RETAIL AND TOWN CENTRE - FACT SHEET 4

South East Lincolnshire
Joint Strategic Planning Committee

Introduction

- In general, South East Lincolnshire is well provided with shopping facilities; the quantity and quality, in terms of accessibility and the range of retailers and retail formats, is broadly appropriate to meet the needs of local people. It has a healthy market share of convenience goods expenditure and a reasonable share of comparison goods expenditure, although leakage exists from peripheral areas, particularly in the south and east.
- The National Planning Policy Framework recognises that town centre environments are at the heart of communities and that competitive town centres that provide customer choice and a diverse retail offer should be promoted. The town centres within South East Lincolnshire are key drivers of the local economy, and also help foster civic pride, promote local identity and contribute towards the aims of sustainable development. The main retail concentration is located in Boston and Spalding town centres.
- This fact sheet reviews the health and vitality of South East Lincolnshire's town centres. Boston town centre is the defined retail centre for Boston Borough whilst the South Holland Local Plan sets out a hierarchy of town centres for retail policy purposes identifying Spalding, Holbeach, Long Sutton, Crowland, Donington and Sutton Bridge as places with defined retail centres.

What has been achieved?

Vacancy rates: Between 2009 and 2014, vacancy rates for retail units in the area's town centres remained fairly stable overall. Disappointingly, however, rates increased in 2014/15 to a greater level than that at the beginning of the recession in 2008.

Number of vacant ground floor units within town centres

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Boston	39	28	38	48	32	37	28	41	40	36	45
Kirton	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	4
Spalding	16	18	21	23	22	29	21	26	20	14	21
Holbeach	3	3	10	9	13	11	9	5	13	14	17
Long Sutton	6	10	9	10	9	9	12	10	9	9	10
Sutton Bridge	3	5	5	5	7	7	7	7	3	3	4
Crowland	4	4	4	4	6	6	7	4	4	3	5
Donington	1	4	4	6	7	5	5	4	4	4	4
Total	**72**	**72**	**91**	**105**	**96**	**98**	**89**	**97**	**93**	**85**	**110**

Source: Boston Borough Council and South Holland District Council

A1 units in primary shopping frontages: Policies RTC6 and RTC7 of the Boston Borough Local Plan and Policy EC6 of the South Holland Local Plan state that development proposals resulting in the change of use from retail (Class A1) to non-retail on the ground floors within the primary shopping area will be permitted except where the number or coalescence of such uses would undermine the dominant retail function or harm the vitality or viability of the town centre.

Number of A1 units in primary shopping frontages

		Boston Prime Frontage	Boston Prime Area	Spalding
2009	N° of A1 units	28	29	36
	% of A1 units	93%	74%	63%
2010	N° of A1 units	28	37	35
	% of A1 units	93%	73%	61%
2011	N° of A1 units	26	33	33
	% of A1 units	81%	60%	58%
2012	N° of A1 units	29	37	35
	% of A1 units	90%	73%	61%
2013	N° of A1 units	22	39	31
	% of A1 units	73%	65%	54%
2014	N° of A1 units	40	93	30
	% of A1 units	82%	61%	61%
2015	N° of A1 units	40	94	41
	% of A1 units	80%	58%	63%

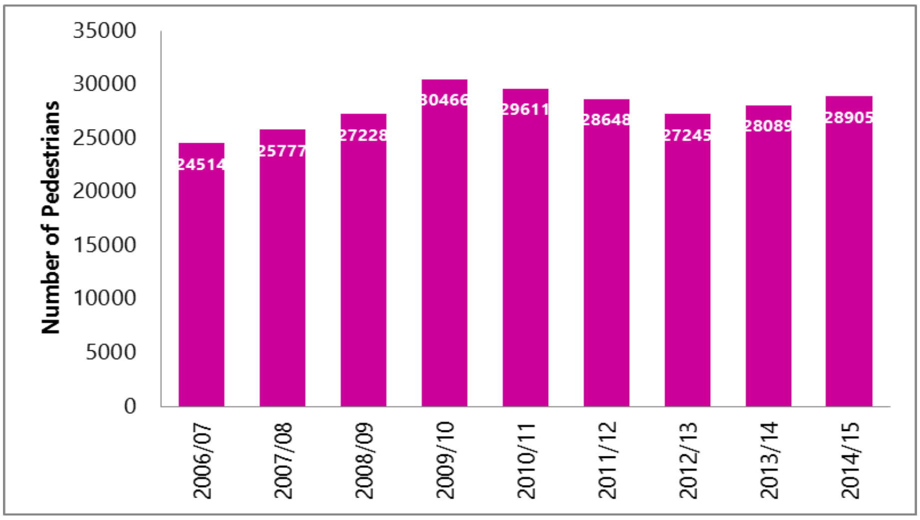
Source: Boston Borough Council and South Holland District Council

The table above shows that the percentage of A1 units in both Boston and Spalding's primary shopping frontages has tended to fluctuate between 2009 and 2015. The greatest change occurred between 2012 and 2013 in Boston where there was almost a 20% decrease in the number of A1 units in its primary shopping frontage. Nonetheless, Boston has consistently had a greater percentage of A1 units than Spalding in the town's primary shopping frontage. In comparison to Boston's primary shopping frontage, the percentage of A1 units in its primary shopping area has generally been lower.

Strait Bargate, Boston

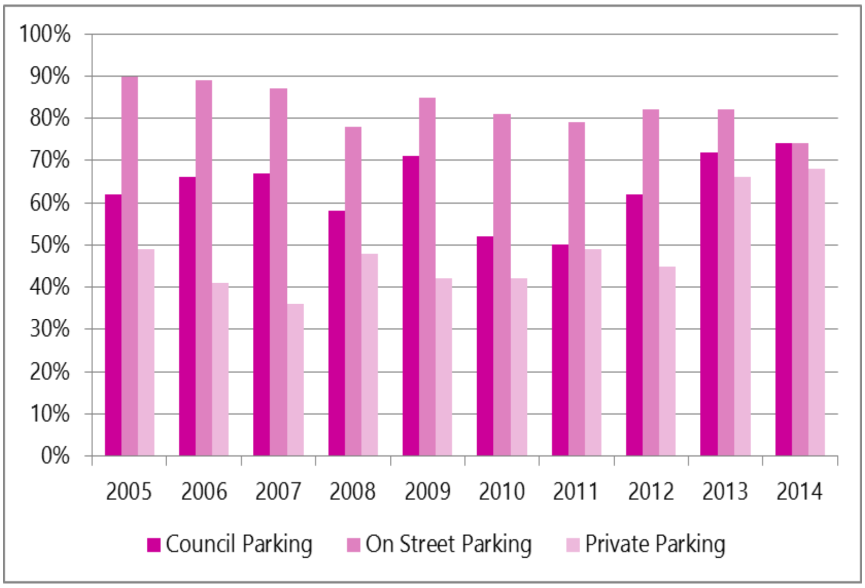
Town Centre Pedestrian Counts (Boston Only): The number of people walking through a town centre is one of the key measures of a town centre's health and vitality. The graph below shows the total number of pedestrians recorded as passing through Strait Bargate, Boston during monthly surveys conducted on Wednesday market days. It shows year-on-year increases until 2010/11 followed by a short period of decline, perhaps linked to the recent recession, before recovering in 2013/14. 2014/15 recorded the third highest total in the nine year period 2006/07 – 2014/15.

Hourly pedestrian traffic through Strait Bargate on Wednesday market day (2006/07 – 2014/15)



Source: Boston Borough Council

Town Centre Car Park Usage (Boston Only): As with town centre pedestrian counts, the usage of town centre car parks provides another general measure of the town centre's vitality. The following graph shows that the occupancy rate of on street car parking has not varied greatly between 2005 and 2014 although there has been an overall decrease of around 15% from the beginning to end of that period. In contrast, the use of Borough Council off street car parks declined significantly from 2009 to 2010 (reflecting both the nationwide reduction in vehicle use caused by the recession, as well as the local effects of increased bus usage), but has recovered in more recent years reaching the highest level in the ten year period from 2005. Between 2005 and 2012, private parking remained below 50% although in 2013 and 2014 this increased to around 65%.



Occupancy of Boston's town centre car parks in October (2005 – 2014)
Source: Boston Borough Council