



Your Town Audit: Clarkston

February 2020

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1. Understanding Scottish Places Summary

This report presents a summary of the Your Town Audit (YTA) for Clarkston, conducted by Scotland's Towns Partnership and EKOS, and comprises an update on the previous Clarkston YTA conducted in 2016. The detailed YTA Framework and Data Workbook are provided under separate cover.

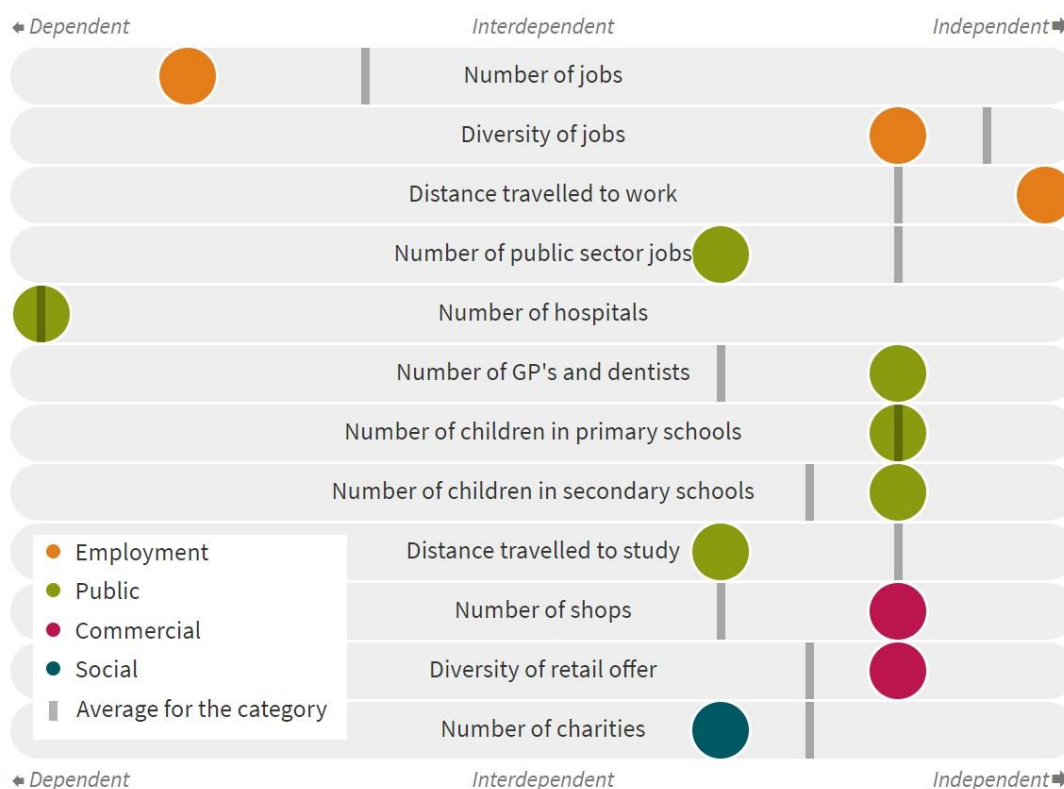
The YTA was developed to provide a framework to measure and monitor the performance of Scotland's towns and town centres using a series of Key Performance Indicators. It provides a comprehensive audit of Clarkston with data on up to 180 KPIs across seven themes – Locality, Accessibility, Local Services, Activities + Events, Development Capacity, Tourism, and Place + Quality Impressions.

The [Understanding Scottish Places](#) (USP) data platform provides a summary analysis for Clarkston and identifies Dunblane as a comparator town with similar characteristics. The USP platform – www.usp.scot – describes Clarkston in the following **general terms**:

Clarkston's Interrelationships: Clarkston is an '*independent to interdependent town*' which means it has a good number of assets in relation to their population. These towns have a good diversity of jobs; and residents on the whole travel shorter distances to travel to work and study. These towns attract people from neighbouring towns to access some of their assets and jobs.

Clarkston's Typology: This type of medium-sized town is a suburban or commuter locality with a prevalence of higher income and private housing. A large proportion of the population are over 45, and many are retired. Many people own their home. There is also a high proportion of people in professional employment and a high proportion of residents are educated to HNC level or above. Many residents own two or more cars.

Inter-relationships i



The coloured circles represent Clarkston's relative position across key themes compared to the other similar town of Dunblane (average marked by the grey line).

Comparing Clarkston to towns with similar USP typology and interrelationships shows it has a similar number of charities, children in school, shops and in its number and diversity of jobs. It also has similarities in the diversity of retail offer and the distance travelled by residents to work and study.

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) measures relative levels of deprivation across Scottish communities (statistically referred to as Data Zones) based on seven indicators: income, employment, education, health, housing, crime and geographic access.

Table 1.1: Clarkston Town Centre – 2011 Data Zones by SIMD 2020 Rank

Data Zone Name	Data Zone Code	Overall SIMD20 Rank ¹	Percentile
Clarkston and Sheddens - 08	S01008378	6,743	97 th
Williamwood - 05	S01008383	6,698	96 th
Stamperland - 02	S01008385	6,730	96 th

Source: Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (2020)

For all ranks (percentiles): 1(1st) is most deprived, 6,976 (100th) is least deprived, Clarkston experiences relatively limited levels of deprivation with all three Data Zones ranked within the 5% least deprived areas in Scotland.

YTA Summary

Building on the USP and SIMD data, this report presents the results of our detailed analysis of Clarkston using the Scottish Government’s [Town Centre Toolkit](#) – an online resource available via the USP website which provides advice, guidance and case studies across three thematic areas: accessible, active and attractive.

In total 40 YTA audits have been prepared for towns across Scotland providing data across a range of KPIs. Where appropriate, this report provides comparisons for Clarkston against other YTAs and the YTA town average, although it is important to note that data for some audits has been collected in previous years, and not all data is available for all towns.

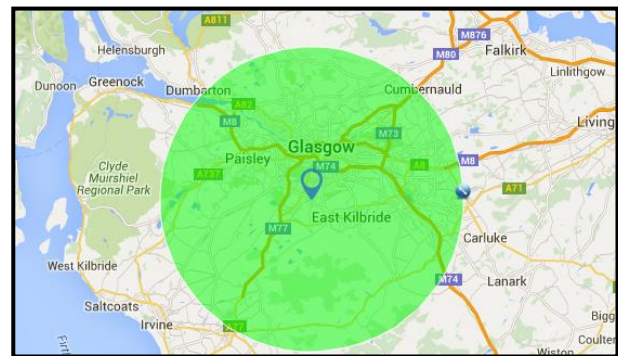
¹ Rank out of 6,976 Scottish Data Zones.

2. Accessible Town Centre

Clarkston is a suburban commuter town in East Renfrewshire, located around six miles south of Glasgow and four miles north west of East Kilbride. It forms a continuous urban conurbation with surrounding communities in East Renfrewshire and the city of Glasgow. The town centre covers a fairly small area, including the core retail area of Busby Road, surrounding lanes, the town hall, library and adjacent car park and green spaces.

15 mile radius around Clarkston

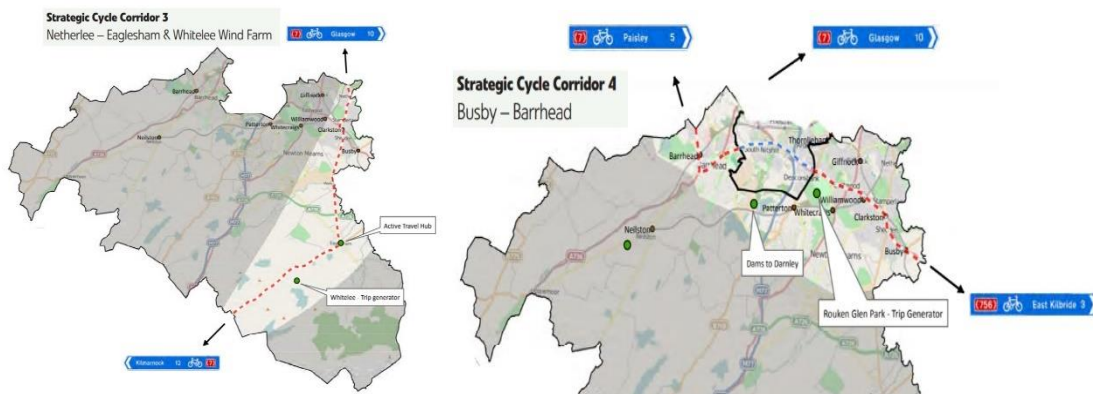
Clarkston sits on the East Kilbride to Glasgow railway line, with services running half hourly throughout the day. This provides a fast service into Glasgow and to some other settlements in East Renfrewshire, including Giffnock. However, there is no direct rail link with towns to the west of the local authority area, such as Neilston, and Barrhead.



Clarkston has bus connections to Glasgow, Clydebank, Eaglesham, Newton Mearns, and East Kilbride. The M77 junction at Darnley (J3) is around 2.5 miles from the town, providing fast road access to Glasgow and Ayrshire.

Recognising the lack of national cycle networks within the local authority area, the Active Travel Action Plan, published by East Renfrewshire Council, proposes a series of strategic cycle corridors to encourage cycling. This includes two routes which will pass through Clarkston, **Figure 2.1** overleaf.

Figure 2.1: Strategic Cycle Corridors



Source: East Renfrewshire Council.

Increased opportunities for active travel in the area include a proposed extension to the White Cart Walkway with associated green network improvements at Busby Glen/ Overlee Park.

There are a good number of parking spaces around the town, with around 100 spaces at the town hall and library (with footbridge access to Busby Road), and a privately operated, rooftop car park above the shops on Busby Road. This charges 50p for two hours parking, a very low charge in comparison with other towns. During the audit visit, the rooftop car park was closed for renovation. There are a limited number of parking spaces in other locations around the town centre including free time restricted on-street parking outside the main retail outlets.

There are two retail banking branches in the town centre: TSB and Bank of Scotland. There are multiple ATMs located outside each bank providing fee-free access to cash. However, the TSB is currently open only 2 days per week, on Tuesday and Friday, and is set to close permanently on 22 July 2020 as part of TSB's Closure Programme. After this date the closest TSB branch will be in Thornliebank about 3 miles north of town.

Clarkston has good mobile connectivity and superfast broadband capability². The town centre provides access to local services which, alongside a mix of retailers and business services, includes a dentist, community hall and library.

² Ultrafast broadband is available to some but not all premises.

Clarkston to Barrhead by car is approximately 6 miles with a journey time of about 15 minutes. However, accessing the many council services located there is difficult by public transport. There is no direct bus line to Barrhead making journey times longer, taking up to 45 minutes.

There is also one Church located just off Busby Road – St. Aiden’s Episcopal Church.



Clarkston Medical Centre, which was formerly based on Busby Road, has relocated out of the town centre to the Eastwood Health and Care Centre in Williamwood, as has the Community Health and Care Partnership office. There are however other doctors and dentists within the Clarkston area.

Overall the town centre has a very good level of transport and digital connectivity.

3. Active Town Centre

3.1 Population and Housing

Clarkston and its immediate vicinity has a population of around 13,200³, with around 2,200 people living within its town centre Data Zones⁴. At 17%, this is slightly below the average of 18% across 36 YTAs. Both the town centre and total Clarkston populations increased by 3% from 2009 to 2019. This compares with increases of 6% for East Renfrewshire and 4% for Scotland over this ten year period. Other audited town centres have generally seen a similar increase in town centre living (average 12% across 35 YTAs).

Table 3.1. Population change in Clarkston and Town Centre

	2009	2019	Change	% Change
Clarkston	12,740	13,160	420	3%
Town centre	2,126	2,192	66	3%

Source: National Records of Scotland (2019)

Almost three-quarters of housing in the town centre is in detached or semi-detached dwellings (74%), typically with at least three bedrooms, and nearly all homes are owner-occupied (94%). The ownership rate in Clarkston is the highest out of all the YTA-audited towns (average of 55% across 39 YTAs). More than half of the dwellings in the town centre (55%) are in council tax bands F-H. There is a small number of vacant residential properties (2%). There is a similar composition of housing in the wider Clarkston area.

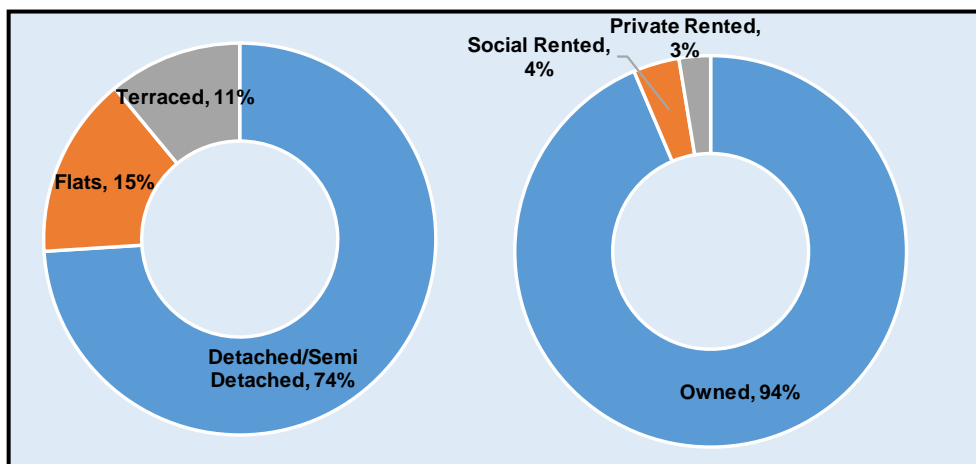
³ Includes Intermediate Zones S02001568 Clarkston and Sheddens, S02001570 Stamperland & S02001569 Williamwood

⁴ 2011 Data Zones S01008378, S01008383 & S01008385 which covers the defined town centre but also surrounding residential streets.



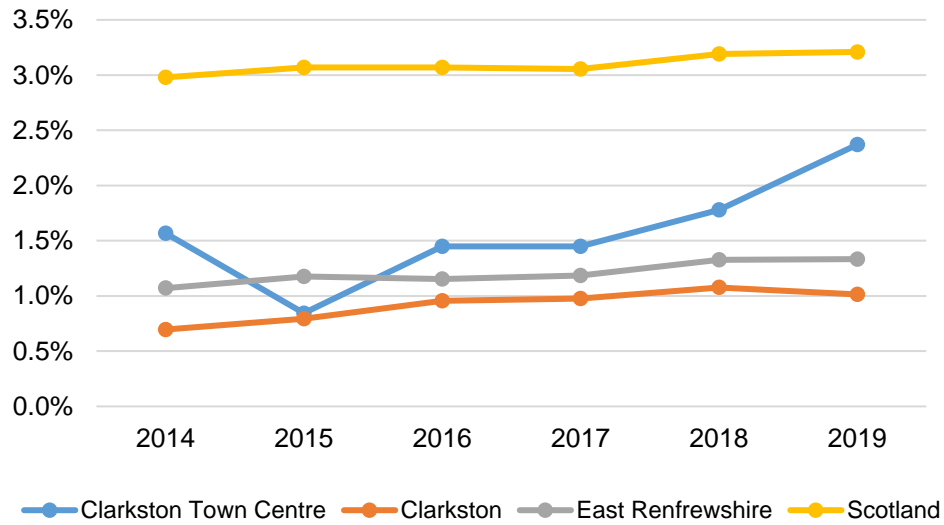
The average purchase price of a town centre dwelling (£308,000) is higher than that of the town as a whole (£250,000) – in percentage terms, there was a considerably greater increase in the average town centre purchase price than in the town as a whole between 2008 and 2018 (town centre: +23%; Clarkston as a whole: +13%).

Clarkston Town Centre Housing Mix



In 2019, the residential vacancy rate was at 2.4% in the town centre, moderately higher than the 1.0% vacancy in the town as a whole. This is slightly above the residential vacancy rate for East Renfrewshire overall but below the Scottish average of 3.2%, **Figure 3.1**.

Residential Vacancy Rate (2014 – 2019)



Source: Scottish Government Statistics

It will be important to analyse and understand the reason for the increasing vacancy rate in Clarkston town centre and, where possible, undertake remedial action to attract new residents.

3.2 Employment

Just over half (56%) of Clarkston’s 2,250 jobs are located in the town centre Data Zones. National statistics record 360 businesses in Clarkston, with around 130 in the BID area. The YTA street audit located 88 businesses within the town centre.

Since the previous audit, Clarkston has experienced a rise in the number of jobs in the town centre – this is likely driven, at least in part, by the presence of two new chain businesses, Costa Coffee and Anytime Fitness.

Map 3.1: Clarkston Commuter Flows



Source: [Understanding Scotland's Places](#), download March 2020

Map 3.1 shows the inbound and outbound flow of commuters from and to Clarkston:

- coloured lines/pins show the main flows that exceed 2% of the town's population or 2,000 people;
- grey lines/pins show smaller flows that still exceed 0.5% of the town's population or 500 people;
- the thickness of each line is proportional to the size of the flow (both inbound and outbound); and
- flows representing less than 10 people in total are not shown.

As Clarkston is a suburban commuter town, there is a net outflow of commuters with residents travelling to larger settlements, such as Glasgow, East Kilbride and Newton Mearns, for work. The largest flow of commuters is between Clarkston and Glasgow, with just over 2,000 people commuting into the city from Clarkston.

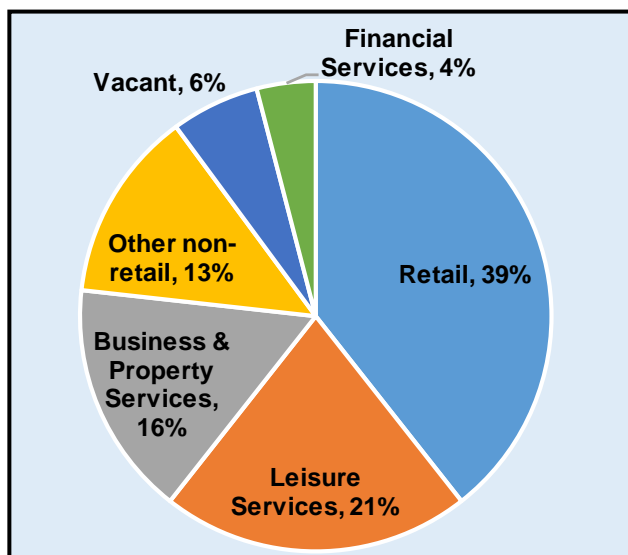
Overall, 80% of commuter flow is outward, or, in other words, about four times as many Clarkston residents leave the town to work than non-residents come into the town to work. This suggests that there may be a need for increase flexible office space in Clarkston.

3.3 Town Centre Businesses

The YTA street audit located a total of 94 commercial units within Clarkston town centre, of which retail forms the largest group, accounting for 39% of all uses in commercial premises. This is lower than most other audited towns where retail on

average comprises 46% (39 YTAs, ranging from 30% in Ardrossan to 63% in Clydebank) of all units, although as part of the wider Glasgow region this profile is perhaps not surprising.

Clarkston Town Centre Unit Mix



Clarkston has a high proportion of business and property service units (16% of total town centre unit use), due to the defined town centre area including a number of light industrial units (e.g. building firms) around its edge. This is the highest profile of business and property service uses of all towns that have been audited, where this category averages 5% of all uses.

The total number of units has increased from 92 in 2016 to 94 in 2020 as the result of splits of the unit at 214 Eastwoodmains Road and the unit at 16 Busby Road.

The overall commercial unit vacancy in the town centre is 6.4% (comprising 4 vacant retail and 2 other vacant units from a total of 94 properties). This is down significantly from 2016 where the rate was 9.8%. Clarkston performs well when compared with the YTA average of 10% (39 YTAs).

The previous audit carried out in 2016 noted that the vacancies were clustered giving the impression of a high vacancy rate. However, the vacant units are currently more spread out the town centre and less noticeable. During the most recent audit, the town centre appeared very lively with retail outlets, cafes and restaurants well visited.

3.4 Retail

The retail offering in Clarkston is concentrated on the section of Busby Road between Clarkston Toll and Strawhill Road.

Taking a broad approach to retail definition, of the total commercial premises 55 units are occupied for retail-type operators⁵.

Looking at retail premises only, the vacancy rate is 6.7%. Encouragingly, this is a decrease since the previous audit (9.9%) and lower than the average of 10.2% for other audited town centres. Although it is slightly higher than other town centres in East Renfrewshire such as Barrhead (6%) and Thornliebank (4.8%).

Taking the official classification of retail – comparison, convenience and retail services, there are 37 retail businesses in Barrhead. The YTA analysis is based on the following retail definitions:

- **Convenience Retail:** primarily low cost goods that are typically bought out of habit or on impulse i.e. food, drink (alcohol and non-alcohol), news, tobacco, etc – *four convenience retailers were identified in Clarkston town centre comprising two convenience stores (Tesco Express and Day Today), a butchers and a delicatessen (decrease of one retailer since 2016 audit as Village Green Grocers has closed);*
- **Comparison Retail:** all other retail purchases comprising goods bought at infrequent intervals where consumers will compare and contrast products and prices – *15 comparison retailers were identified in Clarkston town centre comprising seven charity shops, florist, jewellers, chemist, sportswear shop, gifts and cards shop, computer repair shop, mobile phone repair shop and a vape shop (increase of two retailers since 2016 audit as VPZ vape shop and Debra charity shop have opened) ; and*
- **Retail Services:** services that consumers would expect to find in a town centre including hairdresser, beauty salon, repair of goods, hire of specialist clothing, health clinics, post office, travel agent, etc – *18 retail service operators were identified in Clarkston town centre (decrease of one retailer since 2016 audit).*

⁵ Note that this is different from the formal retail classification and includes food and drink outlets i.e. premises where customers can walk-in off the street and purchase items over the counter.



With a settlement population of almost 13,200 people, Clarkston as a settlement has 357 residents for every town centre retail outlet. This is greater than the YTA average of 235 (39 YTAs). Typically towns that are visitor destinations (e.g. seaside and tourist towns) have far lower ratios e.g. Millport and Moffat have c. 50 residents for every retail outlet.



Shops in Clarkston town centre typically operate standard opening hours of around 9am to 5.30pm. The Tesco Express store opens between 7am and 10pm.

In comparison with others towns that have been audited Clarkston has a high proportion of retail service operators, making up just under half of all retail activity compared with an average of 39% and a low profile in the convenience retail sector at 11% compared to an average of 21%. With an increase in the proportion of comparison retailers since the previous audit, Clarkston is now in line with the average of other audited town centres (41%).

However, with a small number of retail outlets (37) any small change in number would have a large proportionate change in the % profile, therefore caution is required in interpreting the results.

In comparison to the previous audit, there are four fewer independent retailers in Clarkston town centre – at 57% of all retailers within the town centre, this is lower than the average of 71% for other audited towns.

Comparing Clarkston with other town centres in East Renfrewshire shows a lower proportion of independent retailers to Barrhead (67%) and the smaller town centres of Busby (91%) and Neilston (91%). It will be important to monitor any further changes to ensure that there is an appropriate mix of independent and national retailers.

Clarkston Town Centre Retail Mix

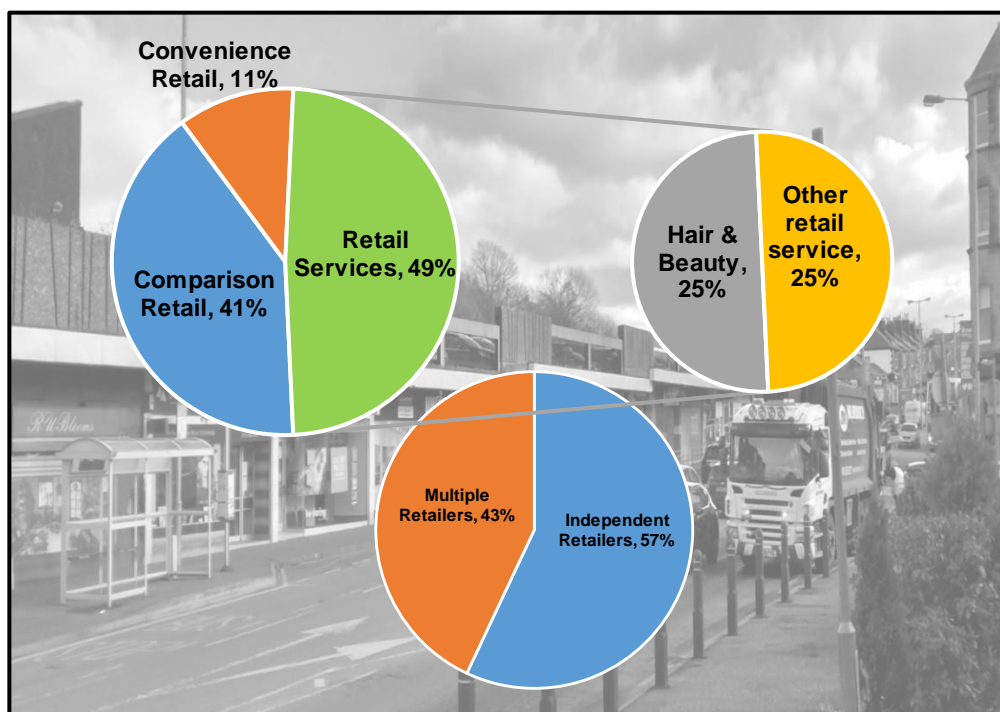


Table 3.1: Split in Uses of Clarkston Town Centre Units (2016-2020)

	2020	2016	Change
Retail	37	37	0
Other non-retail	12	12	0
Leisure services	20	14	+6
Business & property services	15	15	0
Financial services	4	5	-1
Vacant	6	9	-3
Total number of units	94	92	+2

Source: YTA Audit Visits

4. Attractive Town Centre

4.1 Overview

Clarkston has a compact and accessible town centre area, with the railway station at its centre. However, it is intersected by a dual carriageway that is generally busy with traffic. This, and the roundabout at Clarkston Toll, can be unfriendly to pedestrians and has an impact on its walkability for pedestrians. Additionally, pavements are very narrow on Stamperland Road where it crosses the railway.



Source: <https://www.primelocation.com/to-rent/commercial/property/clarkston/busby-road/>

The quality of public realm in the town centre is patchy – although many of the shops themselves are of a good standard, the buildings are inconsistent in their appearance. The outdated concrete rendering of the rooftop car park on Busby Road is currently under renovation and once completed will add to the overall attractiveness of the town centre. Many of the buildings around the town were constructed in the early 1970s and there is little of historical note.



Clarkston was the tenth Scottish town to implement a Business Improvement District, in 2010. With a successful renewal in mid-2015, the town will have a BID until at least the summer of 2020. A renewal-ballot for a third term is planned for February 2021 to ensure continued operation having been delayed by the current Covid-19 pandemic. The BID has

pursued a range of projects to increase interest in the town centre over the last ten

years, including special events, town centre improvements, and marketing campaigns.

The current 'I Love Clarkston' campaign is on prominent display throughout the town centre with banners and branded benches throughout and emphasises the importance of supporting local traders.

Recent public realm improvements in Clarkston have adopted an innovative approach to seating and greenery in the town centre. Located in front of the Toll Building, modern benches and planters have been installed to an excellent standard. These new public areas have extended the width of the pavements in an effort to create an outdoor "café feel."



While there are no public squares, statues, or public art located in the town centre, it is possible that the new seating areas can function as a gathering place.

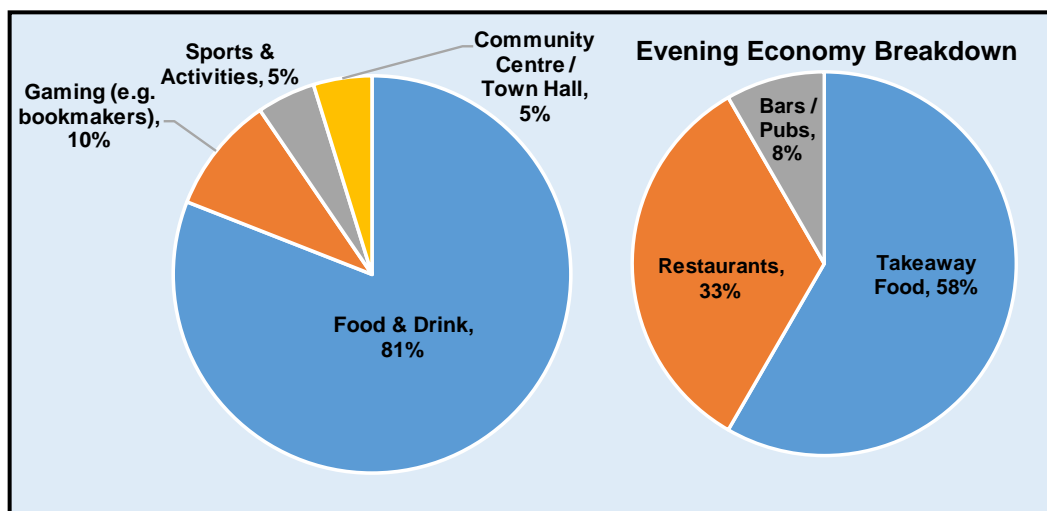
Nearby Costa Coffee and Eat Deli add to this as well. The new public areas also reduce the length of the pedestrian crossing allowing for safer crossing.

In November 2019, East Renfrewshire Council published the proposed Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) which outlines policies and proposals for the use, development and protection of land within East Renfrewshire.

Of particular interest to Clarkston, the LDP2 contains specific reference to the following proposals:

- preparation of a Clarkston Town Centre Strategy and Action Programme;
- extension to the existing nursery at Carolside Primary School;
- potential housing development at the former Drumby Crescent Playing Fields with capacity for 20 units;
- enhanced community, greenspace and recreational facilities as well as improved recreational path networks and biodiversity enhancements at Busby Glen, Overlee Park, White Cart walkway, Netherlee and Cathcart Cemetery; and
- Overlee Park – new sports pavilion and family centre.

4.2 Leisure Mix



The leisure offering in the town centre comprises a number of food outlets, one bar and two bookmakers.

The evening economy has been expanded with an additional three takeaways since the previous audit – Cookoo’s Chicken, BBQ Hut and The Curry Shack.



For a town of its size, there is a good number of high-quality eateries and these are likely play a role in attracting visitors to the town.

There is a council operated leisure centre, which includes a swimming pool and gym, at Eastwood Park, south of Giffnock. Just outside of the town centre in Clarkston, there is a bowling and tennis club, with six floodlit tennis courts and a clubhouse. A number of golf courses are in the surrounding area. Overlee Park, just north of the town centre, has sports pitches and a pavilion building. There are no hotels in Clarkston, with the nearest being the 32-room Busby Hotel in Busby and the Redhurst, near the new Health Centre.

4.3 Attractions and Heritage

There are few stand-alone visitor attractions in Clarkston, with the main draw to the town being its eateries and shops. The National Trust for Scotland operate Greenbank Gardens, the landscaped gardens of a Georgian country house, on the edge of Clarkston. Previously rated two-stars, this has been upgraded to three stars by Visit Scotland. The grounds are open all year round, with an entry fee for visitors, with the cafe, shop and garden open from March-October.



The BID has delivered a range of events designed to draw footfall into the town centre. This has included an annual winter extravaganza held in late November, which culminates in a fireworks display and several treasure hunts.

4.4 Attractiveness Review

The YTA includes an independent (and subjective) review on place and quality impressions, with scores in Clarkston broadly comparable with other towns which have been audited.

Individual unit fronts and shop window displays were graded out of ten during the on-street audit, with a town centre average score of 7.8 for the quality of window display and 7.3 for condition of unit fronts. These scores have remained largely similar to the previous audit and are higher than the average from other audited towns which is 6.9 for both quality of shop fronts and window displays.

Business confidence in the town centre was gauged from a small sample of interviews undertaken with independent traders. Scores averaged at 7.0 / 10, which is a notable increase from the previous audit score (5.7) and is higher than the average across other YTA audited towns of 5.9 – this is also higher than most other East Renfrewshire town centres (Barrhead: 4.4, Neilston: 5.5).



Combining high-quality shop fronts and window displays with recent public realm improvements, Clarkston town centre offers an attractive place for people to spend time and money in which will benefit the local community and economy.

5. YTA Summary and Key Points

The following are offered as final comments on the Your Town Audit of Clarkston, within the framework of the Scottish Government's Town Centre Toolkit.

5.1 Accessible Town Centre

- Clarkston is a commuter town with good rail, road and bus links to the main commuter destinations of Glasgow and East Kilbride, and has a high level of digital connectivity;
- however, those without a car will find it difficult to travel to other parts of East Renfrewshire, particularly Barrhead where many public services are located. A bus journey from Clarkston to Barrhead requires a transfer and take about 45 minutes to an hour;
- the town centre is compact and most facilities are easily within walking distance, while some improvements have been made to pedestrian crossings and pavements, the large roundabout in the town centre remains difficult to navigate; and
- there are two car parks in the town centre providing a good number of spaces – one of which is privately operated and charges a (relatively low) fee, and the other is the large council-owned car park (free parking) by Clarkston Hall on the edge of the centre.

5.2 Active Town Centre

- Clarkston BID (I Love Clarkston) is very active in organising activities in the town. The BID represents the interests of its member businesses and delivering activities and services. It was last renewed in 2015 and is due for another renewal-ballot amongst member business soon;
- there is a need to review and understand the increase in the housing vacancy rate in the town centre and, where possible, to undertake remedial actions to attract new residents;
- there may be an opportunity to broaden the mix of housing in the town centre, particularly creating small starter or affordable units, which would increase footfall in the area, particularly in the evenings. The vacated HSCP office site on Busby Road may be suitable for new housing; and

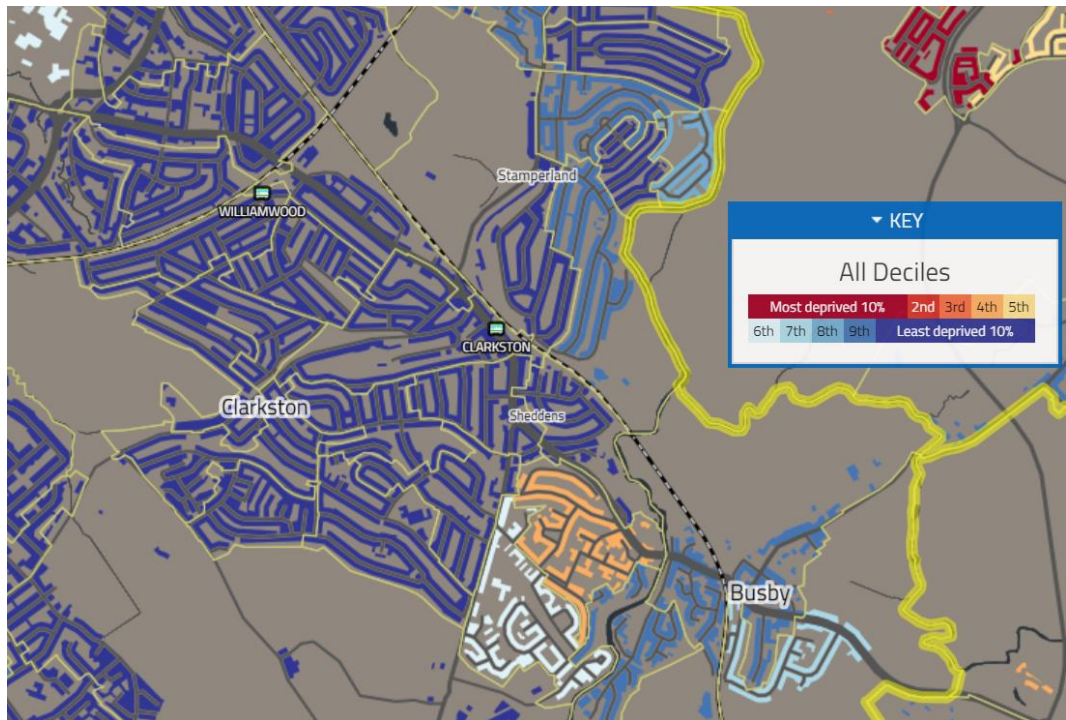
- the BID-operated and other town-focused social media pages are useful in promoting activities and stirring up interest in the town centre, and it is clear that there is a lot of interest in the town centre among local residents.

5.3 Attractive Town Centre

- while Clarkston scores well against quality of shopfront and window display and the prominent I Love Clarkston branding gives the appearance of an active town centre, there may be benefits in making minor improvements to the appearance of key entrance points to the town centre, such as the station;
- the town has a relatively large catchment population with above average incomes, but many commute to work elsewhere (largely Glasgow city centre). One key issue is attracting spend for local businesses – while there will be a high level of retail spend leakage to shops elsewhere, particularly given the high level of car ownership, more could possibly be done to secure passing spend from commuters through later shop opening hours; and
- the recently redesigned pavements and installation of modern seating, planters and greenery, is a welcome improve that improves the overall attractiveness of the town centre while improving walkability and pedestrian safety.

Appendix

Clarkston SIMD 2020 Map



Note: Pale blue and orange regions at the bottom centre of the map belong to the neighbouring locality of Busby.