







NEWCASTLE'S GRAINGER TOWN
An Urban Renaissance



Broken teeth - faded smile.

Mid-year 2009

Welcome to the LDC Mid-Year Report 2009. In the middle of a deep recession you could be forgiven for scrabbling around to find anything but bad news in the retail sector but strong June retail sales figures gave a boost to those who see recovery around the next corner.

A heat wave and a new round of sales brought shoppers out in June. An increase in retail sales volume of 2.9% over June 2008, the largest annual gain since December, was way above expectations and could set the scene for a stronger than expected second half of the year. However this has to be balanced against continued rises in unemployment and therefore less spending power overall.

This report looks at the real impact of the recession on town centres. In particular it looks at the primary manifestation of recession - vacancy.

Vacancy rates have increased significantly since mid 2008 and are showing no signs of abating. As might be expected, the economic pain is falling upon comparison retailers especially and, although the malaise is spread across the whole country, the big city centres of the Midlands and north seem to be particularly badly hit.

Empty shops

Economically, there are few sadder sites than an empty shop. Just as thriving town centres demonstrate vitality, empty shops lay bare weakness and failure. This is particularly poignant in the case of Woolworths, a store that had been a feature of many town centres for generations. Empty shops have a corrosive effect upon the confidence of any area - and their numbers are growing.



Vacancy rates on the rise

Town centre vacancy rates in England and Wales have risen from just over 4% in the middle of 2008 to nearly 12% at the end of June this year. The damage is spread across the country and affects all levels of the retail hierarchy from the largest regional centre to the smallest High Street.

Amongst the large centres, worst hit appear to be the big regional centres in the north and midlands with Derby, Liverpool and Leeds all seeing over 20% of their retail capacity vacant.

The south fares slightly better with Croydon and Exeter the only representatives in the top ten with just over and just under 15% vacancy respectively. Central London sees a vacancy rate of nearly 13%. Generally, smaller centres appear to be doing slightly better than larger ones overall.

TABLE 1

Town Centre	Vacancy rate (%)
Derby	21.8%
Blackpool	21.0%
Liverpool	21.0%
Wolverhampton	20.9%
Leeds	20.8%
Southport	18.5%
Croydon	12.4%
Sheffield	15.2%
Cowenry	14.8%
Exeter	14.8%
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	14.5%
Hull	14.2%
Bromley	14.2%
Southampton	14.1%
Manchester	14.0%
Birmingham	13.7%
Leicester	13.6%
Bolton	13.6%
Central London	12.9%
Bristol	12.7%
Preston	12.3%
Stockport	11.8%
Southend-on-Sea	11.8%
Doncaster	11.8%

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CATHEDRAL QUARTER DERBY

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NATIONAL BID OF THE YEAR















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“This work has contributed greatly to the overall transformation of the area – bringing it back to its former glory. The beautiful restoration of key properties, particularly in The Strand and Sadler Gate has been a major factor in these streets reaching 100% occupancy. It has also been a key factor in the decision by such premium national brands at Whitestuff, Joules and Dr. Martens to join the thriving independent retail offer that the Cathedral Quarter is so renowned for.”

Martin Langsdale, Board Chair of the BID

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