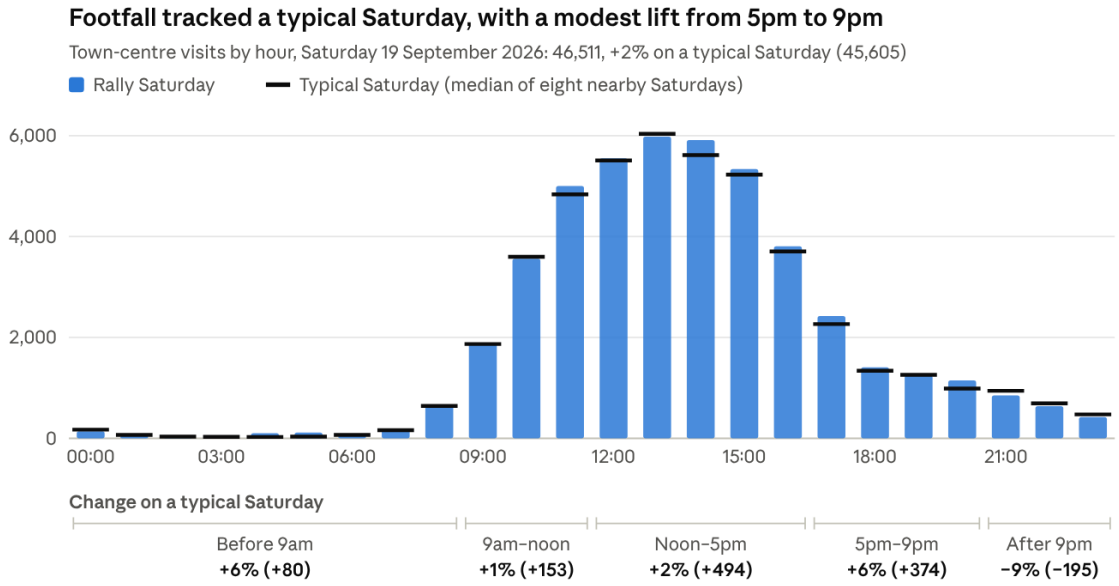
Source	What it measures	Coverage
Springboard footfall cameras	People passing the cameras on High Street and Pride Hill, counted in both directions	Hourly, Fridays and Saturdays, December 2024 to October 2026
Beauclair card spend	Card sales, transactions, customers and average transaction value (ATV) across Shrewsbury	Daily, 1 September 2025 to 30 September 2026

The report uses three comparisons:

- **Against a typical same day.** Each event day is compared with the median of the same day of the week over the four weeks before and after it. A Saturday is compared with nearby Saturdays, for example. This removes the normal weekly pattern and most seasonal drift.
- **Against the same day last year.** For the rally, this is Saturday 20 September 2025, the date-aligned Saturday used by Springboard.
- **Against other town events.** All 14 event days in the Beauclair data are measured against a typical same day in the same way.

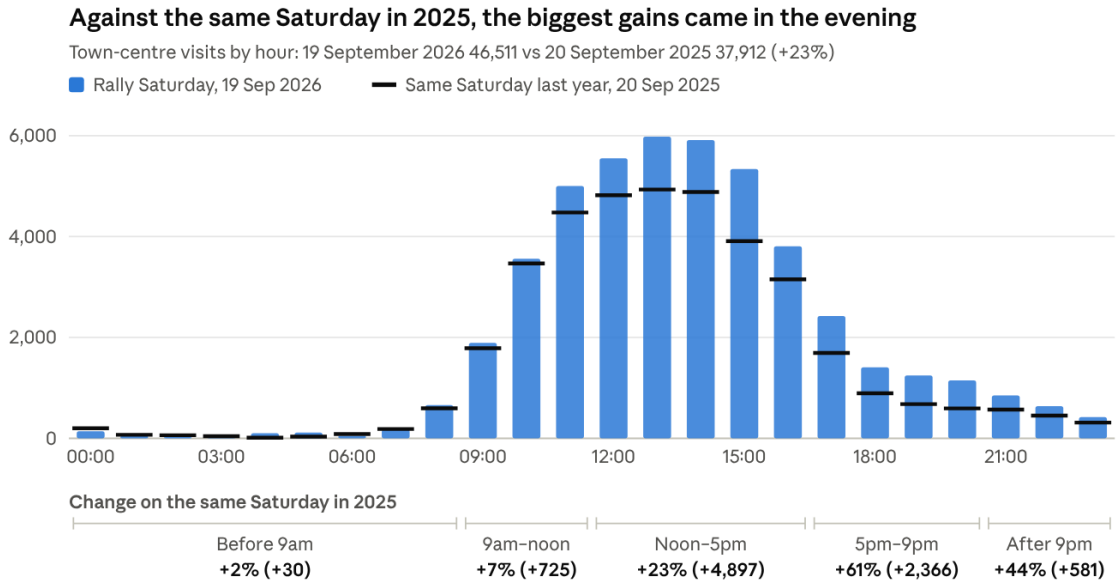
Footfall on rally Saturday

The town-centre cameras recorded 46,511 visits on Saturday 19 September: 23% more than the same day in 2025, but only 2% more than a typical Saturday this autumn. The year-on-year rise mostly reflects a weak comparison. At 37,912 visits, 20 September 2025 was the quietest Saturday in September.



Hour by hour, the day followed the normal Saturday pattern, with no clear spike around the ceremonial start. The early evening was a little busier than usual, but visitors did not stay on: after 9pm the town was quieter than on a typical Saturday. The small rise between 4am and 6am may reflect event set-up rather than visitors.

Against the same Saturday last year, the picture looks much stronger, especially later in the day:

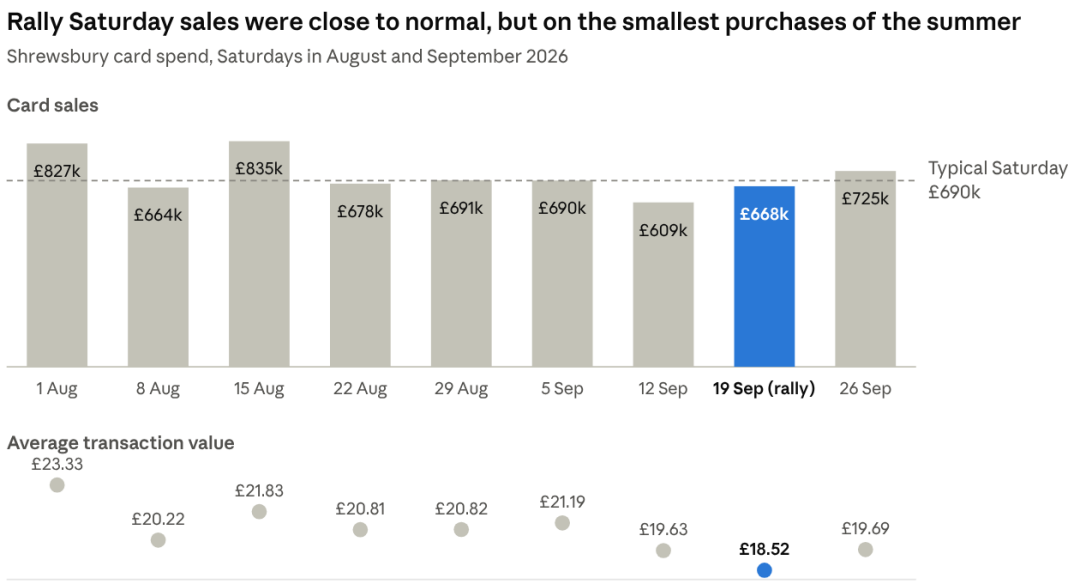


Springboard footfall cameras, High Street and Pride Hill combined · hourly counts supplied by Shrewsbury BID

Visits between 5pm and 9pm were 61% higher than on 20 September 2025, and visits after 9pm 44% higher. Most of this gap comes from last year's day being unusually quiet in the afternoon and evening, not from an exceptional 2026. Compared with a typical Saturday, the 2026 evening was only 6% busier. Members should read the year-on-year chart alongside the typical-Saturday chart above it.

Card spend on rally Saturday

Card sales on rally Saturday were £668k: 13% more than the same Saturday in 2025, with 21% more customers and 23% more transactions. Against a typical Saturday at this time of year, sales were 3% lower.



Beauclair Ltd card spend, Shrewsbury · typical Saturday = median of the five Saturdays within four weeks of the rally

The rally brought more buyers, not bigger spending. Customers were 7% above a typical Saturday, but the average transaction was 11% lower, at £18.52. This is the pattern of spectators buying coffee, food and drink rather than shopping. The same pattern appears on other large spectator Saturdays, such as the Food Festival and the Regatta.

The 13% year-on-year rise needs care. The equivalent Saturday in 2025 was weak, at £590k, and September 2026 as a whole was 12% down on the previous year.

The weekend as a whole

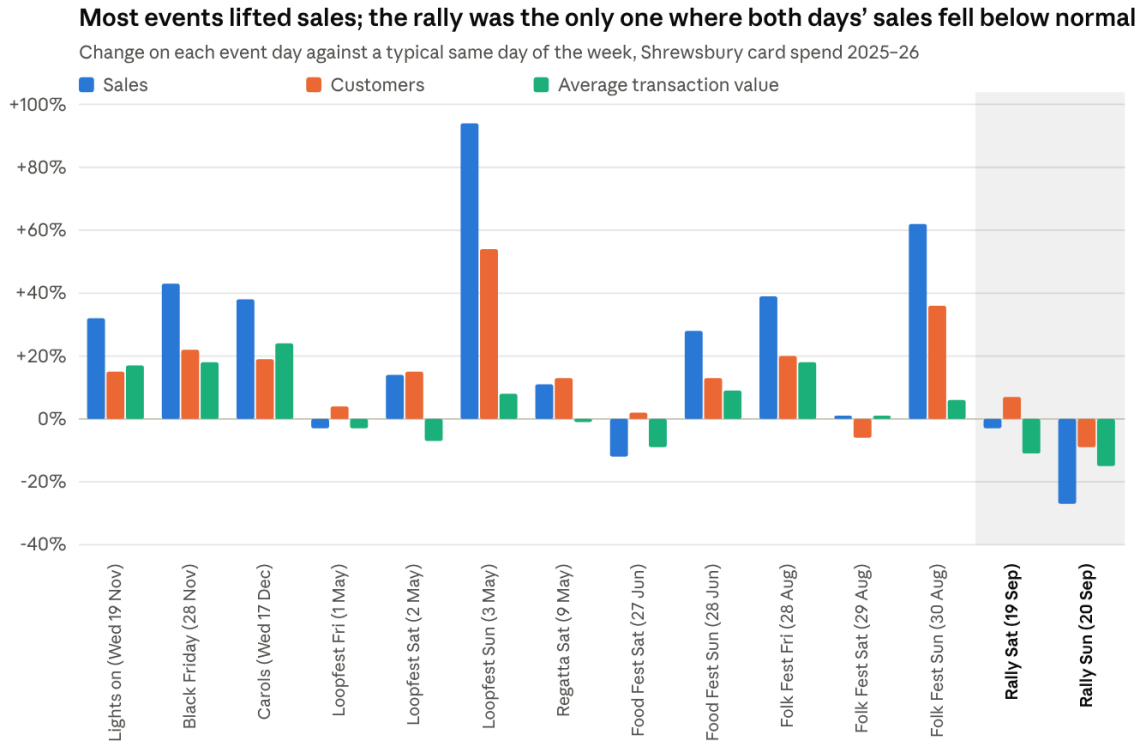
Across Friday to Sunday, the town took £1.325m in card sales: 8% less than the same weekend in 2025, on 2% more transactions. Saturday's gain was outweighed by a weak Friday and a much weaker Sunday.

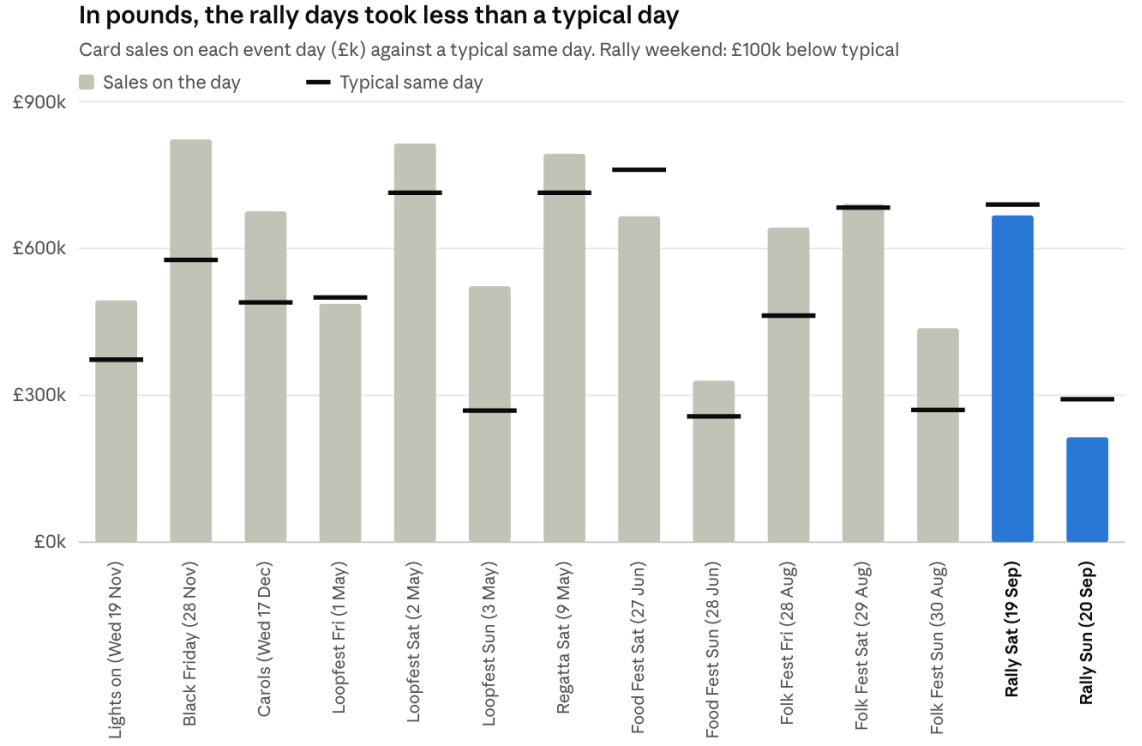
Day	Sales	vs typical same day	vs same day 2025	Transactions vs 2025
Fri 18 Sep	£442k	−2%	−22%	−9%
Sat 19 Sep	£668k	−3%	+13%	+23%
Sun 20 Sep	£214k	−27%	−24%	−19%
Weekend	**£1.325m**		**−8%**	**+2%**

The Friday before the rally was close to normal for the time of year. Sunday 20 September was the weakest Sunday in August and September 2026, with sales about £78k below a typical Sunday.

How the rally compares with other town events

Of the eight events measured in 2025–26, the rally did least for town-centre trade. Its two days together took about £100k less than a typical Saturday and Sunday. By contrast, the Folk Festival and Loopfest weekends each added roughly £340k to £350k.





Beauclair Ltd card spend, Shrewsbury

Implications and recommendations

The evidence supports the rally returning, but with more of it in the town centre. Its benefit to Shrewsbury trade was limited by format: footfall and customer numbers edged above a normal Saturday, but visitors did not stay into the evening and Sunday had no town-centre activity.

The BID asks the committee to consider the following:

1. **Seek a longer town-centre presence if the rally returns**. Options include the service park, a fan zone, a finish or a Sunday return in Shrewsbury.
2. **Require post-event evidence against claimed benefits.** The organisers estimated more than £500k for the county. Organisers of approved events should report afterwards on accommodation, spending and visitor origin so that estimates can be checked.
3. **Use the BID's data in evaluation.** Shrewsbury BID can supply footfall and card-spend analysis for any town-centre event on the method set out here.
4. **Back the event formats that work.** Multi-venue events held inside the town and midweek evening events have produced the strongest uplifts this year.

Limitations

These findings show what happened in the town centre over the rally weekend, but they cannot prove the rally caused every change.

- **Footfall counts passes, not people.** The cameras count each time someone passes in either direction, so one visitor can be counted more than once.
- **Smaller baseline for the rally.** The card data ends on 30 September 2026, so the rally's typical-day figures use five comparison days instead of the usual eight. They are less robust than those for other events.
- **Choice of comparison year.** The equivalent Saturday in 2025 (20 September) was a weak day, which flatters year-on-year growth. Against the same trading week (Saturday 13 September 2025), footfall rose 8% and Saturday sales fell 13%.
- **Other factors.** Weather is described from an hourly record for the weekend only and is not modelled statistically. The wider September slowdown, with sales 12% down on September 2025, is not controlled for.

Sources

- Springboard footfall reports for Shrewsbury: hourly counts for Fridays and Saturdays, December 2024 to October 2026, with published comparisons against 2025 and 2024. Supplied by Shrewsbury BID.
- Beauclair Ltd, Shrewsbury daily card spend, 1 September 2025 to 30 September 2026. Supplied by Shrewsbury BID.
- Shropshire Council, Hills Ford Stages Rally – road closures and further information, 10 September 2026.
- Greatest Hits Radio, Shropshire car rally given green light despite concerns, 11 June 2026.
- Hourly weather record for Shrewsbury, 18–20 September 2026. Supplied by Shrewsbury BID.