

BRIDPORT TOWN CENTRE HEALTH CHECK 2025



Town Centre Health Check 2025
Produced by Bridport Town Council December 2025

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

BRIDPORT HEALTH CHECK 2025

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KEY FINDINGS

The 2025 retail survey tells us that the number of retail outlets in the town centre has remained stable (211) as has the number of vacant premises (14 vacant town centre premises in 2025 and 2023), with a mix of long term vacant and those that turn around quickly.

77 retail categories are surveyed and in 2025 it showed a period of limited change. 9 retail categories have grown in the number of outlets since 2023 and 63 have remained the same. The 4 categories with a decline in retail outlets are minimal but the loss of a high street bank is keenly felt. There is one less takeaway, one less gift shop and fewer second hand shops since 2023. There is still no greengrocer or fishmonger other than a market stall. Davy's Locker and Catch of the Day, who served the town, closed citing pricing pressures from larger suppliers.

Footfall counts showed a significant increase. The four clicker counts over three locations July – Oct show a 17.5% rise in footfall in the town centre.

Overall shopper satisfaction levels with Bridport Town Centre has risen. In 2025 47% scored the town centre 8-10 = excellent and 46% as 4-7 = average compared with 34% scoring the town excellent and 54% average in 2023. There is a more optimistic outlook in 2025 with 15% of respondents saying they felt the town centre was getting better compared to 5% in 2023. There was a significant drop in responders feeling that overall Bridport town centre was getting worse. In 2023 it was 55%, in 2025 it is 30%. Half of respondents said they felt it was staying the same compared with 36% in 2023.

There was a better response level from retailers survey than 2023 – 3 times as many responded. Looking ahead to trading in the next year: 8% expect trading to be better, 55% expect trading to be the same whilst 37% worse than 2025. 49% are expecting to make operational changes.

Survey respondents are still most likely to drive in to the town centre - Car usage dropped from 52% to 50%, which is still slightly more than walking and cycling combined (43% walk, 5% bike), with use of public transport increasing slightly from 1% to 2%

There are recurring issues identified by both shoppers and retailers impacting on the overall health of Bridport town centre: empty shops, expensive and limited parking, traffic flow, unreliable public transport, cluttered pavements and poor surfacing and the need for more care and maintenance of shops and streets.

A renewed urgency to use the 2025 health check findings alongside the [Bridport Investment Plan](#) and Bridport's [Work Needs Assessment](#) to secure funding for town centre improvements including, town hall junction improvements, 20 mph gateways, improved walking and cycling infrastructure, flexible leases and workspaces and more coherent marketing of the town as a destination.

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BACKGROUND

Town centres are complex places, serving a wide range of people and fulfilling multiple roles; economic, cultural, and civic. Their prosperity has been challenged in recent years by declining store numbers, shifting consumer habits, and the rise of online shopping. Yet despite these pressures, town centres remain vital to the identity and resilience of local communities.

Public health experts emphasise that high streets are more than retail hubs; they are places of belonging. As Professor Clare Bamba of Newcastle University observes: *“You should be able to walk down a high street, and feel the uniqueness, culture and identity of that community. Through innovative design, better public transport, and measures that promote people over cars, we can rethink these spaces so they become ‘go-to’s’ rather than ‘ghost towns’.”* Her words highlight the need to reimagine high streets as living spaces that reflect local character and encourage social connection.

This call for renewal is echoed in the House of Lords Built Environment Committee’s 2024 report, *High Streets: Life beyond retail?* The report stresses that retail dominance is fading, and that high streets must evolve into multi-functional spaces. Shopping will remain important, but there is growing demand for leisure, hospitality, and public services such as health centres and libraries. The Committee warns against rigid, one-size-fits-all visions, urging instead that local authorities, communities, and businesses collaborate to create adaptable, resilient high streets that reflect local conditions.

Accessibility is another critical theme. The report notes that high streets thrive only when people can reach them easily and safely. While car access and parking remain commercially important, improved public transport, particularly bus networks, is essential to counter the convenience of out-of-town developments. At the same time, vacant retail units are increasingly being repurposed: cafés, restaurants, and charity shops have taken their place (charities benefit from substantial business rates relief and often have lower staff costs, making them more able to afford high street rents), while public authorities are beginning to relocate services onto high streets. These shifts not only sustain footfall but also reinforce the civic role of town centres.

Young people, in particular, value high streets as places to socialise without the pressure of spending. They also prize green spaces on or near the high street and a welcoming public realm, both of which should be central to regeneration programmes.

Yet the success of these initiatives depends not only on local vision but also on the structures created by national government. Local authorities and the Government together shape the frameworks for high street renewal. The new Government's local growth funding reforms must ensure that high streets are enabled to flourish in the long term, and that those responsible for their future have the expertise and funding to deliver improvements.

Why a Health Check?

If town centres are to adapt successfully to changing lifestyles and economic pressures, their renewal must be guided by evidence rather than assumption. Town Centre Health Checks provide that evidence. They are a means of assessing the vitality, viability, resilience and performance of town centres over time and the results of health check exercises are used to formulate strategies for improvements and inform policy documents.

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 and to the quality of life for residents. As part of this vision, the plan includes a project to undertake regular health checks of the commercial offer provided by the Centre of Bridport. The data gathered is already informing development proposals and building 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 rapid expansion of internet shopping has further disrupted traditional retail, giving customers greater choice in how they shop and spend leisure time. Against this backdrop, health check data is more valuable than ever, helping retailers and councils to adapt development policies to shifting habits while retaining a strong economic and social offer.

The 2025 health check continues a series undertaken in 2019, 2021 and 2023. By repeating the exercise, longer term trends can be identified, offering insight into how the town is performing and how resilience can be strengthened. These health checks provide a robust evidence base to inform policy development and underpin funding proposals for a range of town centre initiatives. In doing so, they 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 Chapos (formerly the Launderette). Surveys were undertaken on 4 dates between July and October 2025. 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.

Bridport Town Centre Health Check 2025 Footfall Counts

Location	Count 1 Weds July 30th		Count 2 Sat August 23rd		Count 3 Thurs Sept 25th		Count 4 Tues October 28th	
Weather	Sunny and hot am but cloudy pm		Sunny and warm		Sunny & breezy. Funeral wake around 2pm of popular resident		Sunny and dry, bit cold, warmer in afternoon	
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
South Street outside Chapos	342	199	517	328	81	97	113	92
West Street outside Nationwide	256	131	267	272	87	94	122	140
East Street outside Bull Hotel	257	194	466	224	124	125	215	137
Count Total	Day 1379		Day 2074		Day 608		Day 819	

Observations from the footfall counts 2025:

- 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 September.

- 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 still a marked variation between morning and afternoon footfall numbers apart from September. Morning counts are generally higher than afternoon footfall counts. The shopper survey results (see page 12) show a clear preference for morning shopping in Bridport.
- As in previous years, South Street recorded the highest footfall across the 4 months but East Street came in a close second and showed higher footfall outside of summer. West Street recorded the lowest footfalls overall but was the busiest of the three count points on the October afternoon on the sunny side of the street.
- 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 2023 Footfall Counts

Location		Count 1 Weds July		Count 2 Sat August		Count 3 Thurs Sept		Count 4 Tues October		Total
2023 Weather		Sunny am, /rain threat in pm		Sunny spells, thundery pm		Sun & cloud am overcast pm		Sunshine and cloud, chilly am		
2025 Weather		Sunny and hot am cloudy pm		Sunny and warm		Sunny and breezy.		Sunny dry, bit cold, warmer 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	
South Street Laundrette/Chapos	2023	276	167	501	292	94	80	80	114	1604
	2025	342	199	517	328	81	97	113	92	1769
West Street Nationwide	2023	132	133	209	193	94	88	101	104	1054
	2025	256	131	267	272	87	94	122	140	1369
East Street Bull Hotel	2023	242	164	429	239	106	108	89	115	1492
	2025	257	194	466	224	124	125	215	137	1742
Count totals 2023		Day: 1114		Day: 1863		Day: 570		Day: 603		4150
Count totals 2025		Day: 1379		Day: 2074		Day: 608		Day: 819		4880

Count up - Count down

Observations from the footfall comparison 2023 - 2025:

- Total footfall counts in 2025 show increases on the 2023 figures – especially for the July and August counts with a rise of 17.5%.
- Streetwise East Street showed increased footfall on 7 of the 8 count times with a particular leap in the morning count in October which was surprising on a non-market day. There was increased footfall across all 3 sites on all 4 dates.

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COUNTER FINDINGS

As part of the health check, Bridport Tourist Information Centre provided footfall counter data for selected days, which can be compared with 2019, 2021 and 2023 data.

Location	Count 1 Weds July 30th		Count 2 Sat August 23rd		Count 3 Thurs Sept 25th		Count 4 Tues October 28th	
Weather	Sunny and hot am, cloudy pm		Sunny and warm		Sunny and breezy		Sunny, dry, bit cold, warmer in afternoon	
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 2025	13	11	9	6	13	9	10	6
	Day: 320		Day: 261		Day: 231		Day: 157	

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	

Tourist Information Centre monthly counter figures:

Month	2019	2021	2023	2025
July	12,497	1,118	9,515	8,207
August	14,134	4,245	11,117	9,288
September	10,375	5,783	7,694	6,956
October	6,826	3,877	6,356	6,206
Totals	43,832	15,023	34,682	30,657

- TIC counter numbers provided on the four count days in 2025 show a decrease on figures gathered in 2023.
- TIC counter data comparison across 2019 - 2025 shows the impact of the covid pandemic on numbers in 2021. Although the 2023 count showed a significant overall increase on 2021 the numbers dropped by 13% in 2025.
- TIC staff say their phone calls, website enquiries and orders are up and spend per customer has increased. On the count days weather has an effect, when there is good weather and lots of sunshine, people tend to stay outdoors, go to the beach, rather than visit the TIC.

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CAR PARK CAPACITY COUNTS

As part of the 4 street surveys car parks were visited to record spaces available at selected times of the day. This shows total spaces and of those spaces which were EV charging spaces and which were disabled parking.

Location	Count 1 Weds July 30th		Count 2 Sat Aug 23rd		Count 3 Thurs Sept 25 th		Count 4 Tues Oct 28th	
Weather	Sunny and hot am, cloudy pm		Sunny and warm		Sunny and breezy		Sunny, dry, bit cold, warmer pm	
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	5	FULL	10	FULL	6	FULL	8
East Street (Short Stay 64 + 2 disabled spaces)	FULL	3	1 (EV)	6 (2 EV)	2 (1 EV, 1 DIS)	1	3 (1 EV)	4 (2 EV)
South Street Car Park (98 + 5 disabled spaces)	3 (all EV)	35 (5 EV)	FULL	24 (4 EV)	18 (3 EV, 2 DIS)	41 (6 EV, 1 DIS)	27 (4 EV, 1 DIS)	46 (6 EV, 1 DIS)
Wykes Court Car Park (96 spaces)	10	30	1	11	48	40	34	45

Observations on car park capacity counts:

- East Street car parks are 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 two car parks were full and two had one space only.
- 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 2023 Car Park Counts:

- The overall pattern of car park usage is largely the same in 2025 as in 2023 – high morning parking, tailing off in the afternoons, with East Street being the most popular car park.
- 2025 parking figures show similar levels of parking in the afternoon period as 2023. Across the 3 car parks surveyed, afternoon spaces in 2025 were 212 (Jul-Aug-Sept) compared to 203 in 2023 (Jul-Aug-Sept).

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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 this is not 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, 2023 and again in 2025.

Observations of changes in Town Centre retail between 2023 and 2025:

- The [2025 retail products and services survey](#) tells us that the number of retail outlets in the town centre has remained stable (211) as has the number of vacant premises (14 vacant town centre premises in 2025 and 2023). Of those premises which were vacant in 2023, one is being completely refurbished, 3 have been relet as retail outlets, 1 as a café/bar and one has a change of use. Some properties have remained vacant for some time – notably a former estate agent, betting shop and a newsagent which is now in some state of disrepair.
- 77 retail categories are surveyed and in 2025 it showed a period of limited change. 9 retail categories have grown in the number of outlets since 2023 and 63 have remained the same.
- The 4 categories with a decline in retail outlets are minimal but the loss of a high street bank is keenly felt. There is one less takeaway, one less gift shop and fewer second hand shops since 2023. There is still no green grocer. The long established Punch and Judy bakery closed but Oxford Bakery opened opposite and The Bridport Baker replaced Georges. There is another just outside the boundary of the town centre (Rise).
- The number of retail categories with an increased number of outlets in the town between 2023 and 2025 is 9, including clothing, phone shops, alternative therapies, antiques, interior decor and one more café and bar open.
- In the larger Centre of Bridport Area the number of retail premises has increased to 291 from 261 in 2023. 52 categories surveyed had the same number of outlets as in 2023. 18 categories had a greater number of

outlets (double that of 2023)– including furnishings, clothes and antiques. 10 categories had fewer outlets including gift shops, second hand clothes and banks.

- In the larger Centre of Bridport Area we have been able to gather a far greater level of detail about businesses operating in the 70 or so units on St Michaels so in addition to the 291 outlets mentioned above there are considerably more if artist studios and workshops are included. As many were already in place in the previous surveys we are not comparing numbers this time but there will be a better comparison in future years.
- In 2023 a number of the retail businesses vacating the town centre found alternative premises on local industrial estates. In 2025 the closures have been generally been total closures.

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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 2025. In total, 402 shopper surveys were completed and returned which was almost three times that of 2023.

Headline findings in 2025:

- There is a somewhat more optimistic outlook in 2025 with 15% of respondents saying they felt the town centre was getting better compared to 5% in 2023. There was a significant drop in respondents feeling that overall Bridport town centre was getting worse. In 2023 it was 55%, in 2025 it is 30%. Half of respondents said they felt it was staying the same compared with 36% in 2023.
- The number of survey respondents using the car to visits Bridport dropped from 52% to 50%, which is still slightly more than walking and cycling combined (42% walk, 5% bike), with use of public transport increasing slightly from 1% to 2%
- 67% of survey respondents favour morning shopping 9.00am to noon than afternoon (29%) even though there is more available parking in afternoon.
- Overall satisfaction level with Bridport town centre has risen since 2023. In 2025 47% scored the town centre 8-10 = excellent and 46% as 4-7 = average compared with 34% scoring the town centre 8-10 = excellent and 54% average in 2023. Only 7% found the town centre disappointing (12% in 2023).
- Those finding the range of eating and drinking excellent are considerably up on 2023 levels. In 2025 53% score 8-10 = excellent and 40% average compared with 34% excellent and 58% average in 2023.

- Those finding the variety of shops excellent is also up on 2023 levels - 38% score 8-10 = excellent and 43% average, compared with 23% excellent and 56% average in 2023.
- Dissatisfaction scores have dropped slightly for public transport (48% scored <3 = disappointing, compared to 57% in 2023). This might be linked to the new Bridport-West Bay shuttle bus at the weekends which brings West Bay residents into town. Fewer respondents reported dissatisfaction with car parking in 2025 (30%) down from 41% in 2023 although there were many comments about the cost and availability.
- The numbers finding cleanliness and safety either average or excellent were broadly the same as 2023. For cleanliness, respondents scored the town 37% excellent and 49% average in 2025 compared with 35% excellent and 51% average in 2023. For safety, respondents scored the town 50% excellent and 43% average in 2025 compared with 48% excellent and 46% average in 2023.

The findings from Bridport's shoppers survey have been collated in more detail in Appendix 3 (taken from the [raw data](#)). Shoppers express a deep affection for the town's independent spirit, lively markets, and strong sense of community, but they also voice frustration at its "tired" and "neglected" appearance. The most common concerns centre on empty shops, limited variety, and affordability, with calls for support for local businesses, creative use of vacant premises, and more everyday essentials alongside the cherished independents. Traffic, parking, and pedestrianisation divide opinion, while issues of cleanliness, civic pride, and accessibility highlight the need for better maintenance, safer pavements, improved public toilets, and greener, more welcoming gateways.

Overall, the message is clear: residents and visitors want Bridport cared for, not radically changed. They would like a cleaner, greener, safer, and more inclusive town centre that continues to celebrate its individuality and creative character while meeting everyday needs. The survey reflects a strong pride in Bridport's heritage and culture, coupled with a desire for thoughtful improvements that restore vitality and ensure the town remains accessible and welcoming for all generations.

Selected Shopper Survey comments – 471 received:

Car Parking	Shopping	Traffic	Public Realm
<p>A great need for parking. With proposed and actual increase in building projects there is not the infrastructure necessary to support these. There is little support for long stay and a need for more parking areas.</p> <hr/> <p>Make parking more affordable and improve the surface and markings on all car parks in the town centre. Especially East Street car park that is an absolute abomination.</p> <hr/> <p>Also awful transport connections to nearby towns and villages has resulted in increased traffic, but no extra parking spaces.</p>	<p>It needs to keep some charm but move with the times a bit to allow younger people and families to want to stay here. Young Dr's, dentists and other professional are put off by the house prices and lack of facilities for families. Bridport has a quirkiness to it and that's fabulous but people who serve in the shops and pubs and hospitality areas are not given a great incentive to stay. Everything is catered to the higher income families or holiday makers. Struggling families have to shop online or in other towns (if they are lucky enough to afford a car) because you can't even get cheap shoes/clothes for school.</p> <hr/> <p>Allow small businesses/ makers to use of empty shops. Implement measures so that we can have the essential shops back: fruit and veg/fishmongers etc..</p> <hr/> <p>The independents keep it going. However, the market can take revenue away from them sometimes eg the number of bread stalls when there's already good independent bakery shops. Market should be different things.</p> <hr/> <p>Less galleries, more shops that sell reasonably priced clothes, particularly shoes. There is nowhere to buy decent children's clothes and shoes. I miss the Clarks shop. The town has become very arty farty and does not reflect the demographic of the residents.</p> <hr/> <p>Do not allow anymore large chain stores in as they will ruin Bridport's unique independent spirit.</p>	<p>Remove the road narrowing outside the Market House, cars wanting to go straight on at the green light are often unable to proceed as blocked from going through by cars waiting to turn right into South Street, This just causes cars to build up back through West Street and at times West Allington and back putting out more pollution whilst waiting, this will only worsen as Vearse Farm develops.</p> <hr/> <p>Remove the lane closure in East St on market days- it's not needed there is plenty of space along the streets for the stall. It causes traffic chaos and is dangerous with people crossing randomly.</p> <hr/> <p>Public transport is improving (temporarily) with the WB1 service. We need to bring back the local shoppers permit (not the county wide version) to encourage people to shop locally. More cycle lanes would be great.</p>	<p>Just avoid making changes in order to be taking "action" The town has evolved organically and is quirky and unusual in being low key and work a day - best suited for local residents. Keep it as it is and encourage small and independent shops.</p> <hr/> <p>When I was pushing a friend in a wheelchair recently I noticed how bad the pavements are: uneven, with trip hazards everywhere. Access for disabled people would be vastly improved by sorting them out.</p> <hr/> <p>The visual impact of trees in a town centre, and particularly in Bridport where, as one enters, one can look up and see the street East or West stretching out ahead gives a welcoming warmth of invitation. Therefore, where surroundings allow, the planting of more trees could help our towns attractive 'quaintness'.</p> <hr/> <p>Christmas decorations are tired and need updating. More events like the Weldmar elephant trail would be great. Can the empty shops have artwork from local schools exhibited in windows to brighten up an empty building.</p> <hr/> <p>I have been very impressed with the TC's efforts to make the town attractive such as Borough Gardens, Conegar Hill, Askers Meadows.</p>
<p>Parking is awful with spaces which are way too small for modern vehicles and the potholes are ridiculous. More disabled parking places are needed to try and prevent them parking on double yellow lines or in thoroughly unsafe places.</p> <hr/> <p>I consider Bridport to be generally thriving despite having been bypassed which often has detrimental effects. In general, the big high street names haven't dominated enabling the unique and smaller shops to display in high street locations, or very close to. In addition, the art/antique area on the western edge continues to thrive and is accessible to all as parking and pedestrian access are relatively easy.</p> <hr/> <p>Cheaper parking would make me spend more money there.</p>			

Car Parking	Shopping	Traffic	Public Realm
<p>As someone who works in the town but lives elsewhere it can be a very expensive place to work with little public transport and expensive car parks. This doesn't encourage people to work in the town and job vacancies are often very hard to fill</p> <hr/> <p>My one and only negative and it does prevent me from using the town centre more is the car parking charges, they are going up and up and I just can't justify them on many occasions.</p> <hr/> <p>I would like the old Shoppers permit for just your local area not the whole of Dorset at a reasonable price to be reintroduced by Dorset Council.</p>	<p>As a young person who has grown up in Bridport, I feel that the types of shops are getting worse. The shops are more suited to older people including the smaller more expensive independent boutique shops, and the wide range of charity shops. The town lacks decent men's clothing shops and clothes for younger women for example we used to have a New Look. Also it's very hard to buy household furniture etc, a retail park with The Range, B&M would be great for the town. I usually have to go further afield Yeovil, Exeter, Southampton to go shopping as there is a wider range of shops available. I would like to see more chain restaurants/take aways a Greggs would work well in Spar now that Subway have vacated.</p>	<p>More frequent buses between Bridport and Dorchester, Weymouth, Lyme, Axminster.</p> <hr/> <p>Public transport (although not the Town Council's responsibility) is a joke. Too little and badly planned to be useful to the majority</p> <hr/> <p>I would like Bucky Doo area and top of South St to be car free. So we can have less pollution and noise there for a more pleasant place to meet, sit, drink & eat and listen to the brilliant music.</p>	<p>More signage as to where places are situated would be a huge improvement. Owners of shop fronts and buildings not in use should be made to keep them in good repair. It would be great if they could be made available for community-based projects at minimal rents. It would be nice to see more flower beds around to bring more wildlife into the centre.</p> <hr/> <p>Some bars are taking over the pavements and is very intimidating when trying to walk through the overcrowded pavement. The Pursuit of hoppiness being the worst offender!</p>
<p>Better signage to the car parks. Maybe even a Park and ride. Disabled parking only along the street.</p> <hr/> <p>Car parks - the space markings are not clear in some of the town car parks (personally I would love to see our car parks offer free parking). I go to Yeovil on a Sunday to shop as the car park is free.</p> <hr/> <p>Better cheaper car parking would encourage more shoppers into town</p> <hr/> <p>Parking remains an issue with a lot of residential areas being used as overflow car parks, and making visibility for cyclists, children and mobility scooters extremely difficult.</p>	<p>One of the strengths of Bridport is the role places like the St Michael's trading estate play in creating affordable creative and experimental retail space (for example Selected Grapes and 101 or even Mercato Italiano at Dreadnaught estate) that supports the whole town - it is what makes Bridport much more interesting than similar towns along the coast. It's important to work with that and carry it through into the high street, by maintaining independent shops, and supporting the filling of empty retail spaces with meanwhile uses - pop ups etc.</p> <hr/> <p>I like the market. There's lots of charity shops. There's a really limited opportunity for clothes shopping and shoes. We cannot afford the specialist little shops. These don't cater for those of us with ordinary budgets.</p>	<p>Public transport is diabolical - it is unforgivably bad. And no one seems to really understand yet the impact that Foundry Lea's 760 new houses and their cars are going to have on Bridport... you really need to get on the front foot with that. It's going to be like August all year, people will get very tired of it.</p> <hr/> <p>We need a few more bike racks and also put these on the town maps like car parks. It's frustrating if you are a cyclist and don't know where to lock them up.</p>	<p>For me the town looks great on a sunny Saturday but all the other days it looks tired. The paint is fading and the shops look unloved. I do love my town it just needs a little TLC.</p> <hr/> <p>More things for the 16-20 year olds, there is nothing for us to do. From the age of 18+ there is a few more as we can go to pubs but when I was younger (from the age of 14-17) there wasn't anything for me and my friends to do so we would all get drunk in a field, I know that people that age now are doing the same things. this isn't right they need more things to do, it is worrying.</p> <hr/> <p>Many empty stores - it's embarrassing.</p>

BRIDPORT HEALTH CHECK 2025

RETAILER SURVEY FINDINGS

[A survey for retailers](#) was produced and made available between July and October 2025. The online survey was promoted through handing out flyers in most shops and local social media. When visiting shops, those who weren't independent seemed doubtful that there would be someone who would have a view to fill in the survey.

In total, 27 responses were received (up from 9 in 2023). Headline findings were:

- All respondents identified as 'independent' retailers,
- 70% had been in business in Bridport for over 10 years,
- In terms of trading performance in 2025: 20% reported 2025 as better than 2023, 30% reported worse than 2023 with 42% reporting same as 2023, and two were new businesses.
- Looking ahead to trading in the next year: 8% expect trading to be better, 57% expect trading to be the same whilst 35% worse than 2025.
- 50% of respondents reported they would be changing their business in the next two years with a number exploring retirement and concerns about the trading environment and rent.
- Town strengths listed were: variety of independent businesses, community spirit, the twice weekly street market, events and creativity
- Opportunities included: more entertainment and events, promote shopping experience/ make it more of a shopping destination, encourage more tour buses and public transport, late night shopping, park and ride
- Town weaknesses listed were: empty/unattractive shops, high rents and rates, expensive/short supply of parking, roadwork chaos, not enough of a destination, feels a bit grubby
- The 27 retailers who responded employed over 100 staff between them.
- There was a sense that the independent retailers would like to have as much promotion as the market and for Bridport to be marketed as a shopping destination



Selected Retailer Comments from 27 retailers:

Looking ahead, the trading environment over the next 12 months is unlikely to improve, with further tax rises and higher business rates hinted at by central government. These pressures make running an independent retail business increasingly difficult. I am now actively considering making changes to how the business operates — including the possibility of winding it down or closing, as it is unlikely that anyone would be in a position to buy it under current conditions.	We are looking to create an online shop as well as bricks and mortar as this seems to be the only way to ensure viability.	Bridport retains a strong base of independent local shops run by entrepreneurs and residents. The variety and individuality of these businesses give the town its charm and appeal.	Needs to smarten up and encourage great new independents to give a wider offer to locals, visitors, and tourists alike. Bring people into the town and make it more of a destination than it already is.
Love, love Bridport and feel privileged to now be part of the commercial and resident community.	Advertise the town as a whole as a shopping destination; introduce a Park and Ride service; attract traders to fill empty shops with businesses the town is lacking (e.g. children's clothes, greengrocer).	It's important to recognise that while the market is often seen as the main attraction and provides valuable income for the Town Council, it is the local shops, open every day from Monday to Sunday, that provide continuity and sustain the local economy week in, week out.	Support and retain independent businesses; promote and strengthen the market; collaborate between traders, the Chamber, and the Council to sustain activity and footfall It is clear to me from what I hear my customers say that they love the town; it is clearly thriving where other towns are struggling with lots of empty units.
Bridport continues to be a vibrant and interesting place to live, work, and visit, thanks largely to the local entrepreneurs and residents who are willing to take risks and invest their time, energy, and money into keeping the town alive. It is these independent businesses that give Bridport its unique identity and character.	Give Bridport a deep clean — it's untidy, litter everywhere. Get everyone involved to take pride in their town. Businesses should take responsibility for their frontage: get rid of weeds, pick up the litter. I know it's not theirs, but start somewhere.	There should be no knee-jerk reactions at this stage, but the town and council need to be very careful about making major changes such as closing roads, pedestrianising key streets, or allowing car parks to be redeveloped for housing. A reduction in parking availability would directly harm trade and accessibility for local businesses.	Bridport is amazing. I love the people and the town, it was the obvious choice locally to open a shop as the town is vibrant and alive (not Dorchester or Lyme which were the other options). The market is a draw, I know not all shopkeepers believe that but I do, however it would be good to see the town busy the rest of the week and the town has SO much to offer visitors... plenty of cafes, museum lots of interesting independents. The strength of the town is that it doesn't have the multiples in my opinion. I love that we have all the events throughout the year. There is a lot to like.

BRIDPORT HEALTH CHECK 2025

MARKET DATA FINDINGS

Market analysis 2019, 2021, 2023 and 2025							
	Total stalls	Seasonal stalls	Seasonal %	Income	Per stall Average	Weds total	Sat total
JULY 19	583	67	12%	£11,000	£18.87	244	339
JULY 21	493	138	28%	£10,410	£21.12	237	256
JULY 23	460	171	37%	£9,580	£20.83	195	265
JULY 25	560	226	41%	£12,558	£22.55	237	323
AUGUST 19	418	5	1%	£8,960	£21.43	164	254
AUGUST 21	481	135	28%	£10,115	£21.04	222	259
AUGUST 23	483	200	43%	£10,380	£21.49	225	250
AUGUST 25	553	222	40%	£12,344	£22.33	144	409
SEPTEMBER 19	345	0	0%	£7,650	£22.17	196	149
SEPTEMBER 21	494	111	22%	£10,285	£20.82	199	295
SEPTEMBER 23	494	199	39%	£10,817	£21.90	114	297
SEPTEMBER 25	231	106	34%	£6,853	£22.18	63	168
OCTOBER 19	350	23	6.5%	£6,046	£17.26	173	177
OCTOBER 21	379	72	19%	£4,993	£13.17	99	280
OCTOBER 23	354	119	34%	£4,984	£14.08	87	267
OCTOBER 25	452	161	36%	£5,954	£13.17	172	280
Total income 2019 £33,656				Total Income 2021 £35,803			
Total Income 2023 £35,761				Total Income 2025 £37,709			

2025 has seen a very strong market through the summer months buoyed by a spell of extremely dry and settled weather. This came to a finish at the end of August, and September saw a very poor trading month. The last Wednesday in September, with improved weather, saw almost double the attendance of all that months' previous Wednesdays. The proportion of seasonal traders has continued to increase and, although not recorded above, the number of retail food stalls has been on the increase over the last 12 months with more applications from businesses wishing to sell baked goods than it has been possible to accommodate. The decision taken to reduce rates at the from the end of September, rather than October, taken seven years ago would appear to building some resilience into attendance as hoped. The intention was to stimulate attendance to bridge the gap until the Christmas seasonal demand and this October saw the highest attendance in the last seven years.

BRIDPORT HEALTH CHECK 2025

CRIME DATA FINDINGS

Crime data for Bridport for the 12 month period October 2024 – September 2025 was captured from the [National Police website for Bridport](#) and indicates a rise in reported crimes from 1,367 in 2023 to 1,736 in 2025 (but decline from 1,884 in 2021).

Of reported crimes between October 2024 and September 2025:

- Violence and sexual offences accounted for 40%;
- Anti-social behaviour accounted 23% and
- Criminal damage and arson 7%

This compares with data collected in 2019, 2021 and 2023:

Crime type	2019	2021	2023	2025
Anti- social behaviour	36%	34%	22%	23%
Violence and sexual offences	31%	31%	34%	40%



BRIDPORT HEALTH CHECK 2025

LEARNING AND ACTION FROM 2025

The 2025 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, 2021 and 2023 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 to increase the resilience of Bridport's local economy and drive future sustainability. 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 2025 Health Check include:

- 2025 footfall counts show a notable increase on 2023 figures and compare favourably with counts from 2021 and 2019.
- The August counts returned the biggest footfall counts with 211 more people that day than in 2023. July increased by 265.
- As in previous counts, summer footfall counts were higher than autumn counts and morning footfall counts were higher than afternoon counts.
- Car parking capacity was reached at East Street long stay car park in the mornings and East Street short stay car park only had spaces in the EV charging and disabled bays for 3 out of 4 of the counts. Other car parks had spaces available, apart from South Street car park in the mornings of summer. There are many more spaces in the afternoon. The counts do not include any cars circling round unable to park.
- 2025 parking figures show the same levels of parking in the afternoon period compared with 2023. Across the 3 car parks surveyed, afternoon spaces in 2025 were a cumulative 202 (Jul-Aug-Sept) compared to 203 in 2023. In 2019 it was a cumulative 427 spaces (Jul-Aug-Sept).
- Overall, the 2025 [retail products and services](#) survey tells us that the number of retail outlets has remained stable (211) and although never welcome, the number of vacant premises remains the same (14). Despite this there is a perception that the number of empty shops is increasing. Some are remaining empty for a long time and shoppers are frustrated that landlords are not made to keep their shop fronts well maintained.
- Overall satisfaction level with Bridport town centre has risen since 2023. In 2025 47% scored the town centre excellent and 46% as average

- compared with 34% scoring the town centre excellent and 54% average in 2023. Only 7% found the town centre disappointing (12% in 2023).
- There is a somewhat more optimistic outlook in 2025 with 15% of respondents saying they felt the town centre was getting better compared to 5% in 2023. There was a significant drop in respondents feeling that overall Bridport town centre was getting worse. In 2023 it was 55%, in 2025 it is 30%. Half of respondents said they felt it was staying the same compared with 36% in 2023.
 - The number of survey respondents using the car to visits Bridport dropped from 52% to 50%, which is still slightly more than walking and cycling combined (43% walk, 5% bike), with use of public transport increasing slightly from 1% to 2%
 - In terms of trading performance in 2025: 20% of retailers reported 2025 as better than 2023, 30% reported worse than 2023 with 42% reporting same as 2023, and two were new businesses.
 - Looking ahead to trading in the next two years: 8% expect trading to be better, 55% expect trading to be the same whilst 37% worse than 2025.
 - 49% of respondents reported they would be changing their business in the next two years with a number exploring retirement and concerns about the trading environment and rent.
 - Retailers' key concerns are: empty/unattractive shops, high rents and rates, expensive/short supply of parking, roadwork chaos, not enough of a destination, feels a bit grubby.
 - There was a sense that the independent retailers would like to have as much promotion as the market and for Bridport to be marketed as a shopping destination

Actions to be considered in response to health check 2025:

- To use the 2025 health check findings alongside the [Bridport Investment Plan](#) and [Neighbourhood Plan](#) to secure funding for town centre improvements including: town hall junction improvements, 20 mph gateways, improved walking and cycling infrastructure, enhanced events programme and more coherent marketing of the town as a destination.
- Bridport's [Work Needs Assessment](#) also calls to prioritise short-term, flexible leases for start-ups. Many businesses require the flexibility to scale up or down without being tied to long-term contracts. It also highlights issues around parking, transport limitations, ageing buildings and highlights unused space above shops in Bridport that could potentially be converted into live-work units or residential accommodations. These spaces, currently left unused for planning or logistical reasons, are an untapped resource that could support small businesses and alleviate workspace shortages.
- Consider how to help promote independents and market Bridport as a shopping destination, not just a cultural/tourist destination.

- Afternoon footfall and parking numbers are increasing but we need to spread the concentration of shopping visits away from mornings. Previous suggestions include offering incentives to afternoon shoppers and discounts in store. Free or cheaper parking would be welcomed but the majority of parking is controlled by Dorset Council.
- A pressing need to lobby for improved public transport into Bridport from the surrounding area.
- Improve signage to the town centre from the A35. Offering drivers information about car park capacity with electronic signage and directing visitors to use the Football Ground Park and Stride car park by preference.

APPENDIX ONE – SURVEY METHODOLOGY

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/nighttime 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 2025 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.

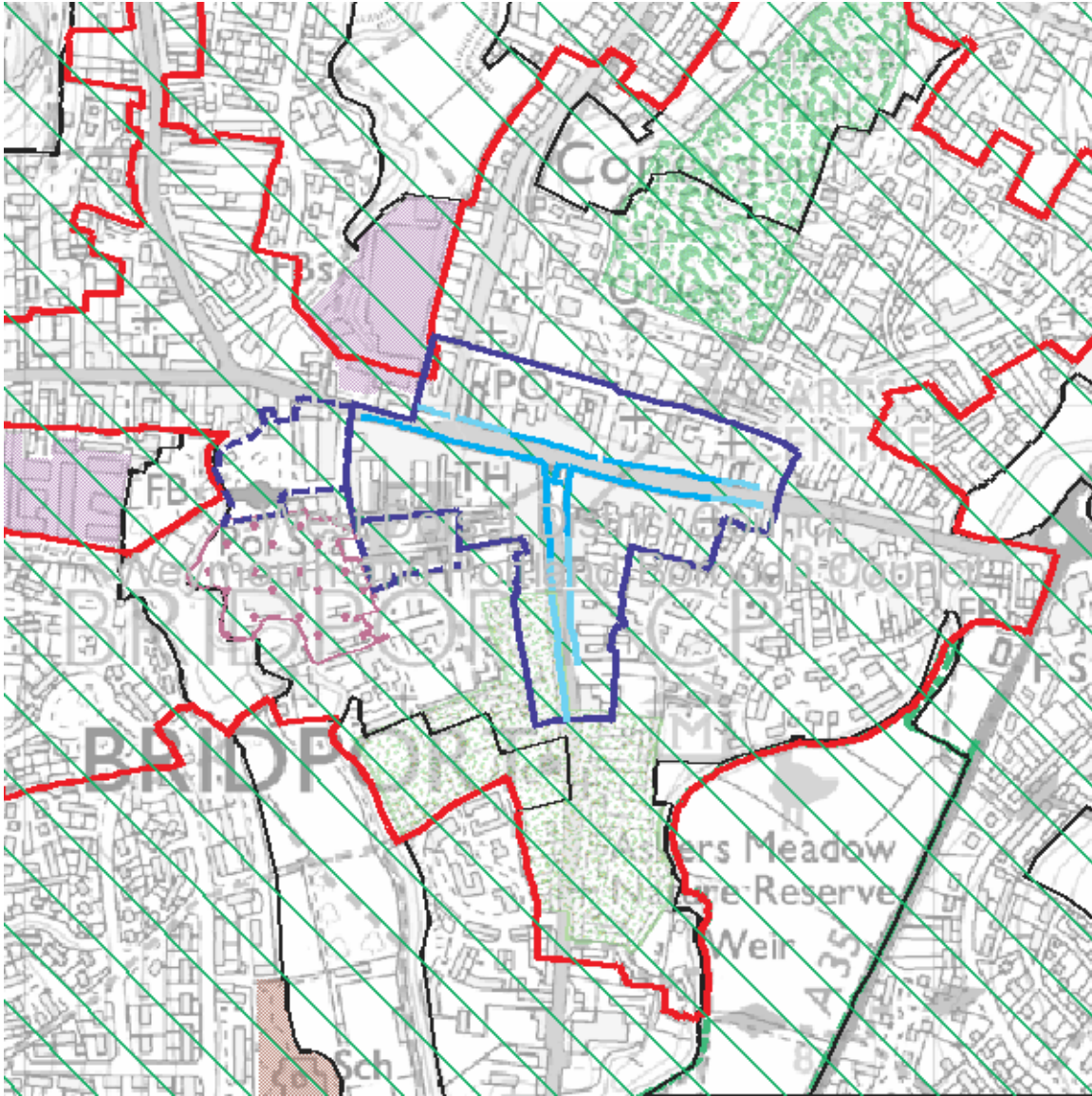
The shopper and retailer questionnaires were available as online surveys between July and October with paper copies available via Bridport TIC.

All data collected for the 2025 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 2025 – Data Sets

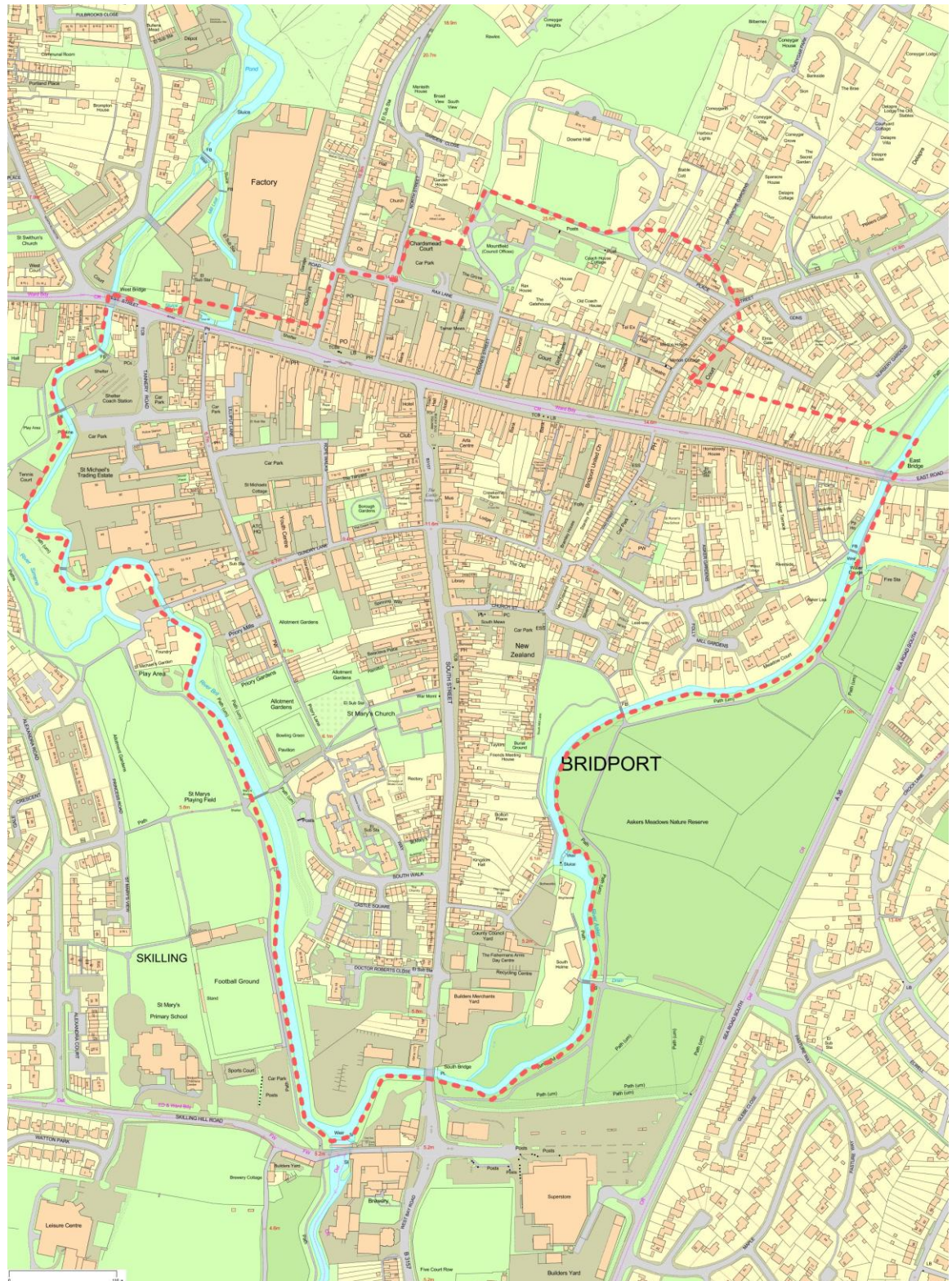
Health Check Indicator	Health Check data required:	Approach to be taken:
People & Footfall	a) Footfall counts - Pedestrian counts/ flows	BTC street counts on 4 days July/Oct 2025
	b) Car park capacity counts	
	c) Tourist Information Centre footfall	TIC counter data
	d) Population numbers/ projections 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) Reported Crime in range of categories 12-month period	Dorset Police
Consumer and Business perceptions	j) Retailer survey – satisfaction, business confidence and intentions to change	Online Survey
	k) Consumer (shopper) survey – satisfaction, and rating of town centre attractiveness	Shopper survey
Economic Characteristics	l) Number of Charity Shops	Survey undertaken by BTC/Volunteers
	m) Number of vacant retail units	

a) West Dorset Local Plan ECON4



Key:
Town Centre area **purple**
Extension areas **dotted**

b) Centre of Bridport Area Referendum Version Neighbourhood Plan:



This report is a summary of the detailed feedback from almost 400 shoppers. Survey responses show deep affection for Bridport's unique, independent character and strong sense of community. Residents and visitors alike describe the town as friendly, lively, and culturally rich, with its independent shops, twice weekly markets, events, and arts scene seen as key strengths. However, many feel that the town centre looks "tired" and "neglected," needing renewed care and investment to restore pride.

Key themes

The key themes outlined below capture what people said in order of frequency of mentions.

1. Empty shops, shop variety & town centre mix

This was the most consistent theme across responses, with 295 references.

Empty and neglected premises cause widespread frustration. Requests and ideas include lower rents and business rates to attract tenants, incentives or enforcement to encourage landlords to let or maintain vacant units and creative temporary uses such as pop-ups, artists' displays, or community stalls. Also calls to convert unused upper floors above shops into affordable housing for young people and workers

The defining feature of Bridport from respondents is the **independent shops** and there is a strong preference for independent and local businesses to preserve character. They want to see support for small businesses and help for start-ups.

There was some support for a few **national retailers** (e.g. M&S Food Hall, White Stuff, youth-friendly clothing shops, B&M) to restore useful variety. There were many comments about too many cafés, barbers, and charity shops, while essentials like greengrocers and shoe shops are missing. Several commented on the price of independent shops being out the reach of many and the need for affordable shops and shops for everyday essentials. Above all respondents want a town centre that works for the whole community, not just visitors or affluent newcomers.

People enjoy the diversity of stalls and atmosphere of the twice weekly **markets**. There are frustrations with market stalls taking disabled bays, double parking by traders and stalls blocking visibility to pedestrian crossings and the road

narrowing by the town hall and closure of Downes St adding to traffic flow problems. Frequent mention of dogs on long leads and too many dogs on market days. There is a call for better **signage** to other tucked away places in town, such as Vintage Quarter and better **marketing** of what's on offer in the town.

2. Traffic, parking & pedestrianisation

An area of strong opinion and divided views, with 191 comments on this topic.

- **Pedestrianisation:** Support for partial or market-day closure of South Street to improve safety, air quality, and café culture but opposition from others who fear loss of access and harm to trade. Some suggest seasonal or trial closures as a compromise.
- **Parking:** Charges are viewed as too high and inconsistently applied and parking is seen as a barrier to access, putting people off from coming in. The lack of long stay parking forces workers to park in residential streets causing issues. Frequent requests for: cheaper parking, clearer signage, more disabled bays, and re-marked wider spaces. Suggestions include park-and-ride options (especially for events) or a multi-storey car park. Safety was frequently mentioned in relation to blue badge holders parking dangerously near to junctions.
- **Traffic issues:** Slow traffic-light phasing and congestion near the Town Hall, especially on market days, closing of Downes St on Saturday market day, delivery vans, and narrow pavements restricting movement. There is concern that the Foundry Lea development will increase traffic. When combined with parking and market disruption, movement through town is a major frustration for many.
- **Cyclists** would like more bike racks (especially outside Post Office) and information on where they are. Also safer cycle routes.

3. Appearance, cleanliness & civic pride

Many of the 93 comments were linked to pride in Bridport's image and visitor appeal. There were several requests and concerns:

- Improved street cleaning, pavement cleaning and weed removal.
- Repairs and repainting of tired or derelict façades (notably Central Stores) which are seen as dragging the town down.
- Shop and building owners to take responsibility for appearance outside their premises
- More greenery: trees, hanging baskets and better maintained planters
- Street furniture / bins that complement Georgian architecture.
- Action on graffiti, dog fouling, and pavement staining.
- Cleaner, better-maintained public toilets, especially at the bus station.
- Gateways: Esso and Crown roundabouts seen as poor entrances to an otherwise beautiful town; residents want them improved and planted.

4. Pavements, pedestrian safety & accessibility

There were 50 comments on this subject. Uneven and narrow pavements are seen as hazardous for wheelchairs, buggies, and mobility scooters and there are several mentions of tripping. Requests for resurfacing, widening, and improved crossings (especially on lower South Street and at the traffic lights and the Waitrose zebra crossing to be made safer). Calls for audio signals at lights for visually impaired users. Support for more cycle racks, safe bike routes, and 20mph zones with “smiley face” speed signs.

5. Public transport

Buses are widely described as irregular, unreliable, or confusing. Main requests include more frequent and later buses to Dorchester, Weymouth, Lyme Regis, and Axminster and improved rural links. Ideas for cheaper Bridport shopper permits (rather than Dorset wide) or park and ride schemes.

6. Anti-social behaviour & safety

Concerns are focused on particular hotspots such as Bucky Doo Square and the bus station with reports of drinking, drug use, vandalism, and late-night noise. Residents want a greater police presence, patrol visibility and reopening of the police station, enforcement of the alcohol ban, late-night car “racing” and ebikes around town addressed and expansion of CCTV coverage.

7. Greening & public realm enhancement

Desire for a greener, brighter, more inviting town centre. Popular ideas include more trees, planters, murals, sculptures, and festive lighting, community planting schemes, better benches (including shaded and “chatty” benches), less cluttered signage and more coordinated “gateway” features at town entrances. People want a town that looks more welcoming at the key entry points.

8. Public toilets

Widespread agreement that public toilet provision is inadequate and central, accessible, clean facilities are a priority. Current facilities at the bus station are much cited, described as “shabby”, “in disrepair” and “they stink”.

9. Provision for young people & families

Strong feeling that Bridport risks becoming a “retirement town” linked to wider worries about Bridport becoming unaffordable for the next generation. The lack of employment and housing opportunities may push them to leave Bridport. Requests include youth cafés, creative hubs, and safe social spaces. Shops with

affordable fashion and family-friendly dining options. Better play areas and more family events. Safe active travel routes.

10. Events, culture & community feel

Markets and community events are deeply valued as Bridport's "beating heart." People want more community events that balance Bridport's traditional charm with fresh ideas: more activity in Bucky Doo Square and other areas, including live music, seasonal celebrations, and improved Christmas decorations/lights. A suggestion for a covered or retractable canopy market area and more use of public art. Respondents ask the Town Council to support arts and festivals but avoid "over-managing" what makes Bridport's creative character special.

Overall Summary

The survey paints a consistent picture: people love Bridport's character and creativity, but they want to see it looked after. Residents call for a cleaner, greener, safer, and more accessible town centre; one that continues to celebrate its independent spirit while meeting everyday needs and supporting local life. The common sentiment: deep love for the town and pride in its individuality. Residents want Bridport cared for, cleaned up, and celebrated, not transformed.

The following report collates feedback from 27 retailers ranging from butchers, gift shops, music stores and clothing. Most of the businesses have been operating over 10 years on the same site and some have long histories (30–50+ years), often starting as market stalls before moving into shops. A few who answered are brand new or recently rebranded.

Trading Performance

5 businesses thought trading was better than last year, 11 businesses said it was about the same, 8 thought it was worse than last year, 2 businesses are new so the question was not applicable. Key themes:

- Rising cost of living, taxation, rents and government costs are squeezing margins.
- Road closures and seasonal fluctuations have hurt footfall.
- Some report growth and strong summer trade, especially from tourists and returning visitors.
- New businesses are encouraged by footfall but face challenges converting browsers into buyers.

Business Changes

Thirteen businesses are considering changes, **six businesses** are not and **eight businesses** are unsure. The planned/considered changes are:

- Expanding into online sales and social media presence.
- Retirement or closure due to poor margins, rent increases, or difficult trading conditions.
- Opening new outlets or downsizing.
- Diversifying stock and services to attract wider customer bases.
- Employing more staff and evolving product lines.

Strengths of the Town Centre according to retailers

- Strong independent retail base with variety and individuality.
- Weekly market draws visitors and boosts footfall.
- Community spirit and local support.
- Clean, vibrant environment with events throughout the year.
- Mix of small independents and larger retailers, plus proximity to coast and industrial estate services.

Weaknesses of the Town Centre according to the retailers

- Parking issues: cost, lack of spaces, congestion, especially on market days.
- Empty shops and prevalence of charity shops.
- High rents, rates, and utilities squeezing independents.
- Seasonal reliance on tourism leading to fluctuating sales.
- Poor public transport and infrastructure.
- Shabby entrances, weeds, rubbish, and dog fouling noted.
- Perception of limited council support.

Opportunities for the Town Centre according to retailers

- Promote independent shopping experience and make Bridport a year-round destination.
- Carnivals, events, late-night shopping to boost footfall.
- Better public transport and park & ride.
- Attract tour coaches and improve gateways into town.
- Fill empty shops with missing businesses (e.g., greengrocer, children's clothing).
- Strengthen collaboration between traders, Bridport Chamber, and Council.
- Diversify markets to keep them fresh and distinctive.

Constraints of the Town Centre according to retailers

- Town Council focus seen as limited (events/market only).
- High rents and expensive parking deter new businesses.
- Infrastructure limitations (size, traffic, lack of funding for cleaning/maintenance).
- Antisocial behaviour concerns (bikes/scooters on pavements).
- Economic pressures expected to worsen: more closures, empty shops, job losses.
- Online retail competition.
- Housing affordability issues for local workers.

Overall picture from the retailers

The town centre is rich in independent businesses with strong community spirit and a vibrant market, but faces serious challenges: parking, empty shops, high costs, and seasonal reliance on tourism. While many traders are adapting through online expansion and diversification, others are considering closure or retirement due to mounting pressures. Opportunities lie in better promotion, infrastructure improvements, and collaborative support to sustain Bridport's unique independent character.