

Cleobury Mortimer: Town Centre Audit Analysis, 2025



Introduction

An audit of businesses operating in Cleobury Mortimer'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. Cleobury Mortimer centre was first audited in July 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

- 33 commercial units, occupying 3,400m² gross floor space
- Second smallest centre audited, behind Highley, accounting for just 1.3% of all Shropshire High Street traders.
- Slightly lower than average number of stores per head of population at a rate of 9.2 units per 1,000 population (average of 13 for Shropshire).
- Average store size 104m² which is much smaller than the average across Shropshire (147m²) and the third smallest in Shropshire behind Shifnal, and Broseley.
- 77 residential premises in the main shopping area, giving a ratio of 0.5:1 commercial versus residential properties
- Since 2019, the amount of churn recorded in Cleobury Mortimer has been on a par with the average for Shropshire. The levels have fluctuated, and were relatively high in 2025 at 18%.
- 15% of all commercial premises were vacant in 2025—this is the fourth highest rate in Shropshire behind Highley, Market Drayton and Wem.
- There was one fewer vacant premises in the town in 2025 than in 2024 but four more than in 2019.
- Six premises in the town have been converted from a commercial entity into residential accommodation since 2019.
- Most commercial units are attributable to retail service providers, comparison retailers or restaurants and takeaways.
- Comparison retail is, however, under-represented, accounting for just 12% of units (27% on average across Shropshire). Cleobury Mortimer has the lowest penetration of comparison retail across all the Shropshire towns.
- Retail services are over-represented, accounting for 27% of units (19% average for Shropshire).
- The share attributable to restaurants and takeaways and to convenience retail is slightly higher than the Shropshire average.
- Finance, professional and business services providers are under-represented, accounting for just 3% of units (8% for Shropshire).

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.

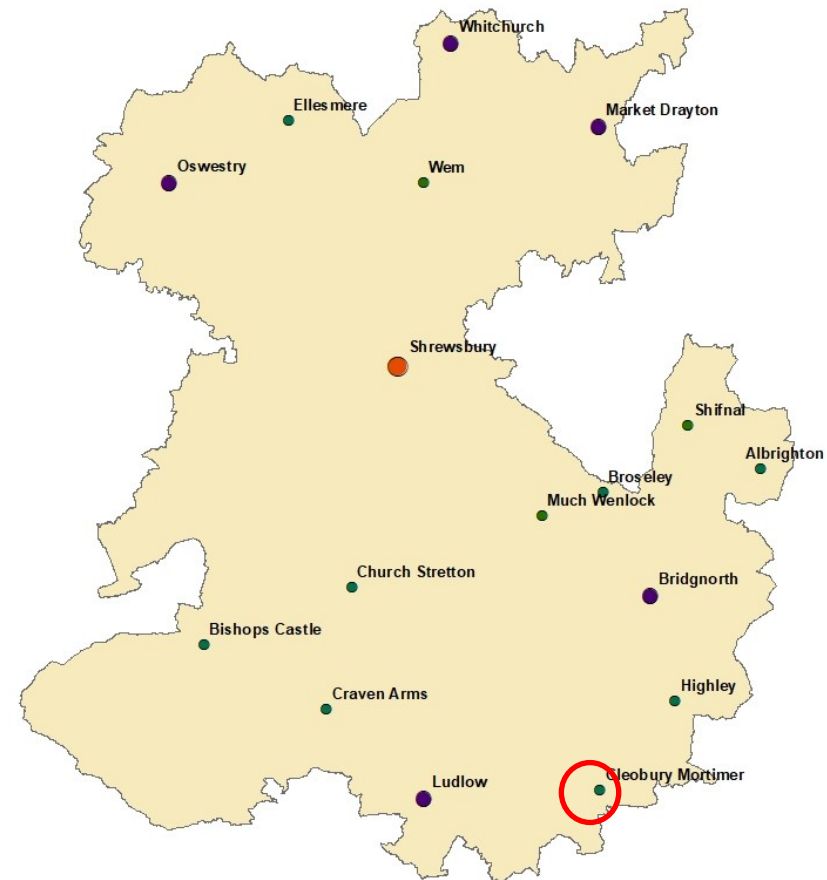
However, not all centres have comparable functions. Larger centres tend to attract workers and shoppers from much further afield than smaller centres, and consequently offer a much greater volume and variety of retail trade and consumer and business services.

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

The retail centre of Cleobury Mortimer is amongst the smallest in Shropshire, with just 33 commercial enterprises in operation.

Map 1: Shropshire's Main Retail Centres



About Cleobury Mortimer

Cleobury Mortimer is a small market town located in the south east of Shropshire near the border with Worcestershire. It is sited midway between the Clee Hills and the Wyre Forest. In the 16th Century, the town played a role in the Industrial Revolution, with the creation of furnaces and forges leading to the production of high quality wrought iron. The decline of the industry in the 19th Century has meant that Cleobury Mortimer has returned to its roots as a market town supporting its rural hinterland. Today Cleobury Mortimer has a population of 3,500 (*ONS mid-year estimates 2024*) and 1,514 households (*2021 Census*). Its population has decreased by 0.6% since 2021. It is currently the 15th largest settlement in Shropshire.

Cleobury Mortimer is located on the A4117 which provides access east to the A456 and then towards Bewdley and Kidderminster (11 miles). The A4117 west provides access to Ludlow (11 miles). The nearest mainline railway stations to Cleobury Mortimer are Ludlow (11 miles) and Kidderminster (13 miles).

The total population within a 10 mile radius is approximately 110,900.

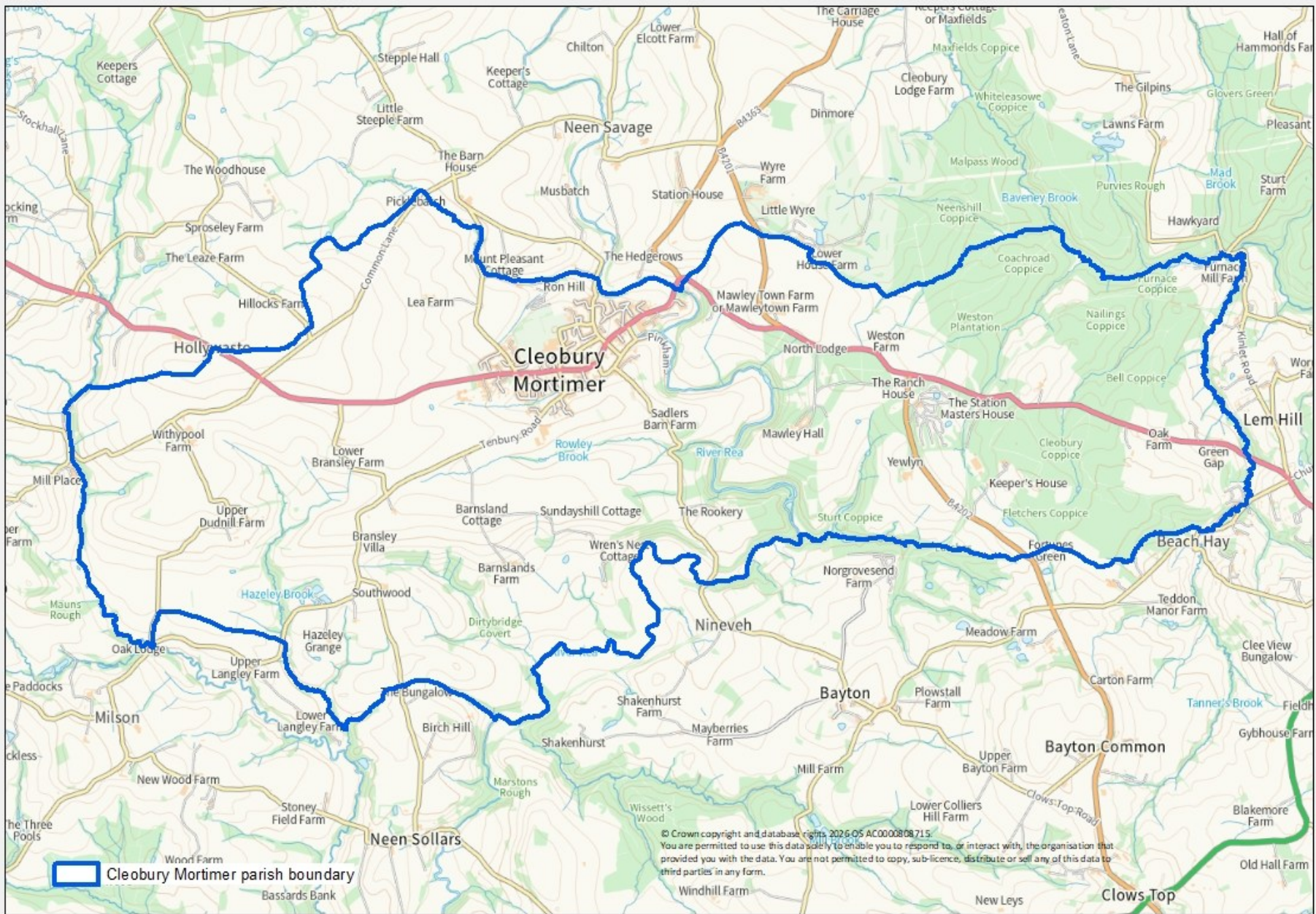
Cleobury Mortimer provides approximately 1,200 jobs across the town council area (*ONS Business Register and Employment Survey, 2024*). Key sectors include:

- Professional, Scientific & Technical (38.7% of jobs)
- Education (13.0% of jobs)
- Accommodation & Food Services (8.4% of jobs)
- Manufacturing (8.4% of jobs)
- Retail (6.7% of jobs)

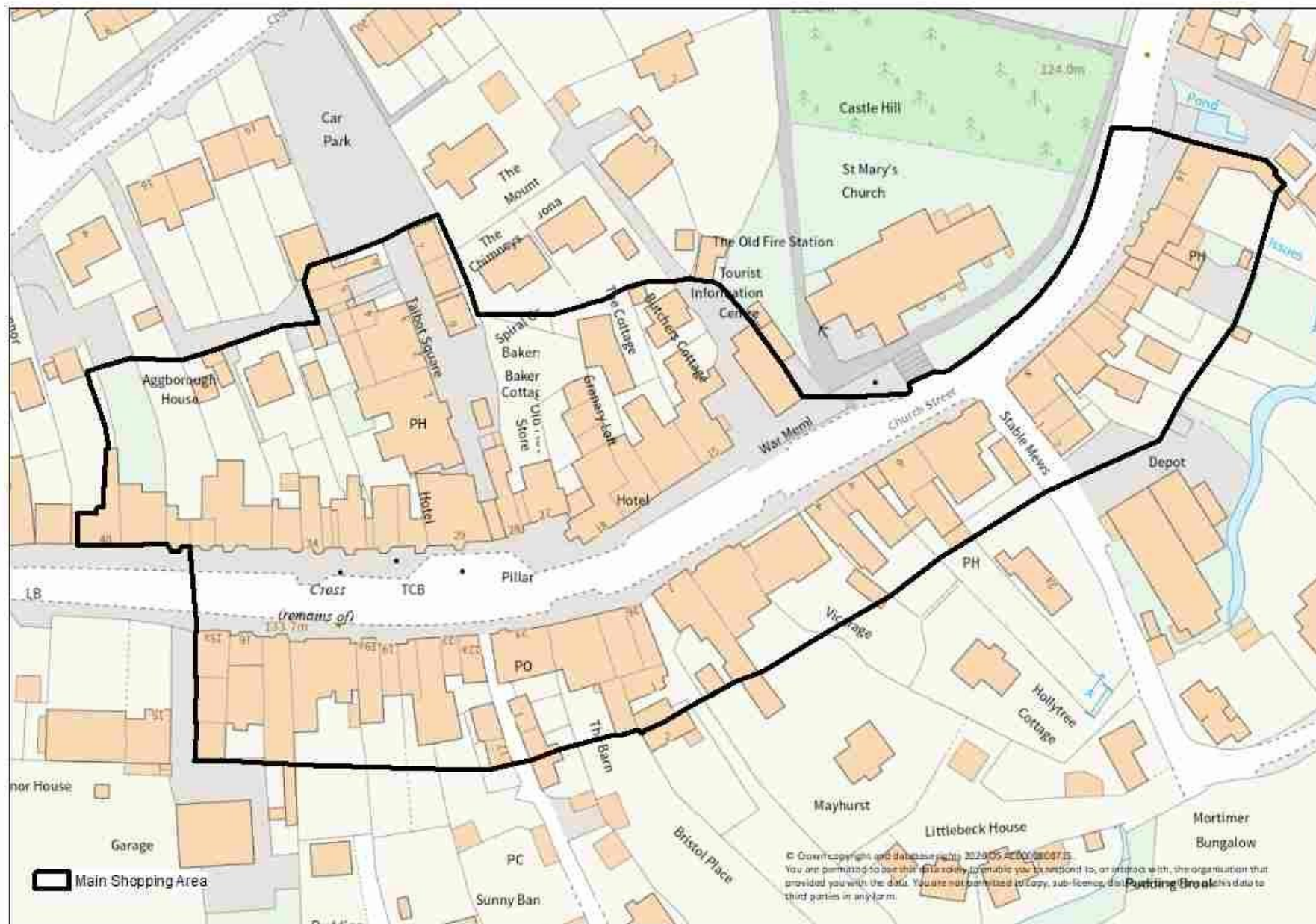
Overall, Cleobury Mortimer town council area (depicted on Map 3) covers an area of 2,005 hectares. The main shopping area (depicted on Map 4) is much smaller than this, at around 2 hectares.

The town comprises predominantly independent retail and there is a reasonable amount of residential housing stock in the main shopping area of the town. The town is served by post office facilities as well as some convenience and comparison retail. Monthly farmers' markets are held around St Mary's Church. Other retail centres that are easily accessible by road to Cleobury Mortimer residents include Ludlow, Bewdley and Kidderminster.

Map 3: Clebury Mortimer Town Council Area



Map 4: Main Retail Shopping Area and Survey Boundary

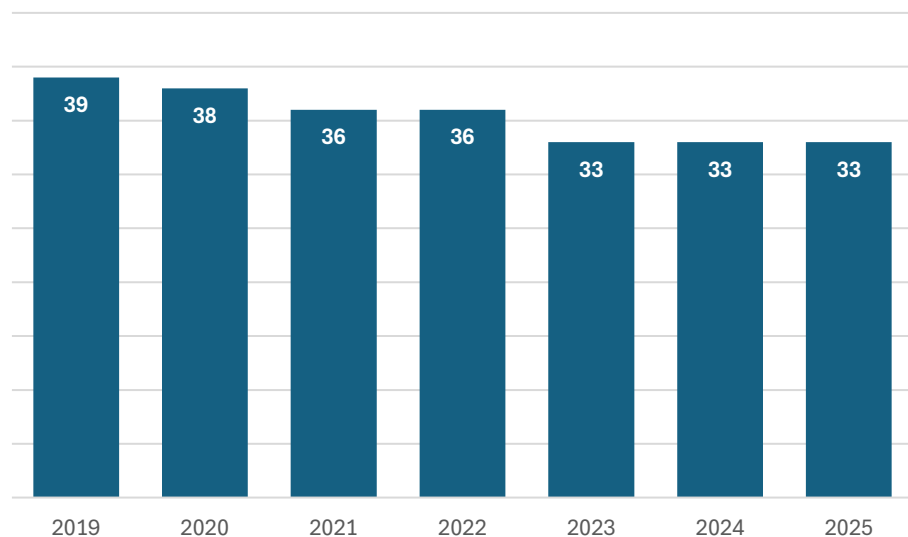


Key Audit Results

A total of 33 commercial premises are located within the Cleobury Mortimer survey area. These are primarily in High Street (21 business premises), with smaller numbers in Church Street (10 business premises) and Talbot Square (2 business premises). Gross floor space allocated to these businesses is around 3,400m² (49% on High Street). The average store size is 104m² with units ranging in size from 25m² to 281m².

The number of commercial premises in the town has declined over the last five years from 39 units in 2019. This is due to six premises (three in 2023, two in 2021 and one in 2020) being repurposed as residential properties. There was no change in the number of commercial premises in 2024 or 2025.

Chart 1: Number of Cleobury Mortimer Commercial Premises, 2019-2025

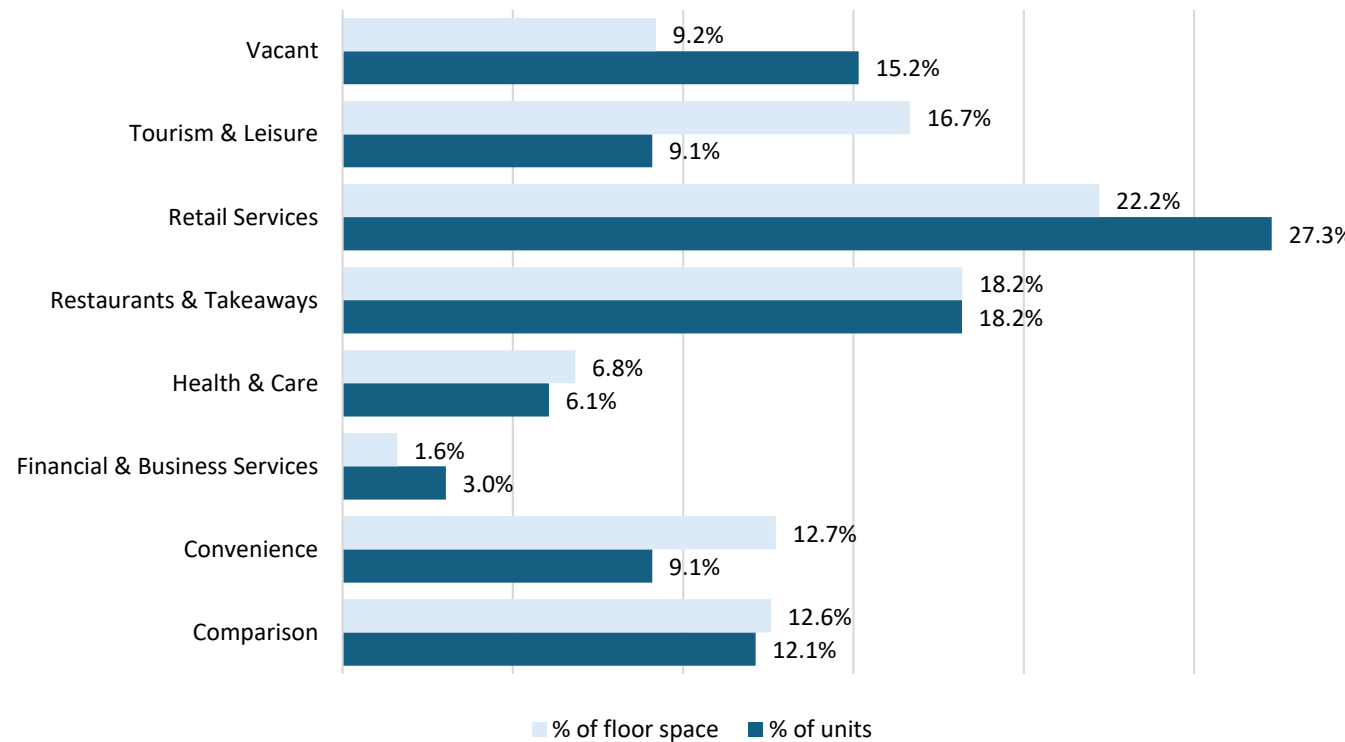


The highest proportion of commercial units are allocated to retail services. These accounted for 27.3% of units (22.2% of floor space) in 2025.

Restaurants and takeaways represented 18.2% of units and floor space in the town. Comparison retail is under-represented, accounting for just 12.1% of units and 12.6% of floor space. Tourism & leisure operators account for 16.7% of floor space, and for 9.1% of all units. Convenience retail takes a share of 9.1% of units and 12.7% of floor space. There are also a small number of financial and business service providers and health and care operators.

There are five vacant premises in Cleobury Mortimer (15.2% of units), which is the equivalent of 9.2% of floor space.

Chart 2: Breakdown of Cleobury Mortimer Commercial Premises by Classification, 2025



Change since 2024

There has been only marginal change in the mix of businesses operating in Cleobury Mortimer between 2019 and September 2025, particularly over the last five years. In 2025, the number of vacancies declined by one, and there was also one fewer operators in the comparison retail and financial and business services sectors.

Despite limited change in business mix, churn has been relatively high in Cleobury Mortimer in recent years (with the exception of 2023), with churn standing at 18% in 2025.

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

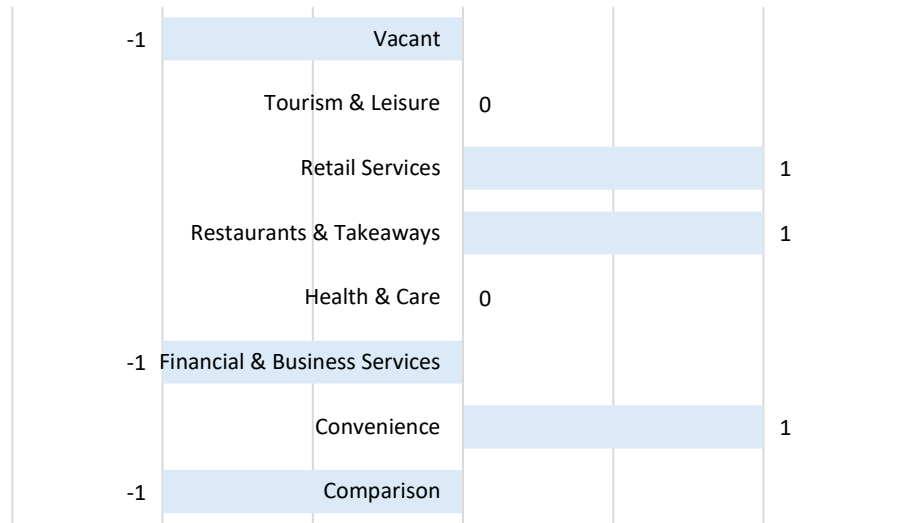


Chart 4: Levels of Business Churn, 2019-2025

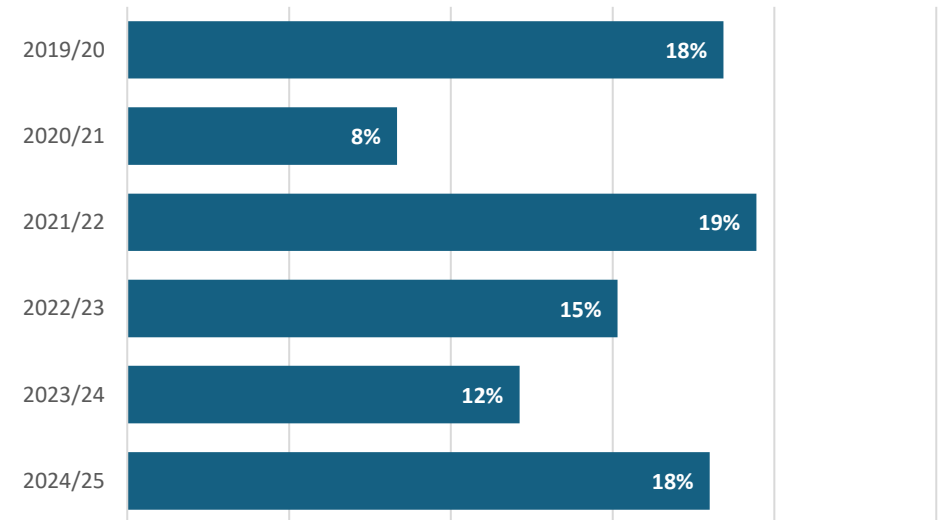
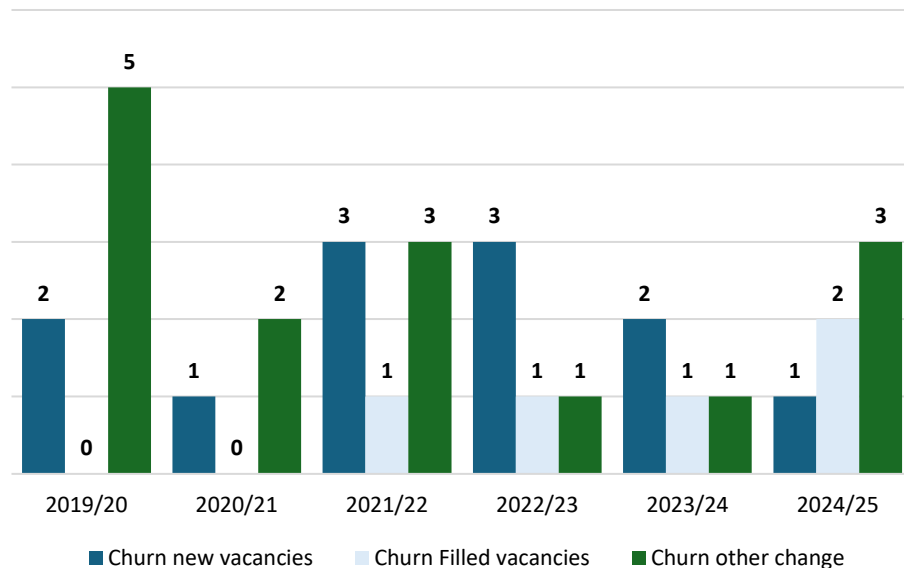


Chart 5: Breakdown of Business Churn 2019-2025



In 2025, new vacancies arising accounted for a sixth of all churn, which is the equivalent of one store being vacated. Previously vacant premises becoming filled represented a third of churn, while all other change accounted for half.

Since 2019, 12 commercial premises have become vacant, while five previously vacant premises have become occupied. However, six of these vacant premises have been repurposed as residential property over the time period.

Comparison Retail

12% of commercial units are dedicated to the comparison retail category, accounting for 13% of gross floor space. This equates with four stores with just over 400m² of floor space. The level of space allocated to comparison goods is very low compared with other towns of a similar size. The number of operators has reduced in recent years, with two businesses closing in 2023 and an additional one ceasing to trade in 2025 (a gift shop).

Within the town there is a charity shop, a haberdashery, an ironmongers and a vape store, which relocated premises in 2024. Since 2022 a jewellers and a shed/fencing purveyor and a gift shop have closed. The town's florist was replaced by the vape store in 2023 although the latter has subsequently changed location.

Convenience Retail

There are three convenience stores within the main shopping area of Cleobury Mortimer, up from two in 2024. These account for 9% of all units and for 13% of gross floor space. There are two general convenience stores (Londis and Select and Save, the latter incorporating post office services). A bakery opened in 2025– the last time the town benefited from a bakery was in 2021.

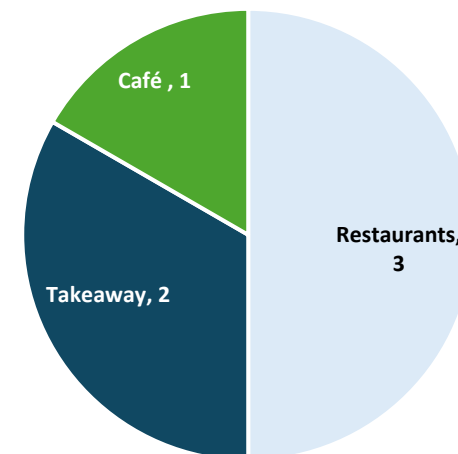
Restaurants & Takeaways

18% of units in Cleobury Mortimer are attributable to restaurants and takeaways, with this category accounting for a similar proportion of gross floor space (18%). The six units are split between restaurants (50%), takeaways (33%) and cafes (17%). The sole café in the centre of the town began trading between the 2024 and 2025 audits. There is an additional café just outside the main shopping zone further up the High Street.

A limited range of cuisines are represented, including fish and chips and Indian.

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

Chart 6: Breakdown of Units in the Restaurant/Takeaway Sector, 2025



Tourism & Leisure

Also within the hospitality sector, there are two public houses and an hotel. These take up approximately 600m² gross floor space.

Finance & Business Services

Since the closure of an estate agents in 2025, there has been just one commercial operator in the finance, professional and business services sector in Cleobury Mortimer town centre, accounting for just over 100m² of gross floor space. This is a solicitor. The town's only bank—a branch of Lloyds—closed between the 2022 and 2023 audits and remains vacant.

Retail Services

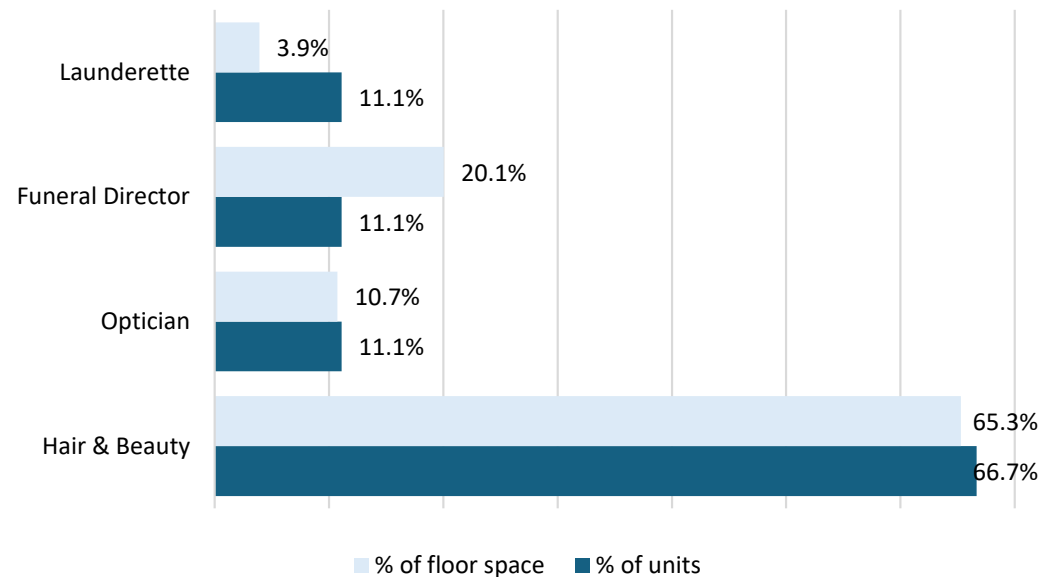
There are nine retail service businesses operating in Cleobury Mortimer town centre, with these accounting for approaching 800m² of gross floor space. This represents an increase of one operator in comparison with 2024. There are a high number of operators in the barber and hair salon classification, with these together representing 67% of units and 65% of floor space. There are three barbers and two hair salons, plus a tanning salon, which was a new trader in 2023, having taken over a previously vacant premise. One of the barbers was new in 2025.

In addition, a launderette, a funeral director and an optician are trading. The funeral director was not trading at the time of the 2024 audit and as such was classified as a vacant premise. A dog groomer which began trading in 2024 had closed by the time of the 2025 audit.

Health

There are two providers of health services within the main shopping area of Cleobury Mortimer—a dental practice and a health and well-being centre.

Chart 7: Breakdown of Retail Services by Type, 2025



Vacant Units

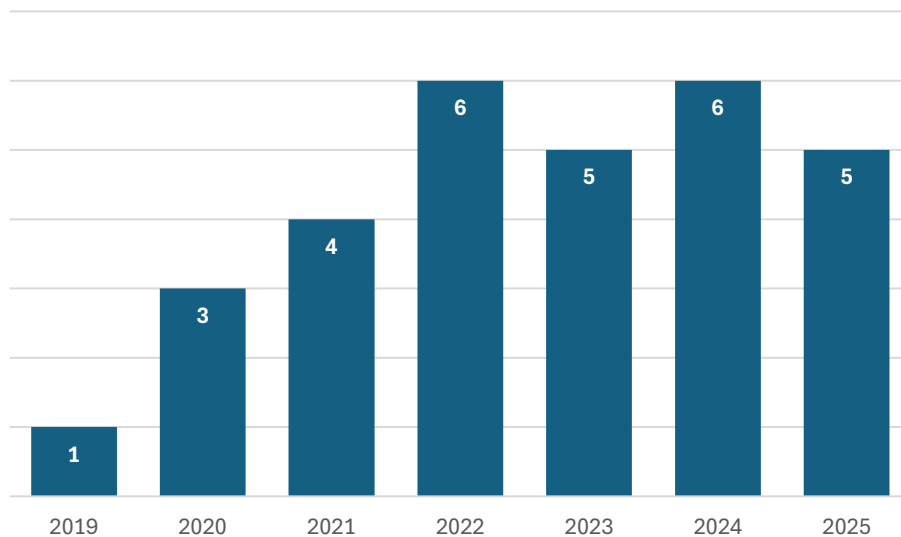
There are five vacant commercial premises in Cleobury Mortimer, which is the equivalent of 15.2% of units in the town and around 9% of floor space. The vacancy rate is high compared with comparable market towns in Shropshire and is also above the national vacancy rate, which stood at 13.5% in the third quarter of 2025 according to BRC (data relating to high streets only).

All five of the vacancies are on the High Street, as shown on the map following.

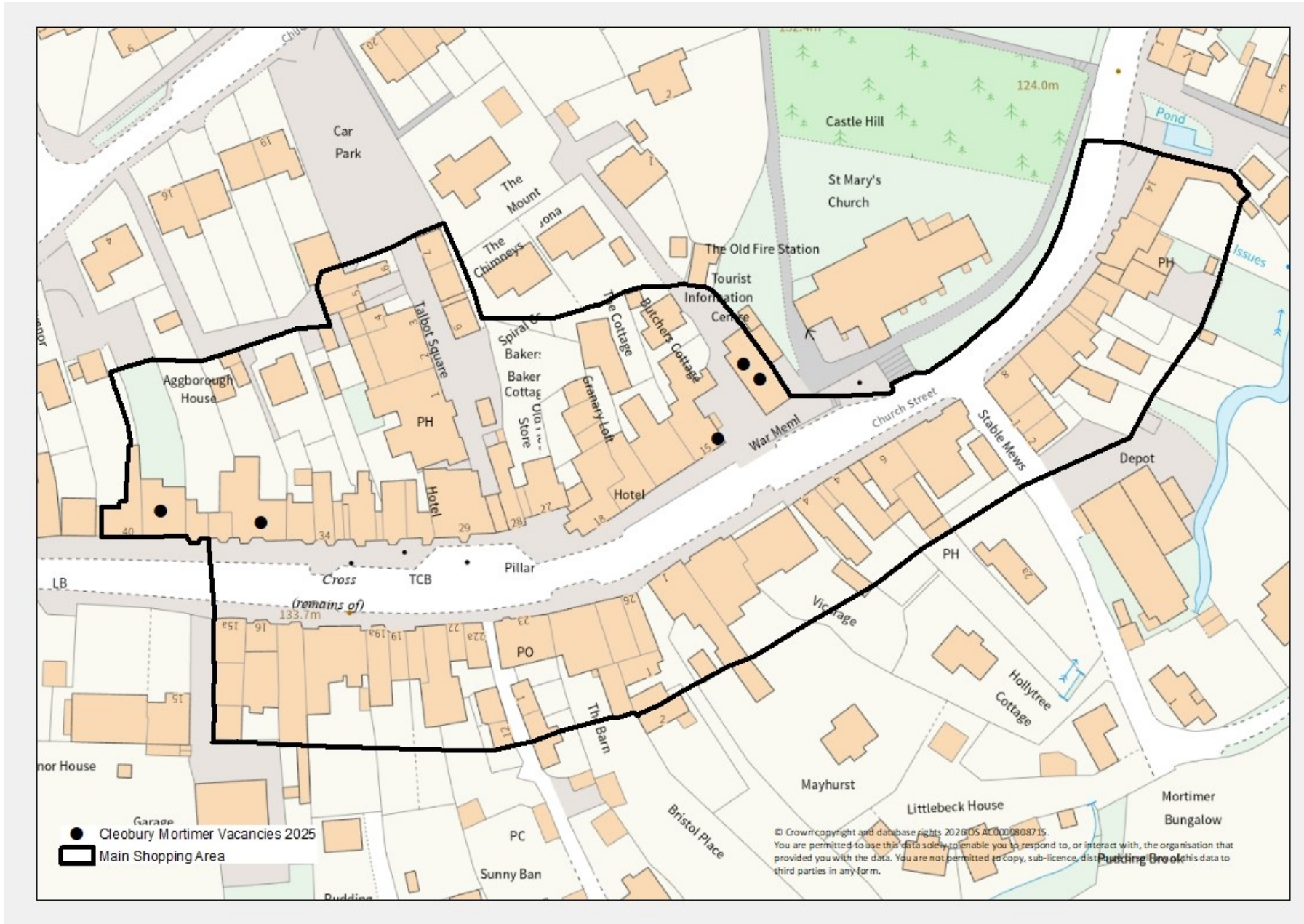
The number of vacancies in Cleobury Mortimer has risen from just one in 2019. Three of the six vacant units which were unoccupied in the town in 2022 have been repurposed as residential.

Of the five vacant units in 2025, one became vacant during the year (20%). Of the other four vacancies, one has been empty since 2020.

Chart 8: Number of Vacant Premises, 2019-2025

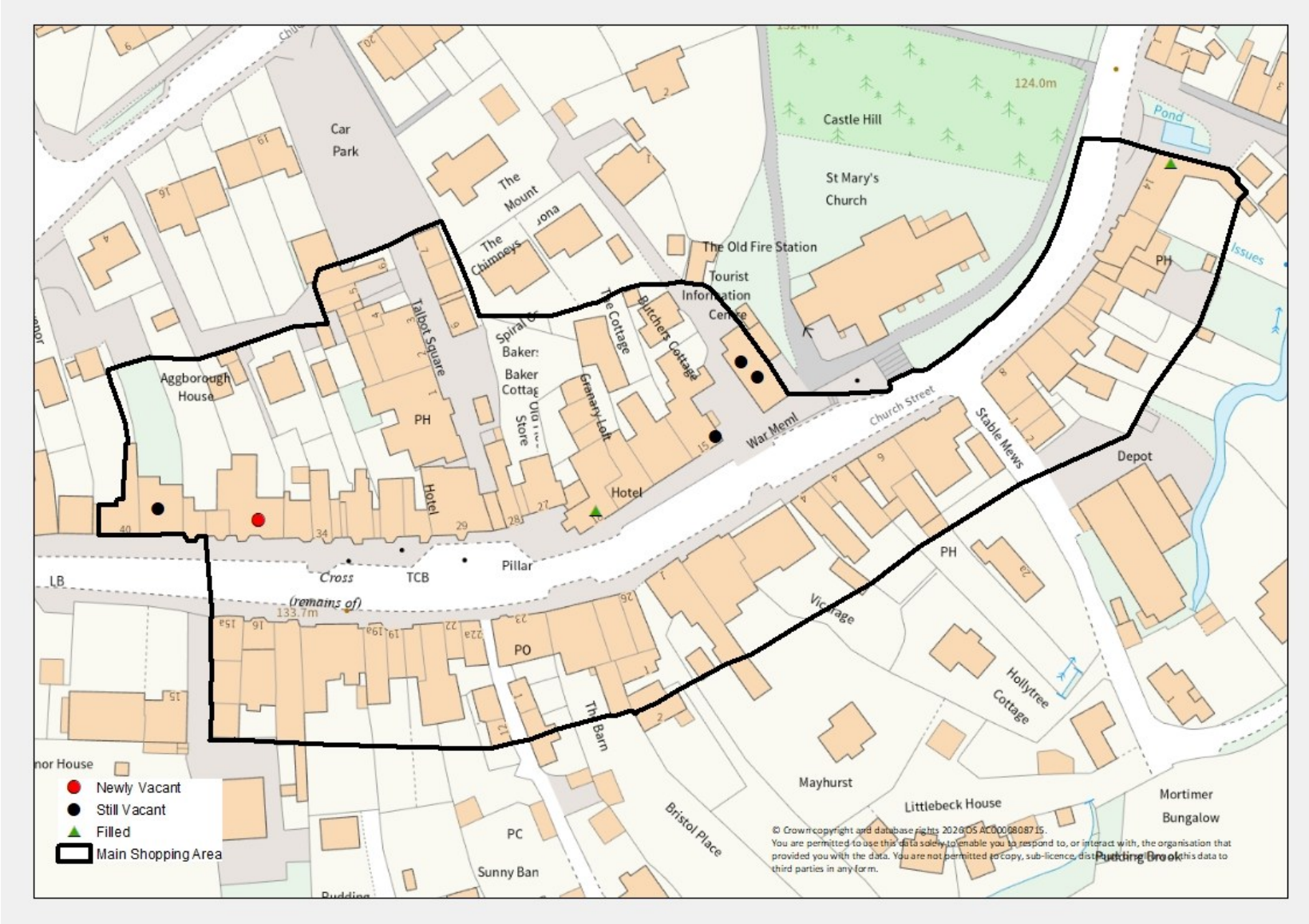


Map 5: Location of Vacant Commercial Premises, 2025



The number of vacant properties in Cleobury Mortimer has fallen by one to five in 2025, but has increased from just one in 2019. There was one new vacant premises in 2025, while four had also been empty in 2024. Two of the 2024 unoccupied premises had been filled by 2025.

Map 6: Change in Location of Vacant Commercial Premises, 2024-2025



Residential Premises

The main shopping streets of Cleobury Mortimer comprise a mix of residential and commercial premises. In total, 77 residential premises are located in the audit area, of which the largest share are flats (39 or 50%) which are largely located above retail or other commercial outlets. This stock is primarily along the High Street and Church Street. There are also 25 terraced houses, also principally along the High Street. There are five detached and eight semi-detached properties in the audit area. There are seven additional residential premises compared with 2019— five flats and three terraced houses although there is one detached premise fewer.

Map 7: Location of Residential Premises in Cleobury Mortimer Town Centre

Chart 9: Breakdown of Residential Properties by Type

