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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Context & Background

The County of Norfolk covers a wide area, with varied landscapes; from the East and North Coast through to the Broads; Brecks and onto the Fens to the west. Norfolk market towns are evenly distributed throughout the county, as shown in figure 1, and 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 are generally supported by seasonal tourism.

![Fig. 1 Location of Norfolk Market Towns](image)

1.2 Scope

This study will analyse and compare 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.

Some of the National Planning Policy Framework’s (NPPF) (2018) core Principles focus on sustainable development and growth associated with rural economies, promoting town centre vibrancy through customer choice and a diverse retail offer. The NPPF emphasises that alongside retail choice, the individuality of town centres needs to be retained through the support of local business and markets. This study, therefore, aims to provide an outline measure for local authorities, businesses, and the general public, to see how their market town is performing.
1.3 Norfolk County Council Market Town Network Improvement Strategies

Norfolk County Council commenced Network Improvement Strategies 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 will 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.

Norfolk County Council has agreed to a staged programme of Network Improvement Strategies with the aspiration that all of the Norfolk Market Towns will have a bespoke transport strategy.

The first phase of towns agreed to be studied in 2017/18 are:

- Dereham
- Diss
- North Walsham
- Swaffham
- Thetford

The second phase of towns agreed to be studied in 2018/19 are:

- Aylsham
- Downham Market
- Fakenham
- Wroxham and Hoveton
- Wymondham
2.0 Methodology

2.1 Definition of 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. For the purposes of this study, 21 of the larger market towns will be assessed, these market towns have “red line” boundaries indicating the town centres and are identified as significant service centres in the district councils’ local plans.

2.2 The Survey

This document has been compiled through two methods;

- A desktop exercise creating GIS (Geographic Information Systems) maps, census data collation and historic survey data analysis.
- A field survey was carried out during Spring 2018, by Norfolk County Council staff visiting each market town and recording the unit types and vacant units within the town centre.
- The survey has changed slightly over time, adjusting to suit the changing market.
- The surveyors have also changed over time.

The quality of data can vary between surveys, so it should be used indicatively.

1.4 Unit Type Definitions

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

- Convenience Retailer - For example, butchers, newsagents and supermarkets.
- Comparison Retailer - For example, clothing shops, charity shops and department stores.
- Leisure Retailer - Entertainment units such as; pubs, restaurants and hotels.
- Retail Services - For example, launderettes, opticians, hairdressers and travel agents.
- Financial and Business - For example, banks, estate agents and legal services.
- Public Service/Facilities - For example, social & sports club, libraries, hospitals and schools.
- Mixed-use - Multiple units in one building such as a book shop being located within a cafe.
- Vacant - A empty unit.
- Renovation - A unit that is undergoing building work.

See appendix 1.1 for the raw survey data.
3.0 How to use this report

4.1 Attleborough

Additional market town information.

GIS map of the market town centre, with red line boundary, using the 2018 survey data.

Analysis of the 2018 survey results.

The historical variation in vacant units. Using historical Norfolk County Council data.

Introduction setting the context of the town.

Data from Norfolk Insight Population Estimates - All Persons Data.

Data collected from the 2018 survey.

% calculated by dividing the total number of vacant units by the total number of units - data from the 2018 survey.

Data from NOMIS table WP101EW - number of people employed in the area. Using Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA) to define the built up area.

Data from NOMIS table WD102EW - density of the workday population. The number of people who work in the area, and those who live in the area but do not work.
4.0 Market Town Centre Profiles
4.1 Attleborough

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

The town has many listed buildings including a 14th century church. Attleborough has a selection of shops which serve the local community and retains a regular market.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - 11,297
Number of town centre business premises (2018) - 116
Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2018) - 0.9% (1 unit)
Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 4,330
Parish work day population (2011) - 9,161

Breckland District Council has allocated funds totalling £2 million to support the regeneration for its 5 market towns, governed by the Market Town Initiative Steering Group.

Breckland has launched The High Street website, which Attleborough has a dedicated web page [https://shopappy.com/attleborough](https://shopappy.com/attleborough), where residents can purchase goods from independent retailers online.

Key Findings from the 2018 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 26%.
- The town has two large convenience retailers, to the west of the town, set back from the High Street.
- The biggest change in unit distribution is the increase in leisure and financial and business units since 2017.
- Most financial and business units are located in close proximity to each other. With another concentration of financial and business units along Connaught Road.
- Most public service units are set back from the High Street.
- Vacant units reduced to 1 unit, the lowest number of vacant units since recording began. Attleborough benefits from the lowest vacancy rate in Norfolk market towns.
4.2 Aylsham

Aylsham is located north of Norwich, in Broadland. The town is accessed by the A140.

The town centre radiates around Market Place Square, where a market is held twice a week.

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
Number of town centre business premises (2018) - 79
Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2018) - 3.8% (3 units)
Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 3,158
Parish work day population (2011) - 5,708

Broadland District Council has a Regeneration and Delivery Strategy for Aylsham.

Aylsham Town Council has commenced the neighbourhood plan processed and has produced a Draft Neighbourhood Plan.

It was agreed in July 2018 for Aylsham to be one of the five market towns in the second tranche of Market Town Network Improvement Strategies. Initial data gathering and meetings with stakeholders have commenced.
Key Findings from the 2018 Survey

• The largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 35%.

• Comparison retail units are often located adjacent to each other.

• 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 change in the market town units has been the increase in 3 convenience retail units and 3 financial and business units since 2017.

• Vacant units have remained consistent at 3 units since 2017.
Cromer is a traditional seaside town located on the North Norfolk coast. Cromer is one of the largest market town centres in North Norfolk and boasts a number of facilities.

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.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - 7,704
Number of town centre business premises (2018) - 195
Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2018) - 5.6% (11 units)
Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 3,810
Parish work day population (2011) - 9,348

North Norfolk District Council are promoting the Deep History Coast Initiative from Weybourne to Cart Gap. Which will develop a range of displays and interactive materials along the coastline in Cromer.

Additionally, North Norfolk District Council have invested funds to regenerate local amenities, in particular, the Cromer Pier, promenade and parks.

North Norfolk District Council plan to construct a £3.2m Community Sports Hub in Cromer to provide a gym, tennis courts, social and meeting spaces. The facility is expected to open in 2019.
Key Findings from the 2018 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 30%.
- Leisure entertainment units such as slot machines and fish and chip shops are mostly located by the seafront, as shown in figure 6.
- Financial and business units are predominately located along or adjacent to Church Street.
- The largest change in the unit distribution since 2017 is the loss of 3 financial and business units but the town gained 7 additional mixed use units.
- Vacant units reduced by 2 units since 2017, to 11 units. The vacancy rate of 5.6% is slightly more than the Norfolk average of 5.4%.
Dereham has the largest number of retail units in Norfolk market towns. The town is located in Breckland along the A47, which provides transport links to Norwich and King’s Lynn.

Dereham has a variety of chain and independent shops and retains a regular market which is held twice a week.

The voluntary Mid-Norfolk Railway runs between Dereham and Wymondham. Nearby attractions also include the Bishop Bonner’s House and the Gressenhall Farm and Museum.

**Key Figures**

- Parish Population (2016) - 19,099
- Number of town centre business premises (2018) - 244
- Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2018) - 4.5% (11 units)
- Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 8,456
- Parish work day population (2011) - 19,578

Breckland District Council has allocated funds totalling £2 million to support the regeneration for its 5 market towns, governed by the Market Town Initiative Steering Group.

Breckland has launched The High Street website, which Dereham has a dedicated web page [https://shopappy.com/dereham](https://shopappy.com/dereham), where residents can purchase goods from independent retailers online.

Dereham included in the first tranche of Norfolk County Council Market Town Network Improvement Strategies. Studies have been undertaken to look at transport in the town and the strategy is due to be published in 2019.
Key Findings from the 2018 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 33%.
- Comparison retail units are mostly concentrated close to the High Street, see figure 8.
- Leisure units are mostly located to the north west of High Street.
- Public service units are located away from High Street closer to residential areas.
- The largest change in the market town units was the reduction in vacant units and the 6 unit increase in comparison retailers.
- Vacant units reduced by 3 units since 2017, the lowest since surveying began.
Diss is situated in the Waveney Valley on the Norfolk/Suffolk border in South Norfolk. The town is connected by the A140, A1066 and regular rail services on 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 Georgian and Edwardian buildings, a public park, the Mere, auction rooms, the Diss Corn Hall Theatre, and a marketplace with a regular Friday market.

### Key Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Parish work day population (2011)</td>
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The [Heritage Triangle Project](#) has been completed which has regenerated the Corn Hall and created a boardwalk link through the Mere.

Diss and District have commenced the [neighbourhood plan](#) process, the area includes; Diss, Roydon and Burston & Shrimpling in Norfolk and Scole and Palgrave, Stuston and Brome & Oakley in Suffolk.

Diss is included in the first tranche of Norfolk County Council Market Town Network Improvement Strategies. Traffic surveys were carried out during summer 2018, the data is currently being analysed.
Key Findings from the 2018 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 33%.
- There are 2 large convenience units are located to the south of the High Street.
- Leisure 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 most considerable change in units in the town in 2018 was the decrease in financial and business units by 6 units.
- Vacant units increased by 7 units since 2017, yet remains less than the peak in 2013, see figure 11. The vacancy rate of 6.3% is above the Norfolk average of 5.4%.
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.

Centred around the old Town Hall is a modern landscaped town square. Downham Market retains a regular market.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2015) - 10,962
Number of town centre business premises (2018) - 135
Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2018) - 10.4% (14 units)
Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 3,209
Parish work day population (2011) - 9,845

Downham Market Town Council has commenced the production of a neighbourhood plan. The Town Council has conducted an initial community consultation, the results are currently being analysed.

Downham Market is one of the five towns in the second tranche of Norfolk County Council Market Town Network Improvement Strategies. Initial data gathering and meetings with stakeholders have commenced.
Key Findings from the 2018 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 27%.
- Public service units are mostly located in the centre of the town, see figure 12.
- The largest change in Downham Market units is the increase of comparison retailers and leisure services.
- Vacant units are pepper potted throughout the town centre. These vacant units have reduced by 2 units since 2017.
- Vacancy rates have also decreased from 12% to 10.4%, which is below the UK average.
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 large supermarket, a cinema and a bowling alley.

Local visitor attractions include the traditional weekly market, the nearby Pensthorpe Nature Reserve and Fakenham Racecourse.

**Key Figures**

Parish Population (2016) - 7,743

Number of town centre business premises (2018) - 146

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2018) - 4.8% (7 units)

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 4,799

Parish work day population (2011) - 9,527

North Norfolk District Council has a budget of up to £400,000 to spend on Market Town Initiatives in 2018/19 on locally owned and managed projects, with Fakenham being allocated up to £100,000. The aim of the project is to increase footfall within the market town.

Fakenham is part of the second tranche of Norfolk County Council Market Town Network Improvement Strategies. Initial evidence gathering and meetings with stakeholders have commenced.
Key Findings from the 2018 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 25%.
- 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.
- Public service units are located in clusters to the north and south of the town.
- The largest change in unit distribution was the increase of 6 financial and business units and the decrease of 7 comparison retailers since 2017.
- Vacant units have remained consistent at 7 units since 2015, see figure 15.
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 and services which are used and supported by local residents and visitors to the town.

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 path. The weekly market is also an attraction.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - 4,206*
Number of town centre business premises (2018) - 96
Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2018) - 4.2% (4 units)
Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 1,718
Parish work day population (2011) - 4,060

The Waveney Valley Local Tourism Action Group is currently running a project to help promote businesses within the area.

Harleston has a variety of walking and cycling routes, including the National Cycle Network Route 30 and the Angles Way walk from Thetford to Great Yarmouth.

Harleston benefits from the Harleston and District Business Forum which supports businesses in Harleston and surrounding areas.

* Reddenhall with Harleston Parish
Key Findings from the 2018 Survey

- The largest proportion of units in Harleston are comparison retailers at 28%, see figure 16.
- There is also a concentration of leisure units at 24%, these units are pepper potted along the High Street.
- There is a large convenience retail unit to the north-west of High Street, see figure 16.
- The biggest increase since 2017 has been the increase in comparison retailers, but the town also lost 2 convenience retail units.
- Vacancy rates have remained consistent since 2013 at 4 units.
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 Bakers & Larners. Holt Country Park lies south of the town, which attracts tourists.

The North Norfolk Railway provides seasonal transport to support the tourism industry.

**Key Figures**

- Parish Population (2016) - 3,988
- Number of town centre business premises (2018) - 165
- Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2018) - 4.2% (7 units)
- Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 2,644
- Parish work day population (2011) - 5,237

North Norfolk District Council has a budget of up to £400,000 to spend on Market Town Initiatives in 2018/19 on locally owned and managed projects, with Holt being allocated up to £100,000. The aim of the project is to increase footfall within the market town.

Holt Town Council has commenced the Neighbourhood Plan process and has published a Draft Neighbourhood Plan.
Key Findings from the 2018 Survey

- The largest proportion of units in Holt are comparison retailers at 49%, which is considerably higher than the Norfolk average of 31%.

- There is a concentration of public service units to the east of the town centre, see figure 18.

- The town centre is dominated by two large mixed use units, housing a department store and convenience retail unit with other auxiliary uses within.

- There is a concentration of vacant units on White Lion Street.

- Vacant units have increased slightly since 2017 by 2 units.
4.10 Hunstanton

Hunstanton is located on the Norfolk Coast, accessed by the A149.

It is a seaside market 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 regularly.

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
Number of town centre business premises (2018) - 123
Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2018) - 5.7% (7 units)
Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 2,201
Parish work day population (2011) - 9,181

The Borough Council of King’s Lynn and West Norfolk has invested in the public realm in Hunstanton and has commenced a process to produce a Southern Seafront Masterplan. This Masterplan will identify development opportunities to help to boost the public realm of Hunstanton.

A Coastal Communities Alliance is a group that consists of various stakeholders, working to address the seasonality of tourism in the market town. To encourage visitors to stay for longer and visit more regularly. This group works in accordance with the Borough Council’s Destination Management Plan 2016-2020.

Hunstanton Town Council has commenced the neighbourhood plan process.
Key Findings from the 2018 Survey

- The largest proportion of units in the market town are leisure services at 29%. A reflection of the market town being a seaside destination.

- A large proportion of leisure units are located to the west of the town centre, benefitting from sea views.

- Financial and business units are located along Westgate and Greevegate on the eastern fringes of the town centre, see figure 20.

- Vacant units have increased slightly since 2017 by 2 units. The vacancy rate of 5.7% is marginally above the Norfolk average of 5.4%.

Fig.21 Historical Number of Vacant Units
4.11 Loddon

Loddon is the smallest market town in this study, located in South Norfolk. It is accessed via the A146 and the River Chet.

Loddon is a historic village which attracts local visitors due to its proximity to the Norfolk Broads.

The shops, services and a regular farmers market serve local residents and tourists.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - 2,860

Number of town centre business premises (2018) - 36

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2018) - 2.8% (1 unit)

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 1,158

Parish work day population (2011) - 3,303

The Waveney Valley Local Tourism Action Group is currently running a project to help promote businesses within the area.

Loddon benefits from a Business Centre, supported by South Norfolk District Council, the centre is located on the High Street and provides office space for start-up and established businesses in a well-connected location.
Key Findings from the 2018 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are leisure services which make up 25% of all units, which deviates from the trends shown in most market towns in Norfolk.

- The linear High Street largely consists of residential units, pepper potted by retail and business units, see figure 22.

- 2 additional retail service units were recorded in the 2018 survey, compared to the previous year.

- Vacant units have increased by 1 unit since 2017, from 0% to 2.8%. There has been a historical trend of fluctuation, see figure 23, with the number of vacant units increasing and decreasing each year.
4.12 Long Stratton

Long Stratton is a large village 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 that broadens out into a small market area at The Plain.

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

**Key Figures**

Parish Population (2016) - 4,490

Number of town centre business premises (2018) - 56

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2018) - 8.9% (5 units)

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 2,338

Parish work day population (2011) - 3,845

South Norfolk District Council has invested £2m to refurbish the Long Stratton Leisure Centre, to create a state of the art facility.

There is a substantial residential development proposed for Long Stratton which has the potential to deliver a bypass to relieve the heavy traffic which currently travels through the High Street on the A140.

Long Stratton Parish Council has commenced the neighbourhood plan process. The area the plan will cover includes parts of Tharston and Hapton Parish.
Key Findings from the 2018 Survey

• The largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 23%.

• The High Street is linear, with a large number of residential units lining the street, see figure 24.

• There is a concentration of leisure units to the north of The St.

• An additional 4 leisure units were recorded in the 2018 survey in addition to a reduction of 2 financial and business units.

• Vacant units have remained consistent at 5 units since 2017. The vacancy rate of 8.9% is above the Norfolk average of 5.4%.

Fig. 24 Unit Distribution in Long Stratton

Fig. 25 Historical Number of Vacant Units
4.13 North Walsham

North Walsham is located in North Norfolk, it is accessed by the A140. The Norwich to Sheringham railway line provides connections to Norwich, Wroxham and Cromer.

A mix of independent shops, butchers and bakers can be found in the town centre, while on the outskirts of the town there are large supermarkets. And a weekly market continues to be held in the town.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - 12,647
Number of town centre business premises (2018) - 142
Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2018) - 9.2% (13 units)
Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 4,793
Parish work day population (2011) - 11,924

North Norfolk District Council has a budget of up to £400,000 to spend on Market Town Initiatives in 2018/19 on locally owned and managed projects, with North Walsham being allocated up to £100,000. The aim of the project is to increase footfall within the market town.

North Walsham is part of the first tranche of Norfolk County Council Market Town Network Improvement Strategies. Initial studies have been conducted and data is being analysed.
Key Findings from the 2018 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 29%.
- The units in the market town are mostly concentrated along Market Street and Market Place with a spread of units to the north and south, see figure 26.
- There are 2 convenience retail units one to the north and one to the south of the market town centre.
- Vacant units are largely located in the centre of the market town.
- Vacant units have reduced by 1 unit since 2017. The vacancy rate of 9.2% is above the Norfolk average of 5.4%.
Sheringham is located in North Norfolk. The town is accessed by the A149 and the Sheringham to Norwich railway.

The town benefits from a beach, cliffs, quaint architecture and the Poppy Line railway service which runs between Sheringham and Holt.

The units vary from independent retailers, game arcades to chain supermarkets. A traditional market is held regularly.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - 7,395
Number of town centre business premises (2018) - 164
Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2018) - 4.9% (8 units)
Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 2,597
Parish work day population (2011) - 7,860

North Norfolk District Council are promoting the Deep History Coast Initiative from Weybourne to Cart Gap. Which will develop a range of displays and interactive materials along the coastline in Sheringham.

North Norfolk District Council has invested in a new £10.7 million Leisure Centre planned for Sheringham, to replace the current leisure centre, the new Leisure Centre is planned to open in 2020.
Key Findings from the 2018 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 38%.
- The high street is mostly linear in shape, with a large car park at the south of Station Road.
- There is a concentration of leisure units to the north closest to the seafront, see figure 28.
- Public Service units are located on the periphery of Station Road.
- Financial and business units are located in the centre of the high street.
- Vacant units have remained consistent at 8 units since 2017.
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 a large superstore.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - 3,276

Number of town centre business premises (2018) - 81

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2018) - 6.2% (5 units)

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 1,704

Parish work day population (2011) - 3,808

North Norfolk District Council has a budget of up to £400,000 to spend on Market Town Initiatives in 2018/19 on locally owned and managed projects, with Stalham being allocated up to £100,000. The aim of the project is to increase footfall within the market town.

Stalham benefits from the Stalham Area Business Forum which was established in 2016 to promote businesses in the area.
Key Findings from the 2018 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 32%.
- The high street is linear in shape, with numerous residential units lining High Street, see figure 30.
- There is a concentration of financial and business units to the east of High Street.
- There has been an increase of 5 comparison retail units since the 2017 survey.
- Vacant units have remained consistent at 5 units since 2017, see figure 31. The vacancy rate of 6.2% is above the Norfolk average of 5.4%.
Swaffham is a large market town in Breckland. It benefits from transport links via the A47.

Swaffham is a historic town with Georgian and Medieval buildings, which house a variety of independent and chain retail outlets.

The historic market is held on Saturdays. Other attractions include the Swaffham Museum and the nearby Castle Acre Priory.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - 7,809
Number of town centre business premises (2018) - 141
Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2018) - 5.7% (8 units)
Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 3,134
Parish work day population (2011) - 7,549

Breckland District Council has allocated funds totalling £2 million to support the regeneration for its 5 market towns, governed by the Market Town Initiative Steering Group. Breckland has launched The High Street website, which Swaffham has a dedicated web page https://shopappy.com/swaffham, where residents can purchase goods from independent retailers online.

Breckland District Council are offering new businesses who locate within an empty property the opportunity to apply for up to a 80% reduction in business rate payments for qualifying businesses.

The Norfolk County Council Market Town Network Improvement Strategy for Swaffham is part of the first tranche of studies, traffic studies have been carried out and analysis of data is ongoing.
Key Findings from the 2018 Survey

• The largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 36%.

• The town centre is triangular in shape with the central focus of the bandstand, see figure 32.

• The largest change since 2017 is the reduction of 4 financial and business units.

• There is a spread of public service units which are mostly located to the east of the town centre.

• Vacant units have increased by 2 units since 2017, yet remain below the peak observed in 2011. The vacancy rate of 5.7% is marginally above the Norfolk average of 5.4%.
Thetford is a historic market town situated in Breckland near to the A11, which provides links to Norwich, Cambridge and London. The town is also well connected by regular rail services.

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 entertainment and outdoor activities.

**Key Figures**

- Parish Population (2016) - 26,582
- Number of town centre business premises (2018) - 201
- Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2018) - 4.5% (9 units)
- Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 11,337
- Parish work day population (2011) - 23,897

Breckland District Council has allocated funds totalling £2 million to support the regeneration for its 5 market towns, governed by the Market Town Initiative Steering Group. Breckland District Council has recently launched The High Street website of which Thetford has a dedicated web page [https://shopappy.com/thetford](https://shopappy.com/thetford), where residents can purchase goods from independent retailers online.

Breckland District Council are offering new businesses who locate within an empty property the opportunity to apply for up to a 80% reduction in business rate payments for qualifying businesses.

The Norfolk County Council Market Town Network Improvement Strategy for Thetford was included in the first tranche of studies, traffic studies have been carried out and analysis of data is ongoing.
Key Findings from the 2018 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are leisure services at 22%, a trend only found in 4 other market towns.

- The biggest change since 2018 is the reduction in comparison retail units, which most likely has been counteracted by the increase in convenience retail units.

- The east of the town centre has a large number of residential units, see figure 34.

- The largest proportion of public service units in Norfolk are in Thetford. The public service units are pepper potted throughout the town centre.

- Vacant units have increased by 1 unit since 2017, but, remains below the peak observed in 2011, see figure 35.
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 popular with residents and tourists.

Key Figures

- Parish Population (2016) - 7,782
- Number of town centre business premises (2018) - 110
- Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2018) - 12.7% (14 units)
- Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 2,707
- Parish work day population (2011) - 8,758

Breckland District Council has allocated funds totalling £2 million to support the regeneration for its 5 market towns. Breckland has launched The High Street website, which Watton has a dedicated web page [https://shopappy.com/watton](https://shopappy.com/watton), where residents can purchase goods from independent retailers online.

Breckland District Council are offering new businesses who locate within an empty property the opportunity to apply for up to a 80% reduction in business rate payments for qualifying businesses.

The Watton Neighbourhood Plan area has been designated and the Town Council has commenced the neighbourhood planning process.
Key Findings from the 2018 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 22%.
- The market town centre is linear in shape, with a large convenience retailer to the east of the town, see figure 36.
- The biggest recorded change has been the reduction of convenience retailers from the high street.
- 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.
- Vacant units have increased by 3 units since 2017, to a total of 14 vacant units. The vacancy rate of 12.7% is above the Norfolk average of 5.4%.

Fig.37 Historical Number of Vacant Units

*Local Data Company, 2017*
Wells-next-the-Sea is a small fishing town located in North Norfolk. The A149 connects the North Norfolk coastal towns and villages.

While mostly serving as a seaside resort the town also host a port.

There is a variety of tourist amenities and attractions which support the tourism industry. Most shops and leisure units are located on The Quay and Staithe Street.

Key Figures
Parish Population (2016) - 2,174
Number of town centre business premises (2018) - 81
Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2018) - 2.5% (2 units)
Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 1,085
Parish work day population (2011) - 2,193

North Norfolk District Council have invested in the Wells Maltings community facilities. The Wells Maltings site was under renovation when the survey was conducted in 2018. The Wells Maltings is a £5m art, heritage and community centre which opened in July 2018. The community centre hosts a selection of events including, film showings, theatre shows, art exhibitions and other community events.

North Norfolk District Council has also undertaken traffic management projects in the market town.
Key Findings from the 2018 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 36%.
- There is a concentration of leisure units along The Quay, see figure 38.
- Public services and financial and business units are located to the south of the market town centre.
- The site recorded as under renovation, in 2018, along Staithe Street during the survey, has since been completed.
- Vacant units have increased by 1 unit since 2017, but remain below the peak number of vacant units observed in 2009, see figure 39.
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
- Number of town centre business premises (2018) - 51
- Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2018) - 3.9% (2 units)
- Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 2,208
- Parish work day population (2011) - 3,948

Wroxham Parish Council has commenced the neighbourhood planning process and has produced a draft Neighbourhood Plan.

Wroxham and Hoveton are being studied under the second tranche of the Norfolk County Council Market Town Network Improvement Strategies. Initial evidence gathering has commenced and stakeholders have been approached.
Key Findings from the 2018 Survey

- The largest proportion of units is equally comparison retailers and leisure services at 33%.
- Leisure units are located alongside or near to the River Bure, see figure 40.
- Vacant units have remained consistent at 2 units since 2015.
- There is a large department store to the east of the River Bure.
- *N.B. for the purpose of this study Wroxham and Hoveton have been surveyed in unison this is because the units are spread amongst both areas of Wroxham and Hoveton.*
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
- Number of town centre business premises (2018) - 131
- Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2018) - 3.1% (4 units)
- Estimated number of jobs (2011) - 6,707
- Parish work day population (2011) - 14,101

South Norfolk District Council has invested £2.4m to refurbish the Leisure Centre and secured £120,000, from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Tourism, to invest in a Digital Trail.

Wymondham is to be studied under the second tranche of Norfolk County Council Market Town Network Improvement Strategies. Initial data gathering work has commenced.
Key Findings from the 2018 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 28%.
- Most units are located in the centre and south of the high street.
- Financial and business units are grouped to the centre and south of Market Street.
- There is also a concentration of retail services to the north of the high street.
- Vacant units are located in the centre and north of the market town centre, see figure 42.
- Vacant units have reduced by 1 unit since 2017.
5.0 Norfolk Wide Analysis
5.1 2017-2018 Comparison

• Historically comparison retail units have been the most dominant unit type in Norfolk market towns.

• Leisure services, retail services and units under renovation have increased on average by 1 unit since 2017.

• Mixed use units have increased on average by 2 units since 2017.

• Comparison retailers are worth a higher amount to the economy as they sell higher value goods. Therefore, the prominence of these retailers is beneficial to Norfolk’s economy.

• The large percentage of leisure units found in Norfolk market towns are indicative of Norfolk being tourism destination. 4 market town centres in Norfolk have a larger number of leisure services than comparison retailers.

• The Local Data Company (LDC) and British Independent Retailers Association (BIRA)* found that in Great Britain there has been an increase in convenience retailers and a decrease in comparison retailers between 2016 and 2017. Also finding that leisure units increased. These trends are not replicated in Norfolk market towns as both convenience retailers and leisure units have not increased, on average.

• Nationally the LDC and BIRA found that more independent high street opened between 2016 and 2017, whereas, chain stores struggled.

* https://bira.co.uk/growth-independent-stores-2017-compared-2016/
5.2 Unit Type Analysis

Fig. 45 The Proportion of Unit Types in Norfolk Market Towns (%)

- Wells-next-the-Sea has the highest proportion of convenience retailers at 10%.
- Holt has the largest proportion of comparison retailers at 49%.
- Wroxham and Hoveton have the highest proportion of leisure services at 33%.
- Harleston has the largest proportion of retail services at 18%.
- The highest proportion of financial and business units are in Attleborough at 18%.
- Thetford has the highest proportion of public service units at 16%.
- The highest proportion of vacant units are in Watton at 13%. Whereas, the lowest proportion of vacant units are in Attleborough at 1%.
- The highest proportion of mixed-use units is in Diss at 13%.
- Wroxham and Hoveton has the highest number of units under renovation at 2%.

See Appendix 1.2 for full details.
5.3 Unit Vacancy Analysis

• The percentage of vacant units across Norfolk remain broadly the same in 2018 at 5.4%, compared to 5.3% in 2017, see figure 47.

• Over 50% of Norfolk market towns have seen a reduction, or no increase, in the number of vacant units since 2017.

• 50% of market towns have vacancy rates less than the Norfolk average.

• 10 market towns have higher vacancy rates than the Norfolk average.

• Dereham has seen the largest decrease in vacant units, for the second year in a row, as 3 vacant units are now occupied.

• The largest increase in vacant units has been observed in Diss, as vacant units increased by 7 units since 2017. Regardless, the vacancy rate in Diss remains below the UK average with a vacancy rate of 6.3%.

• Watton has the highest vacancy rate at 12.7%, above the UK average.

• Vacant units were most often replaced by comparison retailers between 2017 and 2018, as 17 comparison retailers opened in previously vacant units.

• 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 the current average of 7 vacant units per market town, as displayed in figure 46.

*Rhodes, 2018
Icon made by Freepik from www.flaticon.
5.4 Vacancy Rate Graph

Fig. 47 Norfolk vacancy rate 2018 (%)
## 5.5 Population and Dwelling Types

### Norfolk market town populations

- North Norfolk has the most market towns and a total market town population of 40,432.
- Breckland has the second highest number of market towns and a total market town population of 82,177.
- North Norfolk market towns have half the population compared to the market town population in Breckland. This could be due to North Norfolk market towns having a smaller and transient population.
- South Norfolk has a market town population of 36,085, King’s Lynn and West Norfolk has a market town population of 11,925 and Broadland has a market town population of 9,839.

### Types of dwellings in market town centres

- **15%** of dwellings are detached
- **3%** dwellings are semi-detached and **9%** are terraced
- Over **50%** of dwellings are flats
5.6 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.

* Downham Market data not complete
5.7 Summary

• Norfolk market towns appear to be reacting well to the changes in shopping habits.

• Overall, the proportion of unit types remains broadly the same as with the previous surveys.

• The largest overall decrease in proportions units has been convenience retail units, as the 2018 survey recorded a 25% reduction in convenience retail units.

• Average vacancy rates in Norfolk have increased very slightly from 5.3% to 5.4%, but remains below the UK average.

• In 2017 7 market towns had above average vacancy rates this has increased slightly in 2018 to 10 market towns with above Norfolk average vacancy rates.

The Future

Through the ever-growing popularity of internet shopping, the British High Street is facing a testing future. However, the variety and vibrancy of market towns in Norfolk continue to attract shoppers and visitors. To maintain a diverse high street, towns must continue to offer high-quality services and diversify as the markets continue to change.
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