

## Ashford Town Centre/High Street

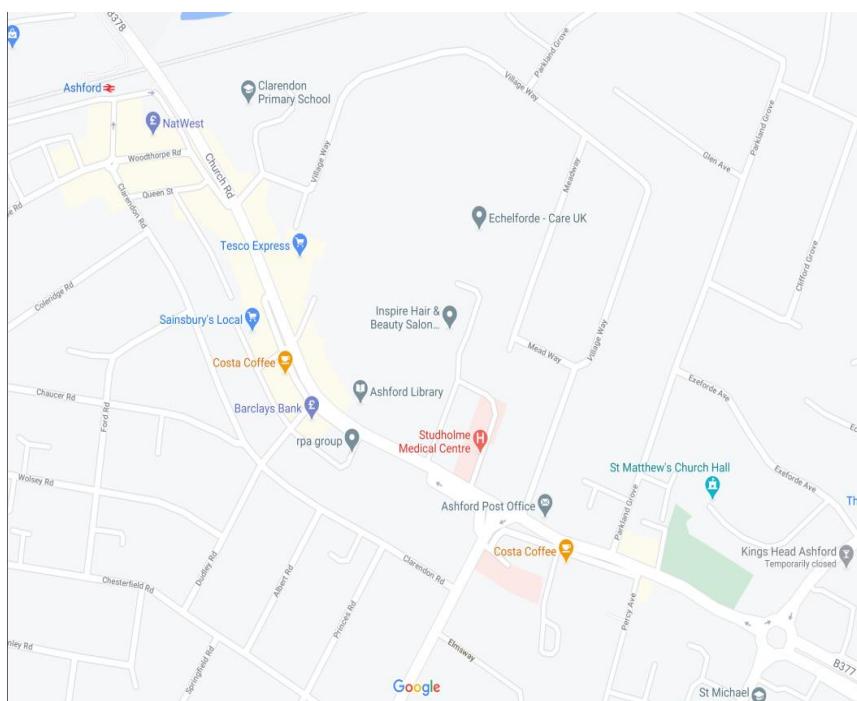
This report and the accompanying spreadsheet has predominantly been created through online research with some physical visits and is designed to be a working document that can be added to as more information is received.

In terms of GDPR, everything in the spreadsheet is 'manifestly in the public domain'.

The collection and storing of any future details will be checked for compliance before being included.

### Geographical area

This report and the accompanying spreadsheet covers the main shopping/town centre area of Ashford, comprising the businesses in Woodthorpe Road, Station Approach, Station Road, Church Road, New Parade, Church Parade & Fir Tree Place.



## Overview

The High Street/Town Centre area of Ashford comprises approx. 162 units/businesses.

The majority of majority of the businesses are retail with a limited number of non-retail businesses spread throughout. The town does benefit from The Atrium - a serviced office unit in the centre of town. This houses approx. 20 companies although the size and total employee number of these is not currently known.

There is additional office space in Chapel House in Woodthorpe Road but companies and details are not currently known.

There is a small selection of high profile national convenience store/supermarket brands situated in the town; -

Sainsburys

Tescos

Co-op

Londis

As well as national brand fast-food and coffee shops; -

KFC

Subway

Costa Coffee

And there's even a Wimpy

(There is a McDonalds but this is situated outside of the town centre on the A30).

Boots, Superdrug, Lloyds Pharmacy provide well-known pharmacy brands and NatWest, Barclays and Santander have branches in the town.

William Hill & Coral have units in town as does Card Factory.

There is a Post Office and a library.

**That leaves a high number of independent retailers.**

## **High Street/shopfront business category breakdown**

There are

- 14 hairdressers/barbers
- 18 restaurants/take-away/sandwich bars
- 8 professional practices
- 8 home design/furnishing
- 7 estate/lettings agents
- 7 coffee shops/sandwich bars
- 6 take-aways (burger/pizza/fish & chips)
- 6 charity shops
- 5 medical (acupuncturist, surgery, chiropodist, ultrasound, osteopathy)
- 5 nail salons
- 4 pharmacies
- 3 building & construction (fire alarms, heating & plumbing, building)
- 3 banks
- 3 dentists
- 3 dry cleaners
- 3 funeral directors
- 3 beauty parlours
- 3 vape stores
- 2 bakers
- 2 florists
- 2 clothes shops
- 2 betting shops
- 2 wine shops
- 2 opticians
- 2 fancy dress shops
- 1 butcher
- 1 post office
- 1 card shop
- 1 newsagent
- 1 printing & copying
- 1 cobbler/key cutting
- 1 jeweller
- 1 mobile phone retailer
- 1 electrical wholesaler
- 1 ice cream parlour (?)
- 1 bargain store
- 1 taxi firm
- 1 antiques
- 1 engraver
- 1 cycle shop
- 1 gym/fitness studio
- 1 homecare services
- 1 tattoo parlour
- 1 teaching studio
- 1 political party office
- 1 photographic studio
- 1 pet supplies
- 1 fruit & veg
- 1 motor garage
- 1 driving test centre

### **Visual**

The main retail area through the town does not look inviting. Many of the shopfronts look outdated and ‘tired’. There is a really nice clock in the centre – but it doesn’t work. There are signs for the toilets – but no toilets.

There is a large, central and very cheap car park – but it is unattractive, very dark and dirty.

Whilst these factors are not ideal, it does give the opportunity for improvements.

### **Void units**

There are currently 10 void units in the town centre area.

This may of course change when the effects of the latest lockdown are seen over the coming weeks.

On the positive side, there are a couple of void units that may actually only be temporarily shut due to the current situation. More investigation is needed on these.

### **Advertising/Promotion/Digital**

The level of clear, informative and accurate online information that prospective customers can find about Ashford businesses is very poor.

Approx. 35-40% of businesses have little or no online presence at all.  
As such, many business listings on the first page of Google seem to be from review sites such as [allinlondon.com](http://allinlondon.com), [openinghours.co.uk](http://openinghours.co.uk), [nearer.com](http://nearer.com).

These have incomplete and, in a lot of cases, inaccurate info.

Many smaller companies will just have a Facebook page instead of a website. This can be perfectly okay for certain businesses and marketing is never a ‘one size fits all’ solution but there is a huge need for better understanding of how to promote your business to potential customers.

In terms of social media, the spreadsheet shows the companies that have a social media presence and, where possible, how many follows they have and how often they use these platforms.

As would be expected, the most widely used platform is still Facebook. The professions tend to use Twitter.

For many businesses such as hairdressers, beauty etc – the growing importance of Instagram is clear.

The need for better use of all forms of advertising is clear.

There are existing ‘town/community’ social media pages.

Ashford Wide has over 2,000 followers and features a lot of great ‘business’ information.

Ashford Local has over 6,000 followers so there is a great opportunity for appropriate ‘business’ messages there.

### **Food businesses/Hygiene ratings**

Of the food outlets throughout the town; -

15 are rated 5  
6 are rated 4  
3 are rated 3  
1 is awaiting inspection  
2 are unknown

### **Spelthorne Business Forum**

Of the businesses within the ‘town centre’ area – only 4 are members with a listing on the SBF website.

This gives both a problem and an opportunity.

Obviously, the more that we promote the SBF the more members it will have and the more it will grow and have an influence. **BUT**, should the support we offer business in Ashford be dependent on them having to join a ‘separate’ organisation?

The vast majority of the businesses that we need to be supporting and working with are exactly the businesses that do not join groups and that all membership organisations find the hardest to engage.

As stated elsewhere, their level of engagement (whether it be through groups, forums, digital, e-commerce etc) is very limited.