

Bridgnorth: Town Centre Audit Analysis, 2023



Published November 2023

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Introduction

An audit of businesses operating in Bridgnorth's main shopping streets was undertaken in September 2023 as part of an on-going piece of research reviewing the vibrancy of Shropshire's main market towns and key settlements. Bridgnorth centre was first audited in May 2019 and then again in September 2020, 2021 and 2022. The objective of these audits is to provide a snapshot of the vitality of the town by investigating:

- The range and diversity of the retail offer
- The number and types of non-retail businesses operating
- The number and location of vacant properties
- Distinctive characteristics within the town, for example a strong tourism offer or a high penetration of "low end" traders
- The amount, location and type of domestic residences in the centre of the town

The research also aims to monitor change over time. The functionality of the High Street has been changing for some time, and through 2020 and 2021 the coronavirus pandemic has posed additional challenges to High Street businesses. The 2020 audits for all towns took place in September, following the first national lockdown. Non-essential retail and hospitality businesses were able to trade at this time (albeit with strict social distancing measures in place). The 2021 audits also took place when High Street businesses were able to trade. By 2022 High Streets were trading normally with no Covid-19 restrictions, but the cost of living crisis was gathering pace. Inflation was elevated in 2023, which has also impacted people's spending power.

Key Findings

- 251 commercial units, occupying approximately 35,000m² gross floor space
- Amongst the largest centres in Shropshire, accounting for almost one in ten of all Shropshire High Street traders
- Higher than average number of stores per head of population at a rate of 20 units per 1000 population (average 13 for Shropshire)
- Average store size 140m²—close to the Shropshire average (147m²)
- 356 residential premises in the main shopping area, giving a ratio of 0.7:1 commercial versus residential properties
- Bridgnorth had a 15% business churn rate between 2022 and 2023. This compares with 14% in 2022, 11% in 2021 and 19% in 2020. Since 2019, churn has been higher in Bridgnorth than in any Shropshire towns except Market Drayton and Ellesmere.
- 10% of all commercial premises were vacant in 2022 which is aligned to the Shropshire average. While it represents a slight decrease over 2022, since 2019 the number of vacancies has risen fourfold.
- Comparison retail accounts for the largest share of business premises, although the sector has contracted since 2019
- Tourism businesses are also well-represented, with much of the comparison retail offer also adding to Bridgnorth's appeal as a tourism destination.

Methodology Statement

Only the main retail centre of the town was surveyed, as shown on Map 4.

Both retail and non-retail businesses will be operating in other parts of the town.

All commercial premises within the defined area were audited, and classified as:

- Comparison Retail—defined as stores selling non-food/drink/tobacco products
- Convenience Retail—defined as stores selling food/drink/tobacco products
- Retail Service— defined as stores selling a service rather than a product, such as hair dressers or travel agents
- Financial & Business Services — for example, banks, solicitors, accountants, estate agents
- Health - including dentists, health centres, GP practices, alternative therapies
- Restaurants & Takeaways—including cafés and tea rooms
- Tourism & Leisure—hotels and public houses/bars as well as visitor attractions and cultural assets
- Education & Community Facilities—including schools, colleges, libraries, community centres
- Other Non-Retail
- Vacant

Gross floor space was matched to each premise using OS Master Map. It should be noted, that where two outlets shared the same premise (as shown on Master Map) an assumption was made that both occupied the same amount of floor space. For multi-storey buildings occupied by multiple businesses, it is assumed that all floors have the same gross space. Unless it is clear that a single business occupies more than one floor of a building, it has been assumed that it occupies only one floor. This means that in some cases, gross floor space may be under-estimated as some traders use upper floors for storage. No estimate relating to net floor space has been made.

Businesses occupying above ground floor level premises have only been included in this audit if their presence is clear from street level (by door signs or external hoardings for example). It is likely, therefore, that some non-consumer businesses operating in the area may have been missed.

Premises are assumed to have changed hands if their name or function has changed since the 2022 audit. In some cases though, ownership may be unchanged but the business has been rebranded or renamed.

An estimate of the number of domestic residences in the main retail centre has been made using OS Address Base (complete version) using all residential classification codes.

Retail Centre Hierarchy

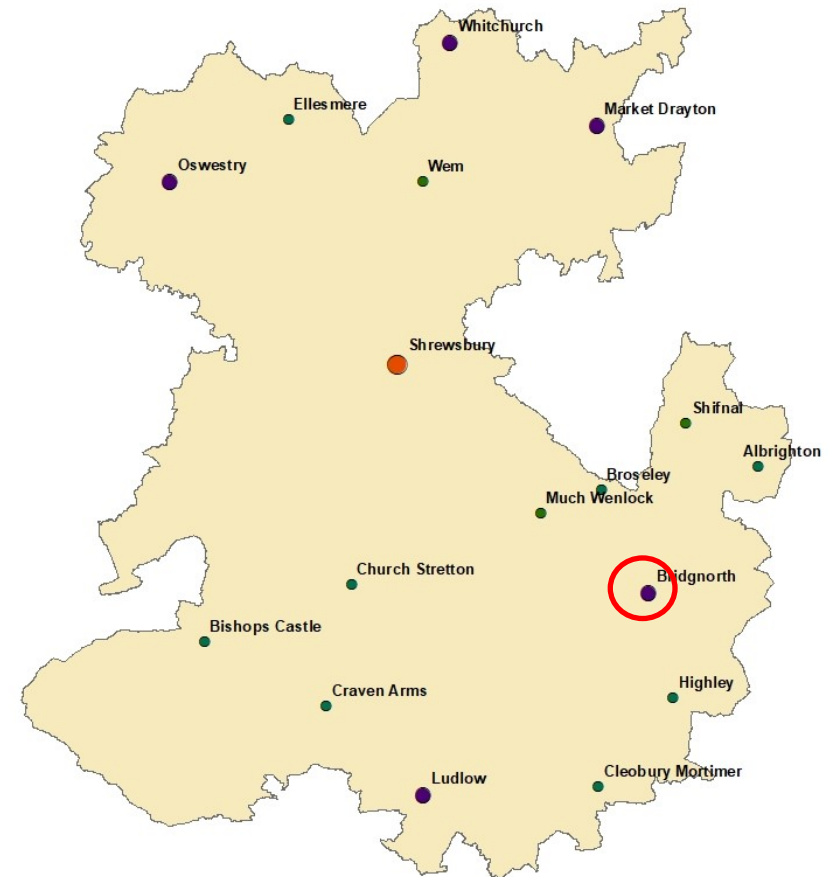
Town centres represent important employment, entertainment and shopping hubs for their local population and hinterland. They also represent an important component of the visitor economy.

However, not all centres have comparable functions. Larger centres tend to attract workers and shoppers from much further afield than smaller centres, and consequently offer a much greater volume and variety of retail trade and consumer and business services.

In order to benchmark Shropshire towns against each other in an appropriate manner, the following hierarchy has been adopted:

- Tier 1: Shrewsbury
- Tier 2: **Bridgnorth**
Ludlow
Oswestry
Market Drayton
Whitchurch
- Tier 3: Albrighton
Bishops Castle
Broseley
Church Stretton
Cleobury Mortimer
Craven Arms
Ellesmere
Highley
Much Wenlock
Shifnal
Wem

Map 1: Shropshire's Main Retail Centres



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Bridgnorth is amongst the largest retail centres in Shropshire. It is smaller than Oswestry, around the same size as Ludlow and notably larger than either Market Drayton or Whitchurch.

About Bridgnorth

Bridgnorth is located in the south east of Shropshire close to the border with Telford & Wrekin, Wolverhampton and Worcestershire. The River Severn divides the town into High Town and Low Town, each linked by ancient donkey steps and the Bridgnorth Cliff Railway. The Railway opened in 1892 and is the steepest inland funicular in England. Today the town has a population of 11,853 and 5,562 households (*2021 Census*). The town's population has declined by almost 2% since 2011. It is the third largest town in the county behind Shrewsbury and Oswestry.

Bridgnorth is on the A458 which links west to Shrewsbury (22 miles) and east to Stourbridge (16 miles) and towards Birmingham (29 miles). The A442 heads north to Telford (12 miles) and south to Kidderminster (15 miles). The A454 provides a direct link east to Wolverhampton (14 miles). Bridgnorth is not located on the main railway network. The Severn Valley Steam Railway does provide services to Kidderminster where connections can be made to mainline services, although its function is primarily leisure/tourism. The nearest mainline railway station is in Shifnal (11 miles) which provides connections to Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton. The total population within a 10 mile radius is approximately 141,100.

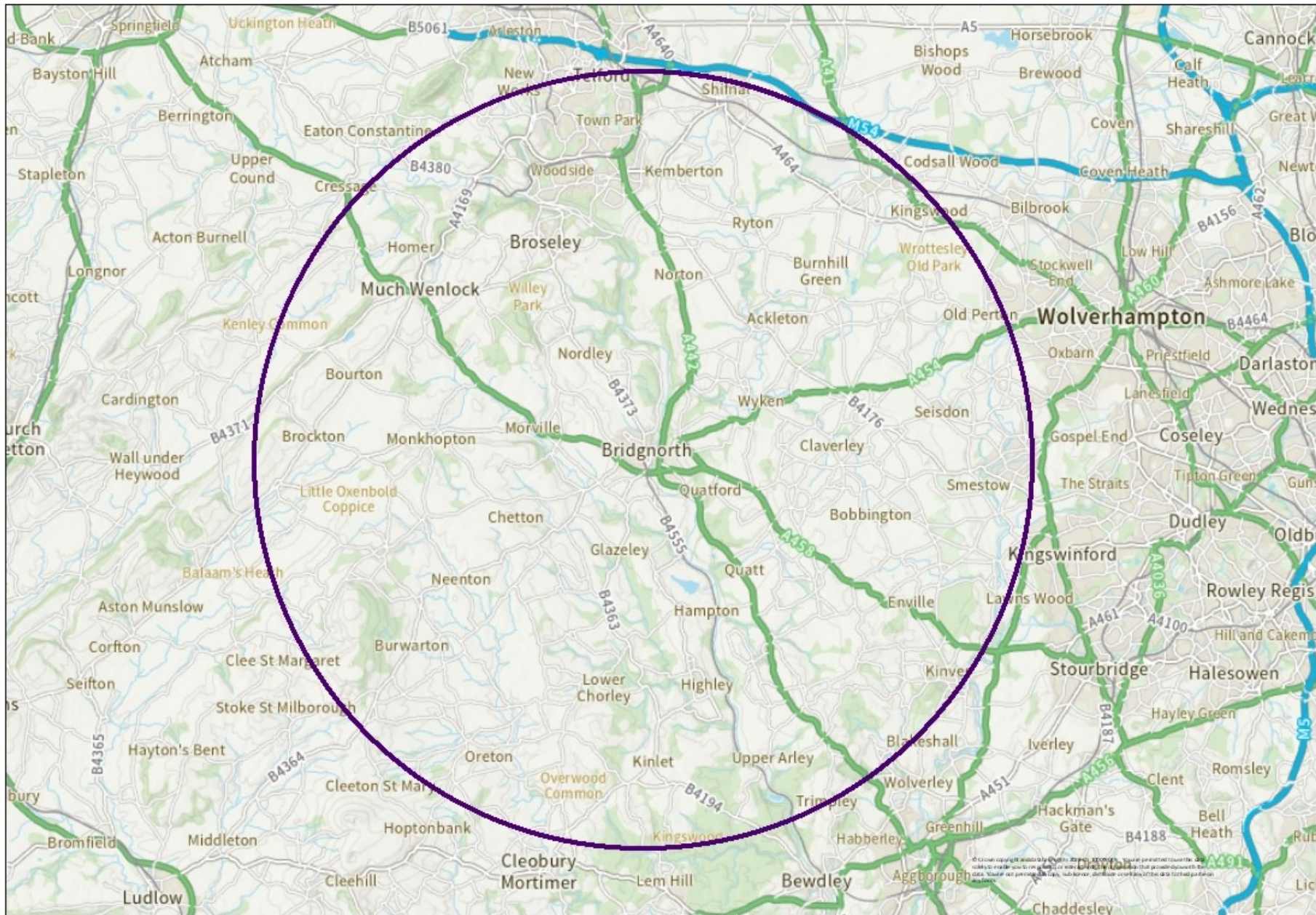
Bridgnorth is an important employment hub, fourth in size in Shropshire to Shrewsbury, Oswestry and Market Drayton. It provides approximately 4,900 jobs across the town council area (*ONS Business Register and Employment Survey, 2022*). Key sectors include:

- Retail (13.2% of jobs)
- Manufacturing (13.2% of jobs)
- Accommodation & Food Services (12.2% of jobs)
- Health (11.2% of jobs)

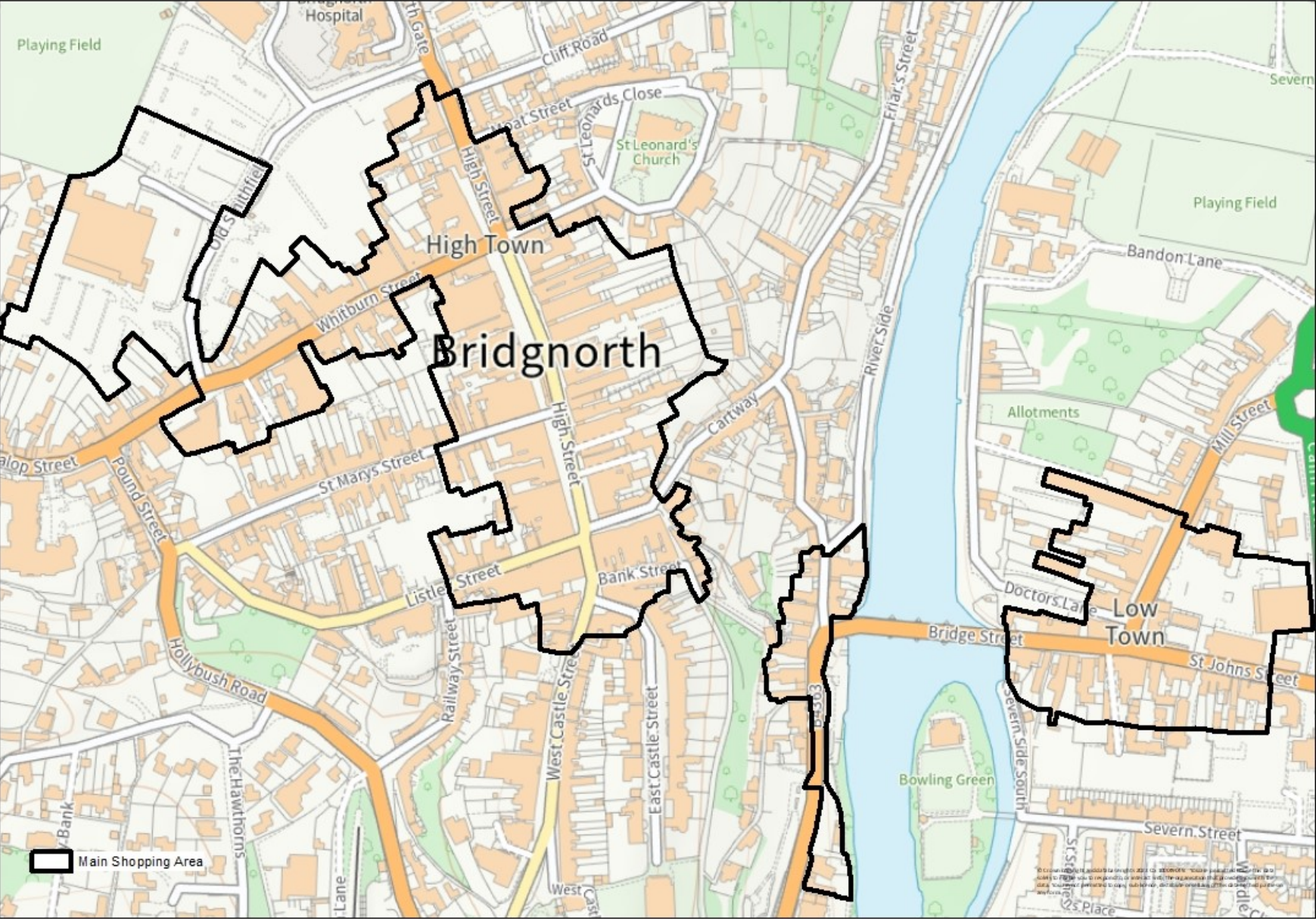
Overall, Bridgnorth town council area (depicted on Map 3) covers an area of 1,069 hectares. The main shopping area (depicted on Map 4) is much smaller than this, at around 11 hectares. This is nonetheless notably larger than the main shopping areas in Market Drayton or Whitchurch, albeit smaller than Oswestry.

Today Bridgnorth town is an attractive market town with a mix of independent stores, many pubs and places to eat. Bridgnorth was named the winner of the Great British High Street in 2016 for large market towns. The Charter Market is held under the town hall with other pitches along the High Street; this takes place every Friday and Saturday. The town has a strong tourism offer, and is a popular destination for holiday makers and day trippers, especially from the West Midlands conurbation.

Map 2: Location of Bridgnorth showing 10 mile radius



Map 4: Main Retail Shopping Area



Catchment and Footfall

The map on the following page shows the main catchment for Bridgnorth town centre. It covers the town itself and a substantial hinterland that stretches into Wales to the west, across much of Telford and into the West Midlands and southwards into Worcestershire. Overall, the area includes 36 postcode districts.

The total population within the catchment is 789,999 people which is the largest catchment of any of the Shropshire towns covered on the Town and Place platform. However, the average catchment distance is relatively small, at 10.73 miles.

Chart 1: Catchment Conversion (%)

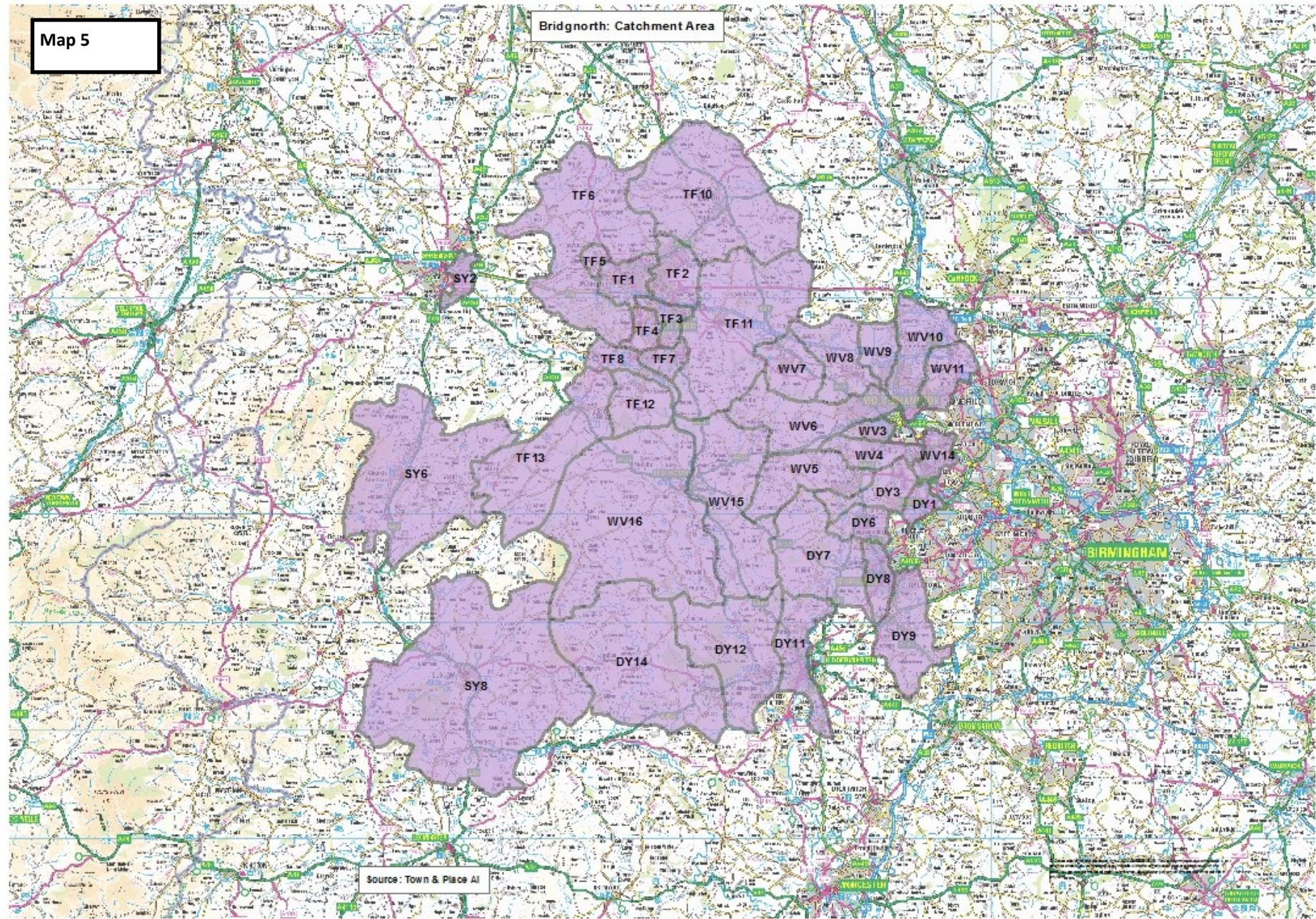


Source: Town & Place AI

Note: Catchment defined as any postcode district from which at least 3% of residents visited the town on at least one occasion during the preceding month. Hence, the precise catchment area and catchment population will change on a monthly basis.

Map 5

Bridgnorth: Catchment Area



Source: Town & Place AI

The following map shows the percentage of each postcode that forms part of the Bridgnorth catchment area that visited the town centre at least once in February 2022.

It is clear that while the catchment covers a large number of postcode districts (36), the majority achieve a conversion rate of less than 10%. WV15 and WV16, which are the main postcode districts covering the town both achieved conversion of almost three-quarters in February.

Overall, just 44% of visitors to Bridgnorth originated from the seven postcode districts that make up the core catchment (WV16, WV15, TF12, WV5, TF13, WV6 and DY14). The remainder of the catchment accounts for 42% of visitors, with the remaining 14% representing visitors from further afield. This reflects Bridgnorth's status as a tourism destination.

Chart 2: Breakdown of Visitors to Bridgnorth, February 2022

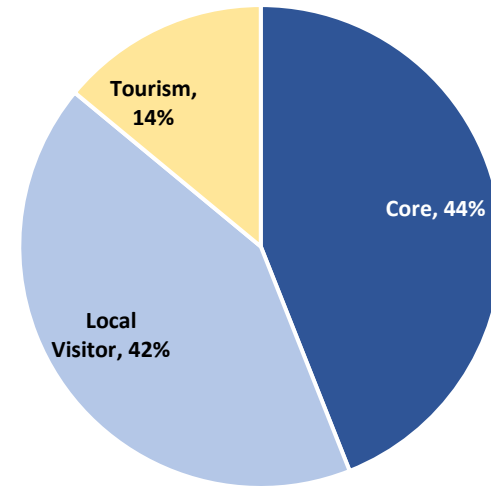
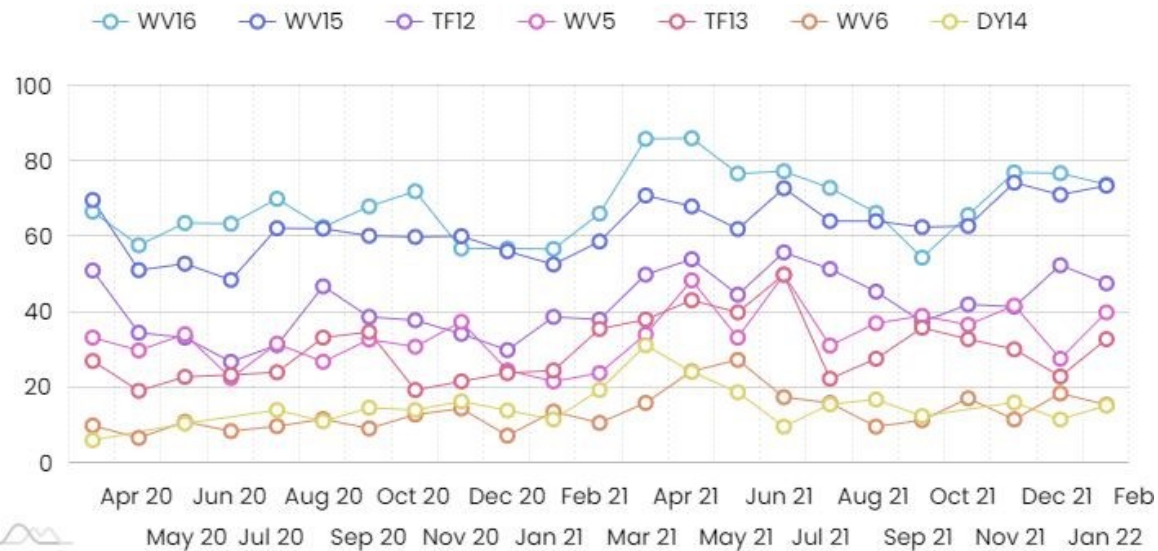


Chart 3: Trends in Bridgnorth Postcode Conversion

Postcode Conversion Trend (%)

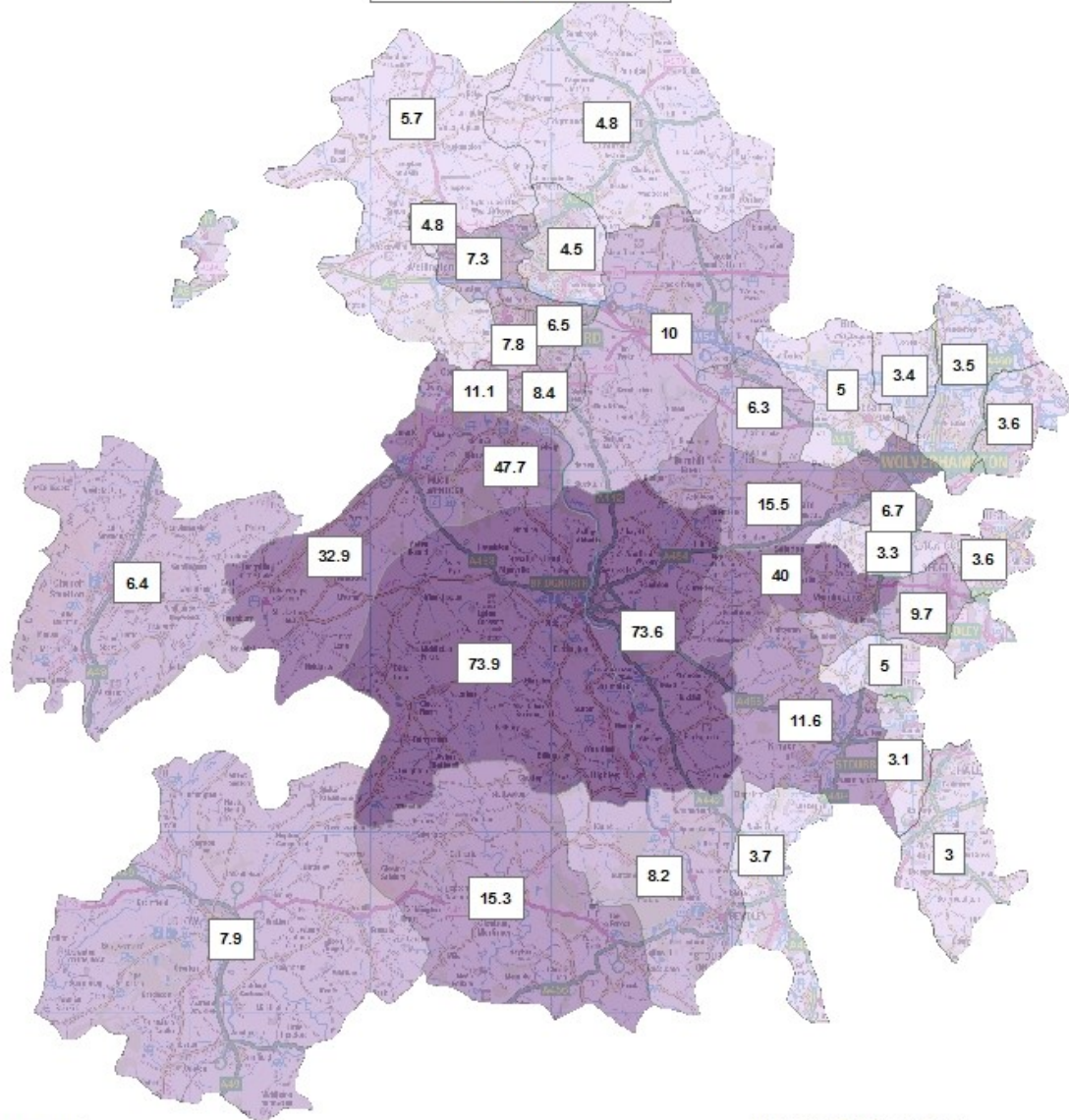


The adjacent chart shows trends in postcode conversion of the Bridgnorth core catchment area. It shows that conversion from the core postcode districts WV15 and WV16 have been consistently high since April 2020, albeit with notable monthly fluctuation.

Source: Town & Place AI

Map 6

Bridgnorth: Postcode Conversion
February 2022

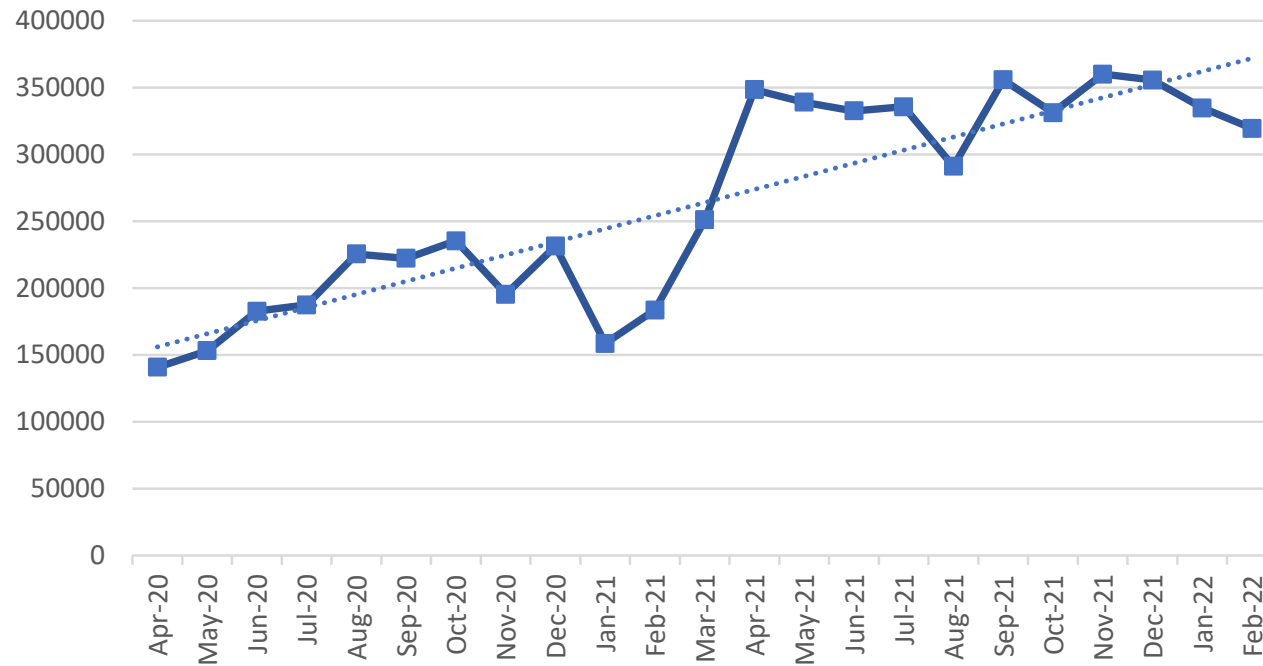


Source: Town & Place AI

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The following chart shows footfall in Bridgnorth town centre from April 2020 to February 2022. Not surprisingly, the overall trend is upward given that the start of the review period coincided with the first national lockdown arising from the Covid-19 pandemic. Overall footfall stood at 319,578 in February 2022, which represents an increase of 74% over the same month in 2021.

Chart 4: Trends in Footfall

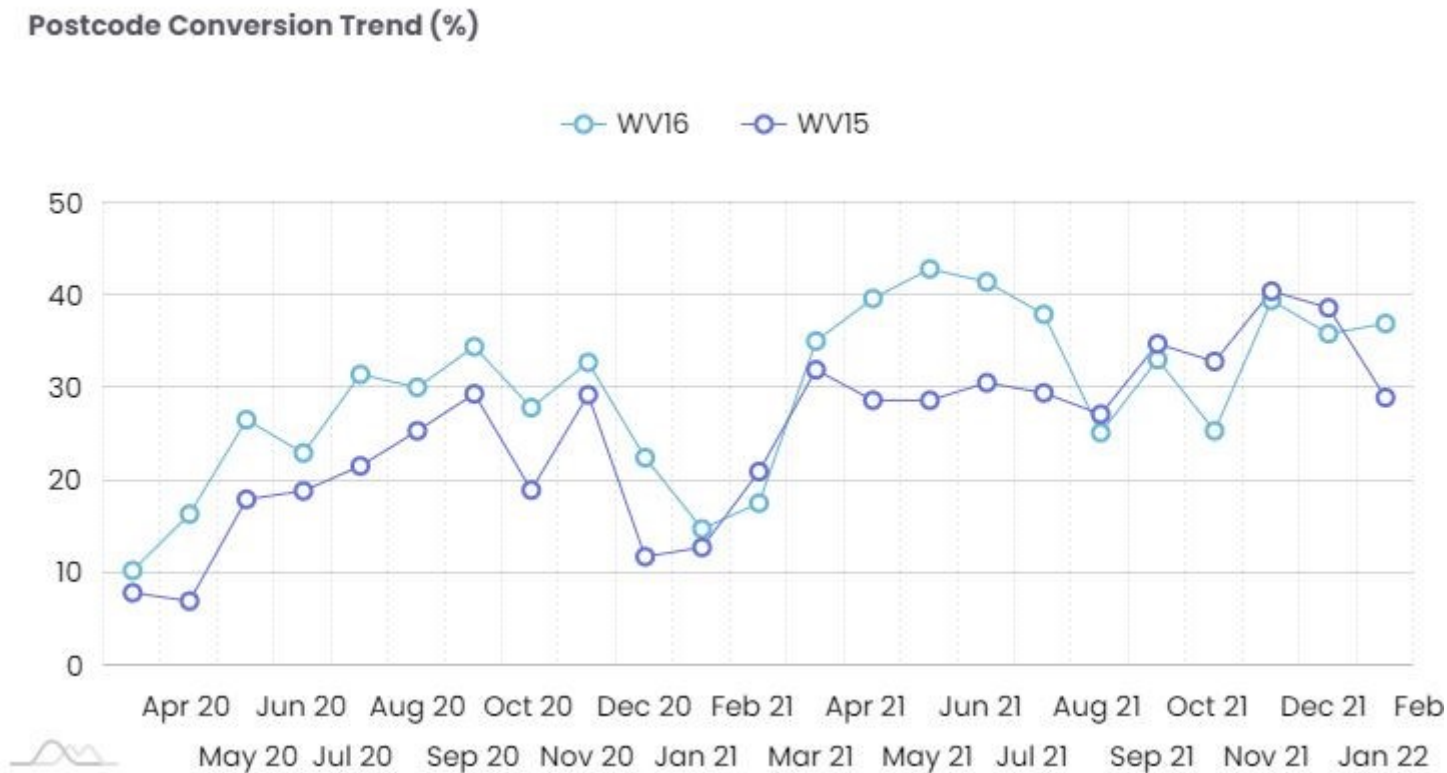


Bridgnorth attracted 76,637 unique visitors in February 2022, each of whom visited an average of 4.17 times to generate footfall of just under 320,000. The average dwell time was 38 minutes.

Alternative Shopping Destinations

Although almost three-quarters of WV15 and WV16 residents visited Bridgnorth in February 2022, the town's population also utilises alternative shopping destinations further afield. The most frequently visited alternative destination is Telford, with 37% of WV16 residents and 29% of WV15 residents visiting at least once in February 2022.

Chart 5: Telford:



Postcode conversion charts have been downloaded from the Town and Place AI tool, which monitors visitor numbers and footfall across a range of towns and city centres across the UK.

Key Results

There are a total of 251 business premises within the Bridgnorth survey area. The town is split into High and Low Town, with the retail offer primarily based in High Town. In area terms, High Town covers approximately 9 hectares and Low Town 2 hectares. Across the two locations, commercial units account for just over 35,200m² of gross floor space. The average store size is 140m².

210 commercial operators are based in High Town against 41 that are located in Low Town. The latter command a higher average size (195m² against 130m²) and as such account for a higher share of gross floor space than they do of units.

Chart 6: Breakdown of Units and Floor Space by High/Low Town, 2023

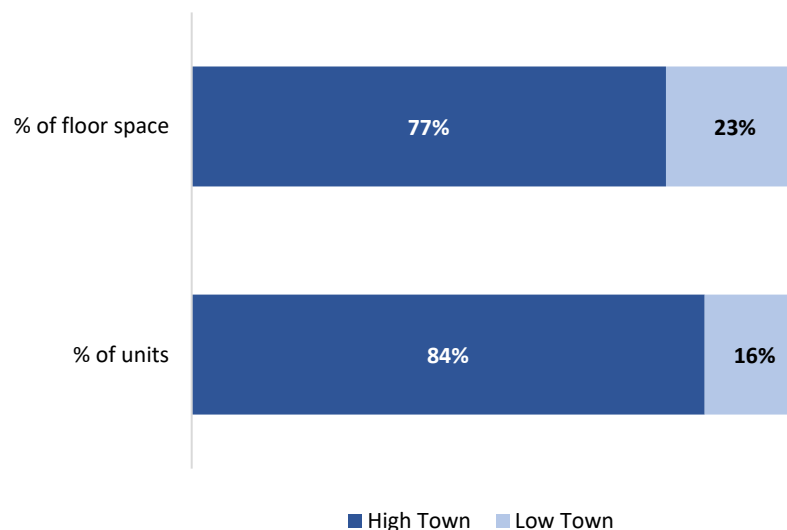


Chart 7: Location of Businesses Operating in Bridgnorth, 2023

Location	% of units	% of floor space
High Street	35%	37%
Whitburn Street	22%	22%
Listley Street	6%	3%
Mill Street	6%	11%
Bridge Street	4%	4%
Other	27%	23%

More than a third of businesses operating in the main shopping area in Bridgnorth are located on the High Street (35% of units and 37% of gross floor space). A substantial number of units are located on Whitburn Street (22% of units and 22% of floor space). 6% of units (3% of floor space) are on Listley Street. These three streets are all in High Town. Mill Street and Bridge Street account for 10% of units and 15% of floor space between them. These streets are both in Low Town.

Commercial units in Mill Street are notably larger than average (249m² each on average) while those in Listley Street are smaller (79m²).

The number of commercial premises in Bridgnorth has remained stable over the last three years, increasing by just one in 2021 from 250 to 251. This reflects two businesses now operating out of the same premise, and as such, no additional retail floor space was brought forward.

In 2022, one new store was opened on Whitburn Street, but the repurposing of one former vacant premise into residential premises means the number of commercial buildings remained the same. Likewise, an additional unit was identified in Low Town in 2023, while two units in High Town were merged into one, resulting in no net change.

Business Classifications

The highest proportion of the town centre is allocated to comparison retail. There are 77 comparison retailers in the main shopping streets, which cover a combined gross floor space of almost 9,300m². This is the equivalent of 31% of units and 26% of space.

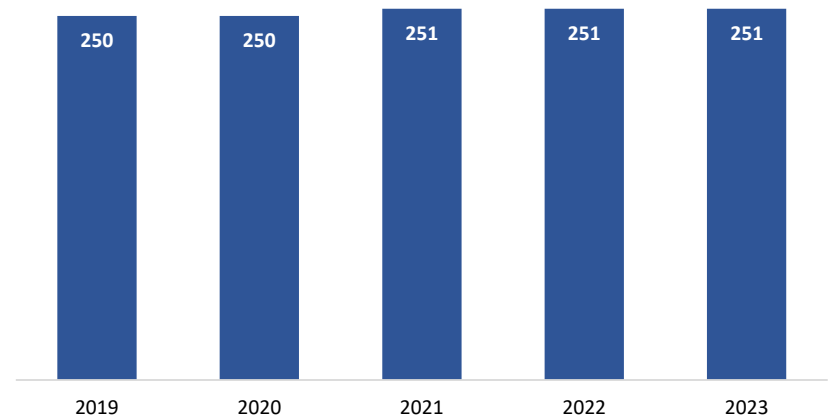
The proportion of units attributable to comparison stores is higher than the Shropshire average (28% of units). Compared with other tier two towns, the comparison offer is much smaller than in Ludlow, but in unit terms, comparison accounts for a higher share than in Oswestry or Market Drayton. However, in terms of floor space, the share allocated to this category is higher in both Oswestry and Market Drayton, reflecting the high volume of small boutique traders in Bridgnorth.

Retail service businesses are also well represented in Bridgnorth, especially in unit terms, with 45 stores operating. This is just under a fifth of the total. These units tend to be smaller than average, and hence account for just 12% of gross floor space. The proportion of outlets attributable to retail services is lower in Bridgnorth than in Oswestry, Whitchurch or Market Drayton.

There are 32 restaurants and takeaways in Bridgnorth town centre, which is the equivalent of 13% of units and 11% of floor space.

11% of units and 18% of floor space is allocated to the tourism and leisure classification. This is significantly higher than in other tier 2 centres in Shropshire.

Chart 8: Number of Business Premises in Bridgnorth, 2019-2023

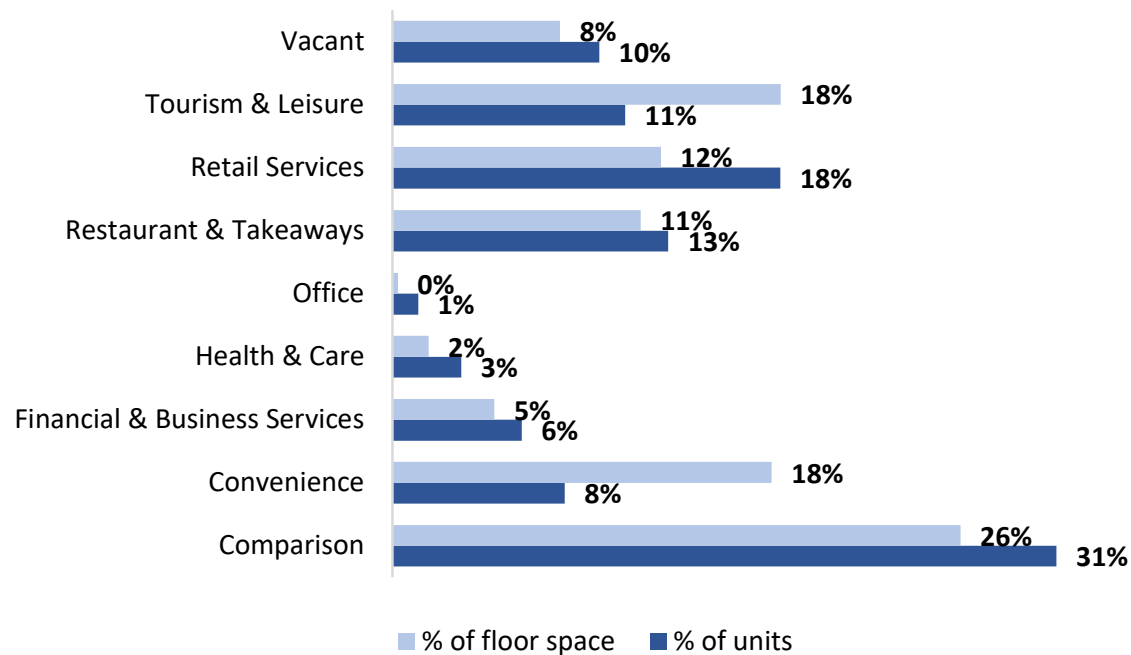


6% of units (and 5% of floor space) is attributable to financial institutions and business services providers. This is lower than other market towns of the same hierarchy. 8% of units are convenience retail. There are some large outlets in this classification, with convenience retail commanding 18% of floor space.

A small number of units are allocated to office space (clearly identifiable as commercial, but non-customer facing) and some floor space is allocated to health care provision.

There are 24 vacant units in the town, accounting for 10% of units and 8% of floor space.

Chart 9: Breakdown of Bridgnorth Commercial Premises by Classification, 2023



Change since 2022

Bridgnorth was particularly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, with churn at 19% between the 2019 and 2020 audits. The level of churn in 2021 was much reduced (11%) but rose again slightly in 2022 to 14% and again in 2023 to 15%. **This is** slightly higher than the Shropshire average of 12%. Across the four year period from 2019 to 2023, churn has been higher in Bridgnorth than anywhere else in Shropshire except Market Drayton and Ellesmere.

There were four fewer vacancies in Bridgnorth in 2023 than in 2022. The main beneficiary of increased activity in 2023 was comparison retail, with the number of outlets trading increasing by three. There was also an additional tourism and leisure operator and a new health care provider.

In contrast, there was one fewer restaurant/takeaway and no change in retail services, finance and business services or convenience retail.

Chart 11: Breakdown of Business Churn 2019-2023

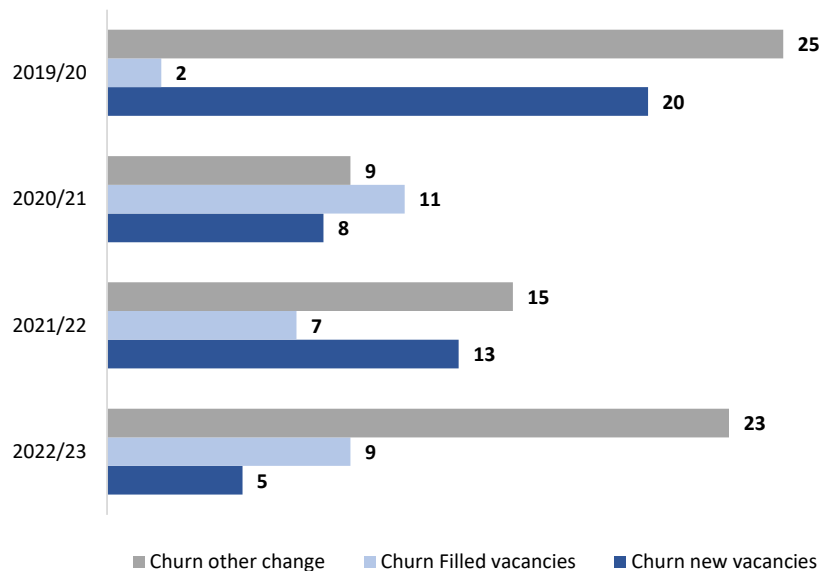
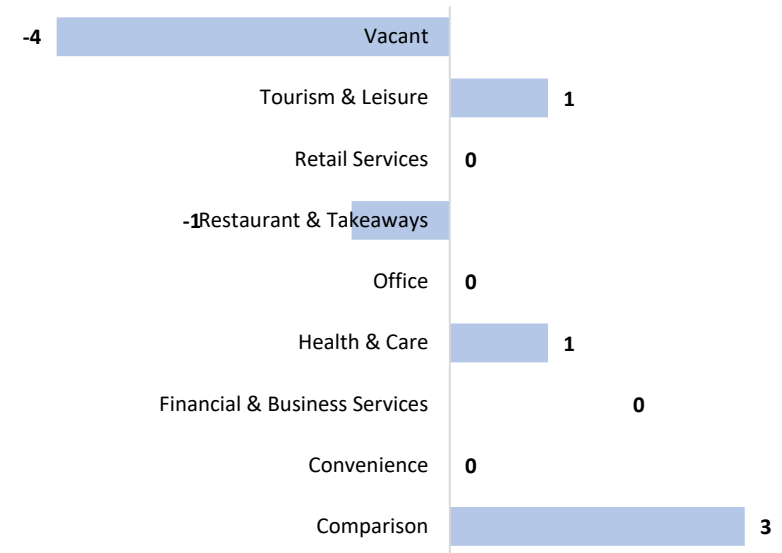


Chart 10: Change in Number of Units by Category, 2022/2023



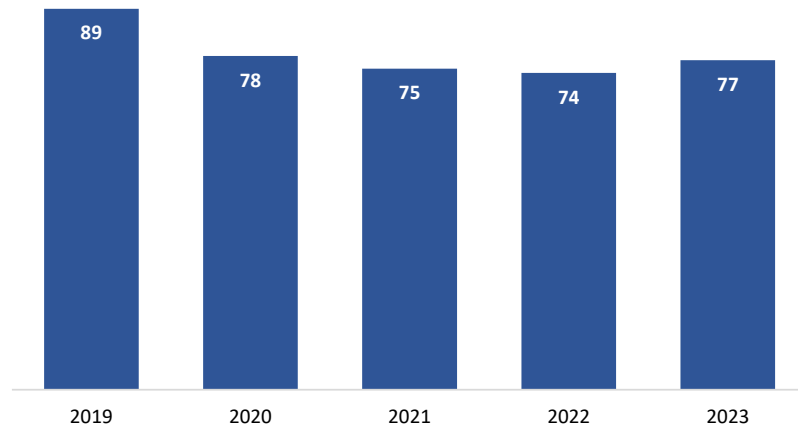
The impact of the pandemic on Bridgnorth town centre was apparent in the number of vacancies that arose between 2019 and 2020 (20, or 43% of all churn). This reduced to 8 new vacancies in 2021 but rose slightly to 13 in 2022 (37% of all churn) before dropping back down to 5 (14%) in 2023.

In 2023, almost a quarter of all churn was attributable to previously vacant premises becoming filled (20% in 2022, 39% in 2021 and 4% in 2020). All other churn accounted for 62% of high street change in 2023. This includes all units that changed classification or ownership and may also include premises which did not change use or owner, but which had been significantly rebranded since the previous audit.

Comparison Retail

The comparison retail sector in Bridgnorth has been squeezed over the last few years, with the number of stores in operation declining from 89 in 2019 to 74 in 2022 before recovering in 2023 with the opening of three new comparison stores. Despite this recovery, there were still 12 fewer comparison retailers in the town in 2023 than in 2019, which represents a 13% reduction. Despite this, the classification still accounts for the largest share of the town centre offer, representing 31% of units and 26% of floor space in 2023.

Chart 12: Number of Comparison Retail Units, 2019-2023



In comparison with other tier 2 towns in Shropshire, comparison retail remains particularly important in Bridgnorth, especially in unit terms. This is due to a high presence of up-market boutiques, which are an important component of the tourism offer. The range of different comparison good stores is wide, and there is a balance between independents and national chains. Bridgnorth is a location which attracts mid market and higher end chains due to its relatively affluent local population and its strong visitor economy.

Within the town there are 16 shops selling clothes, accessories or footwear. The shops cater for men, women and children, and include small up-market boutiques as well as larger mass market outlets. Although most stores are independent, there is a branch of the chain Fat Face. A number of chains have closed in recent years, including Edinburgh Woollen Mill and M & Co (in 2023). Bridgnorth has as many clothes shops as Oswestry, which is a significantly larger town.

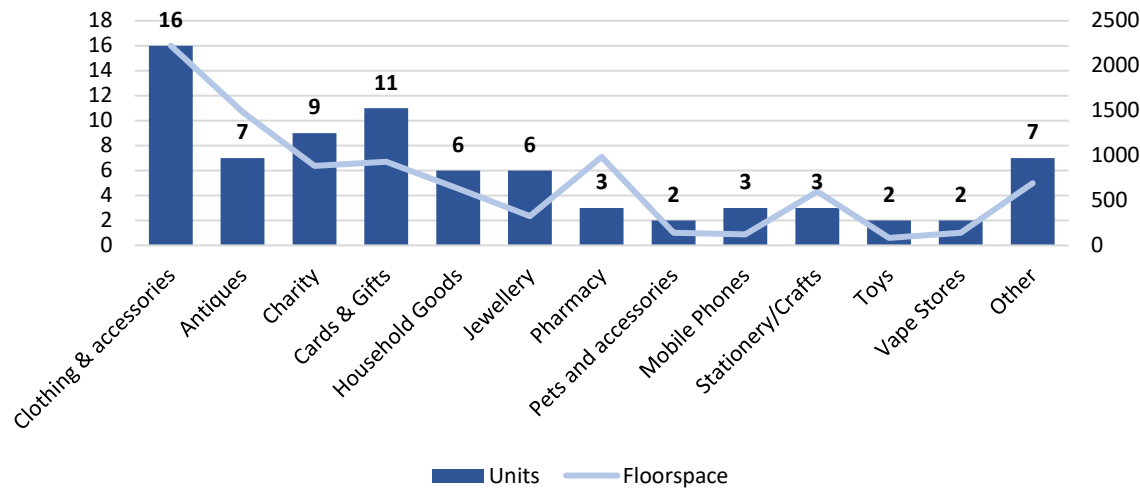
More than one in ten outlets is a charity store, with nine units trading. Most of these are national charities (Oxfam, Blue Cross, Cancer Research UK, British Red Cross, Mind) but more local charities are also represented (Hope House, Severn Hospice). The charity shops are clustered in the very centre of town, on the High Street, Waterloo Terrace and Whitburn Street. A temporary store supporting the Ukraine war effort was trading at the time of the 2022 audit but this had closed in 2023. Therefore, there was one fewer charity store operating in 2023 than in 2022.

Also very well represented in Bridgnorth are antiques shops, of which there are seven. These account for 16% of category floor space. The presence of these stores adds to the town’s tourism offer.

There are 11 gift and/or card shops and six stores offering a variety of home products, including blinds, electricals and soft furnishings. Also represented by multiple outlets are jewellers, mobile phone stores, pharmacies, toy stores and florists. National chains which are represented include Boots, Superdrug, WH Smith and the Card Store.

There is an absence of discounters within Bridgnorth’s main shopping streets.

Chart 13: Breakdown of Comparison Retail Units, 2023

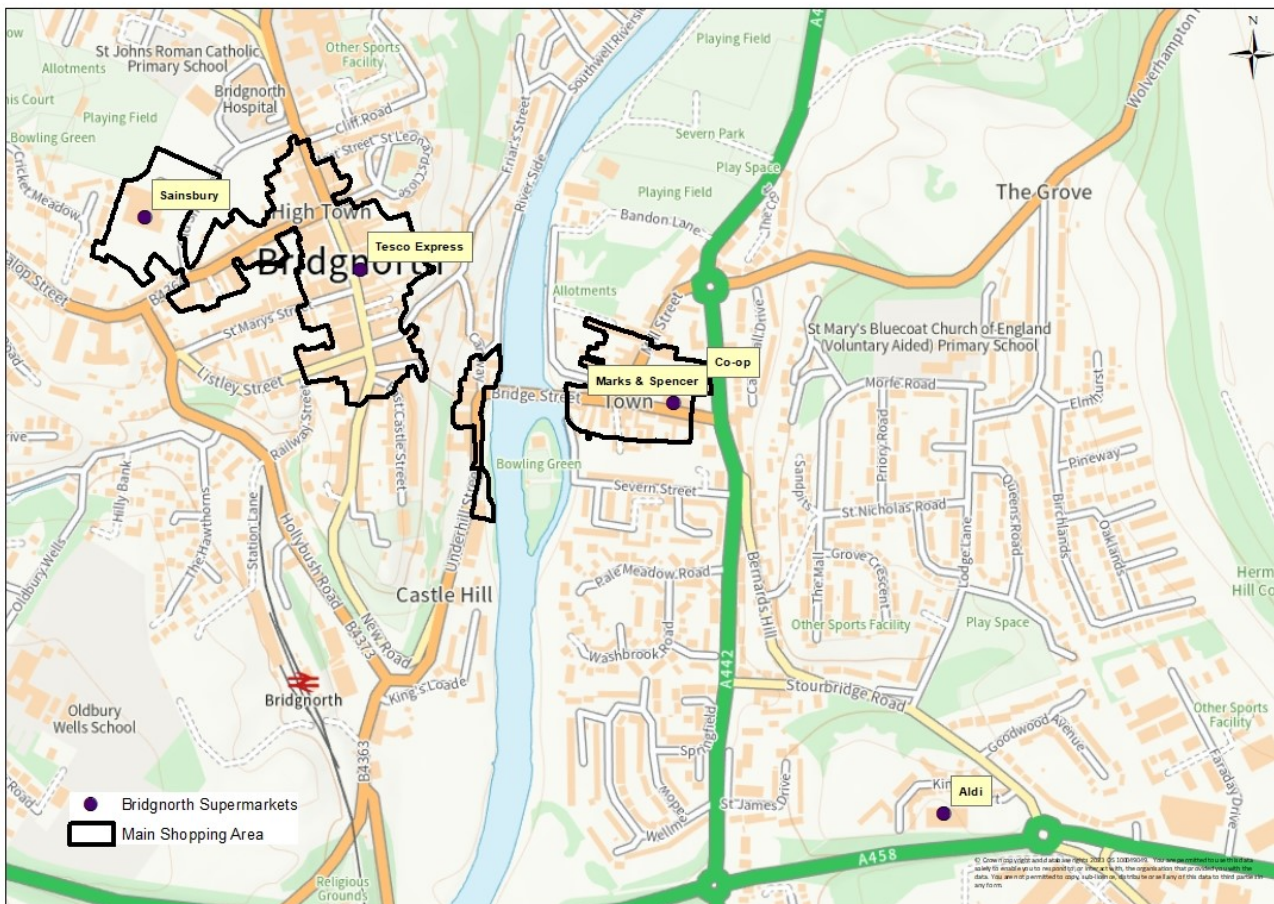


In 2023, three new clothes stores opened which offsets the closure of M & Co and one independent clothes retailer. There was also a net increase of one gift shop, two new household goods stores, a pet supply retailer and a new vape store.

Convenience Retail

There are 20 convenience stores within the main shopping area of Bridgnorth. These account for 18% of floor space against a share of just 8% of units, meaning that the average size of units in this classification is more than twice the size of the overall average for businesses within Bridgnorth town centre. The reason for this is the presence of some large supermarkets within the principal shopping area. The four supermarkets that are in the town account for almost three-quarters of convenience store floor space.

Map 7: Location of Bridgnorth's Main Convenience Stores



At the time of the audit, Sainsbury's, Tesco Express, Marks & Spencer Simply Food and the Co-op were all in the survey boundary.

By way of contrast, the main supermarkets serving both Whitchurch and Market Drayton are outside the main shopping centres.

As shown in the adjacent map, Bridgnorth is also home to an Aldi but this is some way outside the main shopping area.

The number of convenience stores in Bridgnorth has crept upwards in recent years, rising from 16 in 2019 to 20 in 2023. This constitutes a rise of 25%. There was, however, no change in 2023 compared with 2022.

As well as the main supermarkets, the town centre is also home to four butchers (there is also another butcher just outside the town centre boundary), four bakers, two health food stores, and two off licences (including wine merchant Tanners). One general food store closed in 2023 (the Refill Shop) but another opened in different premises. There was no other change in the convenience sector between 2022 and 2023.

Chart 15: Number of Convenience Stores, 2019-2023

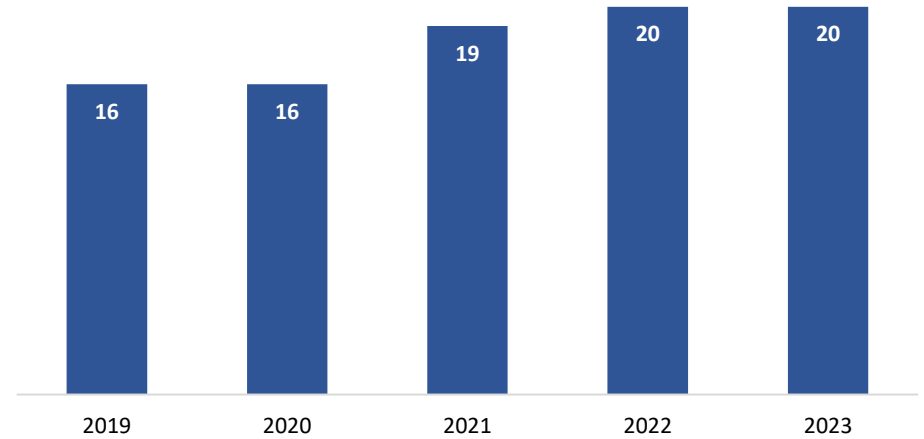


Chart 16: Number of Convenience Stores by Type, 2023



With the exception of the supermarkets, most operators in the convenience retail category are independent, although the chains Greggs, Holland & Barrett and Grape Tree are all present.

Restaurants & Takeaways

13% of units in Bridgnorth are attributable to restaurants and takeaways, with this category accounting for a lower proportion of gross floor space (11%). The number of units and floor space allocated to restaurants and takeaways is typical for a town the size of Bridgnorth and although the number of operators declined by one in 2023, the offer has nonetheless increased since 2019 with an additional two outlets.

Chart 18: Breakdown of Restaurant/Takeaway Units by Type, 2023

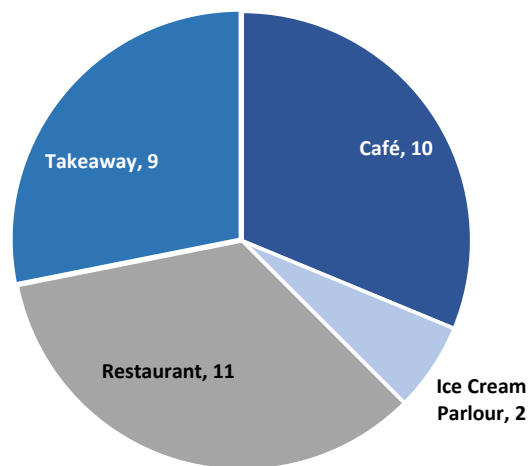
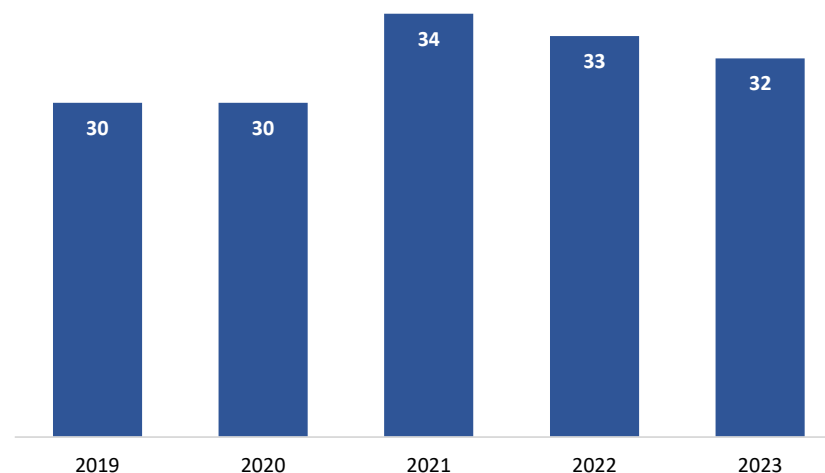


Chart 17: Number of Restaurants/Takeaways, 2019-2023



The 32 units are split between cafés (31%), restaurants (34%) and takeaways (28%). There are also two ice cream parlours. One of these expanded its premise in 2023 by taking over the space formerly occupied by the Refill convenience store. The number of restaurants rose by one in 2023, while two takeaways closed.

Restaurants have a disproportionately high share of floor space (41%). The range of cuisines on offer by Bridgnorth restaurants includes Thai, Chinese, Indian, Italian and modern British. In terms of takeaways, there is a range of Indian, Chinese, pizza and fish and chip outlets.

Although most outlets in this category in Bridgnorth are independent, there is a Costa Coffee shop.

Tourism & Leisure

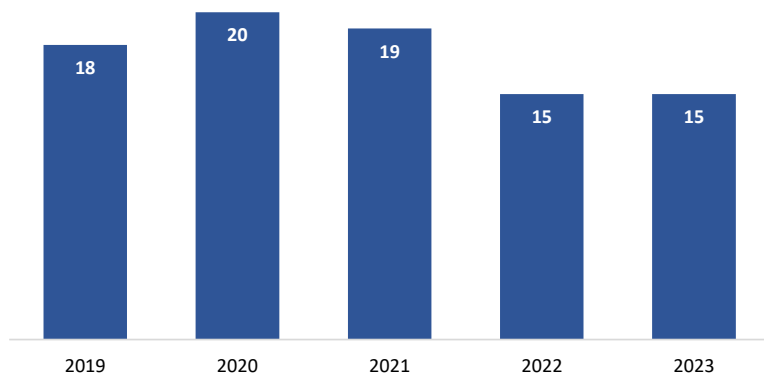
Also within the hospitality sector, there are 27 tourism and leisure operators, which account for 11% of town centre businesses and for 18% of gross floor space. This classification is very well represented in Bridgnorth. There are 17 public houses and bars. These take up approximately 4,300m² gross floor space, the equivalent of 12% of all floor space in the town. A new bar opened on the High Street in 2023, and another pub in the town expanded its premises. In addition, Bridgnorth accommodates a number of other tourism and leisure facilities, including a hotel/guesthouse and two B&Bs and an ABB within the main shopping streets. Some of the public houses may also offer rooms for overnight visitors.

Chart 19: Bridgnorth Town Centre Tourism & Leisure Offer, 2023

	Units	Floor Space (m ²)	Average Size (m ²)
Public House/Bar	17	4,260	251
Holiday Accommodation	4	987	247
Museum	1	50	50
Visitor Attraction	1	128	128
Cinema	1	740	740
Other	3	155	52
Total	27	6,320	234

There is one museum (the Northgate Museum) as well as other leisure facilities including a cinema, plus a visitor attraction (the Cliff Railway). This is currently closed for repair but has been included as still operational. Just outside the town centre boundary is the Theatre on the Steps and the Severn Valley Railway is also an important tourism asset for the town.

Chart 20: Number of Finance & Business Services Providers, 2019- 2023



Finance & Business Services

There are 15 commercial operators in the finance and business services area in Bridgnorth town centre, accounting for just under 1,700m² of gross floor space. The number of operators in this sector has fluctuated in recent years, but remained stable in 2023.

Included within this classification are three banks/building societies (HSBC, Lloyds, Nationwide). The Bridgnorth Barclay bank branch closed in 2022 and its former premise is now vacant.

There are two accountants, four estate agents, two financial advisers and a solicitor. Also within this classification are an energy consultant, an insurance broker, a day care nursery, and a web designer.

Retail Services

There are 45 retail service businesses operating in Bridgnorth town centre, with these accounting for more than 4,300m² of gross floor space. The number of operators in this classification has fluctuated since 2019, falling by five in 2020, increasing by three in 2021 before declining by two in 2022. There was, however, no change in the net number of traders in 2023.

Although the range of services provided is wide, a very high number of operators are in the barber and hair/beauty salon classification, with these together representing 60% of units and 42% of floor space. There are 19 hair dressers/beauty parlours, five barbers and three nail bars. Two new hair salons and an additional nail bar opened in 2023.

Chart 21: Number of Finance & Business Services Businesses by Type, 2023

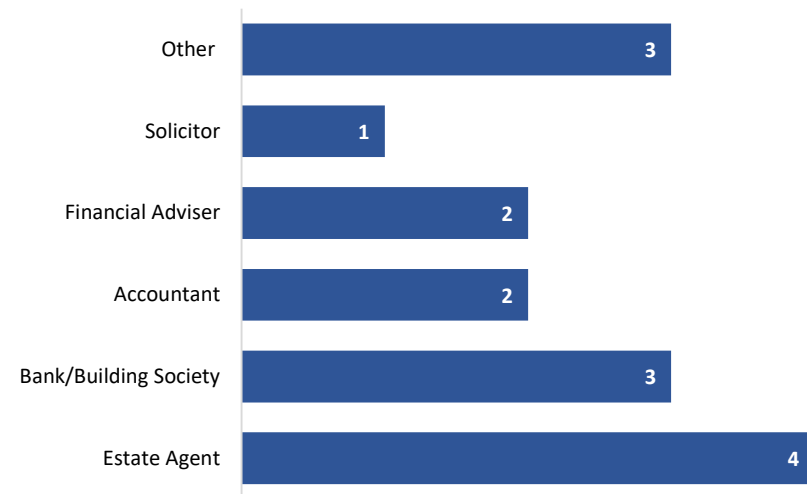


Chart 22: Number of Retail Services Providers, 2019- 2023

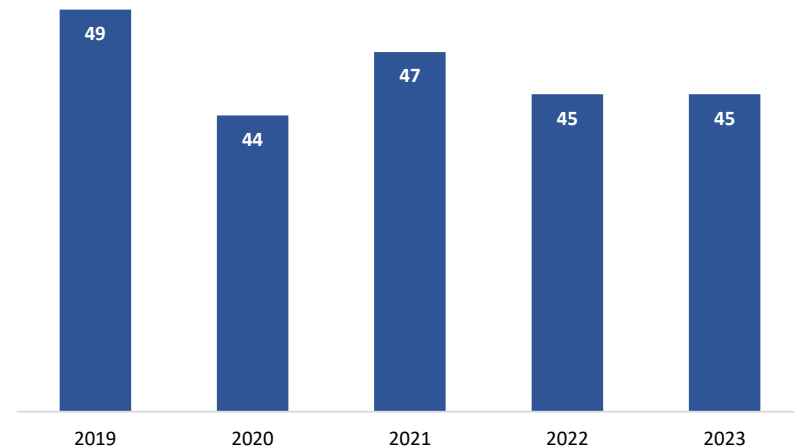
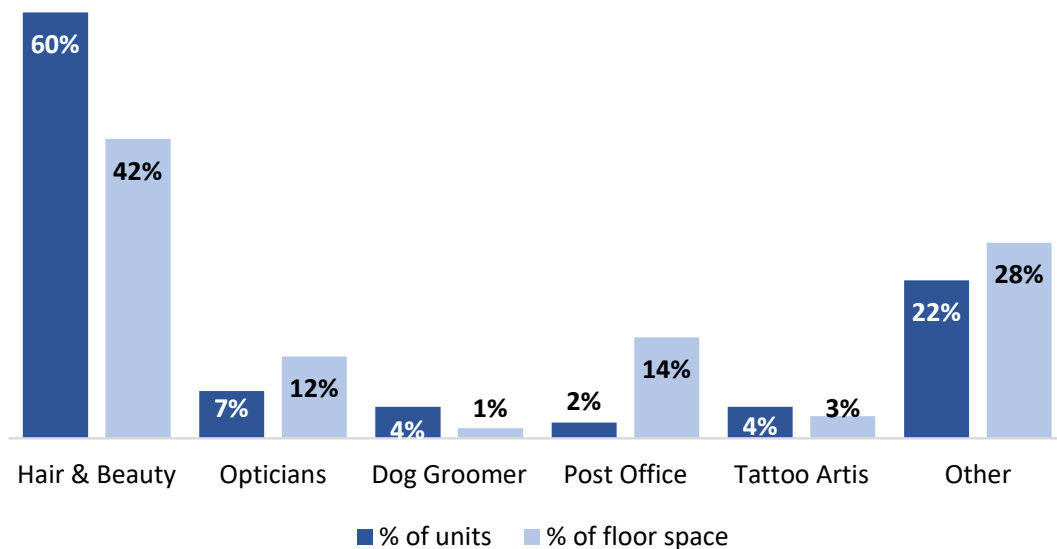


Chart 23: Breakdown of Retail Services by Type, 2023



In addition, there are three opticians (including the chains Specsavers) in the town. This is one fewer than in 2022. There are also two dog groomers as well as a post office, which accounts for 14% of retail services floor space. There are two tattoo parlours, one of which is new.

Other operators include a travel agent, a shoe repairer, an auctioneer and a clothes altering business. There is also just one bookmaker (Coral having closed in 2022 leaving just the chain Bet Fred). Likewise, there is now just one funeral director .

Health

There are eight health care providers in Bridgnorth town centre, which are allocated approximately 590m² gross floor space. Included within this number are a dentist, a denture repairer, an osteopath, alternative health provision and two therapists, one of which started trading between the 2022 and 2023 audits..

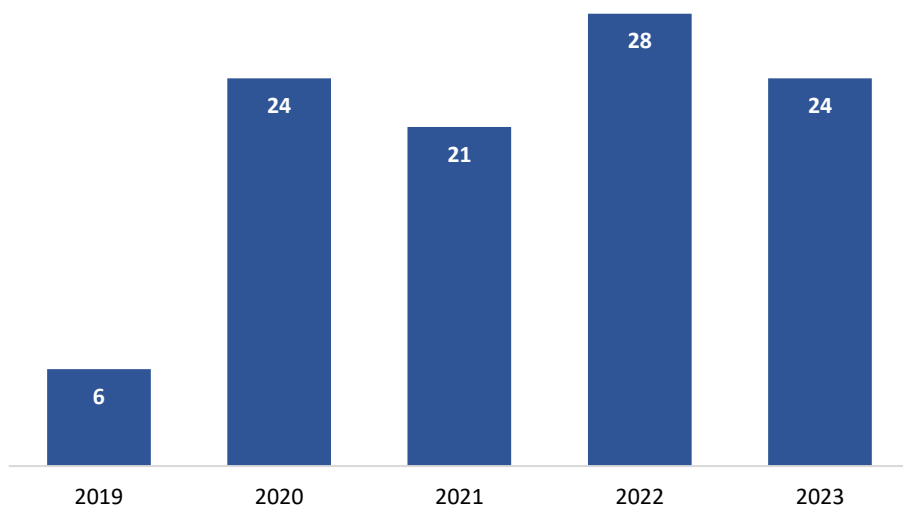
Vacant Units

At the time of the 2023 audit, there were 24 vacant units in Bridgnorth, accounting for over 2,700m² of gross floor space. Vacancies therefore represent approximately 10% of commercial units in the town and some 8% of floor space. This is aligned with the Shropshire average (11%) and is below the average national rate which stood at 13.9% in the second quarter of 2023 according to BRC (data relating to high streets only).

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, there were very few vacancies in Bridgnorth, with just six being recorded in 2019. This rose sharply to 24 in 2020, before falling back to 21 in 2021. The vacancy rate rose once more in 2022 when the number of empty properties rose by six. A reduction of four vacant units was recorded in 2023.

12 vacant premises are on the High Street, four on Whitburn Street, four on Listley Street and one on Waterloo Terrace. Just three commercial premises in Low Town were vacant in 2023, all on Mill Street.

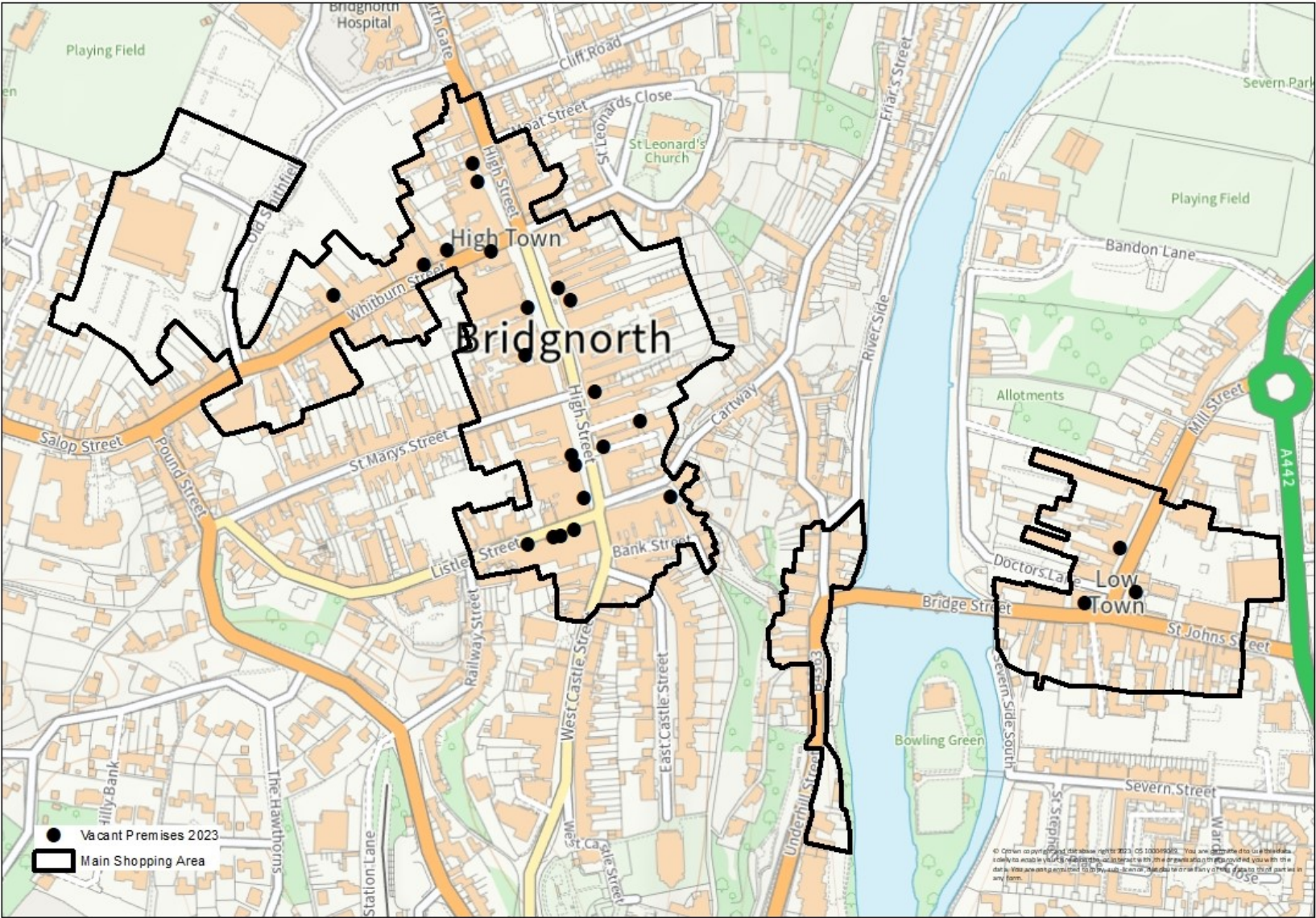
Chart 24: Number of Vacant Premises, 2019-2023



Of the 24 vacancies in Bridgnorth in 2023, five (21%) had become vacant during the previous year. Two units have been vacant since at least 2019, and an additional six units which became vacant between the 2019 and 2020 audits remain unoccupied. A third of all current vacancies have, therefore, been empty since the pandemic.

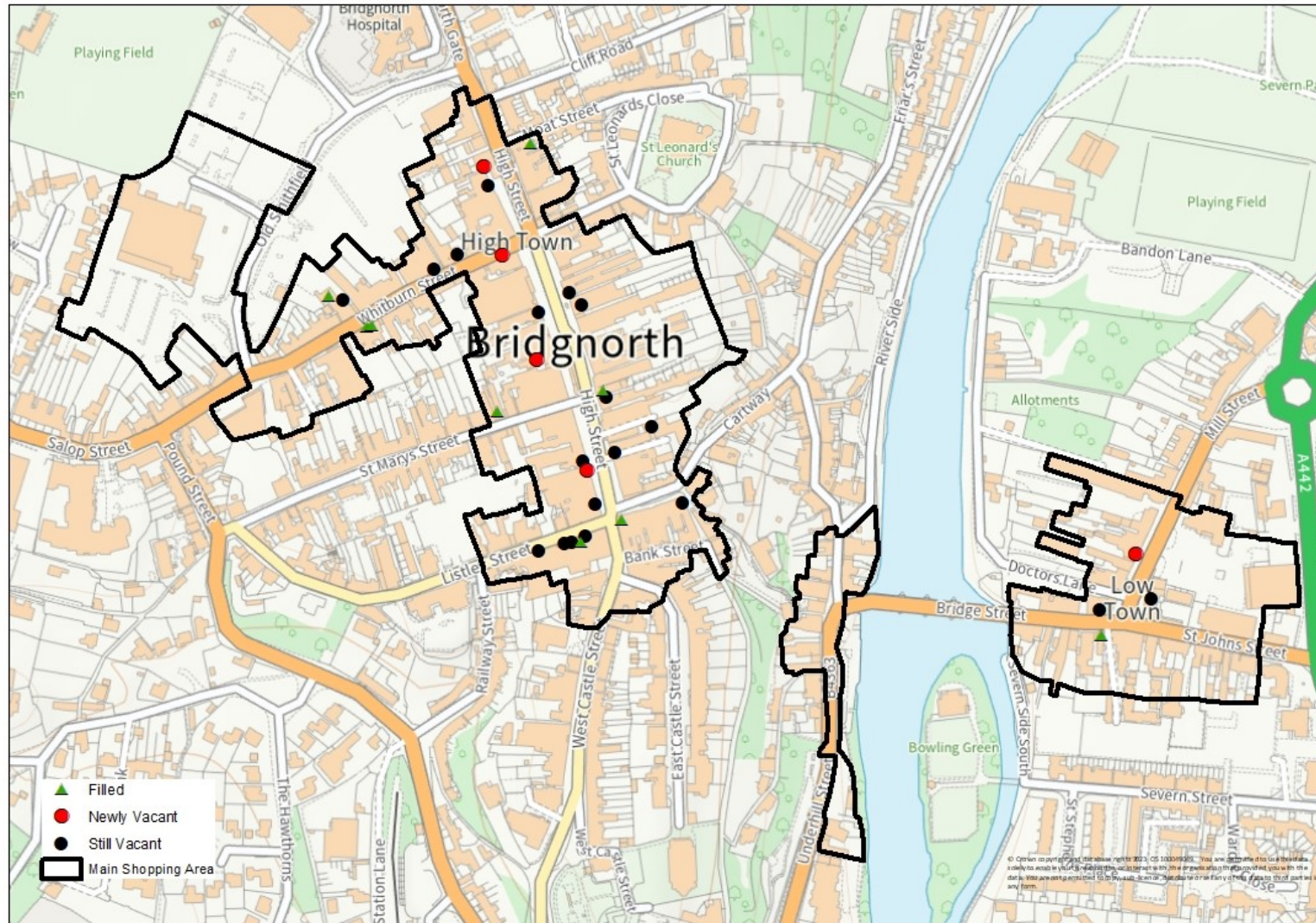
As shown in the map below, most vacancies in Bridgnorth in 2023 were on the High Street with additional clusters in Whitburn Street and Listley Street.

Map 8: Location of Vacant Commercial Premises, 2023



Although the vacancy rate in Bridgnorth is comparable to the Shropshire average (and lower than the national average), it has increased significantly since the town was first audited in 2019. In 2023, 19 of the premises which had been vacant in 2022 remained empty, while nine had become occupied. There were five new vacancies in 2023.

Map 9: Change in Location of Vacant Commercial Premises, 2022 –2023



Residential Premises

Although the town centre contains concentrations of commercial enterprises, there is also a significant amount of residential property within the main shopping centre. In total, 356 residential premises are located within the scope of the audit, of which the majority are flats (194 or 55%). These are largely located above retail or other commercial outlets. There are 138 terraced houses in the area, which is the equivalent of almost 40% of all housing stock in the town centre. There are clusters of terraced housing on the side streets off the High Street. Around a quarter of all flats are located on the High Street. Semi-detached and detached premises account for 5% and 2% of town centre housing stock respectively.

As well as residential homes, there are also five premises in the area which are classified as holiday lets.

Map 10: Location of Residential Premises in Bridgnorth Town Centre

Chart 25: Breakdown of Residential Properties by Type

