

# Shifnal: Town Centre Audit Analysis, 2025



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## Introduction

An audit of businesses operating in Shifnal'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. Shifnal 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

- 103 commercial units, occupying 9,200m<sup>2</sup> gross floor space.
- Seventh largest centre in Shropshire (according to the number of commercial units) accounting for 4.1% of all Shropshire High Street traders.
- Low number of stores per head of population at a rate of 9.2 units per 1,000 population (13 on average for Shropshire).
- Average store size 90m<sup>2</sup> which is the smallest across all settlements audited (147m<sup>2</sup> on average for Shropshire).
- 88 residential premises in the main shopping area, giving a ratio of 1.3:1 commercial versus residential properties.
- Shifnal had a 16% business churn rate between the 2024 and 2025 audits. This is a higher rate of churn than the preceding year (9%). It is also notably higher than the Shropshire average (13% churn in 2025).
- 9% of all commercial premises were vacant in 2025, which is lower than the average across Shropshire (11%).
- The number of vacant premises declined by two in 2025.
- The highest proportion of commercial units is attributable to retail services; at 31% of units this is higher than in any other towns except Albrighton and compares with the Shropshire average of 19%.
- Finance, professional and business services are also over represented, accounting for 12% of commercial units (8% on average for Shropshire), with only Craven Arms supporting a higher proportion.
- In contrast, there are comparatively few businesses operating in comparison or convenience retail (18% compared with 27% for Shropshire for comparison and 5% compared with 6% for Shropshire for convenience).
- Tourism and leisure businesses also have a slightly lower than average representation (5% of units compared with 7% for Shropshire). There are an average number of restaurants and takeaways.

## Methodology Statement

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

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

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

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

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

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

Premises are assumed to have changed hands if their name or function has changed since the 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.

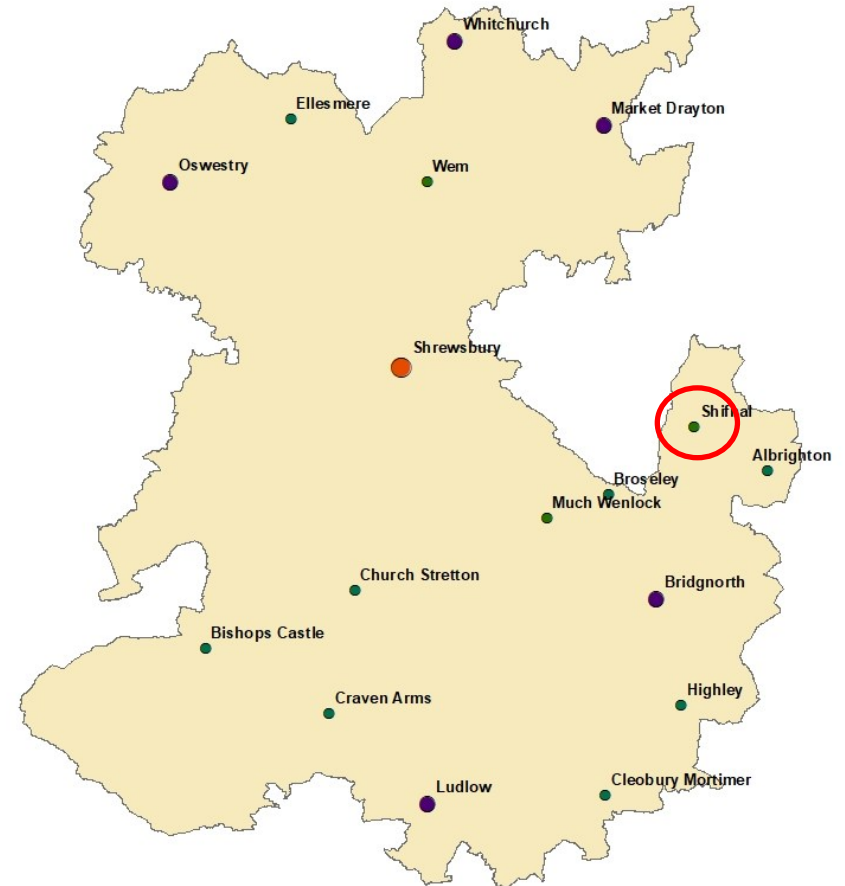
However, not all centres have comparable functions. Larger centres tend to attract workers and shoppers from much further afield than smaller centres, and consequently offer a much greater volume and variety of retail trade and consumer and business services.

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

Shifnal has a mix of commercial operators within its main shopping streets and is of a similar size to Wem and Ellesmere.

Map 1: Shropshire's Main Retail Centres



## About Shifnal

Shifnal is a small market town located in the east of Shropshire. The town, once known as Idsall, dates back to the 7th Century. Today it has a population of 11,300 (2024 ONS Mid-year estimates) and 4,515 households (2021 Census). It is the fastest growing town in Shropshire, its population having risen by 6.9% since 2021. It is the fifth largest market town in the county and is now larger than both Ludlow and Whitchurch.

Shifnal is well served with transport links. The only motorway directly serving Shropshire (the M54) is easily accessible, with Junction 4 for Telford only two miles away and Junction 3 for Cosford 3.5 miles away. This provides easy access to the Black Country, the West Midlands conurbation and the M5 and M6. The I54 development, which is home to major manufacturers Jaguar Land Rover, Eurofins and Moog Aerospace, is within a 15 mile commute. The nearby A41 provides direct links north to Newport (9 miles), Whitchurch and Cheshire. Southbound, the A41 links to Wolverhampton (13 miles). Eastwards from Shifnal, the A5 provides access to Stafford and Cannock.

The town is on the main railway line between Shrewsbury and Birmingham.

The total population within a 10 mile radius is approximately 306,400.

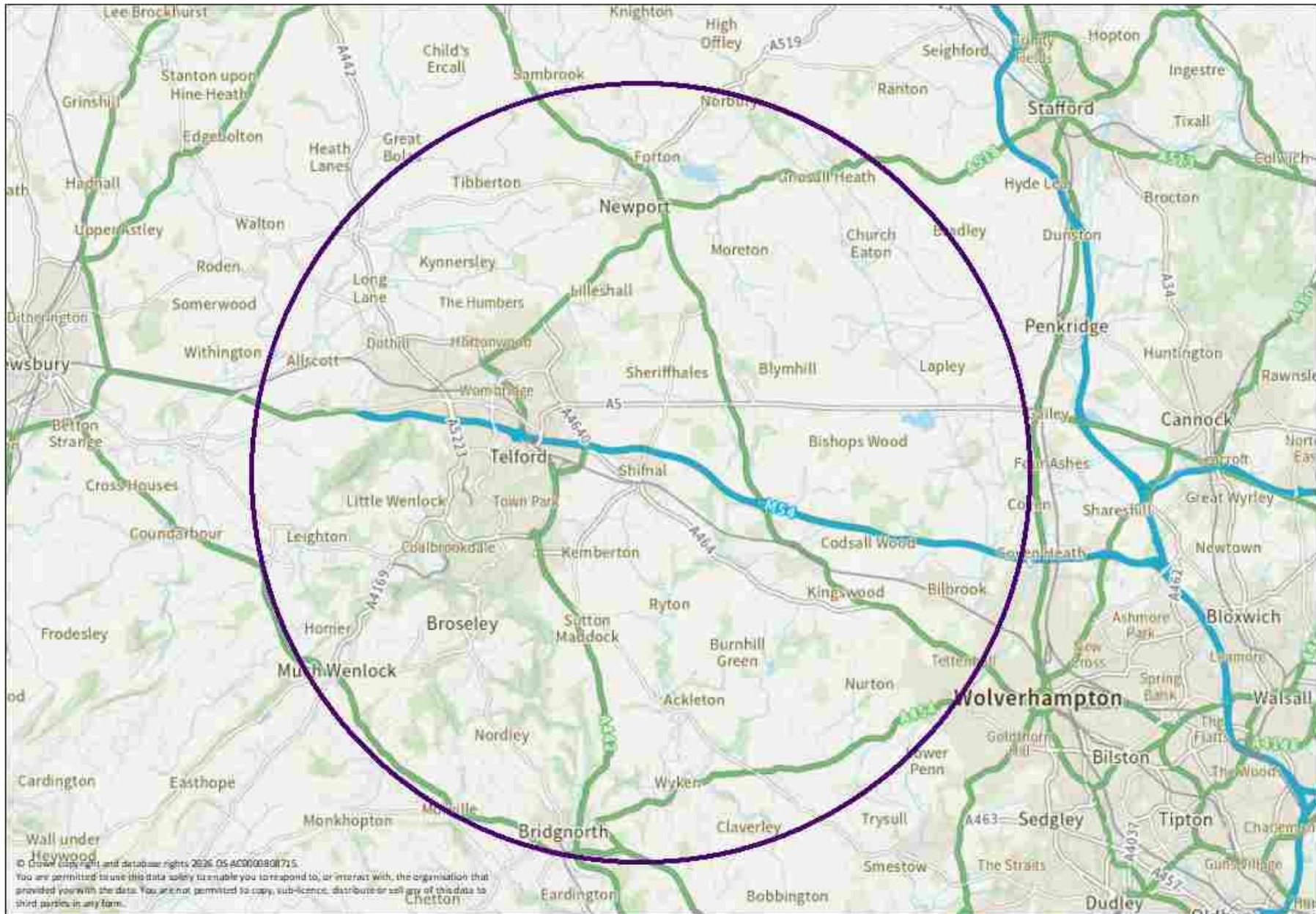
Shifnal provides approximately 2,700 jobs across the town council area (*ONS Business Register and Employment Survey, 2024*). The town's strong transport links to main employment centres in the West Midlands means that a significant number of local residents commute out. Notwithstanding this, as the town's population has grown, the number of local employment opportunities has also risen. Key sectors include:

- Arts, Entertainment & Recreation (24.2% of jobs)
- Education (13.1% of jobs)
- Accommodation & Food Services (12.0% of jobs)
- Health (11.8% of jobs)
- Professional, Scientific & Technical (10.5% of jobs)

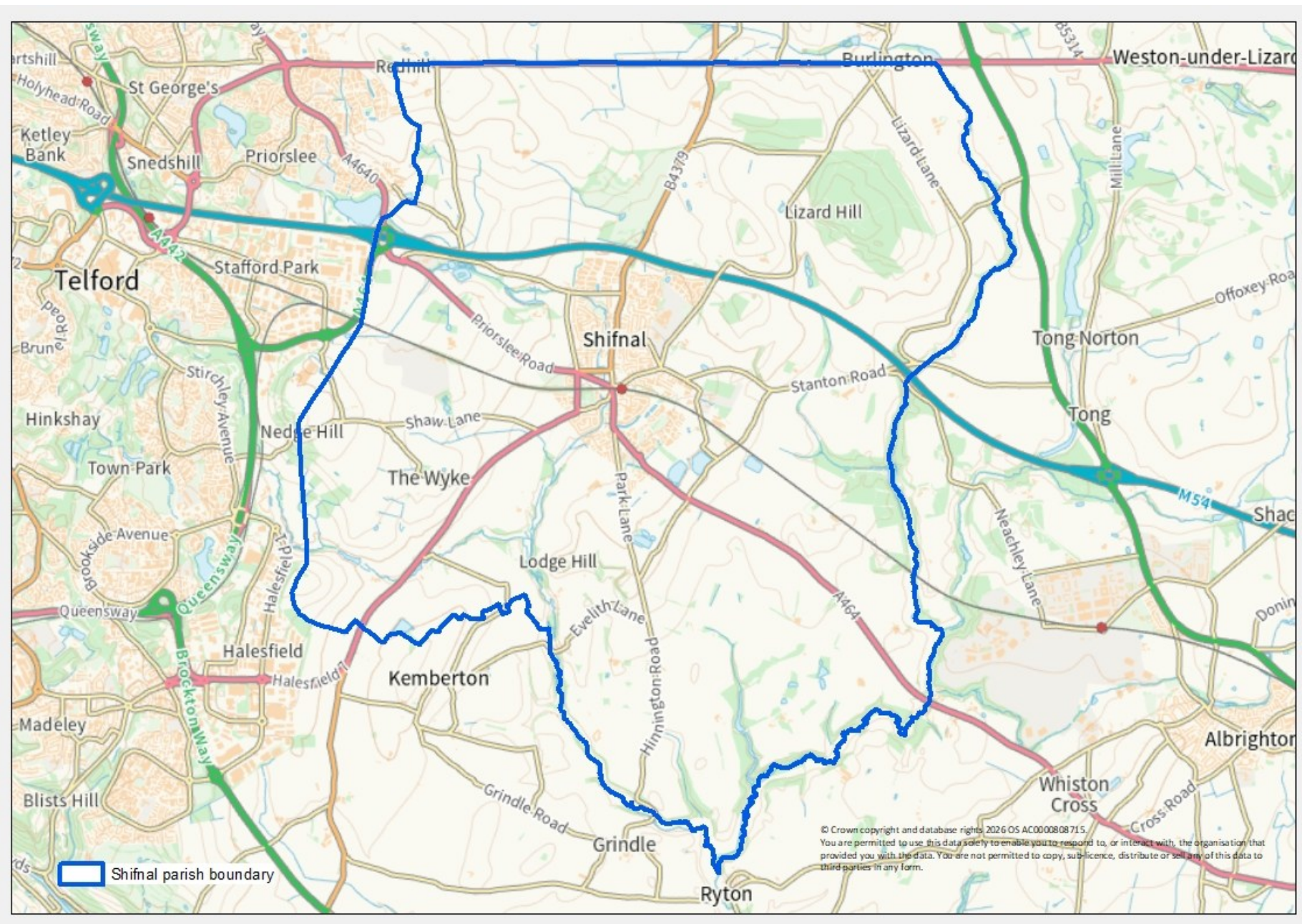
Overall, Shifnal town council area (depicted on Map 3) covers an area of 3,864 hectares. The main shopping area (depicted on Map 4) is much smaller than this, at around 3 hectares.

The town comprises predominantly independent retail and there is a significant amount of residential housing stock in the main shopping area of the town. Telford is within easy reach for Shifnal residents, offering a wider range of chain stores.

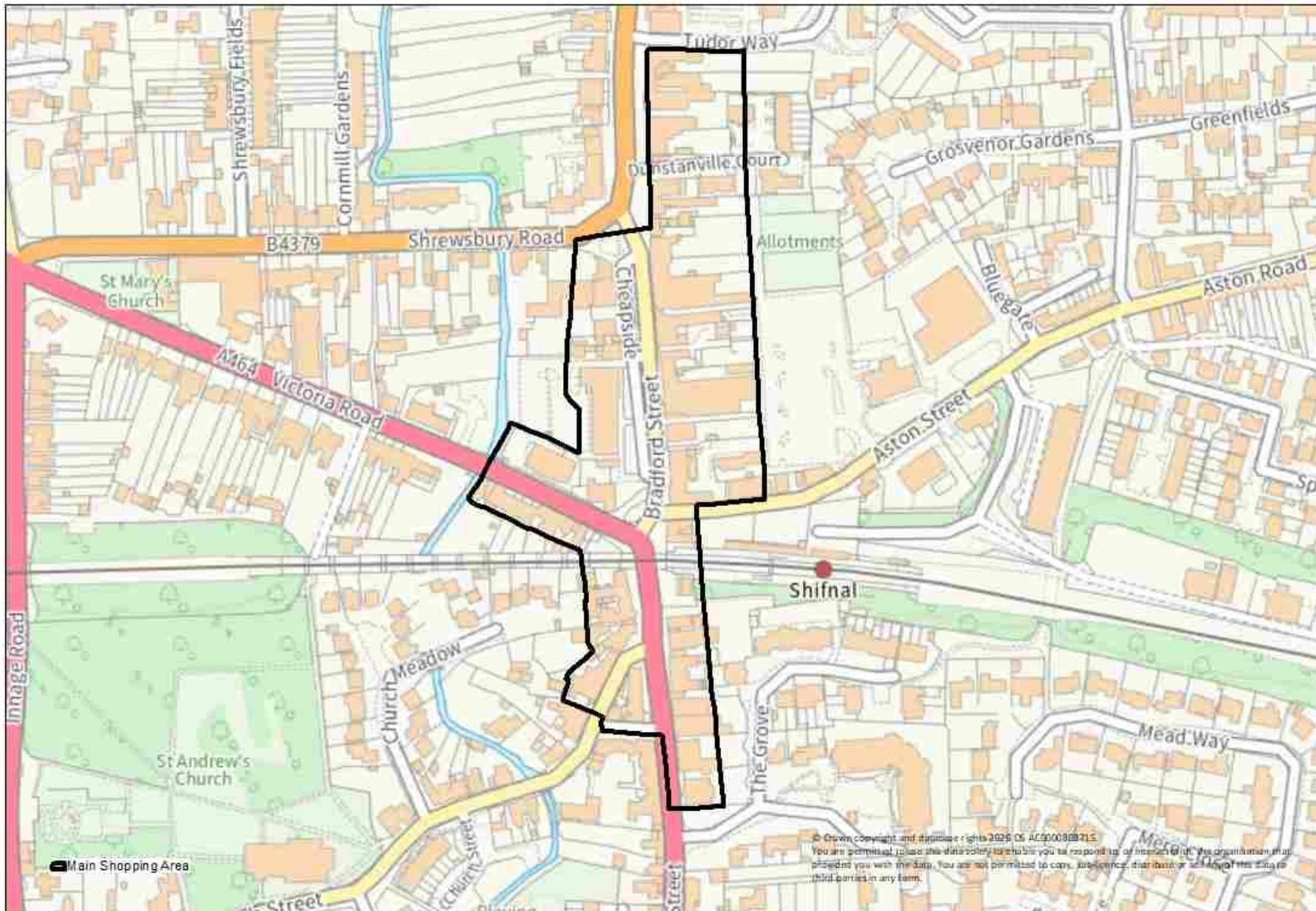
Map 2: Location of Shifnal showing 10 mile radius



Map 3: Shifnal Town Council Area



Map 4: Main Retail Shopping Area and Survey Boundary



## Key Audit Results

There are a total of 103 commercial premises within the Shifnal survey area. These are primarily in Market Place (22 business premises), Cheapside (13 business premises), Bradford Street (14 business premises plus nine in the Parade), Broadway (15 business premises), Victoria Road (12 business premises) and Church Street (10 business premises) with a small number in Aston Street and Park Street. Gross floor space allocated to these businesses is around 9,200m<sup>2</sup> (over a quarter on Bradford Street). The average store size is 90m<sup>2</sup> with units ranging in size from 14m<sup>2</sup> to 910m<sup>2</sup>. The average size of commercial units in Shifnal is smaller than in any other Shropshire town.

The number of commercial premises in Shifnal town centre has reduced in recent years, especially in 2022 when four units which had been vacant were reclassified as non-commercial. In addition, two units on Cheapside were merged into one, and another business closed in The Parade. In 2023, another unit was lost as two premises in Market Place were merged. In 2024, one unit was split to accommodate two businesses taking the number of premises back up to 103. There was no further change in 2025.

The highest proportion of commercial units is allocated to retail services and comparison retail, the former accounting for 31.1% of units and the latter for 18.4%. The former are comparatively small in size and account for just 21.8% of floor space. Comparison retailers account for 17.2% of floor space. The share attributable to comparison retail is small compared with the Shropshire average (27%) while the share attributable to retail services is high (19% in Shropshire).

Convenience retail accounts for only a small share of units (4.9%) but for a significant proportion of floor space (14.0%). 14.6% of units are attributable to restaurants and takeaways, while 11.7% of units are filled by a financial/professional/business services operator. Small numbers of units are filled by tourism & leisure operators, health care providers and non-service businesses. There are nine vacant premises in Shifnal (8.7% of units), which is the equivalent of 10.4% of floor space.

Chart 1: Number of Shifnal Commercial Premises, 2019-2025

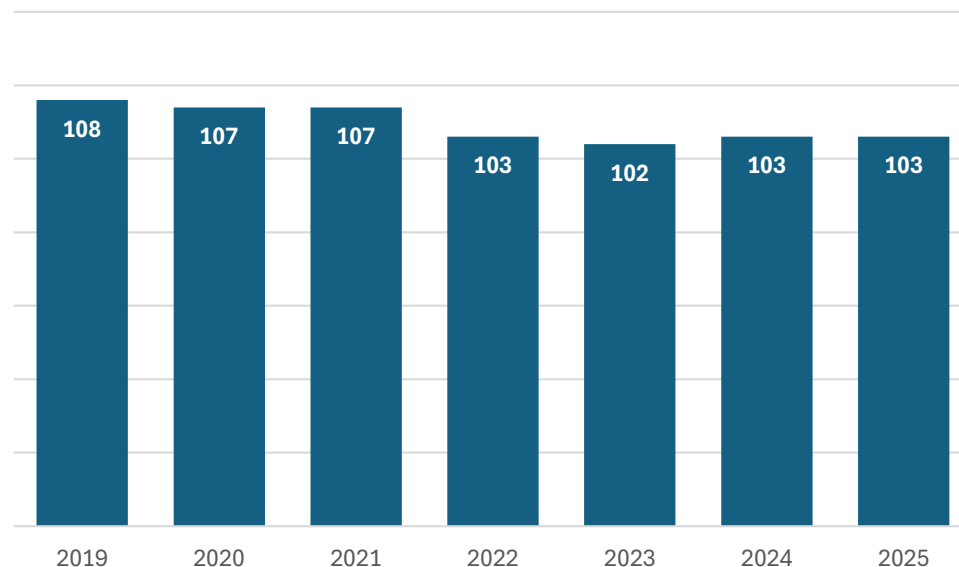


Chart 2: Breakdown of Shifnal Commercial Premises by Classification, 2025

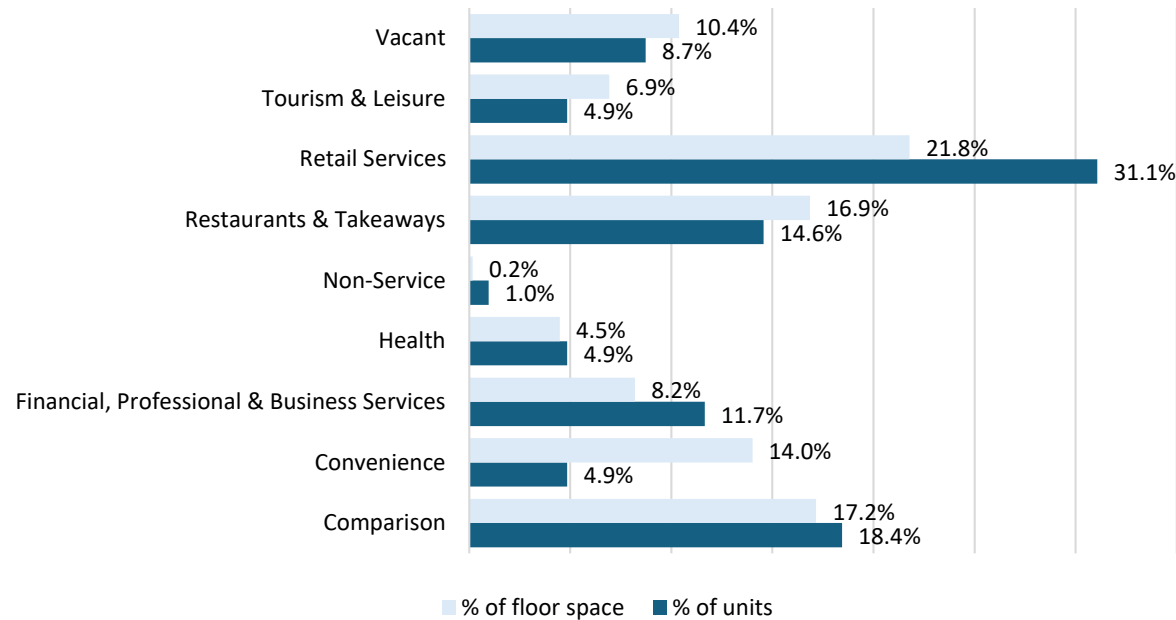
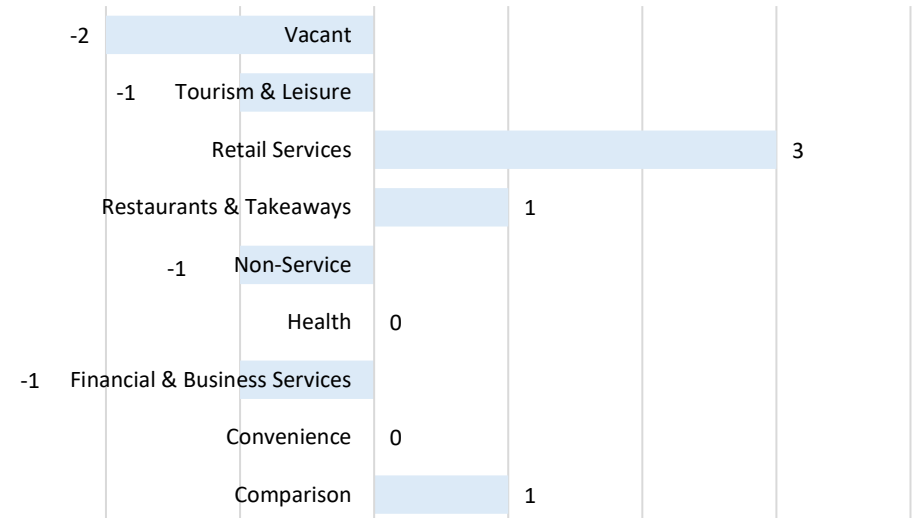


Chart 3: Change in Number of Units by Category, 2024/25



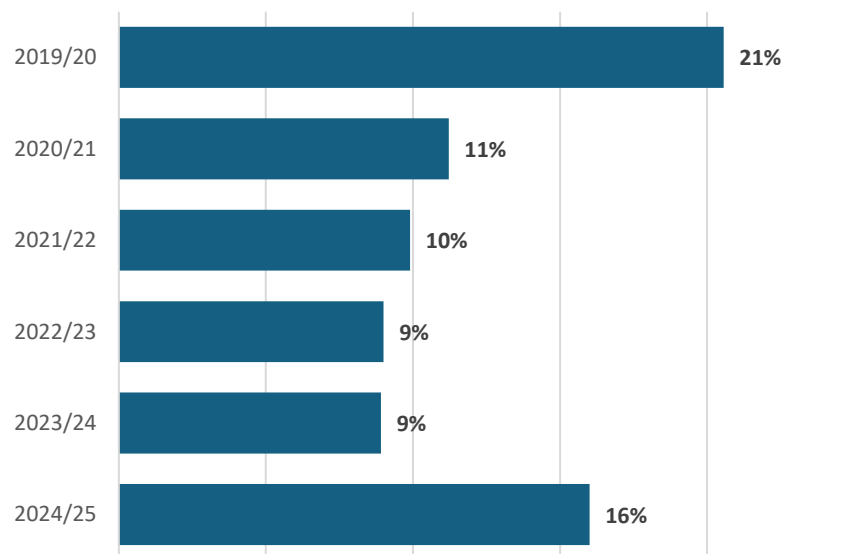
## Change since 2024

The composition of the retail/business mix in Shifnal has shifted only slightly since 2024, with the net loss of one operator in the restaurants and takeaway sector and in the finance & business services sector.

In contrast, there is an additional restaurant and comparison retailer plus three more retail services businesses than there were in 2024.

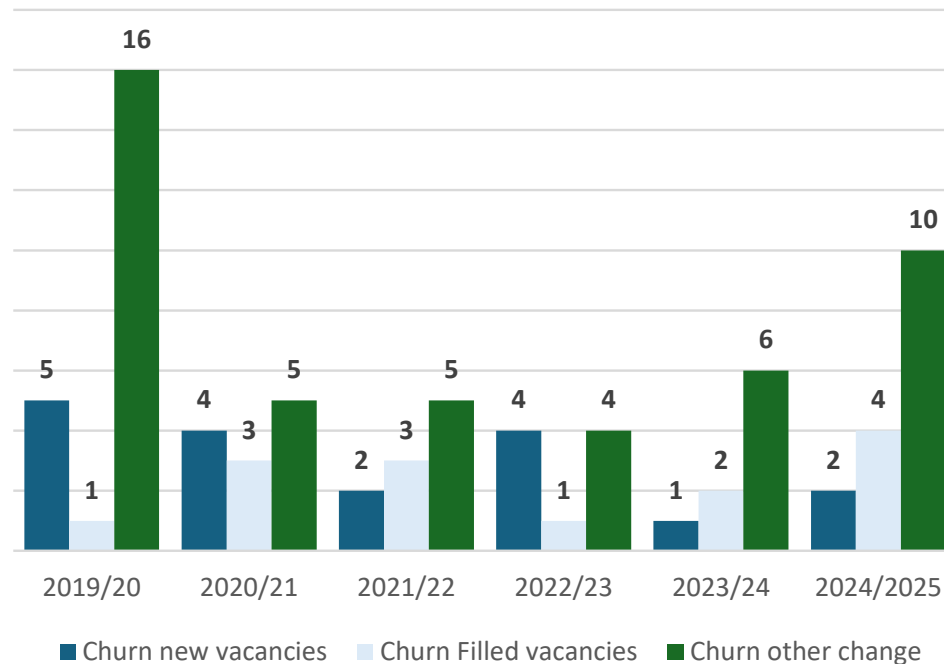
There are two fewer vacant premises in the town than there was in the previous year.

Chart 4: Level of Business Churn 2019-2025



The overall level of churn in Shifnal has been comparatively low since 2020, when 21% of all businesses changed in some way. In 2021, this had reduced to 11%, which is the equivalent of 12 businesses which started up, closed or changed in some way. By 2022, the churn rate had fallen to 10% (10 units changing) and by 2023 and 2024 to 9% (nine businesses changing in each year). Churn increased significantly in 2025, to 16%.

Chart 5: Breakdown of Business Churn 2019-2025



Just 13% of all churn in 2025 was attributable to premises becoming vacant (11% in 2024, 44% in 2023, 20% in 2022, 33% in 2021 and 23% in 2020). Old vacancies becoming occupied represented 25% of the total in 2025 similar to the 22% which was recorded in 2024. Other churn therefore accounted for almost two-thirds of the total in 2025. This comprises businesses that have changed hands and/or purpose and those that may have relocated as well as those that may have rebranded.

## Comparison Retail

The second largest proportion of commercial floor space and units is dedicated to the comparison retail category, accounting for 18% of units and 17% of gross floor space. This equates with 19 stores with just under 1,600m<sup>2</sup> of floor space. In comparison with similar sized towns in Shropshire, the proportion of town centre capacity allocated to comparison goods is low, perhaps reflecting the proximity of the shopping centres in nearby Telford which offer an extensive choice, especially in the chain store market. The sector has also been in decline in Shifnal in recent years, although the number rose by one in 2025.

Chart 6: Number of Comparison Retailers, 2019-2025

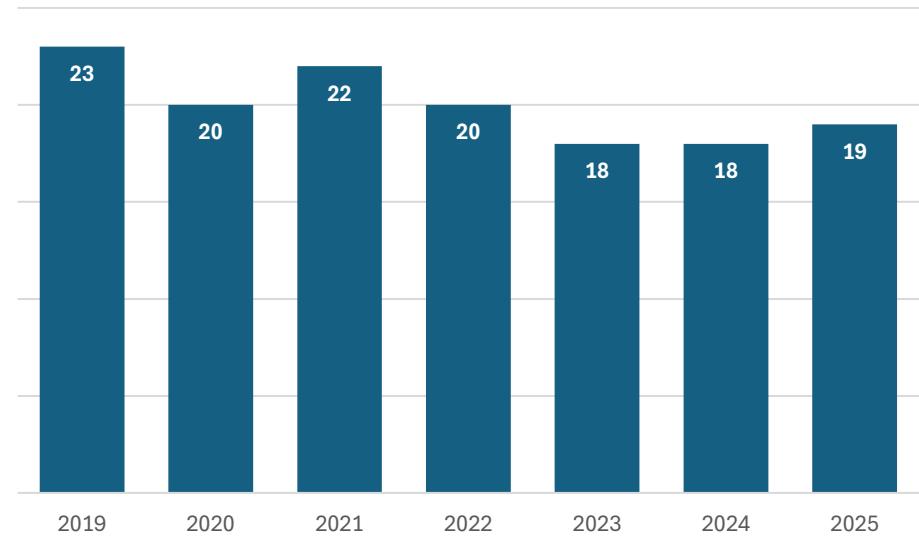
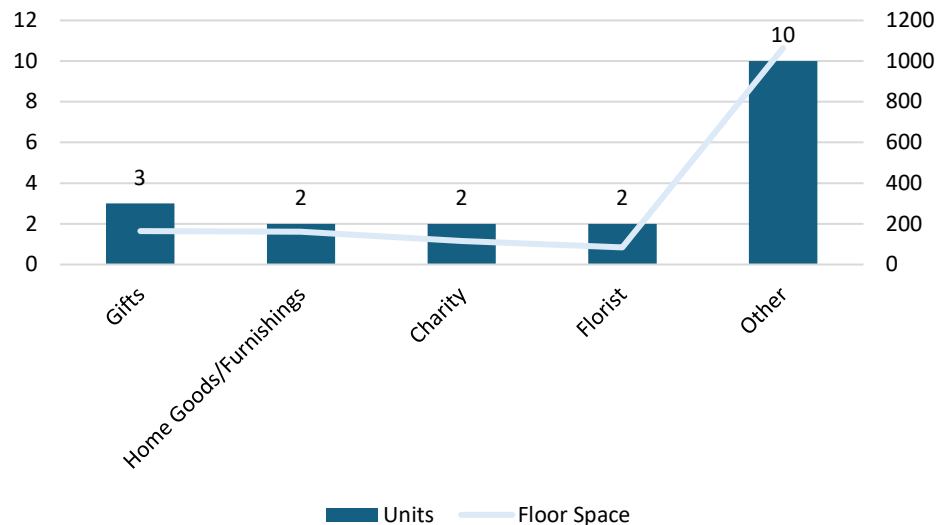


Chart 7: Breakdown of Comparison Retail by Type, 2025



Within the town there are three gift shops, two home goods/ furnishing stores, two florists and two charity shops. All other classification types are represented by just one store. These include an antique store, a clothes store, an electricals store, a golf shop, a bicycle shop and a pharmacy. The town lost a clothes store in 2024 but gained a kitchen, bathroom and bedroom home furnishings store. In 2025, the bicycle store relocated and a fabric shop opened in its former premises.

The majority of stores are independent, although the town is home to Boots pharmacy and Severn Hospice charity shop (a local charity, but nonetheless a small chain of stores).

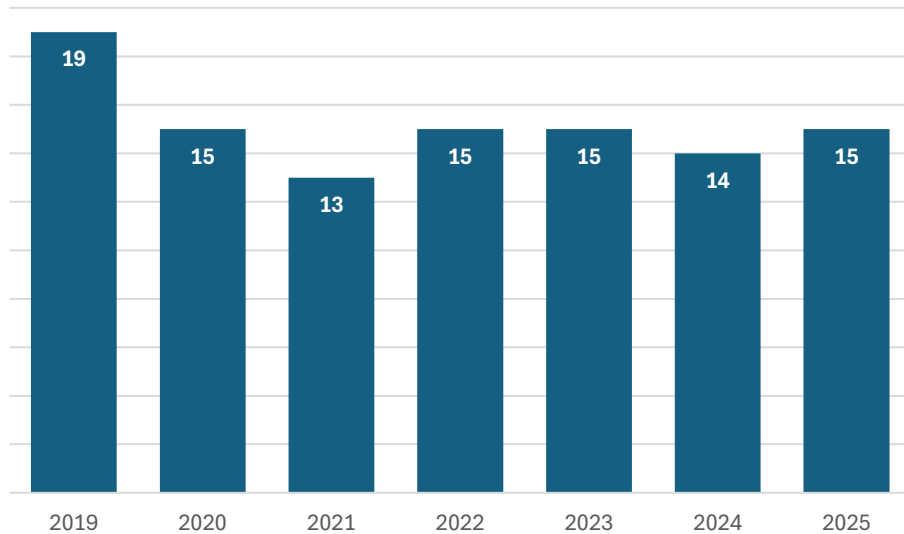
## Convenience Retail

There are five convenience stores within the main shopping area of Shifnal. These account for 5% of all units and for 14% of gross floor space. As well as a supermarket (the Co-op), there is a bakery, a butcher, an off-licence and a general convenience store. There has been no change in the convenience offer since 2019.

Other than the Co-op, which is the largest store in Shifnal, and the One Stop convenience store, other operators in the convenience retail sector are independent. The main supermarket facilities for Shifnal residents are located in nearby Telford.

## Restaurants & Takeaways

Chart 8: Number of Units in the Restaurant/Takeaway Sector, 2019-2025



The 15 units are split between cafés (20%), restaurants (33%) and takeaways (47%). Other than the opening of a restaurant, the only changes in this sector in 2025 were name changes for two other restaurants.

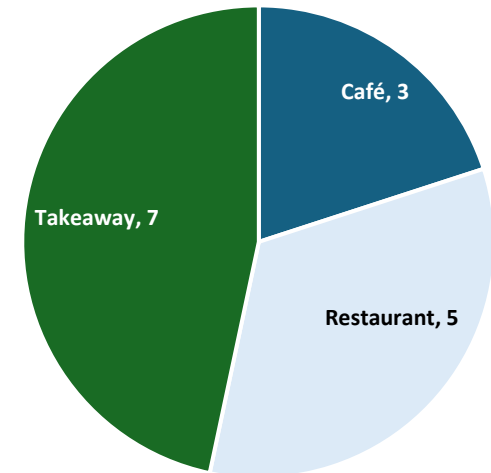
A range of cuisines are represented, including fish and chips, pizza, sandwich bars, Indian, Chinese, Italian, modern British and French.

There are no chain stores in the restaurant and takeaway category in Shifnal.

15% of units in Shifnal are attributable to restaurants and takeaways, with this category accounting for a slightly higher proportion of gross floor space (17%).

The number of operators in this sector has fallen by four since 2019 (-21%), but an additional restaurant did open in 2025.

Chart 9: Breakdown of Units in the Restaurant/Takeaway Sector, 2025



## Tourism & Leisure

Also within the hospitality sector, there are five public houses/bars, which is one fewer than there was in 2022 but no change since 2023. These take up approximately 640m<sup>2</sup> gross floor space. A micro brewery opened in Shifnal between the 2020 and 2021 audits, taking over a previously vacant premise.

The art gallery which opened in 2023 was empty in 2025. However, it is likely that this closure is for refurbishment rather than a permanent closure.

There is no hotel or guesthouse located within Shifnal town centre, although one or more of the public houses may offer overnight accommodation.

## Finance & Business Services

There are 12 commercial operators in the finance and business services arena in Shifnal town centre, accounting for just under 800m<sup>2</sup> of gross floor space. The classification accounts for 12% of all units in the town and for 8% of floor space. The number of operators fell by one in 2025 with the closure of a marketing agency.

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

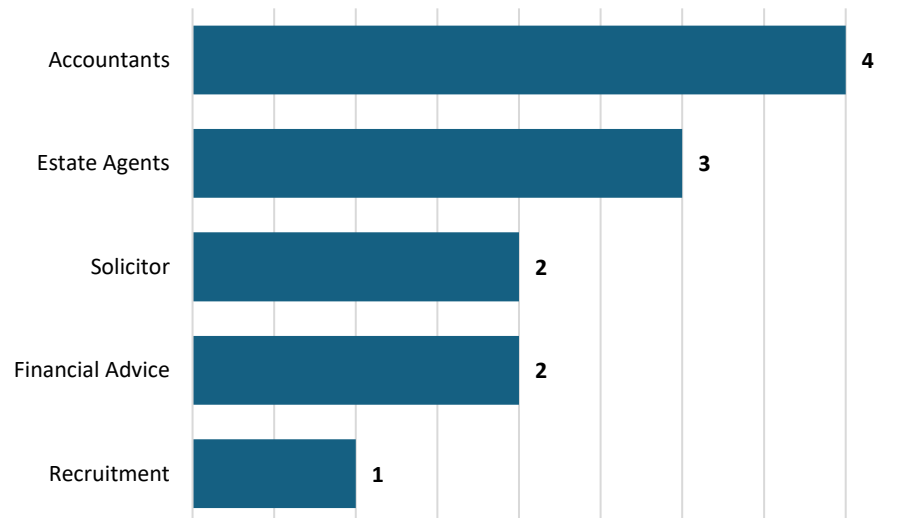
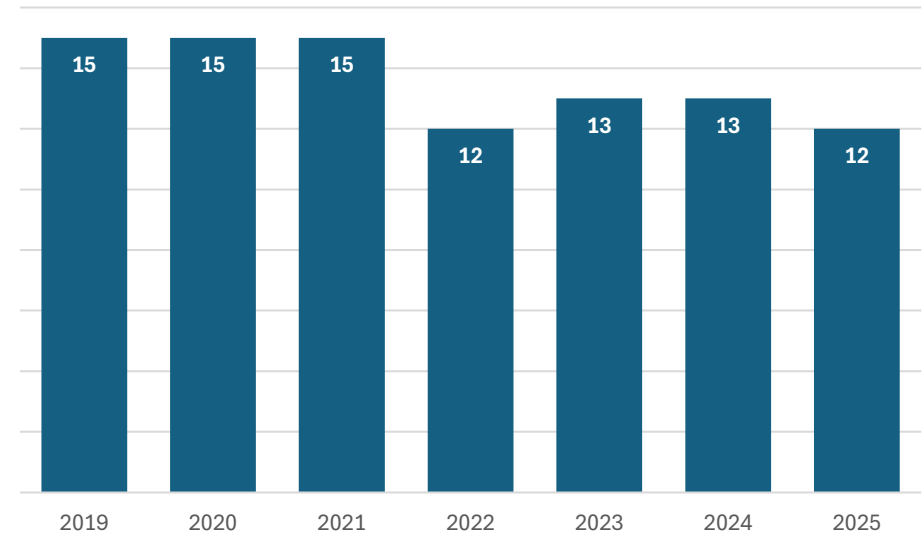


Chart 10: Number of Finance and Business Services Providers, 2019-2025



Included within finance and business services are three estate agents, four accountants, two financial advisers, two solicitors and a recruitment agency.

There are no longer any banks or building societies open in Shifnal.

## Retail Services

There are 32 providers of retail services in Shifnal town centre. The number has fluctuated somewhat since 2019, with an additional four stores opening between 2019 and 2020, four closing between 2020 and 2021 and two more opening the following year. In 2023, there were three fewer operators in this sector than there were in the preceding year but the number rose again in 2024 and 2025 by two and three units respectively.

Overall retail services account for 31% of all commercial units in the town centre, and for 22% of all gross floor space. Retail services account for a higher share of commercial units than in most other towns in Shropshire.

Chart 13: Breakdown of Retail Services by Type, 2025

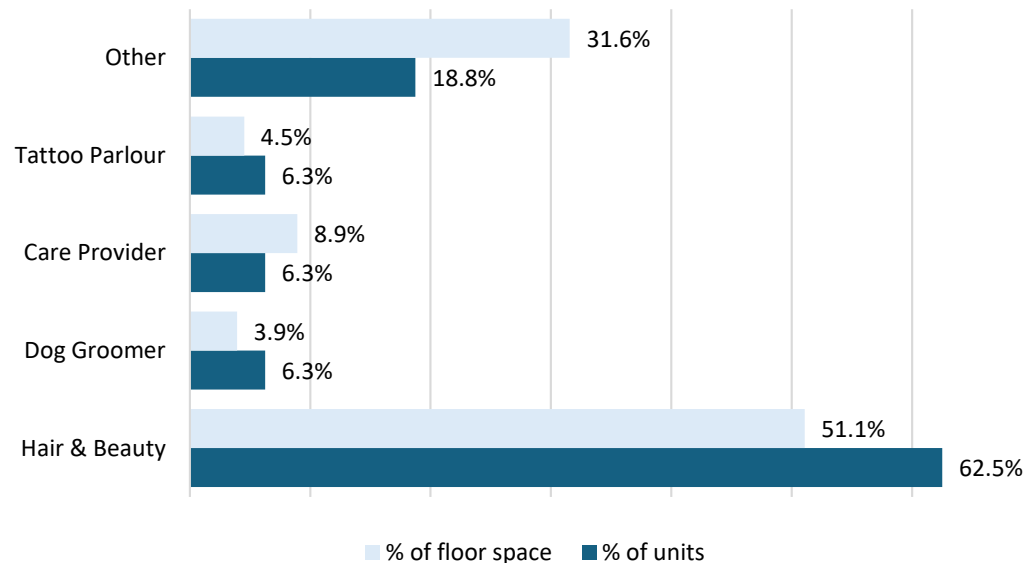
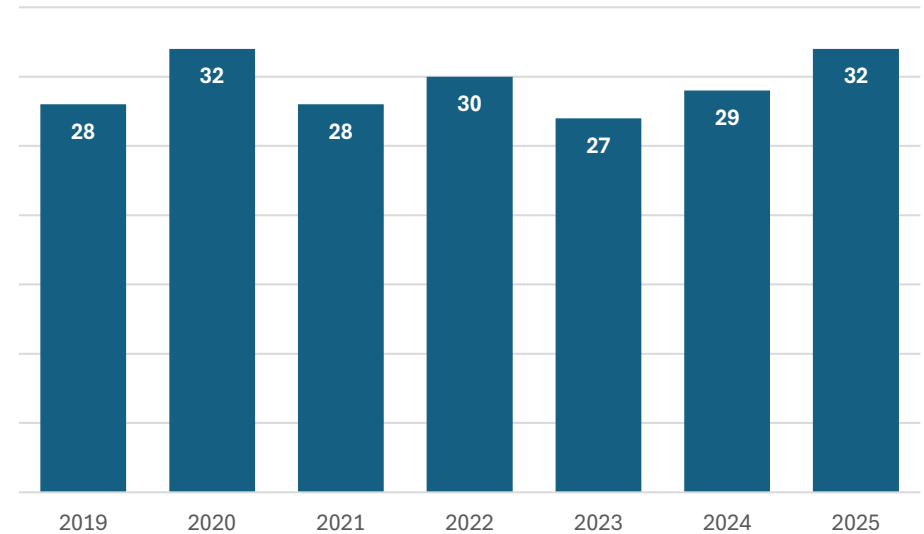


Chart 12: Number of Retail Service Providers, 2019-2025



Although the range of retail services provided in Shifnal is wide, a very high number of operators are in the barber and hair salon classification, with these together representing 63% of units and 51% of floor space. There are three barbers and 17 unisex or ladies' hair salons and beauty parlours.

In addition, there are two dog groomers, two tattoo parlours and two care providers. Represented by a single store are: a photographer, a bookmaker, a nursery, an optician and a funeral director. One of the tattoo parlours is new, and there are also two additional hair salons compared with 2024.

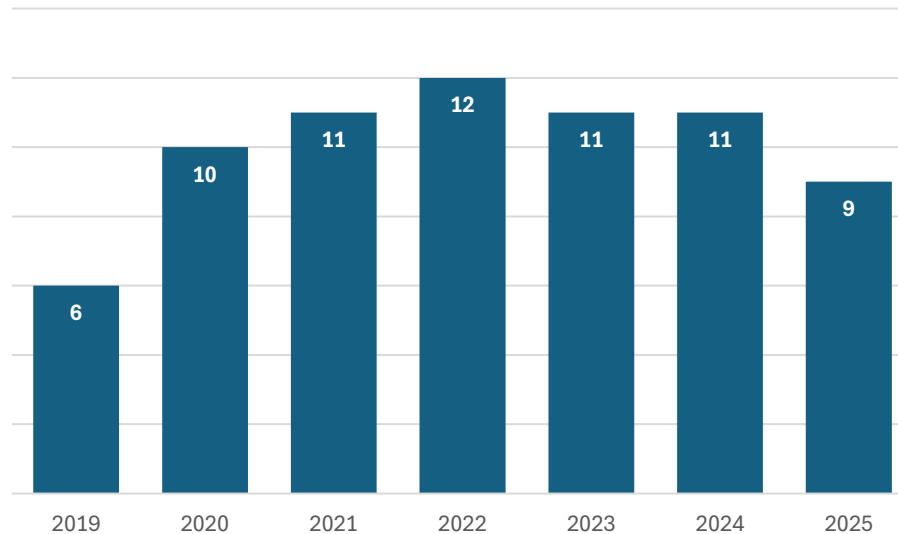
## Health

There are five health care providers operating in Shifnal, including a foot specialist/chiroprapist, a sports injury specialist and a weight management consultant. A dentist opened between the 2023 and 2024 audits in a previously vacant premise while a massage parlour opened in 2025. A foot specialist closed in 2025, leaving no net change in the number of health providers.

## Vacant Units

9% of Shifnal town centre outlets are vacant (10% of gross floor space). This is below average in comparison with comparable market towns in Shropshire. It is also lower 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 empty premises has declined by two to nine in 2025. Empty units range in size from 14m<sup>2</sup> to 314m<sup>2</sup>.

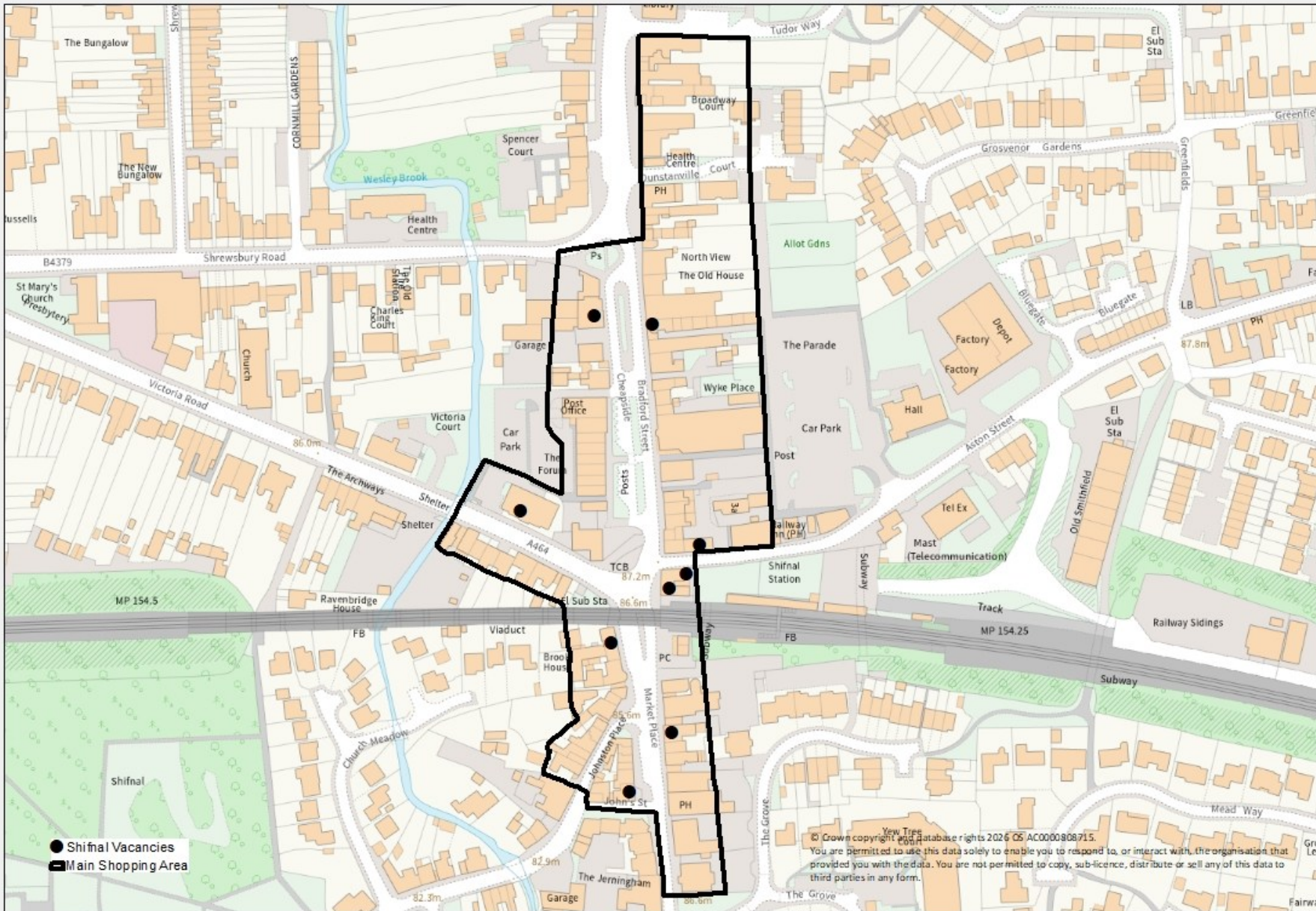
Chart 14: Number of Vacant Premises, 2019-2025



22% of all vacant premises in Shifnal had become vacant between the 2024 and 2025 audits (the equivalent of two premises). Six units (67% of all vacancies) have been empty since 2020, and five (55%) have been unoccupied since at least 2019.

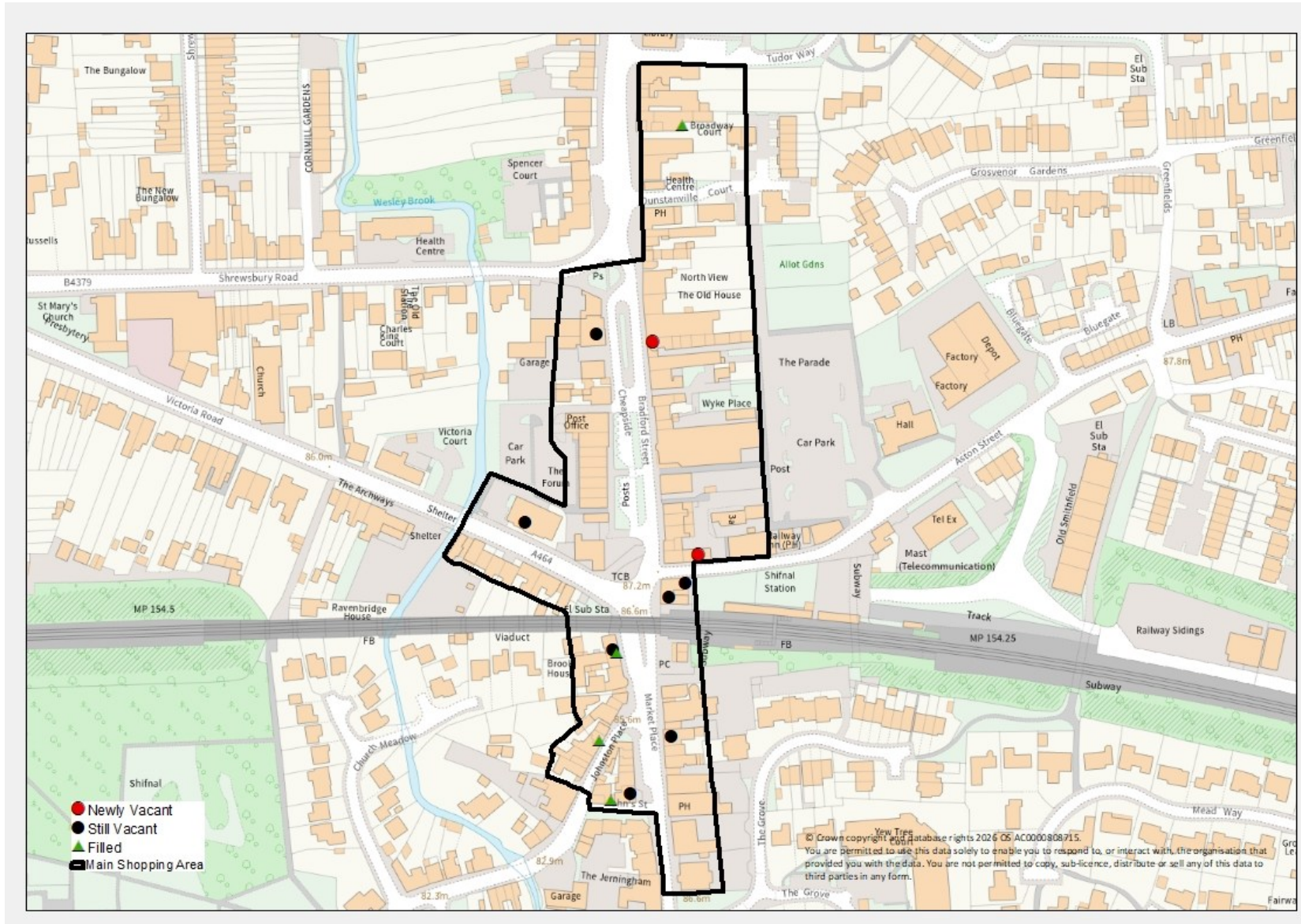
Five of the vacancies are in Market Place, two are in Church Street, and there is one vacant premise on Aston Street, Broadway, Cheapside and Victoria Road.

Map 5: Location of Vacant Commercial Premises, 2025



The number of vacant commercial premises in Shifnal fell by two between 2024 and 2025. Four premises that had been vacant in 2024 had been filled, with the remaining seven remaining unoccupied. Two premises were vacated between the 2024 and 2025 audits.

Map 6: Change in Location of Vacant Commercial Premises, 2024-25



## Residential Premises

Although the main shopping streets in Shifnal are primarily occupied by commercial premises, there is also a significant quantity of residential dwellings. In total, 88 residential premises are located in the audit area, of which the majority are flats (68 or 77%) which are largely located above retail or other commercial outlets. This stock is spread across the main shopping area. There are small quantities of detached and semi-detached housing stock, most of which is towards the periphery of the main shopping zone. There are 10 terraced houses in Shifnal town centre (11% of the total), with these being located in Victoria Street, Church Street and Market Place. The volume of residential premises in Shifnal has risen by three since 2020 (all flats).

Map 7: Location of Residential Premises in Shifnal Town Centre

Chart 15: Breakdown of Residential Properties by Type

