

Town Centre Footfall Report

February 2022



SOUTH EAST
LOCAL ENTERPRISE
PARTNERSHIP

Town Centre Footfall

There are now various datasets available, using Big Data methods to track locational and movement information of the population, for those individuals carrying a mobile phone. Different bodies are making use of data providers to understand changing patterns of footfall in town and city centres. The High Street Task Force uses data from Springboard, and the Centre for Cities using data from Locomiser, which are propriety datasets with subscriptions required to access the data.

Since the start of the pandemic some of the large tech companies have also made some footfall data available free of charge, to support public health measures and policy evaluation of impacts of lockdowns. The open data provided by google community mobility reports is widely used, which has good geographic coverage and good breakdowns for different location types. Google classify locations down to a granular level as residential, employment, transit stations, parks and open space, grocery/pharmacy and retail/recreation.

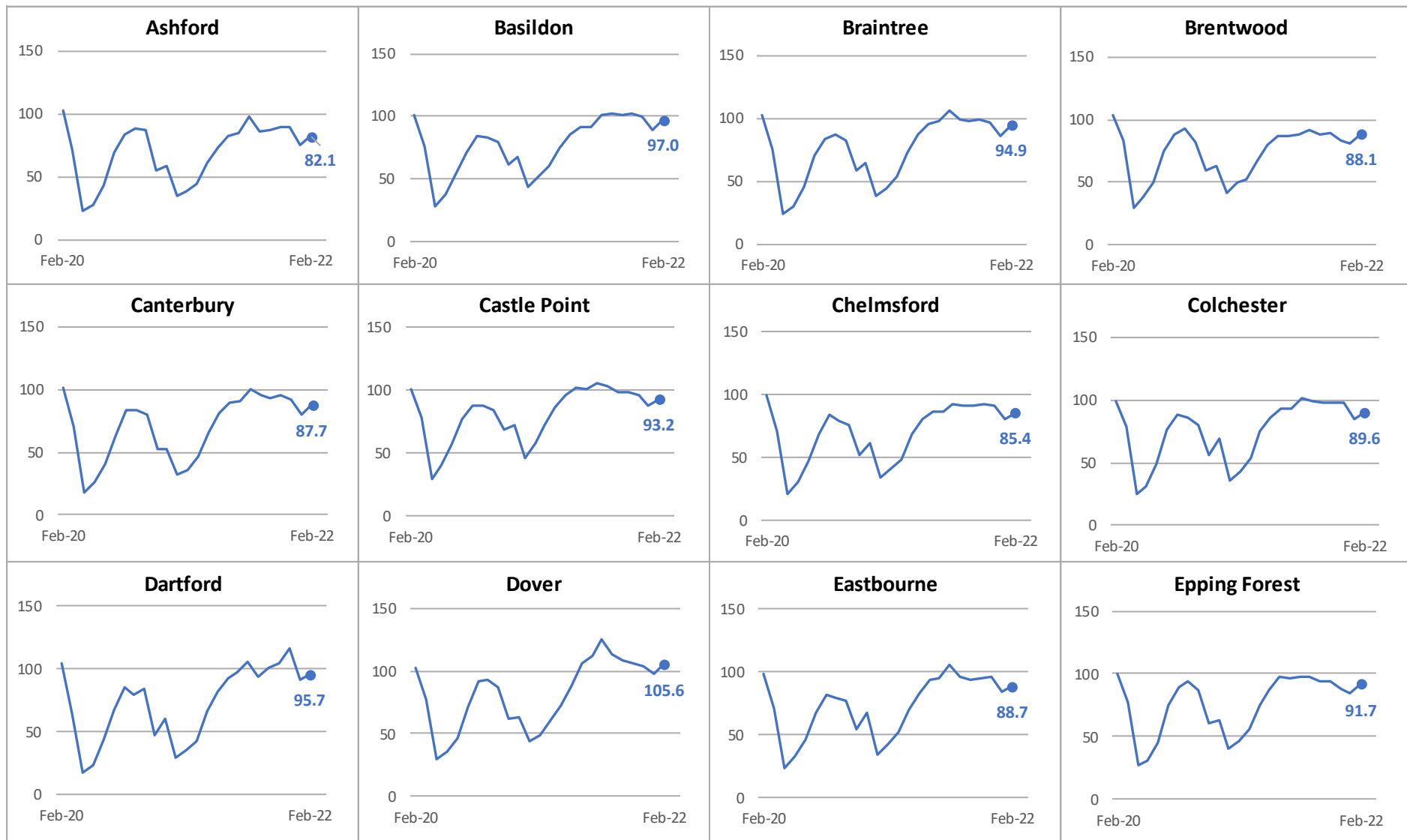
Google data is available at local authority level, rather than at town level, but the retail/recreation location can be seen as a good proxy for town centre and high street locations.

The Appendix below provides graphs showing footfall levels across all 32 local authorities within the SELEP area for Retail and Recreation locations using google community mobility reports. The information is provided as Index numbers, with early February 2020 (pre-pandemic) being the baseline index, where footfall is assigned an Index Value of 100.

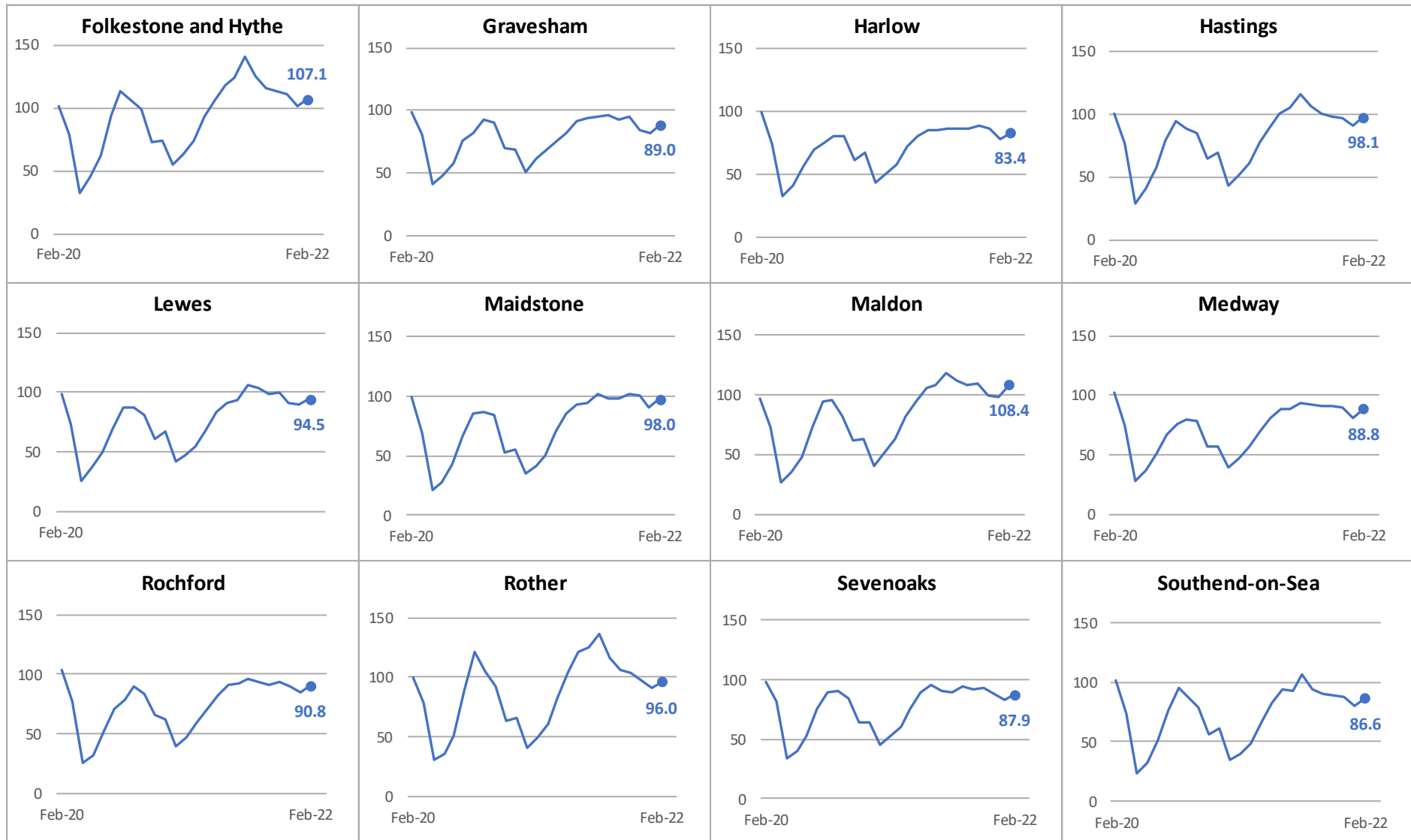
The graphs reveal the following trends:

- Significant drops in footfall during lockdown periods
- For many local authorities, footfall up to the end of December 2021 had not fully recovered to the same level as in February 2020, such that the Index Value remained some way below 100 (e.g. Ashford, Brentwood, Harlow)
- Some local authorities had footfall in December at the highest level since February 2020 and were at or very close to the February 2020 level (e.g. Braintree, Colchester, Maidstone)
- Many coastal local authorities had high footfall levels in Summer 2021, well above the February 2020 level, although with the available information it is not possible to determine to what extent this was a normal seasonal pattern and to what degree this was a result of increased “stayaction” activity (e.g. Dover, Folkestone & Hythe, Maldon, Rother and Tendring).
- However, for some coastal areas, while seeing footfall above February 2020 levels at some point in 2021, this was not particularly high and in some cases short lived (e.g. Eastbourne, Hastings, Lewes and Southend)
- For some local authorities, footfall was lower in December than November, but this will partly be due to the number of Bank Holidays in the month, as well as impacts from Plan B and the Omicron variant although Dartford exceptionally had a good increase in footfall in December, likely related to Bluewater footfall rather than town centre footfall.
- Footfall fell fairly sharply across nearly all local authorities in January 2022, but has recovered somewhat in February, although remaining below February 2020 levels for all but 4 local authorities (Dover, Folkestone and Hythe, Maldon, and Tendring)

Retail and Recreation Footfall by Local Authority – February 2020 (=100) to February 2022



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