

Albrighton: Village Centre Audit Analysis, 2024



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Introduction

An audit of businesses operating in Albrighton's main shopping streets was undertaken in September 2024 as part of a longitudinal research study reviewing the vibrancy of Shropshire's main market towns and key settlements. Albrighton centre was first audited in July 2019 and then again in September every year between 2020 and 2024. The objective of these audits is to provide a snapshot of the vitality of the settlement 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 October 2024, 27.6% 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 has impacted people's spending power. By 2024, inflation was much reduced, but economic confidence remained low.

Key Findings

- There are 53 commercial units, occupying 6,300m² gross floor space
- Albrighton is amongst the smallest centres in Shropshire, accounting for 2.1% of all Shropshire High Street traders
- This is a lower than average number of stores per head of population at 11 per 1,000 (13 on average across Shropshire)
- Average store size 118m² compared with the Shropshire average of 147m²
- One premise was reclassified from commercial to residential between 2019 and 2020. One additional trader was identified in 2023. No other changes have been identified in terms of the number of commercial premises over the 2019-2024 period.
- There are 27 residential premises in the main shopping area, giving a ratio of 2:1 commercial versus residential properties
- Albrighton had a 26% business churn rate between 2023 and 2024—this compares with less than 10% in each of the preceding three years and was the highest of all Shropshire town centres surveyed (15% on average across Shropshire).
- 9% of all commercial premises were vacant in 2024, an unchanged rate compared with 2023. The vacancy is lower than the Shropshire average (11%) - only Much Wenlock, Broseley and Church Stretton have a lower proportion of unoccupied premises.
- Key commercial sectors include retail services, comparison retail and hospitality, although the representation of comparison is low compared to the Shropshire average.
- Retail services accounts for 30% of all commercial units, which is the second highest proportion in Shropshire (behind Highley).
- Finance , business and professional services provides represent a very small proportion of operators in Albrighton, at just 2% (9% on average across Shropshire).

Methodology Statement

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

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

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 2023 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 Address Base (complete version) 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.

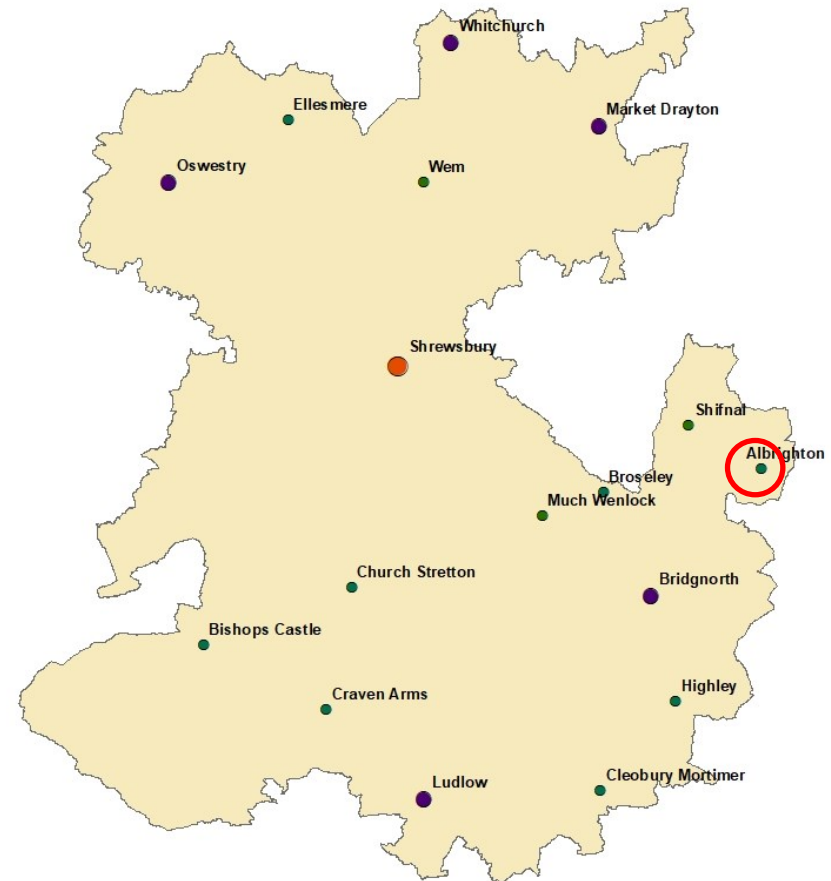
However, not all centres have comparable functions. Larger centres tend to attract workers and shoppers from much further afield than smaller centres, and consequently offer a much greater volume and variety of retail trade and consumer and business services.

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

Albrighton, with 53 commercial units in the village centre, is amongst the smallest of Shropshire's retail centres even amongst the tier three settlements.

Map 1: Shropshire's Main Retail Centres



About Albrighton

Albrighton is a large village located in the east of Shropshire. The settlement's origins can be traced back to the end of the 6th Century. Today it has a population of 4,444 and 1,945 households (*2021 Census*). Its population has grown by less than 3% since 2011. It is currently the eleventh largest settlement in Shropshire.

Albrighton is well served with transport links. The only motorway directly serving Shropshire (the M54) is easily accessible, with J3 just two miles away. This provides easy access to the Black Country, the West Midlands conurbation and the M5 and M6 (13 miles to the M6). The I54 development, which is home to major manufacturers Jaguar Land Rover, Eurofins and Moog Aerospace, is within a 15 mile commute. The M54 westbound leads to Shrewsbury (24 miles). The nearby A41 provides direct links north to Newport (11 miles), Whitchurch (31 miles) and on to Cheshire. Southbound, the A41 links to Wolverhampton (8 miles). The A464 provides access to nearby Shifnal (5.5 miles).

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

The total population within a 10 mile radius is approximately 563,200.

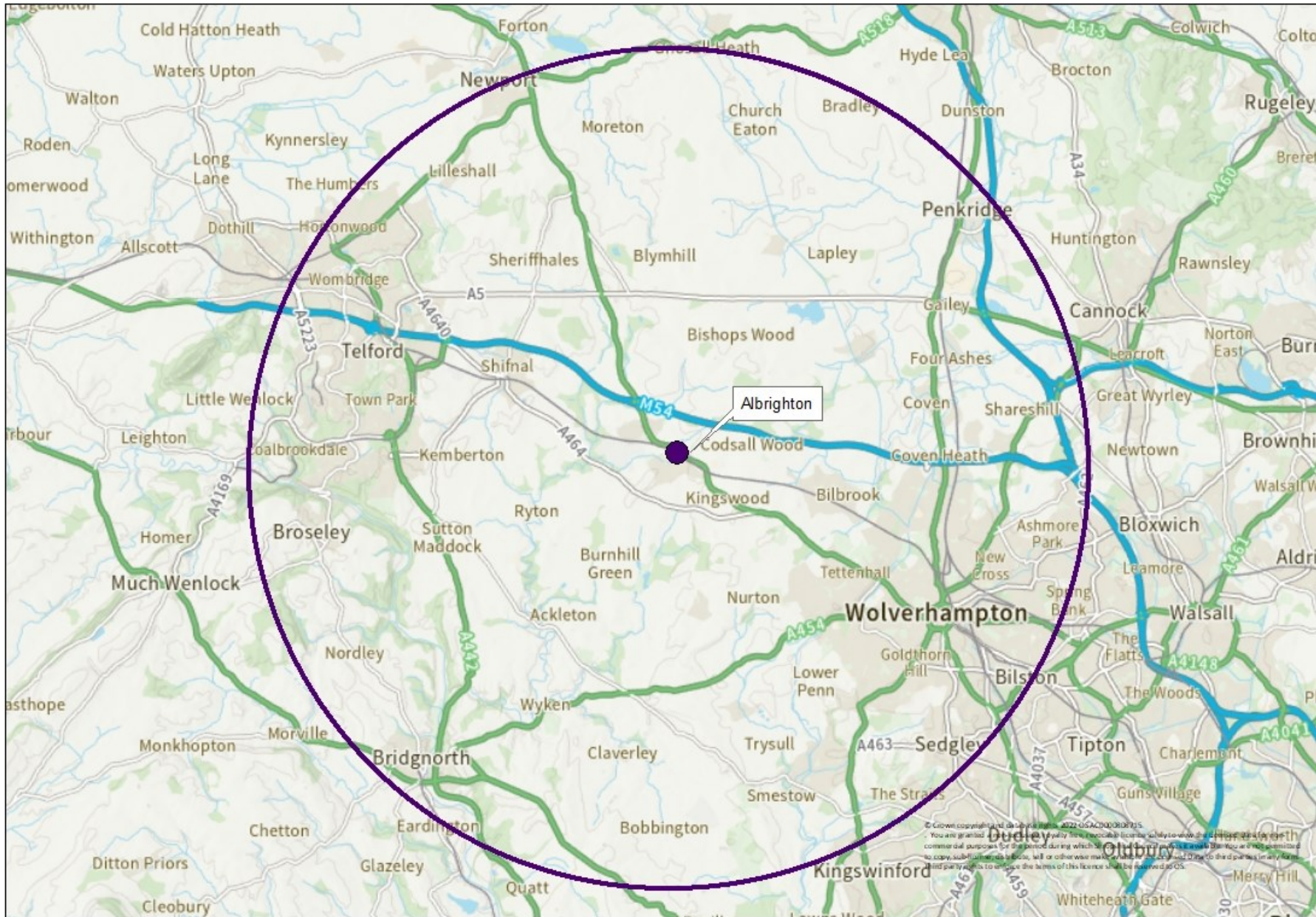
Albrighton provides approximately 1,400 jobs across the parish council area (*ONS Business Register and Employment Survey, 2023*). Key sectors include:

- Health (29.5% of jobs)
- Accommodation & Food Services (13.2% of jobs)
- Retail (10.4% of jobs).
- Wholesale (8.3% of jobs)
- Education (6.9% of jobs)

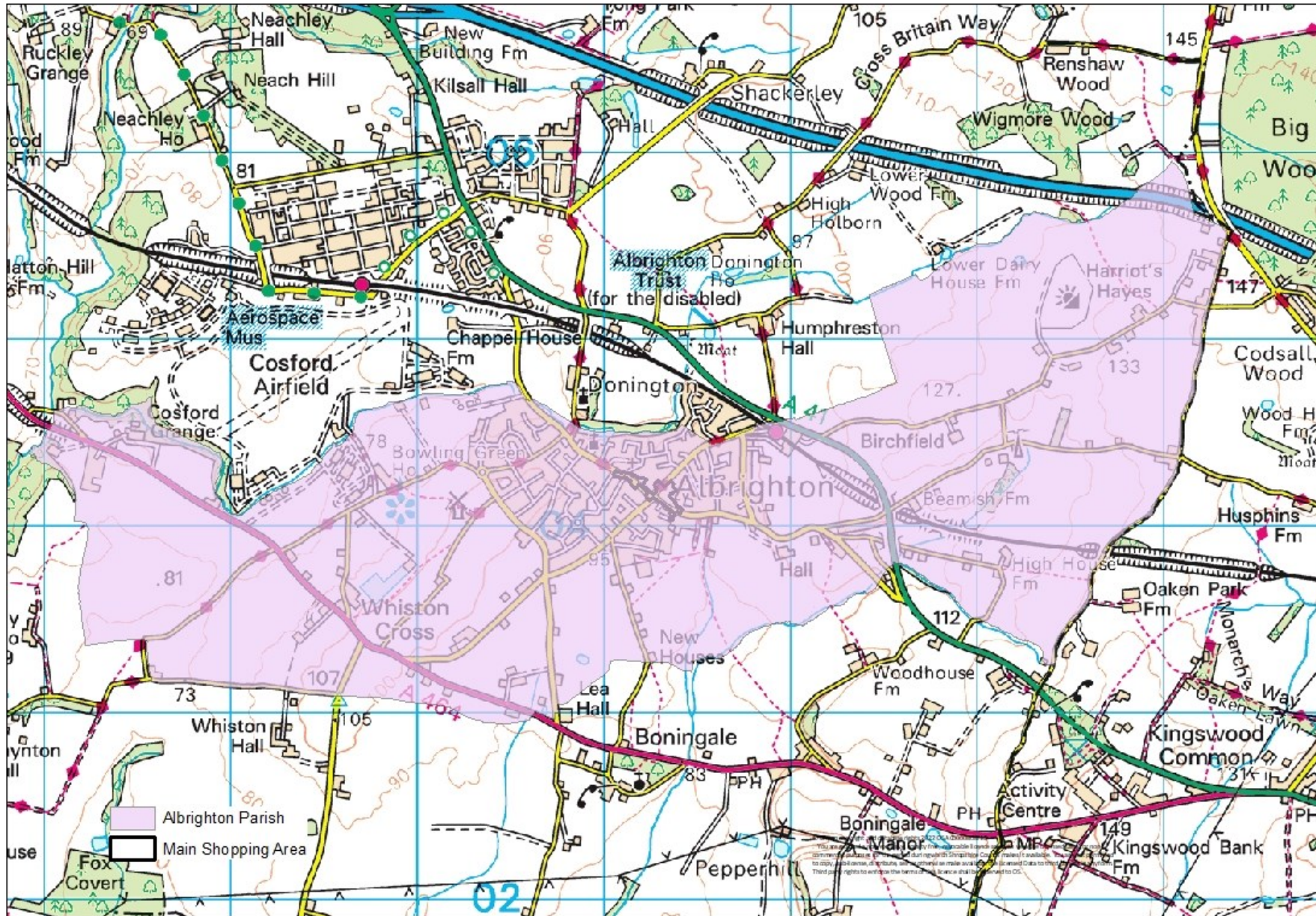
Overall, Albrighton parish council area (depicted on Map 3) covers an area of 894 hectares. The main shopping area which the survey covers (depicted on Map 4) is much smaller than this, at around 2 hectares.

The village comprises predominantly independent retail and there is a small amount of residential housing stock in the main shopping area of the town. Albrighton primarily services its own local population. However, larger towns which offer a greater choice of comparison retail and more leisure and hospitality opportunities also attract visitors from Albrighton. Telford, Wolverhampton and Bridgnorth are all popular destinations for Albrighton residents.

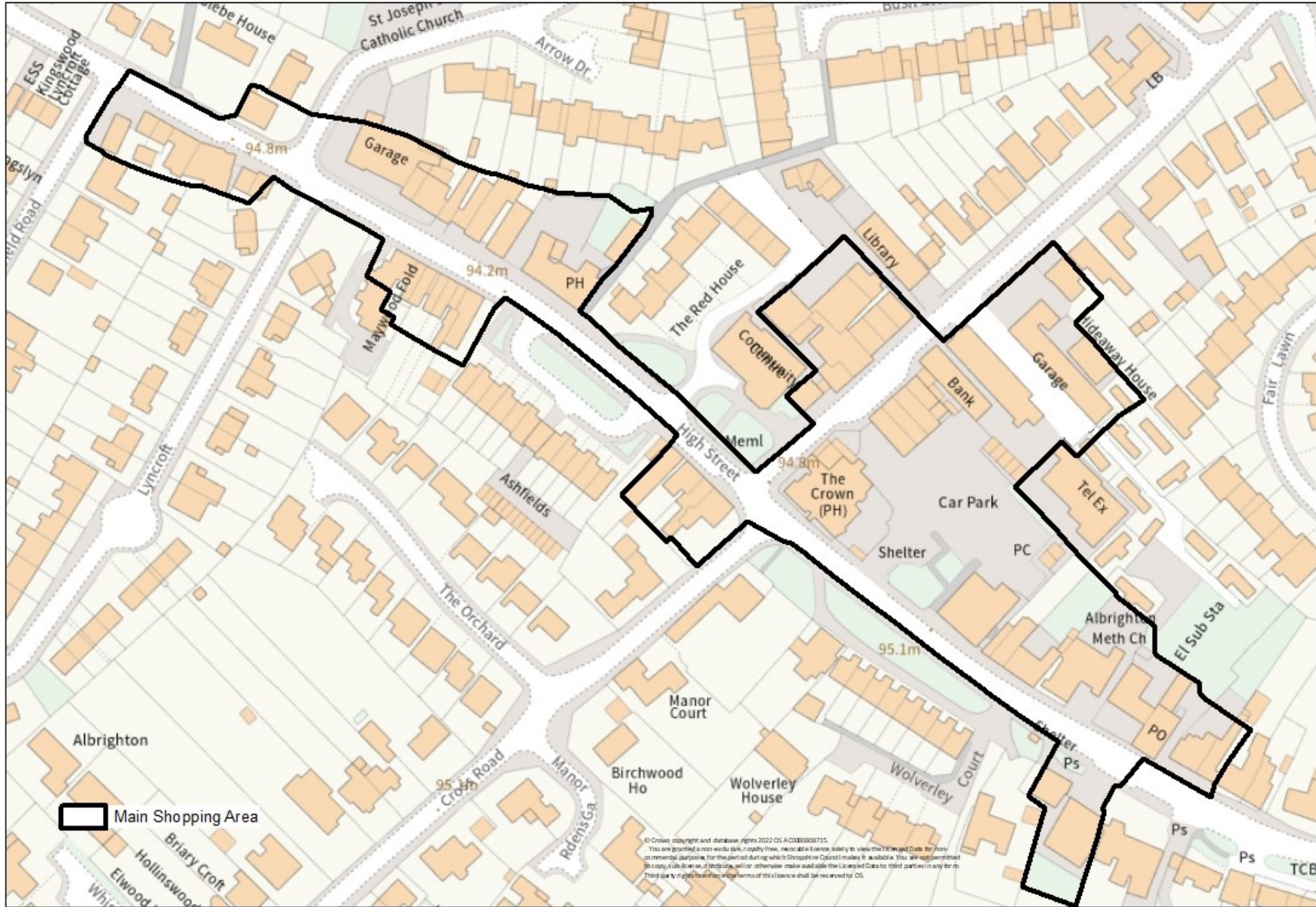
Map 2: Location of Albrighton showing 10 mile radius



Map 3: Albrighton Parish Council Area



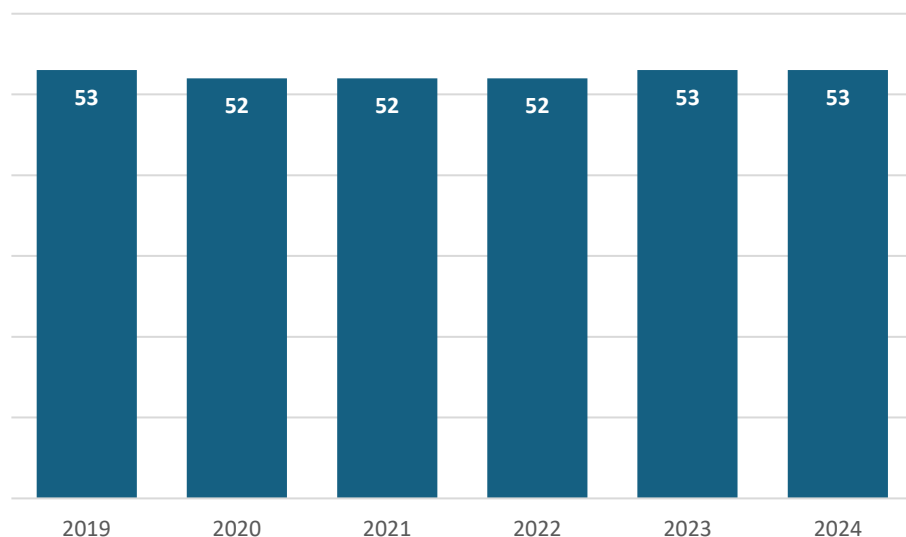
Map 4: Main Retail Shopping Area and Survey Boundary



Key Audit Results

A total of 53 commercial premises are located within the Albrighton survey area. These are primarily in High Street (38 businesses) and Station Road (15 businesses). Gross floor space allocated to these businesses is around 6,300m² (over two-thirds on High Street). The average store size is 118m² with units ranging in size from 24m² to 426m². There is a further cluster of 12 shops further up the High Street outside of the main shopping zone. Likewise, there are an additional five outlets (including a Lonsdale supermarket) further up Station Road that fall outside the main shopping area.

Chart 1: Number of Commercial Units in Albrighton, 2019-2024



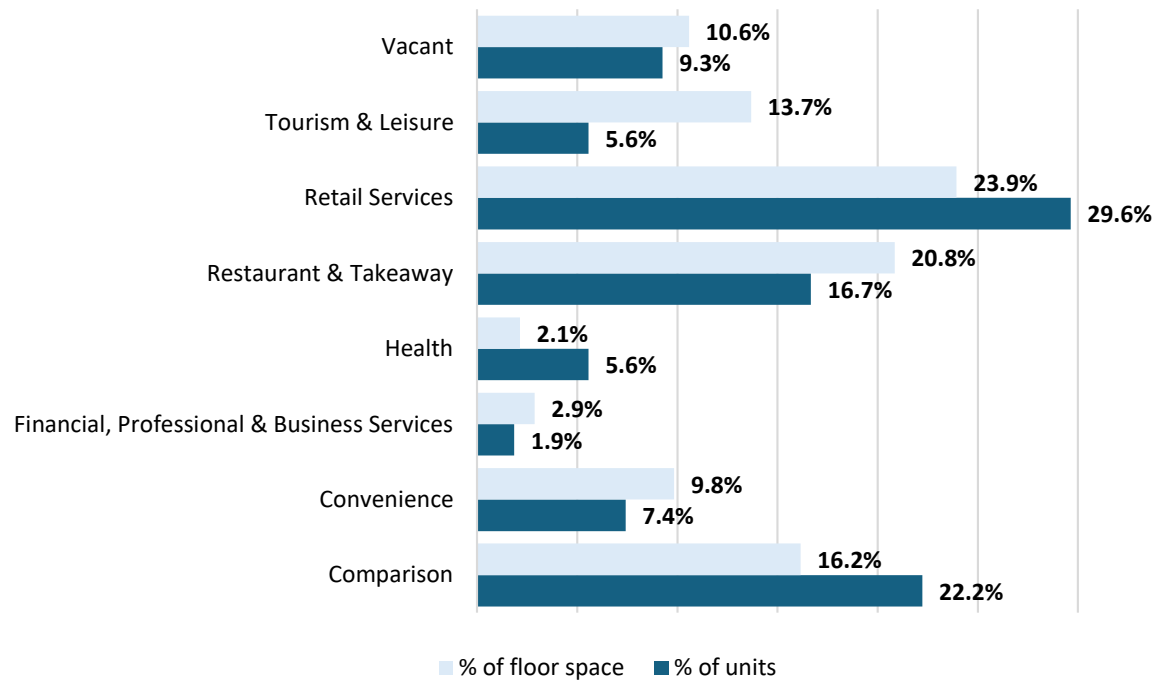
The amount of commercial space in Albrighton village centre rose slightly in 2023 compared with the previous three years. This was due to a new business operating within the village hall. There was a loss of approximately 75m² in 2020—the equivalent of one fewer outlet which has been converted into a residential property. In 2024, two units were merged into one while an additional business opened on the first floor of the High Street.

Other than these changes, the retail space in the village has been stable over the last six years.

The highest proportion of commercial units in Albrighton is allocated to retail services, accounting for 29.6% of units and for 23.9% of floor space in 2024. A substantial share is allocated to comparison retail (22.2% of units and 16.2% of floor space). Convenience retail accounts for only a small share of units (7.4%) but for a slightly higher proportion of floor space (9.8%). 16.7% of units are attributable to restaurants and takeaways, while 5.6% of units are occupied by tourism and leisure operators.

There were five vacant premises in Albrighton in 2024 (9.3% of units), which is the equivalent of 10.6% of floor space.

Chart 2: Breakdown of Albrighton Commercial Premises by Classification, 2024



Change since 2023

There has been comparatively little change in the business mix in Albrighton over the last year. The comparison offer was improved by the addition of one outlet—similarly one new operator in the restaurant and health and care sectors were identified. Meanwhile, there were two fewer finance and business/professional services providers.

There has been no change in the convenience, tourism & leisure or retail service sectors, and the number of vacant premises has likewise remained the same.

Overall, business turnover in Albrighton rose significantly in 2024 to a 26% churn rate. This compares with 9% in the previous year and 6% in the two years before that and was higher than any other of the surveyed Shropshire towns or villages.

Chart 3: Change in Number of Units by Category, 2023/2024

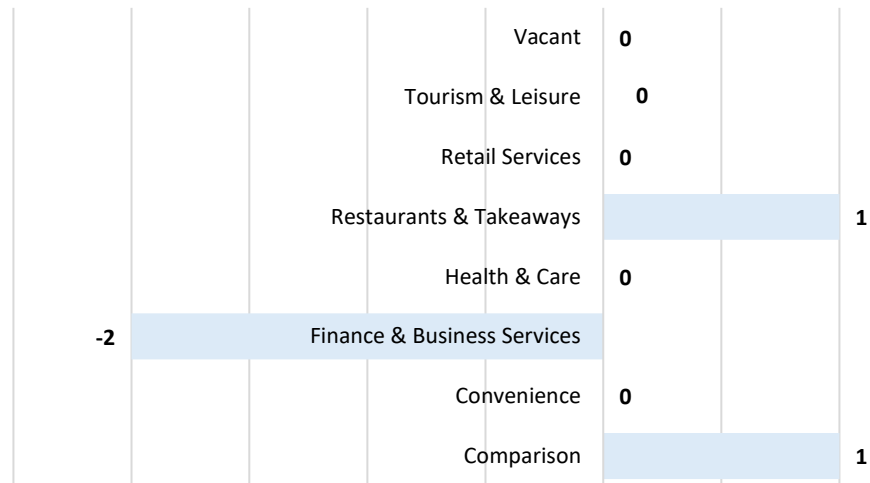
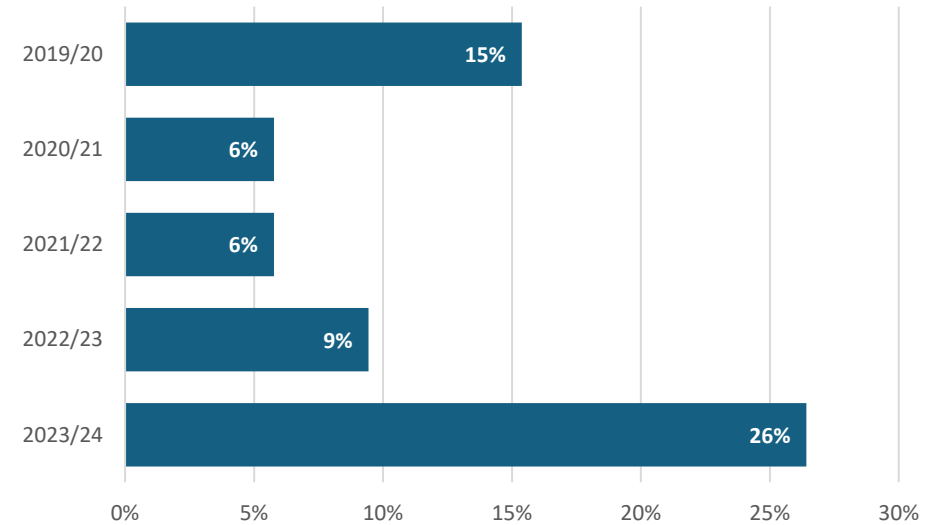


Chart 4: Level of Business Churn, 2019-2024



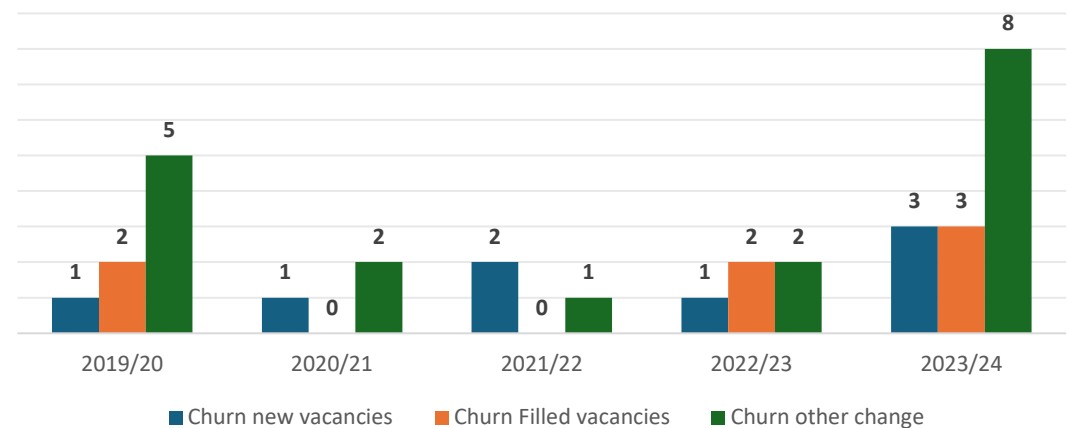
The adjacent chart shows change on the high street broken down by new vacancies that have arisen between audits, old vacancies that have been filled and all other change.

A fifth of churn between 2023 and 2024 (21%) was attributable to new vacancies (the equivalent of three new vacant premises). This compares with one new vacancy in 2023 and two in 2022. One new vacancy was recorded in 2021 and in 2020.

Three previously vacant premises in the town had become occupied by the time of the 2024 audit resulting in no overall change in the number of unoccupied commercial premises.

Other churn (premises changing hands or purpose) accounted for 57% of churn in 2024 compared with 40% in 2023 and 33% in 2022. In 2024, three business relocated to alternative premises in Albrighton and two changed names.

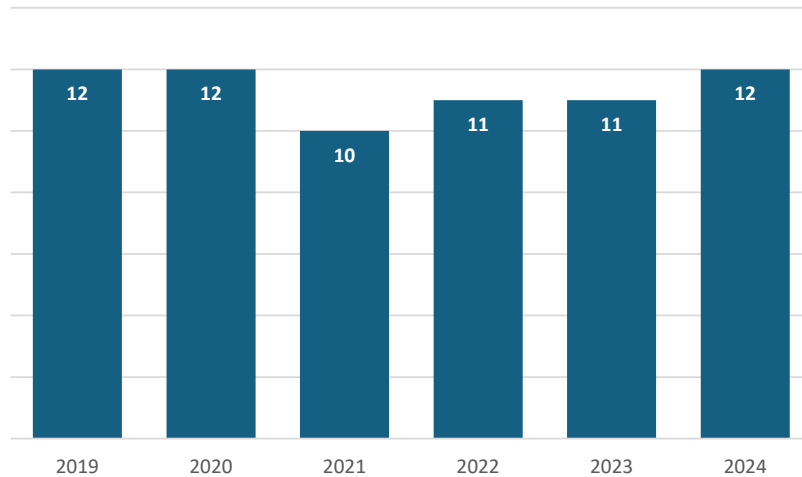
Chart 5: Breakdown of Business Churn, 2019-2024



Comparison Retail

The second largest proportion of commercial units in Albrighton is dedicated to the comparison retail category, which accounted for 22% of units and 16% of gross floor space in September 2024. This equates with 12 stores with approaching 1,000m² of floor space. Like other tier 3 towns in Shropshire, there is less emphasis on comparison retail in Albrighton than in Shrewsbury or the tier 2 towns, with Telford a close destination offering a wide range of choice in the comparison sector.

Chart 6: Number of Comparison Goods Stores, 2019-2024



The number of comparison goods stores remained unchanged between 2019 and 2020, although there was some churn.

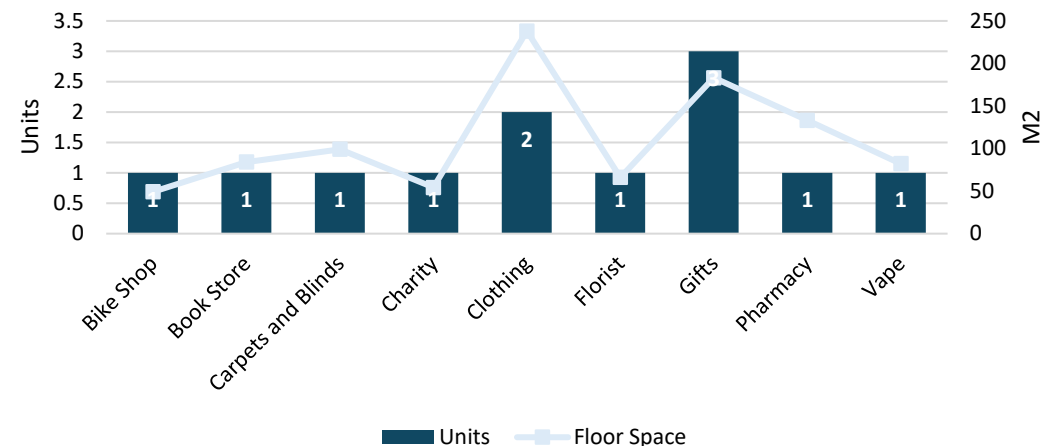
However, two comparison goods stores closed between 2020 and 2021 (a 16.7% reduction), with the loss of an antiques store and a shoe shop. This equates with a loss of 100m² comparison floor space. There was some recovery in 2022, with a dog gift store opening, which added 50m² to comparison floor space.

There was no change at all in the comparison offer in 2023 but there was an addition in 2024 in the form of a new clothing store.

Within the town there are three gift shops, two clothing shops, a bicycle retailer, a book shop, a charity store, a carpet shop, a florist, a pharmacy and a vape store.

All stores are independent.

Chart 7: Breakdown of Comparison Retail by Type, 2024



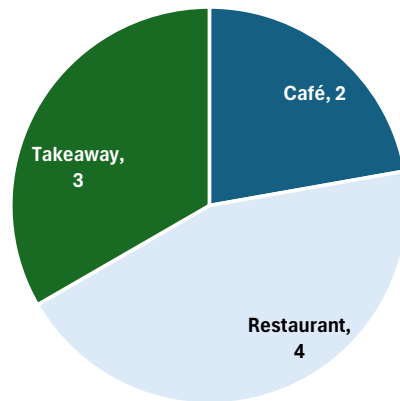
Convenience Retail

There are four convenience stores within the main shopping area of Albrighton, representing around 600m² of floor space. The convenience offer was unchanged between 2019 and 2022, but the butcher closed between the 2022 and 2023 audits, with the loss of approaching 200m² of floor space. The classification accounts for 7% of all units and for 10% of gross floor space. The proportion of units attributable to convenience retail in Albrighton is around average compared with other tier 3 Shropshire settlements, albeit much lower than Highley, Broseley and Much Wenlock.

As well as a supermarket (the Co-op), there is a post office (incorporating a gift store), an off-licence and a newsagent. Prior to 2024, the post office also incorporated a Spar supermarket. There is also a Londis on Station Road, albeit outside the main shopping area zone. Similarly, the village benefits from another butcher just outside the survey area. The main supermarket facilities for Albrighton residents are located in nearby Telford.

Restaurants & Takeaways

Chart 8: Breakdown of Units in the Restaurant/Takeaway Sector, 2024



17% of units in Albrighton are attributable to restaurants and takeaways, with this category accounting for a slightly larger proportion of gross floor space (21%). This sector is particularly important to the settlement. A new restaurant opened in 2024 in what was previously a vacant premises and one takeaway expanded by taking over the unit adjacent to it. There are four restaurants, three takeaways and two cafes. A range of cuisines are represented, including fish and chips, Indian and Chinese.

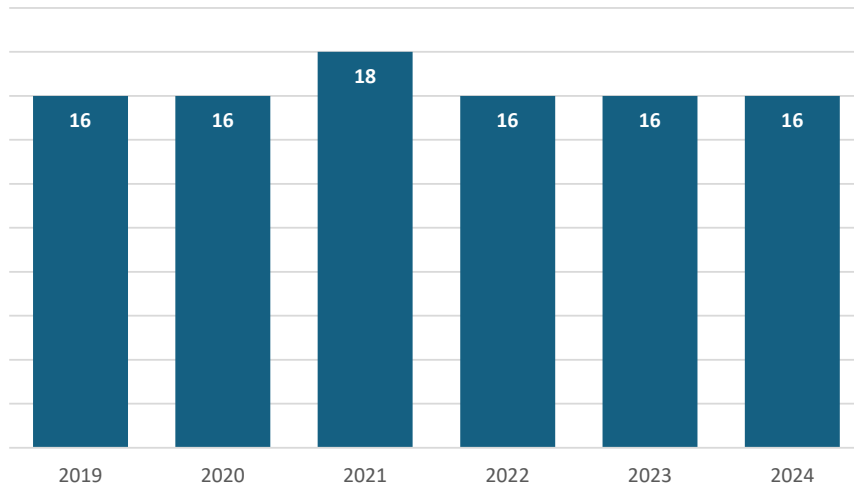
There are no chain stores in the restaurant and takeaway category in Albrighton.

Tourism & Leisure

Also within the hospitality sector, there are three public houses. These take up approximately 700m² gross floor space. There is also a health and fitness outlet in the town centre which changed premises in 2024.

Retail Services

Chart 9: Number of Retail Services Business, 2019-2024

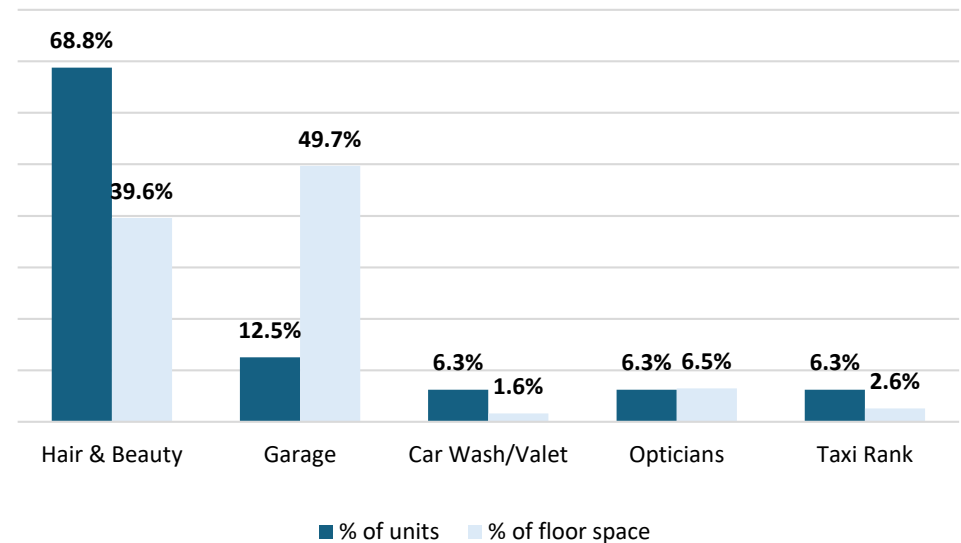


There are 16 retail service businesses operating in Albrighton centre, with these accounting for almost 1,500m² of gross floor space. This equates with 30.2% of all units and 23.3% of floor space. The number decreased by two in 2021, taking the number back down to the level seen in 2019 and 2020. There was no further change in the number operating in retail services in either 2023 or 2024. The proportion of units attributable to retail services is higher in Albrighton than in any other Shropshire town except Highley.

There are a very high number of operators are in the barber and hair salon classification, with these together representing over two thirds of units and almost 40% of retail services floor space. There are three barbers and eight unisex or ladies' hairdressers/beauty salons. One new hair salon opened in 2024 and another changed premise.

In addition, there are two garages/motor repair operators, with these accounting for a high proportion of category floor space (almost half). There is also an optician, a taxi rank and a car wash and valet service.

Chart 10: Breakdown of Retail Services by Type, 2024



Finance, Business & Professional Services

Since the closure of the Lloyds bank in Albrighton in 2021, there has been no bank in the village. Two professional services providers (a technology company and a surveyor) began trading in 2023, both occupying premises which had been vacant in 2022. However, both had closed by 2024. This means that the sole representative in the finance, business and professional services sector is an electrical contractor. The only Shropshire centre surveyed with a lower representation of this sector is Highley.

Health & Care

Within the health classification, there is a dentist practising in Albrighton village centre. In addition a foot clinic began operating out of the village hall during 2023. There were no changes to the sector in 2024.

Vacant Units

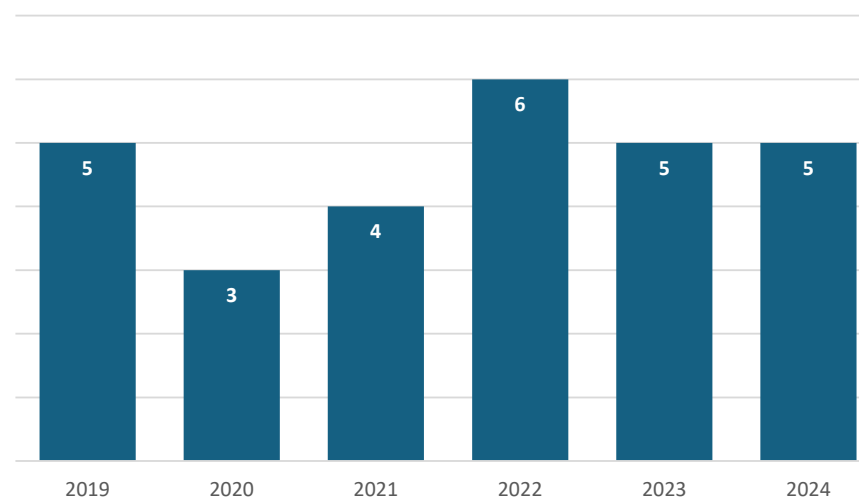
The number of vacant premises in Albrighton has fluctuated slightly in recent years. In 2019 there were five vacant premises. This number had fallen to three by 2020 and crept back up to four in 2021. By 2022 the number had risen still further to six. The number of vacant premises stood at five in 2023 and 2024, which is the equivalent of a vacancy rate of 9.4% .

The vacancy rate is lower than the Shropshire average (11%) and is also lower than the national average, which stood at 14.0% in the fourth quarter of 2023 according to BRC (data relating to high streets only).

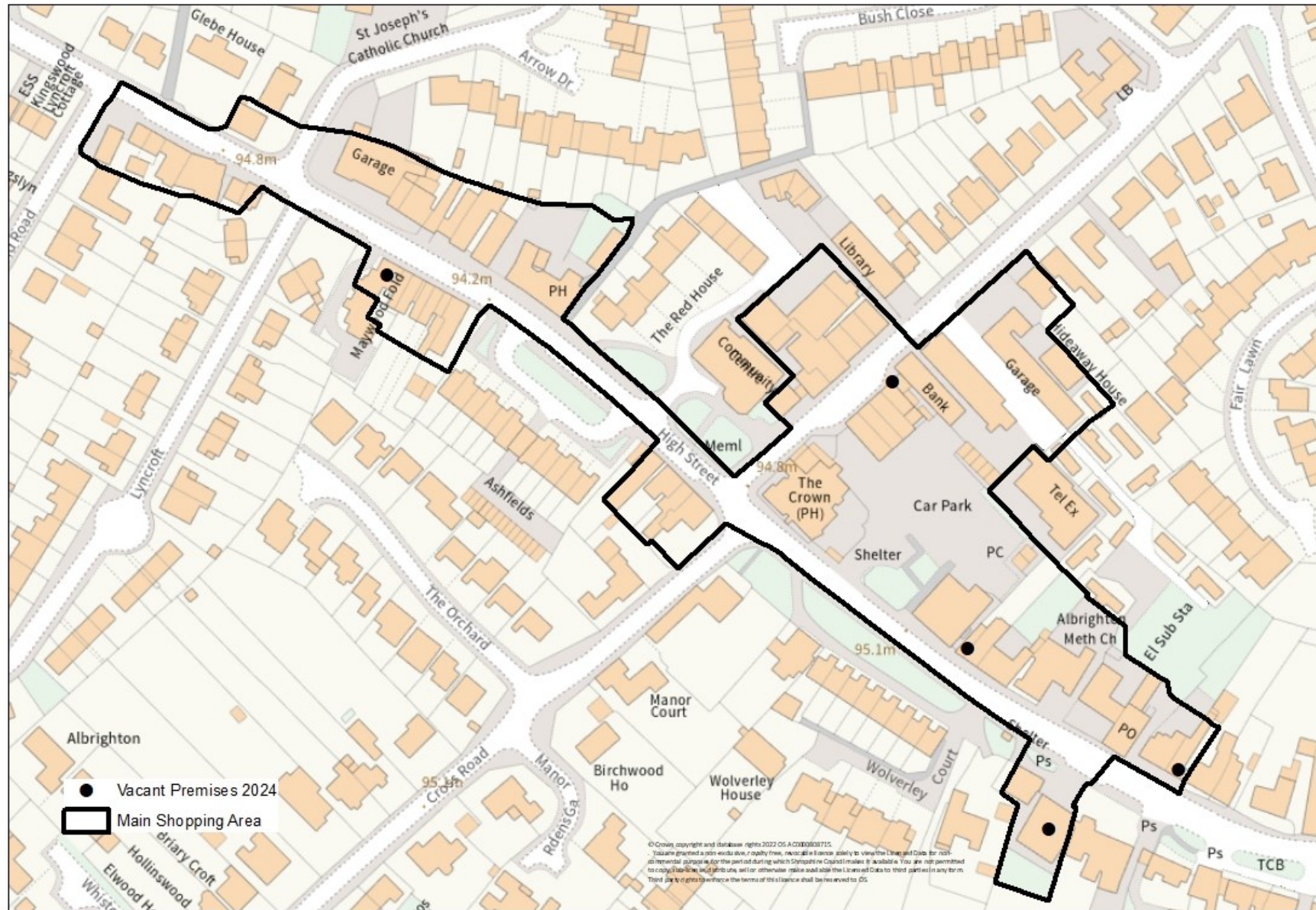
There are four vacant premises on the High Street and one on Station Road.

Three of the vacancies in 2024 became vacant between the 2023 and 2024 audits (60%). One unit has been vacant since at least 2019 and another since 2020.

Chart 11: Number of Vacant Units, 2019-2024

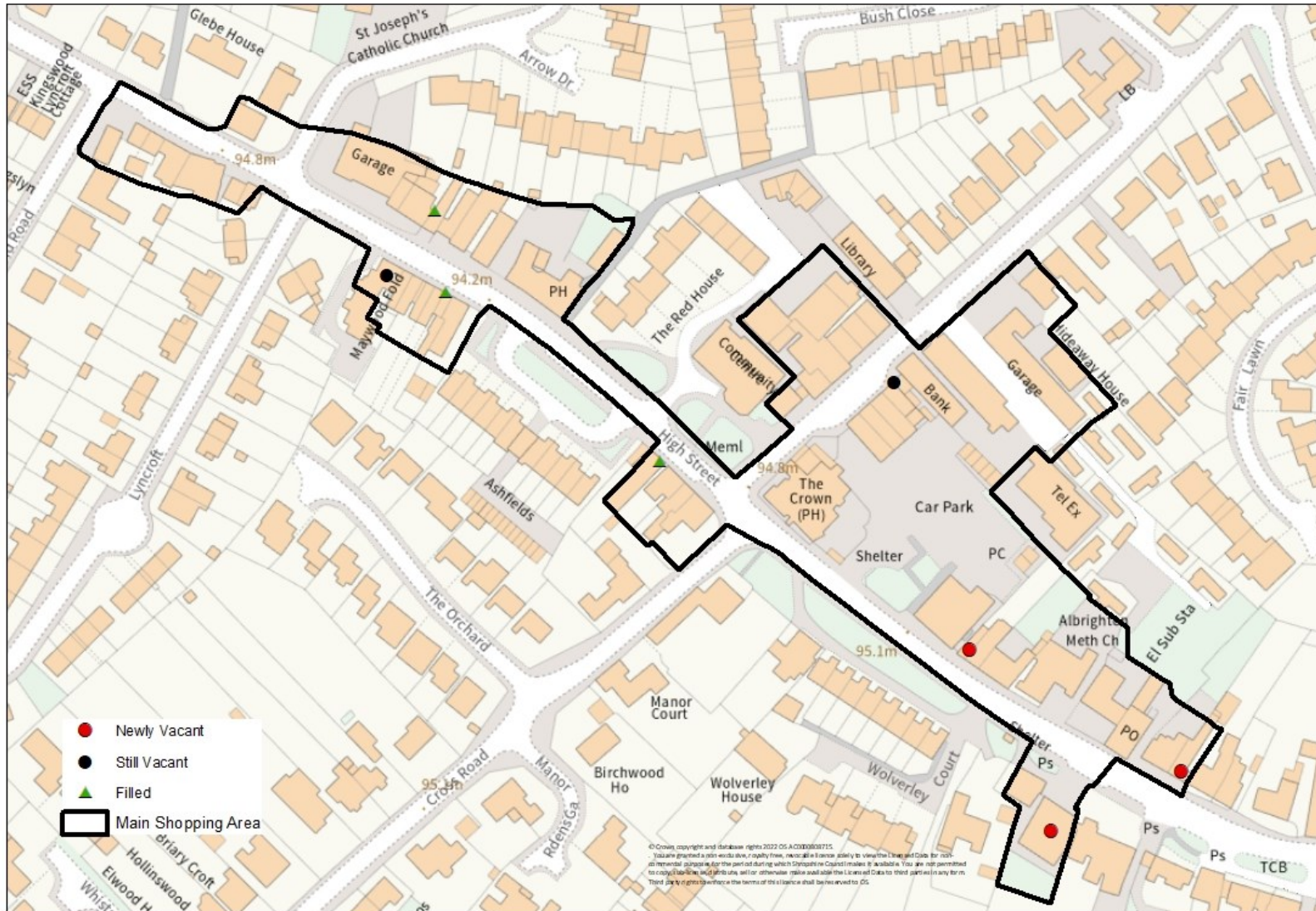


Map 5: Location of Vacant Commercial Premises, 2024



Of the five vacant premises in Albrighton in 2024, two had been vacant in 2023, while three had become vacant at some point during the year. Over the same period of time, three premises which had been empty in 2023 became occupied.

Map 6: Change in Location of Vacant Commercial Premises, 2023/24



Residential Premises

Although the main shopping streets in Albrighton are primarily occupied by commercial premises, there is also a small quantity of residential dwellings. In total, 27 residential premises are located in the audit area, of which the majority are flats (24 or 89%) which are largely located above retail or other commercial outlets. This stock is primarily along the High Street. There are also three terraced houses, but no detached or semi-detached premises within the shopping zone. The amount of residential stock in the shopping area has not changed since 2019.

Map 7: Location of Residential Premises in Albrighton Town Centre



Chart 12: Breakdown of Residential Properties by Type, 2024

