

Formby District Centre

Description

Formby is located approximately 12 kilometres to the south of Southport. The centre has a good provision of convenience, comparison and service operators, with relatively high levels of pedestrian activity noted throughout the centre at the time of our visit.

The centre is primarily located along Chapel Lane at the junction of Three Tuns Lane and Halsall Lane, and is anchored by a Waitrose store to the east of the centre. Formby also contains a range of community facilities, including Formby Pool, which is located just beyond the western boundary of the defined centre.

Status

District Centre (as defined by the Local Plan for Sefton, adopted April 2017)

Photos



Figure 1: Commercial units on Chapel Lane viewed in March 2020



Figure 2: High quality public realm on Halsall Lane in March 2020



Figure 3: Commercial units on Brows Lane viewed in March 2020



Figure 4: Vacant units of Chapel Lane in March 2020

Table 1: District Centre Floorspace Composition

GOAD Category	Formby District Centre Floorspace at 2011 (%)	Formby District Centre Floorspace at 2015 (%)	Formby District Centre Floorspace at 2020 (%)	Formby District Centre Floorspace at 2020 (sq.m)	Floorspace UK Average at 2020 (%)
Convenience	33.9	35.1	27.7	6,080	15.4
Comparison	27.9	27.9	21.8	4,780	33.5
Retail Services	8.3	6.7	9.5	2,080	7.0
Leisure Services	14.3	15.9	22.6	4,950	25.6
Financial and Business Services	12.4	12.8	11.5	2,520	7.3
Miscellaneous	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0
Vacant	3.2	1.6	6.9	1,520	10.6
TOTAL	100	100	100	21,930	100

Source: Composition of Formby District Centre based on Experian Goad definition of the centre and derived from Nexus Planning Survey of March 2020; historic data derived from Sefton Retail Strategy Review 2015 and Sefton Retail Strategy Review Update 2012; UK Average from Experian Goad Report February 2020

Table 2: District Centre Unit Composition

GOAD Category	Formby District Centre Units at 2011 (%)	Formby District Centre Units at 2015 (%)	Formby District Centre Units at 2020 (%)	Formby District Centre Number of Units 2020	Units UK Average at 2020 (%)
Convenience	11.9	10.3	8.7	11	9.2
Comparison	36.9	36.4	29.9	38	29.2
Retail Services	14.9	16.8	21.3	27	15.1
Leisure Services	15.8	20.6	22.8	29	24.5
Financial and Business Services	13.9	13.1	9.4	12	9.8
Miscellaneous	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0
Vacant	6.9	2.8	7.9	10	11.9
TOTAL	100	100	100	127	100

Source: Composition of Formby District Centre based on Experian Goad definition of the centre and derived from Nexus Planning Survey of March 2020; historic data derived from Sefton Retail Strategy Review 2015 and Sefton Retail Strategy Review Update 2012; UK Average from Experian Goad Report February 2020

Table 3: District Centre Facilities

		Total
Key Anchor Store	Waitrose	32
Other National Retailers	Age UK, British Heart Foundation, Barclays Bank, Barnardo's, Boots Pharmacy, Cafe Nero, Cancer Research, Card Factory, Costa, Co-operative Funeralcare, Domino's, Hays, Holland & Barrett, HSBC, Iceland, Ladbroke's, Lloyds Bank, Marie Curie, Marks & Spencer Simply Food, Oxfam, Pizza Express, Rowlands Pharmacy, Santander, Savers, Specsavers, Subway, The Edinburgh Woollen Mill, TUI, Vision Express, William Hill, YMCA	
Community Facilities	Four doctors' surgeries, three places of worship, two dental surgeries and Formby Pool (edge of centre)	10

Source: Composition of Formby District Centre derived from Nexus Planning Survey of March 2020

Overall Composition

- There are 11 convenience goods operators located in Formby. These account for 6,080 sq.m (27.7% of the total stock of floorspace). There are also 38 comparison goods operators which account for 4,780 sq.m of floorspace (21.8% of the total stock).
- Service operators account for 9,550 sq.m of floorspace and equate to 43.6% of the total stock of floorspace.
- There are 10 vacant units within Formby, equating to 7.9% of all units within the centre. This figure is lower than national average level (which equates to 11.9% of units). The amount of vacant floorspace (1,520 sq.m, or 6.9% of the total) is also lower than the UK average.
- The centre is of a good environmental quality, with ample provision of car parking and pedestrian access ensuring the centre is easily accessible and attractive to users.

Convenience & Comparison

There are 49 convenience and comparison goods retailers in Formby. These account for 10,860 sq.m of floorspace, equating to 49.5% of total floorspace in the district centre.

The 11 convenience goods retailers in the centre account for 6,080 sq.m of floorspace, or 27.7% of the total stock. Convenience goods operators occupy 8.7% of all units in the centre. The centre's offer is underpinned by the Waitrose foodstore (at Three Tuns Lane), but individual operators are diverse and comprise convenience stores, a greengrocer, a baker, an off licence and a butcher. The M&S Foodhall at Halsall Lane also has an important role in meeting local needs and drawing custom into the centre. The proportion of floorspace in convenience goods use in Formby is significantly greater than national average level.

There are 38 comparison units within Formby, representing 29.9% of all units. These account for 4,780 sq.m of floorspace, or 21.8% of the total stock. Individual operators include charity shops, chemists, gift shops, florists, clothes stores and hardware and household stores. The proportion of floorspace in comparison goods use is less than national average level, which is not untypical for a district centre (which generally tend to meet convenience goods retail and service needs). In addition, it should be noted that both the number of units in comparison goods use and the proportion of floorspace dedicated to this use has declined since the undertaking of the previous survey in 2015, with the loss of national multiple retailers such as Dorothy Perkins and New Look (the latter of which is nationally implementing closures). Moreover, the amount of charity shops in the centre is considered to be high (11 of the 38 comparison operators) and the centre may benefit from diversifying the comparison offer to provide a wider offer for the catchment.

Since the previous survey in July 2015 there have been changes in the overall convenience and comparison goods composition of Formby, with decreases in floorspace for both categories. However, Formby

continues to maintain a relatively good variety of convenience and comparison goods operators for a centre of its size.

Services

Service operators dominate Formby district centre. There are a total of 68 service units, equating to 53.5% of all units in the centre, or 9,550 sq.m of floorspace (43.6% of the stock).

There are 27 retail service operators in the centre, which account for 2,080 sq.m of floorspace, or 9.5% of the total stock. Retail service operators are diverse and varied, and include hairdressers, travel agents, opticians, beauty salons, an undertaker, a laundrette/dry cleaners and a Post Office.

In addition, there are 29 leisure service operators in Formby. These account for 4,950 sq.m of floorspace, equating to 22.6% of the total stock. Operators include cafes, restaurants, hot-food takeaways, public houses and betting offices. There are 12 financial and business service operators in Formby, including estate agents four banks. These operators account for 2,520 sq.m of floorspace (equating to 11.5% of the total stock).

Although there have been some changes in the overall service offer since the previous survey was conducted, such as the closure of Natwest and RBS on Chapel Lane, Formby maintains a varied and strong service offer. This encourages linked trips and helps to underpin Formby's district centre role.

Vacancies

Whilst Formby's vacancy rate has increased from that recorded by WYG's previous survey of July 2015, it is still less than national average (equating to 6.9% of floorspace and 7.9% of units). The most significant recent closures of New Look and RBS on Chapel Lane (both of which are nationally implementing closures) are likely to be indicative of the changing nature of centres more generally. The other vacancies appear to be consistent with the natural 'churn' of town centre occupancy. Furthermore, the availability of some units helps the centre to evolve and accommodate new operators and formats, particularly in respect of future potential leisure operators.

Equally, during our survey it was noted that a number of operators within the centre, particularly independent professional services, were in the process of relocating to more suitable premises within Formby. This would appear to show a continued, underlying confidence in the centre.

Miscellaneous

There are a number of community facilities located within Formby. These include four doctor surgeries, three places of worship, three halls/clubs and two dental surgeries.

Additionally, Formby Pool is located on Chapel Lane to the immediate west of the district centre boundary.

Formby is therefore well served by community facilities, with a number of these located in the district centre. These ensure that Formby plays a key role for the surrounding residential community.

Pedestrian Flows

At the time of our visit strong pedestrian flows in the centre were concentrated along Chapel Lane, and along those parts of Halsall Lane and Three Tuns Lane in close proximity to Chapel Lane.

The core of Formby is relatively tightly defined, with the M&S Simply Food and Waitrose stores well positioned to encourage linked trips and movement throughout the centre. In this regard, a pedestrian crossing is provided across Three Tuns Lane, towards Waitrose.

Accessibility

Road Access

The A565 bypasses central Formby to the west and provides an excellent road link to Southport to the north, and Crosby and central Liverpool to the south. Southport is around 15 minutes' drive from Formby, with Liverpool around 40 minutes to the south.

The centre is concentrated around the streets of Chapel Lane/Brows Lane and Halsall Lane/Three Tuns Lane (which form a letter 'T'). There are limited short stay on-street parking spaces on Chapel Lane Brows Lane. Additionally, approximately 180 parking spaces are available to the rear of The Cloisters shopping parade, off Furness Avenue (£0.20 for an hour). A further 60 spaces are available at Formby Pool, Elbow Lane (£1.00 for an hour, maximum stay 4 hours) and a further 55 spaces are available at Sumner Road (£1.00 for up to two hours; four hours plus for £3.30). Approximately 240 spaces are available for Waitrose customers at the School Lane car park to the front of the store. All the car parks are of good quality, well-signed and appear to be well used.

Public Transport: Rail

Formby Station lies approximately 1 kilometre to the west of the centre and provides access to regular Mersey Rail services between Southport and Liverpool. Although not immediately accessible from the centre on foot, Formby Station does provide a means of access to key regional destinations and direct bus services link the railway station with the district centre on a regular basis.

Public Transport: Bus

The town is served by regular bus services to Southport and Liverpool and by the Formby Circular. Central bus stops are provided at Summer Lane, Duke Street and Church Road which, although outside of the district centre boundary, are within easy walking distance of the centre.

Walking, Cycling and Disabled Access

The principal streets and, in particular, Chapel Lane provide a good quality environment for pedestrians which is not overly dominated by

traffic. There are a number of cycle stands at various point on Chapel Lane, Halsall Lane and Three Tuns Lane. Furthermore, the centre appears to offer a good level of accessibility and safety for disabled visitors, although disabled car parking spaces are limited to car parking areas away from Chapel Lane.

Overall, Formby has a good standard of accessibility for all users.

Perception of Safety

The centre appears safe and secure, with high levels of footfall and activity through most of the day and with an active street environment with a range of uses, including restaurants and bars. The town centre is well related to adjacent residential areas with again adds to a sense of activity and surveillance.

According to the website UKCrimeStats the following crime rates were reported within a mile radius of Formby District Centre over the past three years:

- 1,036 crimes (approximately 86 per month) between August 2019 and July 2020
- 976 crimes (approximately 81 per month) between August 2018 and July 2019
- 1,118 crimes (approximately 93 per month) between August 2017 and July 2018

Environmental Quality

The environmental quality of Formby is considered to be very high, benefitting from a good stock of well-maintained and occupied units. Shop façades are also generally well maintained, with a strong sense of character throughout the centre.

The public realm is attractive and creates a pleasant environment through planting and landscaping which also improve the centre's visual character.

Both public realm and shopfronts are generally well maintained, and Formby is a pleasant centre for potential users to spend time in.

Conclusion

Formby has a high standard of environmental quality and high levels of pedestrian activity were noted throughout the centre. Accordingly, it is a well-used district centre that offers a suitable range of services and retailers to serve the community, with the offer augmented by a number of community facilities within in or adjacent to the centre boundary.

Although there has been a recent increase in the centre's vacancy rate, Formby is still considered to be a vital and viable district centre. The centre may benefit from fewer charity shops and an improved comparison goods offer.



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|  Comparison |  Leisure Service |
|  Convenience |  Retail Service |
|  Financial & Business Services |  Vacant |

Formby District Centre

Survey Date
March 2020