

Market Drayton: Town Centre Audit Analysis, 2025



Introduction

An audit of businesses operating in Market Drayton's main shopping streets was undertaken in September 2025 as part of a longitudinal research study reviewing the vibrancy of Shropshire's main market towns and key settlements. Market Drayton centre was first audited in May 2019 and then again in September every year between 2020 and 2025. The objective of these audits is to provide a snapshot of the vitality of the town by investigating:

- The range and diversity of the retail offer
- The number and types of non-retail businesses operating
- The number and location of vacant properties
- The level of business churn—how many businesses are closing and opening each year
- Distinctive characteristics within the town, for example a strong tourism offer or a high penetration of “low end” traders
- The amount, location and type of domestic residences in the centre of the town

The research also aims to monitor change over time. The functionality of the High Street has been changing for some time, with internet shopping a key factor that has impacted. In September 2025, 27.2% of all retail sales were attributable to on-line purchases. Through 2020 and 2021 the coronavirus pandemic posed additional challenges to High Street businesses. The 2020 audits for all towns took place in September, following the first national lockdown. Non-essential retail and hospitality businesses were able to trade at this time (albeit with strict social distancing measures in place). The 2021 audits also took place when High Street businesses were able to trade. By 2022 High Streets were trading normally with no Covid-19 restrictions, but the cost of living crisis was gathering pace. Inflation was elevated in 2023, which also impacted people's spending power. Inflation has since fallen significantly, albeit still above the Bank of England target, but interest rates are comparatively high and economic confidence remains low.

Key Findings

- 130 commercial units, occupying 16,800m² gross floor space.
- 5th largest centre in Shropshire behind Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Bridgnorth and Ludlow, accounting for 5.2% of all Shropshire High Street traders.
- Low number of stores per head of population at a rate of 10.1 units per 1,000 population (13 on average for Shropshire).
- Average store size 129m² which is slightly smaller than the average across Shropshire (147m²).
- 141 residential premises in the main shopping area, giving a ratio of almost 1:1 commercial versus residential properties.
- Market Drayton town centre is subject to a considerable level of churn. The rate stood at 19% in 2025, up slightly from 17% in 2024. It remains amongst the highest in Shropshire, and higher than the Shropshire average (13%). Since 2019, there has been more change in Market Drayton than in any other Shropshire town.
- 17% of all commercial premises were vacant in 2025, which is higher than the Shropshire average (11%) and national average.
- The number of vacant units has doubled since 2019.
- The highest proportion of commercial units is attributable to retail services which accounted for 30% of units in 2025. Only Albrighton and Shifnal support a higher representation of retail services.
- Comparison is the second largest sector, but the offer has declined over the last two or three years (as it has in many places) and the sector is under-represented, accounting for 16% of units (27% on average for Shropshire).
- The number of restaurants/takeaways has also declined over the last year, and this sector also accounts for a lower share of commercial units than the Shropshire average (12% compared to 14%).
- Financial and business service providers are well-represented in Market Drayton, and the town still benefits from banking services. Accounting for 11% of all businesses, this sector is proportionally larger in Market Drayton than in all other towns except Craven Arms and Shifnal.

Methodology Statement

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

Both retail and non-retail businesses will be operating in other parts of the town. In Market Drayton a main employment hub, Tern Valley Business Park, is outside the scope of this audit.

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

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

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

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

Premises are assumed to have changed hands if their name or function has changed since the 2024 audit. In some cases though, ownership may be unchanged but the business has been rebranded or renamed.

An estimate of the number of domestic residences in the main retail centre has been made using OS LPI using all residential classification codes.

Retail Centre Hierarchy

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

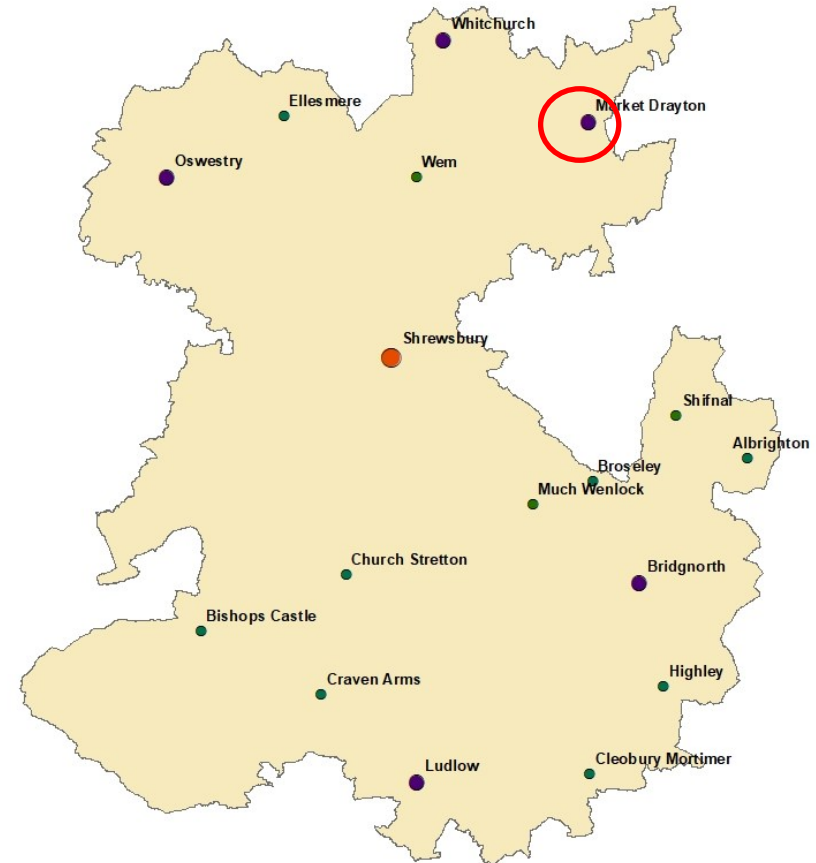
However, not all centres have comparable functions. Larger centres tend to attract workers and shoppers from much further afield than smaller centres, and consequently offer a much greater volume and variety of retail trade and consumer and business services.

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

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

Market Drayton town centre is a comparable size to Whitchurch, but somewhat smaller than other three tier two Shropshire towns.

Map 1: Shropshire's Main Retail Centres



About Market Drayton

Market Drayton is located in the north east of Shropshire close to the borders with Cheshire and Staffordshire. It has been inhabited since Saxon times, and today has a population of 12,800 (ONS Mid-year population estimates 2024) and 5,465 households (*2021 Census*). The town's population has grown by 0.8% since 2021. It is the third largest market town in the county, with its population now just slightly exceeding the population of Bridgnorth, Shifnal and Ludlow.

The town has Cheshire to the north, Stoke and Staffordshire to the east, Shrewsbury to the south and Oswestry to the west. It is accessible via the A53 which stretches between Shrewsbury (21 miles from Market Drayton) and Stoke (16 miles from Market Drayton). The A41 is 4 miles from Market Drayton centre and provides access northwards to Whitchurch (8 miles) and Chester (29 miles) whilst south towards the M54 (20 miles) and Wolverhampton (30 miles). The total population within a 10 mile radius is 73,800.

Market Drayton is not on the mainline rail network. It is, however, adjacent to the Shropshire Union Canal.

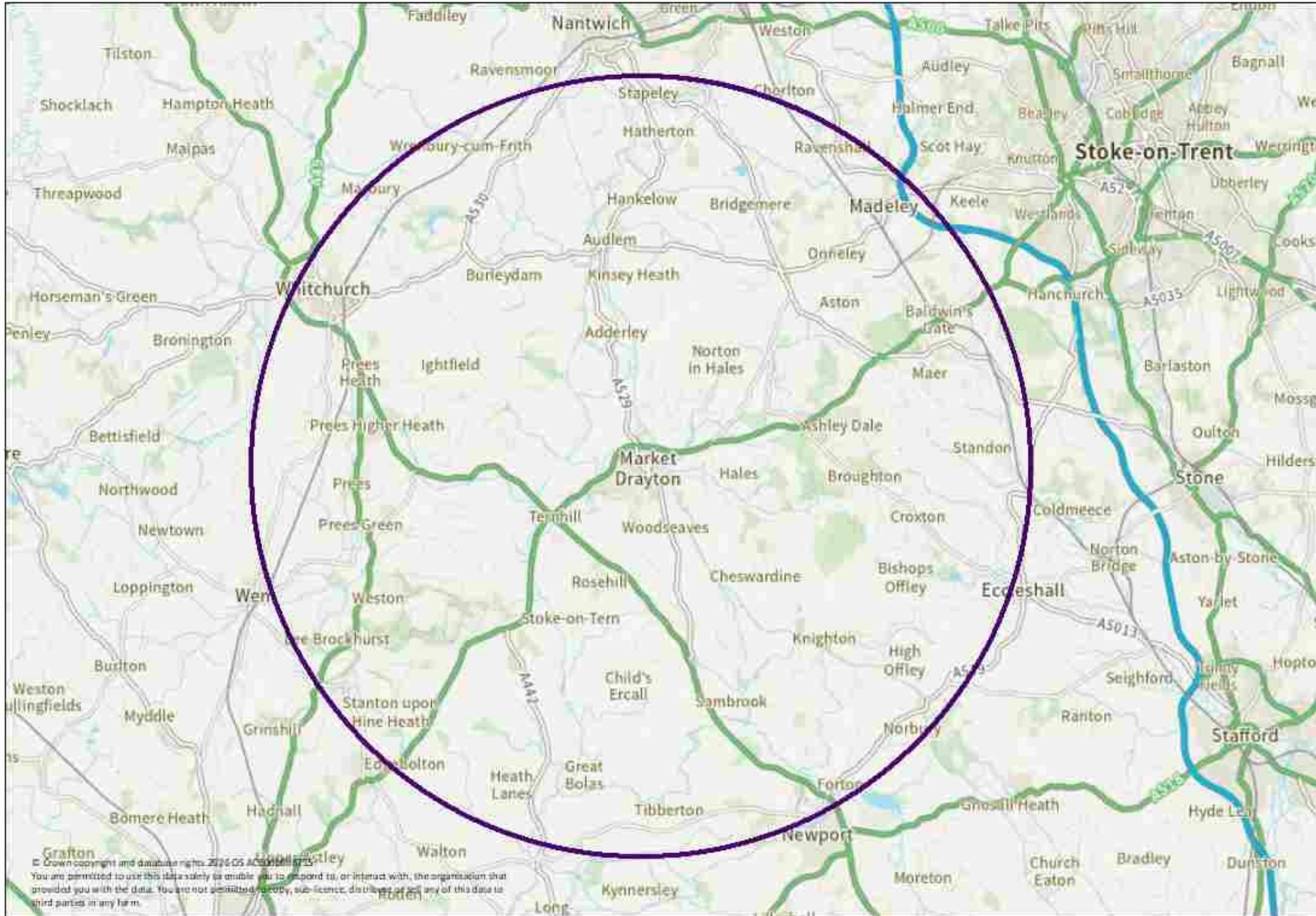
Market Drayton is an important employment hub (the third largest in Shropshire behind Shrewsbury and Oswestry), providing approximately 5,500 jobs across the town council area (*ONS Business Register and Employment Survey, 2024*). Key sectors include:

- Professional, Scientific & Technical (23.9% of jobs)
- Manufacturing (14.5% of jobs)
- Retail (8.7% of jobs)
- Transport & Storage (8.6% of jobs)
- Business Administration (8.5% of jobs)

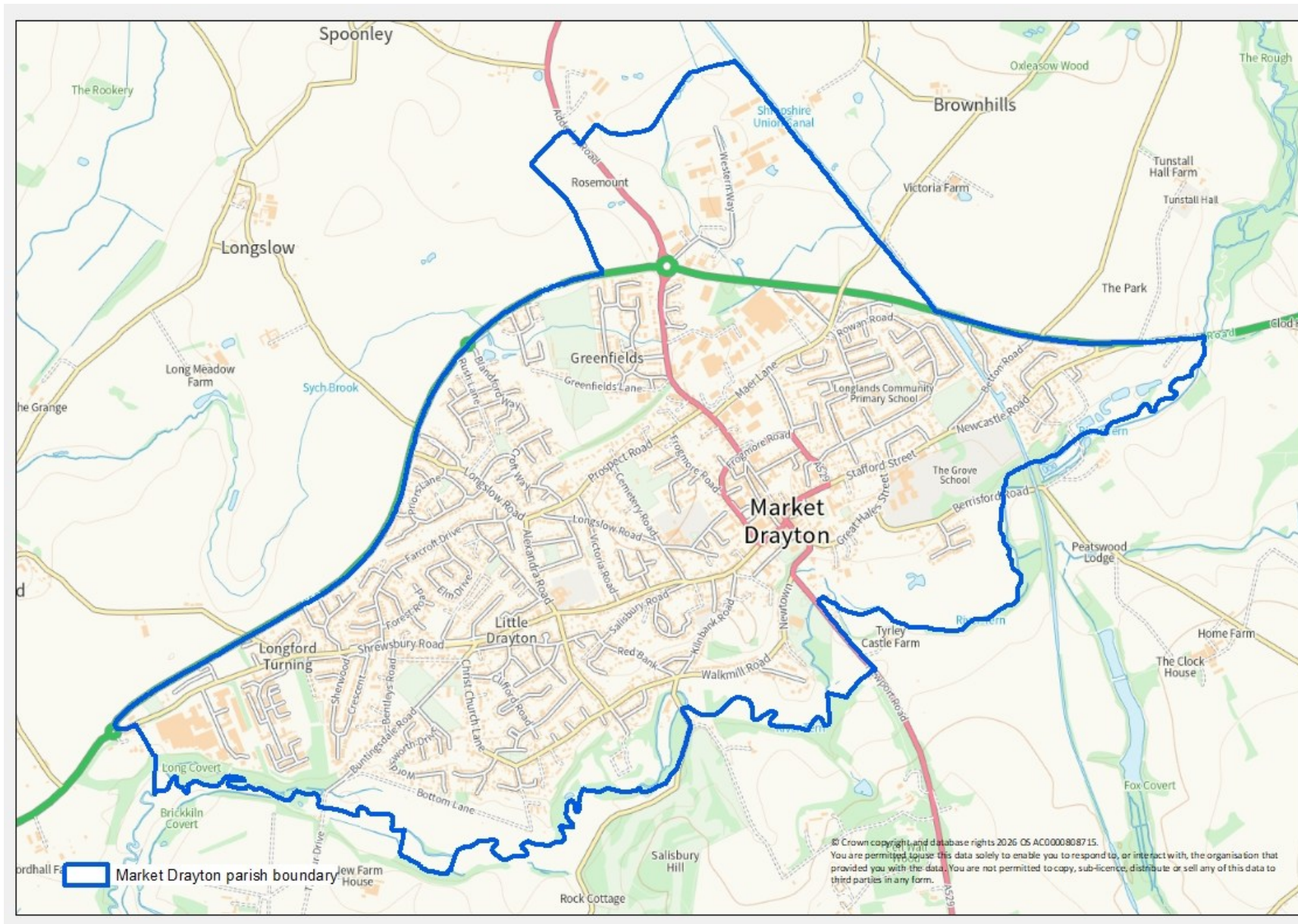
Overall, Market Drayton town council area (depicted on Map 3) covers an area of 461 hectares. The main shopping area (depicted on Map 4) is much smaller than this, at around 3 hectares.

The town comprises predominantly independent retail, although the centre is large enough to have attracted a number of chains, particularly in the comparison retail and financial and professional service sectors. The main outdoor market dates back some 750 years and is held every Wednesday in Cheshire Street from 9.00am until 3.00pm. The indoor market operates on a Wednesday and Saturday.

Map 2: Location of Market Drayton showing 10 mile radius



Map 3: Market Drayton Town Council Area

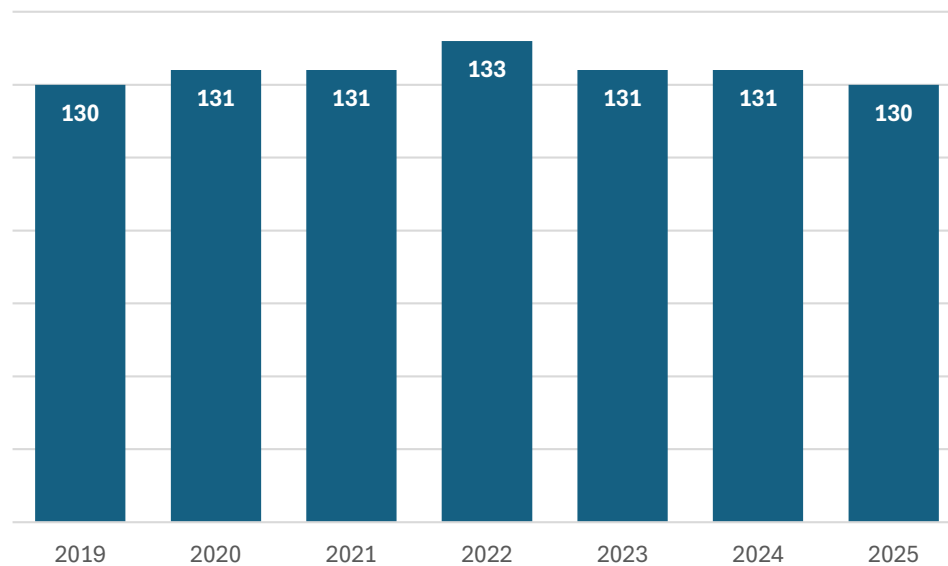


Key Audit Results

There are a total of 130 commercial premises within the Market Drayton survey area. These are primarily in Cheshire Street (53 business premises), High Street (27 business premises), Shropshire Street (19 business premises), and Queen Street (28 business premises including those in Wilkinson's Walk). A small number of units are located in Frogmore Street. Gross floor space allocated to these businesses is almost 16,800m² (41% in Cheshire Street, 20% in High Street, 16% in Queen Street). The average store size is 129m² with units ranging in size from 21m² to 1,230m². Compared with the other tier two retail centres in Shropshire, the average store size is around average. Although there are fewer operators in Frogmore Street than in the other main shopping streets, there are some atypically large units in this area, which together account for 13% of gross floor space.

In terms of the number of units operating, Market Drayton is notably smaller than Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Ludlow and Bridgnorth and is about the same size as Whitchurch. In terms of gross floor space, Market Drayton is marginally larger than Whitchurch.

Chart 1: Number of Commercial Premises in Market Drayton, 2019-2025



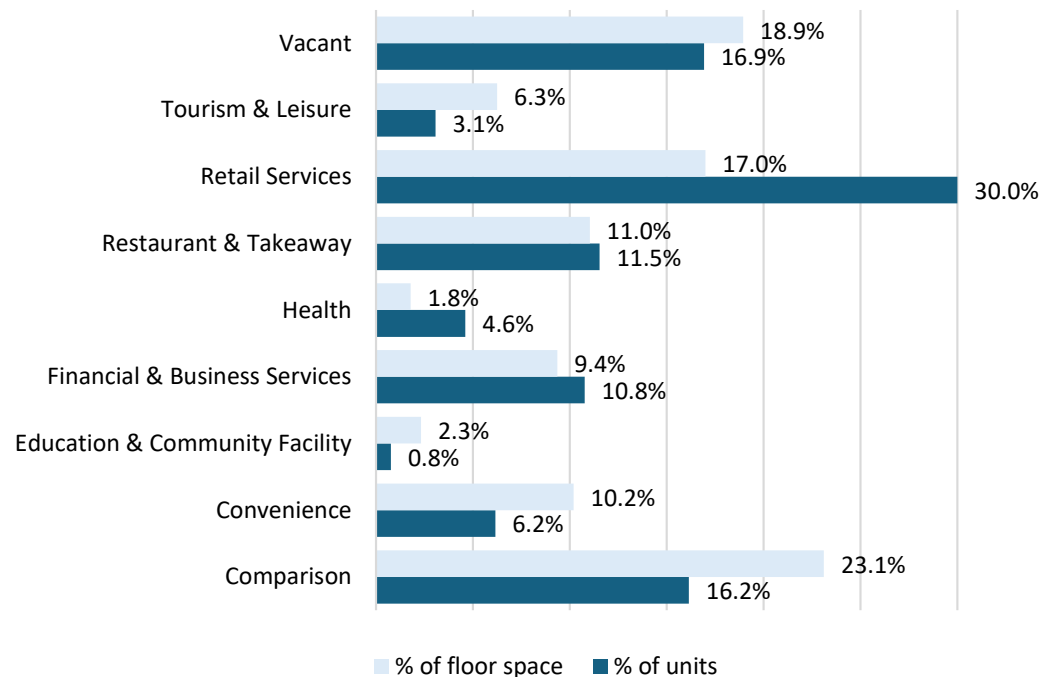
The number of commercial premises in Market Drayton has fluctuated slightly since 2019, at between 130 and 133 units. This small level of change disguises a greater level of reconfiguration within the town, with some premises being repurposed from commercial to residential and other commercial units opening. In 2022, the net increase was two units. This gain was offset in 2023 with the loss of two units (one on the High Street and one on Shropshire Street) which are no longer classified as commercial. There was no further change in the number of commercial units until 2025, when two further vacant premises were reclassified as non-commercial and an additional outlet began trading from first floor premises above a different business.

There are 21 comparison retailers in Market Drayton town centre, which cover a combined gross floor space of almost 3,900m². This is the equivalent of 16.2% of units and 23.1% of floor space. The proportion of units attributable to comparison stores is low compared to the other comparable market towns in Shropshire. Commercial space allocated to comparison has increased over the last year with the opening of a discounter in the former Wilko premise.

Retail service businesses are also very well represented in Market Drayton especially in unit terms, with 39 stores operating, which is approaching a third of the total (30.0%). These units tend to be smaller than average, and hence account for just 17.0% of gross floor space. Market Drayton supports a higher proportion of retail service units than anywhere else except Shifnal and Albrighton. There are 15 restaurants and takeaways in the town centre, which is the equivalent of 11.5% of units and 11.0% of floor space. These proportions are broadly similar in Bridgnorth and Ludlow. 10.8% of units and 9.4% of floor space is attributable to financial institutions and professional and business services providers. This proportion is higher than in other Shropshire towns except Craven Arms and Shifnal. A small proportion of outlets in Market Drayton are attributable to the convenience retail, education & community facilities, health and tourism & leisure categories.

16.9% of units across the town centre are vacant, which is the equivalent of 18.9% of gross commercial floor space.

Chart 2: Breakdown of Commercial Premises by Classification, 2025



Change since 2024

There has been relatively little change in the mix of businesses operating in Market Drayton between September 2024 and 2025. The most significant change has been in comparison retail, with the offer reducing by three units. In addition, there were two fewer financial and business service providers and one fewer operator in convenience retail, restaurants & takeaways and in tourism & leisure. In contrast, the retail services offer was boosted by the opening of two businesses and an additional operator was identified in the health sector.

In comparison with 2024, there are four additional vacant unit in the town.

Chart 3: Change in Number of Units by Category, 2024/2025

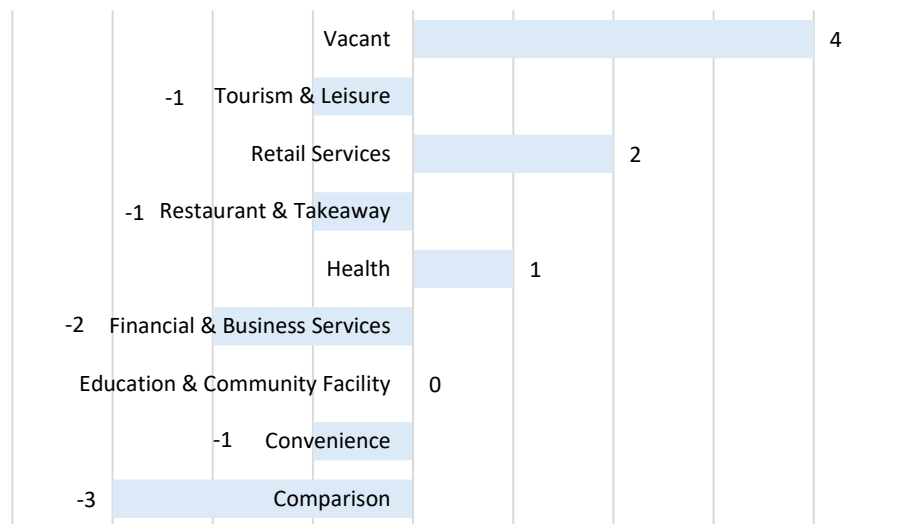
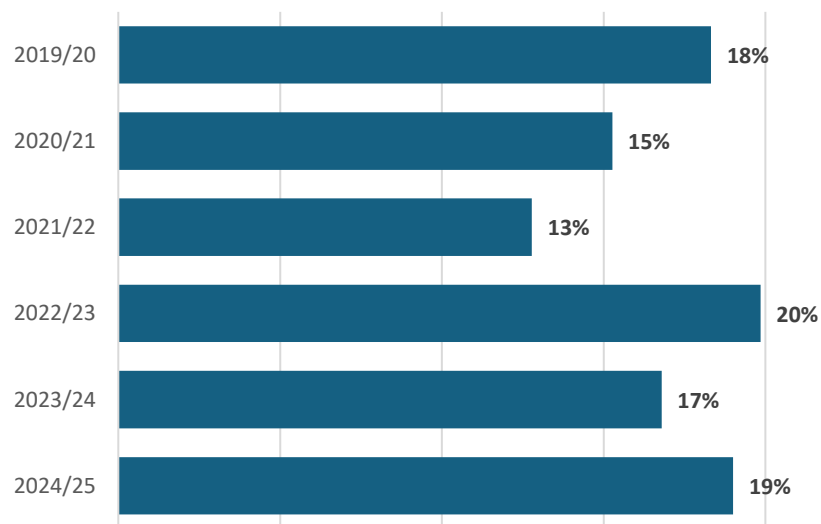


Chart 4: Levels of Business Churn 2019-2025

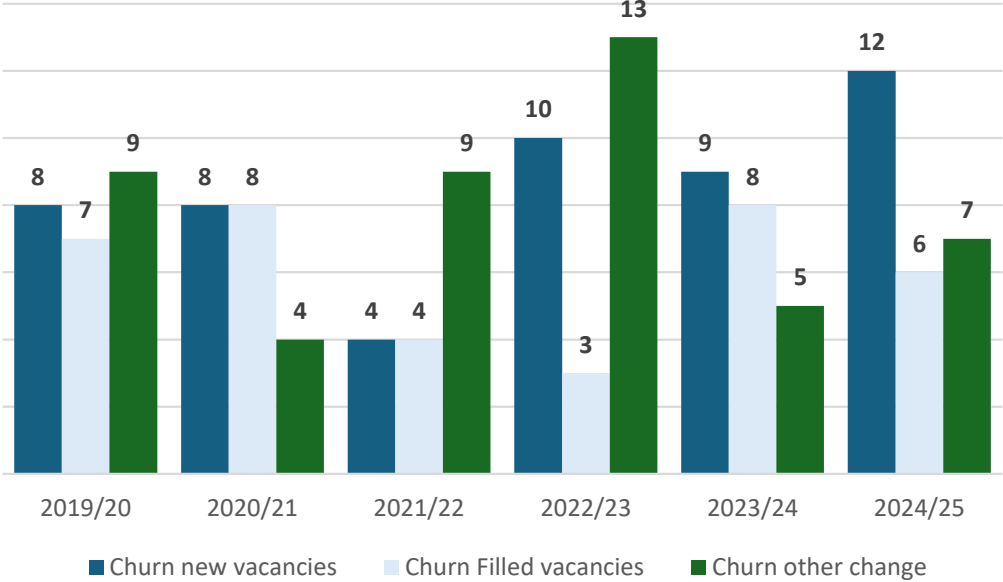


Despite relatively little change in the composition of the business mix in Market Drayton town centre, there has been a notable amount of churn over the last six years.

This town experienced 18% churn in 2020 (15% in Shropshire), 15% in 2021 (11% in Shropshire), 13% in 2022 (13% in Shropshire), 20% in 2023 (12% in Shropshire), 17% in 2024 (15% in Shropshire) and 19% in 2025 (13% in Shropshire)

This level of churn is higher than in any other Shropshire town.

Chart 5: Breakdown of Business Churn 2019-2025

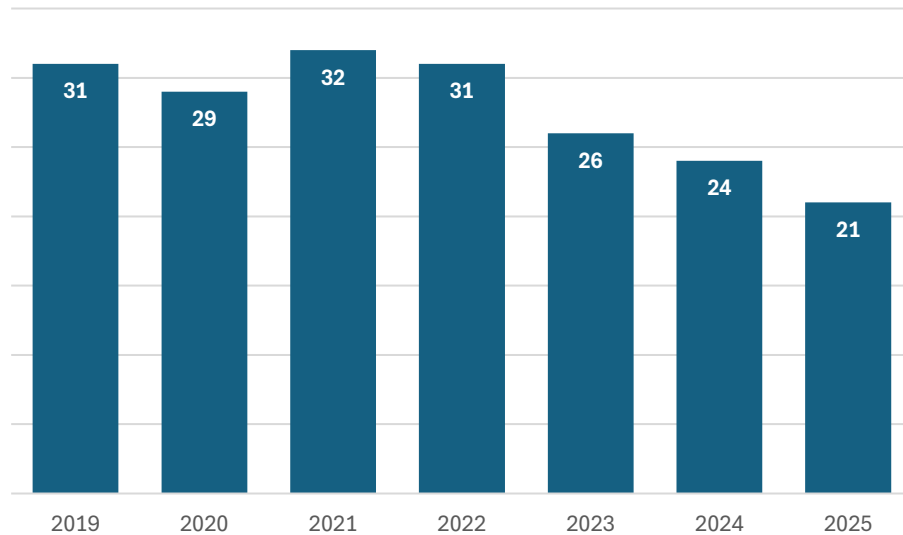


Over the last year, 48% of churn was attributable to new vacancies arising and 24% to old vacancies becoming occupied. Other change therefore represented just over a quarter (28%) of all churn. In 2022 and 2023, at least half of all churn was attributable to other change. Over the last six years, 51 premises in Market Drayton have become vacant compared with just 36 premises which were vacant becoming occupied.

Comparison Retail

The second largest proportion of the Market Drayton commercial offer is dedicated to the comparison retail category, which accounts for 16% of units and 23% of floor space. There were 21 comparison retailers in 2025, which represents a reduction of three over the preceding year and which also reflects a loss of 11 stores since 2021 (a drop of 34%). The loss of two stores between the 2023 and 2024 audit had a notable impact of the amount of comparison commercial space as both closures (Argos and Wilko) were of above average size. Overall the amount of space designated to comparison retail fell by 48% between 2023 and 2024. However, in 2025 the former Wilko site became occupied which has boosted comparison floor space in the town.

Chart 6: Number of Comparison Retail Units, 2019-2025



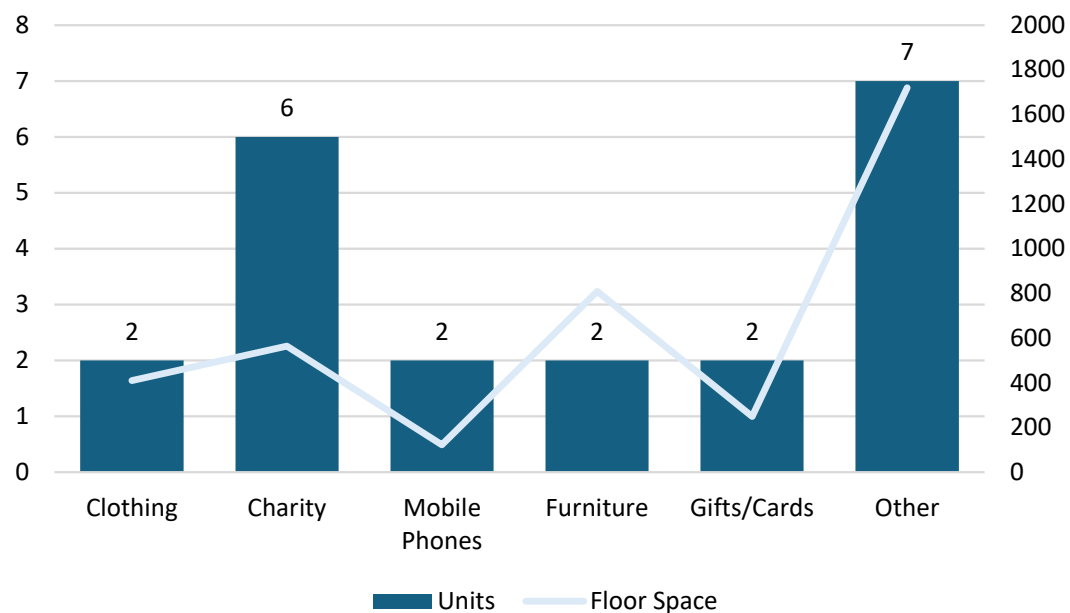
The decline in the comparison retail sector is reflective of the national situation, with on-line retail having been a major competition to the high street in the comparison sector in recent years and especially since the Covid-19 pandemic.

Within the town there are two clothes shops, both of which are independent. One clothes shop closed in 2025, which followed the closure of two stores between 2023 and 2024 (including the branch of Peacocks), but another opened in a previously vacant premise. Two clothing stores also closed between the 2022 and 2023 audits. This includes one dress agency. The other clothes store relocated to Tern Valley Business Park. This means that the number of clothes shops in Market Drayton has more than halved over the past three years.

There are six charity shops in the town, which is an decrease of one since 2024. Three of the charity stores are national —Oxfam, Sue Ryder and Barnados. The branch of Cancer Research closed in 2025. Three local based charity shops are represented (Severn Hospice, Salopian Care and AE Donate).

There are two mobile phone stores, two furniture stores and two gift shops. There is one pharmacist, a stationers/book store, a florist, an antiques store, a haberdashery and a discounters. The latter was newly opened in 2025 in the premises of the old Wilko store. One of the furniture stores is also new. As well as the clothes shop and charity store, Market Drayton also lost a florist, a gift shop and a haberdashery between the 2024 and 2025 audits.

Chart 7: Breakdown of Comparison Retail by Type, 2025

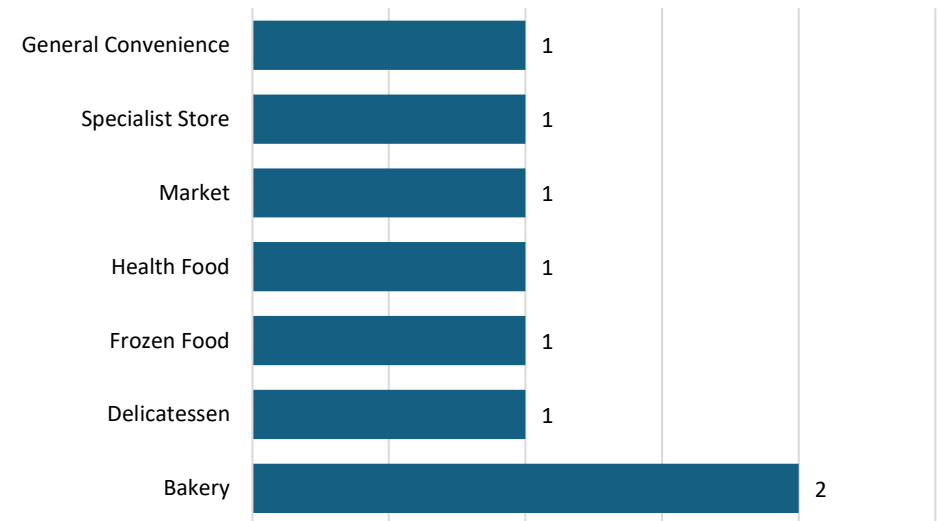


Although most traders are independent, Market Drayton hosts the following multiples: Card Factory, Boots.

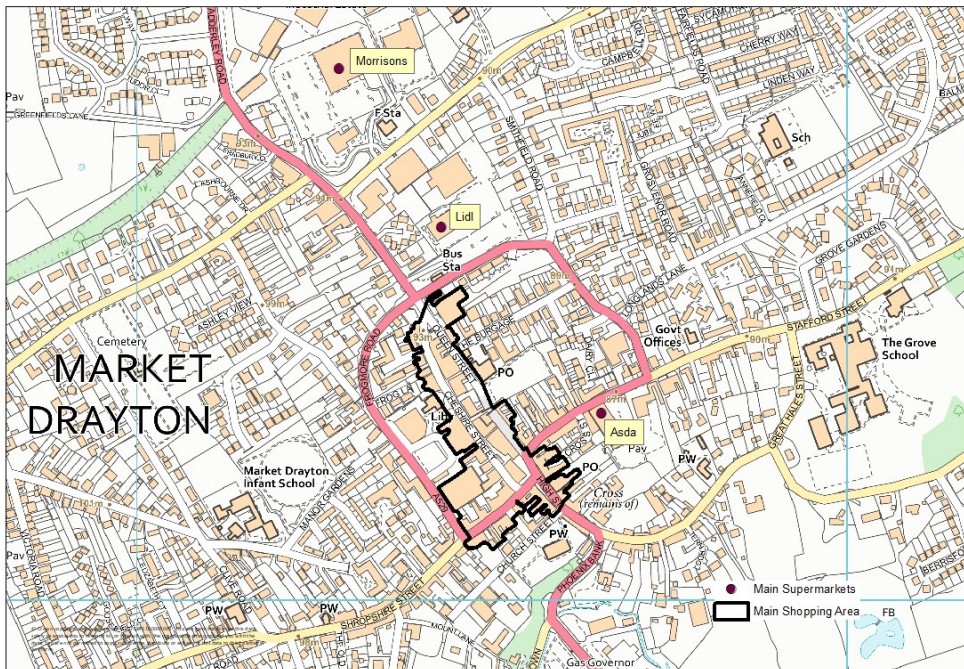
Convenience Retail

There are eight convenience stores within the main shopping area of Market Drayton, which reflects net reduction of one since 2021. Convenience retail accounts for 6% of all units and 10% of gross floor space. In the town there are two bakeries (one new in 2022), a delicatessen, a frozen food store, a health food shop, a market and a general convenience store. The latter opened in 2025, replacing a different general convenience store elsewhere in the town centre that closed in 2025. There is also a specialist food store selling Polish goods. A confectionery store closed between the 2024 and 2025 audits.

Chart 8: Breakdown of Convenience Retail by Type, 2025



Map 5: Location of Market Drayton's Main Convenience Stores



Operators in this sector are mainly independent, although there is an Iceland food store and a Greggs bakery. The new general convenience store is a Morrisons Daily.

It should be noted that the town's main supermarkets – Morrisons, Asda and Lidl – are all located a short distance from the main town centre shopping streets, as shown on the adjacent map.

Despite the presence of Iceland within the main shopping centre boundary, this means that compared with other towns, a relatively small proportion of units and floor space is allocated to the convenience sector.

There is no butcher in the town centre, and also no specialist greengrocer. The market, however, widens choice in the town.

Restaurants & Takeaways

12% of units in Market Drayton are attributable to restaurants and takeaways, with this category accounting for a slightly lower proportion of gross floor space (11%). The number of operators in this classification rose from 17 to 20 between 2019 and 2021, but declined by one in 2022, by three in 2024 and by a further one in 2025. This means that the offer has declined by five since 2021 (-25%) to 15.

The 15 units are split between cafés (27%), restaurants (40%) and takeaways (33%). Takeaways account for a lower share of floor space (23%) while restaurants have a disproportionately high share of floor space (47%).

Chart 10: Breakdown of Restaurant/Takeaway Units by Type, 2025

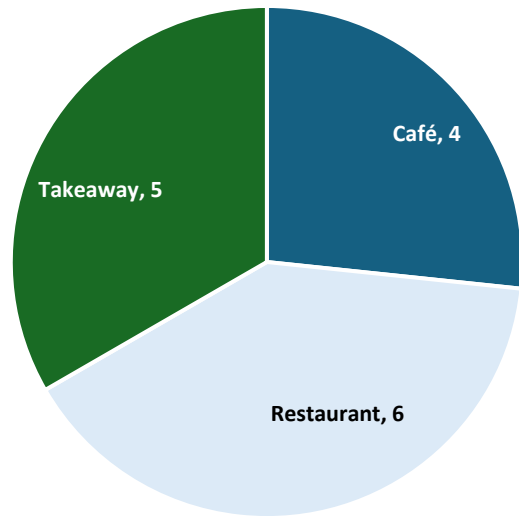
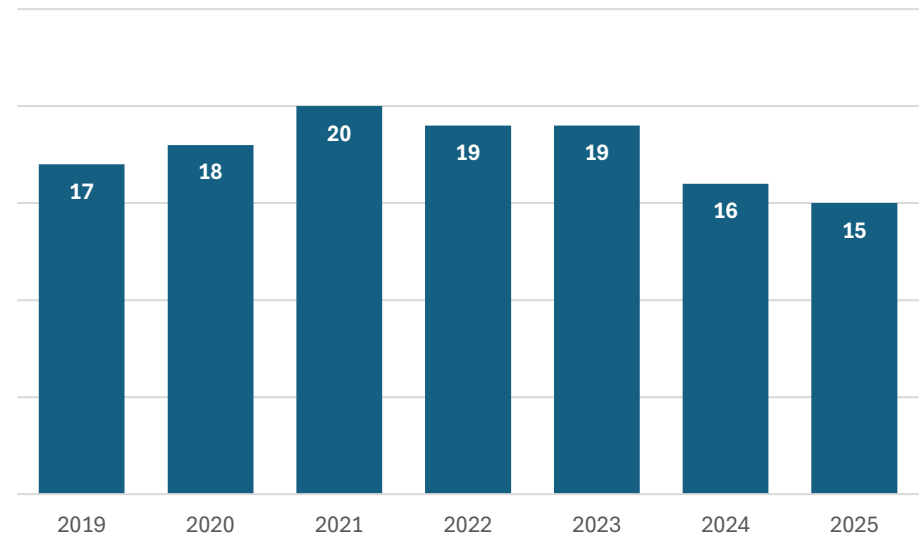


Chart 9: Number of Restaurant/Takeaway Units, 2019-2025



The number of takeaways in Market Drayton fell by two in 2025, while a new restaurant opened. There was no change in the number of cafes.

The range of cuisines on offer by Market Drayton restaurants includes Thai, Chinese, Indian and modern British. In terms of takeaways, there is a fish and chip shop, Chinese takeaway and two kebab outlets.

There are two chains in the restaurant and takeaway category in Market Drayton—Domino's Pizza and Costa Coffee.

Tourism & Leisure

Also within the hospitality sector, there are three public houses. These take up approximately 1,000m² gross floor space, the equivalent of 6% of all floor space in the town. One bar/public house closed between the 2024 and 2025 audits, although the closure is thought to be temporary for refurbishment. A personal trainer has opened premises in the town, occupying a previously vacant property. There is an absence of guest accommodation (B&Bs or hotel bed spaces) within the town centre, although one of the main restaurants has guest rooms.

Festival Drayton Centre is just outside the main shopping area boundary.

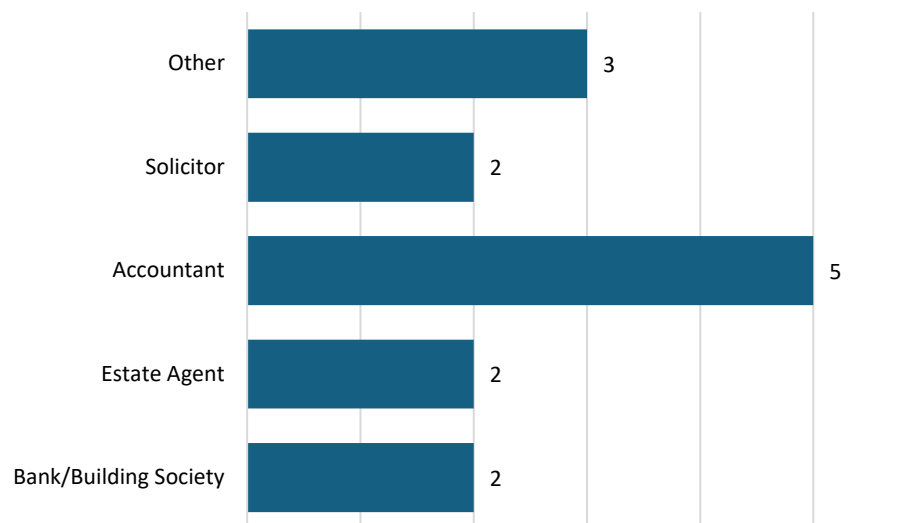
Finance & Business Services

There are 14 commercial operators in the finance and business services arena in Market Drayton town centre, accounting for approximately 1,600m² of gross floor space. The number declined by two between 2024 and 2025, with the closure of Lloyds Bank and a insurance broker.

Included within this classification are the one remaining bank (Nat West) plus one building society (Leek). There are five accountants, two estate agents and two solicitors. One of the estate agents is new since the 2021 audit.

There is also a stonemason and a surveyor in the town.

Chart 11: Number of Finance and Business Services Providers by Type, 2025



Retail Services

There are 39 retail service businesses operating in Market Drayton town centre, with these accounting for almost 2,900m² of gross floor space. This represents a gain of two stores compared with 2024. Overall, the offer has risen by eight units since 2019 (+26%), with fluctuations in the intervening years.

The retail services sector accounts for the highest percentage of commercial units in the town (30%) but for a smaller share of commercial floor space (17%).

Although the range of services provided is wide, a very high number of operators are in the barber and hair salon classification, with these together representing 56% of units and 49% of floor space. There five barbers and 17 unisex hair salons and beauty parlours in the town centre. The offer has risen by four stores since 2023.

Chart 13: Breakdown of Retail Services by Type, 2025

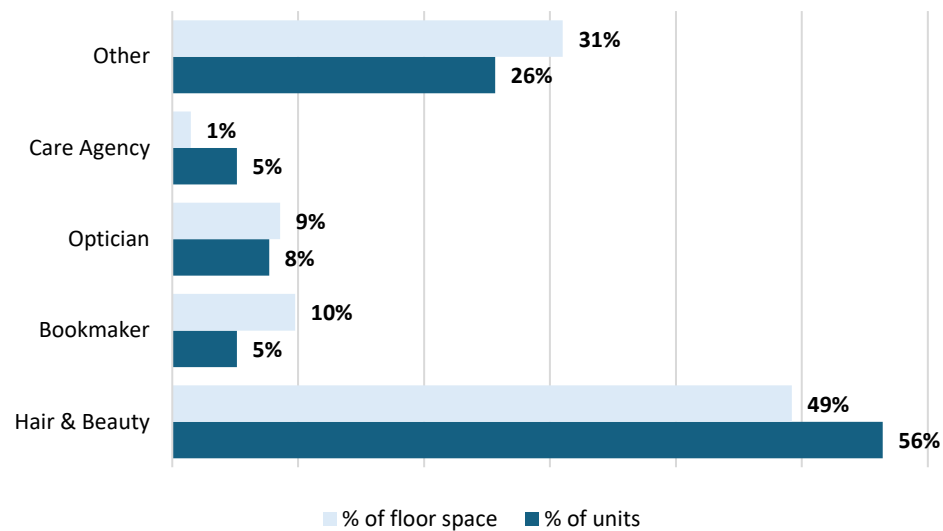
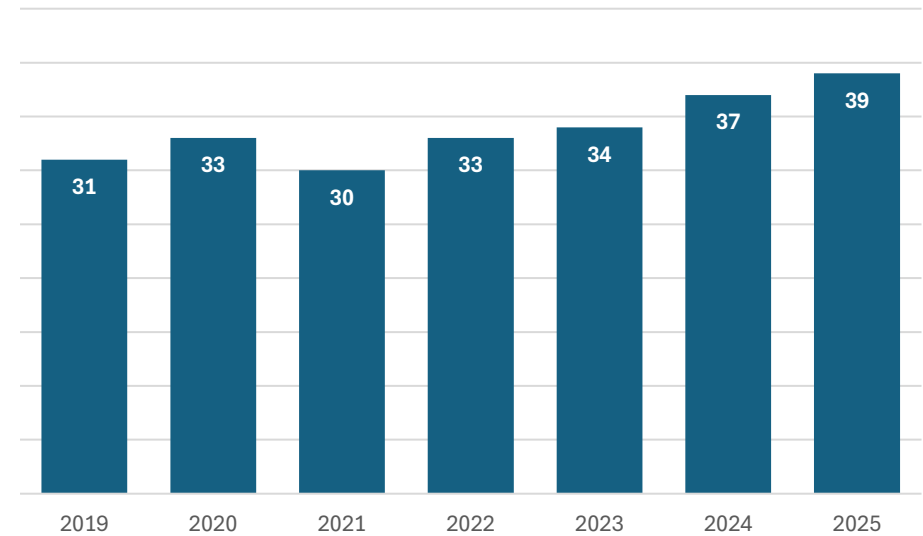


Chart 12: Number of Retail Service Providers, 2019-2025



In addition, there are three opticians, two bookmakers and two care agencies.

Amongst other services provided in the town (by one operator only) are post office, cleaning agency, house clearance, tattoo artist, computer repairs and a funeral director. The post office moved locations in 2023. A new dog grooming business opened in 2024. A shoe repair business closed in 2025.

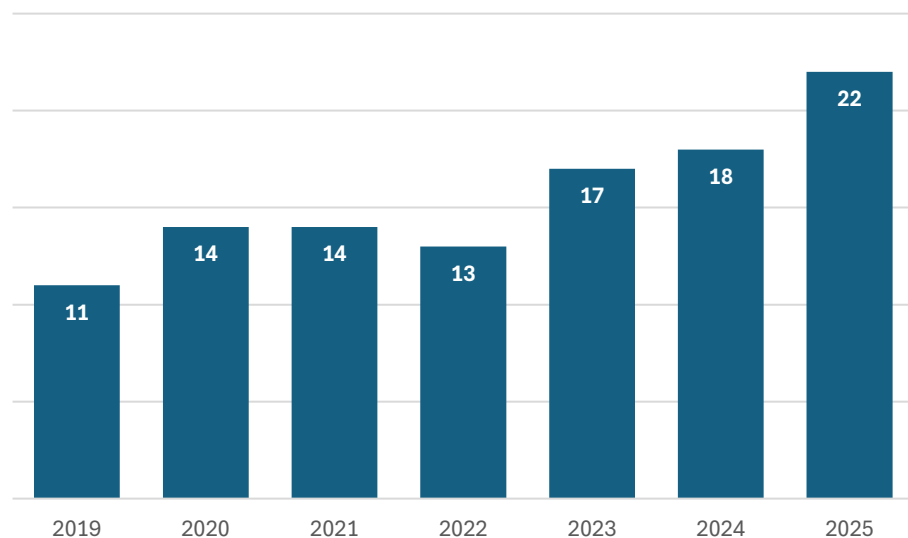
Health

There are six health care practitioners within the main retail centre of Market Drayton. There is a foot care business, an osteopath and a health and well-being practitioner and a yoga studio. In addition a health clinic opened in 2025.

Vacant Units

17% of Market Drayton town centre outlets are vacant (19% of gross floor space). This is above average compared with Shropshire as a whole (11% vacancy rate) and is also higher than the vacancy rate nationally which stood at 13.5% in the third quarter of 2025 according to BRC (data relating to high streets only). The number of vacant units rose by four to 22 in 2025. Four of these vacancies are on Cheshire Street, five on the High Street, seven on Queen's Street (including two on Wilkinson's Walk) and five on Shropshire Street. There is also one on Frogmore Road—the premises formerly occupied by Argos. The premises which was occupied by Wilko until 2023/24 has now been filled by an alternative discounter.

Chart 14: Number of Vacant Premises, 2019-2025

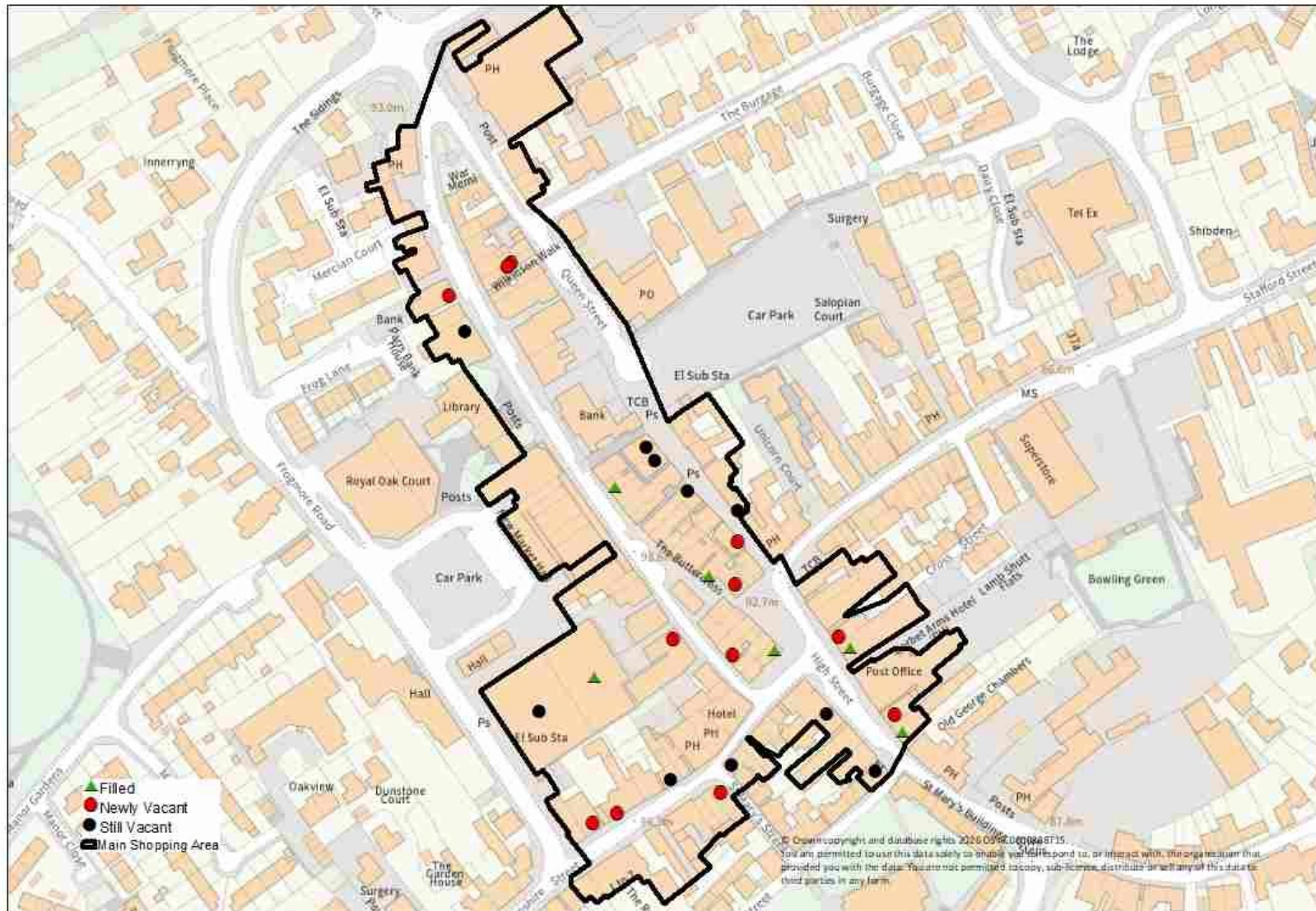


The number of vacant premises in Market Drayton has risen from 11 in 2019.

12 of the 22 vacant premises in 2025 had become unoccupied since the 2024 audit (55% of the total). The town has relatively few long-standing vacancies, with one unit empty since at least 2019 and another since 2020. Six have been vacant since 2023 (27% of all current vacancies).

Of the 18 vacant premises in 2024, ten were still vacant in 2025 and six had become occupied. A further two vacant premises were reclassified as residential rather than commercial. There were 12 new vacant premises in 2025.

Map 7: Change in Location of Vacant Commercial Premises, 2024—2025



Residential Premises

Although the town centre contains concentrations of commercial enterprises, there is also a significant amount of residential property within the main shopping centre. In total, 141 residential premises are located in the audit area, of which the vast majority are flats (129 or 92%) which are largely located above retail or other commercial outlets. There are nine terraced houses in the area, two semi-detached houses plus just one detached house. Most residential premises are on Frogmore Road (23%), Shropshire Street (30%), High Street (18%), Cheshire Street (14%) and Queen Street (9%). The amount of residential stock in the town centre increased by six in 2025 (all flats). This was the first change since 2021.

Map 10: Location of Residential Premises in Market Drayton Town Centre

Chart 15: Breakdown of Residential Properties by Type

