(https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)

Folkestone & Hythe District Council

(https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)

Information request details

Request

I request access to information held by Folkestone & Hythe District Council relating to Folkestone Town Centre footfall, visitor activity, parking, economic performance and town centre regeneration monitoring.

Please provide the following information:

1. Footfall Data
Please provide all Folkestone Town Centre footfall data held by the Council from 1 January 2018 to the present date, including:

Pedestrian counts
Footfall monitoring reports
Automated footfall counter data
Manual pedestrian surveys
Mobile phone movement data
Wi-Fi/Bluetooth visitor tracking data
Consultant reports analysing footfall
For each dataset please provide:

Measurement locations
Dates covered
Frequency of measurement
Methodology used
Raw data (where available)
Summary reports and analysis
2. Footfall by Location
Please provide any available footfall data broken down by specific locations, including (but not limited to):

Sandgate Road
Bouverie Place
Guildhall Street
Middelburg Square
Old High Street
Tontine Street
Harbour area
The Leas
Folkestone Central Station routes
Bus station area
3. Visitor Behaviour Data
Please provide any information held relating to:

Visitor numbers
Dwell time
Length of stay
Repeat visits
Visitor origin/location data
Peak visiting times
Seasonal variations
4. Town Centre Economic Indicators
Please provide any data/reports held relating to:

Retail vacancy rates
Number of empty commercial units
Business openings and closures

Independent retailers
Hospitality sector performance
Town centre investment monitoring
For the period:
2018–present

5. Parking and Access Data
Please provide:

Parking usage:
Car park occupancy data
Ticket sales
Usage levels
Peak demand periods
For all Council-owned town centre car parks including:

Bouverie Place
Middelburg Square
Harbour area car parks
Other relevant town centre facilities
Parking policy:
Please provide:

Reports assessing the relationship between parking charges and town centre footfall
Reviews of parking strategy
Consultation responses regarding town centre parking
6. Safety and Public Realm Data
Please provide any reports linking town centre activity with:

Anti-social behaviour
Crime concerns
Street cleanliness
Public realm improvements
Perceptions of safety
Including any visitor or business surveys.

7. Regeneration and Strategy Documents
Please provide:

Footfall targets
Town centre performance indicators
Monitoring reports for the Folkestone Place Plan
Town Centre Operating Model documents
Regeneration impact assessments
Consultant reports relating to increasing footfall
8. Future Plans
Please provide:

Any documents considering:

Future town centre footfall strategies
Changes to monitoring arrangements
Plans connected with future local government reorganisation/unitary authority changes

Response

Regarding points 1-3: Footfall Data, Footfall by Location and Visitor Behaviour Data

Please find attached all recorded held data in response to your request (see pdf titled Footfall and visitor data, and Huq Methodology 2026 also see spreadsheet titled Monthly footfall 2021-2025).

Additional information on data and source supplied below:

Visitor Insights were a company who provided footfall data to understand the impact of COVID on the high street and if the interventions that were being delivered made a difference to footfall, dwell time etc. This reporting was government funded via the Reopening High Street Safely Fund. Visit Kent were commissioned to provide the Cambridge report. Please note the Visit Kent platform has since closed down. Destination Research were procured to produce the Cambridge report thereafter, to understand footfall relating to the works undertaken by the Levelling Up Fund, now known as The Local Regeneration Fund.

Huq Industries are the current platform provider for visitor numbers, their methodology has been provided (See attached HUQ Methodology 2026 pdf). It should be noted that the Council pay to use their platform and do not undertake regular reporting at this time.

Data on this platform is viewed accurately at the time the report is generated when required this is done on an ad-hoc basis subject to need and requirements, attached is a spreadsheet export of held recorded information covering 2021 -2025 for Sandgate Road and Guildhall Street. No data has been requested, extracted and prepared for 2026. This information is not held.

Market Research to support regeneration opportunities for Folkestone Town Centre, February 2020– this link: FileNewTemplate (https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/downloads/file/1084/folkestone-town-centre-regeneration-research) (watermelon report) will send you directly to the report on FHDC website. Page 7 may be of interest.

4: **Town Centre Economic Indicators**
I can confirm that the Council holds all of the information you requested. The Council has determined to withhold that information in part since we consider that Section 21 applies to it. The exemption is set out below:

S21 – Information reasonably accessible to the applicant by other means

The information you have requested is already publically available via the council webpages. Information you have requested is reported and made public in the authority monitoring

reports The Council is not obliged to provide information under section 21 (https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1203/information-reasonably-accessible-to-the-applicant-by-other-means-sec21.pdf) of the Act if the information is already reasonably accessible to the applicant by other means.

The information in question can be obtained via the below link for ease:
Search results – Folkestone & Hythe District Council (https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/site-search/results/?q=authority+monitoring+report)
The 2025 report has not yet been through cabinet so is not yet published, however we have attached the relevant data in pdf titled shop front visitor survey 2025.

5. Parking and Access Data and Parking policy
Car park occupancy data can be viewed below:
** Figures derived from occupancy surveys undertaken in April 2022*
Please note Bouverie Place and Middelburg Square are not council-owned.
Ticket sales /Usage levels /Peak demand periods – this data is not held.
Parking policy:
Parking Strategy was halted in 2024 as Kent County Council were considering options for the on-street parking service arrangements with districts going forward. There is no other data to provide to you.
The watermelon report linked for you in point one may be of further assistance.

6. Safety and Public Realm Data
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- The information in question can be obtained via the below links for ease:Anti-social behaviour - Public Spaces Protection Order – (PSPO) (Scanned Document (https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/downloads/file/6002/dog-control-pspo-2025)), Consultation, (Proposed changes to dog control measures | Folkestone & Hythe District Council (https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/news/article/334/proposed-changes-to-dog-control-measures)) changes to Dog Control PSPO given go ahead (New district dog

control measures given go-ahead | Folkestone & Hythe District Council (https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/news/article/348/new-district-dog-control-measures-given-go-ahead)), Anti-social Behaviour PSPO (Anti-social Behaviour Public Spaces Protection Order (ASB PSPO) | Folkestone & Hythe District Council (https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/downloads/download/116/anti-social-behaviour-public-spaces-protection-order-asb-pspo-))

- Crime concerns Any criminal activity data would need to be obtained from Kent Police and their targeted work through “GRIP funding” to tackle work within the Folkestone area and specifically targeting the town centre.

Kent County Council can be contacted directly re alcohol and vape sales.
KCC can be contacted by the following means:

- By email: freedomofinformation@kent.gov.uk (mailto:freedomofinformation@kent.gov.uk)
- Through their Contact Us (https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/contact-us) page.
- By post: Information Resilience and Transparency Team,
  Kent County Council,
  Room 2.71, Sessions House,
  County Hall, Maidstone,
  Kent, ME14 1XQ.

- Street cleanliness: We hold no studies / reports / data linking town centre activity to street cleanliness.
- Public realm improvements: As part of Folkestone – A Brighter Future, our government funding highways and public realm programme, details of designs which include improvements to the public realm, public consultations and engagement surveys can be found on our dedicated programme webpages specific links set out below:
- Designs (https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/downloads/file/5835/consultation-boards-april-2025)
- Public consultation (https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/folkestone-place-plan/folkestone-brighter-future-public-engagement)
- Engagement feedbackConsultation phase 1 (https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/downloads/file/4844/p1-engagement-feedback-responses-23-10)
- Consultation phase 2 (https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/downloads/file/5024/phase-2-engagement-feedback-and-responses)
- Consultation phase 3 (https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/downloads/file/5328/phase-3-engagement-feedback-and-responses)
- Play area Bouverie Sq. (https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/downloads/file/5919/bouverie-square-proposed-play-park-survey-analysis)

- Perceptions of safety – Grant funding from the Home Office to help provide a programme of works to improve the feeling of “safer streets” in the nighttime economy (Safer Streets support for nights out | Folkestone & Hythe District Council (https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/news/article/270/safer-streets-support-for-nights-out)) and “Folkestone Connected” map that lists the locations around Folkestone of the following items:
- Safe Spaces

- Defibrillators
- Taxi Ranks
- Trauma Packs
- CCTV Locations
- Connected Streets
- Map of the connected routes is: (Folkestone Connected (https://folkestone-hythe.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=acc402b1ccf5464c98216c57b97c3ff6))

Including any visitor or business surveys. Please see link to watermelon report. (as provided in point one).

7. Regeneration and Strategy Documents

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For ease the information in question can be obtained via the below links:

- Folkestone Place Plan – Folkestone & Hythe District Council (https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/folkestone-place-plan) and Equality impact assessments (EQIAs) | Folkestone & Hythe District Council (https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/folkestone-levelling-up/equality)Consultant reports relating to increasing footfall – We hold no consultant reports relating to increasing footfall.
- Town Centre Operating Model documents:

I can confirm that the Council holds all of the information you requested. The Council has determined to withhold that information in full since we consider that Section 29 applies to it. The exemption is set out below:

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s29 – Prejudicial to the economy

Section 29 (https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1177/theeconomy.pdf) provides an exemption for information which might prejudice the economic interests of the UK or any part of it (1a). Exempted information relates to:

or any part of it (1a). Exempted information relates to:
Town Centre Operating Model documents.

Impact on an economic interest:
The disclosure of the exempted information would impact an economic interest protected by the s29 exemption. This exemption extends to information that would have a prejudicial impact on the economy of the UK as a whole, or any part of it. This includes local impacts on a district or community level.

The council has determined that releasing the operating model would be likely to cause significant economic and financial prejudice to Folkestone's town centre economy.

Disclosure would, or would likely, cause the described prejudice:
The exemption is subject to a prejudice test; the Council has considered the identified economic prejudice and the likelihood of this prejudice being caused by disclosure.

The operating model outlines speculative, unapproved long-term strategies for trading, event spaces, and high street management to sustain the town after construction is finished. Releasing projections regarding local markets, commercial zones, or footfall management would create market confusion, artificially depress local commercial property values, and discourage consumer footfall based on incomplete planning.

We have concluded that in the circumstances of the case, there is a real and causal link between the identified prejudice and the disclosure of the withheld information.

Public interest test:
The exemption is subject to the public interest test; the Council has considered the public interest in disclosing the information and the public interest in maintaining the exemption. Factors considered include but are not limited to:

- transparency and accountability - to promote public understanding.
- good decision-making by public bodies.
- There is a strong public interest in avoiding the release of economic modelling that could unsettle existing commercial tenants, delay private investment, or undermine the wider economic wellbeing of the town centre.
- The model includes sensitive footfall mapping, risk logs and economic appraisals for specific shopping areas. Releasing this information could give competing out-of-town retail parks or other commercial developments in Kent an unfair insight into the town centre's position.
- Competitors could use this information to target key high street tenants, increasing the risk of vacancies and encouraging businesses to move away from the town centre.
- There is also a significant public interest in ensuring the Council can negotiate commercial leases, event partnerships and public realm management contracts fairly, and secure the best possible value for public money.
- Prematurely publishing economic data or operational assumptions could unsettle current traders, slow private investment, and weaken the commercial success of the town centre

regeneration work.
- Disclosing the operational risks, structural challenges or vacancy projections identified in the model could damage investor confidence, discourage major retailers from locating in the town centre, and reduce footfall, which would be harmful to the local economy.

We have concluded that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information as while transparency in town centre management is important, it cannot override the severe, tangible risk of damaging the local economy, devaluing public assets, and increasing costs to the taxpayer. Devaluation of town centre assets or the collapse of commercial negotiations would cause direct financial detriment to the public, which is not in the public interest

Whilst we recognise that there may be a public interest in the information, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information (Section 2(2)(b)).

In light of the above we can provide link below to where this has been discussed in Overview and Scrutiny Committee via link below which is published via the MODGOV pages of the council website.
Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday, 26th May, 2026, 6.00 pm | Folkestone & Hythe District Council (https://folkestone-hytheintranet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=437&MID=5883#AI21544)

8. Future Plans
Please provide:
- Any documents considering:Future town centre footfall strategies
- Changes to monitoring arrangements
- Plans connected with future local government reorganisation/unitary authority changes

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S21 – Information reasonably accessible to the applicant by other means

The information you have requested is already publically available via the council website in the Corporate plan and Performance reports. The Council is not obliged to provide information under section 21 (https://ico.org.uk/media/for-

information under section 21 (https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1203/information-reasonably-accessible-to-the-applicant-by-other-means-sec21.pdf) of the Act if the information is already reasonably accessible to the applicant by other means.

The information in question can be obtained bysearching policies, plans and documents on the council website.
The Corportate plan and Council performance data are avilable here.
For ease see links below to most recent data:
Introduction | Corporate Plan | Folkestone & Hythe District Council (https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/policies-plans-documents/corporate-plan)
And
Council performance 2025/2026 | Folkestone & Hythe District Council (https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/policies-plans-documents/council-performance)

Any changes to these plans are subject to change depending upon the future needs within the district including but not limited to local government reorganisation/unitary authority changes.

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And

Council performance 2025/2026 | Folkestone & Hythe District Council (https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/policies-plans-documents/council-performance)

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https://folkestonehythedc.my.salesforce.com/sfc/p/1t000000qGSL/a/bH000006YdJd/gFzOqiGen8pATIMKmXJY.duzU_CA9186fwY_vSEp_a4
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https://folkestonehythedc.my.salesforce.com/sfc/p/1t000000qGSL/a/bH000006YdMr/ptD3SzEkxD.5aCeLBA2DdSFlKjPDNvsVwBvxvGyoC84
(https://folkestonehythedc.my.salesforce.com/sfc/p/1t000000qGSL/a/bH000006YdMr/ptD3SzEkxD.5aCeLBA2DdSFlKjPDNvsVwBvxvGyoC84)

CAR PARK	CAPACITY	CURRENT OCCUPANCY*
Foresters Way	26 (+2 dis)	91%-100%
Harbourside	10 (+1 dis)	Full
Pleydell Gardens	37 (+2 dis)	71%-80%
Sandgate Road	172 (+7 dis)	81%-90%
Shellons Street	57 (+2 dis, 2 EV)	81%-90%
The Coastal Park	32 (+2 dis)	91%-100%
Tram Road	58 (+6 dis, 6 EV)	91%-100%
Upper Payers	39 (+3 dis)	91%-100%

Date Closed
10/07/2026

Folkestone & Hythe District Council
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GOV.UK (https://www.gov.uk/)

Kent Home Choice (http://www.kenthomechoice.org.uk/choice/)

Kent.gov (http://www.kent.gov.uk/)

Visit our District (https://www.visitfolkestoneandhythe.co.uk/)