



Norfolk County Council

Norfolk Market Town Centre Report 2022

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Context and Background

The County of Norfolk covers a wide area, with varied landscapes and 90 miles of coastline. Norfolk market towns are relatively evenly distributed throughout Norfolk, as shown in Figure 1, they act as service centres to large rural populations. Norfolk market towns have a number of different functions, they act as: service centres, employment centres, commuter towns, retirement centres, and shopping destinations. Functions aside, many market towns retain a historic core and the coastal market towns benefit from seasonal tourism.

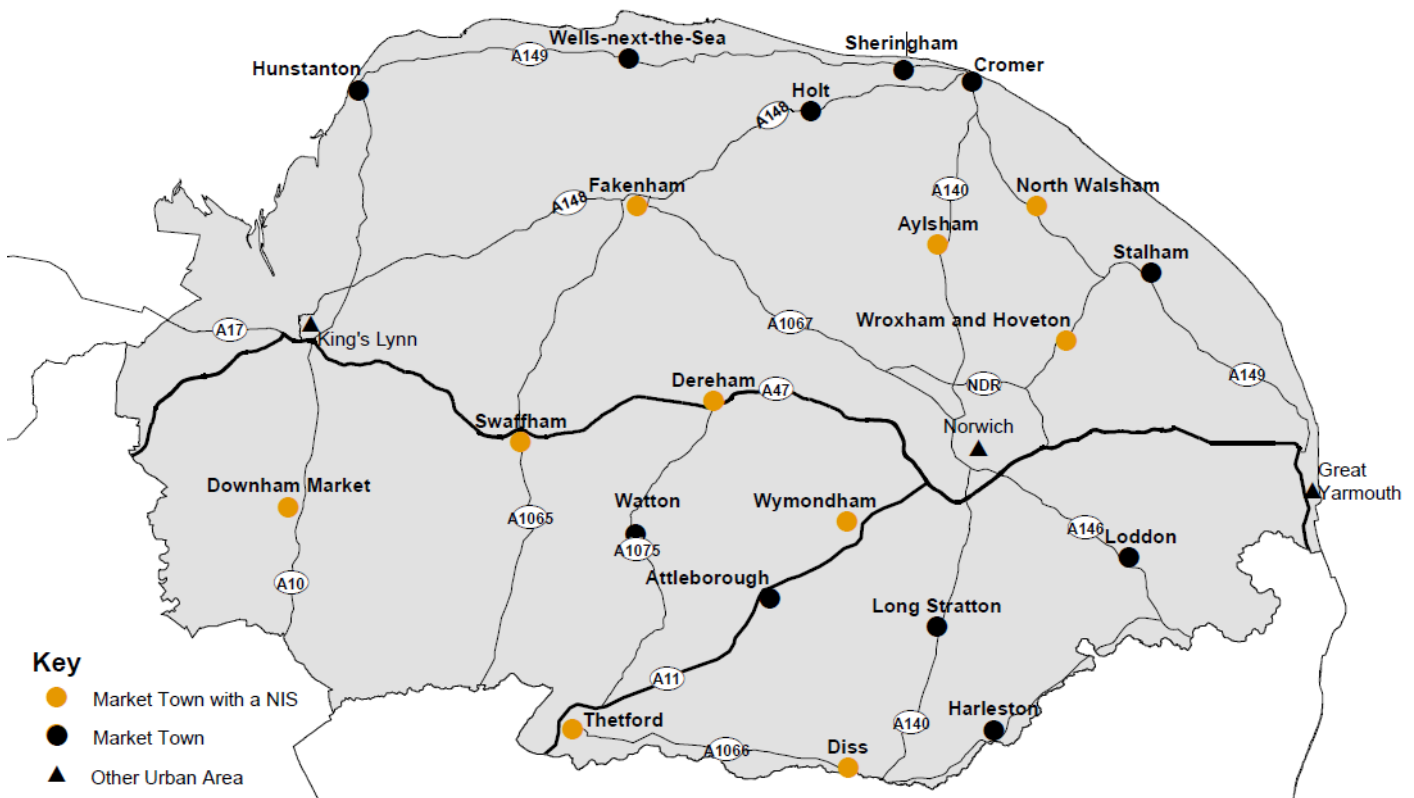


Figure 1 Location of Norfolk Market Towns

1.2 Scope

This study analyses and compares market town centre uses across Norfolk, identifying any significant push/pull factors, such as tourist attractions and the types of services available. A comparison will be drawn between the County and national averages.

Section 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021 (para 86(a)), sets out how planning policies should retain the distinctive characters of town centres and allow them 'grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allows a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and reflects their distinctive characters'. The NPPF also states that markets should be retained and enhanced and where appropriate re-introduced.

1.3 Norfolk County Council Market Town Network Improvement Strategies

Norfolk County Council began a series of [Network Improvement Strategies](#) (NIS) in September 2017. The aim of these strategies is to collaborate with a variety of stakeholders to investigate the transport problems and issues in Norfolk market towns. The strategies look at the future growth planned for the market towns and the impact this will have on the transport network. The overall aim of each strategy is to develop an implementation plan identifying appropriate interventions.

The market towns with completed NISs are:

- Dereham
- Diss
- North Walsham
- Swaffham
- Thetford
- Aylsham
- Downham Market
- Fakenham
- Wroxham and Hoveton
- Wymondham

2.0 Methodology

2.1 What is a market town?

Typically, a market town is a key settlement which has presently or historically held a regular market, in total there are 29 market towns in Norfolk that meet this criterion. For the purposes of this study, 21 of the larger market towns will be assessed. These market towns have 'red-line' boundaries indicating the limits of the defined town centres and are identified as significant service centres in the district and borough councils' local plans.

2.2 Retail Use Definitions

The following definitions are used throughout this report to identify the type of retail units in Norfolk market towns.

- Convenience Retail - for example: butchers, newsagents and supermarkets
- Comparison Retail - for example: clothing shops, charity shops and department stores
- Leisure Retail - for example: entertainment units such as, pubs, restaurants and hotels
- Retail Services - for example: launderettes, opticians, hairdressers and travel agents
- Public Service/Facilities - for example: banks, estate agents and legal services
- Mixed-use – for example: one unit that houses two or more retail stores
- Vacant - an empty unit
- Renovation - a unit that is undergoing building work
- Demolished - a bulldozed building

2.3 Survey

This report has been compiled through two methods:

- A desktop exercise creating Geographic Information Systems (GIS) maps, census data collation and historic survey data analysis.
- A field survey which was carried out during June/July 2022, by County Council staff. The surveyors visited each market town and recorded the unit types and vacant units within the town centre's red-line boundary.

3.0 Market Town Centre Profiles



3.1 Attleborough

Attleborough is a historic market town located in Breckland. The town has good transport links via the A11 and benefits from regular rail services to Norwich and Cambridge.

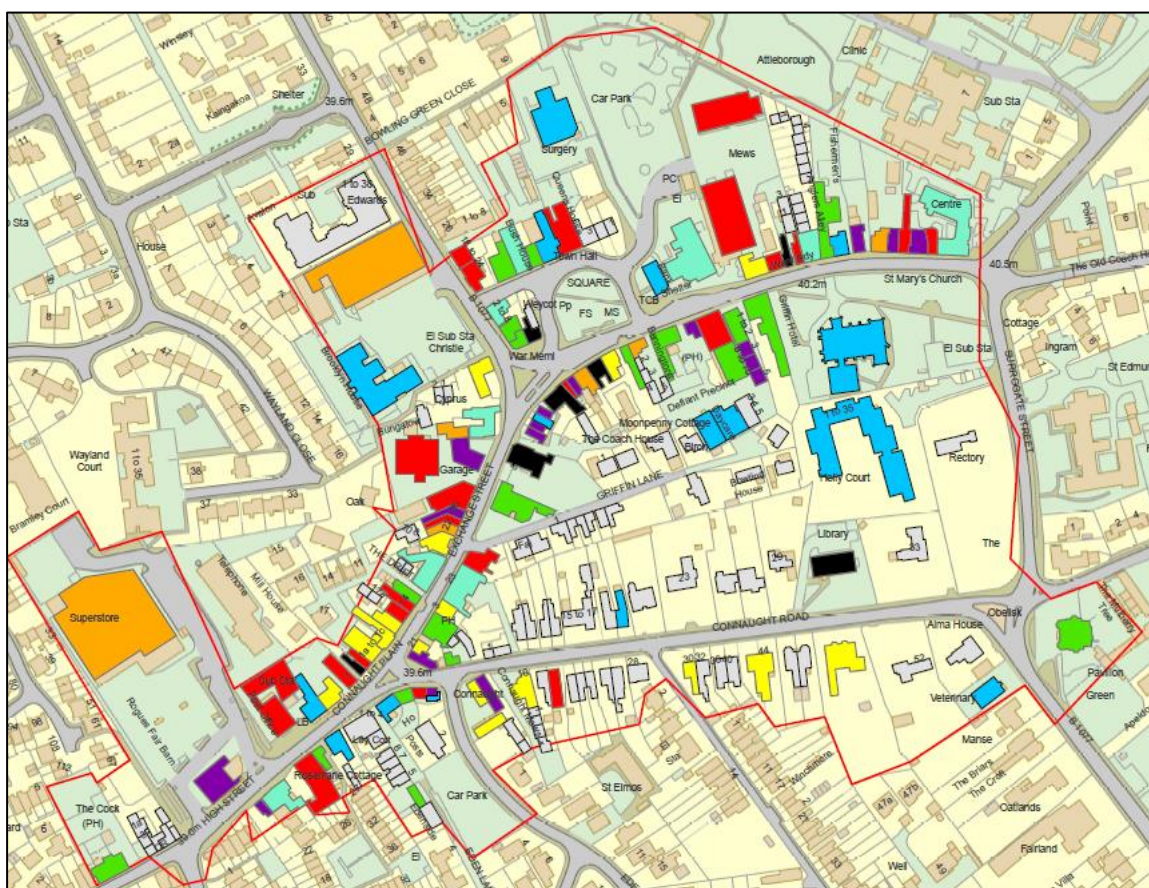
Attleborough has many listed buildings including a 14th century church. The town has a selection of amenities ranging from large supermarkets to independent shops, cafes and restaurants. The town also retains a regular market.

Key Figures

- Parish Population (2016) - 11,297
- Economically Active Population (2011) – 72%
- Main Occupation (2011) - Skilled trades occupations (15.4%)
- Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 4,330
- Parish work day population (2011) - 9,161
- Number of town centre business premises (2022) - 116
- Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2022) – 6% (7 units)



Attleborough Town Sign and Town Hall



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Figure 2 Unit Distribution in Attleborough

Key Findings from the 2022 Survey

- The town has two large convenience retailers, supermarkets, set back from the High Street to the west of the town.
- Most financial and business units are located close to each other, with two concentrations of financial and business units along Exchange Street and Connaught Road.
- Most public service units are set back from the High Street.
- The largest proportion of units are comparison retail units at 20.7%, this is lower than the Norfolk average of 27.1%.
- The biggest change in unit distribution since 2021 is increase of vacant units by 43% (3 units).
- However, the vacancy rate of 6% is still below the Norfolk average.
- The type of retail unit most affected by vacancies was financial and business units as two financial and business units have become vacant since 2021.
- Figure 3 shows that there has been a steady increase in the number of vacant units since 2018.

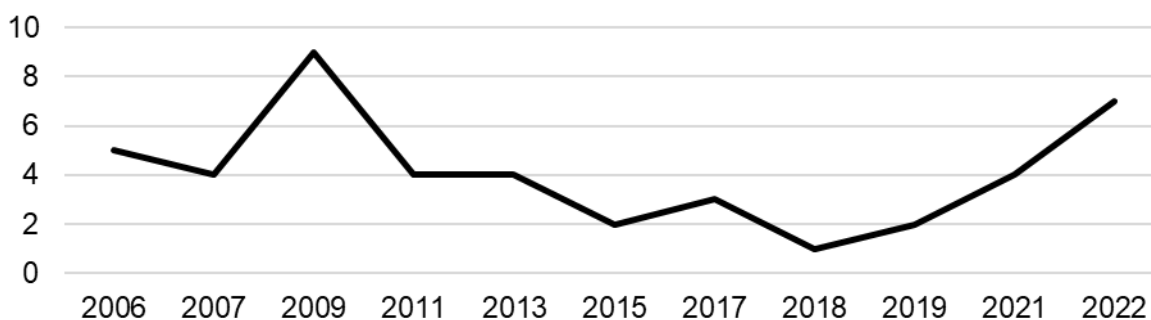


Figure 3 Historical Number of Vacant Units in Attleborough

3.2 Aylsham

Aylsham is located north of Norwich, in Broadland. The market town is accessed by the A140 which provides good transport links.

The town centre radiates around Market Place Square, where a regular market is held. Amenities in the market town include supermarkets, a variety of shops and eating establishments. Places of interest include a 13th century church and the Blickling Estate. The town is also served by the Bure Valley Railway, which is a tourist link between Aylsham and Wroxham.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - 6,515

Economically Active Population (2011) – 66%

Main Occupation (2011) - Skilled trades occupations (16%)

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 3,158

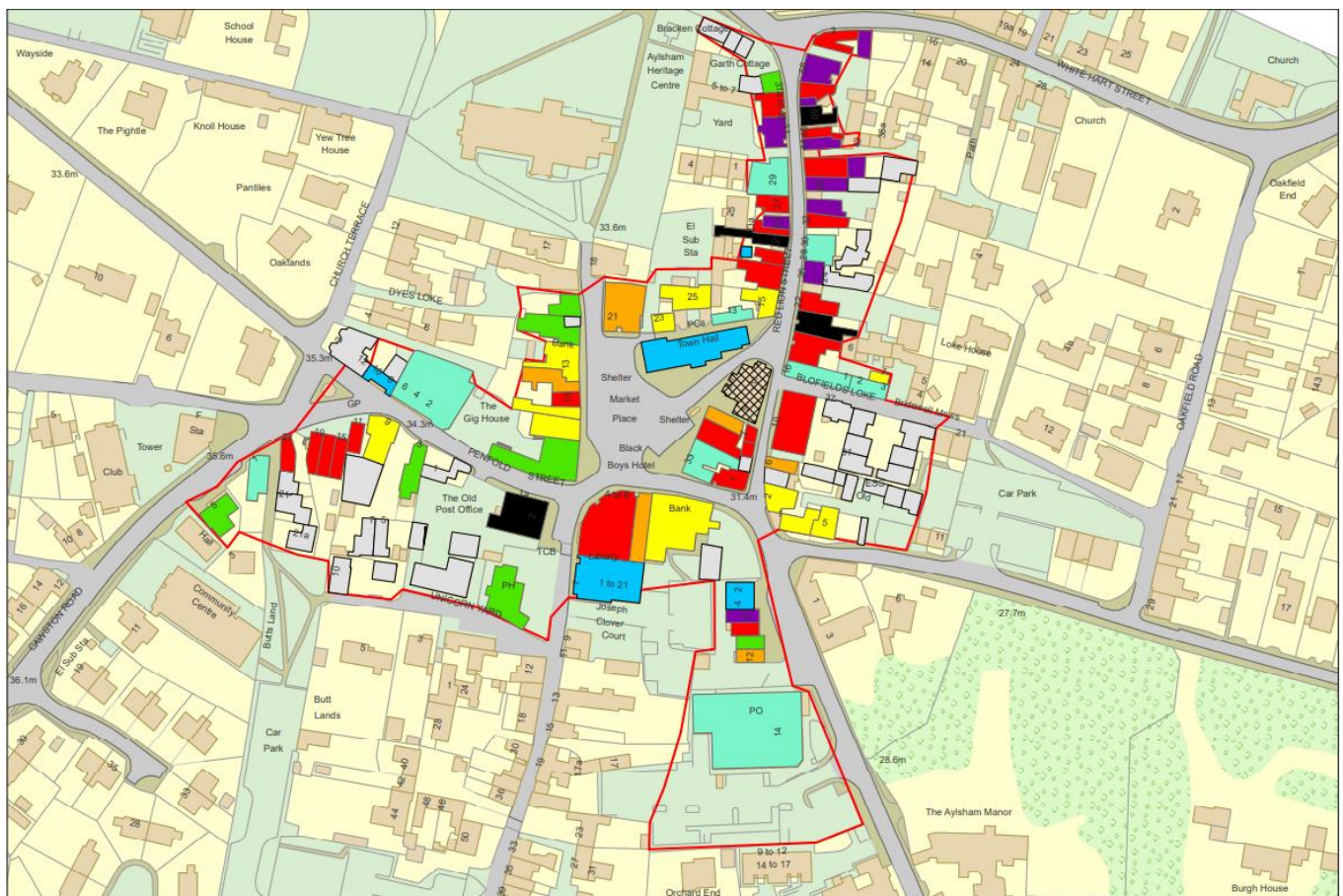
Parish work day population (2011) - 5,708

Number of town centre business premises (2022) - 81

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2022) – 4.9% (4 units)



Aylsham Water Pump



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Figure 4 Unit Distribution in Aylsham

Key Findings from the 2022 Survey

- The majority of leisure units are located to the west of Market Place (see Figure 4).
- Most retail services are located to the north of the town centre along Red Lion Street.
- The largest proportion of units are comparison retail units at 30.9%, higher than the Norfolk average.
- The largest change in the market town units has been the 16% increase in retail services, as four additional units were recorded since 2021.
- Vacant units have increased by one unit, but the vacancy rate of 4.9% remains below the Norfolk average of 6.9%.
- The types of retail unit most affected by vacancies was comparison retail.

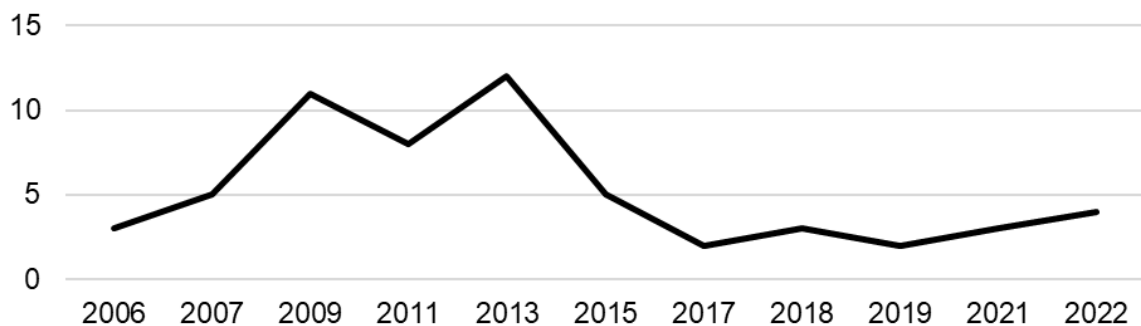


Figure 5 Historical Number of Vacant Units in Aylsham

3.3 Cromer

Cromer is a traditional seaside market town located on the North Norfolk coast. Cromer is one of the largest market towns in North Norfolk.

Cromer has good transport connections via the A140, A148 and the Bittern Railway Line which connects Cromer to Norwich.

Cromer is an important shopping destination for the local community and provides amenities and attractions for the tourism industry and local residents. It retains a regular market.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - 7,704

Economically Active Population (2011) – 60%

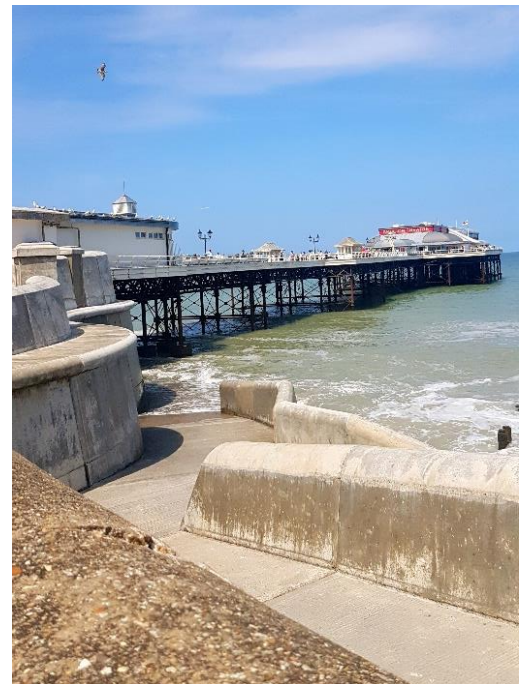
Main Occupation (2011) - Caring, leisure and other Service occupations (15.5%)

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 3,810

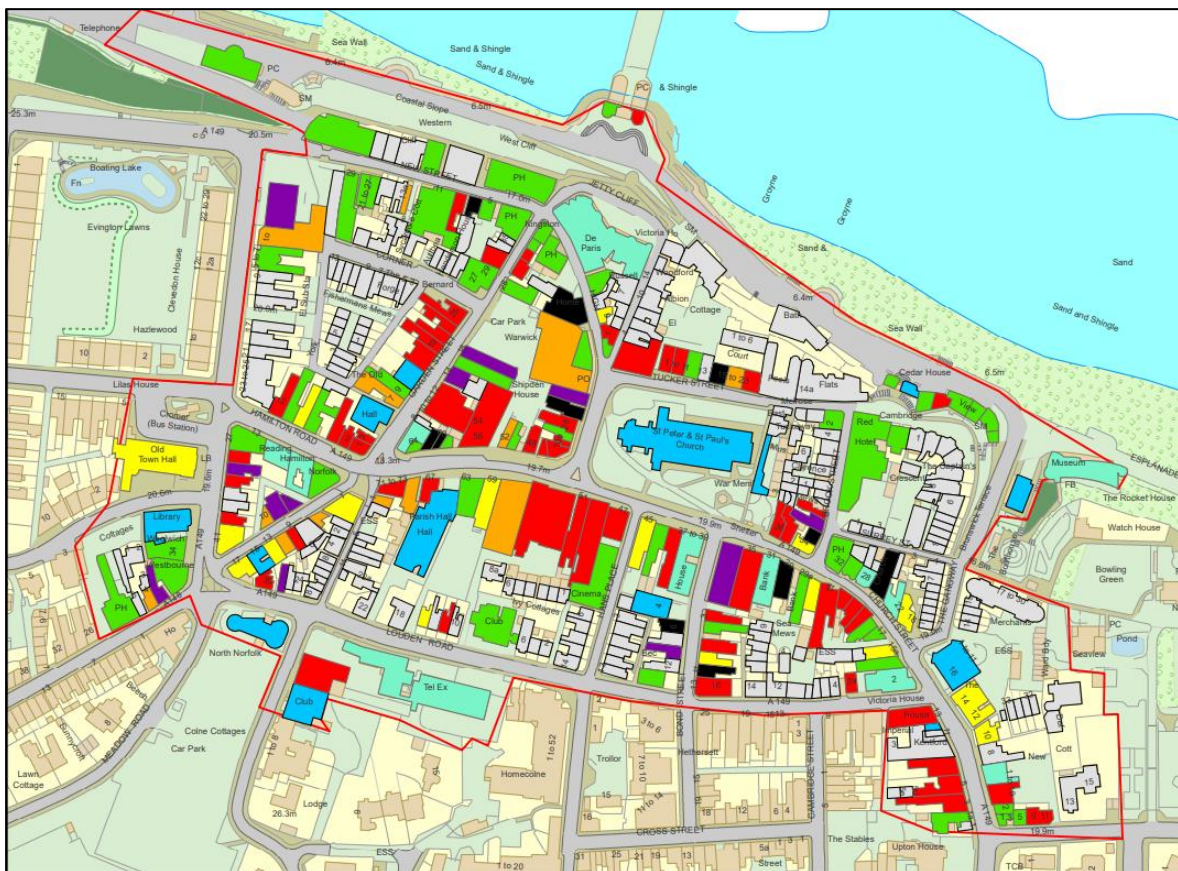
Parish work day population (2011) - 9,348

Number of town centre business premises (2022) - 198

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2022) – 5.6% (11 units)



Cromer Pier



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Figure 6 Unit Distribution in Cromer

Key Findings from the 2022 Survey

- Leisure units such as amusements and fish and chip shops are mostly located close to the seafront, as shown in Figure 6.
- Financial and business units are predominately located along or adjacent to Church Street, set back from the sea front.
- The largest proportion of units are comparison retail units at 30.3%, but leisure services are also a dominant unit type in the town at 29.8% of the total number of units. The percentage of leisure services is above the Norfolk average of 19.7%.
- The largest change in the unit distribution since 2021 is the increase in vacant units, the number of vacant units has increased from 6 to 11 in 2022.
- The vacancy rate of 5.6% is lower than the Norfolk average of 6.9%.
- The type of retail unit most affected by vacancies was comparison and convenience retail units, two units from each category have become vacant since 2021.

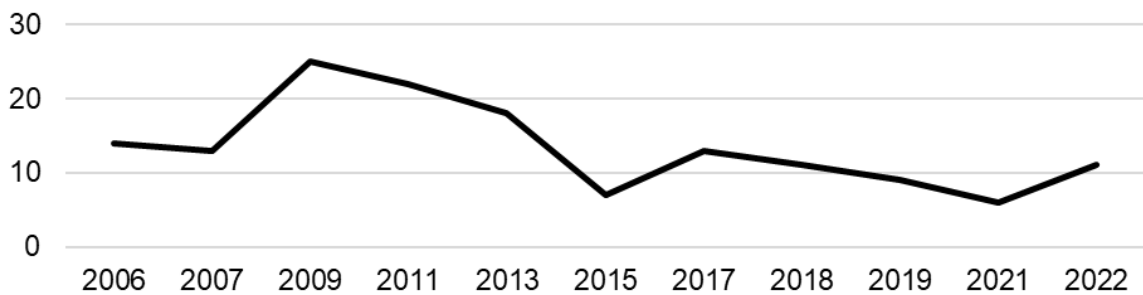


Figure 7 Historical Number of Vacant Units in Cromer

3.4 Dereham

Dereham is located in Breckland along the A47, which provides transport links to Norwich and King's Lynn. Dereham has the highest number of retail units out of all Norfolk market towns.

The town has a variety of chain and independent shops and eateries, the town also retains a regular market which is held twice a week. The voluntary Mid-Norfolk Railway runs between Dereham and Wymondham. Nearby attractions also include Bishop Bonner's House and Gressenhall Farm and Museum.



Shops in Dereham

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - 19,099

Economically Active Population (2011) – 70%

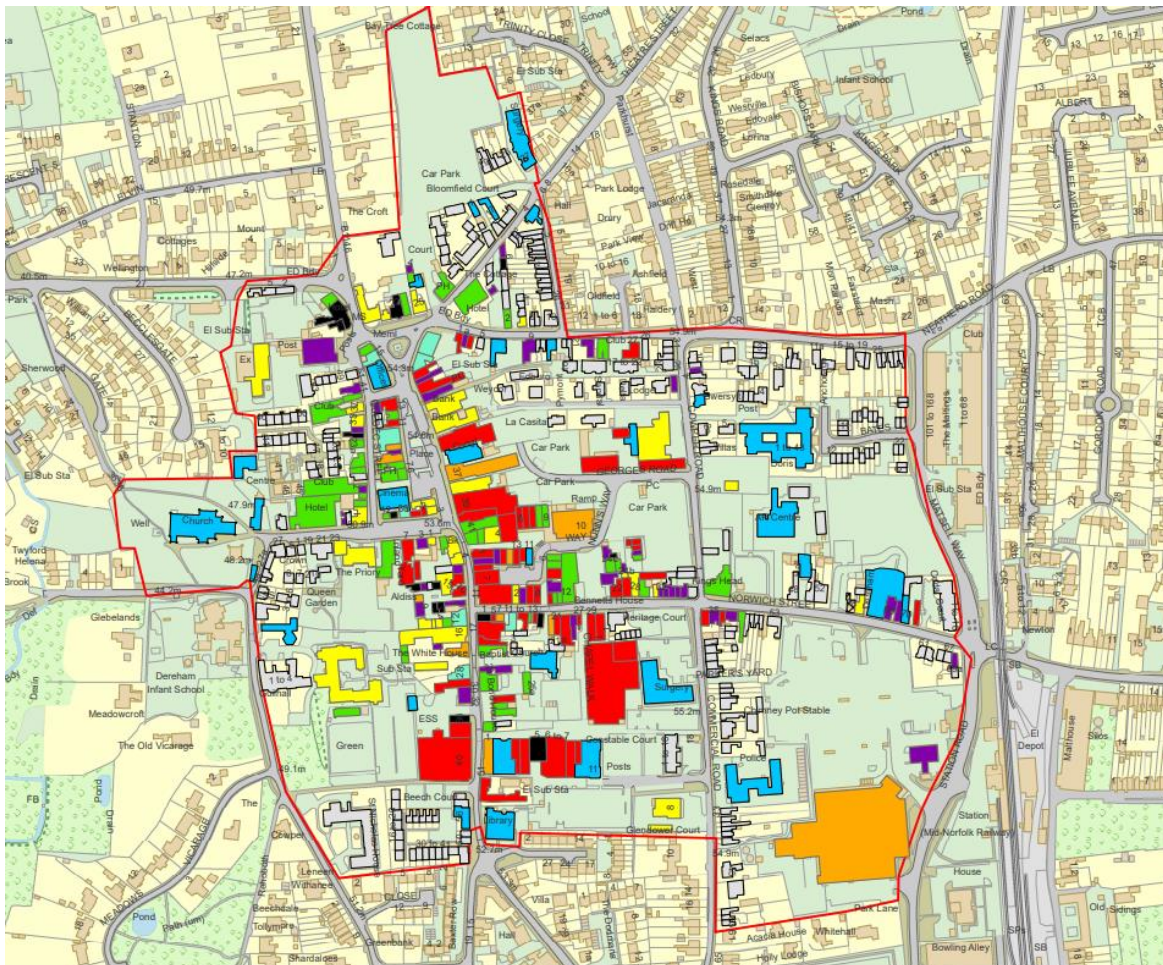
Main Occupation (2011) - Skilled trades occupations (13.8%)

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 8,456

Parish work day population (2011) - 19,578

Number of town centre business premises (2022) - 264

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2022) – 5.7% (15 units)



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Figure 8 Unit Distribution in Dereham

Key Findings from the 2022 Survey

- Comparison retail units are mostly concentrated close to the high street (see Figure 8).
- Leisure units are mostly concentrated to the north-west of High Street.
- Public service units are located on the periphery of the town centre, closer to the residential areas.
- The largest proportion of units are comparison retail units at 25%.
- The largest change in the units in is the increase of four retail services, and a decrease of four comparison units.
- Vacant units have reduced by one unit since 2021. The vacancy rate of 5.7% is lower than the Norfolk average of 6.9%.
- The types of retail unit most affected by vacancies were comparison retail units and leisure service units one unit from each respective category have become vacant since 2021.

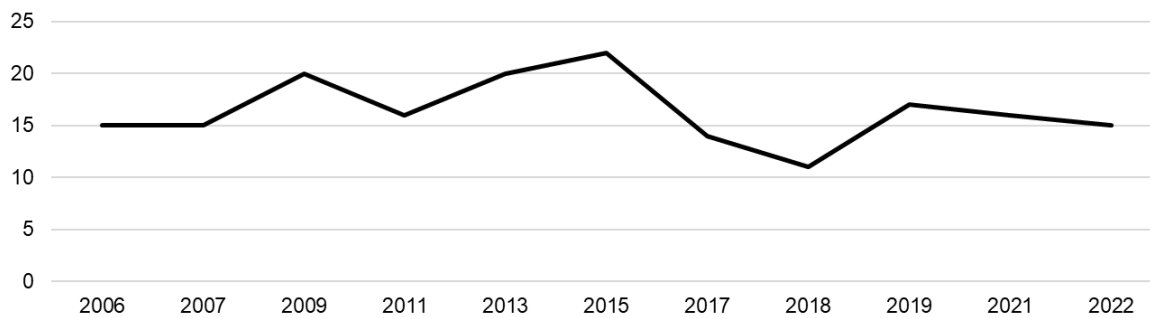


Figure 9 Historical Number of Vacant Units in Dereham

3.5 Diss

Diss is located in the Waveney Valley on the Norfolk/Suffolk border in South Norfolk. The town is connected by the A140, A1066 and regular rail services along the Norwich to London railway line.

Diss has a wide selection of shops ranging from small local businesses to large superstores, meaning it not only serves its residents but serves the surrounding rural catchment.

The town centre has a mixture of attractions including a public park, the Mere, auction rooms, the Diss Corn Hall Theatre, and a marketplace with a regular Friday market.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - 8,279

Economically Active Population (2011) – 71%

Main Occupation (2011) - Skilled trades occupations (15%)

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 3,617

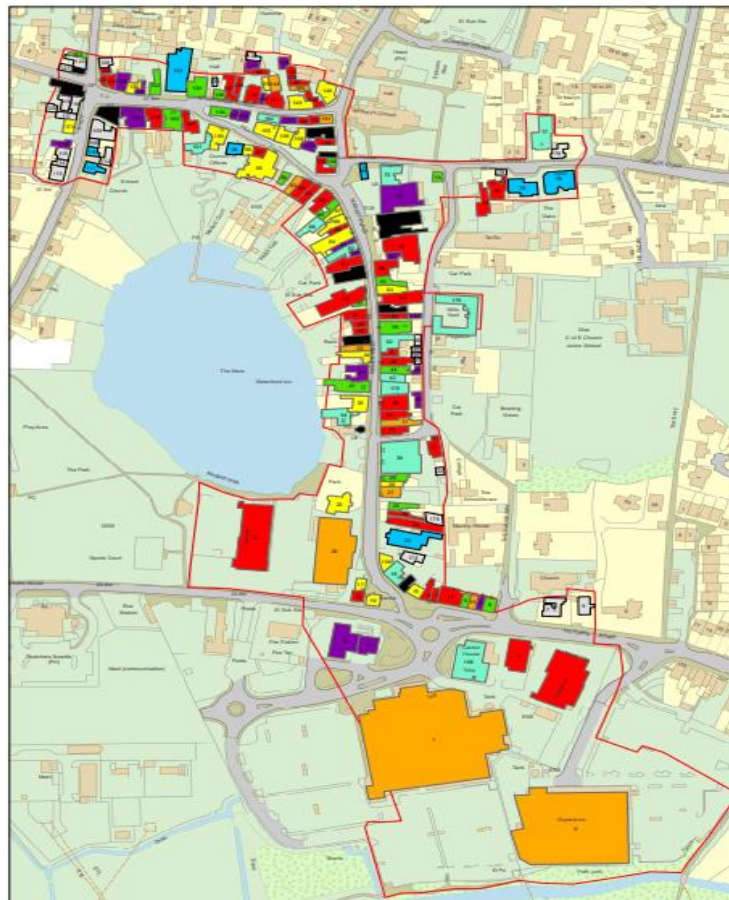
Parish work day population (2011) - 11,269

Number of town centre business premises (2022) - 156

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2022) – 6.4% (10 units)



Diss Town Sign



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Figure 10 Unit Distribution in Diss

Key Findings from the 2022 Survey

- There are two large convenience retail units (supermarkets), located to the south of the High Street.
- Financial and business units are largely located north of the High Street (see Figure 10).
- There is a concentration of vacant units to the north of the market town centre.
- The largest proportion of units are comparison retail at 30.1%.
- The largest change in units since 2021 is the decrease in comparison units and retail services units by two units each, there was an increase of two financial and business units.
- Vacant units have decreased by one unit since 2021. The vacancy rate of 6.4%, which is below the Norfolk average.

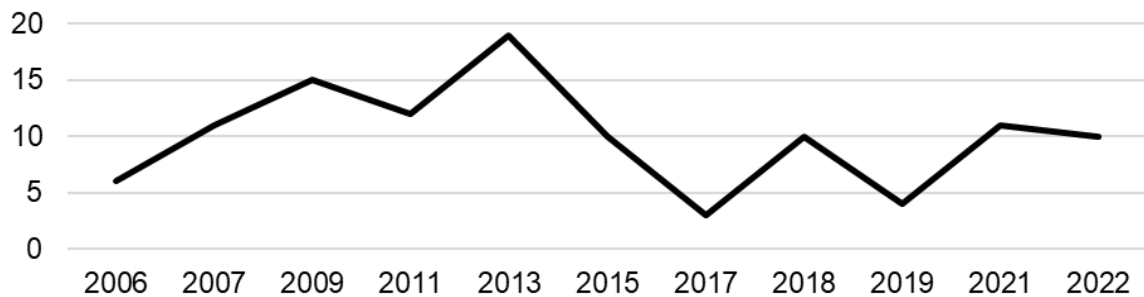


Figure 11 Historical Number of Vacant Units in Diss

3.6 Downham Market

Downham Market is located in King's Lynn and West Norfolk. The town is accessible via the A10 and A1122 and is served by regular rail services to King's Lynn, Cambridge and London.

A modern landscaped town square is centred around the old Town Hall. Downham Market retains a regular market. Amenities in the town range from large supermarkets to a range of local stores, cafes and pubs.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2015) - 10,962

Economically Active Population (2011) – 63%

Main Occupation (2011) - Skilled trades occupations (13.5%)

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 3,209

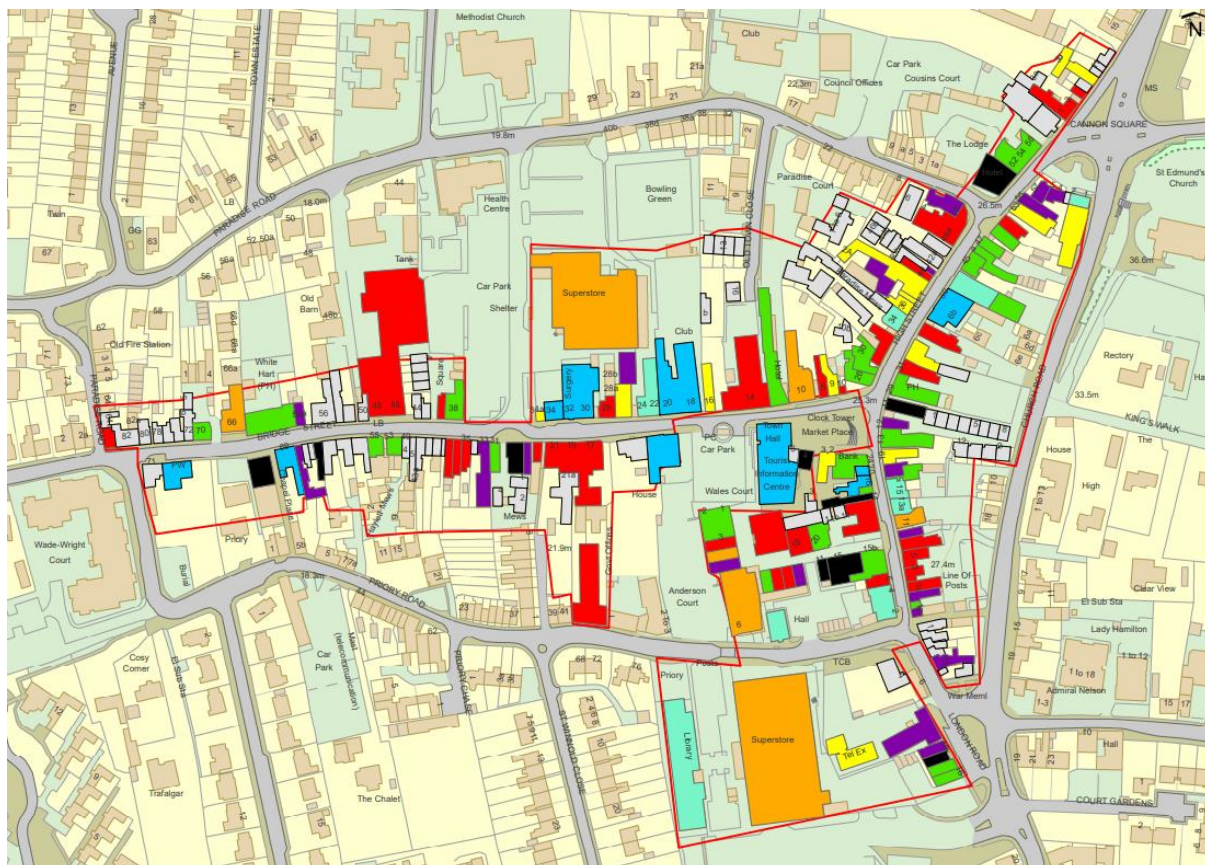
Parish work day population (2011) - 9,845

Number of town centre business premises (2022) - 131

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2022) – 7.6% (10 units)



Downham Market Clock Tower



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Figure 12 Unit Distribution in Downham Market

Key Findings from the 2022 Survey

- Public service units are mostly located in the centre of the town (see Figure 12).
- Retail service units are generally spread across the town centre, but they are generally located near to other retail service units.
- The largest proportion of units are comparison retail units at 24.4%.
- The largest change in Downham Market units is the increase of three Leisure Services units since 2021.
- Vacant units have increased from previous year by three units. The vacancy rate of 7.6% is higher than the Norfolk average.
- Retail services are the most affected category by vacancy, with two units becoming vacant.

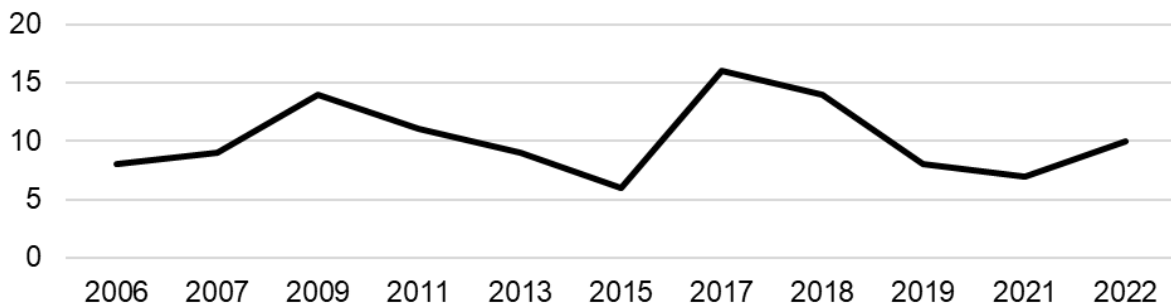


Figure 13 Historical Number of Vacant Units in Downham Market

3.7 Fakenham

Fakenham is located in North Norfolk and is accessed by the A1065 and A148.

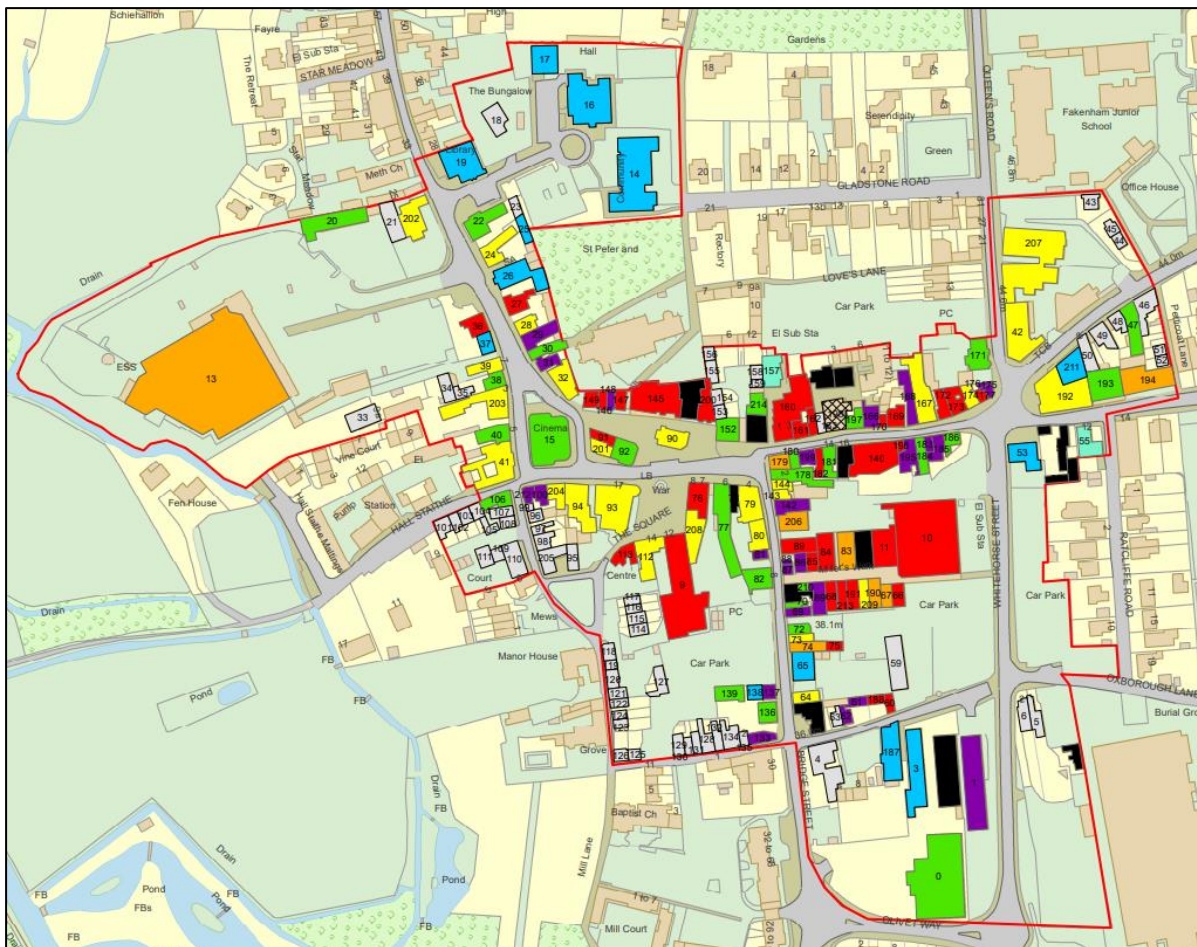
Fakenham has a range of outlets and leisure facilities including a supermarket, cinema, bowling alley and a range of retail and leisure units that range from independent stores to national retailers. Local visitor attractions include the traditional weekly market, Pensthorpe Nature Reserve and Fakenham Racecourse.

Key Figures

- Parish Population (2016) - 7,743
- Economically Active Population (2011) – 69%
- Main Occupation (2011) - Skilled trades occupations (17%)
- Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 4,799
- Parish work day population (2011) - 9,527
- Number of town centre business premises (2022) - 145
- Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2022) – 6.9% (10 units)



Fakenham Church and Shops



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Figure 14 Unit Distribution in Fakenham

Key Findings from the 2022 Survey

- Convenience retail units are concentrated in the centre of the town (see Figure 14).
- There is a large number of financial and business units which are located adjacent to each other, throughout the town centre. There are multiple solicitors to the west of the town centre.
- Public service units are located in clusters to the north and south of the town.
- The largest proportion of units are comparison retail units at 24.1%.
- The largest change in unit distribution was in the vacant units, which have decreased by five since 2021 (a 33% decrease).
- The vacancy rate of 6.9%, which is the same as the Norfolk average.
- Financial and business and leisure services are two other main types of retail units in the town.

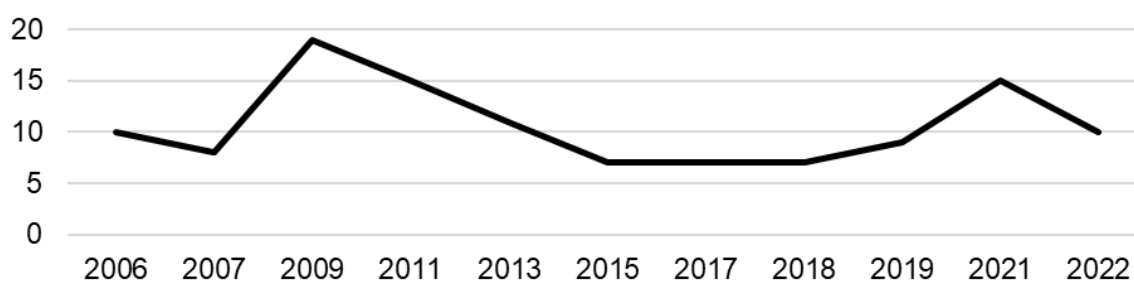


Figure 15 Historical Number of Vacant Units in Fakenham

3.8 Harleston

Harleston is a small market town in South Norfolk, connected to surrounding towns and villages by the A143.

There is an assortment of independent shops, services and national retailers which are used and supported by residents and visitors to the town. A market is held weekly. Harleston is a popular destination for ramblers and cyclists, who want to explore the Waveney valley walks, cycle paths and the Angles Way (a 93-mile footpath).

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - 4,206 (Reddenhall with Harleston)

Economically Active Population (2011) – 69%

Main Occupation (2011) - Skilled trades occupations (18%)

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 1,718

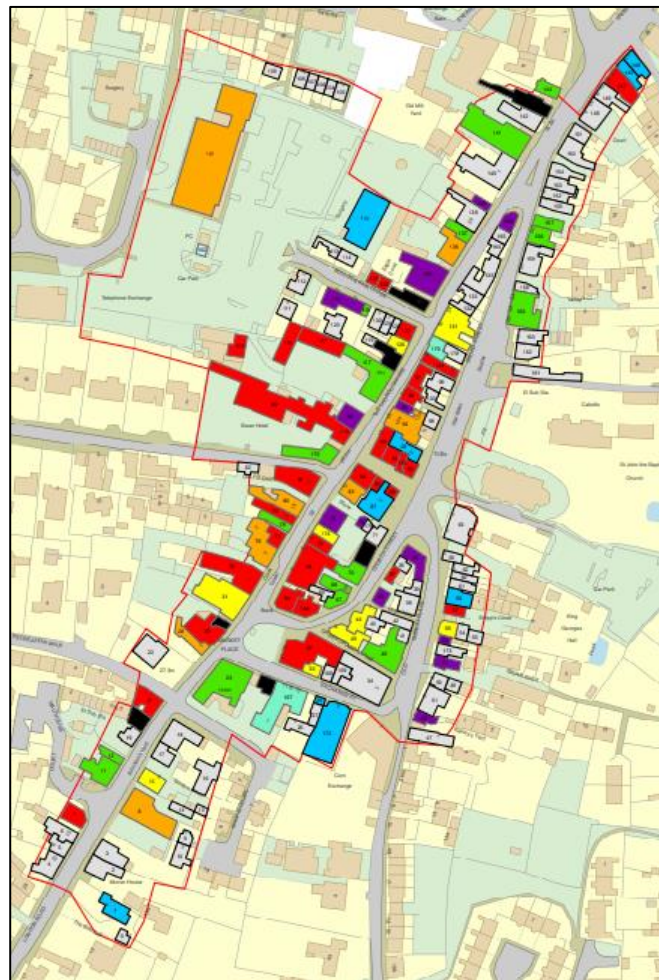
Parish work day population (2011) - 4,060

Number of town centre business premises (2022) - 100

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2022) - 7% (7 units)



Harleston Town Centre



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Figure 16 Unit Distribution in Harleston

Key Findings from the 2022 Survey

- Retail service units are mostly set back away from the high street.
- Comparison retail units are mostly located in the centre of the market town centre.
- The largest proportion of units in Harleston are comparison retail units at 31%, above the Norfolk average of 27.1%.
- The largest increase since 2021 is the addition of two local public service units (a rise of 18%).
- Vacant units have remained stable at seven units since 2019.
- The vacancy rate of 7%, is slightly above the Norfolk average.
- The type of retail unit most affected by vacancies was comparison retail units as three have become vacant since 2021.

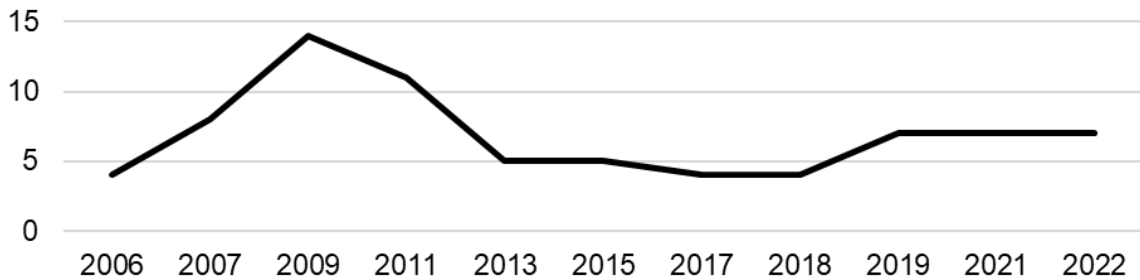


Figure 17 Historical Number of Vacant Units in Harleston

3.9 Holt

Holt is situated in North Norfolk and is connected to the coast and Norwich by the A148.

Holt has a diverse range of retail outlets including a local department store, a range of cafes and restaurants and a mix of independent and national retailers.

Visitor attractions include Holt Country Park and the North Norfolk Railway which provides seasonal transport and events between Holt and Sheringham.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - 3,988

Economically Active Population (2011) – 54%

Main Occupation (2011) - Skilled trades occupations (16%)

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 2,644

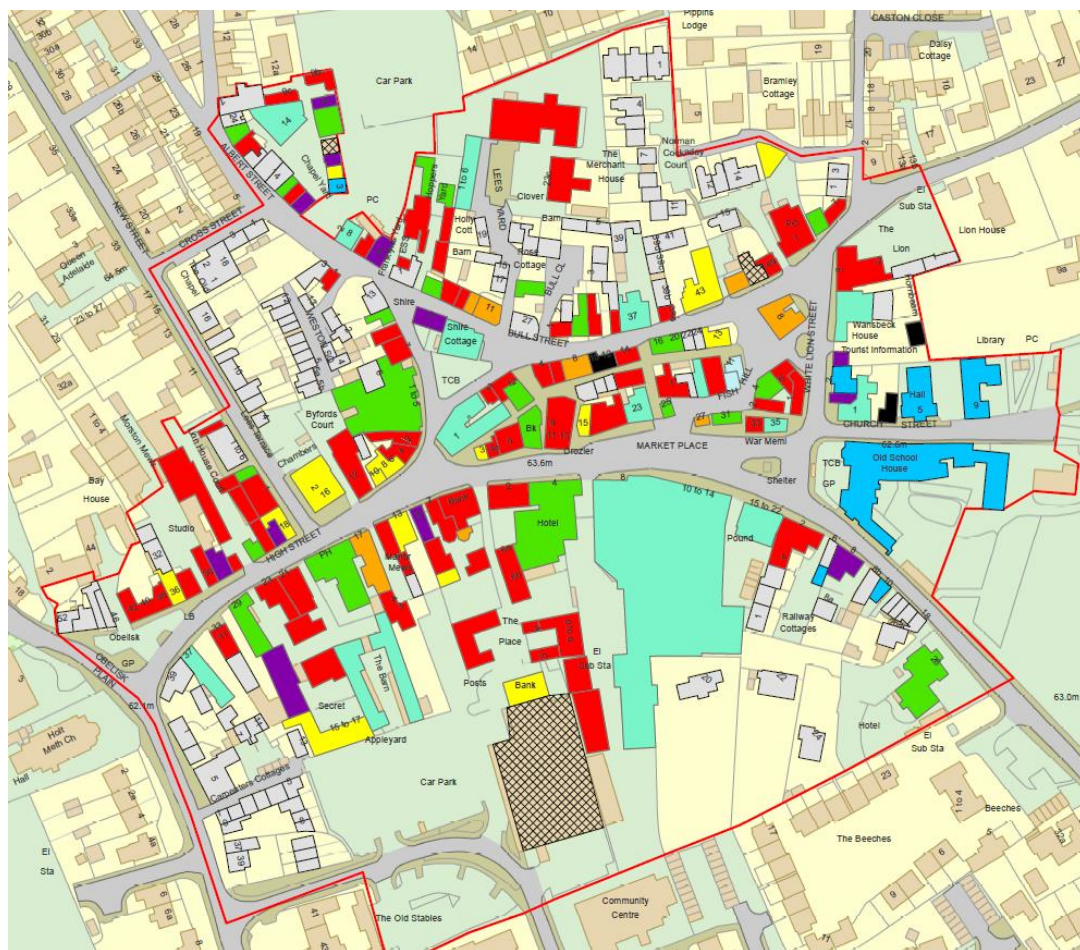
Parish work day population (2011) - 5,237

Number of town centre business premises (2022) - 161

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2022) – 1.9% (3 units)



Holt Town Centre



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Figure 18 Unit Distribution in Holt

Key Findings from the 2022 Survey

- There is a concentration of public service units to the east of the town centre, see Figure 18.
- The town centre has multiple mixed use units, including a large department store located off of Market Place.
- A fire in 2020 destroyed a convenience retail unit in the town, which has been recorded as demolished, a temporary supermarket is being run in its place. This unit is expected to be rebuilt within the next year.
- The largest proportion of units in Holt are comparison retail units at 46%, which is considerably higher than the Norfolk average of 27.1%.
- The largest change in units, since 2021, was reduction of number of vacant units, from nine units to three units
- The vacancy rate is the lowest since 2013
- The vacancy rate of 1.9% is lower than the Norfolk average.

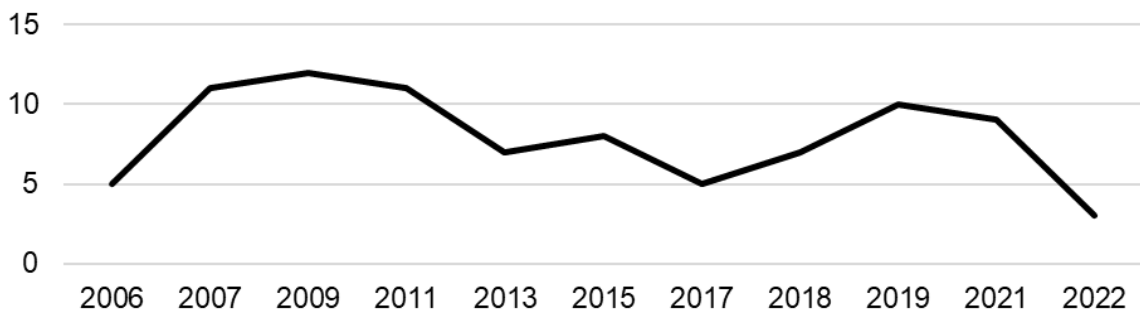


Figure 19 Historical Number of Vacant Units in Holt

3.10 Hunstanton

Hunstanton is located on the Norfolk Coast, accessed by the A149, located in King's Lynn and West Norfolk. It is a seaside town which was a popular Victorian holiday resort. Much of the town centre serves the tourism industry, but the High Street also offers a range of retail outlets for local residents. A market is held once a week throughout the year, and more often during the summer.

The Norfolk Coast Path originates in the town centre, linking with the Peddar's Way at Holme-next-the-Sea and Cromer, to the east.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - 5,277

Economically Active Population (2011) – 56%

Main Occupation (2011) - Managers, directors and senior officials (17%)

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 2,201

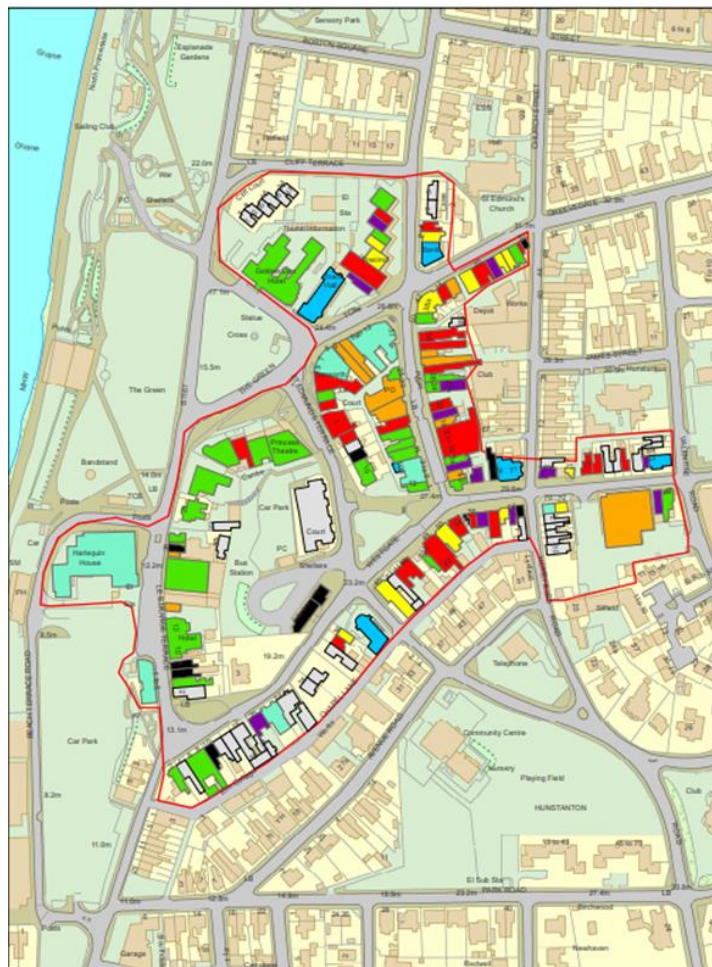
Parish work day population (2011) - 9,181

Number of town centre business premises (2022) - 119

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2022) – 9.2% (11 units)



Hunstanton Town Sign



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Figure 20 Unit Distribution in Hunstanton

Key Findings from the 2022 Survey

- A large proportion of leisure units are located to the west of the town centre, near to the sea front.
- Financial and business units are to the north and south of the town centre.
- The largest proportion of units in the market town are leisure services at 25.2%, above the Norfolk average of 19.7%. The next largest number of units are comparison retail units at 22.7%
- The largest change in units was the increase of convenience retail units an increase of three units.
- Vacant units have increased by one unit since 2021, to 11 units. The vacancy rate of 9.2% is higher than the Norfolk average.
- The type of retail unit most affected by vacancies were retail service units as three have become vacant since 2021.

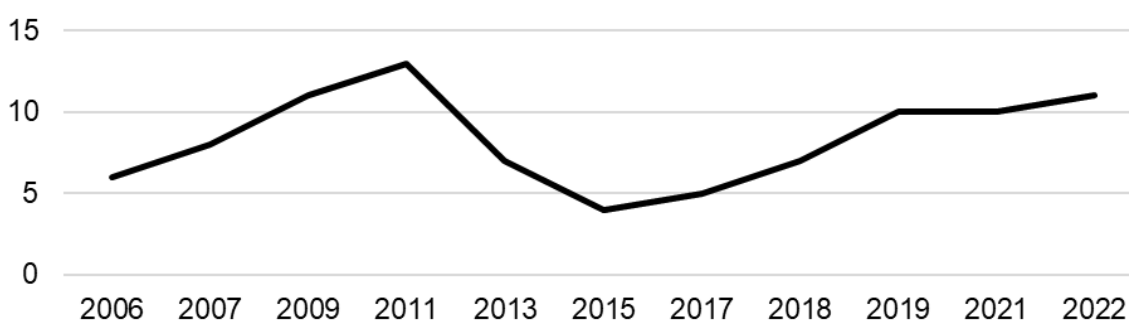


Figure 21 Historical Number of Vacant Units in Hunstanton

3.11 Loddon

Loddon is a village located in South Norfolk. It is accessed via the A146 by road and the River Chet by boat.

There is a small selection of shops and services in Loddon and a regular farmers market serve residents and tourists.

Loddon is a historic village within the Norfolk Broads, it is popular with visitors by boat and on foot.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - 2,860

Economically Active Population (2011) – 70%

Main Occupation (2011) - Professional occupations (16%)

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 1,158

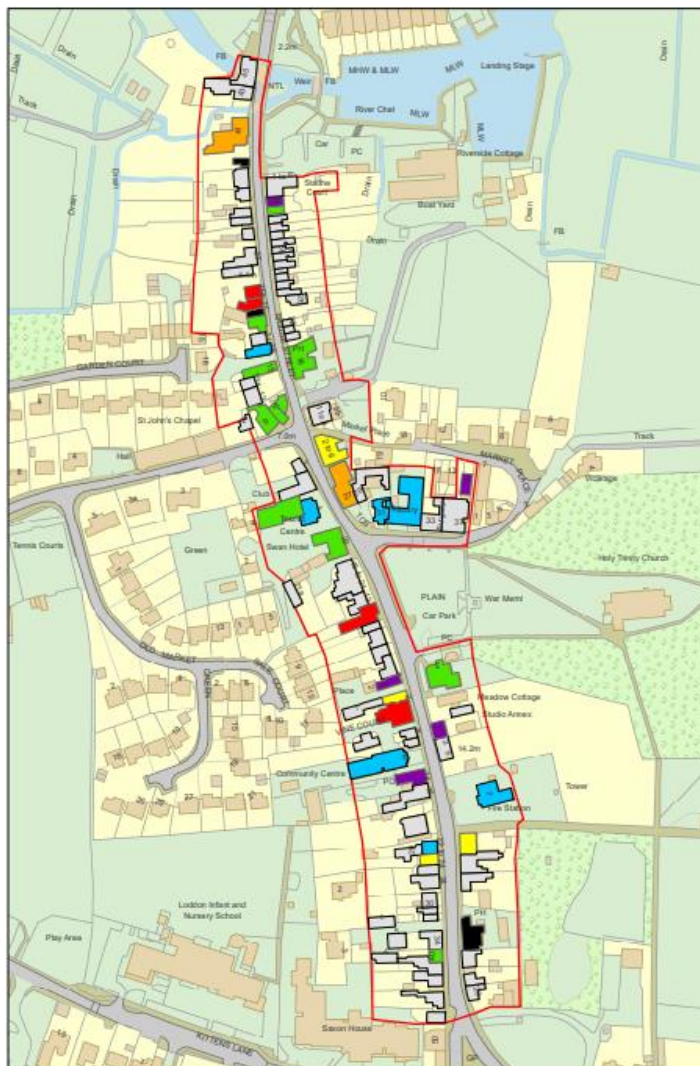
Parish work day population (2011) - 3,303

Number of town centre business premises (2022) - 36

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2022) – 5.6%
(2 units)



Loddon Town Sign



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Figure 22 Unit Distribution in Loddon

Key Findings from the 2022 Survey

- The linear High Street largely consists of residential units, interspersed by retail and business units (see Figure 22).
- The largest proportion of units are leisure services which make up 30.6% of all units, which is higher than the Norfolk average.
- 11.1% of units in Loddon are comparison retail units, which is considerably lower than the Norfolk average of 27.1%.
- Both Financial and Business Services and Public Services have remained the same level from 2021.
- The largest change is the increase of two units in vacant units, from zero vacant units in 2021.

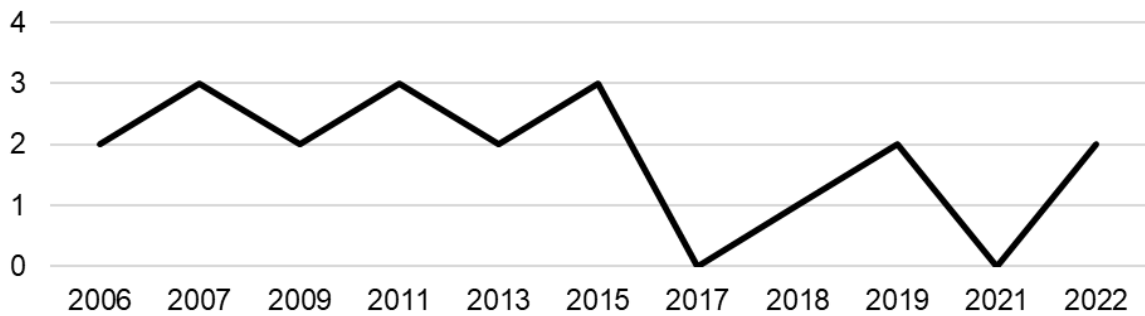


Figure 23 Historical Number of Vacant Units in Loddon

3.12 Long Stratton

Long Stratton is a market town in South Norfolk, accessed by the A140.

The settlement's growth to date has formed in a linear pattern following the A140, creating a corridor of shops, interspersed with residential dwellings. The high street broadens out into a small market area at The Plain.

The centre of the town houses many listed buildings. There is also a regular farmers market.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - 4,490

Economically Active Population (2011) – 74%

Main Occupation (2011) - Skilled trades occupations (15%)

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 2,338

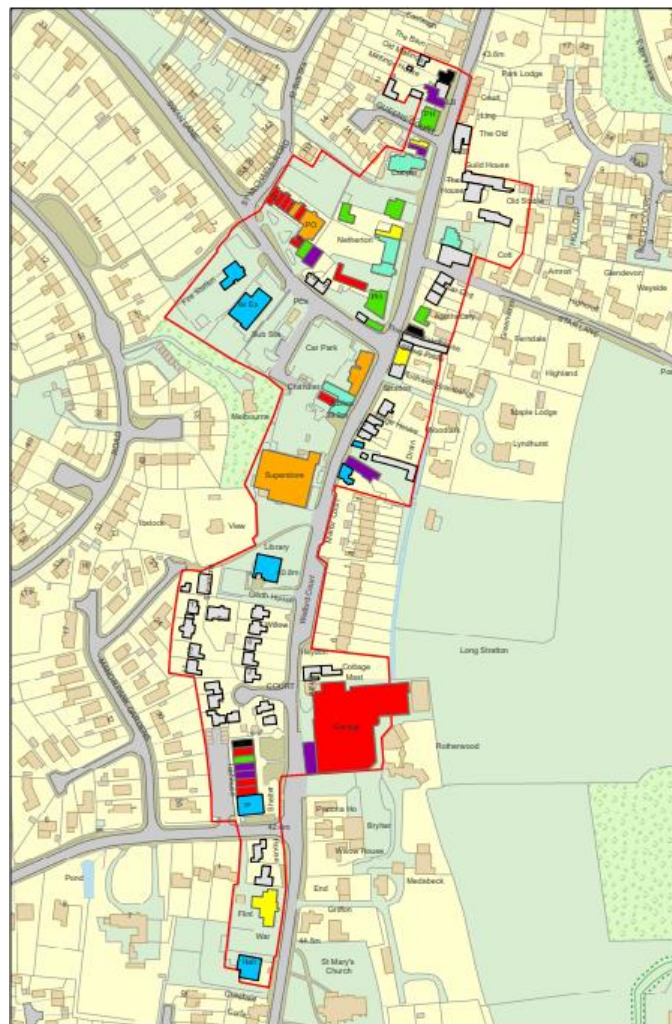
Parish work day population (2011) - 3,845

Number of town centre business premises (2022) - 52

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2022) – 5.8% (3 units)



Long Stratton High Street



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Figure 24 Unit Distribution in Long Stratton

Key Findings form the 2022 Survey

- The High Street (the A140 which runs through Long Stratton) is linear, with a large number of residential units lining it (see Figure 24).
- There is a concentration of leisure units to the north of the town centre.
- Most retail and business units are scattered throughout the high street, but there are two concentrations of retail units at Ice House Court and at South Norfolk Shopping Centre.
- The largest proportion of units are comparison retail units at 24.5%.
- Vacant units have halved since 2021, with a reduction of three units from the six units recorded in 2021.
- The vacancy rate of 5.7% is lower than the Norfolk average.

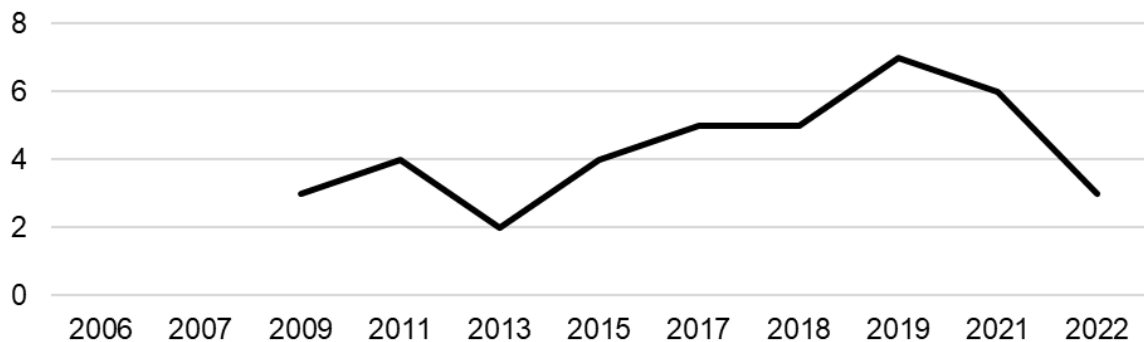


Figure 25 Historical Number of Vacant Units in Long Stratton

3.13 North Walsham

North Walsham is located in North Norfolk, it is accessed from Norwich by the A140 and the B1145. There are regular rail services via the Norwich to Sheringham railway line.

There are a range of amenities, from independent and national retailers, cafes and restaurants to large supermarkets. A weekly market is held in the town.

Nearby is Bacton Woods, a 280 acre ancient woodland site, which Weavers Way runs through.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - 12,647

Economically Active Population (2011) – 65%

Main Occupation (2011) - Skilled trades occupations (17%)

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 4,793

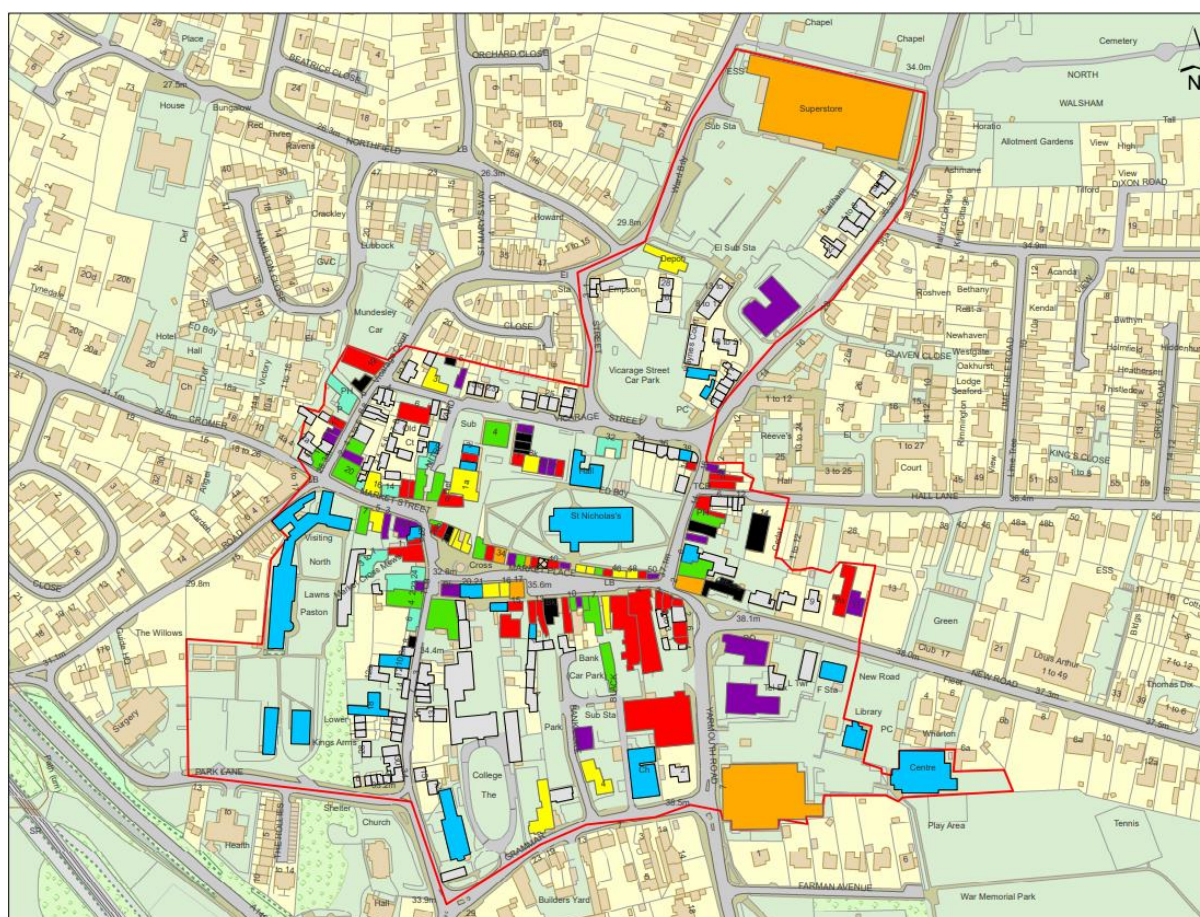
Parish work day population (2011) - 11,924

Number of town centre business premises (2022) - 144

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2022) – 7.6% (11 units)



North Walsham Clock Tower



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Figure 26 Unit Distribution in North Walsham

Key Findings from the 2022 Survey

- The units in the market town are mostly concentrated along Market Street and Market Place with a dispersed spread of units to the north and south (see Figure 26.)
- There are two large convenience retail units one to the north and one to the south of the market town centre.
- Public service units are mostly on the periphery of the market town centre.
- The largest proportion of units are comparison retail units at 25%.
- Local Public Services have the second largest proportion of units in town.
- The total number of vacant units remained stable at 11 units, since 2021.
- The vacancy rate of 7.6% is above the Norfolk average.

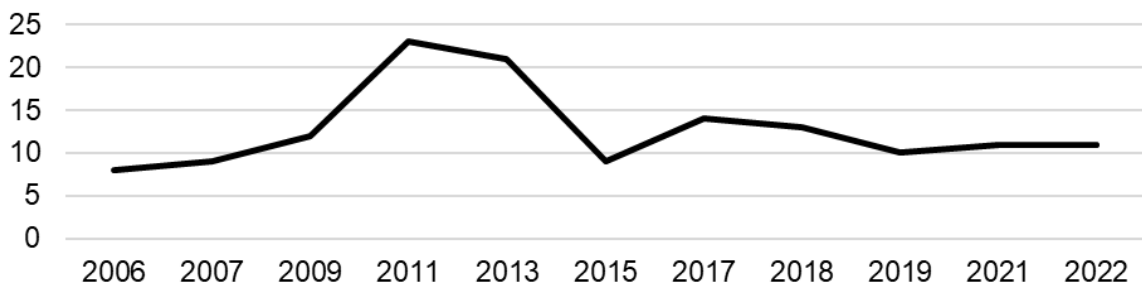


Figure 27 Historical Number of Vacant Units in North Walsham

3.14 Sheringham

Sheringham is located in North Norfolk. The town is accessed by the A149 and the Sheringham to Norwich railway line.

The amenities in the market town vary from independent retailers, cafes and restaurants to supermarkets. A traditional market is held regularly.

The town benefits from beaches, cliffs, museums, a theatre and the North Norfolk railway which is a tourist attraction running between Sheringham and Holt.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - 7,395

Economically Active Population (2011) – 60%

Main Occupation (2011) - Skilled trades occupations (15%)

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 2,597

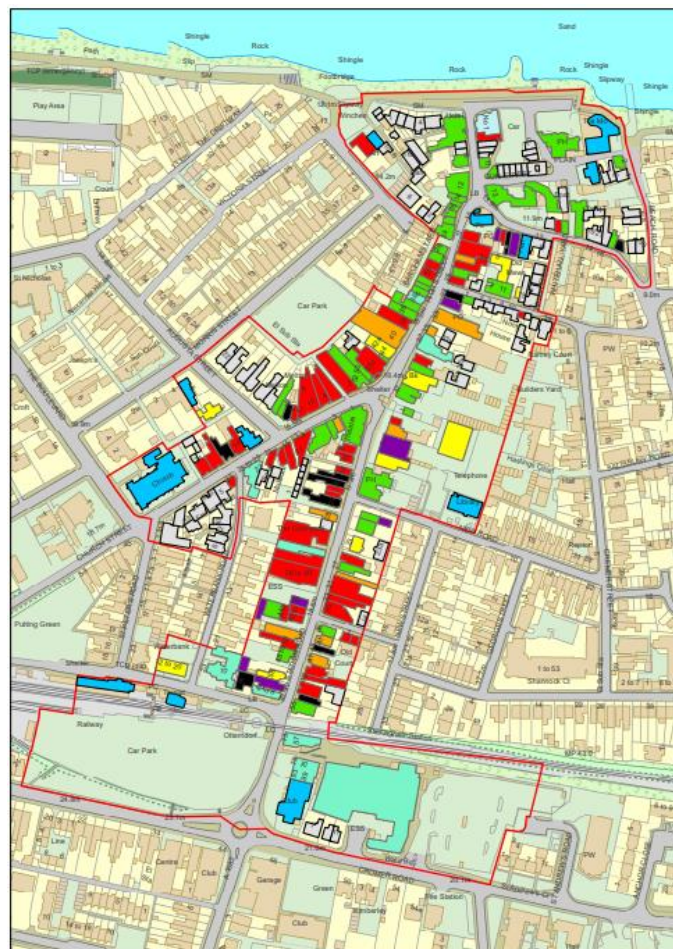
Parish work day population (2011) - 7,860

Number of town centre business premises (2022) - 160

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2022) – 6.9% (11 units)



Sheringham High Street



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Figure 28 Unit Distribution in Sheringham

Key Findings from the 2022 Survey

- The high street (Station Road) is mostly linear in shape, with a large car park at the south end.
- There is a concentration of leisure units to the north of the town near to the seafront (see Figure 28).
- Public Service units are located on the periphery of Station Road.
- The largest proportion of units are comparison retail units at 31.3%, and closely followed by Leisure Services at 30%.
- Vacant units increased by five units to a total of 11 units since 2021, an 83% increase.
- The vacancy rate of 6.9% is exactly in line with the Norfolk average.
- The types of retail unit most affected by vacancies were comparison and Leisure services units, both became vacant by two units.

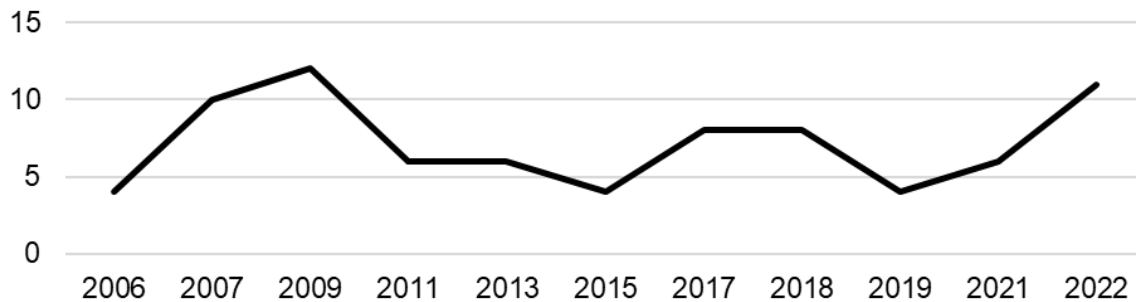


Figure 29 Historical Number of Vacant Units in Sheringham

3.15 Stalham

Stalham is a small market town in North Norfolk, within the Norfolk Broads. The town is served by the A149 and the A1151 connecting the town with Wroxham and Norwich.

The prominence of the Broads makes Stalham an important service town to the surrounding villages.

High Street hosts an array of businesses including cafes, restaurants and retail units and a large superstore.

There are regular Farmer Markets held in the town.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - 3,276

Economically Active Population (2011) – 66%

Main Occupation (2011) - Skilled trades occupations (20%)

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 1,704

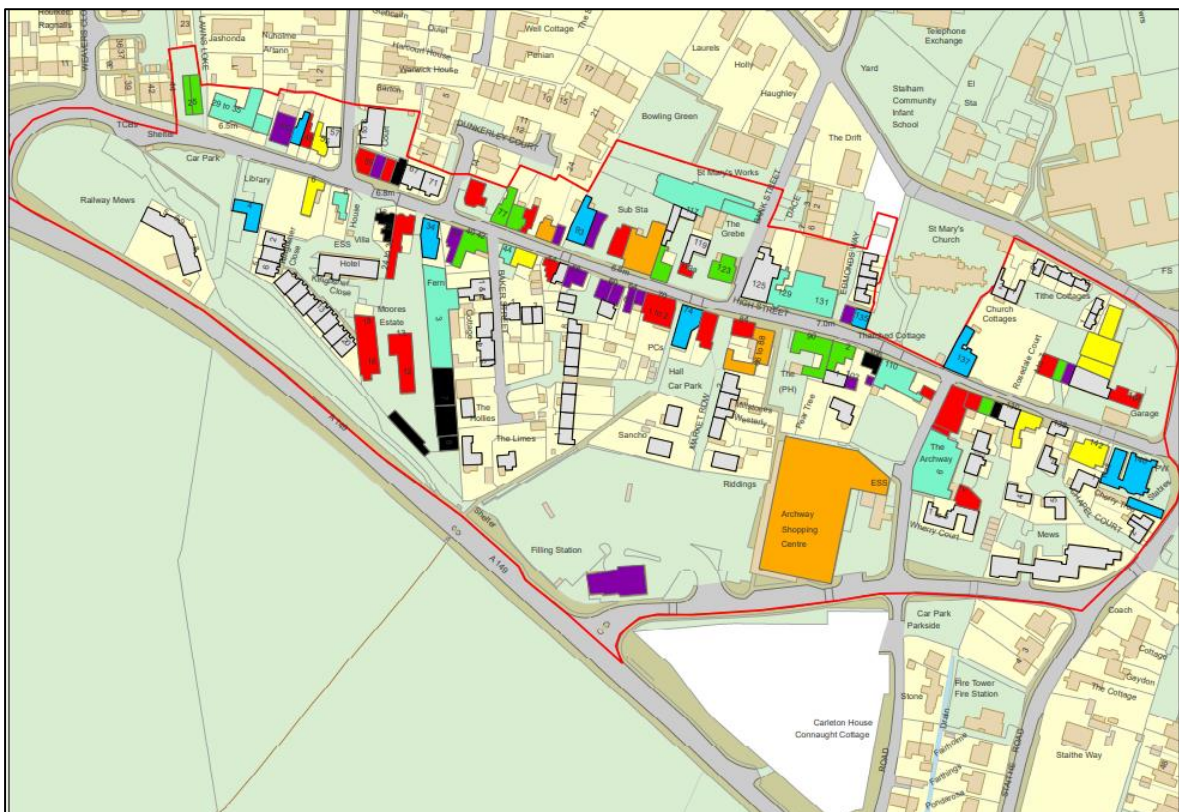
Parish work day population (2011) - 3,808

Number of town centre business premises (2022) - 86

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2022) – 9.3% (8 units)



Stalham High Street



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Figure 30 Unit Distribution in Stalham

Key Findings from the 2022 Survey

- The high street is linear in shape (see Figure 30).
- The largest proportion of units are comparison retail units at 24.4%, lower than the Norfolk average.
- There is a higher than the Norfolk average percentage of retail service units in the market town at 17.4%.
- At 11.6%, there is a higher than the Norfolk average percentage of mixed use units.
- Vacant units have remained the same at eight units, since 2021.
- The vacancy rate of 9.3% is higher than the Norfolk average.

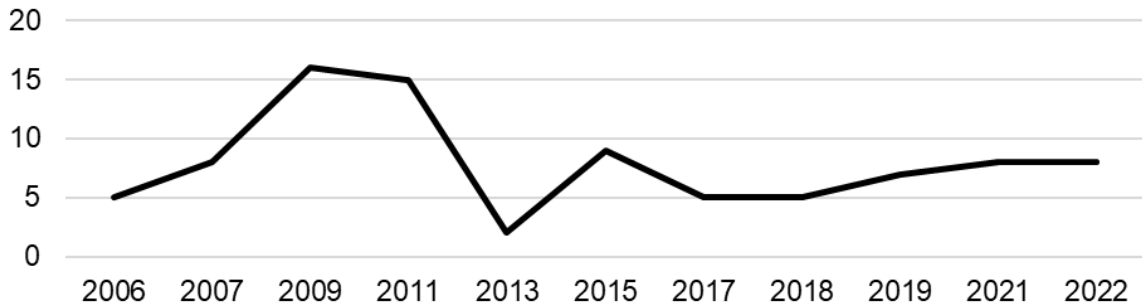


Figure 31 Historical Number of Vacant Units in Stalham

3.16 Swaffham

Swaffham is a large market town in Breckland. It benefits from transport links via the A47.

Swaffham is an historic town with Georgian and Medieval buildings, which house a variety of amenities including cafes, restaurants and independent and chain retail outlets. A market is held on Saturdays.

Other attractions include the Swaffham Museum, the Swaffham Assembly Rooms and the nearby Castle Acre Priory.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - 7,809

Economically Active Population (2011) – 62%

Main Occupation (2011) - Elementary occupations (15%)

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 3,134

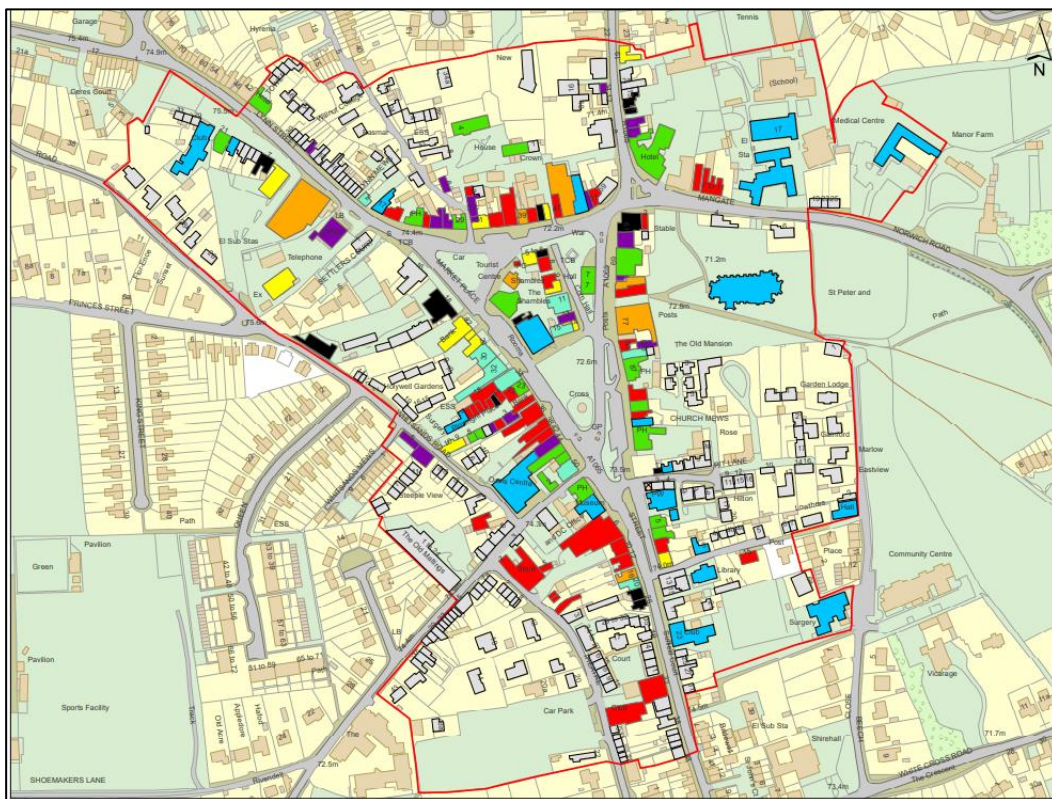
Parish work day population (2011) - 7,549

Number of town centre business premises (2022) - 149

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2022) – 8.7% (13 units)



Swaffham Buttercross



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Figure 32 Unit Distribution in Swaffham

Key Findings from the 2022 Survey

- The market town centre is triangular in shape with the central focus of the Swaffham Buttercross (see Figure 32).
- There is a concentration of public service units to the east of the market town centre.
- The largest proportion of units are comparison retail units at 28.9%.
- The largest change since 2021 is the decrease of five financial & Business Service units, a 18% decrease.
- Leisure services, with 14.8% of all units, is the second biggest concentration of units in the town.
- Vacant units increased by two units since 2021.
- The vacancy rate of 8.7% is above the Norfolk average.

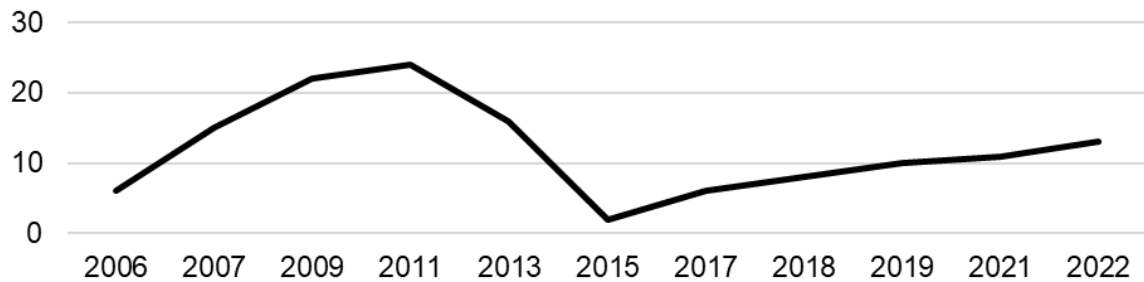


Figure 33 Historical Number of Vacant Units in Swaffham

3.17 Thetford

Thetford is an historic market town situated in Breckland and accessed via the A11, which provides links to Norwich, Cambridge and London. The town is also well connected by regular rail services to Norwich and London.

Thetford has a range of shops from large convenience stores to small independent retailers and businesses. In the centre of the town a traditional market is held on Tuesdays and Saturdays.

Thetford Forest is a local tourist attraction providing outdoor activities.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - 26,582

Economically Active Population (2011) – 74%

Main Occupation (2011) - Elementary occupations (20%)

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 11,337

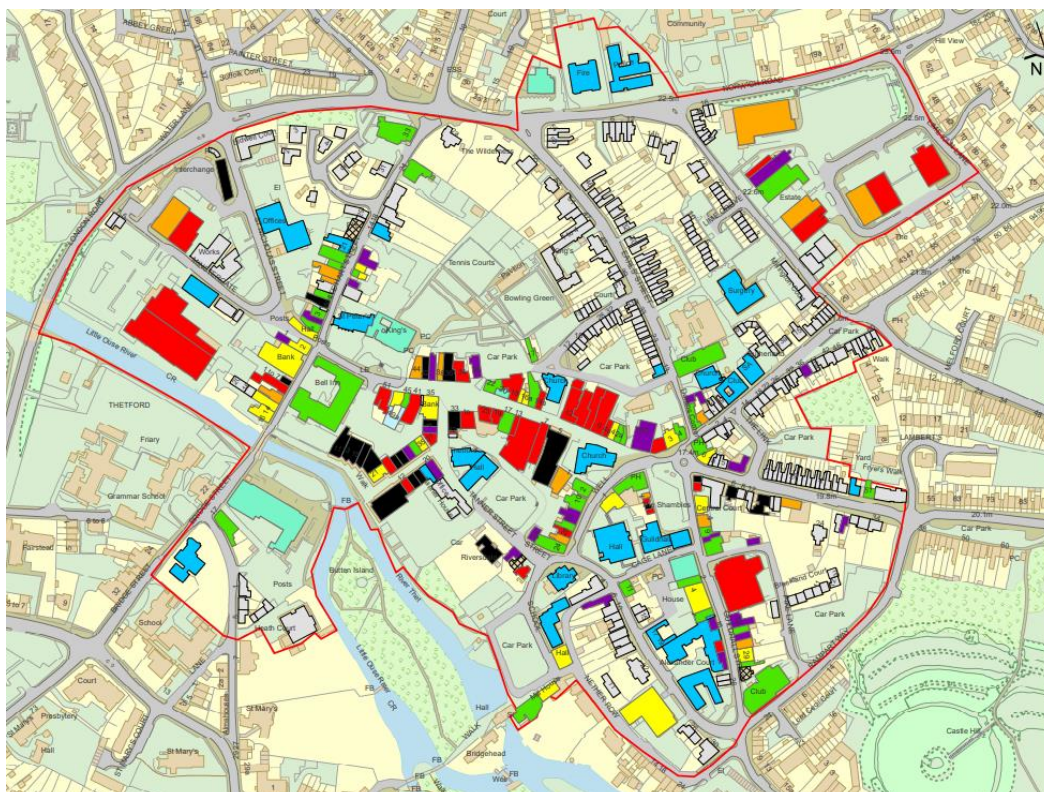
Parish work day population (2011) - 23,897

Number of town centre business premises (2022) - 198

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2022) – 11.1% (22 units)



Little Ouse River in Thetford



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Figure 34 Unit Distribution in Thetford

Key Findings from the 2022 Survey

- The north east of the town centre has a large number of residential units (see Figure 34).
- There is a concentration of vacant units in the centre of the market town centre.
- The largest proportion of units are leisure services at 19.2% and 18.7% of units in the market town are comparison retail units, this is below the Norfolk average. This is reflective of the fact that the town has a high visitor economy, due to its proximity to Thetford Forest.
- The biggest change since 2021 is the reduction of five Financial and Business Services units.
- Vacant units have increased by three units to 22 units since 2021.
- The vacancy rate of 11.1% is above the Norfolk average and is one of the highest recorded vacancy rates across all Norfolk Market Towns, along with Watton.

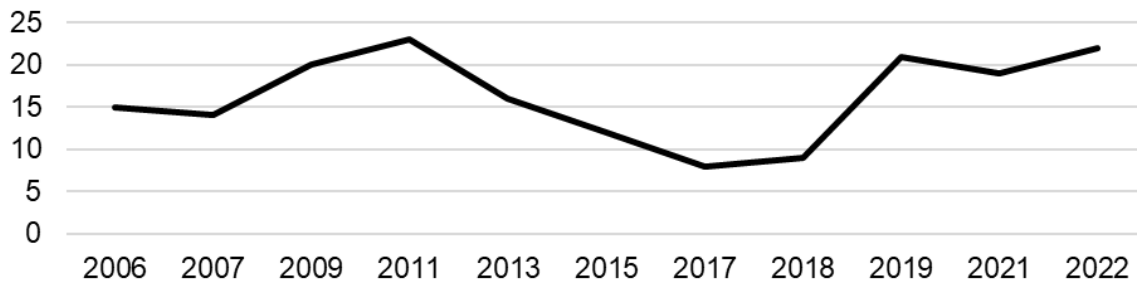


Figure 35 Historical Number of Vacant Units in Thetford

3.18 Watton

Watton is located in Breckland, it has good transport links via the B1108.

Watton has a variety of shops and amenities including a market which is held every Wednesday.

The town has many historic buildings including the Clock Tower which was built in 1679. The Wayland Wood Nature Reserve is also nearby.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - 7,782

Economically Active Population (2011) – 66%

Main Occupation (2011) - Skilled trades occupations (16%)

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 2,707

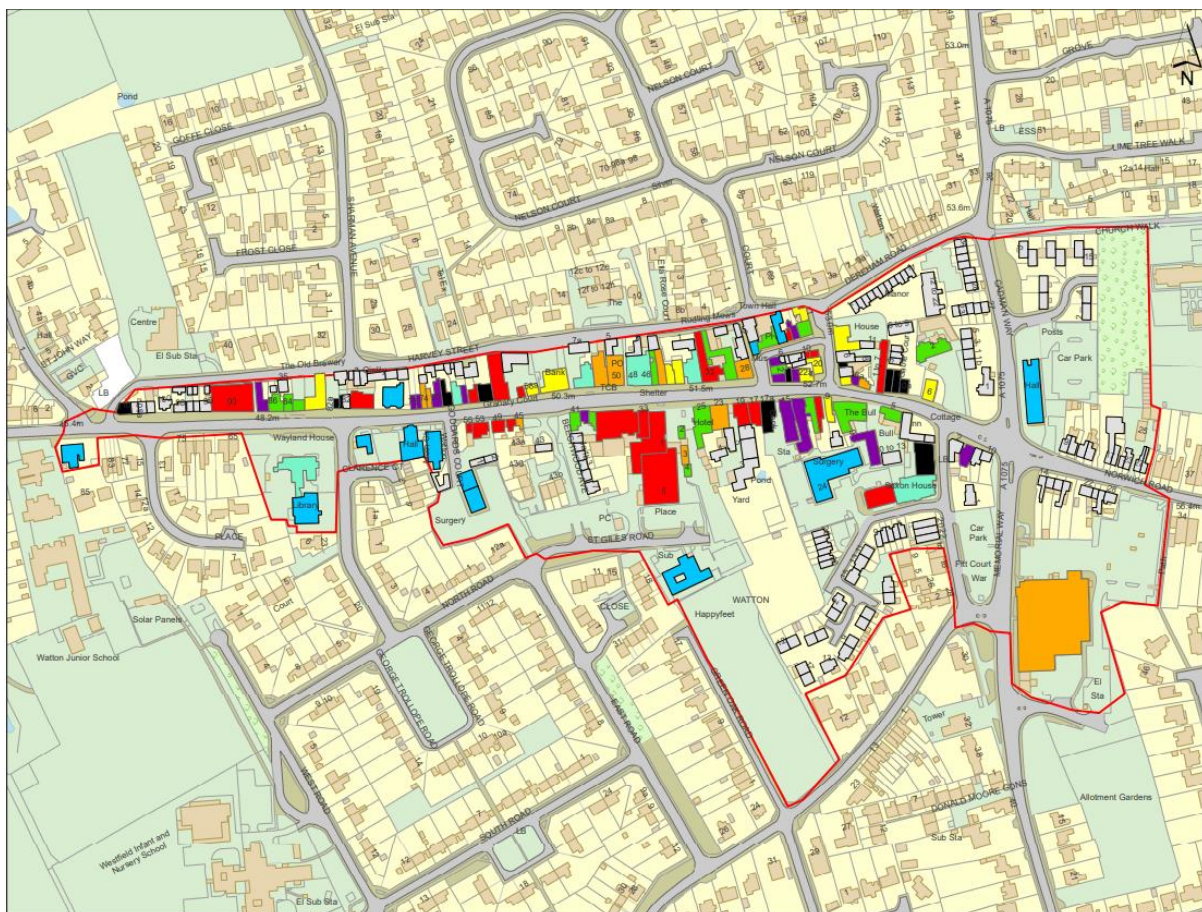
Parish work day population (2011) - 8,758

Number of town centre business premises (2022) - 108

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2022) – 11.1% (12 units)



Watton Clock Tower



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Figure 36 Unit Distribution in Watton

Key Findings from the 2022 Survey

- The market town centre is linear in shape, with a large convenience retailer to the east of the town (see figure 36).
- Public service units are mostly located to the south of High Street.
- There is a concentration of vacant units to the east of High Street.
- The largest proportion of units are comparison retail units at 20.4%, less than the Norfolk average of 27.1%.
- Vacant units have reduced by two units since 2021. The vacancy rate of 11.1% is above the Norfolk average and is one of the highest recorded vacancy rates across all Norfolk Market Towns, along with Thetford.

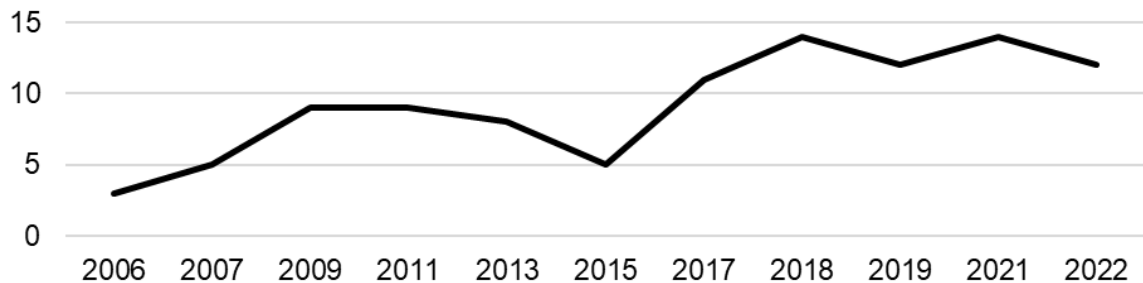


Figure 37 Historical Number of Vacant Units in Watton

3.19 Wells next the Sea

Wells-next-the-Sea is a small fishing town located in North Norfolk. The A149 connects the market town to North Norfolk and further afield.

While mostly serving as a seaside resort, the town also hosts an active port used by the fishing industry. There is a variety of amenities and attractions, including the beach, port and museum. The retail units are mostly independent cafe, restaurants, delicatessens and gift and homeware shops.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - 2,174

Economically Active Population (2011) – 63%

Main Occupation (2011) - Skilled trades occupations (22%)

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 1,085

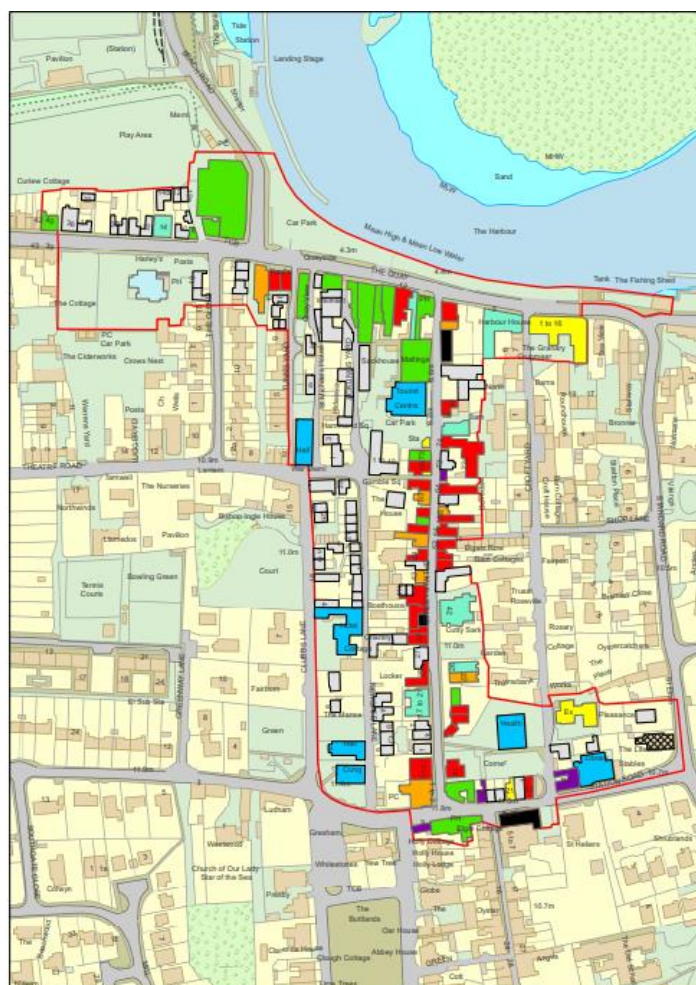
Parish work day population (2011) - 2,193

Number of town centre business premises (2022) - 80

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2022) – 3.8% (3 units)



The Port of Wells



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Figure 38 Unit Distribution in Wells-next-the-Sea

Key Findings from the 2022 Survey

- There is a concentration of leisure units along The Quay, adjacent to the Port (see Figure 38).
- Public services and financial and business units are located to the south of the town centre, set back from the sea front.
- The largest proportion of units are comparison retail units at 35%, higher than the Norfolk average.
- Reflecting the fact that the town is a coastal resort, Leisure services have the second largest proportion of units, and at 21%, higher than the Norfolk average.
- Vacant units have reduced from four units to three units from 2021. The vacancy rate is 3.8%, this is lower than the Norfolk average.

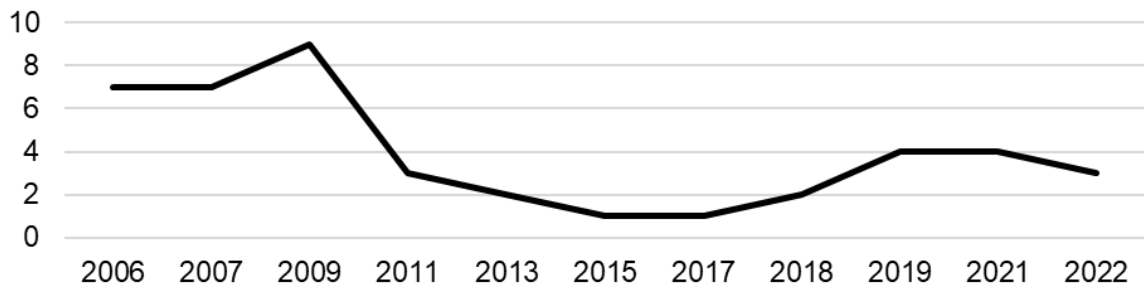


Figure 39 Historical Number of Vacant Units in Wells-next-the-Sea

3.20 Wroxham and Hoveton

Wroxham and Hoveton are separated by the River Bure, Wroxham is within Broadland and Hoveton is in North Norfolk.

The town is accessed by the A1151 and is served by the Bittern Line Railway connecting the town with Norwich and North Norfolk.

Wroxham and Hoveton are located on the Broads which means the town is a key tourist centre for the region.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - 3,451

Economically Active Population (2011) – 66%

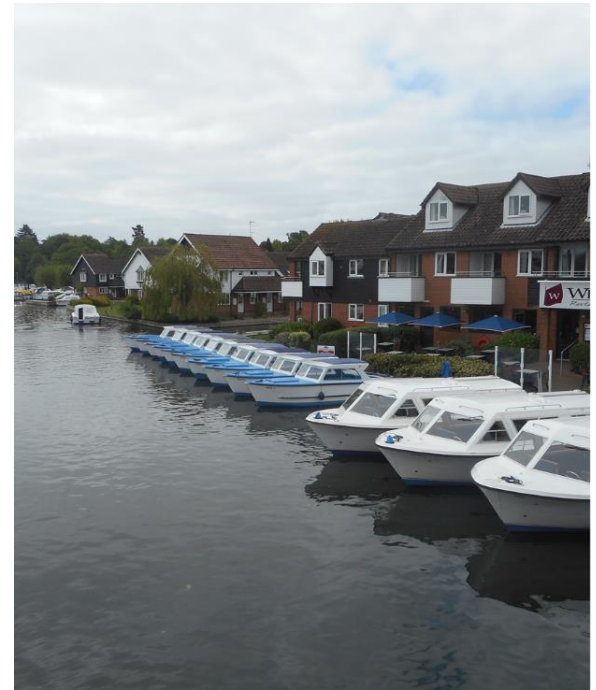
Main Occupation (2011) - Professional occupations (14%)

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 2,208

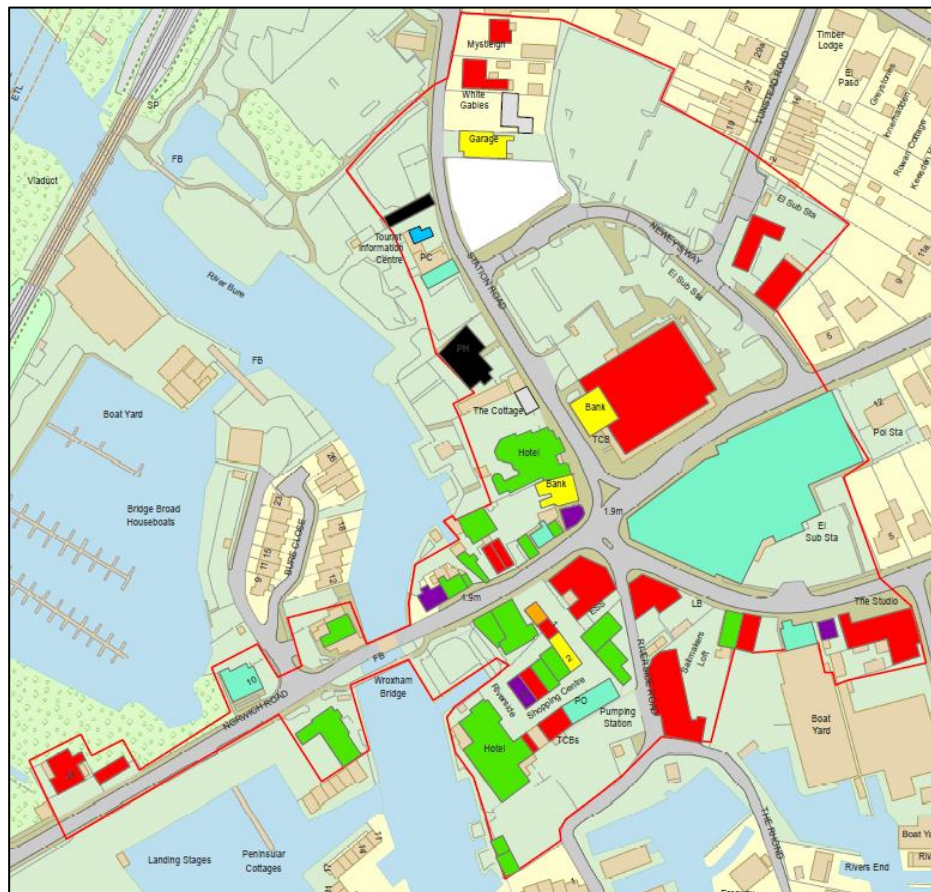
Parish work day population (2011) - 3,948

Number of town centre business premises (2022) - 55

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2022) – 3.6% (2 units)



The River Bure in Wroxham/Hoveton



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Figure 40 Unit Distribution in Wroxham and Hoveton

Key Findings from the 2022 Survey

- Leisure units are located alongside or near to the River Bure (see Figure 40).
- There is a large department store to the east of the River Bure.
- The largest proportion of units are leisure services units at 34.5%, higher than Norfolk average which is reflective of the market town being a tourist location.
- The second largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 32.7%.
- Vacant units have reduced by one unit to a total of two units since 2021.
- The vacancy rate of 3.6% is below the Norfolk average.

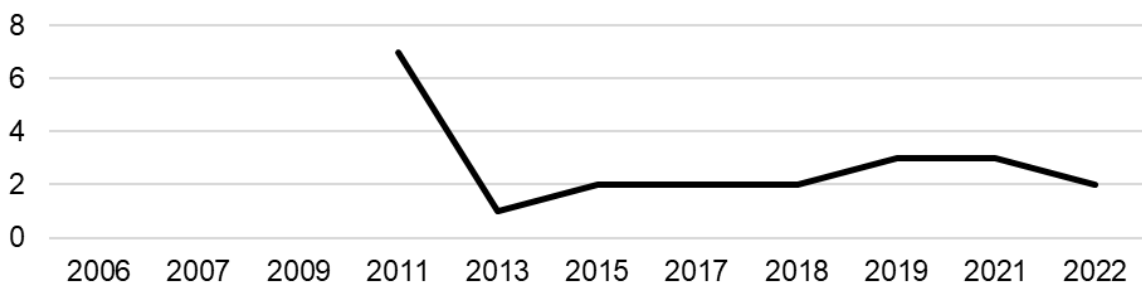


Figure 41 Historical Number of Vacant Units in Wroxham and Hoveton*

*Vacant unit data not available before 2011

N.B. for this study Wroxham and Hoveton have been surveyed as one settlement. This is because the units are spread amongst both areas of Wroxham and Hoveton.

3.21 Wymondham

Wymondham is located in South Norfolk. The town is well connected via the A11 and the Norwich to Cambridge railway line.

There is a variety of locally owned shops and cafés providing amenities to residents and tourists.

The town hosts a selection of attractions including; the Wymondham Abbey, the Mid-Norfolk Railway line and the Market Cross, which houses the Tourist Information Centre. A market is held every Friday and a farmers market is also held monthly.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - 15,875

Economically Active Population (2011) – 66%

Main Occupation (2011) - Professional occupations (19%)

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 6,707

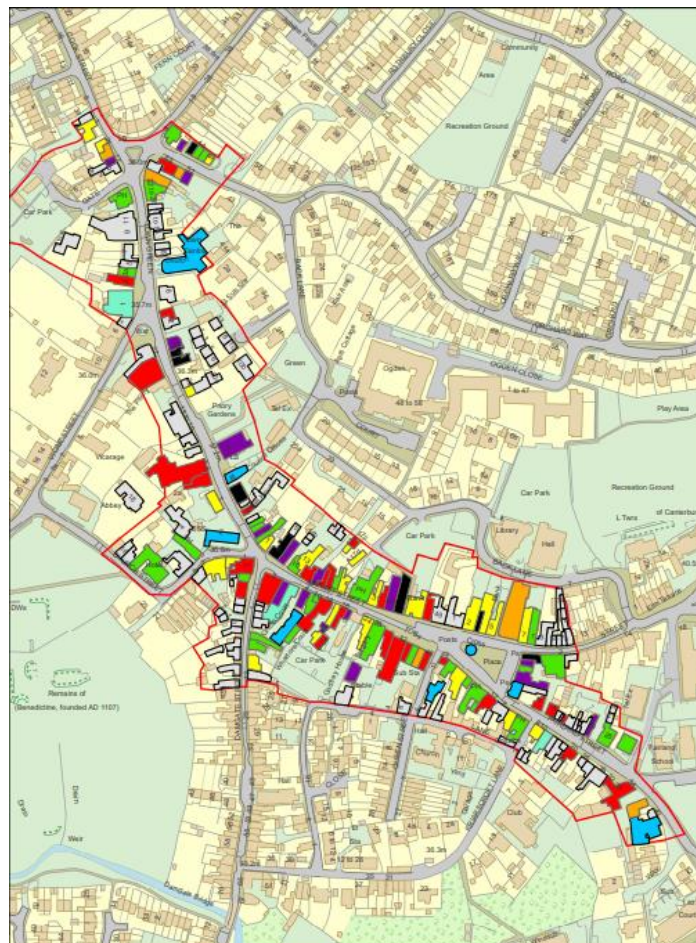
Parish work day population (2011) - 14,101

Number of town centre business premises (2022) - 129

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2022) – 6.2% (8 units)



Wymondham Town Sign



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Figure 42 Unit Distribution in Wymondham

Key Findings from the 2022 Survey

- Financial and business units are concentrated in the centre and south of Market Street.
- Vacant units are mostly located in the centre and north of the market town centre (see Figure 42).
- The majority of units are leisure units at 24%. This is above the Norfolk average.
- Comparison retails units are the second largest proportion of units in the town, which is at 23.3%. This is below the Norfolk average.
- Vacant units remained stable at eight units, since 2021.
- The vacancy rate of 6.2% is less than the Norfolk average.
- The type of retail unit most affected by vacancies were leisure services units as two units became vacant since 2021.

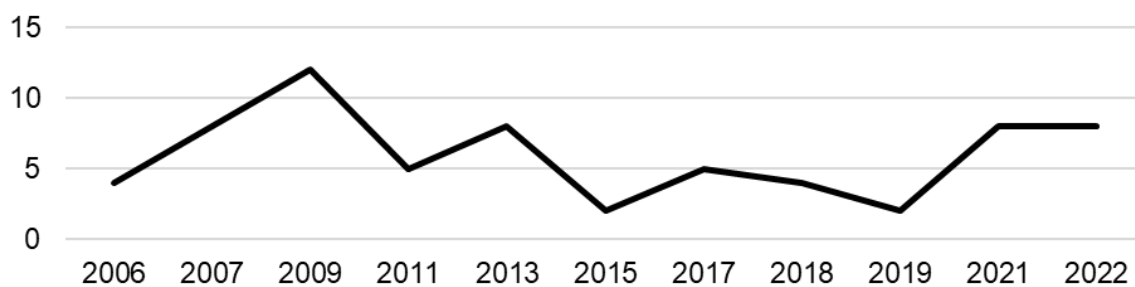


Figure 43 Historical Number of Vacant Units in Wymondham

4.0 Norfolk Analysis

4.1 Unit Type Analysis

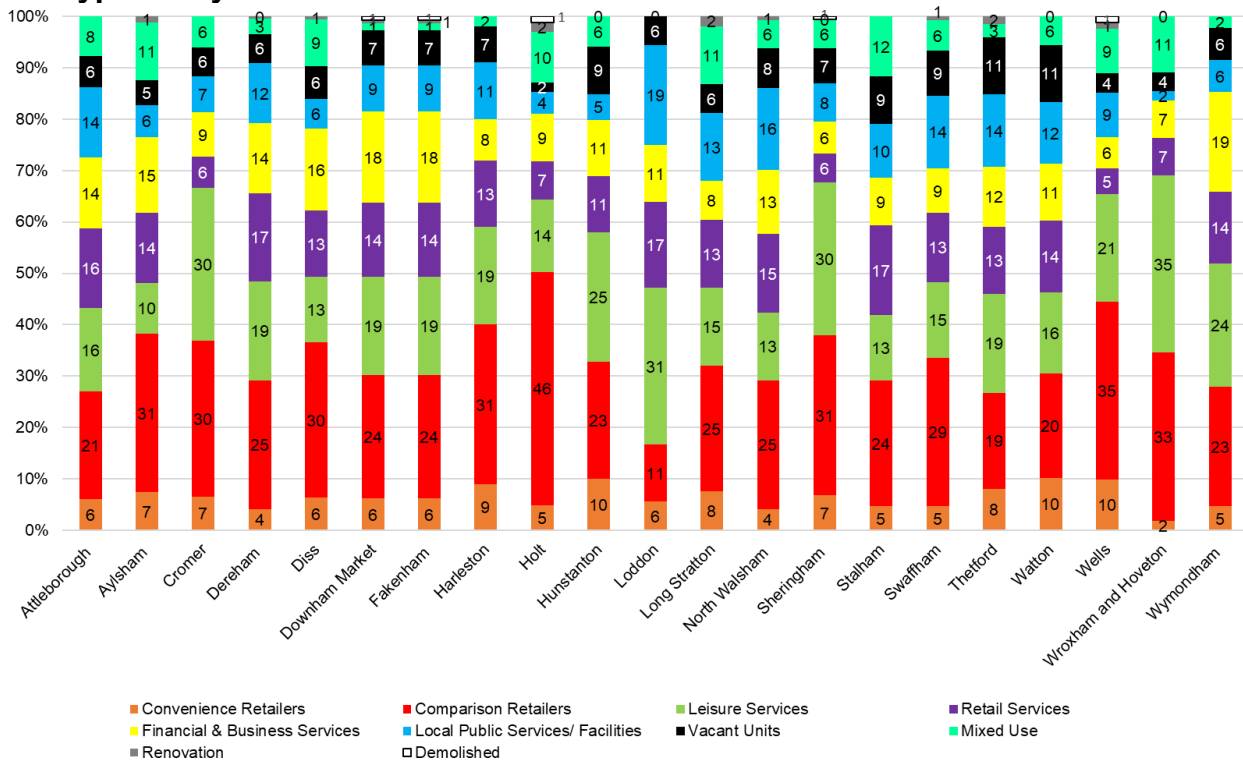


Figure 44 The Proportion of Unit Types in Norfolk Market Towns (%)

- Convenience retail units: Wells-next-the-Sea, Watton and Hunstanton have the highest proportion at 10%. Wroxham and Hoveton have the lowest at 2%.
- Comparison retail units: Holt has the highest proportion at 46%. Attleborough has the lowest at 11%.
- Leisure services: Wroxham and Hoveton has the highest proportion at 35%. Aylsham has the lowest at 10%.
- Retail services: Dereham, Stalham and Loddon have the highest proportion at 17%. Wells-next-the-Sea has the lowest at 5%.
- Financial and business units: Wymondham has the highest proportion at 19%. Wells-next-the-Sea has the lowest at 5%.
- Public service units: Loddon has the highest proportion at 19%. Wroxham and Hoveton has the lowest at 7%.
- Vacant units: Thetford and Watton have the highest proportion at 13%. Holt has the lowest at 2%.
- Mixed use units: Stalham has the highest proportion at 12%. Hunstanton has the lowest at 0%.
- Units under renovation: Holt, Long Stratton, and Thetford have the highest proportion at 2%. 10 Market Towns had no units under renovation.
- Demolished units: Downham Market, Fakenham, Holt, Sheringham, Wroxham and Hoveton have jointly have the highest proportion at 1%. 15 Market Towns had no demolished units.

See Appendix 1 for full details.

4.2 2021-2022 Comparison

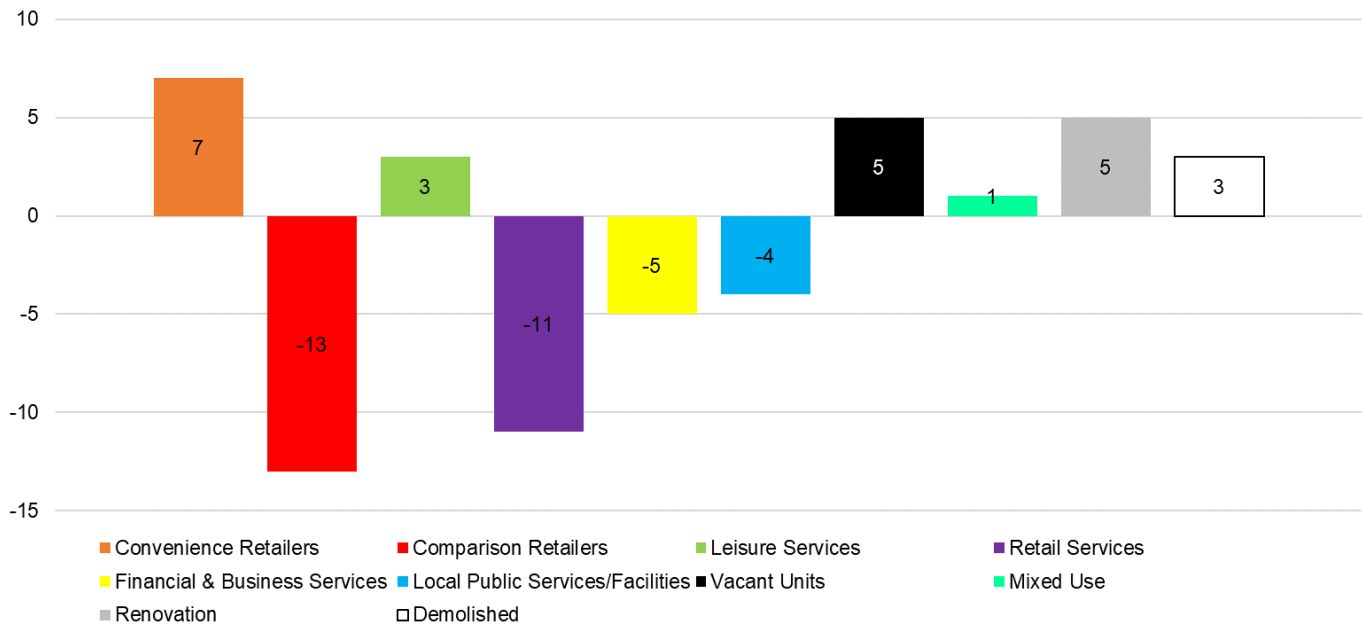


Figure 45 Comparison of Units in Norfolk Market Towns 2021-2022

Figure 45 displays the change in units, since 2021, across all Norfolk Market Towns. It shows that:

- Comparison retail units have declined across Norfolk market towns since 2021, a reduction of 13 comparison retailers (2% decrease) has been recorded. This decline has been ongoing since 2018.
- Leisure services units have increased slightly by three units (1% increase) since 2021.
- Convenience retail units have increased slightly since 2021 by seven units (4% increase).
- Vacant units have increased by five units since 2021 (3% increase).
- Retail service units have decreased by five units (2% decrease).
- Public service units decreased by four units (2% decrease).
- The biggest change in retail units since 2021 was the reduction in comparison retail units.
- The most significant change in percentage terms are renovation and demolished units, with a 38% and 60% increase being recorded, respectively.

4.3 Unit Vacancy Analysis

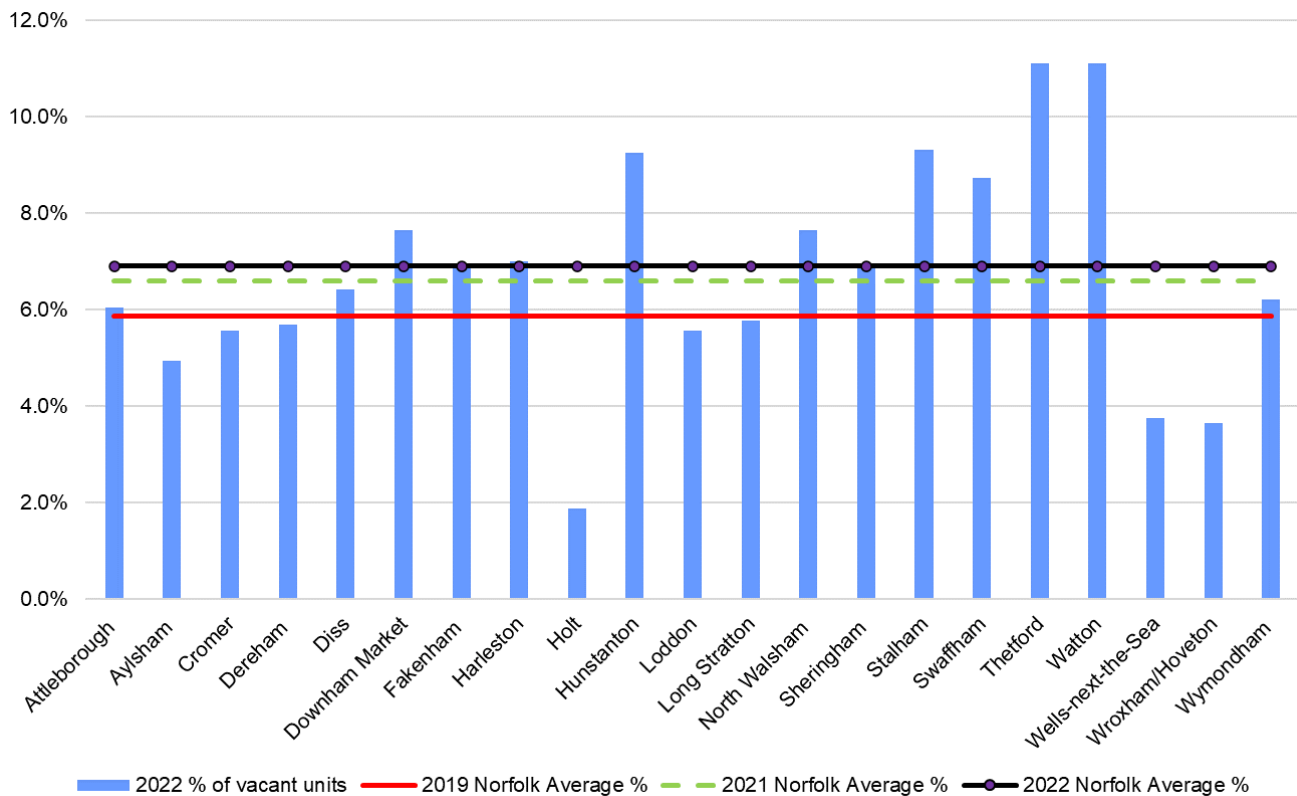


Figure 46 Norfolk Vacancy Rate Comparison

- Since 2021, the percentage of vacant units across Norfolk has increased from 6.6% to 6.9% a 0.3% increase, the percentage increase between 2019 and 2021 was 0.7%. This upward trend has been observed since 2015 (see Figure 46). The lowest Norfolk percentage vacancy rate was recorded in 2015 at 4.7%.
- 43% of Norfolk market towns have experienced a reduction in the number of vacant units since 2021. Of the remaining market towns 24% experienced no increase in vacant units and 43% experienced an increase in vacant units.
- 52% of market towns have vacancy rates lower than the Norfolk average.
- 9 market towns have higher vacancy rates than the Norfolk average.
 - Of those with the higher than average vacancy rate Breckland have three Market Town in this category and North Norfolk and King’s Lynn and West Norfolk both have 2 towns in this category.
 - One of these is a coastal market town, Hunstanton, whereas the other eight market towns are inland market towns.
 - Broadland has no market towns with above average vacancy rates.
- The largest decrease in vacant units was found to be in Holt as five previously vacant units came into use.
- The largest increase in vacant units has been observed in Dereham as five additional units were recorded as vacant.
- Watton and Thetford have the highest vacancy rate at 11.1%.

- The average number of vacant units in Norfolk peaked in 2009 with an average of 13 vacant units per market town. Since 2009 the number of vacant units has fallen steadily to an average of seven vacant units in 2018, this increased to an average of eight vacant units in 2019 and then dropped to 7 vacant units in 2021. In 2022, the average vacancy rate increased to nine vacant units.

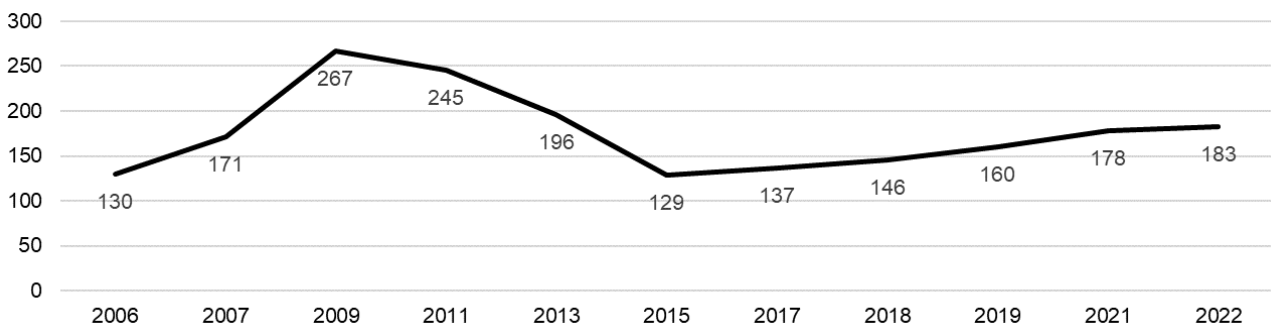


Figure 47 Historical Number of Vacant Units

- Figure 47 shows that a steady increase in vacant units has been recorded since 2015. The number of vacant units recorded has increased by 50% since 2015.
- Figure 47 also shows that 183 vacant units were recorded across all Norfolk Market Towns in 2022. A slight increase of 3% since 2021. This is lowest level of increase since vacant unit rates began to increase in 2015.

4.4 Jobs in Norfolk Market Towns

- The largest workday population (the number of people who work in the area, and those who live in the area but do not work) is in Thetford, with a workday population of 23,897.
- Dereham, Wymondham and North Walsham also have large workday populations.
- The largest number of people in employment (number of people employed in the area) is also in Thetford with 11,337 people in employment.
- The smallest workday population is in Wells-next-the-Sea at 2,193. Similarly, the lowest number of people in employment is in Wells-next-the-Sea at 1,085.
- The market towns in Breckland have the largest workday population and the largest number of people in employment. This is representative of larger populations living in Breckland compared to North Norfolk.
- North Norfolk coastal market towns have the smallest workday population and the lowest number of people in employment. This is indicative of North Norfolk being largely rural with seasonal tourism.

4.5 Summary

- Norfolk market towns appear to have not been too negatively impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, as the average vacancy rate in Norfolk have increased from 6.6% to 6.9% but remains below the UK average town centre vacancy rate of 13.9% (LDC, 2022).

- The Norfolk market town retailers may have been benefited by local residents staying at home, due to home working: if a higher percentage of the population are spending more time at home they are likely to shop and use services provided locally, i.e. in their local market towns.
- The biggest change observed is the decline in comparison retailers, whereas Leisure services (which include barbers and hairdressers) and Convenience Retail units, (which include job centres, doctors and dentists) have increased.
- In the last year there has been an increase in the number of retail service units, which include entertainment units, pubs and restaurants. There is also an increase of convenience retails units which include butchers, news agents and supermarket.
- Generally, the increase in online shopping has continued across Great Britain, as online shopping now accounts for 26.2% of goods purchased, (data August 2021, Statista, 2021), this has increased from 19.4% in August 2019. In the last two years online retail purchases soared to 37% in January 2021 - a record high. Since lockdowns have eased the percentage of online retail purchases has declined.

4.6 The Future

- Market towns will need to continue to adapt to meet the changing needs of the consumer.
- Hyper-localisation is likely to continue as some companies look to adopt agile or permanent home-working models. This means that there will be a larger percentage of the population staying at home who may be more likely to shop on their local high street.

Appendix 1

Table 1 2022 Market Town Survey Unit Results

| Market town | Convenience Retailer Units | Comparison Retailer Units | Leisure Service Units | Retail Service Units | Financial & Business Service Units | Local Public Services/ Facility Units | Vacant Units | Mixed Use | Units Under Renovation | Demolished Units | Total Number of Units |
|-------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|------------|------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Attleborough | 7 | 24 | 19 | 18 | 16 | 16 | 7 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 116 |
| Aylsham | 6 | 25 | 8 | 11 | 12 | 5 | 4 | 9 | 1 | 0 | 81 |
| Cromer | 13 | 60 | 59 | 12 | 17 | 14 | 11 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 198 |
| Dereham | 11 | 66 | 51 | 45 | 36 | 31 | 15 | 8 | 1 | 0 | 264 |
| Diss | 10 | 47 | 20 | 20 | 25 | 9 | 10 | 14 | 1 | 0 | 156 |
| Downham Market | 7 | 32 | 27 | 21 | 15 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 131 |
| Fakenham | 9 | 35 | 28 | 21 | 26 | 13 | 10 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 145 |
| Harleston | 9 | 31 | 19 | 13 | 8 | 11 | 7 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 100 |
| Holt | 8 | 74 | 23 | 12 | 15 | 7 | 3 | 16 | 3 | 2 | 161 |
| Hunstanton | 12 | 27 | 30 | 13 | 13 | 6 | 11 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 119 |
| Loddon | 2 | 4 | 11 | 6 | 4 | 7 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 36 |
| Long Stratton | 4 | 13 | 8 | 7 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 52 |
| North Walsham | 6 | 36 | 19 | 22 | 18 | 23 | 11 | 8 | 1 | 0 | 144 |
| Sheringham | 11 | 50 | 48 | 9 | 10 | 12 | 11 | 9 | 0 | 1 | 160 |
| Stalham | 4 | 21 | 11 | 15 | 8 | 9 | 8 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 86 |
| Swaffham | 7 | 43 | 22 | 20 | 13 | 21 | 13 | 9 | 1 | 0 | 149 |
| Thetford | 16 | 37 | 38 | 26 | 23 | 28 | 22 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 198 |
| Watton | 11 | 22 | 17 | 15 | 12 | 13 | 12 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 108 |
| Wells | 8 | 28 | 17 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 80 |
| Wroxham & Hoveton | 1 | 18 | 19 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 55 |
| Wymondham | 6 | 30 | 31 | 18 | 25 | 8 | 8 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 129 |
| Total | 168 | 723 | 525 | 332 | 309 | 258 | 183 | 157 | 13 | 5 | 2668 |

Norfolk County Council exists to represent and serve the people of Norfolk; to contribute to the County's growth and prosperity and make Norfolk a great place to live and work.

Community and Environmental Services
Norfolk County Council County Hall
Martineau Lane
Norwich
Norfolk
NR1 2DH

General enquiries should be made to planobs@norfolk.gov.uk.



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