Norfolk County Council

Norfolk Market Town Centre Report

2019

www.norfolk.gov.uk

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Context & Background

The County of Norfolk covers a wide area, with varied landscapes with extensive coastline,The Broads National Park, The Brecks and the Fens. Norfolk market towns are 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 are generally supported by seasonal tourism.

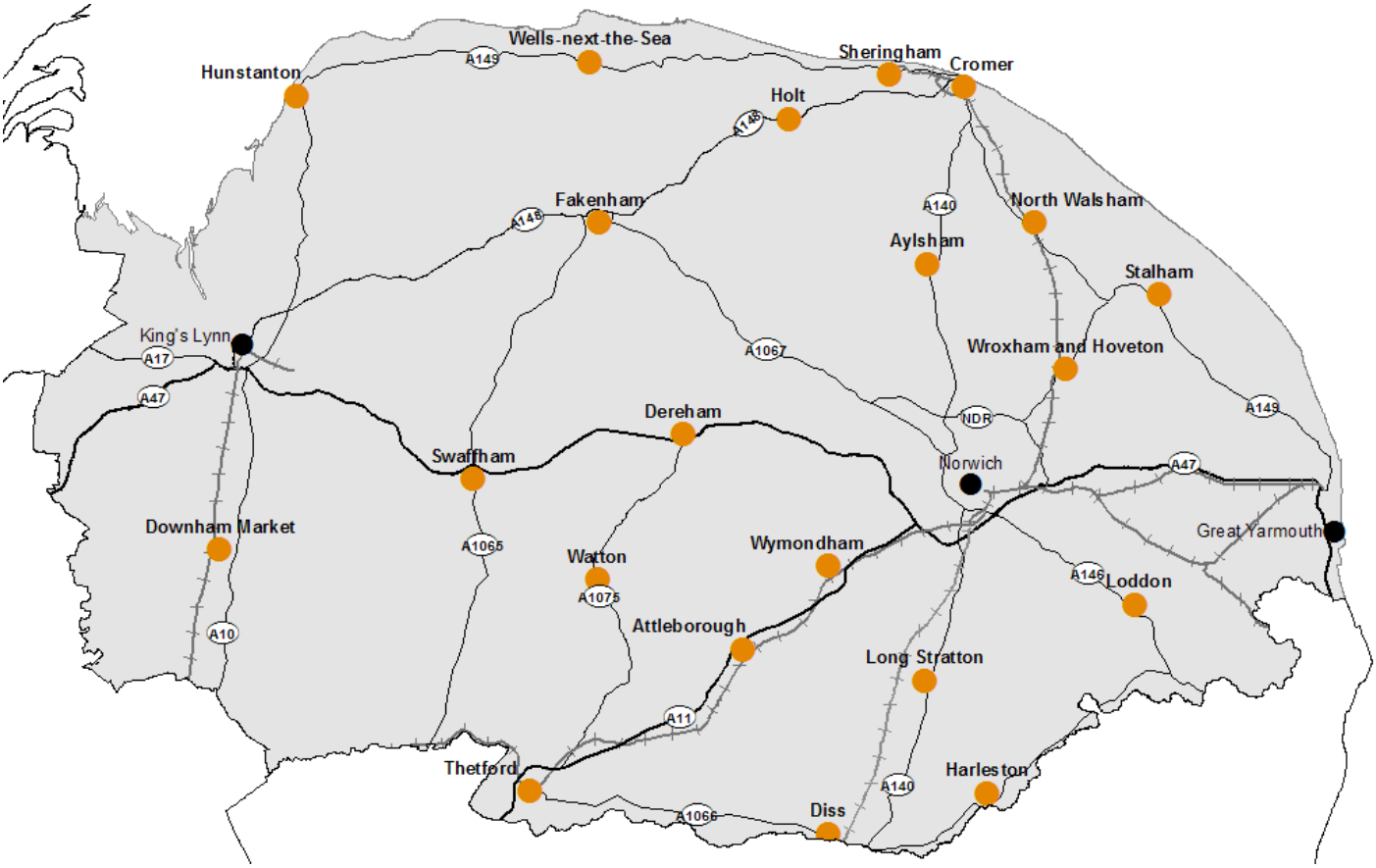


Fig. 1 Location of Norfolk Market Towns

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), focusses on the vitality of the town centre and how planning policies should retain the distinctive characters of town centres and allow them to grow and diversity in a way that can respond to changes in the retail and leisure industries. 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 commenced a series of 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 studied in 2017/18 were:

- Dereham
- Diss
- North Walsham
- Swaffham
- Thetford

The second phase of towns studied in 2018/19 were:

- 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 that meet this criteria. 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 and borough 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 which was carried out during Spring 2019, by Norfolk County Council staff . The surveryors visited each market town and recorded the unit types and vacant units within the town centre red-line boundary.

Surveying in North Walsham

1.4 Unit Type Definitions

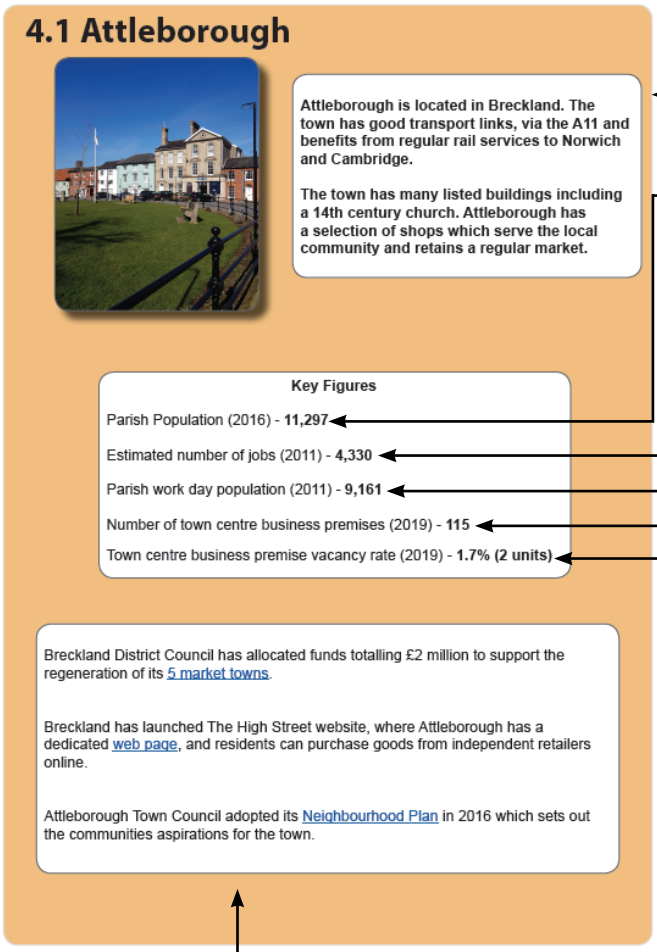
The following defintions are used throughout this report to identify the type of retail units in Norfolk market towns.

- 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 - An empty unit.
- Renovation - A unit that is undergoing building work.

See appendix 1.1 for the raw survey data.

The survey has changed slightly over time, adjusting to suit the changing market *The quality of data can vary between surveys, so it should be used indicatively.*

3.0 How to use this report



Introduction setting the context of the town.

Data from Norfolk Insight Population Estimates - All Persons Data.

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.

Data collected from the 2019 survey.

% calculated by dividing the total number of vacant units by the total number of units - data from the 2019 survey.

Additional market town information.

GIS map of the market town centre, with red line boundary, using the 2019 survey data.

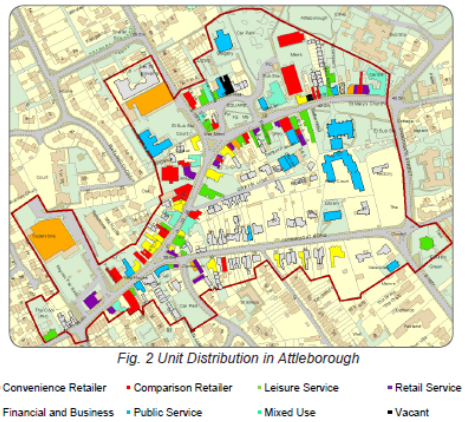


Fig. 2 Unit Distribution in Attleborough

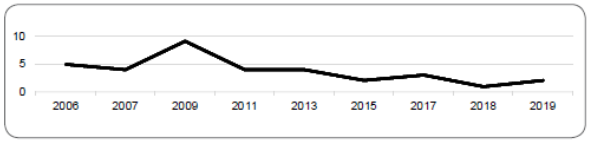
Analysis of the 2019 survey results.

Key Findings from the 2019 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 25%.
- 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 decrease in leisure and financial and business units since 2018.
- 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 increased by 1 unit, since 2018.

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

Fig. 3 Historical Number of Vacant Units



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**

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - **4,330**

Parish work day population (2011) - **9,161**

Number of town centre business premises (2019) - **115**

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2019) - **1.7% (2 units)**

Breckland District Council has allocated funds totalling £2 million to support the regeneration of its 5 market towns.

Breckland District Council has launched The High Street website, where Attleborough has a dedicated web page for residents to purchase goods from independent retailers online.

Attleborough Town Council adopted its neighbourhood plan in 2016 which sets out the communities aspirations for the town.

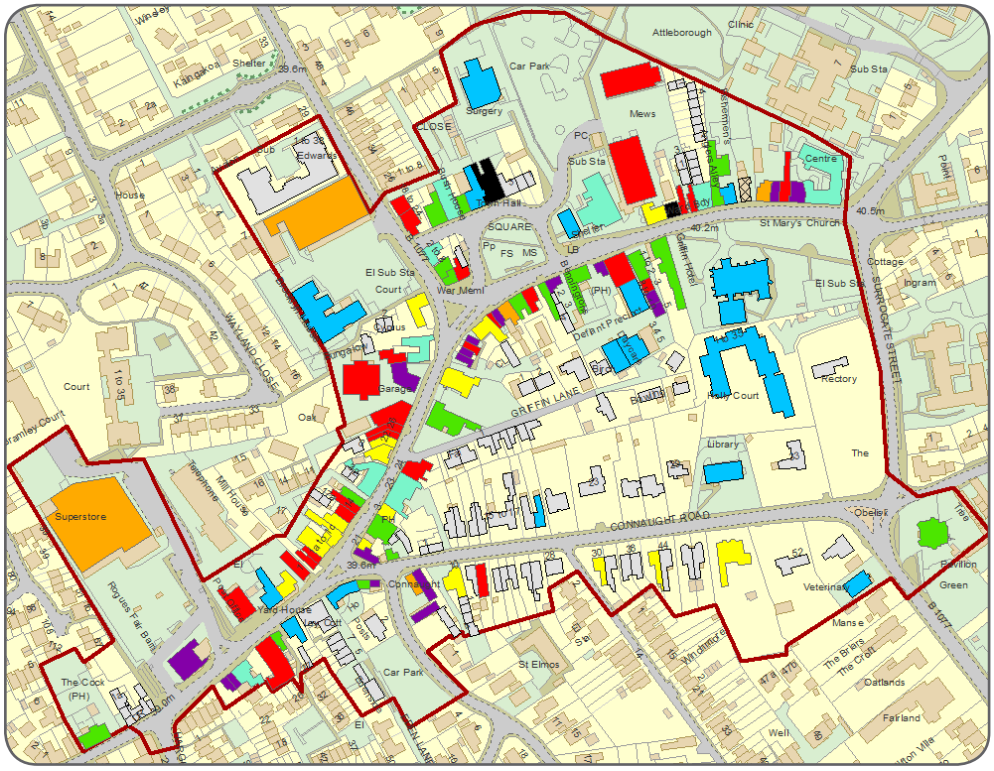


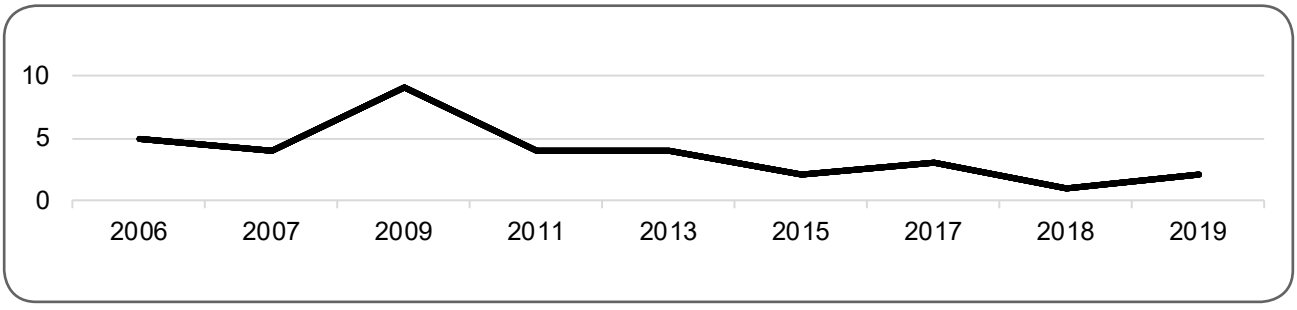
Fig. 2 Unit Distribution in Attleborough

- Convenience Retailer
- Comparison Retailer
- Leisure Service
- Retail Service
- Financial and Business
- Public Service
- Mixed Use
- Vacant

Key Findings from the 2019 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 25%.
- 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 decrease in leisure and financial and business units since 2018.
- Most financial and business units are located close 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 increased by 1 unit, since 2018.

Fig. 3 Historical Number of Vacant Units



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**

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - **3,158**

Parish work day population (2011) - **5,708**

Number of town centre business premises (2019) - **82**

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2019) - **2.4% (2 units)**

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

Aylsham Town Council has adopted its neighbourhood plan in 2018, this document sets out the communities aspirations for the town.

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. Evidence has been collected and the report is being drafted.

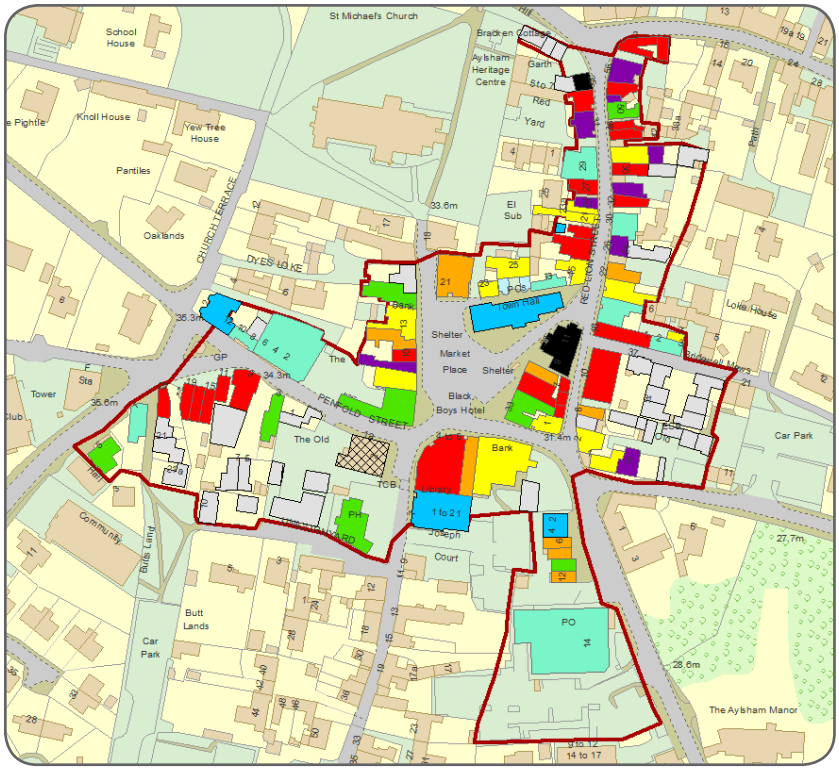


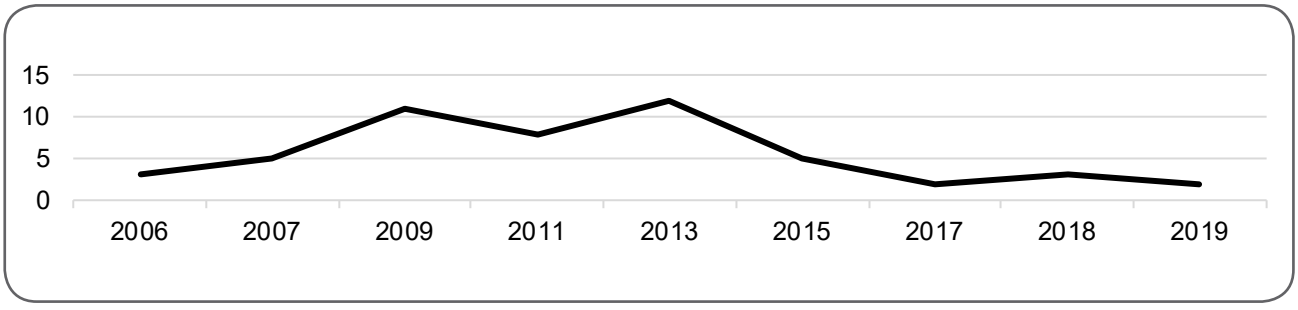
Fig. 4 Unit Distribution in Aylsham

- Convenience Retailer
- Comparison Retailer
- Leisure Service
- Retail Service
- Financial and Business
- Public Service
- Mixed Use
- Vacant

Key Findings from the 2019 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 30%.
- 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 since 2018.
- Vacant units reduced to 2 units, the lowest number of vacant units since recording began.

Fig. 5 Historical Number of Vacant Units



4.3 Cromer

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 several 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**

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - **3,810**

Parish work day population (2011) - **9,348**

Number of town centre business premises (2019) - **202**

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2019) - **4.5% (9 units)**

North Norfolk District Council are promoting the Deep History Coast Initiative from Weybourne to Cart Gap. The initative has developed a range of displays and interactive materials along the coastline in Sheringham including the free Deep History Coast app, which supports ten walks along 36 km of coastline which brings history to life.

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

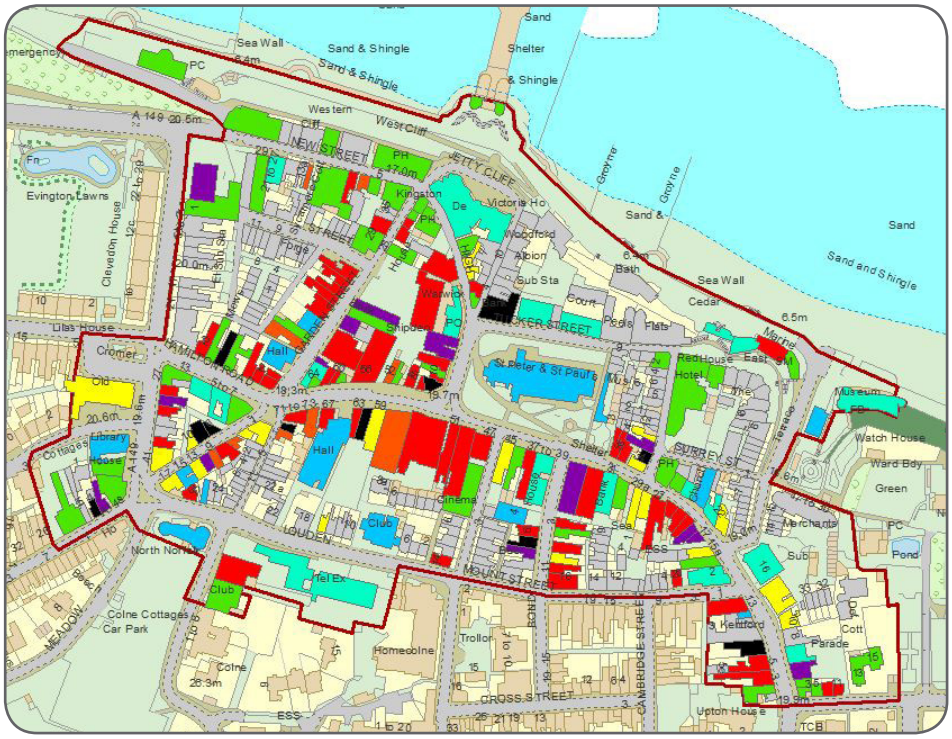


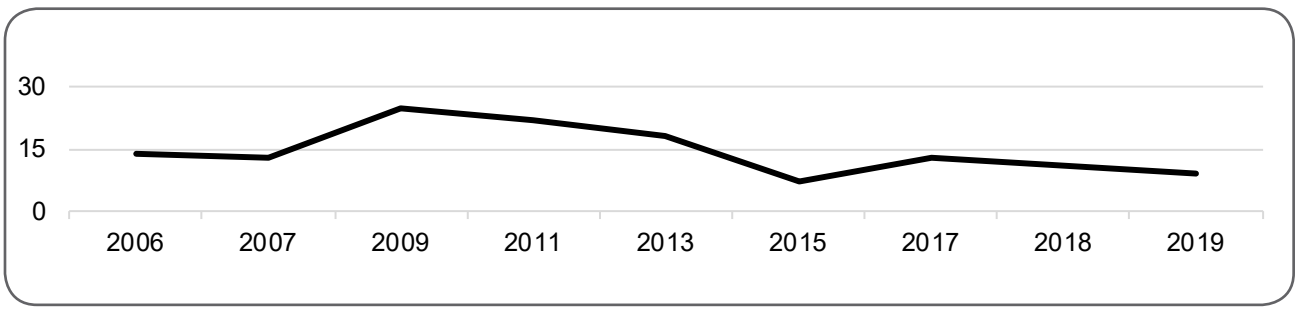
Fig. 6 Unit Distribution in Cromer

- Convenience Retailer
- Comparison Retailer
- Leisure Service
- Retail Service
- Financial and Business
- Public Service
- Mixed Use
- Vacant

Key Findings from the 2019 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 31%.
- Leisure units such as amusements 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, set back from the sea front.
- The largest change in the unit distribution since 2018 is the increase in 7 leisure service units.
- For the second consecutive year vacant units reduced by 2 units, to 9 units.

Fig. 7 Historical Number of Vacant Units



4.4 Dereham

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**

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - **8,456**

Parish work day population (2011) - **19,578**

Number of town centre business premises (2019) - **262**

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2019) - **6.5% (17 units)**

Breckland District Council has allocated funds totalling £2 million to support the regeneration for its 5 market towns. Dereham has secured funding from this source to commission a wayfinding study if the town centre.

Breckland District Council has launched The High Street website, where Dereham has a dedicated web page for residents to 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 this strategy has now been adopted by Norfolk County Council.

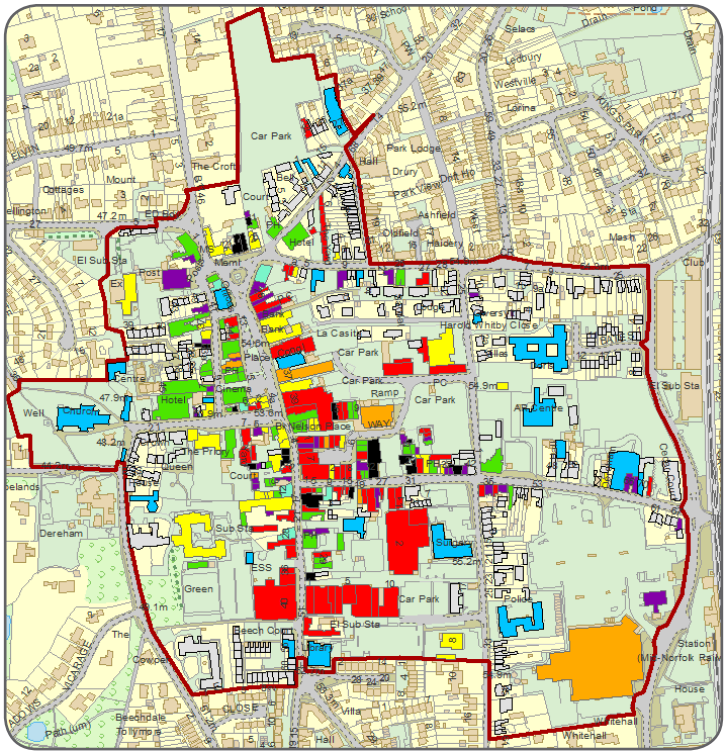


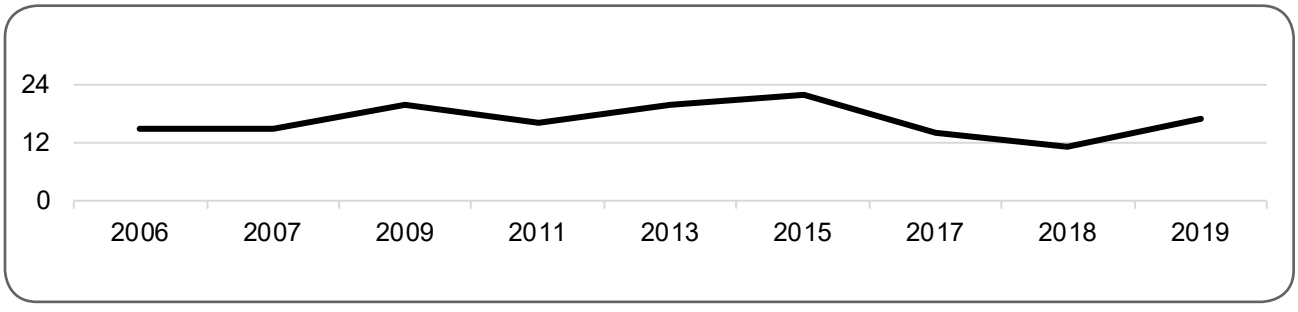
Fig. 8 Unit Distribution in Dereham

- Convenience Retailer
- Comparison Retailer
- Leisure Service
- Retail Service
- Financial and Business
- Public Service
- Mixed Use
- Vacant

Key Findings from the 2019 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 30%.
- 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 units in is the increase in 5 retail services and the increase in vacant units.
- Vacant units increased by 6 since 2018.

Fig. 9 Historical Number of Vacant Units



4.5 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 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

Parish Population (2016) - **8,279**

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - **3,617**

Parish work day population (2011) - **11,269**

Number of town centre business premises (2019) - **160**

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2019) - **2.5% (4 units)**

The Heritage Triangle Project has been completed, the project 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 report is being drafted.

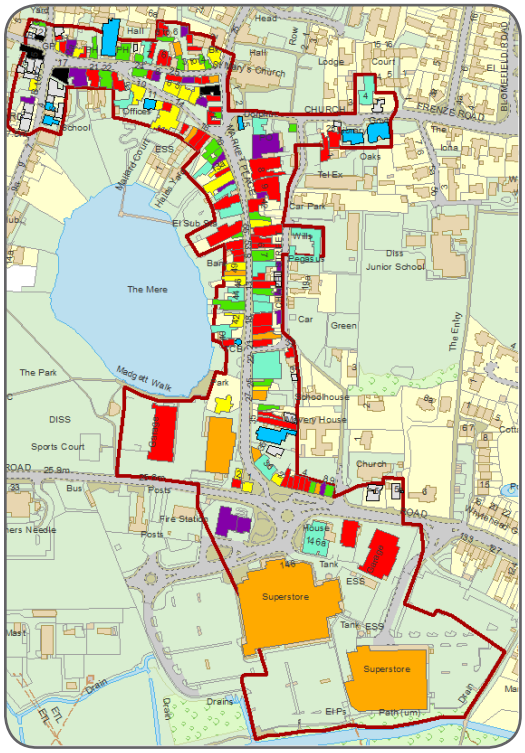


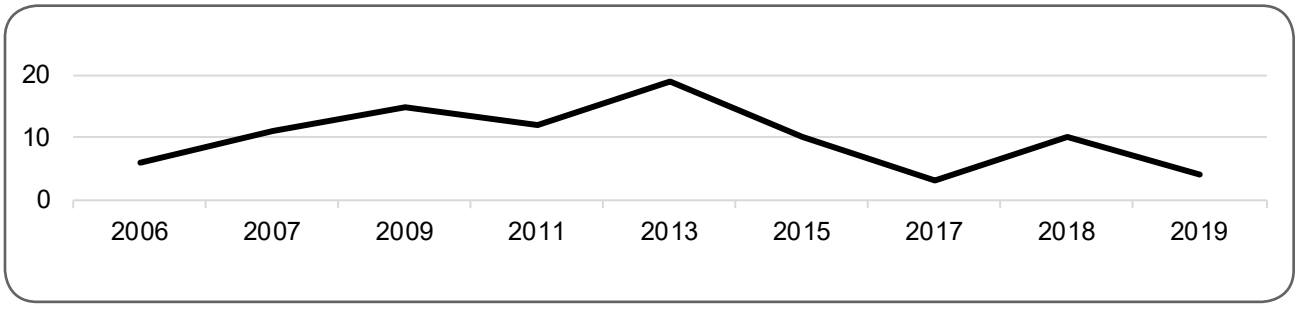
Fig.10 Unit Distribution in Diss

- Convenience Retailer
- Comparison Retailer
- Leisure Service
- Retail Service
- Financial and Business
- Public Service
- Mixed Use
- Vacant

Key Findings from the 2019 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 34%.
- 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 vacant units.
- Vacant units reduced by 7 units since 2018.

Fig.11 Historical Number of Vacant Units



4.6 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.

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**

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - **3,209**

Parish work day population (2011) - **9,845**

Number of town centre business premises (2019) - **140**

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2019) - **5.7% (8 units)**

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. Study work has been commissioned and the results of the studies are being reviewed.

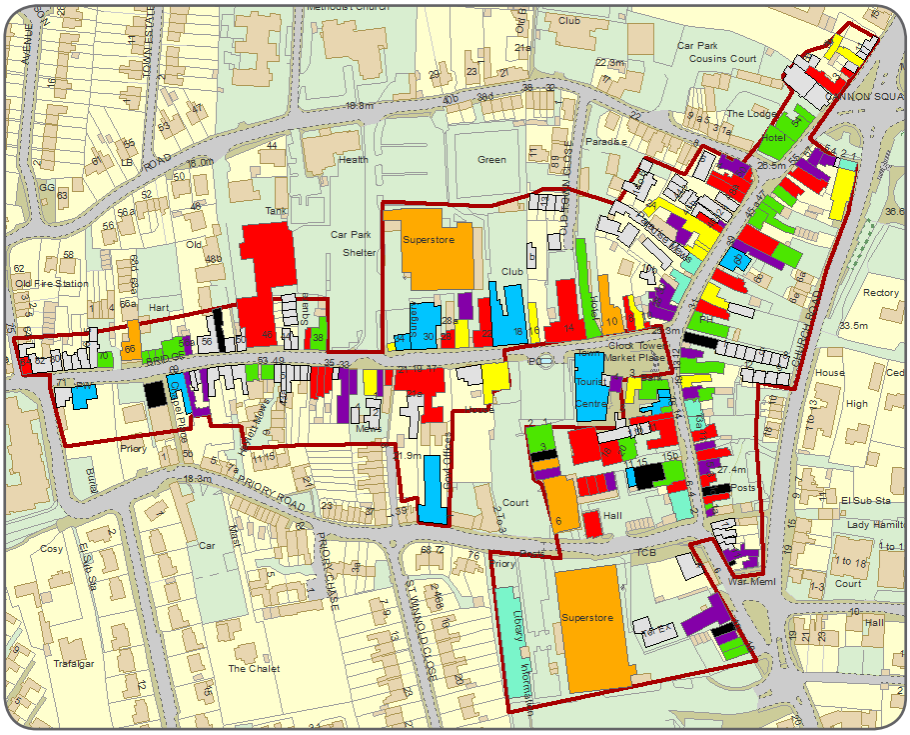


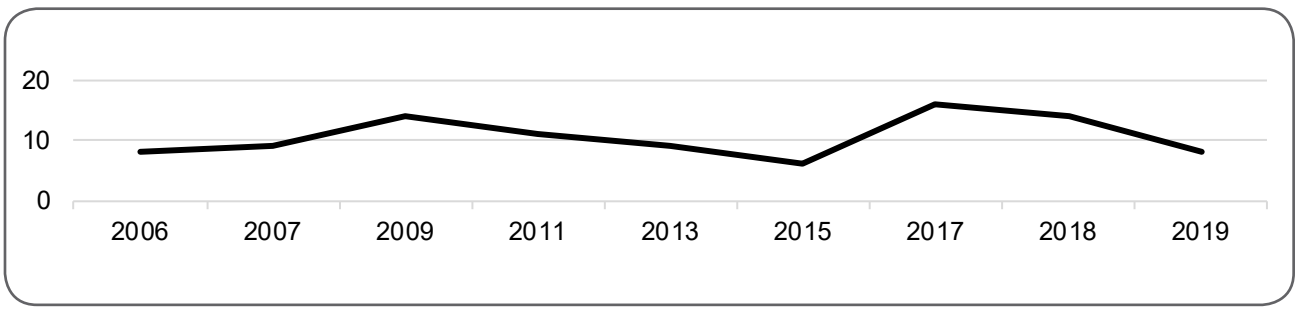
Fig.12 Unit Distribution in Downham Market

- Convenience Retailer
- Comparison Retailer
- Leisure Service
- Retail Service
- Financial and Business
- Public Service
- Mixed Use
- Vacant

Key Findings from the 2019 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 26%.
- 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 5 retail service units and 4 leisure service units.
- Vacant units have reduced for the second consecutive year by 6 units.
- Historically Downham Market has had a higher than average vacancy rate, in 2018 vacancy rates were at 10.4%, in 2019 vacancy rates reduced to 5.7% below the Norfolk average vacancy rate.

Fig.13 Historical Number of Vacant Units



4.7 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, 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**

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - **4,799**

Parish work day population (2011) - **9,527**

Number of town centre business premises (2019) - **155**

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2019) - **5.8% (9 units)**

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. Fakenham has secured funding of £33,000 to market events in the town and the town council has secured over £25,000 to regenerate shop frontages and print a heritage guide.

Fakenham is part of the second tranche of Norfolk County Council Market Town Network Improvement Strategies. The report is currently being drafted.

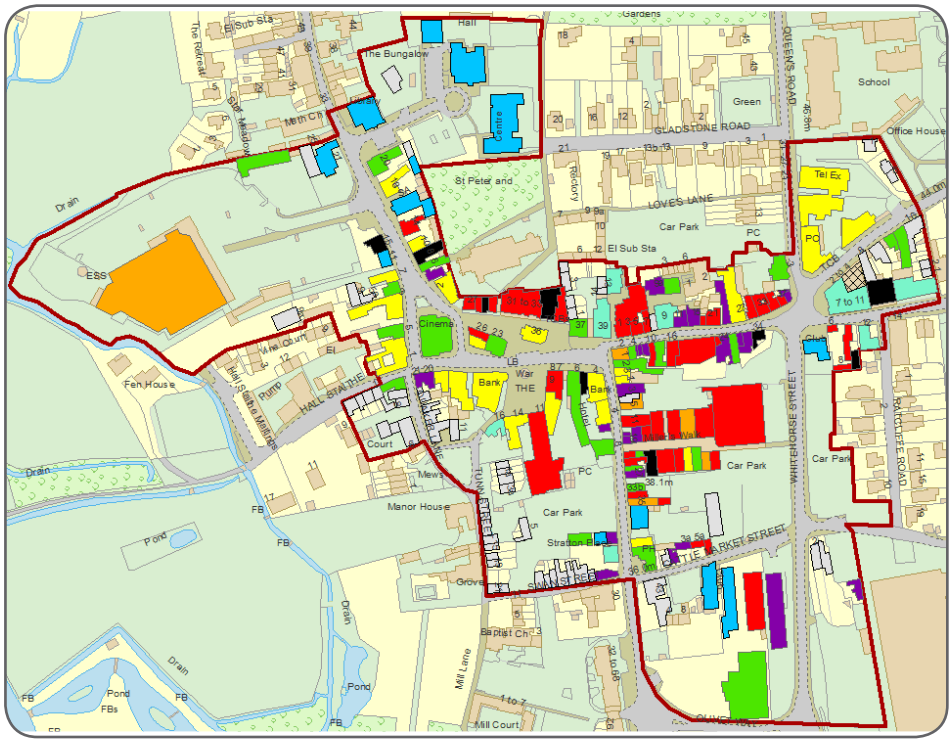
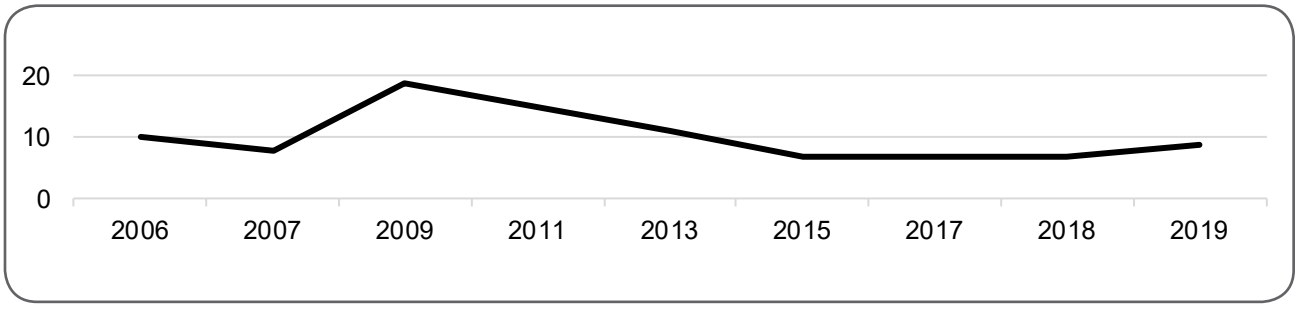


Fig.14 Unit Distribution in Fakenham

Key Findings from the 2019 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 26%.
- 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 4 comparison retailers since 2018.
- Vacant units increased by 2 units since 2018.

Fig.15 Historical Number of Vacant Units



4.8 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 and services which are used and supported by 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***

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - **1,718**

Parish work day population (2011) - **4,060**

Number of town centre business premises (2019) - **97**

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2019) - **7.2% (7 units)**

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

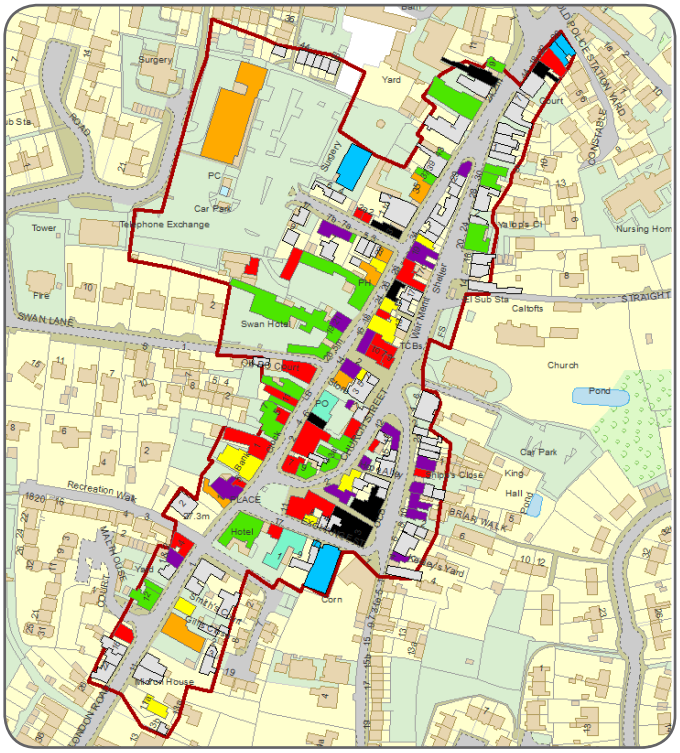


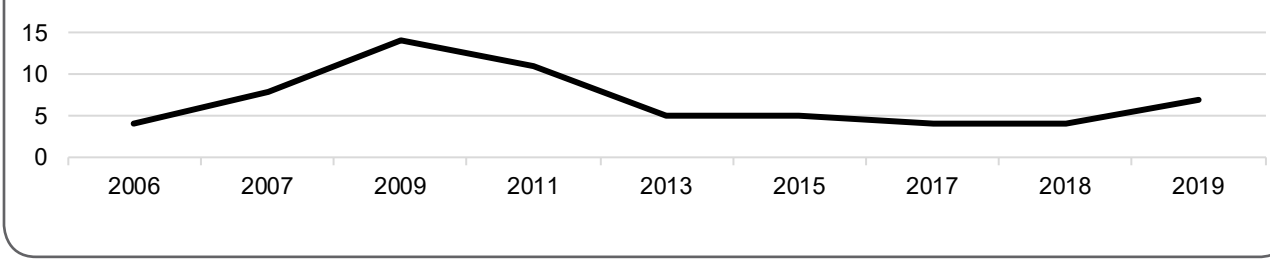
Fig.16 Unit Distribution in Harleston

- Convenience Retailer
- Comparison Retailer
- Leisure Service
- Retail Service
- Financial and Business
- Public Service
- Mixed Use
- Vacant

Key Findings from the 2019 Survey

- The largest proportion of units in Harleston are comparison retailers at 27%, see figure 16.
- There is also a concentration of leisure units at 22%, 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 2018 was found to be the increase in vacant units.
- Vacant units have increased by 3 units since 2018, the first increase since 2017.

Fig.17 Historical Number of Vacant Units



4.9 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 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**

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - **2,644**

Parish work day population (2011) - **5,237**

Number of town centre business premises (2019) - **171**

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2019) - **5.8% (10 units)**

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. Holt has secured £7,200 to improve the Holt Owl Trail, it has also secured funding of £26,000 to increase visitor footfall and trade and the Town Council has funding of £17,500 for a park-and-ride scheme.

Holt Town Council has commenced the neighbourhood plan process and has published a draft neighbourhood plan.

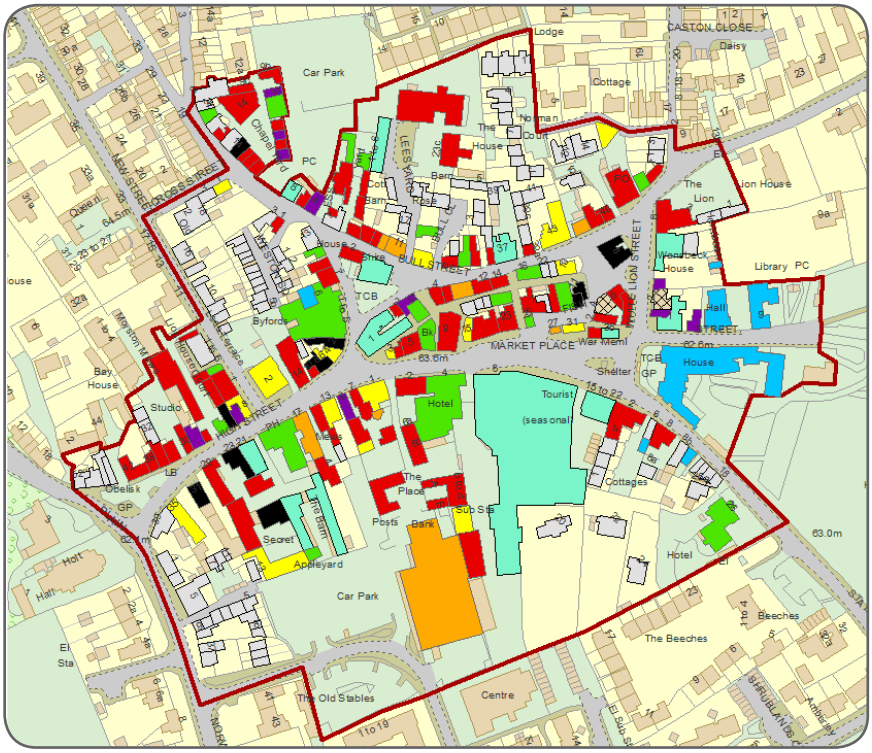


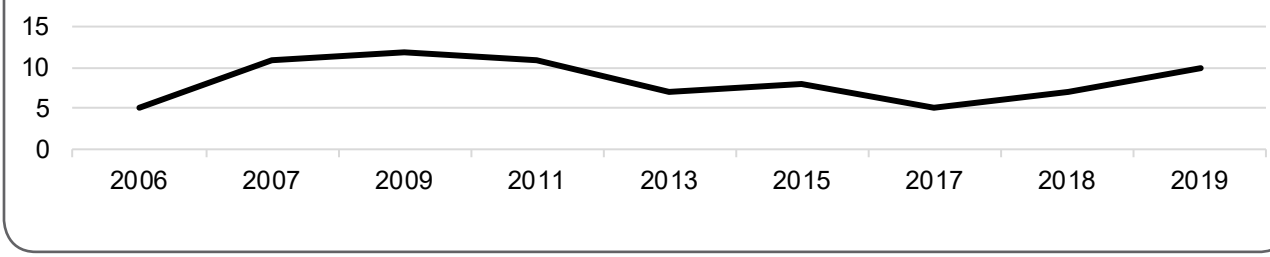
Fig.18 Unit Distribution in Holt

- Convenience Retailer
- Comparison Retailer
- Leisure Service
- Retail Service
- Financial and Business
- Public Service
- Mixed Use
- Vacant

Key Findings from the 2019 Survey

- The largest proportion of units in Holt are comparison retailers at 46%, which is considerably higher than the Norfolk average of 29%.
- 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.
- The largest difference in units, since 2018, recorded was the increase of 5 financial and business service units.
- Vacant units have increased for the second year by 3 units.

Fig.19 Historical Number of Vacant 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 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**

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - **2,201**

Parish work day population (2011) - **9,181**

Number of town centre business premises (2019) - **126**

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2019) - **7.9% (10 units)**

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 and is working towards producing a draft regulation 14 neighbourhood plan.

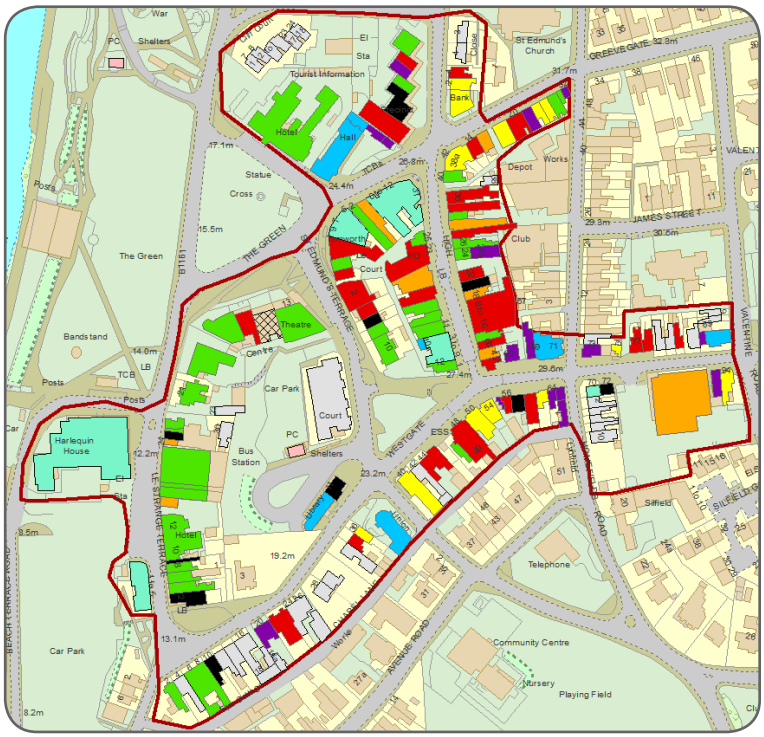


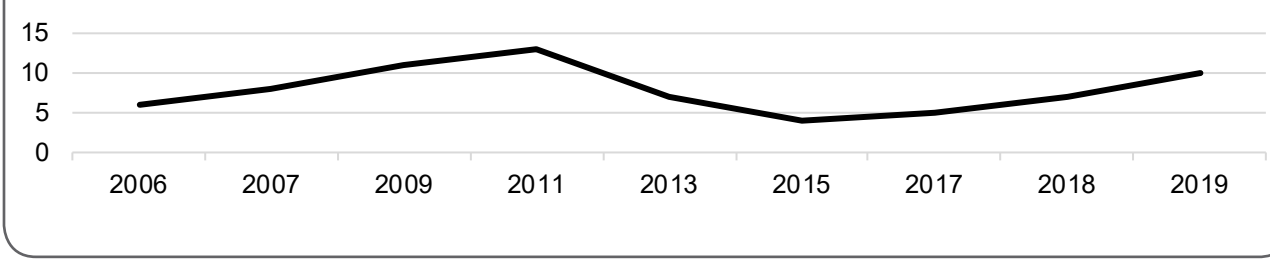
Fig.20 Unit Distribution in Hunstanton

- Convenience Retailer
- Comparison Retailer
- Leisure Service
- Retail Service
- Financial and Business
- Public Service
- Mixed Use
- Vacant

Key Findings from the 2019 Survey

- The largest proportion of units in the market town are leisure services at 28%. A reflection of the market town being a seaside resort.
- 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.
- The biggest change since 2018 was recorded as the decrease in 5 comparison retailers.
- Vacant units have increased for the fourth consecutive year.

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 residents and tourists.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - **2,860**

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - **1,158**

Parish work day population (2011) - **3,303**

Number of town centre business premises (2019) - **38**

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2019) - **5.3% (2 units)**

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.

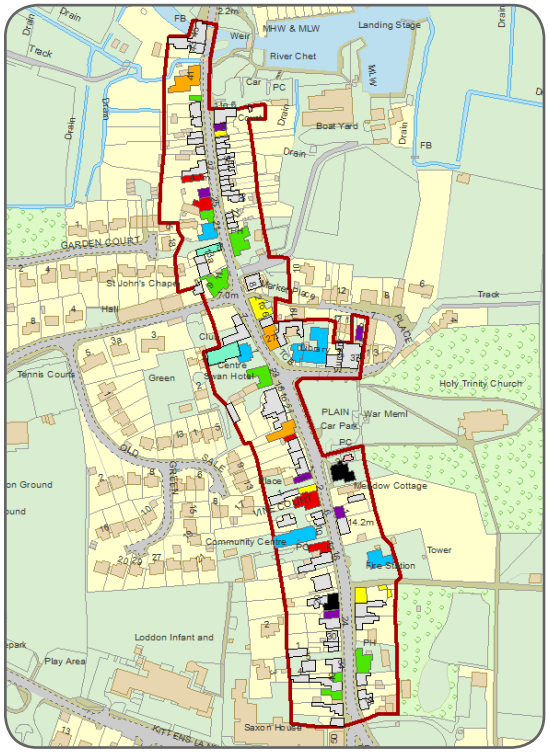


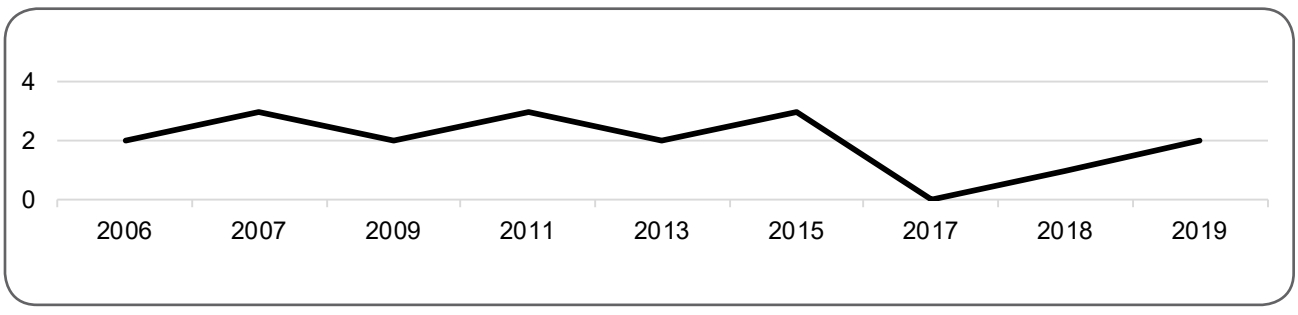
Fig.22 Unit Distribution in Loddon

- Convenience Retailer
- Comparison Retailer
- Leisure Service
- Retail Service
- Financial and Business
- Public Service
- Mixed Use
- Vacant

Key Findings from the 2019 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are leisure services which make up 21% of all units, which deviates from the trends shown in most market towns in Norfolk.
- 13% of units in Loddon are comparison retailers, which is considerably less than the Norfolk average of 29%.
- The linear High Street largely consists of residential units, pepper potted by retail and business units, see figure 22.
- Vacant units have increased for the second year by 1 unit. There has been a historical trend of fluctuating vacant units, see figure 23, with the number of vacant units increasing and decreasing each year.

Fig.23 Historical Number of Vacant Units



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**

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - **2,338**

Parish work day population (2011) - **3,845**

Number of town centre business premises (2019) - **56**

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2019) - **12.5% (7 units)**

South Norfolk District Council has invested £2 million to refurbish the Long Stratton Leisure Centre and 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, the bypass project is being considered for national funding.

Long Stratton Parish Council has commenced the neighbourhood plan process. The area the plan includes parts of Tharston and Hapton Parish.

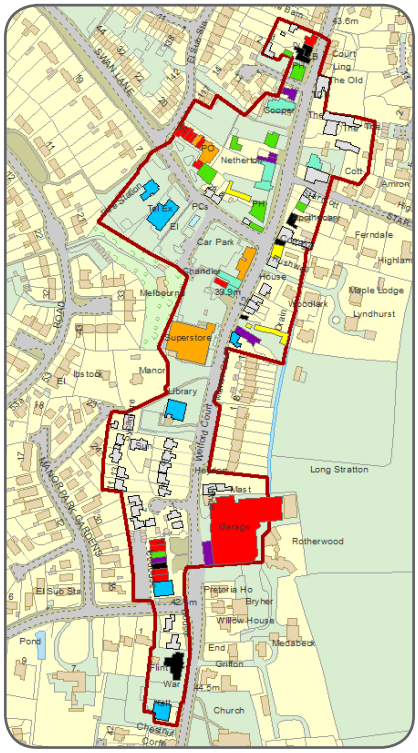


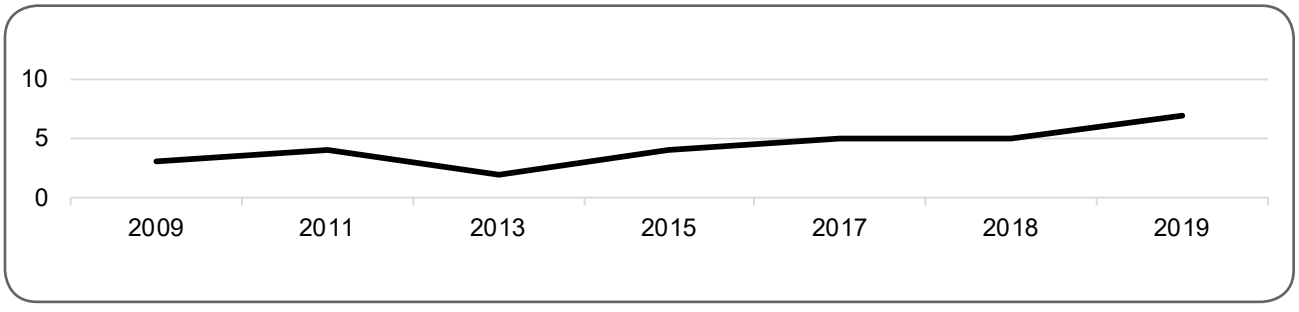
Fig.24 Unit Distribution in Long Stratton

- Convenience Retailer
- Comparison Retailer
- Leisure Service
- Retail Service
- Financial and Business
- Public Service
- Mixed Use
- Vacant

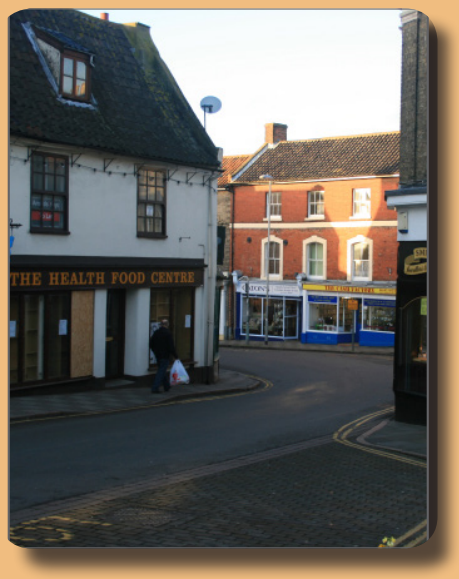
Key Findings from the 2019 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 25%.
- 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.
- Vacant units have been increasing since 2013, and continued to increase by 1 unit to 7 vacant units, since 2018. Vacancy rates in the town are above the Norfolk average.

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 two supermarkets. And a weekly market continues to be held in the town.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - **12,647**

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - **4,793**

Parish work day population (2011) - **11,924**

Number of town centre business premises (2019) - **146**

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2019) - **6.8% (10 units)**

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. North Walsham has secured funding of £99,575 to implement three schemes which include improvement to St Nicholas court, the town centre and increasing visitor footfall.

North Walsham is part of the first tranche of Norfolk County Council Market Town Network Improvement Strategies. Studies have been conducted and the report is being drafted.

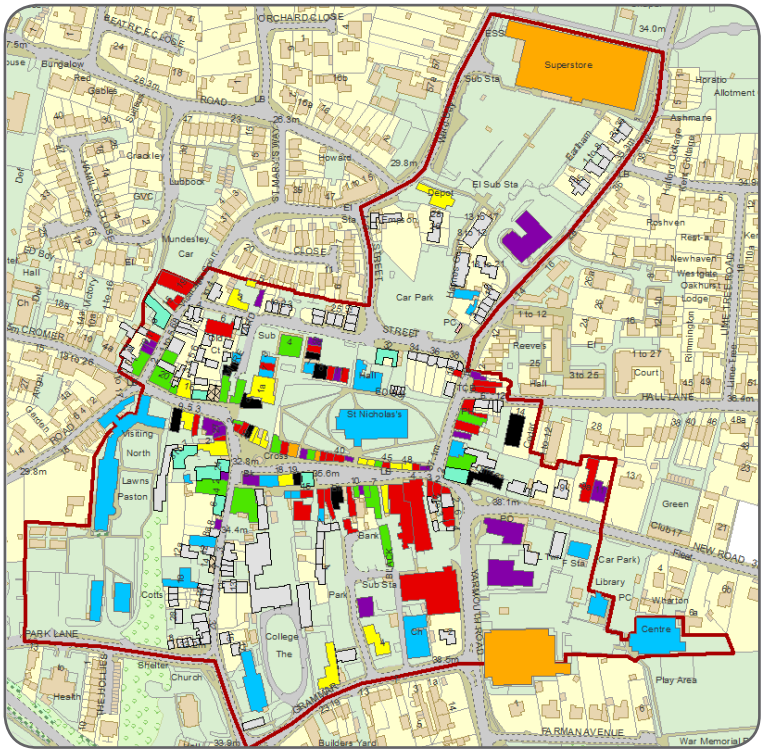


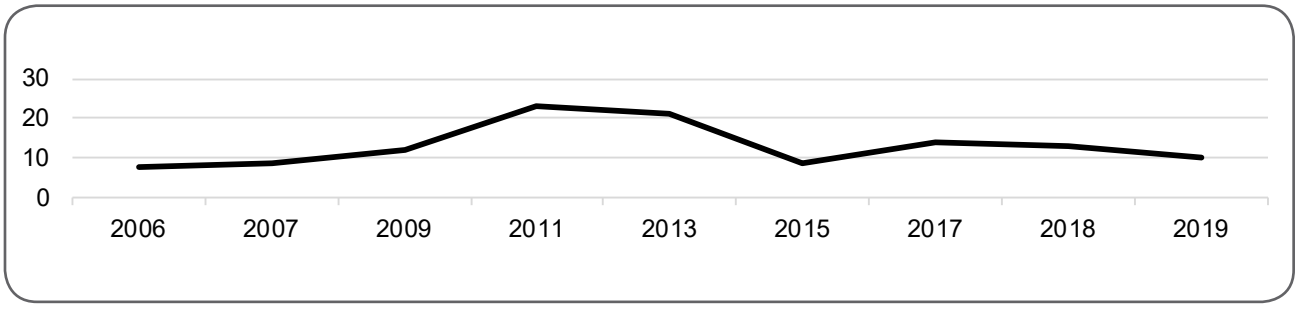
Fig.26 Unit Distribution in North Walsham

- Convenience Retailer
- Comparison Retailer
- Leisure Service
- Retail Service
- Financial and Business
- Public Service
- Mixed Use
- Vacant

Key Findings from the 2019 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 for the second consecutive year to 10 vacant units, the lowest amount recorded in the last 3 years.

Fig.27 Historical Number of Vacant Units



4.14 Sheringham

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**

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - **2,597**

Parish work day population (2011) - **7,860**

Number of town centre business premises (2019) - **164**

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2019) - **2.4% (4 units)**

North Norfolk District Council are promoting the Deep History Coast Initiative from Weybourne to Cart Gap. The initiative has developed a range of displays and interactive materials along the coastline in Sheringham including the free Deep History Coast app, which supports ten walks along 36 km of coastline, which brings history to life.

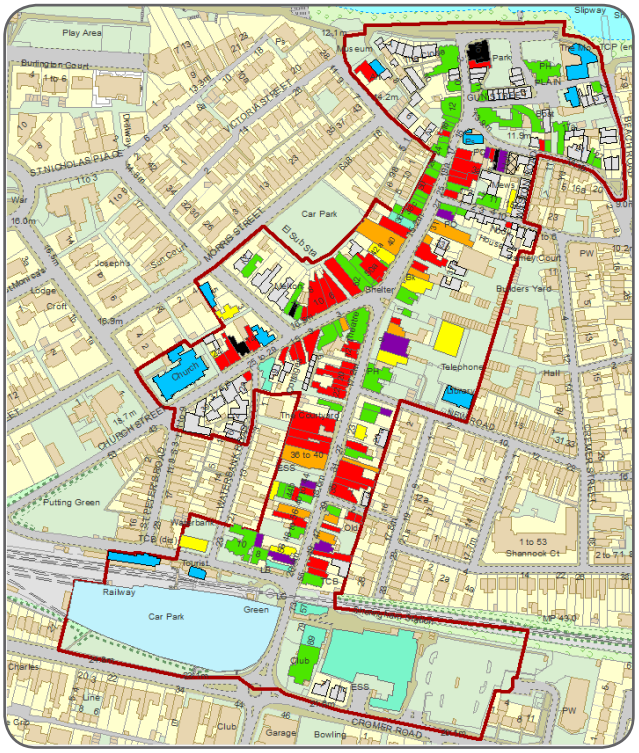


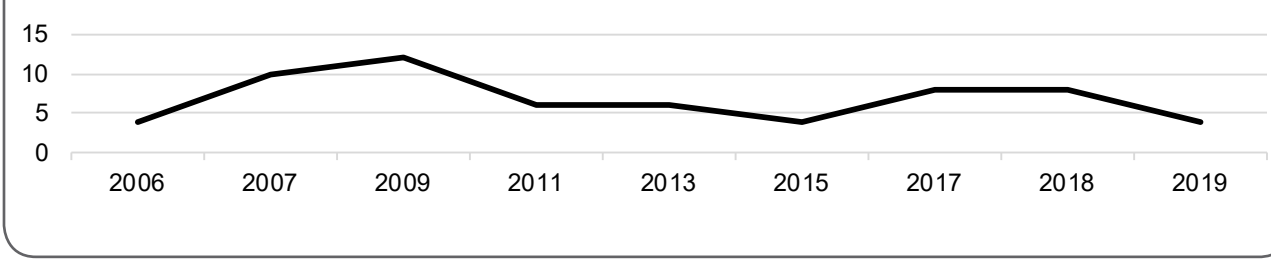
Fig.28 Unit Distribution in Sheringham

- Convenience Retailer
- Comparison Retailer
- Leisure Service
- Retail Service
- Financial and Business
- Public Service
- Mixed Use
- Vacant

Key Findings from the 2019 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 35%.
- 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 reduced by 4 units since 2018 to the lowest number recorded since 2015.

Fig.29 Historical Number of Vacant Units



4.15 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 a large superstore.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - **3,276**

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - **1,704**

Parish work day population (2011) - **3,808**

Number of town centre business premises (2019) - **85**

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2019) - **8.2% (7 units)**

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. Stalham has secured funding of £32,000 to improve the town centre by improving signage, additionally, £22,000 has been secured to implement regenerative projects focussed on businesses.

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

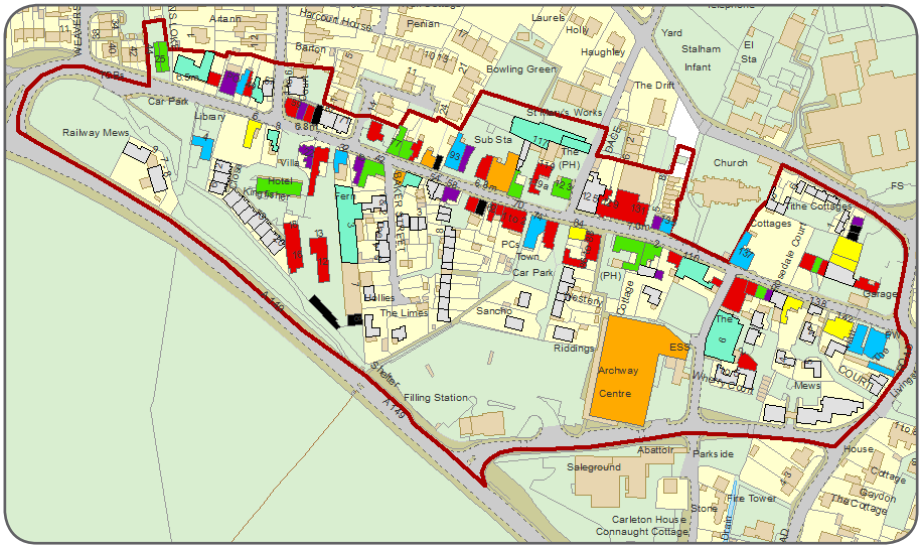


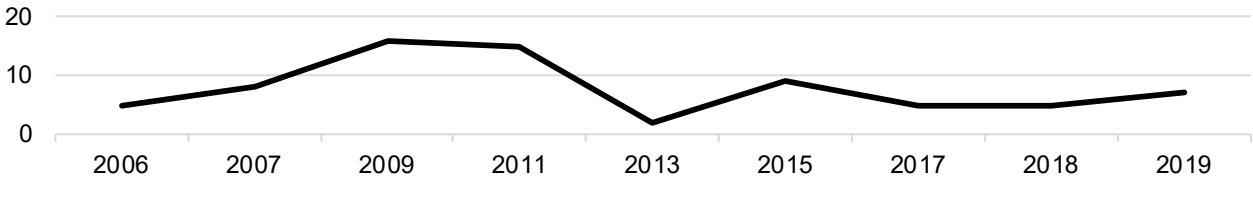
Fig.30 Unit Distribution in Stalham

- Convenience Retailer
- Comparison Retailer
- Leisure Service
- Retail Service
- Financial and Business
- Public Service
- Mixed Use
- Vacant

Key Findings from the 2019 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 8.2% is above the Norfolk average of 5.9%.

Fig.31 Historical Number of Vacant Units



4.16 Swaffham

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**

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - **3,134**

Parish work day population (2011) - **7,549**

Number of town centre business premises (2019) - **148**

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2019) - **6.8% (10 units)**

Breckland District Council has allocated funds totalling £2 million to support the regeneration for its 5 market towns. Swaffham secured funding from this source to increase the number of market stalls. And a project has already been completed to renovate the Swaffham Buttercross area which has introduced electric car charging points, added new lighting and provided free town centre wifi.

Breckland has launched The High Street website where Swaffham has a dedicated web page for residents to purchase goods from independent retailers online.

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.

The Swaffham Neighbourhood Plan was adopted in May 2019.

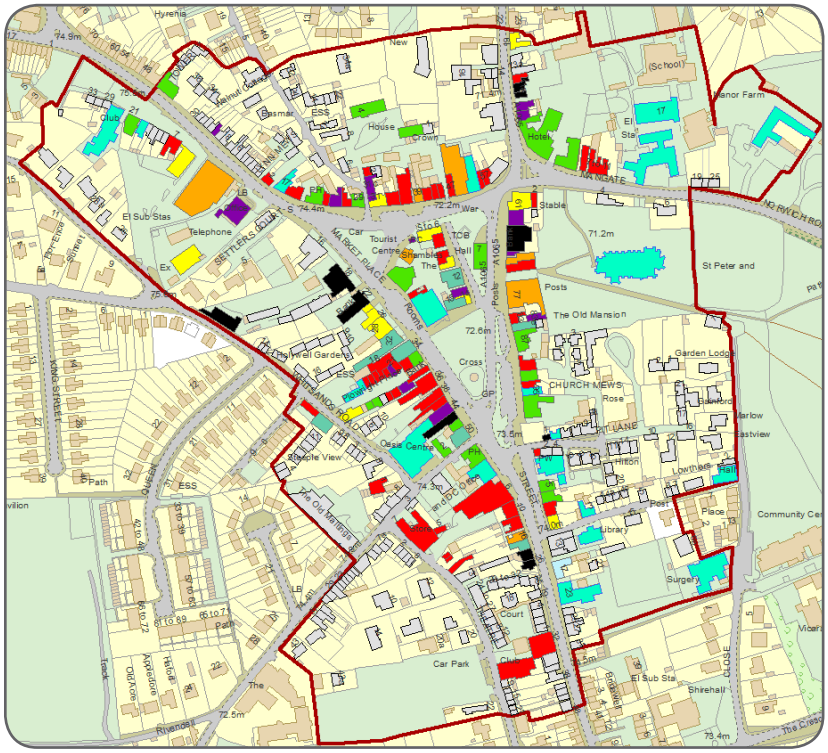


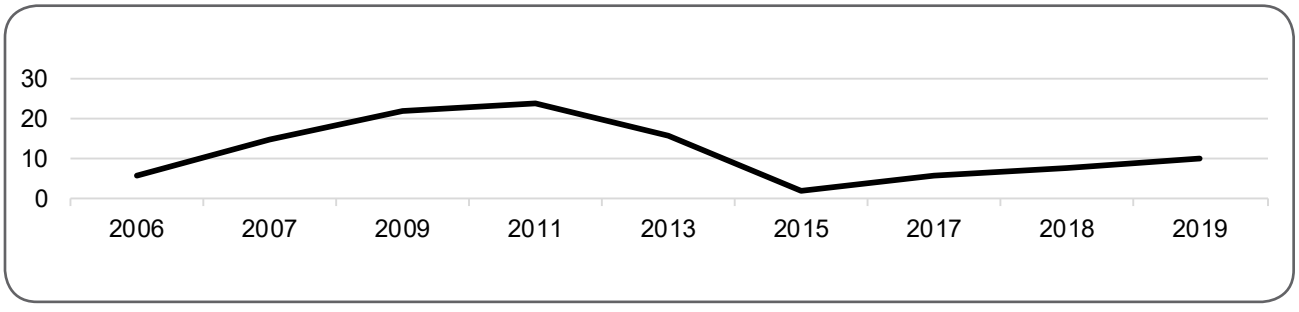
Fig.32 Unit Distribution in Swaffham

- Convenience Retailer
- Comparison Retailer
- Leisure Service
- Retail Service
- Financial and Business
- Public Service
- Mixed Use
- Vacant

Key Findings from the 2019 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 35%.
- The town centre is triangular with the central focus of the Swaffham Buttercross, see figure 32.
- The largest change since 2018 is the increase in 3 local public service units.
- There is a spread of public service units which are mostly located to the east of the town centre.
- Vacant increased by 2 units since 2018, yet remain below the peak observed in 2011. The vacancy rate of 6.8% is above the Norfolk average of 5.9%.

Fig.33 Historical Number of Vacant Units



4.17 Thetford

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**

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - **11,337**

Parish work day population (2011) - **23,897**

Number of town centre business premises (2019) - **206**

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2019) - **10.2% (21 units)**

Breckland District Council has allocated funds totalling £2 million to support the regeneration for its 5 market towns. Thetford secured funding through this source for three projects all of which are now complete these projects are; events On the Green, Thetford murals, and improving the Butten Island by removing dead and unsafe vegetation from the island.

Breckland District Council launched The High Street website where Thetford has a dedicated web page for residents to purchase goods from independent retailers online.

The Norfolk County Council Market Town Network Improvement Strategy for Thetford was included in the first tranche of studies. The final report is expected to be adopted in 2019.

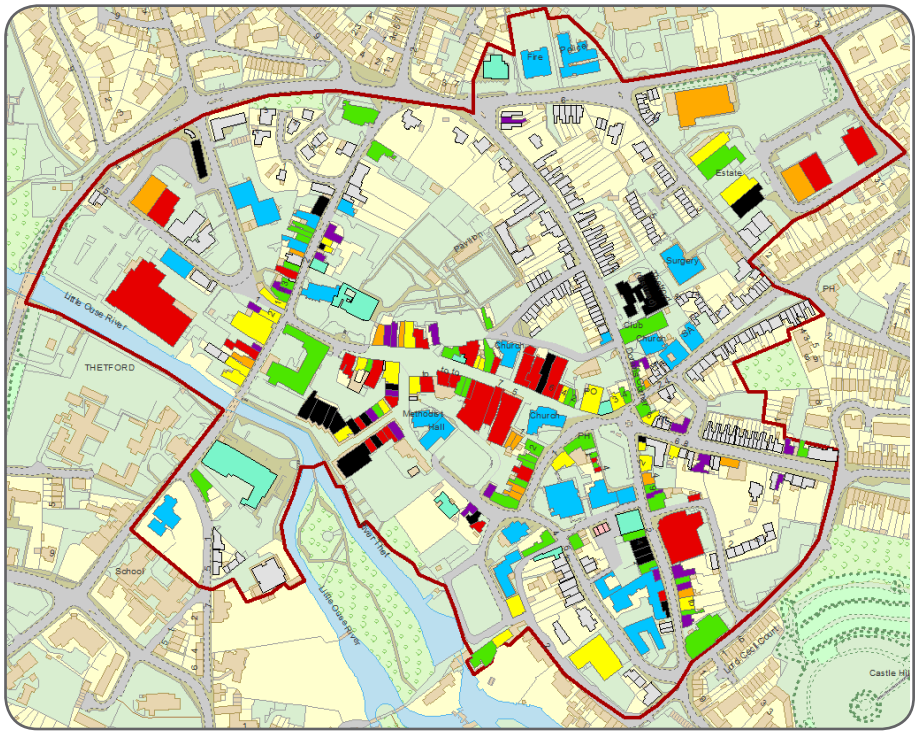


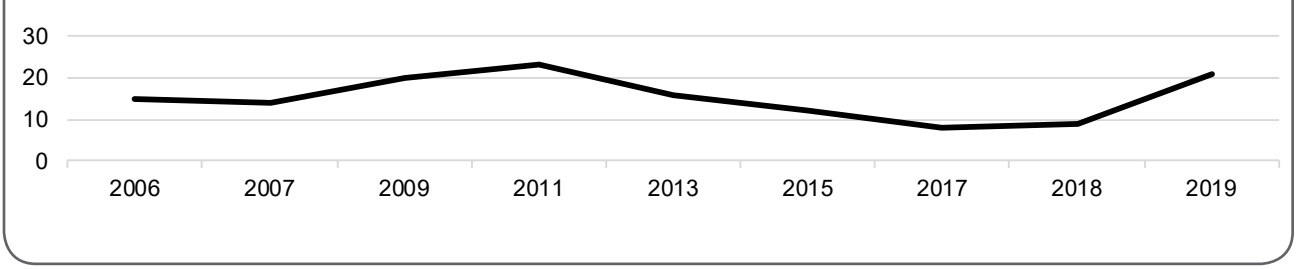
Fig.34 Unit Distribution in Thetford

- Convenience Retailer
- Comparison Retailer
- Leisure Service
- Retail Service
- Financial and Business
- Public Service
- Mixed Use
- Vacant

Key Findings from the 2019 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are leisure services at 22%, a trend only found in 4 other market towns. 17% of units in the market town are comparison retailers, this is considerably lower than the Norfolk average of 29%.
- 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.
- 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.
- Vacant units have increased by 12 units since 2018, vacancy rates remain below the peak observed in 2011, see figure 35. The vacancy rate is higher than the Norfolk average.

Fig.35 Historical Number of Vacant Units



4.18 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 popular with residents and tourists.

Key Figures

Parish Population (2016) - **7,782**

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - **2,707**

Parish work day population (2011) - **8,758**

Number of town centre business premises (2019) - **112**

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2019) - **10.7% (12 units)**

Breckland District Council has allocated funds totalling £2 million to support the regeneration for its 5 market towns. Watton has secured funding to purchase additional market stalls and secured funding for Watton parkrun, an event which is now held each Saturday approximately 142 runners take part.

Breckland has launched The High Street website where Watton has a dedicated web page for residents to purchase goods from independent retailers online.

The Watton Neighbourhood Plan area has been designated and the Town Council has commenced the neighbourhood planning process.

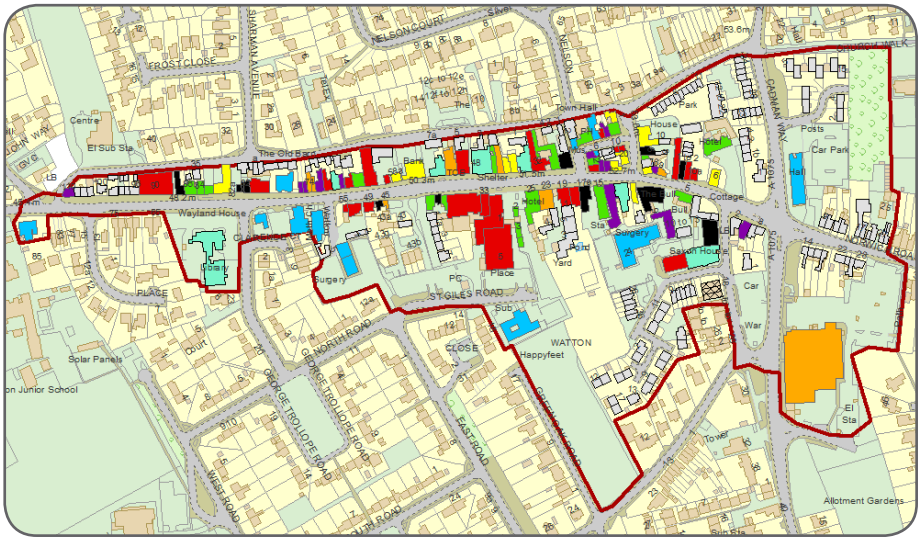


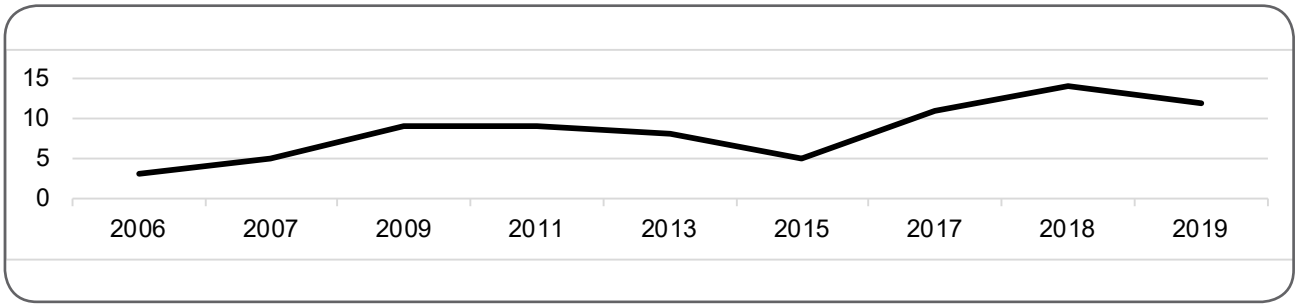
Fig.36 Unit Distribution in Watton

- Convenience Retailer
- Comparison Retailer
- Leisure Service
- Retail Service
- Financial and Business
- Public Service
- Mixed Use
- Vacant

Key Findings from the 2019 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 22%, less than the Norfolk average of 29%.
- 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.
- Vacant units have reduced by 2 units since 2018. The vacancy rate of 10.7% is above the Norfolk average of 5.9%.

Fig.37 Historical Number of Vacant Units



*Local Data Company, 2017

4.19 Wells-next-the-Sea

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**

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - **1,085**

Parish work day population (2011) - **2,193**

Number of town centre business premises (2019) - **79**

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2019) - **5.1% (4 units)**

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 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.

Wells-next-the-Sea has commenced the neighbourhood planning process and has designated its neighbourhood planning area.

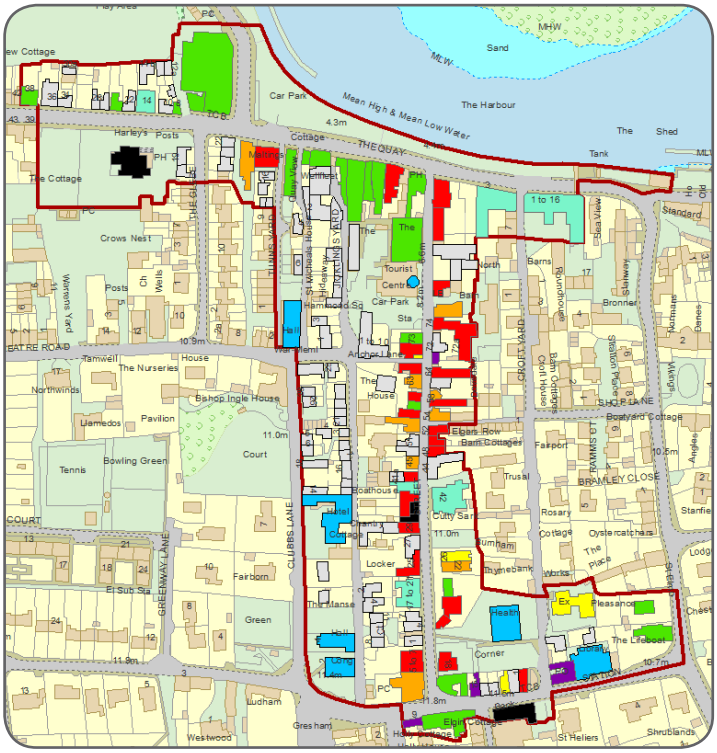


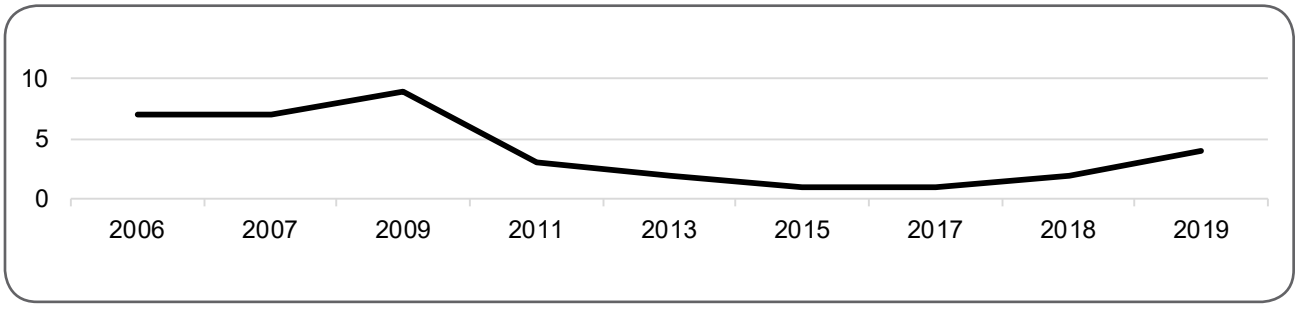
Fig.38 Unit Distribution in Wells-next-the-Sea

- Convenience Retailer
- Comparison Retailer
- Leisure Service
- Retail Service
- Financial and Business
- Public Service
- Mixed Use
- Vacant
- Renovation

Key Findings from the 2019 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 30%, leisure units are also prominent at 27%, higher than the Norfolk average. This is reflective of the market town being a tourist resort.
- 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.
- Vacant units have increased for the second consecutive year by 2 units since 2018, but vacancy rates remain below the Norfolk average vacancy rate.

Fig.39 Historical Number of Vacant Units



4.20 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**

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - **2,208**

Parish work day population (2011) - **3,948**

Number of town centre business premises (2019) - **55**

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2019) - **5.5% (3 units)**

Wroxham Parish Council has adopted the Wroxham Neighbourhood Plan in March 2019.

Wroxham and Hoveton are being studied under the second tranche of the Norfolk County Council Market Town Network Improvement Strategies. Work is now underway to collect evidence to support the strategy.

North Norfolk District Council have provided Hoveton Parish Council with £13,000 to purchase new play equipment for the recreation ground. This grant was funded through the district council's Big Society Fund.

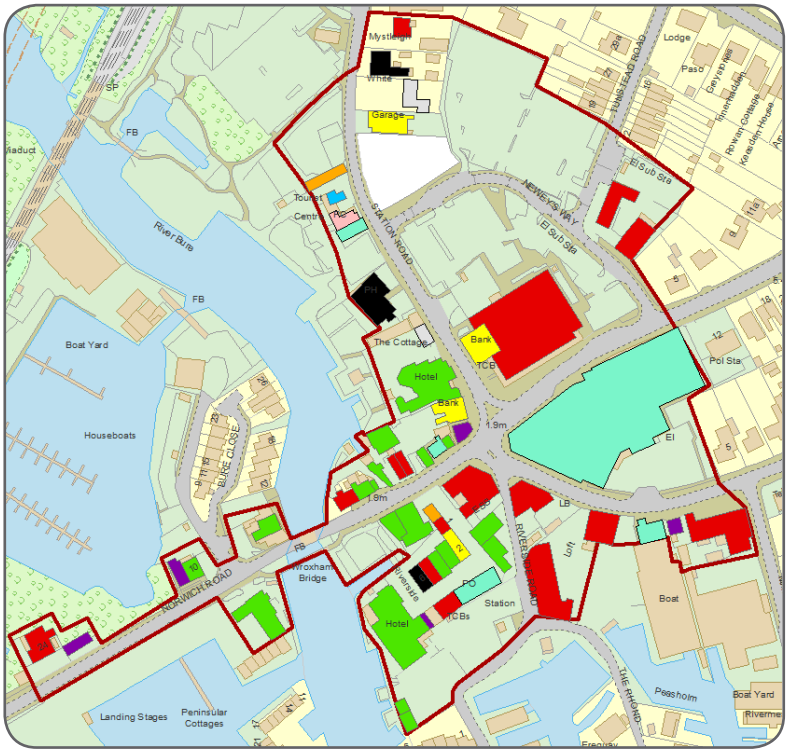
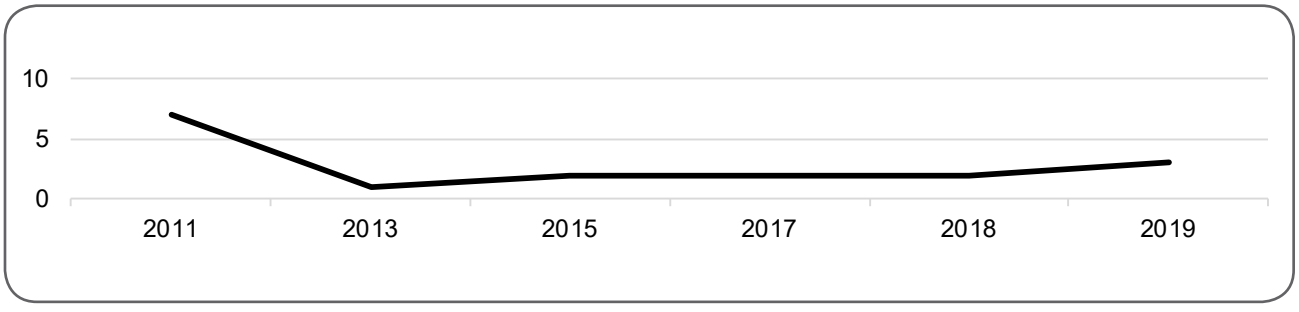


Fig.40 Unit Distribution in Wroxham and Hoveton

Key Findings from the 2019 Survey

- The largest proportion of units is equally comparison retailers and leisure services at 35%, this is reflective of the market town being a tourist location.
- 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.
- Vacant units increased by 1 unit since 2018.
- *N.B. for this study Wroxham and Hoveton have been surveyed in unison this is because the units are spread amongst both areas of Wroxham and Hoveton.*

Fig.41 Historical Number of Vacant Units



4.21 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**

Estimated number of jobs (2011) - **6,707**

Parish work day population (2011) - **14,101**

Number of town centre business premises (2019) - **129**

Town centre business premise vacancy rate (2019) - **1.6% (2 units)**

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, which is now live.

Wymondham is to be studied under the second tranche of Norfolk County Council Market Town Network Improvement Strategies. Initial data gathering work has commenced and work is underway.

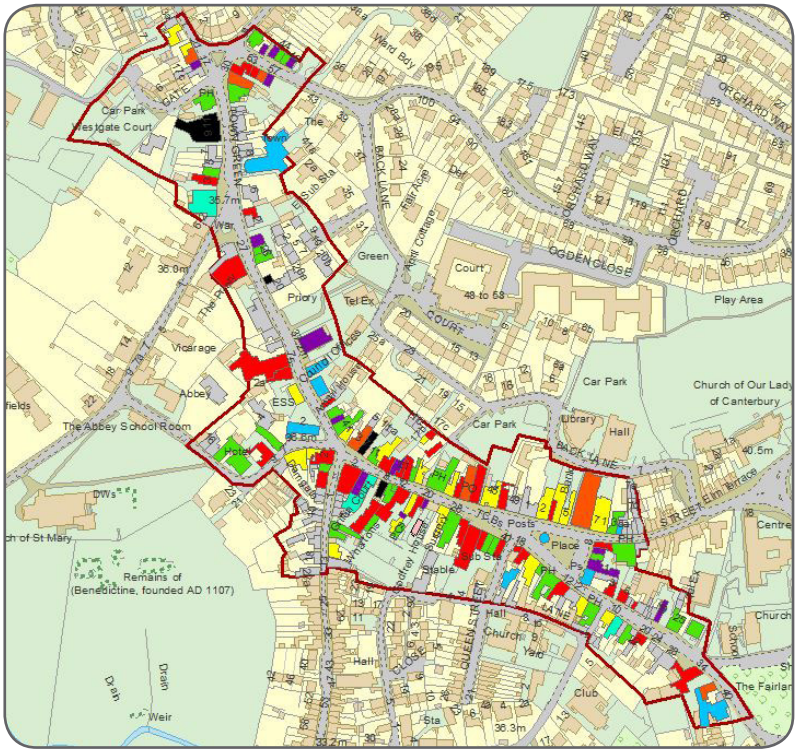


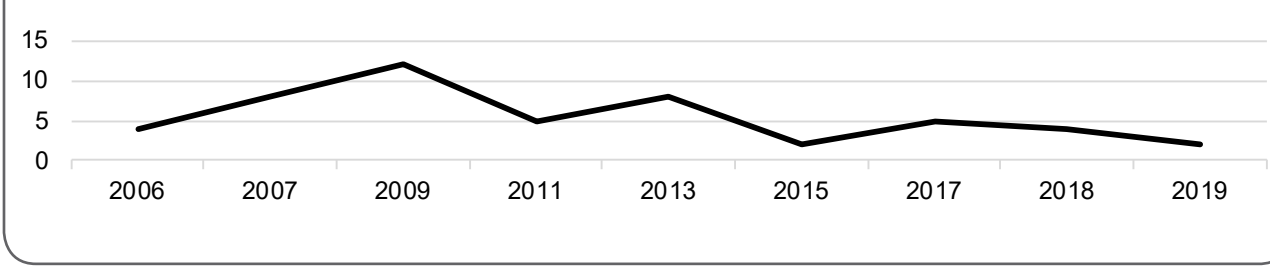
Fig.42 Unit Distribution in Wymondham

- Convenience Retailer
- Comparison Retailer
- Leisure Service
- Retail Service
- Financial and Business
- Public Service
- Mixed Use
- Vacant

Key Findings from the 2019 Survey

- The largest proportion of units are comparison retailers at 28%, there is also a concentration of leisure units are 25%.
- 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 reduced fro the second consecutive year to 2 units.

Fig.43 Historical Number of Vacant Units



5.0 Norfolk Analysis

5.1 2018-2019 Comparison

Fig.44 Comparison of Units in Norfolk Market Towns 2017-2019

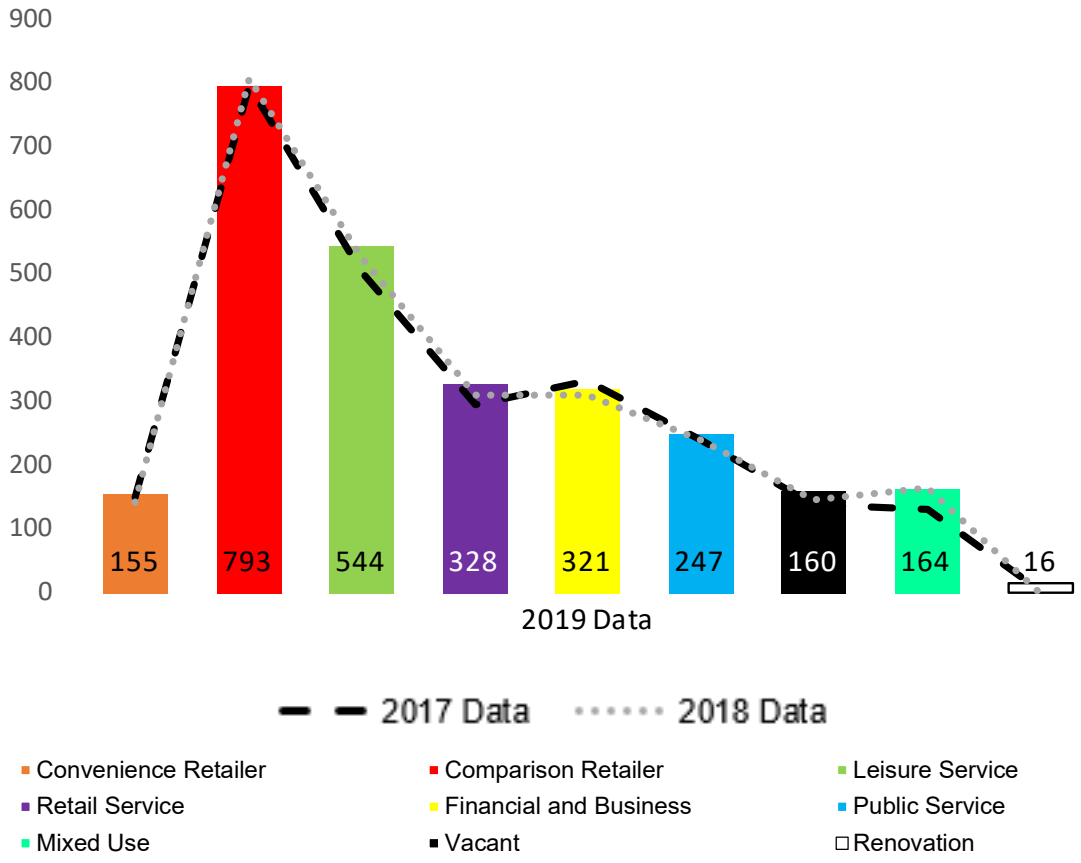


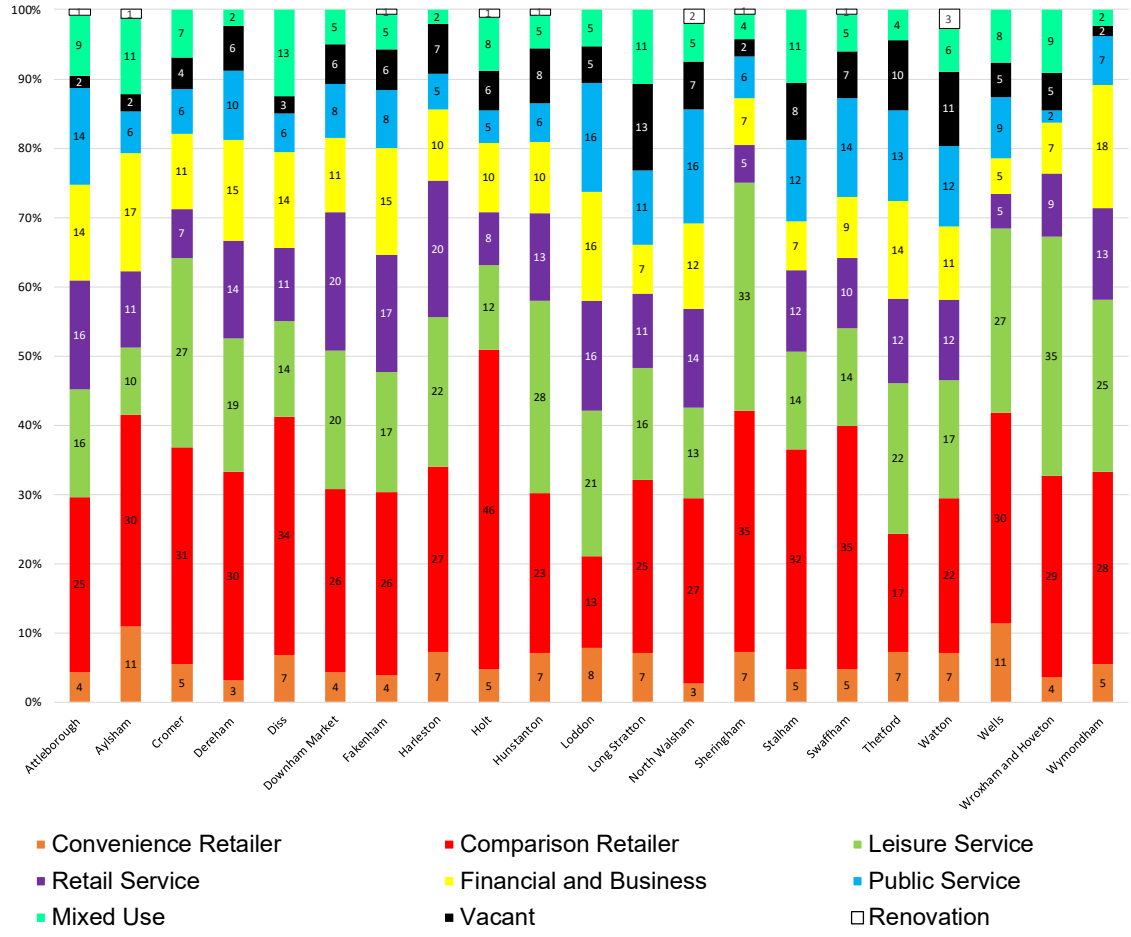
Figure 44 displays the trend, since 2017, in retail and business unit distribution across Norfolk.

Figure 44 shows that:

- All unit types other than comparison retailers and mixed used units were recorded to increase, since 2018.
- Comparison retail units have been the most dominant unit type in Norfolk market towns, but there has been a steady decline in comparison retailers across the market town with a reduction of 15 units since 2018.
- Convenience retailer units have been recorded as the lowest number of units in Norfolk, other than units under renovation.
- All unit types other than comparison retailers and mixed used units were recorded to increase, since 2018.
- The largest observed increase has been the increase of leisure services and retail services, which increased by 17 and 16 units respectively.

5.2 Unit Type Analysis

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



- Wells-next-the-Sea and Aylsham have the highest proportion of convenience retailers at 11%.
- Holt has the largest proportion of comparison retailers at 46%.
- Wroxham and Hoveton have the highest proportion of leisure services at 35%.
- Downham Market and Harleston have the largest proportion of retail services at 20%.
- The highest proportion of financial and business units is in Wymondham at 18%.
- North Walsham has the highest proportion of public service units at 16%.
- The highest proportion of vacant units are in Long Stratton at 13%.
- The highest proportion of mixed use units are found in Diss at 13%.
- Watton has the highest proportion of units under renovation at 3%.

See Appendix 1 for full details.

5.3 Unit Vacancy Analysis

*The Norfolk market town average vacancy rate is 5.9%, considerably less than the UK average of 10.2%**

• The percentage of vacant units across Norfolk have increased since 2018 from 5.4% to 5.9%, see figure 46 and 47.

• 38% of Norfolk market towns experienced a reduction in the number of vacant units since 2018, therefore, over 50% experienced an increase in vacant units.

• **57%** of market towns have vacancy rates less than the Norfolk average.

• **9** market towns have higher vacancy rates than the Norfolk average, a reduction since 2018.

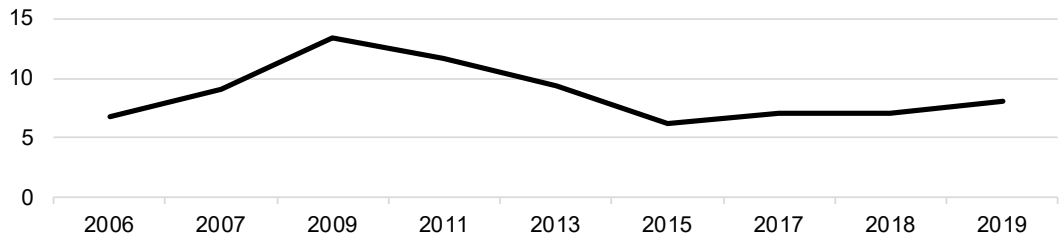
• The largest decrease in vacant units was found to jointly be in Diss and Downham Market which both experienced a decrease of 6 vacant units.

• The largest increase in vacant units has been observed in Thetford, as vacant units increased by **12** units since 2018, to a vacancy rate of 10.2%

• Long Stratton has the highest vacancy rate at **12.5%**.

• 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 7 vacant units in 2018, this increased to an average of 9 vacant units per market town in 2019, as displayed in figure 46.

Fig.46 Historical Average Number of Vacant Units

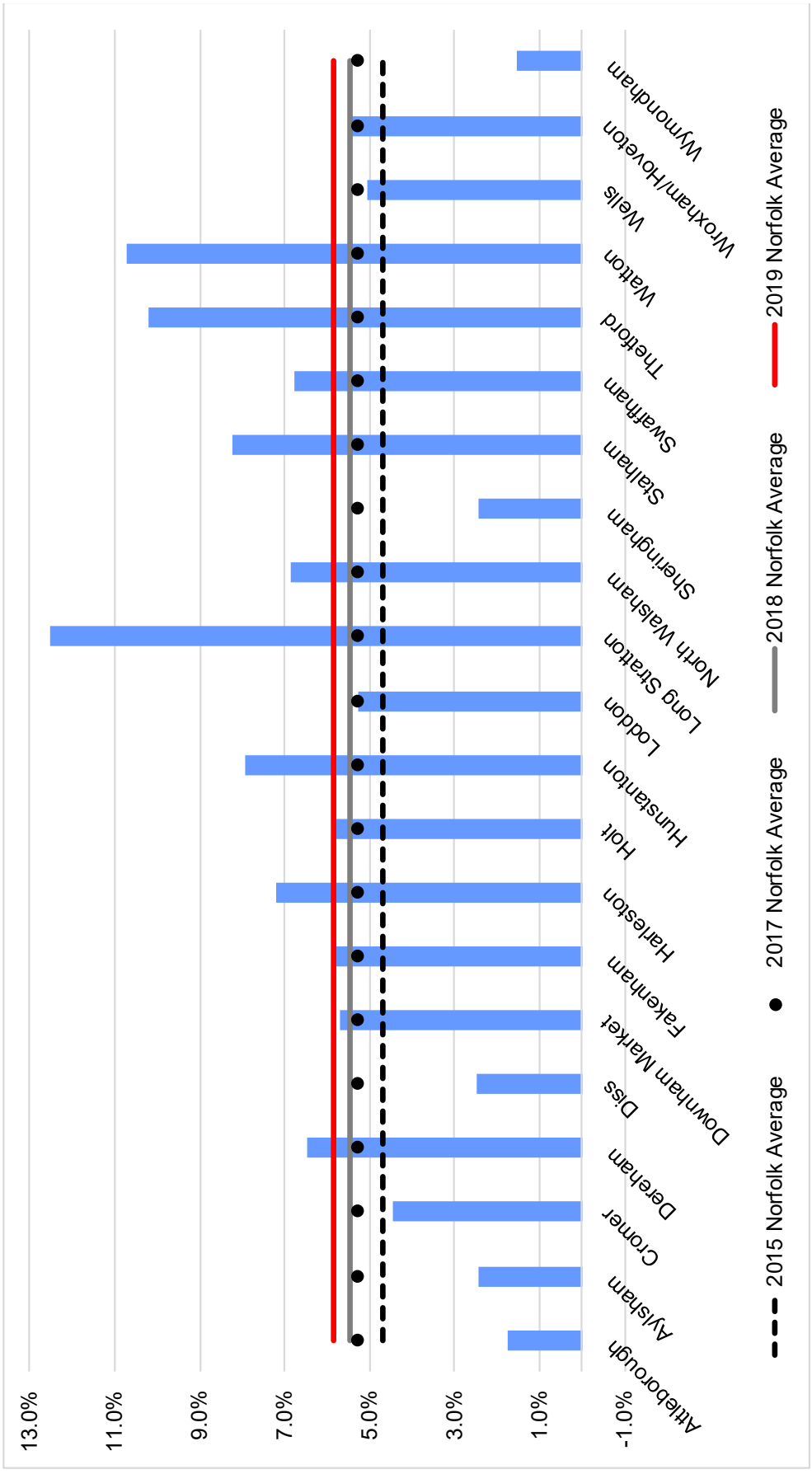


*Source: Fish, 2019

Icon made by Freepik from www.flaticon.com

5.4 Vacancy Rate Graph

Fig.47 Norfolk Vacancy Rate 2019 (%)



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

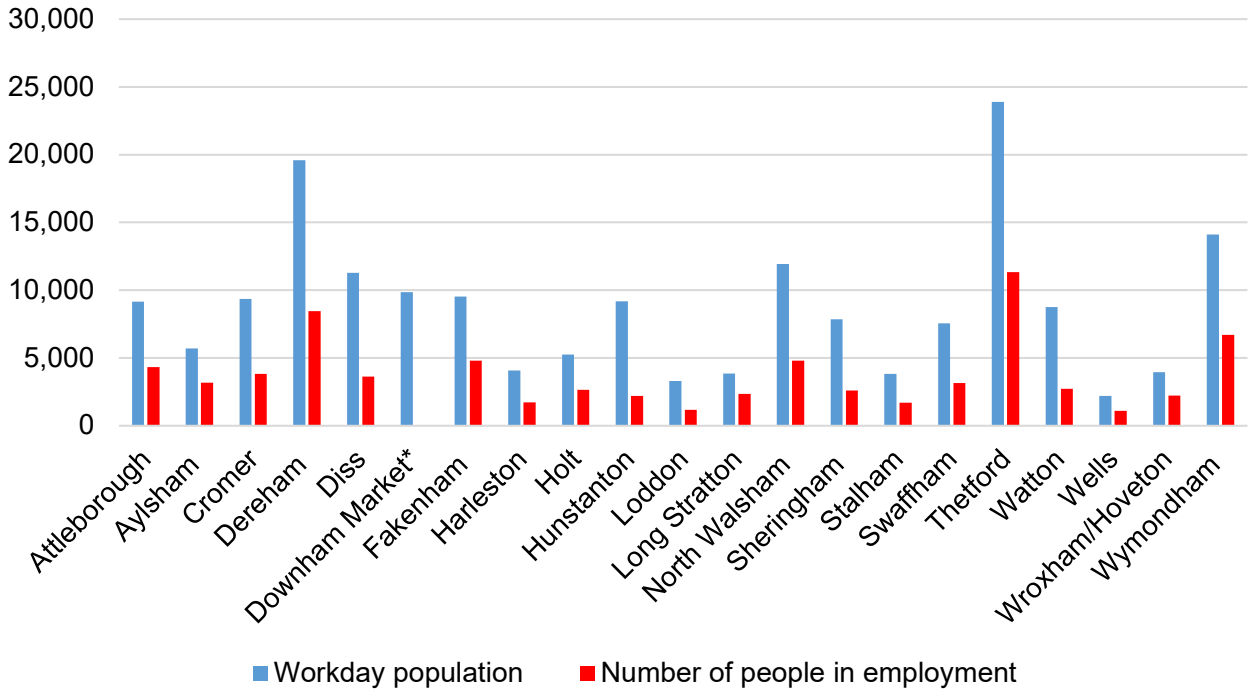
15% of dwelling are detached

3% dwellings are semi-detached and **9%** are terraced

Over **50%** of dwellings are flats

5.6 Jobs in Norfolk Market Towns

Fig.48 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 the proportion of units has been convenience retail units, as the 2019 survey recorded a 2% reduction in convenience retail units.
- Average vacancy rates in Norfolk have increased from 5.4% to 5.9%, but remains below the UK average.
- In 2018 10 market towns had above-average vacancy rates this has reduced in 2019 to 9 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.

Appendix 1 Raw Market Town Unit Data - 2019

	Convenience Retailers	Comparison Retailers	Leisure Services	Retail Services	Financial & Business Services	Local Public Services/ Facilities	Vacant Units	Mixed Use	Renovation	Total
Attleborough	5	29	18	18	16	16	2	10	1	115
Aylsham	9	25	8	9	14	5	2	9	1	82
Cromer	11	63	55	14	22	13	9	14	1	202
Dereham	8	79	50	37	38	26	17	6	1	262
Diss	11	55	22	17	22	9	4	20	0	160
Downham Market	6	37	28	28	15	11	8	7	0	140
Fakenham	6	41	27	26	24	13	9	8	1	155
Harleston	7	26	21	19	10	5	7	2	0	97
Holt	8	79	21	13	17	8	10	13	2	171
Hunstanton	9	29	35	16	13	7	10	6	1	126
Loddon	3	5	8	6	6	6	2	2	0	38
Long Stratton	4	14	9	6	4	6	7	6	0	56
North Walsham	4	39	19	21	18	24	10	8	3	146
Sheringham	12	57	54	9	11	10	4	6	1	164
Stalham	4	27	12	10	6	10	7	9	0	85
Swaffham	7	52	21	15	13	21	10	8	1	148
Thetford	15	35	45	25	29	27	21	9	0	206
Watton	8	25	19	13	12	13	12	7	3	112
Wells	9	24	21	4	4	7	4	6	0	79
Wroxham & Hoveton	2	16	19	5	4	1	3	5	0	55
Wymondham	7	36	32	17	23	9	2	3	0	129
Total	155	793	544	328	321	247	160	164	16	2728
Average	8	38	26	16	15	12	8	8	1	254

What we do
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.

For further details visit www.norfolk.gov.uk

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