

BRIDPORT TOWN CENTRE HEALTH CHECK 2023



Town Centre Health Check 2023
Produced by Bridport Town Council November 2023

All health check data collected is downloadable from:
<https://www.bridport-tc.gov.uk/healthcheck/>

BRIDPORT HEALTH CHECK 2023

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KEY FINDINGS

The 2023 retail survey tells us that whilst the number of retail outlets has remained stable (204) **a significant number of vacant premises have appeared in the town centre** (14 vacant premises in 2023 compared to 7 in 2021 and 8 in 2019). Some premises are quickly re purposed as another retail outlet but others have remained closed/ vacant for some time – notably the former High Street Banks.

Of the 74 retail categories surveyed in 2023, **18 have seen a decline in the number of retail outlets since 2021. Only 9 retail categories have grown in number of outlets since 2021.** Loss of the last greengrocers in the town centre in 2023 is a concern as was the closure of the iconic Leakers Bakery.

Overall shopper satisfaction levels with Bridport Town Centre are declining - 34% of respondents to the shoppers survey scored the town centre 8-10 = excellent and 54% as 4-7 = average. This compares with 55% scoring the town centre excellent and 38% average in 2019. In 2023 55% of respondents felt that Bridport town centre was getting worse with 36% reporting staying the same and 5% seeing improvements. This is a gloomier outlook than in 2019 when 20% respondents felt the town getting worse and 48% staying the same and 28% improving.

Despite a poor response level the retailers survey seems to reflect a gloomier outlook for the town – when asked to look ahead to trading in the next two years: 44% expect trading to be the same whilst 44% worse than 2023.

For the first time since starting Health Checks in 2019 more survey responders are using the car to visits Bridport (52%) than walking and cycling combined (42% walk, 5% bike) with use of public transport declining further to just 1%.

There are **recurring issues identified by both shoppers and retailer impacting on the overall health of Bridport town centre:**

- Cluttered pavements,
- Traffic congestion;
- Car parking fees,
- Empty shops,
- The public realm is looking tired and in need of a refresh.

A renewed urgency to use the 2023 health check findings alongside the [Bridport Investment Plan](#) to secure Government Prosperity funding for town centre improvements including, 20 mph gateways, improved walking and cycling infrastructure, enhanced events programme and more coherent marketing of the town as a destination.

BACKGROUND

Town centres are complex places that serve a wide range of people and purposes. The complexity of issues affecting the performance and prosperity of town centres and high streets has become increasingly recognised. Businesses operating on the high street are facing a growing array of operational challenges, evidenced by a steady decline in store numbers on many high streets. Understanding and re-positioning themselves strategically to better serve their communities and visitors in line with the ethos of each location, town centres can re-emerge at the centre of the community, cultural and civic life with retail as a key – though not always a dominant element.

The Association of Town and City Management report – *Successful Town Centres (2018)* suggests thinking of town centres as living ecosystems, where retail alone may not be the only (or even necessarily fully dominant) factor affecting their performance as attractive places in which to live, work, play, visit and shop.

Why a Health Check?

Town Centre Health Checks are a means of assessing the vitality, viability, resilience and performance of town centres over time. The results of health check exercises are used to formulate strategies for improvements and inform policy documents.

The submission version of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan recognises that the retail and cultural offer of the Centre of Bridport is a critical element for the future viability of the local economy, as well as underpinning the quality of life for residents. The neighbourhood plan includes a project to undertake regular health checks of the commercial offer provided by the Centre of Bridport. The data being used to inform development proposals and build a robust evidence base for future reviews of the local and neighbourhood plans.

High Streets have been under pressure since the financial crash in 2008. The widespread adoption of internet shopping has exacerbated issues for many retailers, as customers exercise greater choice as to how they shop and spend leisure time. Health check data is now more valuable than ever, as retailers and councils try to adapt development policies to meet changing lifestyles and habits, whilst retaining a strong economic and social offer.

The 2023 health check repeats the 2019 and 2021 health checks and provides valuable information on how the Town is performing and allows longer term trends to be considered. Health checks offer a robust evidence base to inform policy development and underpin funding proposals for a range of town centre initiatives to support local businesses and build resilience into the town centre economy.

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FOOTFALL FINDINGS

Footfall data was collected from 3 locations in the town centre; West Street between the Nationwide and Costa, East Street outside the Bull Hotel and South Street outside the Launderette. Surveys were undertaken on 4 dates between July and October 2023. It was decided to survey on different days of the week in different months and during the morning and afternoon. Counts were for a standard 20 minutes.

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Footfall Counts

Location	Count 1 Weds July 26th		Count 2 Sat August 26th		Count 3 Thurs Sept 21st		Count 4 Tues October 17th	
Weather	Sunny am, cloudy/rain threat in pm		Sunny spells, thundery showers pm		Sunshine and cloud am Overcast, spitting pm		Sunshine and cloud, chilly am	
<i>Times</i>	10.30 10.50	14.00 14.20	10.30 10.50	14.00 14.20	10.30 10.50	14.00 14.20	10.30 10.50	14.00 14.20
South Street Outside Launderette	276	167	501	292	94*	80	80	114
West Street Outside Nationwide	132	133	209	193	94	88	101	104
East Street Outside Bull Hotel	242	164	429	239	106	108	89	115
Count Total	Day	1114	Day	1863	Day	570	Day	603

*Van parked on pavement during count

Observations from the footfall counts 2023:

- Seasonal differences in footfall are pronounced. July and August counts are significantly higher than September and October.
- The August Saturday count returned the biggest footfall counts, over 3 times the numbers collected in October.
- The difference between the July and August counts and the September and October counts suggests that the summer holiday season and street market days have a significant impact on footfall in the town.

- There is a significant variation between morning and afternoon footfall numbers across most count locations. Morning counts are generally higher than afternoon footfall counts. However, October afternoon counts came in higher than mornings. The shopper survey results (see pg 10) show a clear preference for morning shopping in Bridport.
- South Street recorded the highest footfall counts in July and August with West Street recording the lowest footfalls in the same two months. Excluding the September afternoon count in East Street, South Street would appear to be the most popular shopping street. This could be due to the draw of Bucky Doo Square and easy access from South Street Car Park/Toilets.
- West Street footfall is significantly lower than South and East Street counts except in October when it was higher.
- The lower footfall numbers recorded in September and October gives an indication of the level of baseload of shoppers as opposed to the summer counts where visitors will be more significant.

Comparisons with 2019 Footfall Counts

Location	Count 1 Weds July	Count 2 Sat August	Count 3 Thurs Sept	Count 4 Tues October					
2019 Weather	Dry/sunny/ warm	Dry/sunny /warm	Dry/sunny/warm	Dry/ cool some sun					
2023 Weather	Sunny am, cloudy /rain threat in pm	Sunny spells, thundery pm	Sunshine and cloud am Overcast pm	Sunshine and cloud, chilly am					
<i>Times</i>	10.30 10.50	14.00 14.20	10.30 10.50	14.00 14.20					
South Street Laundrette	2019 2023	246 276	194 167	467 501	202 292	78 94	83 80	82 80	84 114
West Street Nationwide	2019 2023	157 132	135 133	258 209	172 193	131 94	57 88	85 101	63 104
East Street Bull Hotel	2019 2023	187 242	137 164	396 429	183 239	110 106	83 108	105 89	116 115
Count totals 2019	Day: 1056		Day: 1678		Day: 542		Day: 535		
Count totals 2023	Day: 1114		Day: 1863		Day: 570		Day: 603		

Count up - Count down

Observations from the footfall comparison 2019 - 2021:

- Total footfall counts in 2023 show increases on the 2019 figures – especially for the July and August counts.
- Streetwise South and West Street show increased footfall on 5 of the 8 count times with afternoon counts in August showing increased footfall across all count sites.

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COUNTER FINDINGS

As part of the health check, Bridport TIC provided footfall counter data for selected days, which can be compared with 2021 and 2019 data.

Location	Count 1 Weds July 28th		Count 2 Sat August 28th		Count 3 Thurs Sept 23th		Count 4 Tues October 19th	
Weather	Sunny am, cloudy /rain threat in pm		Sunny spells, thundery pm		Sunshine and cloud am Overcast pm		Sunshine and cloud, chilly am	
Times	10.30 10.50	14.00 14.20	10.30 10.50	14.00 14.20	10.30 10.50	14.00 14.20	10.30 10.50	14.00 14.20
TIC counter 2023	34	22	56	32	8	6	9	1
	Day: 281		Day: 396		Day: 175		Day: 203	

Location	Count 1 Weds July 28th		Count 2 Sat August 28th		Count 3 Thurs Sept 23th		Count 4 Tues October 19th	
Weather	Sunny, warm, windy pm		Sun and cloud, dry		Overcast, dry, some sun pm		Overcast, windy, light rain pm	
Times	10.30 10.50	14.00 14.20	10.30 10.50	14.00 14.20	10.30 10.50	14.00 14.20	10.30 10.50	14.00 14.20
TIC counter 2021	19	21	5	7	4	8	21	
	Day: 134		Day: 289		Day: 175		Day: 179	

Location	Count 1 Weds July 17th		Count 2 Sat August 24th		Count 3 Thurs Sept 19th		Count 4 Tues October 22nd	
Weather	Dry/sunny/ warm		Dry/sunny /warm		Dry/sunny/warm		Dry/ cool some sun	
Times	10.30 10.50	14.00 14.20	10.30 10.50	14.00 14.20	10.30 10.50	14.00 14.20	10.30 10.50	14.00 14.20
TIC counter 2019	16	26	81	64	46	38	30	42
	Day: 321		Day: 589		Day: 355		Day: 264	

TIC monthly counter figures:

Month	2019	2021	2023
July	12,497	1,118	9,515
August	14,134	4,245	11,117
September	10,375	5,783	7,694
October	6,826	3,877	6,356
Totals	43,832	15,023	34,682

- TIC counter numbers provided on the four count days in 2023 show significant increases on figures gathered in 2021 for July and August. Though counts in September and October are fairly similar to 2021.
- TIC counter data comparison across 2019 -2023 shows the impact of the covid pandemic on numbers in 2021. 2023 counts show a significant overall increase on 2021 but the numbers have yet to recover to the levels recorded in 2019.

Car park capacity counts 2023

As part of the 4 street surveys car parks were visited to record spaces available at selected times of the day.

Location	Count 1 Weds July 28th		Count 2 Sat August 28th		Count 3 Thurs Sept 23rd		Count 4 Tues Oct 19th	
Weather	Sunny am, cloudy /rain threat in pm		Sunny spells, thundery pm		Sunshine and cloud am Overcast pm		Sunshine and cloud, chilly am	
Times	11.00	14.30	11.00	14.30	11.00	14.30	11.00	14.30
East Street Car Park (Long Stay -79 spaces)	FULL	2	FULL	4	6	17	7	13
East Street (Short Stay 64 + 2 disabled spaces)	FULL	2	FULL		FULL	4	1	5
South Street Car Park (98 + 5 disabled spaces)	11	21	FULL	9	24	43	42	47
Wykes Court Car Park (96 spaces)	26	43	FULL	16	37	42	70	71

Observations on car park capacity counts:

- East Street car parks appear to be the most popular, recording the lowest levels of available spaces across the 4 days of survey.
- The 11.00 counts are the point in the day with fewest parking spaces. This is particularly true for the August Saturday count, when all car parks were full.
- There is generally more car park capacity in the afternoon, reflecting the generally reduced footfall counts in the afternoon.
- Of the car parks surveyed, Wykes Court appears to be the one with the most available spaces across count times.

Comparison with 2019 Car Park Counts:

- The overall pattern of car park usage is largely the same in 2023 as in 2019 – high morning parking, tailing off in the afternoons, with East Street being the most popular car park.
- 2023 parking figures show higher levels of parking in the afternoon period compared with 2019. Across the 3 car parks surveyed, afternoon spaces in 2019 were a cumulative 427 spaces (Jul-Aug-Sept) compared to 203 spaces (Jul-Aug-Sept) in 2023.

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RANGE AND VARIETY OF RETAIL OUTLETS SURVEY FINDINGS

The 2002/2006 surveys undertaken by West Dorset District Council (WDDC) were repeated in July 2019 using the same business classifications. Comparisons between the 2002/2006 data and the 2019 data is problematic, as the 2002/2006 survey didn't list businesses allocated to each category. As a result, it is likely that across the 3 data sets, there will be inconsistencies in the allocation of businesses into categories. Since the 2019 survey the names of the businesses allocated to each category have been recorded, so that this will not be a factor in future survey comparisons.

The WDDC 2002 and 2006 surveys only included the area defined in the Local Plan as Bridport Town Centre. Data has been collected for this area since 2019 for comparison purposes. A new baseline for the larger Centre of Bridport area as defined by the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan was collected in 2019 and repeated in 2021 and again in 2023.

Observations of changes in Town Centre retail between 2019 and 2023:

- Overall, the 2023 retail survey tells us that whilst the number of retail outlets has remained stable (204) **a significant number of vacant premises have appeared in the town centre** (14 vacant premises in 2023 compared to 7 in 2021 and 8 in 2019). Some premises are quickly re purposed as another retail outlet but others have remained closed/ vacant for some time – notably the former High Street Banks.
- Of the 74 retail categories surveyed in 2023, **18 have seen a decline in the number of retail outlets since 2021. Only 9 retail categories have grown in number of outlets since 2021.**
- The number of **retail categories with reduced number of outlets in the town between 2021 and 2023 = 18, including greengrocers, hairdressers, shoe shops, locksmiths and Estate Agents.**

- The number of **retail categories with an increased number of outlets in the town between 2021 and 2023 = 9, including clothing and gift shops.**
- **In the larger Centre of Bridport Area retail premises declined from 278 in 2021 to 261 in 2023.** 45 categories surveys had the same number of outlets as in 2021. 9 categories had a greater number of outlets – including Solicitors and florists. 26 categories had fewer outlets including electrical outlets.
- A number of the retail businesses vacating the town centre do appear to have found alternative premises on local industrial estates; Babygear to Dreadnought, Country Seats Design to Old Laundry and Findlay Surveyors to Gore Cross.

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SHOPPER SURVEY FINDINGS

A survey aimed at shoppers in the Town Centre was produced and made available between July and October 2023. In total, 141 shopper surveys were completed and returned.

Headline findings in 2023:

- For the first time since starting Health Checks in 2019 more survey responders are using the car to visits Bridport (52%) than walking and cycling combined (42% walk, 5% bike) with use of public transport declining further to just 1%,
- 63% of survey respondees favour morning shopping 9.00am to noon than afternoon (34%).
- Overall satisfaction level with Bridport Town Centre has fallen significantly since 2019. In 2023 34% scored the town centre 8-10 = excellent and 54% as 4-7 = average compared with 55% scoring the town centre 8-10 = excellent and 38% average in 2019 .
- Satisfaction returns for the range of eating and drinking are down on 2019 levels. In 2023 34% score 8-10 = excellent and 58% average compared with 61% excellent and 35% average in 2019.
- Satisfaction returns for the variety of shops is also down on 2019 levels - 23% score >8 excellent and 56% average, compared with 43% excellent and 42% average in 2019.
- Dissatisfaction scores remain high for public transport (57% scored <3 = disappointing, compared to 61% in 2021). More respondents reported dis satisfaction with car parking in 2023 (41%) up from 21% in 2019.
- In terms of safety and cleanliness responses in 2023 are slightly down but broadly similar to 2019. For cleanliness, respondents scored the town 35% excellent and 51% average in 2023 compared with 41% excellent and 51% average in 2019. For safety, respondents scored the town 48% excellent and 46% average in 2023 compared with 52% excellent and 42% average in 2019.

- The majority of responders in 2023 felt that overall Bridport town centre was getting worse (55%) with 36% reporting staying the same and 5% seeing improvements. This is a gloomier outlook than in 2019 when 20% respondents felt the town getting worse and 48% staying the same and 28% improving.

Selected Shopper Survey comments – 141 received:

Car Parking	Shopping	Traffic	Public Realm
I used to travel to Bridport Town Centre 2 or more times a week, but parking is so expensive now I just come in for my monthly prescription and avoid it at other times.	I am a 17 year old girl and I can promise to whoever is reading this that everybody my age feels left out. There is nothing for us to do and no-where to hang out there are no affordable food places such as McDonald's.	1. Close the top of South Street if only on a Saturday. 2. Turn the top of North Street into a one way system with the bottom of Victoria Grove.	More central located events and days to give markets and retailers more opportunity. Areas to sit and relax and eat food around the centre
We would visit the shops more often if there was 1/2 hour free parking for quick "pop-in" visits. It's cheaper to pay postage for online shopping as it is.	If Bridport is to retain its distinctive character and culture, more must be done to encourage independent retailers and pop-up retailers. People want something different from the usual chains.	The traffic is terrible, noisy and polluting. Suggest you stop the tractors from going through town and get some electric buses travelling to and from the surrounding villages and housing estates.	The main areas of the town have become very scruffy lately. In particular the showcase areas of Buckydoo Square, the Town Hall itself and South Street.
I think increasing car park charges (or charging at all) is short-term thinking. A vibrant town centre with profitable businesses needs encourage people into the town with free or low-priced car parks and a free bus service. In the long term it will be better for the town and the businesses and can only encourage growth, and in doing so will ultimately bring in more money to the council.	The town has a special feel to it, assisted hugely by the presence of the market two days a week and the excellent range of events in the town. As a young person I would like to see more high street chain stores especially clothing & shoe stores. If I want to purchase such items larger homeware items I will go to larger areas such as Exeter, Poole or Yeovil. I also find that most of the independent shops are expensive.	Improving the town centre relies on easy and pleasant access and affordable parking. More must be done to bring people into Bridport by public transport. For a town of its current size, let alone its projected size, the current provision is absolutely pathetic.	Can the paved area in front of the Arts Centre be incorporated with Bucky Doo Square in some way? Clearing away the cones and signs used on market days. They are left in piles on the pavements until the next market which makes the place look untidy.

Car Parking	Shopping	Traffic	Public Realm
Obviously cheaper parking and signs to show where spaces are available to avoid constant traffic driving around looking for spaces.	Many people visit Bridport and comment on the range of independent shops we have in the town. They often comment that they have lost these shops where they live. This is what we should be protecting. It's what makes Bridport unique.	Apart from the main north-south cycle route from Bradpole to West Bay the overall infrastructure for cycling in and around the town is very poor.	Co-ordinate the large black planters around town. It's all a bit piecemeal - some are good and well looked after, some aren't - but perhaps an overall "look" would make the place seem better cared for.

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RETAILER SURVEY FINDINGS

A survey for retailers was produced and made available between July and October 2023. The online survey was promoted through the Chamber of Trade and local social media.

In total, 9 responses were received. Headline findings were:

- All respondents identified as 'independent retailers',
- 55% had been in business in Bridport for over 10 years,
- In terms of trading performance in 2023: 20% reported 2023 as better than 2021, 30% reported worse than 2021 with 50% reporting same as 2021,
- Looking ahead to trading in the next two years: 44% expect trading to be the same whilst 44% worse than 2023.
- 55% of respondents reported they would be changing their business in the next two years with a number exploring retirement.
- Town strengths listed were: variety of independent businesses, the twice weekly street market, and the history of the town,
- Opportunities included: more entertainment and events,
- Town weaknesses listed were: parking and traffic flow, empty shops and a general sense that the town is looking tired and scruffy.

Selected Retailer Comments– 9 received:

It would be nice if the small independent shops were promoted more providing a unique shopping experience.	It's being stifled by lack of imagination!	Close access to south street on a market day. Have the stalls in the middle of the road. At the moment too many dogs and mobility scooters clogging up the path. Very frustrating for shoppers to navigate.	Bridport is amazing we just have to be careful in the next few years to bring in good quality business, not more coffee chains, no more charity shops and no more Knick knock shops!
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MARKET DATA FINDINGS

Market analysis 2019, 2021, 2023							
	<i>Total stalls</i>	<i>Seasonal stalls</i>	<i>Seasonal %</i>	<i>Income</i>	<i>Per stall Average</i>	<i>Weds total</i>	<i>Sat total</i>
<i>JULY 19</i>	583	67	12%	£11,000	£18.87	244	339
<i>JULY 21</i>	493	138	28%	£10,410	£21.12	237	256
<i>JULY 23</i>	460	171	37%	£9,580	20.83	195	265
<i>AUGUST 19</i>	418	5	1%	£8,960	£21.43	164	254
<i>AUGUST 21</i>	481	135	28%	£10,115	£21.04	222	259
<i>AUGUST 23</i>	483	200	43%	£10,380	£21.49	225	250
<i>SEPTEMBER 19</i>	345	0	0%	£7,650	£22.17	196	149
<i>SEPTEMBER 21</i>	494	111	22%	£10,285	£20.82	199	295
<i>SEPTEMBER 23</i>	494	199	39%	£10,817	£21.90	114	297
<i>OCTOBER 19</i>	350	23	6.5%	£6,046	£17.26	173	177
<i>OCTOBER 21</i>	379	72	19%	£4,993	£13.17	99	280
<i>OCTOBER 23</i>	354	119	34%	£4,984	£14.08	87	267
Total income 2019 £33,656				Total Income 2021 £35,803			
Total Income 2023 £35,761							

The most notable feature of this year's markets over the monitoring period has been the weather with some dreadful trading conditions, especially during July and the first week of August. Events, both local and national, were severely impacted over this period. Despite this every opportunity to trade was enthusiastically seized by traders and turnout, when the weather permitted, was excellent.

The number of seasonal traders as a proportion of the market has continued to rise and their presence is evident on both markets and in most weather conditions. South st, with its characteristic "flea market" can be said to have recovered strongly this year and space here is at a premium on some weeks.

There is evidence of a strong core resilience in the market with numbers holding their own despite adverse trading conditions, both from the weather and from a gloomy economic backdrop.

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CRIME DATA FINDINGS

Crime data for Bridport for the 12 month period September 2022 – August 2023 was captured from the [National Police website for Bridport](#) and indicates a decline in reported crimes from 1,884 in 2021 to 1,367 in 2023. “023 sees a continued reduction in reporting of anti social behaviour.

Of reported crimes between September 2022 and August 2023:

- Violence and sexual offences accounted for 34%;
- Anti- social behaviour accounted 22% and
- Criminal damage and arson 11%

This compares with data collected in 2019 and 2021:

Crime type	2019	2021	2023
Anti- social behaviour	36%	34%	22%
Violence and sexual offences	31%	31%	34%



The 2023 health check surveys on footfall, shopper and retailer surveys and range of products and services provides a useful 'snapshot' that can be assessed alongside data from 2019 and 2021 to inform actions and initiatives aimed at improving the retail offer and public realm of the Centre of Bridport.

In 2023 Bridport Town Council produced the [Bridport Investment Plan](#) – In consultation with Bridport's business community the Plan identifies 3 key investment opportunities that will increase the resilience of Bridport's local economy and drive future sustainability. Responding to the needs of the community, especially young people, developing skills for reaching net zero targets for Bridport sit firmly at the heart of the investment proposals. There is clear support for the town centre to focus more on being a space that connects people – people meeting, people learning, people sharing ideas, people shopping, eating and enjoying events.

Key learning points from the 2023 Health Check include:

- 2023 footfall counts in South and East Streets show significant increases on 2021 figures and compare favourably with counts from 2019.
- The August Saturday counts returned the biggest footfall counts, over 3 times the numbers collected in October.
- As in 2019 summer footfall counts higher than autumn counts and morning footfall counts higher than afternoon counts.
- Car parking capacity was only reached at the August Saturday count. At other times there are car parking spaces available, though mornings are busy, especially in East Street Car Park.
- 2023 parking figures show higher levels of parking in the afternoon period compared with 2019. Across the 3 car parks surveyed, afternoon spaces in 2019 were a cumulative 427 spaces (Jul-Aug-Sept) compared to 203 spaces (Jul-Aug-Sept) in 2023.
- Overall, the 2023 retail survey tells us that whilst the number of retail outlets has remained stable (204) **a significant number of vacant premises have appeared in the town centre** (14 vacant premises in 2023 compared to 7 in 2021 and 8 in 2019). Some premises are quickly re purposed as another retail outlet but others have remained closed/ vacant for some time – notably the former High Street Banks.

- Overall satisfaction level with Bridport Town Centre has fallen significantly since 2019 - 34% scoring the town centre 8-10 = excellent and 54% as 4-7 = average in 2023 compared with 55% scoring the town centre 8-10 = excellent and 38% average in 2019.
- The majority of responders in 2023 felt that overall Bridport town centre was getting worse (55%) with 36% reporting staying the same and 5% seeing improvements. This is a gloomier outlook than in 2019 when 20% respondents felt the town getting worse and 48% staying the same and 28% improving.
- For the first time since starting Health Checks in 2019 more survey responders are using the car to visits Bridport (52%) than walking and cycling combined (42% walk, 5% bike) with use of public transport declining further to just 1%.
- In terms of trading performance in 2023: 20% of retailers reported 2023 as better than 2021, 30% reported worse than 2021 with 50% reporting same as 2021,
- Looking ahead to trading in the next two years: 44% expect trading to be the same whilst 44% worse than 2023.
- 55% of retailers reported they would be changing their business in the next two years with a number exploring retirement.
- Retailers' key concerns are: parking and traffic flow, empty shops and a general sense that the town is looking tired and scruffy.

Actions to be considered by the Town Centre Working Group in response to health check 2023:

- To use the 2023 health check findings alongside the Bridport Investment Plan to secure Government Prosperity funding for town centre improvements including, 20 mph gateways, improved walking and cycling infrastructure, enhanced events programme and more coherent marketing of the town as a destination.
- There are signs that afternoon footfall and parking numbers are increasing. More efforts is needed to spread the concentration of shopping visits away from mornings. Offering incentives to afternoon shoppers; free parking, free entertainment, discounts in store?
- A pressing need to lobby for improved public transport into Bridport from the rural hinterland,
- Improve signage to the town centre from the A35. Offering drivers information about car park capacity and directing visitors to use the Football Ground Park and Stride car park by preference.
- Re visit consideration of sites for a park and ride scheme to operate on Saturdays during the summer months.

The Government provides guidance for Town Centre Health Checks and offer the following indicators, and their changes over time, as relevant in assessing the health of town centres:

- diversity of uses,
- proportion of vacant street level property,
- commercial yields on non-domestic property,
- customers' views and behaviour,
- retailer representation and intentions to change representation,
- commercial rents,
- pedestrian flows,
- accessibility,
- perception of safety and occurrence of crime,
- state of town centre environmental quality.

Alongside the collection of health check indicators government recommends collating information on the local population, for example, numbers, demography and spend potential. If available population modelling data is useful in understanding future growth, future spend potential and to identify any life cycle issues. The implications of an ageing population are especially relevant given the nationally high levels of older residents in the Bridport area.

The National Town Centre Performance Framework produced by the Association of Town and City Management provides a toolkit for authorities to use in pulling together market research to gain a better understanding of town centres and the complexity of interactions between different parameters.

- 1) **People and Footfall** - This theme groups five key performance indicators: footfall, geographical catchment, access, car parking and community spirit. The overall aim in this theme is to provide an assessment of who comes to visit the town centre, what their socio-economic background is likely to be, how close they feel to the people around them in terms of community cohesion and how they travel to the town centre.

- 2) **Diversity & Vitality** - This theme groups five key performance indicators: retail offer, culture and leisure offer, events, reported crime and markets. The overall aim in this theme is to provide an assessment of the actual offer of the town centre and its diversity taking a holistic approach that includes its daytime, evening and night-time economies.
- 3) **Consumer and Business Perceptions** - This theme groups five key performance indicators: business confidence, town centre visitor satisfaction with retail offer, visitor experience satisfaction, attractiveness, crime and safety perception. The overall aim in this theme is to provide users with a glimpse into an issue that can make or break a town centre on its own and can be one of the most challenging things to change – perceptions.
- 4) **Economic Characteristics** - This theme groups five key performance indicators: retail sales, partnership working, charity shops, vacant retail units and the evening/night time economy. The overall aim in this theme is to provide users with an assessment of static and dynamic elements linked to the economic performance of a town centre.

In selecting what information and which indicators to include in the 2023 health check consideration has been given to the following:

- Data readily available to the Town Council,
- Practical data collection issues for staff and volunteers,
- The costs of acquiring data sets and
- The repeatability of data collection.

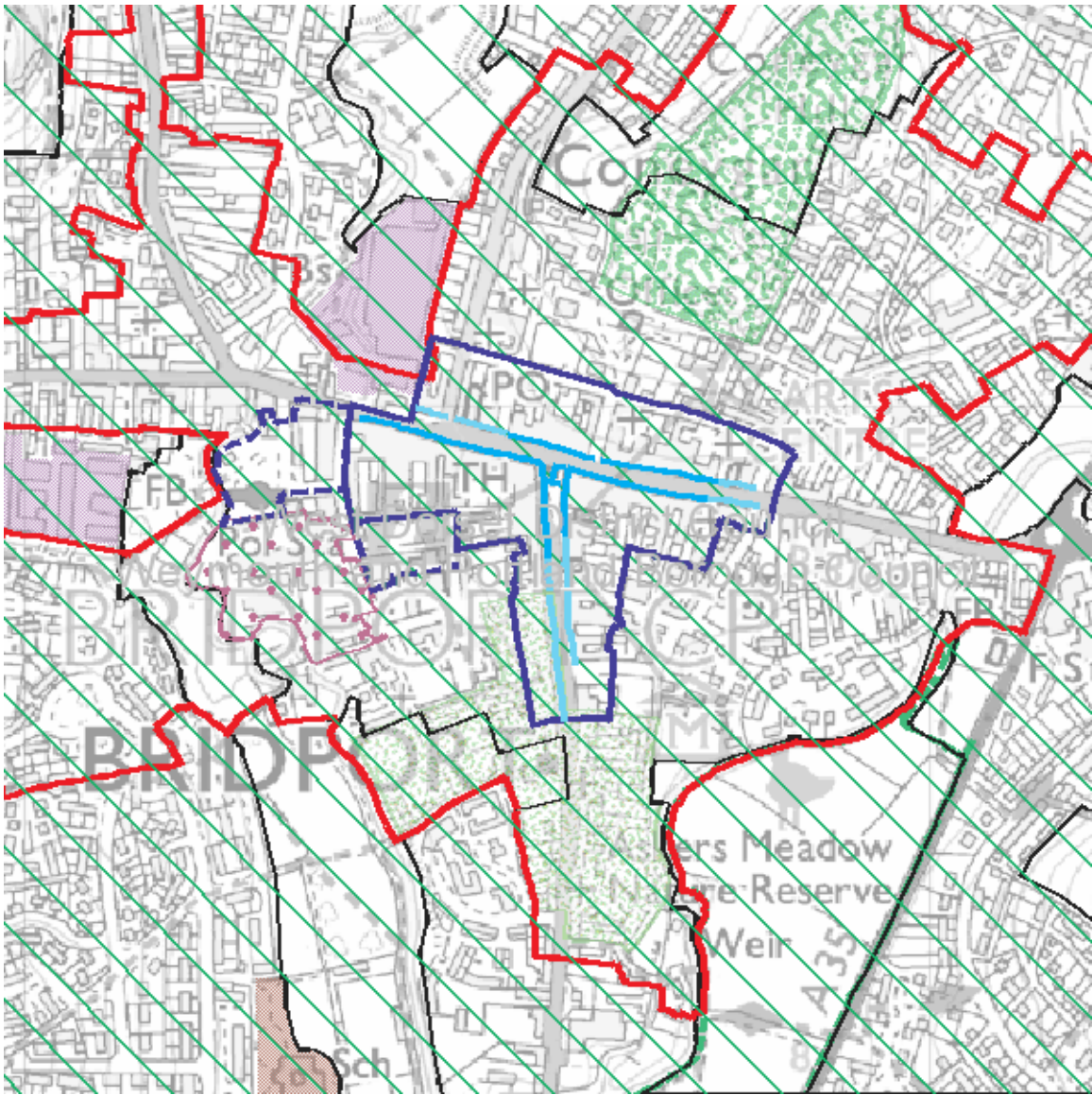
The shopper and retailer questionnaires were available as online surveys between July and October with paper copies available via Bridport TIC.

All data collected for the 2023 health check will be held by the Town Council and made available to partners to inform town centre initiatives.

Centre of Bridport Health Check Report 2023 – Data Sets

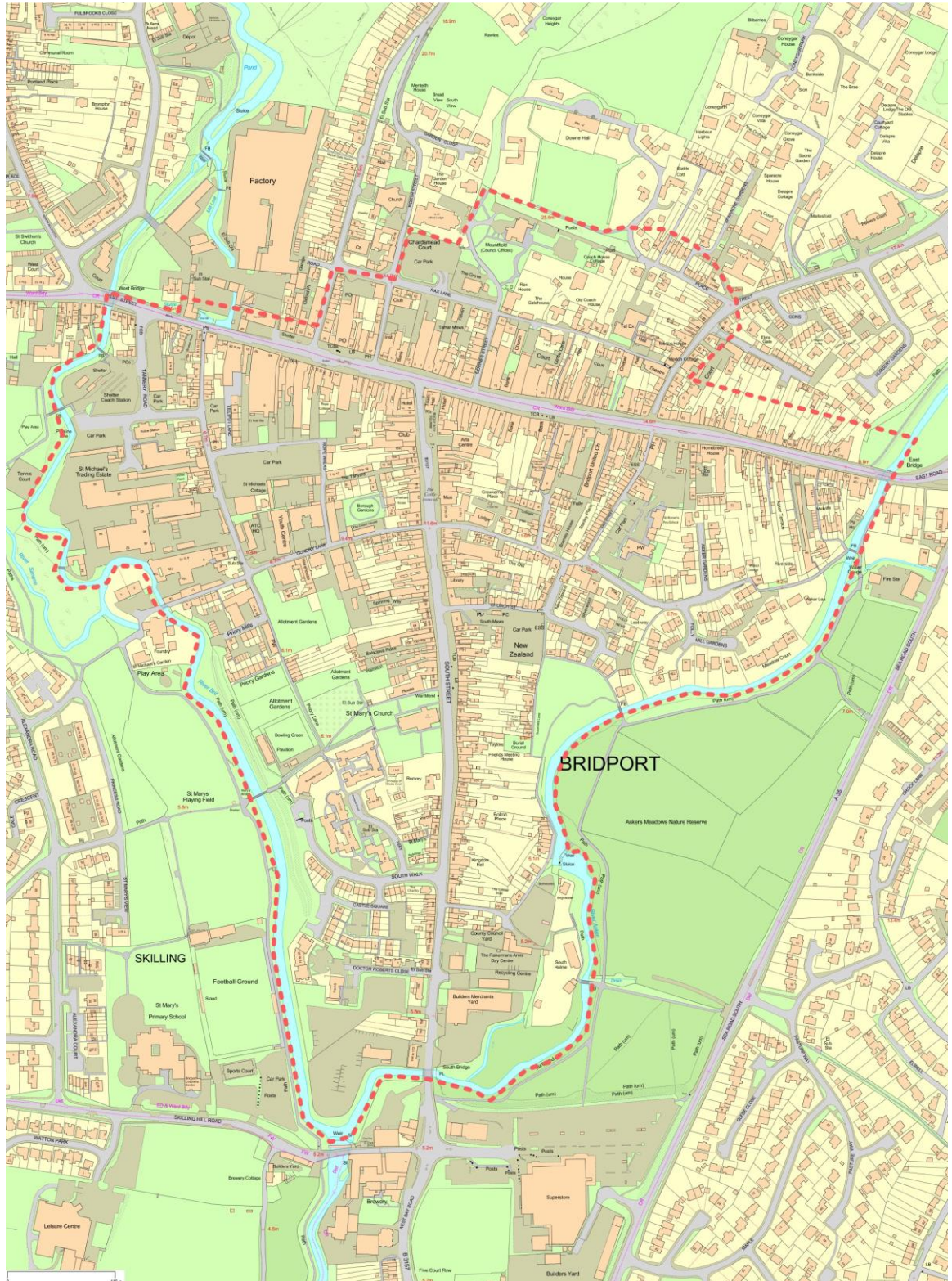
Health Check Indicator	Health Check data required:	Approach to be taken:
People & Footfall	a) Footfall counts - Pedestrian counts/ flows b) Car park capacity counts & length of stay data from DC c) Postcode harvesting from consumer survey (see below)	BTC street counts on 4 days July/Oct 2023 TIC counter data
	d) Population numbers/ projections e) Life Cycle modelling	Census 2021 BANP evidence
Diversity and Vitality	f) Range and variety of retail outlets g) Primary and secondary products h) Number of Independent and multiple outlets	Survey undertaken by BTC using 2006 and 2019 formats as a template
	i) Number of events across a 12-month period j) Reported Crime in range of categories 12-month period	BTC Dorset Police
	k) Primary Shopping frontages A1-A5 (metre/ %)	Dorset mapping service
	l) Floorspace (metre square) / rateable value	BANP evidence base
Consumer and Business perceptions	m) Retailer survey – satisfaction, business confidence and intentions to change	Online Survey
	n) Consumer survey – satisfaction, and rating of town centre attractiveness	Shopper survey
Economic Characteristics	o) Number of Charity Shops p) Number of vacant retail units	Survey undertaken by BTC/Volunteers

a) West Dorset Local Plan ECON4



Key:
Town Centre area purple
Extension areas dotted

b) Centre of Bridport Area Referendum Version Neighbourhood Plan:



BRIDPORT HEALTH CHECK 2023

APPENDIX THREE – SHOPPERS QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire to be available online and via BTC/TIC during July- October 2023.

Draw prize available to encourage returns by set date.

Q1. On average, how often do you visit Bridport town centre? (Please choose one answer only):

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Less frequently
- First Visit

Q2 Generally, at what time of day do you most often visit Bridport town centre? (Please choose one answer only):

- Morning (9am - 12 noon)
- Afternoon (12 noon - 4pm)
- Evening (6pm - 12 midnight)

Q3 When you visit Bridport town centre, how do you usually travel there? (Please choose one answer only):

- On Foot
- By Bike
- Car or van
- Motorcycle or scooter
- Bus
- Taxi

Q4 How would you rate Bridport Town Centre on a scale from 1-10? Where 1 is 'Very Disappointing' and 10 is 'Excellent'

Disappointing			Average				Excellent		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Q5. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following elements of the Bridport town centre?
(Please choose one answer for each aspect)

Public Transport									
Disappointing			Average				Excellent		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Car Parking									
Disappointing			Average				Excellent		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Pedestrian Accessibility									
Disappointing			Average				Excellent		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Type & Variety of Shops									
Disappointing			Average				Excellent		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Places to Eat & Drink									
Disappointing			Average				Excellent		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Cleanliness									
Disappointing			Average				Excellent		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Safety									
Disappointing			Average				Excellent		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Q6. Overall is Bridport Town Centre:

- Improving
- Staying the same
- Getting worse
- Don't know

Q7. Suggested improvements to Bridport town centre:

1.	
2.	

Any further comments you would like to make about Bridport town centre?

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About you

This information will help us understand what different groups of people need from Bridport town centre both now and into the future.

Gender

- please specify	
Prefer not to say	

Age

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Thank you for completing the questionnaire.

BRIDPORT HEALTH CHECK 2023

APPENDIX FOUR – RETAILERS QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire to be available online and via BTC/TIC during July- October 2023.

About your business

Q1. How would you describe your town centre business?

- National Multiple outlet
- Franchise outlet
- Independent outlet

Q2. Please list the primary and secondary Goods / Services you retail:

Q3. How long has your business operated in Bridport:

First year	
1-5 years	
5-10 years	
➤ 10 years	

Q4. How long has your business operated from existing site:

First year	
1-5 years	
5-10 years	
Over 10 years	

Q5. How many staff are employed in the business?

None		
	Full time	Part time
Family staffing only		
1-		
2		
3-5		
Over 5		

Business Performance

Q5. How has trading been for you since the Covid19 19 Restrictions were put in place??

- Better than 2019
- Worse than 2019
- About the same

Q6. What is your sense of the trading environment over the next 12 months?

- Better
- Worse
- About the same

Q7. Are you considering changes to your business over the next two years?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

If Yes to Q8 then. What will the investment be in?

Premises	
Goods and services offered	
Staffing	
Business promotion	
Other (please describe)	

Q9 Please complete the following SWOT frame for Bridport town centre:

Strengths of Bridport town centre	Weaknesses of Bridport town centre
Opportunities for Bridport town centre:	Constraints for Bridport town centre:

Q10. Any other comments you'd like to make about Bridport town centre:

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Thank you for completing the questionnaire.