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Food environments

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Background

Obesity is a global public health concern, which can increase the risk of developing noncommunicable diseases, such as Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and hypertension (Akhter et al., 2021; WHO, 2024), and impact mental wellbeing (Holmes, 2021).

In 2023/24, 26.8% of adults (18+) in West Sussex were classified as obese, with a body mass index (BMI)[1] of greater than or equal to 30kg/ m^2, based on data collected via Sport England's Active Lives Survey (OHID, 2025). This is not significantly different to England (26.5%). The percentage of adults classified as obese in West Sussex has increased overtime, from 19.3% in 2016/17 to 26.8% in 2023/24.

Although the health risks caused by obesity are becoming increasingly well-documented (WHO, 2024), tackling the issue is challenging as it is impacted by numerous social, economic, biological and environmental factors that influence the way we live and behave (Blackshaw et al., 2019).

An increasing amount of research has investigated the association between the presence of fast-food outlets, which provide energy-dense food quickly within an area, and obesity (Pineda et al., 2024; van Erpecum et al., 2022).

[1] Body mass index (BMI) is a widely used measure of obesity, defined as an individuals' weight divided by the square of their height (kg/m^2). For further information on BMI, click this link: Obesity - NHS

This briefing aims to provide insight into the local food environment in West Sussex, looking into the rate of fast-food outlets and availability of supermarkets across the county.

Fast food outlets per 100,000 population

In February 2025, Fingertips, OHID's (2025) public health data collection and analysis tool, updated an indicator within its 'Wider Determinants of Health' profile, which provides a summary of the rate of fast-food outlets per 100,000 population. This indicator was last published in 2017.

This indicator draws data from the Food Standards Agency's (FSA) Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) data set, as of February 2024. Under the scheme, places where food is supplied, sold or consumed are given a rating based on their hygiene standards from 0 (require urgent improvement) to 5 (very good) (IFF Research, 2024).

As this data contains information on food outlets submitted regularly by local authorities, it is one of the most complete secondary sources of food outlet data in England and covers a range of places selling food such as burgers, pizza and kebabs, amongst others (OHID, 2025; MRC Epidemiology Unit, n.d.).

Key takeaways

- In 2024, there were 777 fast food outlets in West Sussex, equating to a rate of 86.3 outlets per 100,000 population. This rate is significantly lower than England (115.9 per 100,000).
- The number of fast-food outlets per 100,000 has increased in West Sussex since 2017 (75.5 per 100,000).
- West Sussex has the fifth lowest number of fast-food outlets per 100,000 when compared to its tnearest statistical neighbours.
- Worthing had the highest density of fast-food outlets (number of outlets per 100,000 people) in West Sussex (124.7). This was the ninth highest rate across the amongst the districts and unitary authorities (UAs) in the South East.

Good to know

There are caveats to be aware of when interpreting the analysis presented in this briefing. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- This data does not provide information on the levels of consumption of fast food within a particular area and as highlighted by the Health Foundation (2024), a higher concentration of outlets could be indicative of additional factors such as town planning or the economic benefits of having outlets clustered together.
- Third party and direct delivery services are increasingly available which may dilute the impact of geographical proximity of premises.
- This indicator measures exposure rather than access, availability or consumption for individuals, and as highlighted by OHID (2025) will be affected by numerous factors such as opening hours, price and ease of car parking, public transport or delivery options.

Despite these caveats, it is still important to assess the exposure of the resident population to fast food outlets as this can help us to inform the development of targeted interventions to improve aspects of public health in West Sussex (e.g., reduce obesity rates), and increase the availability of healthier foods (Hoenink, et al., 2025).

County

In 2024, there were 777 fast food outlets in West Sussex, equating to a rate of 86.3 fast food outlets per 100,000 population. This rate is significantly lower than England (115.9 per 100,000).

Compared to the last update in 2017, the rate of fast-food outlets in West Sussex increased from 75.5 to 86.3 outlets per 100,000 population.

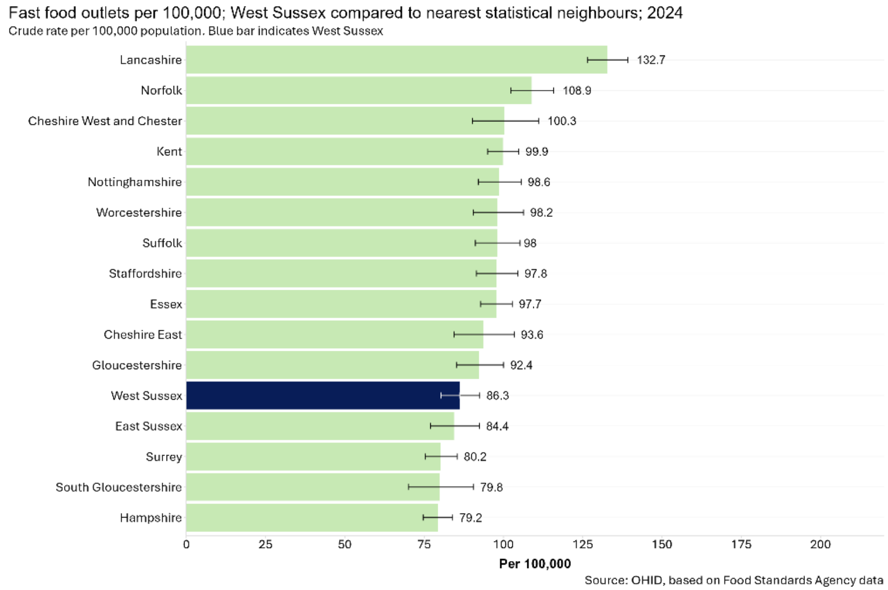
The number of fast-food outlets per 100,000 varies across both upper-tier (counties) and lower-tier authorities (district and boroughs) in England. Figure 1 compares West Sussex with its nearest statistical neighbours for the rate of fast food outlets per 100,000.

Good to know

The nearest neighbours model provides a method of comparing the rate of food outlets amongst local authorities with similar characteristics (such as age profile, ethnicity and density), based on the 2021 census and other open data sources[1].

West Sussex has the fifth lowest rate of food outlets amongst the nearest statistical neighbours (see figure 1).

Figure 1 Density of food outlets per 100,000; West Sussex compared to its statistical nearest neighbours

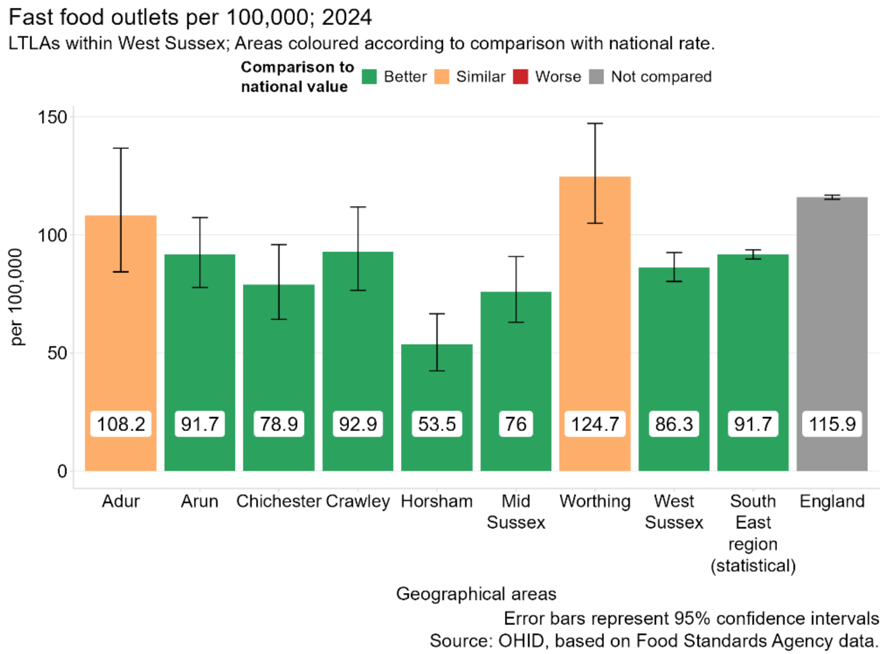


District and boroughs

There is variation in the rate of fast-food outlets across the county - Worthing had the highest rate of fast-food outlets (124.7 per 100,000) and Horsham had the lowest (53.5 per 100,000).

Both Adur and Worthing had statistically similar rates of fast-food outlets compared to England (115.9), as indicated by the orange bars in figure 2.

Figure 2 Density of food outlets per 100,000; Districts and boroughs within West Sussex



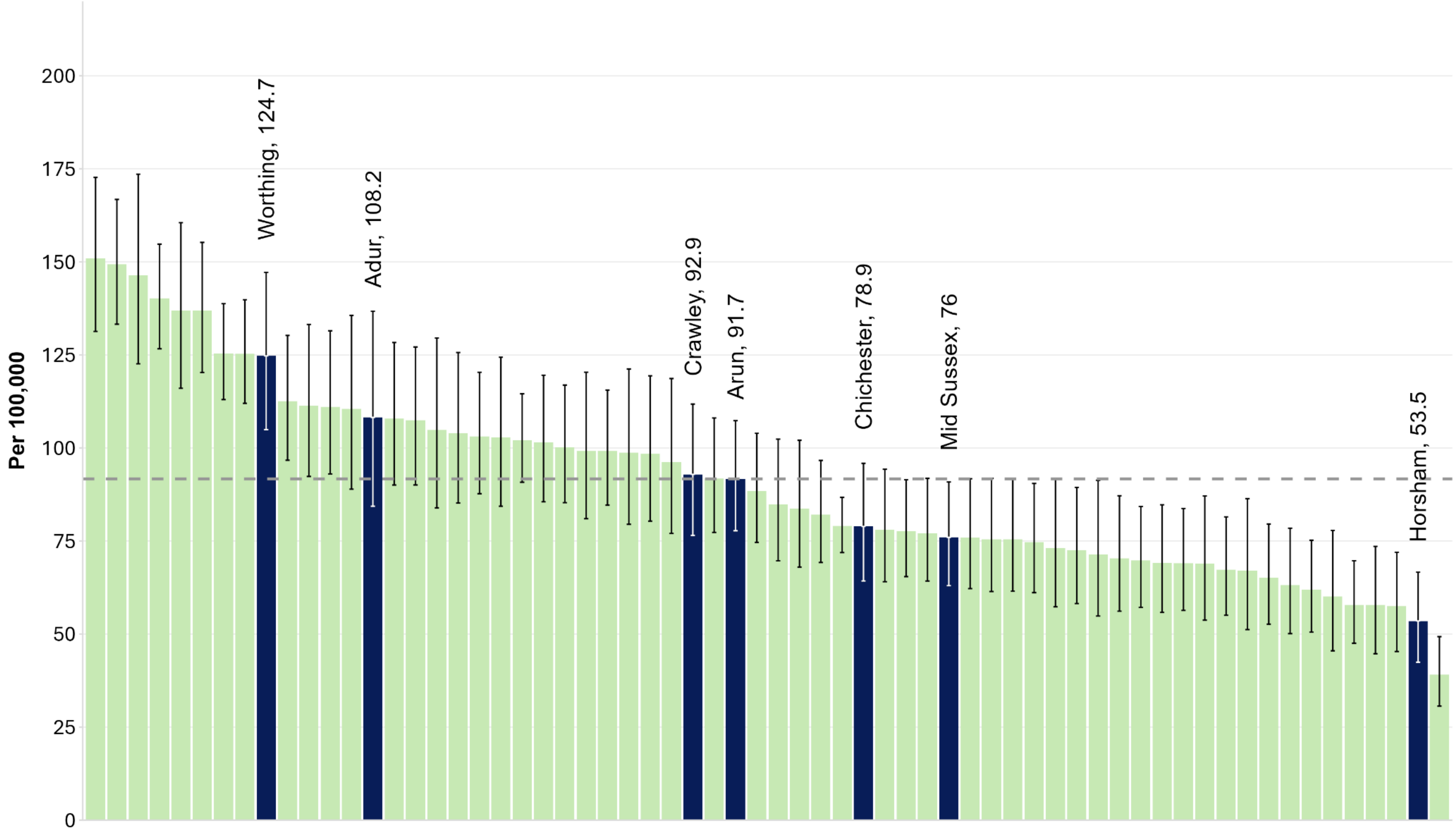
When compared to other districts and unitary authorities (UAs) in the South East, Worthing had the ninth highest rate of fast-food outlets per 100,000 population.

Three districts were below the Southeast average rate of 91.7 food outlets per 100,000 population: Chichester (78.9 per 100,000), Mid Sussex (76 per 100,000) and Horsham (53.5 per 100,000; see figure 3).

Figure 3 Density of food outlets per 100,000; District and unitary authorities in the South East

Fast food outlets per 100,000 in the Southeast; 2024

Crude rate per 100,000 population. Blue bars indicate districts within West Sussex.



Grey line indicates South East average (91.7 per 100,000).
Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.
Source: OHID, based on Food Standards Agency data

Small area analysis of fast food outlets

OHID provides analysis on the rate of fast-food outlets per 100,000 population at a local authority level. This section of the briefing looks at how this analysis could be replicated for smaller areas.

Stage 1 - Following Fingertips Methodology

Data for OHID's Fingertips indicator was sourced from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) data.

An inclusion criterion was applied to select food premises from the FHRS data that fit the definition of fast food. To meet the inclusion criteria, three different searches were applied:

1. **Initial search:** select all premises that are categorised under 'Takeaway/ sandwich shop' business type'
2. **Main chain name search:** select the largest chain outlets (cut-off criteria of 100 outlets nationally) that are categorised under 'restaurant/cafe/canteen', 'retailers', and 'other catering premises'.
3. **Keyword search**: selects relevant premises from the following business types; mobile caterer, other catering premises, restaurant/café/canteen. The keywords used in the search are grill, burger, chicken, chip, fish bar, pizza, kebab, India, China, Chinese.

To 'test' this methodology, data was extracted from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) in March 2025 and filters from OHID were applied. For the main chain name search, a manual search was conducted for each district and borough to identify the size of the food outlets, based on the cut off criteria (see Appendix B).

Through this method, 755 food outlets were identified in West Sussex as of March 2025, less than the 777 outlets identified by OHID as of February 2024. However, this variation could be accounted for by the differences in the date of the FSA data extraction.

Stage 2 – Defining geographical boundaries

The seven district and boroughs within West Sussex featured in this analysis, alongside ten neighbouring local authorities (Havant, East Hampshire, Waverley, Mole Valley, Reigate and Banstead, Tandridge, Wealden, Lewes, Brighton and Hove and Sevenoaks). The rationale for adding neighbouring areas was that people may travel or order food from 20 to 30 minutes away across local authority borders.

Stage 3 – Modifying inclusion criteria

OHID analysis focused on food outlets of a certain size (100 outlets) rather than whether a takeaway service was available.

As this analysis was focusing on West Sussex and neighbouring local authorities, it was decided that for the main chain name search, smaller businesses would be included where it is clear or likely that they were accepting orders for takeaway. To support with this, a postcode search was conducted on Just Eat in March

2025, to see if the food outlet was registered with this popular online food delivery service. Further details of this are provided in Stage 4.

The initial inclusion and exclusion criteria table (see Appendix B) was reviewed, and 31 chains were identified as providing takeaways (see Appendix C).

Stage 4 – Applying search to West Sussex and neighbouring local authorities

The initial and keyword searches used by OHID were applied to FSA data for West Sussex and neighbouring local authorities. Results from each search were then manually reviewed to detect errors.

For the main chain search, the following steps were applied:

1. Any outlets identified as a ‘main chain’ (over 100 outlets) who offered delivery were selected.
2. A postcode search (based on each unique combination of post town and district e.g., PO19) was conducted on Just Eat to identify smaller businesses that offered takeaway.
3. For each authority, the business names of any outlets not identified as offering delivery in steps 1 and 2 were manually scanned and searched for in Just Eat.

This search strategy was tested in March 2025 and then applied to a snapshot of FSA FHRS data from the 26th June 2025.

Results – Mapping Exercise

A series of maps were created to gain a further understanding of the food environment across West Sussex and neighbouring local authorities.

Key takeaways

- 1,927 food outlets were identified across West Sussex and within 5 miles from the county border.
- Most food outlets identified were located within Worthing, Adur and Crawley, districts within West Sussex with the highest population density.
- There is variation in the rate of food outlets across electoral wards in West Sussex. The five wards with the highest rate of outlets per 1,000 population were Chichester Central, Central, Three Bridges, East Grinstead Town and Burgess Hill Meeds & Hammonds.
- West Sussex neighbourhoods with a higher deprivation score tended to have a higher number of outlets.

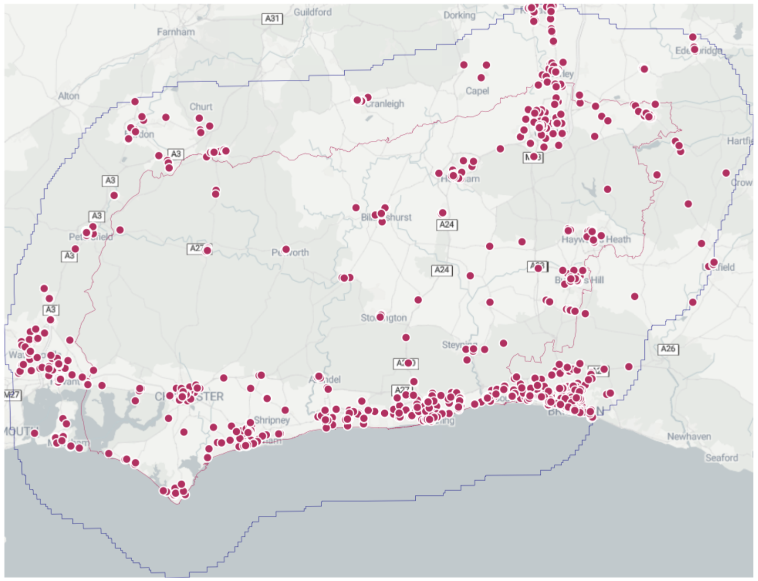
Fast food outlets in and around West Sussex

Based on a snapshot of data from the 26th June, 1,927 food outlets were identified across West Sussex and within 5 miles from the county border. 1,027 (53.3%) of these outlets were within West Sussex. This is 350 (32.2%) more outlets compared to the 777 identified by Public Health England in 2024.

Figure 4 Fast food outlets in and around West Sussex

Fast food outlets in and surrounding West Sussex; 2025;

Points indicate fast food outlets that offered takeaway on Justeat in March 2025 across West Sussex and within 5 miles from West Sussex borders.



Excludes outlets where geographical co-ordinates were unavailable/unknown.
Based on Food and Hygiene Standards open data updated on 26/06/2025
© Stadia Maps; © OpenStreetMap contributors

Outlets relative to schools

Alongside an overall picture of fast-food outlets in and around West Sussex, it is important to consider the location of fast-food outlets relative to schools across the county. This is because the local food environment, such as the presence of fast-food outlets near to schools, could influence children's dietary choices and behaviours (Savory, et al., 2025).

Research, such as a review by Pineda et al (2024), has highlighted the role of the local food environment as a key determinant for the prevention of obesity and other diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

This was recognised by a recent amendment to the National Planning Policy Framework, which sets out the Government's planning policies for England (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2024). This amendment states that local planning authorities should 'refuse applications for hot food takeaways and fast-food outlets that are near where children congregate (unless in a designated town centre) or in locations where there is evidence that a concentration of such uses is having an adverse impact on local health, pollution or anti-social-behaviour' (Obesity Health Alliance, 2024).

For the academic year 2024/25, there were 332 schools in West Sussex. The majority are state-funded primary schools (n = 227), which tend to have smaller capacity than secondary schools.

Roughly one third of the 332 schools in West Sussex are within 400m (an approximate five-minute walk) of at least one fast food outlet. Further work is ongoing to explore the presence of fast-food outlets near schools and will be published on the JSNA website in due course.

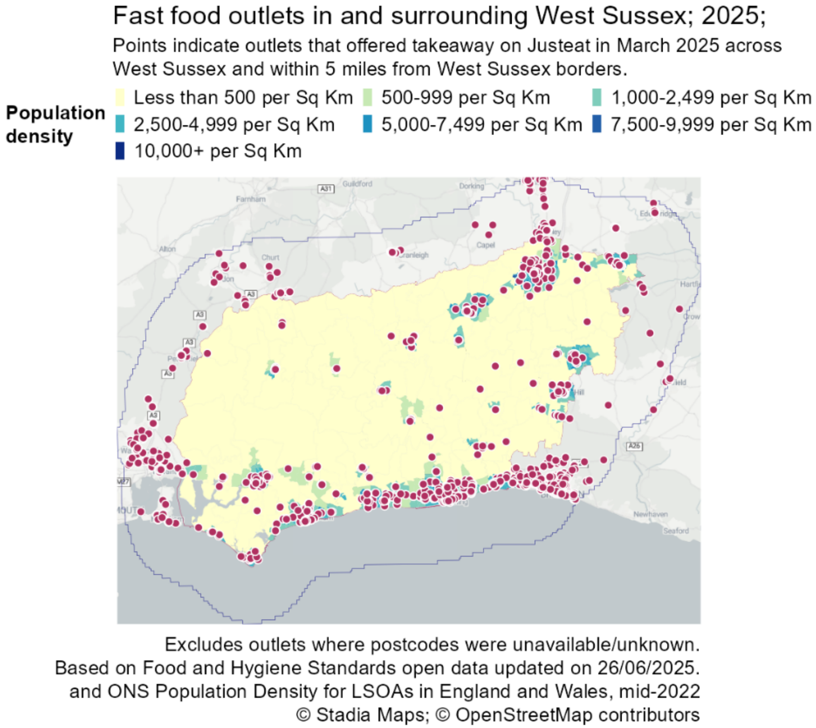
Population density

The mid-year population estimates show us how many people live per square kilometre, as a measure of population density (how many people share a unit of space) (PHSRU, 2025).

In West Sussex, in 2022, there was estimated to be 448 people per square kilometre. Across the district and boroughs, Worthing had the greatest population density, with 3,445 residents per square metre and Chichester had the lowest population density (160 per square metre).

The majority of food outlets identified were located within Worthing, Adur and Crawley, districts within West Sussex with the highest population density. This could be indicative of the economic benefits of food outlets being in areas with higher population density and therefore, larger potential customer base (Kopczewska, Kubara, & Kopyt, 2024).

Figure 5 Fast food outlets in West Sussex by population density (mid-2022)



Rural Urban Classification

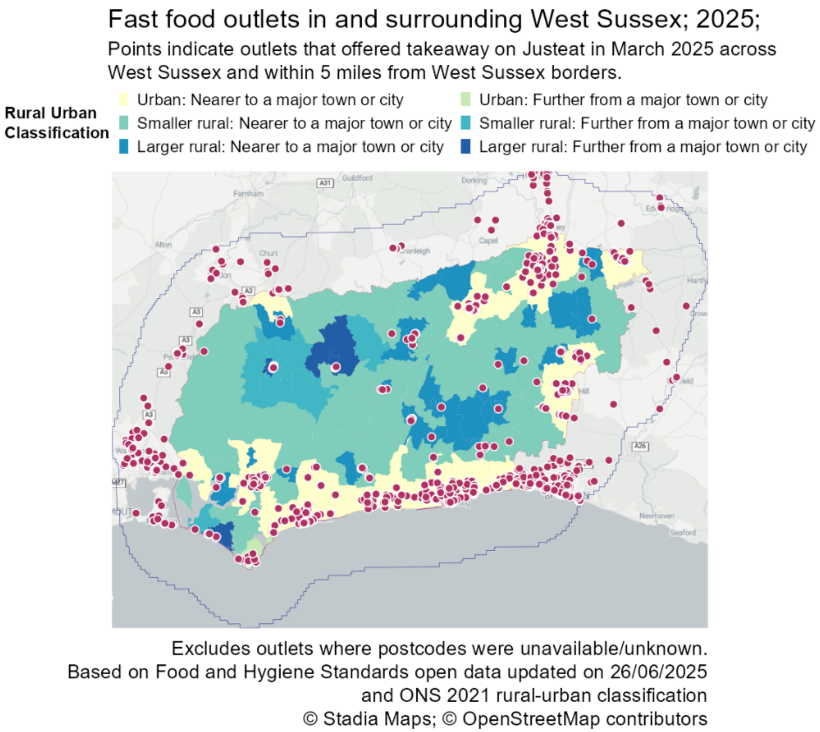
The 2021 Census Rural Urban Classification categorises geographies as either urban or rural - urban areas are determined as settlements with a population of 10,000 or more and rural areas include settlements with populations under 10,000, such as rural towns, villages, hamlets, isolated dwellings and open countryside: ONS, 2025).

According to the 2021 Rural Urban Classification (RUC), most neighbourhoods within West Sussex (80.1%) are classified as urban (either nearer or further from a major town or city). 10.3%

of neighbourhoods across the county are classified as 'smaller rural' (fewer than 10,000 residents) and 9.6% 'larger rural' (with a population of 10,000 residents or more).

Most food outlets were located within areas classified as 'urban: nearer to a major town or city'. This means they were situated within a 30-minute car journey from a major urban area with a population of 75,000 or more.

Figure 6 Fast food outlets in West Sussex by rural/urban classification (2021)



Deprivation

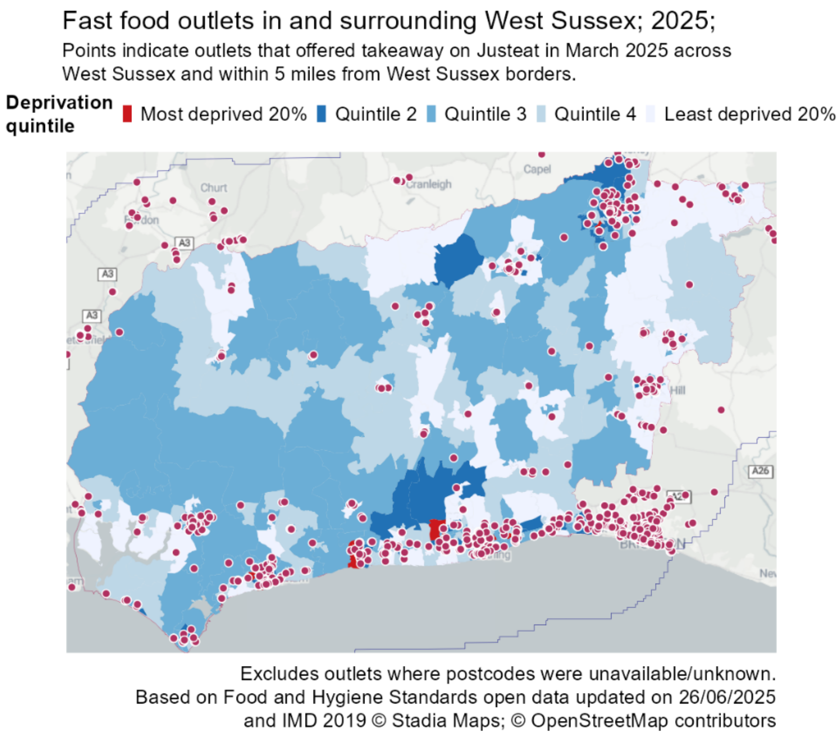
The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD; 2019) measures how deprived one area is compared with another. Each neighbourhood (lower-super output area) is ranked from least (1) to most deprived (32,844) and grouped into deciles.

Quintile 1 represents the most deprived 20% of the national population and quintile 5 represents the least deprived.

Good to know

Deprivation is extremely localised and highly variable (Davis et al, 2025). As the IMD is an area measure, it is important to note that not everyone living in a deprived area will be deprived and not everyone in the least deprived area will be affluent.

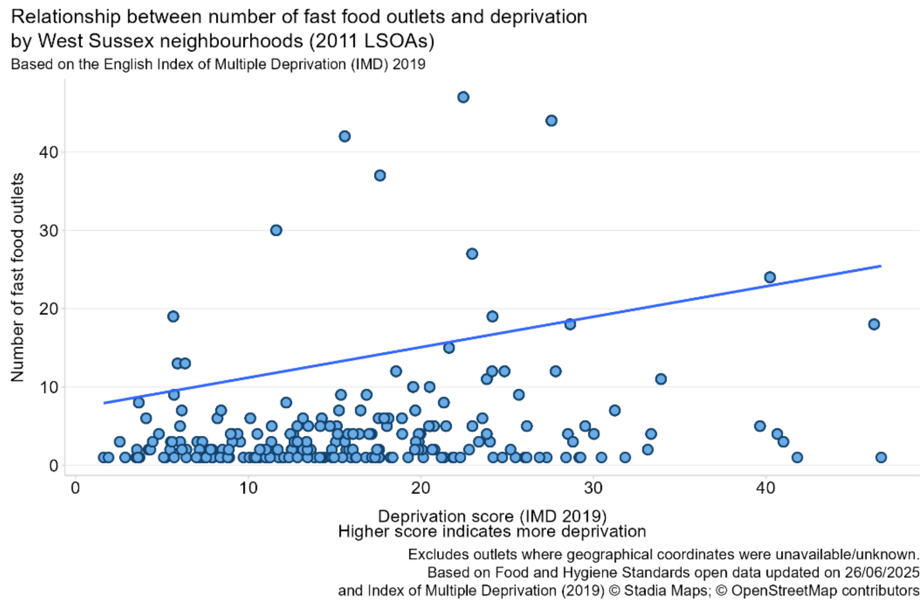
Figure 7 Fast food outlets in West Sussex by deprivation



Most food outlets were located across areas in West Sussex within Quintile 2 (28.8%) and 3 (33%).

Figure 10 illustrates the association between number of outlets and area level deprivation. West Sussex neighbourhoods with a higher deprivation score tended to have a higher number of outlets, however this trend was not particularly strong (a weak positive correlation was found between fast food outlets and deprivation score).

Figure 8 Relationship between number of outlets and deprivation

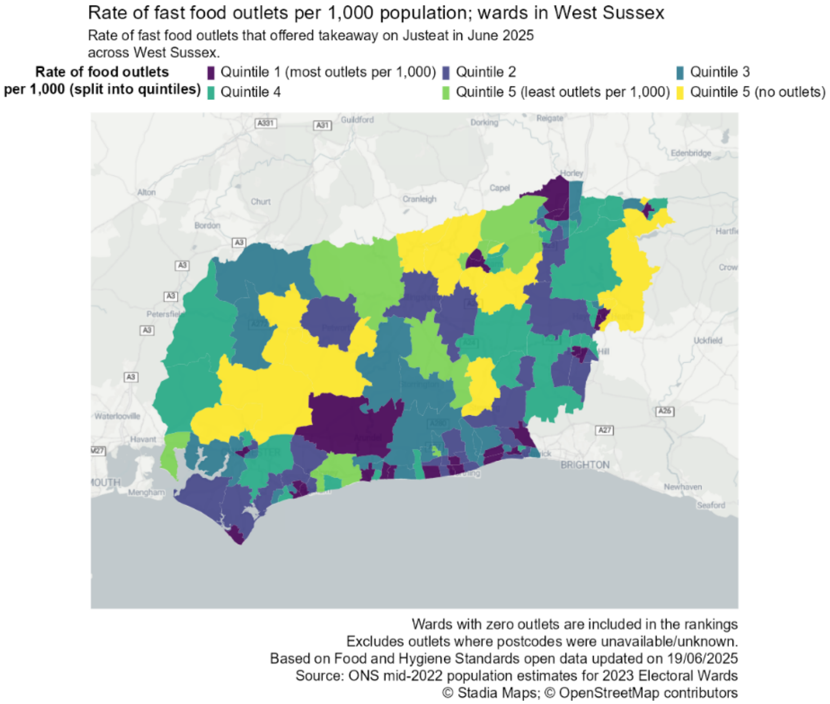


Wards

For the remainder of this analysis, electoral wards were used to better understand the rate of food outlets across small areas. Electoral wards are areas within local authorities which are used to elect councillors to local authorities and can vary significantly in population and area size (Anscombe, n.d; Leach, n.d.)

There is variation in the rate of food outlets across wards in West Sussex. Fourteen wards (10.5%) in West Sussex did not have any outlets (indicated in yellow; four outlets in Chichester, five in Horsham and five in Mid Sussex).

Figure 9 Rate of fast food outlets per 1,000 population across West Sussex wards



The five wards with the highest rate of outlets per 1,000 population were Chichester Central, Central, Three Bridges, East Grinstead Town and Burgess Hill Meeds & Hammonds.

Table 1 Wards in West Sussex with the highest rate of food outlets per 1,000 population

Ward	Local authority	Number of outlets	Mid-2022 population estimates	Rate per 1,000 population
Chichester Central	Chichester	55	2,586	21.3
Central	Worthing	76	10,674	7.1
Three Bridges	Crawley	57	10,010	5.7
East Grinstead Town	Mid Sussex	37	6,660	5.6
Burgess Hill Meeds & Hammonds	Mid Sussex	31	6,291	4.9

Source: Food Standards Agency's Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) data
ONS Estimates by single year of age and sex for 2023 Electoral Wards, mid-2022.

By analysing the rate of food outlets across small areas, additional outlets could be identified compared to Public Health England's methodology in 2024. See Appendix D for a table summarising the differences in outlets identified for the five wards with the highest density.

Alongside table 1 and appendices for supporting information, maps of each ward with the highest rate of outlets per 1,000 population are available (with outlets plotted relative to local schools) and can be accessed here: [Wards.]

Availability of Supermarkets in West Sussex

Alongside fast-food outlets, supermarkets play a significant role in shaping the retail food environment, influencing food purchases, dietary behaviours and health outcomes (Scapin, et al., 2025).

The impact of supermarkets has been reflected in a new healthy food standard proposed by the UK government as part of their 10 year health plan, which will mandate a minimum target for healthy food sales for the largest supermarket chains (Bowes Byatt, 2025; Wise, 2025).

The food environment assessment tool (FEAT) uses Food Standards Agency (FSA) food hygiene rating data to map the location of places where food is supplied or sold directly to people, such as supermarkets, at a local level.

The map below provides the location of supermarkets across West Sussex, based on the inclusion criteria used by FEAT. This criterion focuses on major national chains (both small- and large-format stores) operated by Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda, Morrisons, Aldi, Lidl, The Co-operative, Waitrose and Iceland.

Based on FSA data accessed in June 2025, there were 206 major national chain supermarkets in West Sussex (rate of 0.23 per 1,000 residents). Amongst the district and boroughs within West Sussex, the rate of supermarkets per 1,000 population ranged from 0.2 (Adur) to 0.28 (Worthing).

Table 2 Number and rate of major national chain supermarkets per 1,000 across West Sussex

Area	Number of major national chain supermarkets*	MYE 2023 population	Rate per 1,000 population
Adur	13	64,687	0.20
Arun	38	168,008	0.23
Chichester	31	128,003	0.24
Crawley	27	120,545	0.22
Horsham	33	149,464	0.22
Mid Sussex	33	157,915	0.21
Worthing	31	112,240	0.28
West Sussex	206	900,862	0.23

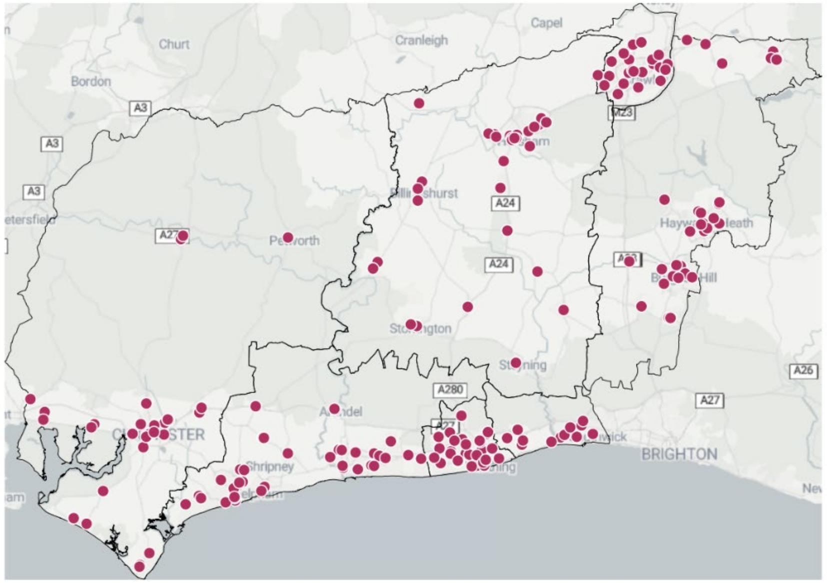
Source: FSA FHRS data (accessed June 2025) *and* ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates - June 2023 (published 15th July 2024).
*Major supermarkets refer to national chain supermarkets, both small and large format stores, operated by Tesco, Sainsburys, Asda, Morrisons, Aldi, Lidl, Co-op, Waitrose and Iceland.

Figure 12 provides an overview of the major national chain supermarkets within West Sussex. Supermarkets without co-ordinates provided by the FSA (*n* = 1) were not able to be plotted.

Figure 10 Major national chain supermarkets in West Sussex

Major national chain supermarkets in West Sussex; 2025

Includes both small- and large-format stores operated by Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda, Morrisons, Aldi, Lidl, Co-op, Waitrose and Iceland.



Excludes outlets where geographical co-ordinates were not provided by FSA.
Based on Food and Hygeine Standards open data updated on 26/06/2025
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Conclusion

This briefing aimed to provide a summary of the retail food environment in West Sussex, through the identification of fast-food outlets and supermarkets across West Sussex overall, district and boroughs and small areas.

OHID's analysis provides data on the number of fast-food outlets in an area taking the size of the population into account. Whilst this is useful as a starting point, this data is not available for smaller areas (e.g., electoral wards) and inclusion criteria focuses on the size of the outlet chain rather than additional factors such as whether an outlet offers takeaway services.

Through the adaptation and extension of OHID's methodology, taking these factors into account, 350 additional fast-food outlets were identified in West Sussex (from a snapshot of FSA data) compared to Public Health England in 2024. In addition, this analysis was able to identify electoral wards within the county which had the highest density of fast-food outlets which can support district and boroughs with public health interventions.

Despite the benefits of this additional analysis, there are caveats to be acknowledged and further avenues which could be explored. For example, to identify outlets which offered takeaway, a manual search of one online delivery provider (Just Eat) was undertaken in March 2025 and subsequently applied to a FSA snapshot from June 2025. Whilst Just Eat is recognised as one of the leading food delivery platforms in the UK (Goffe, et al., 2020), this does not take into account additional platforms and therefore, is not representative of all out-of-home food outlets. In addition, the FSA and Just East data used in this analysis is a snapshot in time and businesses and outlets may have subsequently opened or closed since the manual search was conducted. Therefore, this may reflect discrepancies in the number of outlets identified if this analysis was replicated.

In addition, whilst mapping schools relative to fast food outlets provides an initial picture, more focused work is currently being undertaken by the Public Health and Social Research Unit and will be published shortly.

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Appendix A

Table 3 Initial inclusion and exclusion criteria table

Criteria	Food outlets (as of 6th March 2025)
Inclusions (more than 100 outlets)	Asda Café (more than 100 stores), Black Sheep Coffee, Brasserie Blanc, Burger King, Caffe Nero, Chopstix, Costa, Cote, Five Guys, GAILS, Greggs, Harvester, KFC, Krispy Kreme, McDonalds, Miller & Carter, Nandos, Papa Johns, Pizza Express, Pret, Shakeaway, Shake-a-delic, Starbucks, Subway, Taco Bell, Toby Carvery, Wagamama, Wild Bean Café, Wimpy, Zizzis

Appendix B

Table 4 Reviewing the inclusion and exclusion criteria for takeaways.

Criteria	Food outlets (as of 6th March 2025)
Inclusions (deliveries)	Black Sheep Coffee, Burger King, Caffe Nero, Chopstix, Costa, Five Guys, GAILS, Greggs, Harvester, KFC, Krispy Kreme, McDonalds, Miller & Carter, Nandos, Papa Johns, Pizza Express, Pret, Shakeaway, Shake-a-delic, Starbucks, Subway, Taco Bell, Toby Carvery, Wagamama, Wimpy, Zizzis Tortilla, Slim Chickens, Kaspas Desserts, Millies Cookies, Shake Shack, Shakeaway, TGI Fridays, Tim Hortons, Pizza Rebellion, Prezzo, ASK Italian, Franco Manca, Kokoro, Wendys, itsu, The Breakfast Club, Turtle Bay, Real Eating Company

Appendix C

Table 5 Differences between outlets identified by small area analysis and OHID

Ward	Local Authority	Outlets identified by small area analysis	Rate per 1,000 population	Number of outlets identified by OHID in 2024
Chichester Central	Chichester	55	21.3	27
Central	Worthing	76	7.1	42
Three Bridges	Crawley	57	5.7	35
East Grinstead Town	Mid Sussex	37	5.6	21
Burgess Hill Meeds & Hammonds	Mid Sussex	31	4.9	22