



Your Town Audit: Barrhead

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Contents

1.	Understanding Scottish Places Summary	1
2.	Accessible Town Centre	5
3.	Active Town Centre	8
4.	Attractive Town Centre	16
5.	YTA Summary and Key Points	23

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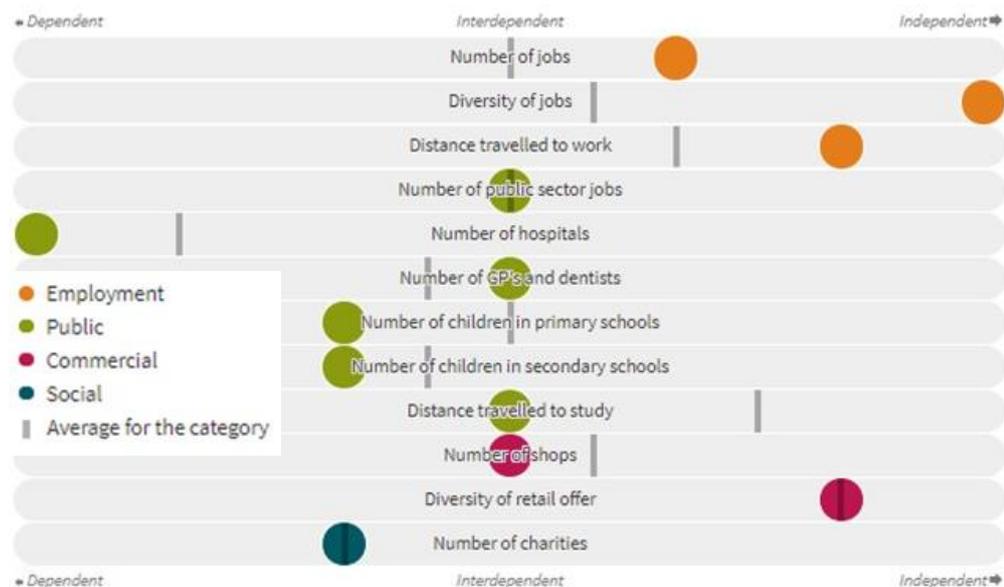
1. Understanding Scottish Places Summary

This report presents a summary of the Your Town Audit (YTA) for Barrhead, conducted by Scotland's Towns Partnership and EKOS, and comprises an update on the previous Barrhead 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 Key Performance Indicators. It provides a comprehensive audit of Barrhead 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 Barrhead and identifies 12 comparator towns that have similar characteristics, with the most similar being Armadale, Cambuslang, Rosyth and Tranent¹. The USP platform - www.usp.scot - describes Barrhead as an interdependent town.

Inter-relationships



The coloured circles represent Barrhead's relative position for key indicators across key themes compared to the 12 other towns (average marked by the grey line).

¹ Similarity is framed in the context of the socio-demographic typology. The towns are then classified by population size and finally ordered within groups based on their inter-relationship scores. The other comparator towns are Bonnyrigg, Glenrothes, Gourrock, Kirkcaldy and Dysart, Largs, Musselburgh, Penicuik, Stenhousemuir.

Comparing Barrhead to towns with similar USP typology and interrelationships shows it has a broadly similar number of charities, GP surgeries, hospitals, children in secondary schools, public sector jobs, and shops. It differs in its diversity of jobs and distance travelled to study.

In summary, the USP platform describes Barrhead in the following general terms:

Barrhead's Interrelationships: Barrhead is an *'interdependent town'*, which means it has a medium number of assets in relation to its population; average diversity of jobs; and residents travel a mix of short and long distances to travel to work and study. These towns are attractors of people from neighbouring towns who come to access some assets and jobs but they are also reliant on neighbouring towns for other assets and jobs.

Barrhead's Typology: This type of large town is extremely mixed in terms of demographics. There is a particularly wide range of people, housing and activities. The number of older couples with no children is higher than average. There is a mix of professional and non-professional jobs, and part-time and self-employment are both important for a significant proportion of residents. Socioeconomic status is higher than in other kinds of town and there is a mix of professionals and non-professionals, those with higher and lower educational attainment.

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation

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

The SIMD ranks all of Scotland's datazones from the most deprived (1) to the least deprived (6976) and these ranks can be further split into percentiles.

As measured through the latest SIMD 2020 update, 28% of Barrhead's datazones (7 datazones) are among the 20% most deprived areas, whereas 16% (4) are in the least deprived 20%. This indicates substantial variation in deprivation within different parts of Barrhead, as shown on the datazone map at the appendix, and described in the town's USP Typology described above.

The position of Barrhead, in regard to multiple deprivation, has improved. Three of its 25 datazones fall into the 15% most deprived in Scotland (none in the town centre), whereas six of Barrhead’s datazones were classified in this group in the SIMD 2016. The SIMD also records crime rates, showing that crimes in the town centre have reduced by 9% and by 2% in the whole settlement since 2016.

Barrhead SIMD Ranking by Data Zone

2011 Intermediate Zone	2011 Data Zone	Overall SIMD16 Rank ²	Percentile
Cross Stobbs	S01008303	3,387	49 th
	S01008304	3,684	53 rd
	S01008305	5,822	83 rd
	S01008306	6,076	87 th
	S01008307	5,285	76 th
	S01008308	6,232	89 th
Dunterlie, East Arthurlie and Dovecothall	S01008309	1,194	17 th
	S01008310	3,113	45 th
	S01008311	2,963	42 nd
	S01008312	5,225	75 th
	S01008313	628	9 th
	S01008314	1,118	16 th
	S01008315	544	8 th
	S01008316	212	3 rd
	S01008317	1,556	22 nd
Auchenback	S01008323	1,135	16 th
	S01008324	2,483	36 th
	S01008325	2,401	34 th
	S01008326	1,375	20 th
	S01008327	2,818	40 th
Arthurlie and Gateside	S01008318	4,975	71 st
	S01008319	2,408	35 th
	S01008320	3,151	45 th
	S01008321	6,782	97 th
	S01008322	2,180	31 st

Source: Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020

² Rank out of 6976 Scottish Data Zones.

YTA Summary

Building on the USP, this report presents the results of our detailed analysis of Barrhead, based around 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.

Over 40 YTA audits have been prepared for towns across Scotland providing data across a range of KPIs. Where appropriate, this report provides comparisons for Barrhead 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. In particular, we have provided comparison with three USP comparator towns with completed YTA audits – Kirkcaldy (2015), Largs (2016) and Musselburgh (2015).



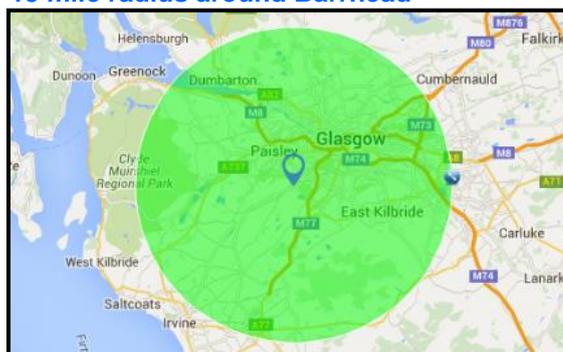
2. Accessible Town Centre

Located seven miles south-west of Glasgow city centre, Barrhead is a former industrial town within East Renfrewshire with a population of around 17,800³. The town centre in Barrhead, as defined in the current Local Development Plan, takes in a relatively large area, including the town’s core retail area and Centenary Park.

Barrhead station is located to the north of the town centre, around ten minutes’ walk from Main Street. This provides a half-hourly local rail service to Glasgow throughout the day. As the station is situated on the line between Kilmarnock and Glasgow, there is also a half-hourly express service to each destination. Barrhead does not, however, have a direct rail link to other key settlements in East Renfrewshire, including Giffnock, Newton Mearns, and Clarkston.

These and other settlements can be reached by bus from Barrhead. Glasgow, Paisley, and Neilston are served by direct and relatively quick bus services. However, journey times to Giffnock, Thornliebank, and Clarkston are longer as a change of service in Glasgow is involved. Journeys to East Kilbride take around 1 hour, to Giffnock around 30-45 minutes, Thornliebank around 30 minutes, and Clarkston around 50 minutes through Glasgow.

15 mile radius around Barrhead



Plans are underway to introduce a temporary station at Barrhead South on the Neilston to Glasgow line which will test demand for the service and, if successful and made permanent, will reintroduce a railway link with Neilston⁴. Similarly, improving bus connections to commuter settlements could reduce car dependency in the town – see also commuter map in section 3.2.

The M77 motorway is around two miles east of the town and is easily accessible by road, providing fast access to Glasgow and Ayrshire. A winding country road provides quicker access to Newton Mearns, the largest town in East Renfrewshire, but public transport between the two areas is very limited.

³ ‘Whole town’ defined as intermediate zones S020001560 Auchenback, S02001557, Cross Stobbs, S02001558 Dunterlie, East Arthurlie and Dovecothall & S02001559 West Arthurlie and North Neilston.

⁴Barrhead News (2018) [Plans for new train station gather pace](#)

Limited on-street parking spaces are available in Barrhead town centre along Cross



Arthurlie and Main Street. In addition, off-street car parks on Ralston Road, Cochrane Street, and behind the Main Street shopping centre offer free parking up to 2½ hours maximum stay. In 2014, ERC invested £100,000 in 26 new on-street spaces, while the Barrhead Foundry also provides free parking.



Further large customer car parks are contained within the new



ASDA, Lidl and Tesco supermarkets. An electric vehicle charging station (by Chargeplace Scotland) has been introduced in the carpark on Cochrane Street and was in use during the audit.

Barrhead has good mobile connectivity and has had superfast broadband rolled out since 2014.

The town centre provides access to local services which, alongside a mix of retailers and business services, includes the new Barrhead Foundry (a multi-purpose learning, leisure and business hub open from 7.30am till 10pm), and the new Health and Care Centre. Within the audited area there is also a doctors' surgery in the Westbourne business centre, Barrhead Dental Care on Bank Street and a chiropodist, Barrhead Foot Clinic.

Other town centre services include a mix of retailers and a good provision of civic services. Employability services (Work EastRen and Skills Development Scotland) are located in the Foundry, and a youth employability service run by a third sector organisation has opened within the new Hub at the James McGuire building, which also contains a café and community meeting spaces. In addition, Citizens' Advice Scotland is found on Main Street, and a business coaching service, ActionCoach, in the Westbourne Business Centre, along with the Third Sector Interface for East Renfrewshire, Voluntary Action East Renfrewshire.



Several food takeaways, including chain outlets and independent restaurants, are concentrated on Main Street with a few others also found on Cross Arthurlie Street. These tend to be open from late morning until 11pm or midnight.

There is a Bank of Scotland located in the town centre on Main Street which



operates on regular opening hours (9am-5pm) and TSB on Cross Arthurlie Street, open from 9.30am to 4.30pm. The retail banking industry has seen wide scale branch closure in recent years that has affected the availability of cash points. In the town centre, ATMs were also found at the new ASDA and Tesco supermarkets.

With good connectivity by walking, cycling, and buses that stop on the main street, the town centre services are accessible to residents in surrounding neighbourhoods and nearby settlements.

3. Active Town Centre

3.1 Population and Housing

Just under 3,000 people live within Barrhead’s town centre datazones⁵. At 16% of the total settlement population, this is at the average for YTA audited towns (18%, 36 YTAs) and sits in the mid-range of other audited towns in East Renfrewshire, where the figure ranges between 3%-41%. At 16%, Barrhead is similar to two of the four USP comparator towns that have been audited – Largs (13%) and Musselburgh (15%) but is higher than Cambuslang (10%) and substantially higher than Kirkcaldy (1.5%) which recorded the lowest level of town centre living of all YTA audited towns.

The town centre population has remained stable since 2016 with nominal decrease of 0.1%, while there was a small decrease in the population of the whole town (-3%). In a ten-year period from 2009, the population of the town centre decreased by 1% while Barrhead on the whole increased by 3%.

This compares with an increase of 6% for the population of East Renfrewshire and a 4% increase in Scotland over this ten-year period. The decrease in town centre living contrasts with trends found elsewhere in other audited towns (average of 12% increase), and might indicate an opportunity to increase town centre living in Barrhead, in line with national policy aspirations⁶. Further housing development is planned in the wider Barrhead settlement, with work already started in some areas.

Table 3.1. Population change in Barrhead and Town Centre

	2009	2019	Change	% Change
Barrhead	17,426	17,920	494	3%
Town centre	2,951	2,927	-24	-1%

Source: National Records of Scotland (2019)

Housing in the town centre is mostly flatted accommodation (73%), with 3 or 4 bedrooms (58%), in council tax banding A-C (82%). This is a mix of newer flats, older social housing stock and traditional tenements, in some cases with commercial usage on the ground floor, providing a ready customer base for the town’s retail and service businesses.

⁵ 2011 Datazones S01008309, S01008310, S01008314, S01008315.

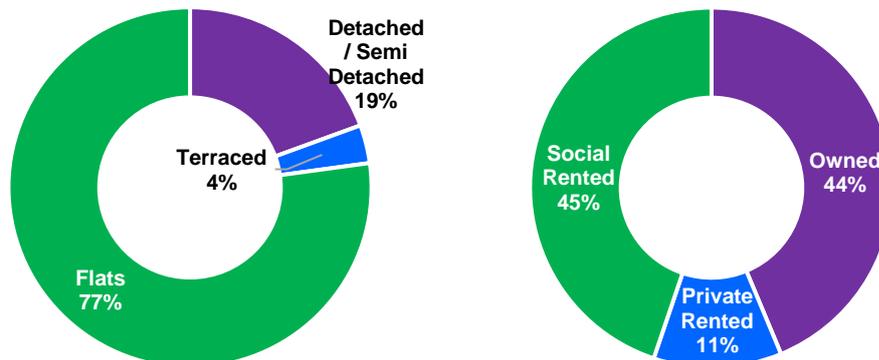
⁶ Town centre living as one of the six objectives of the Scottish Government’s Town Centre Action Plan.

The total number of residential homes increased in the town centre area by around 50 dwellings (3% since 2016), which includes the completion of the development on Cross Arthurlie Street and Robertson Street as part of the Town Centre Master Plan regeneration programme.

The average purchase price of a town centre dwelling is just over £100,000 and is lower than that of the town as a whole (£153,700). Average prices increased in the town centre by 3% since 2014, while Barrhead as a whole saw a 36% increase in average prices over this time.

Housing in the town centre comprises 45% social housing and 45% owner-occupied dwellings, whereas in the wider town there is a much higher rate of private ownership (64%). Privately rented accommodation represents 11% in the centre and 7% in the wider town. It should be noted that the latest available data comes from the 2011 Census and the tenure composition is likely to have changed since.

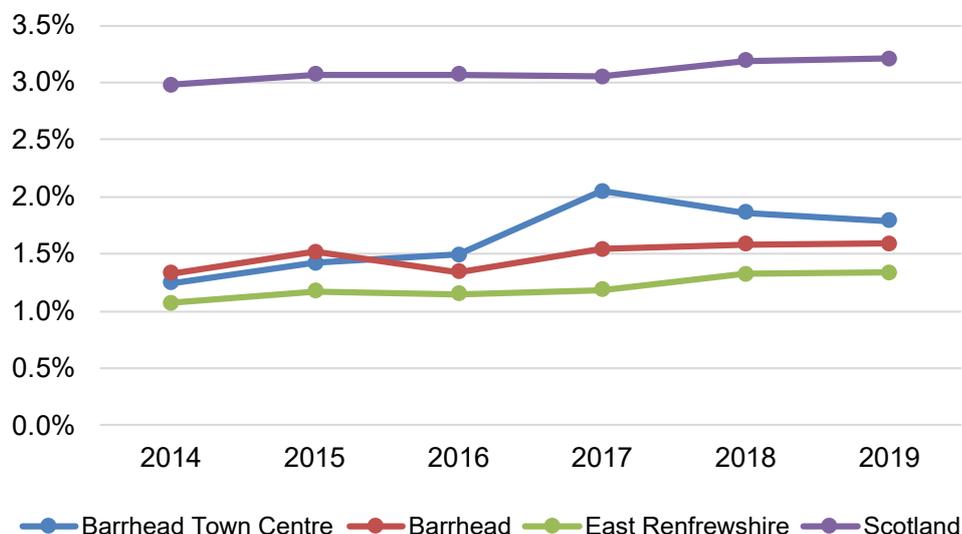
Barrhead Town Centre Housing Mix



In comparison with 39 other YTA audited towns, Barrhead has a substantially higher proportion of social rented homes (av 29%), and accordingly a lower proportion of owned (av 55%) and private rented (14%). None of the four USP comparator towns have a similar volume of social rented housing stock but the difference may be due to the make-up of Barrhead's geographic town centre area.

In 2019, the residential vacancy rate was 1.8% in the town centre and 1.6% in Barrhead as a whole. This is slightly above the residential vacancy rate Of 1.3% in East Renfrewshire as a whole, but substantially lower than the Scottish average of 3.2%, as shown in the figure over.

Residential Vacancy Rate (2014-2019)



Source: Scottish Government Statistics

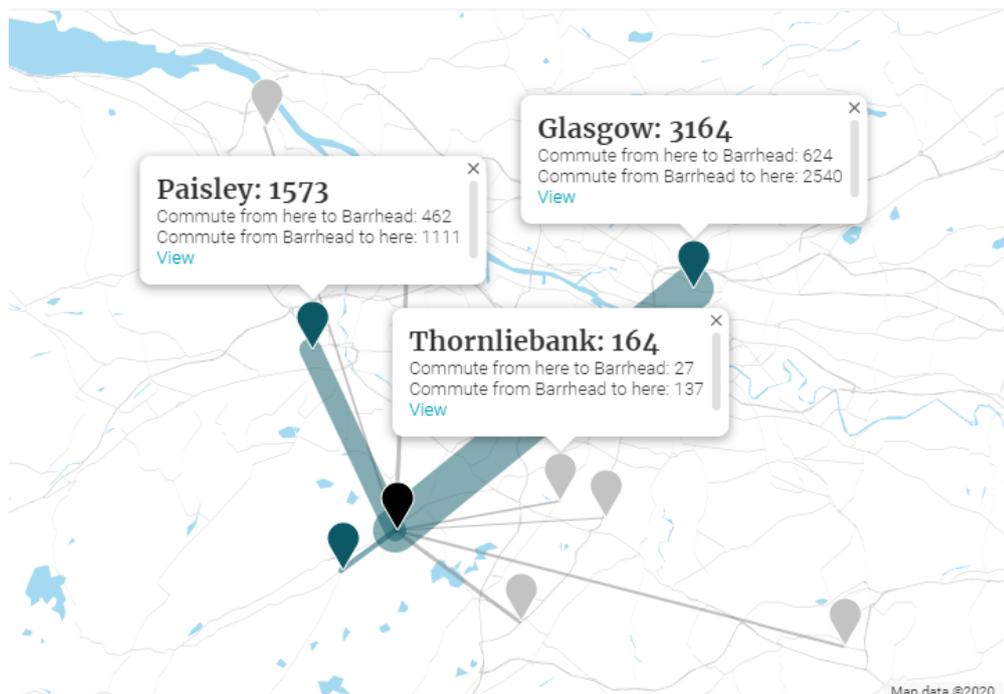
While vacancy rates have been relatively static, the data shows that there was an increase between 2014 and 2017 in the town centre, representing a jump from 20 to 33 vacant homes, followed by a decline in the next two years to 29 vacancies.

3.2 Employment

Employment is concentrated in the town centre, where 42% of jobs (5,775 in total across the town) are located. The number of jobs has increased by 7% in the town centre and by 1% in the whole of Barrhead since 2016. National statistics record 370 businesses in the settlement overall – key employers in the town include East Renfrewshire Council and other public sector agencies, after which the largest employing sectors are construction, business administration services, and retail⁷.

The Understanding Scottish Places profile shows that the largest commuter flows run into Glasgow (2,540 daily commuters from Barrhead), Paisley (1,111 daily commuters), Renfrew (241 daily commuters), and Thornliebank (137 daily commuters). Whereas direct services run to Glasgow and Paisley, Renfrew and Thornliebank can only be reached by changing services. The commuting patterns imply that the working population in Barrhead would benefit from improved connections to surrounding towns by public transport, while existing services should be maintained. This would also benefit residents from across East Renfrewshire in accessible public services and facilities in Barrhead, particularly at The Foundry.

⁷ Business Register and Employment Survey, 2019



Barrhead commuter flows map. Screen capture from the USP website.

The commuter flow map shows the inbound and outbound flow of commuters from, and to, Barrhead:

- 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.

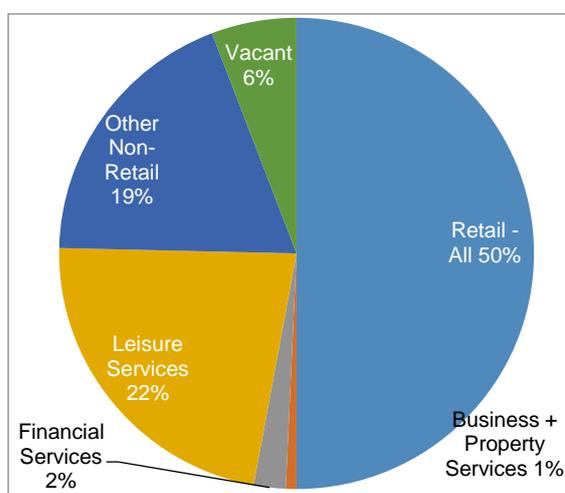
Overall, Barrhead has a total flow pattern of around 6,300 daily commuters, of which almost three-quarters travel from Barrhead to other places, primarily to Glasgow and Paisley. Only three settlements record higher inflows of workers than outflows, the highest volume from the adjacent town of Neilston with smaller inflows from Newton Mearns and Giffnock.

3.3 Town Centre Businesses

The YTA street audit located a total of 138 commercial units within Barrhead town centre, of which retail forms the largest group, accounting for half of all uses in commercial premises. This is marginally higher than the YTA average of 46% (39 YTAs, ranging from 30% in Ardrossan to 63% in Clydebank).

The total number of units has reduced slightly from 153 in 2016, as a result of two factors – the previous analysis was based on UPRN codes for which a number of individual units had more than one entry (likely two units joined to form one larger premises), and also a small number of units being demolished.

The overall commercial unit vacancy in the town centre is 6% (comprising 6 vacant retail and 2 other vacant units from a total of 138 properties). This is low, particularly considering Barrhead has a fairly large and dispersed town centre, but is marginally higher than the 5% all-unit vacancy rate recorded in the 2016 YTA. Barrhead performs well when compared with the YTA all-unit vacancy average of 10% (39 YTAs).



UK Business count data records 370 businesses in Barrhead, and 195 within the town centre. The total number of businesses in the town centre has fallen by 20% since 2016.

Barrhead has a high proportion of ‘other non-retail’ units, largely due to a number of council facilities and advice offices located in and around the town centre, and light industrial units/ workshops on its periphery, which fall under this category.



Since the last audit, there has been a slight reduction in financial services in the town, as the Royal Bank of Scotland branch and two credit shops have closed. This is in line with wider trends across the country, but does represent a risk of continuing access to financial services and cash machines, particularly as Barrhead will also be the primary financial service point for residents of nearby Neilston.

3.4 Retail

Taking a broad approach to retail definition, of the total commercial premises 94 units are occupied for retail-type operators⁸. Retail uses are primarily contained across three distinct areas of the town centre:

- Main Street: 49 units, larger chains concentrated within a street-facing shopping centre, plus an ASDA supermarket which opened directly across the road in 2014;
- Cross Arthurlie Street: 24 units, a mix of shops including independent traders and retail services; and
- Kelburn Street: 12 units, a mix of units and a Tesco supermarket contained within the Westbourne Centre, alongside office accommodation. There is also a separate Lidl supermarket.

Taking the official classification of retail – comparison, convenience and retail services, there are 69 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 – *9 convenience retailers identified in Barrhead town centre (including Asda, Lidl and Tesco supermarkets), representing a decline of 4 convenience retailers since the 2016 audit;*
- **Comparison Retail:** all other retail purchases comprising goods bought at infrequent intervals where consumers will compare and contrast products and prices – *22 comparison retailers identified in Barrhead town centre (including Boots, Poundstretchers, and multiple charity shops), representing a decline of 4 comparison retailers since the 2016 audit;* 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 – *38 retail service operators identified in Barrhead town centre (including 20 hair and beauty salons), representing an increase of 7 retail services since the 2016 audit.*

⁸ 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.

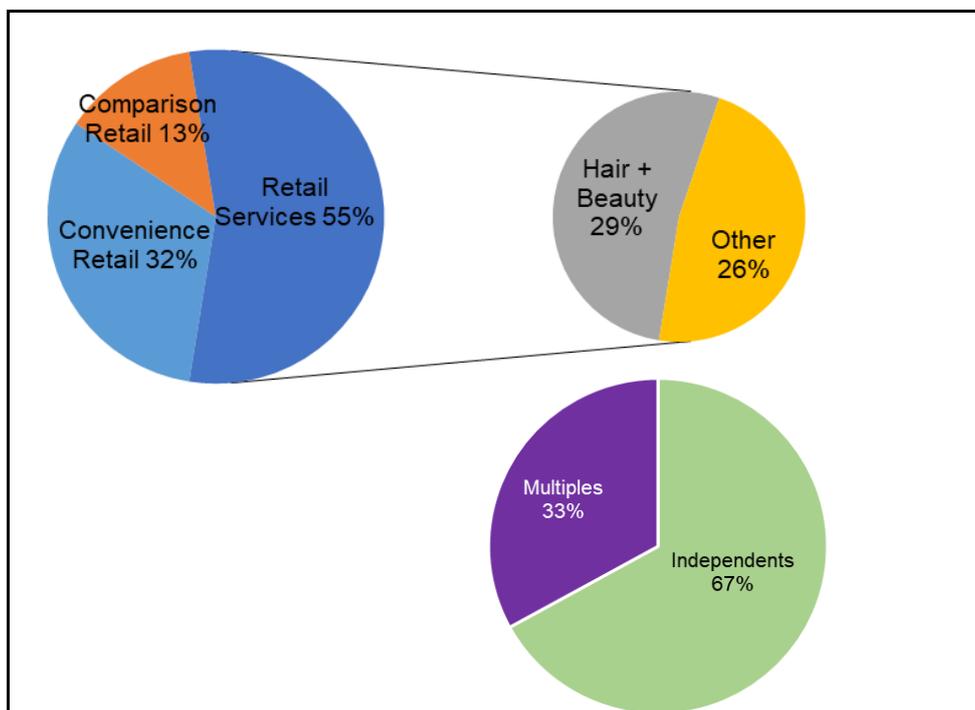
Table 3.2: Split in Uses of Barrhead Town Centre Units (2016-2020)

	2020	2016	Change
Retail	69	70	-1
Other non-retail	26	32	-6
Leisure services	30	31	-1
Business & property services	1	4	-3
Financial services	3	6	-3
Vacant	9	8	+1
Total number of units	137	153	-16

Note: The total number of units has reduced slightly from 153 in 2016, as a result of two factors – the previous analysis was based on UPRN codes for which a number of individual units had more than one entry (likely two units joined to form one larger premises), and also a small number of units being demolished.

Source: YTA Audit Visits

While the make-up of the retail sector has changed (fewer comparison/ convenience and more retail services) the total number of retail businesses has remained stable since the 2016 audit (69 in 2020 compared with 70 in 2016). The ownership profile of the retail businesses has also remained stable, with 67% of retail traders being independent businesses. This is broadly in line with the YTA average of 71% independents (39 YTAs) but there is a large variation in towns ranging from 41% in Newton Mearns to 96% in Millport. Typically smaller and ‘destination’ towns report higher levels of independent businesses.



Hair and beauty shops now represent the most common single type of retailer, comprising 53% of retail services and 15% of all occupied premises (20 operators). Together with hot food takeaways (12 operators) and charity shops (6 operators), these three single uses make up almost 30% of the total retail activity in Barrhead town centre.



Looking at retail premises only, the vacancy rate is also 6% in Barrhead, comprising 6 vacant retail premises from a total of 108 retail style units.

Shops in Barrhead town centre primarily operate standard opening hours of around 9am to 5.30pm. The Tesco supermarket opens between 6am and 10pm, while ASDA opens between 6am and midnight. The Foundry building (leisure, learning and business) also opens from 7.30am till 10pm, generating footfall in the town centre from early morning until late evening.

With a settlement population of almost 18,000 people, Barrhead as a settlement has 258 residents for every town centre retail outlet. This is very similar to the YTA average of 235 (39 YTAs) but is considerably different from three of the four USP comparator towns – Cambuslang 693, Kirkcaldy 274, Largs 104, and Musselburgh 173.



4. Attractive Town Centre

4.1 Overview

Barrhead town centre has been transformed over the past decade. In 2005, a masterplan was developed, focusing on improving the overall economic and social wellbeing of the town, reversing population decline and making it a more attractive place to live and work.

Major improvements have since been undertaken, achieved through a variety of projects and funding sources. One of the key projects has been enhancing the public realm around the town centre, including on Main Street, around the Westbourne Centre and on Cross Arthurlie Street.

The fabric on Main Street has been greatly improved, with the surrounding pavements repaved, metal barriers removed and new street furniture installed. The audit however observed that the outer appearance of the shopping centre building on Main Street is dated and would benefit from improvement – even a relatively minor re-paint would substantially improve the visual appearance of the town centre public realm, although it is noted this is in private ownership.



In places, there is a big contrast in the quality of the public realm in the town centre –



for example the tree grill surrounds at the shopping centre do not appear to be well-maintained and there was tobacco litter around the bins. In contrast there is modern and new public art in a well-maintained space on the opposite side of Main Street.



Across the road from the shopping centre, the opposite side of Main Street has undergone a radical transformation. A new Health and Care Centre was built, complementing the adjacent council office. In 2014, a new ASDA supermarket opened. Notably, car parking is located underneath the building, allowing it to be fronted by a large public space, which has potential to be used for public events.

The Barrhead Foundry, a modern concept sports, cultural and learning hub, then followed in early 2015, significantly improving the facilities which were originally there. It has a visitor car park at its front, encouraging linked trips and use of the town's businesses. With the Foundry open until 10pm most evenings, and the ASDA store until midnight, it ensures that the town centre is busy with passing footfall at all times of day.

Together, the new facilities and rejuvenated public realm create an impressive civic core at the heart of Barrhead, demonstrating strong commitment to the Town Centre First principle. The achievements of the regeneration programme over the last decade are reflected in the town centre's low commercial vacancy rate.



Cross-business marketing campaigns have been initiated in the town over the past few years. A Business Improvement District was formed in 2016, branded as 'All About Barrhead' and will run to 2021, when a ballot will be held regarding its renewal. The Barrhead BID organises events throughout the year, such as an Easter Egg Hunt, Christmas market, and Halloween parade, which have had large attendance especially by families. All About Barrhead also hosts annual Business Awards for local organisations. The events have contributed to making the town more attractive to new visitors.

While Main Street is busy with traffic, pedestrian crossings are well placed and ongoing work on streetlights at pedestrian crossings was observed during the audit. Pavements are generally wide on both sides and their condition has been improved with some sections extended onto the road. However, the audit observed some parts

of roads and pavements to be in a poorer condition, and road works were taking place on Main Street. Directional sign posting is also provided around the town, although some signs could be updated to point to the new developments.



There are flower beds and hanging baskets throughout the town centre. The quality of seating is generally good, and newer metal benches and some block seats have been placed around the town. There was a good provision of litter bins around the town, while their condition varied. New recycling bins have been placed mainly around the Foundry and new developments on Main Street. Extending this to other parts of the town would be beneficial.



A positive element that was noted in the audit, is the defibrillators that have been placed in multiple locations around the town.

Multiple cycle racks are provided along Cross Arthurlie Street and Main Street, although none were seen to be in use on the day of the audit walkabout. Some cycle lanes have been introduced as part of the council's plans to improve cycling infrastructure, these could be further extended to encourage use and reduce vehicular traffic in the centre, with associated air quality improvements.

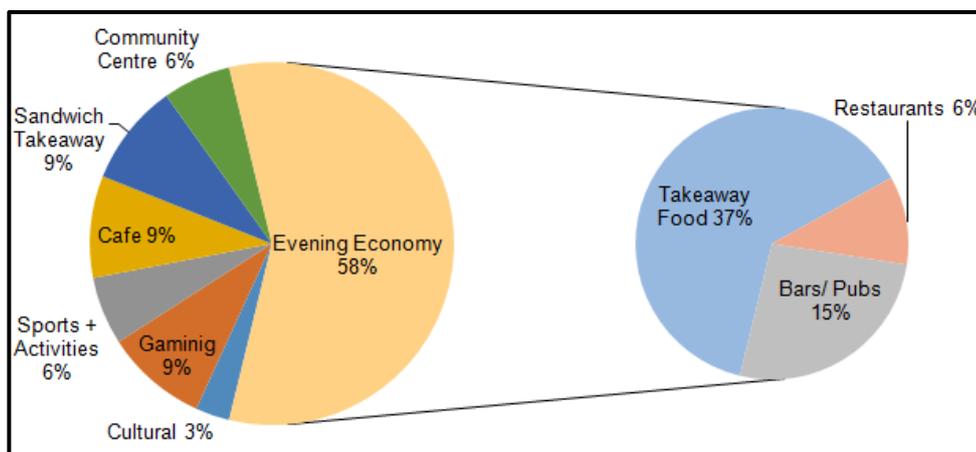


Recent town developments as part of ERC Local Development Plans include improvements in green space (with enhancements to lighting and seating completed in Carlibar Park) with proposals to improve access to the Dams to Darnley Country Park underway. The ongoing improvement strategy has a further focus on public safety, with funds allocated to intelligent street lighting⁹.



Other plans currently assigned to East Renfrewshire's investment within the Glasgow City Region City Deal consist of the refurbishment of the former factory site at Levern Works into commercial units, the proposed Auchenback rail and bus station, and a new road connection to Newton Mearns¹⁰.

4.2 Leisure Mix



Barrhead has a range of leisure facilities in the town centre, although the unit mix is dominated by evening economy uses, which has increased its proportion to 58% from the previous audit (52%). The largest single sector is hot food takeaway food, forming just over one third (37%) of all leisure units in the town.

⁹ East Renfrewshire council, Nov 2019

¹⁰ <https://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/article/7463/East-Renfrewshire-City-Deal-projects>



During the in-street audit we identified only two restaurants – both Indian restaurants that also offer hot food takeaway. Of the five bars, four are traditional pub-style and the fifth is a social club. The offer is somewhat limited for a town centre of the size of Barrhead, the catchment population, and the diversity of other commercial activity. This will likely result in high levels of leakage of evening economy spend to other towns, both within and beyond East Renfrewshire.

The evening economy offer does not, however, fully reflect the range of facilities e.g. the Barrhead Foundry leisure centre includes a swimming pool, gym, café, library and soft play area, alongside offices and employability services (Work EastRen and Skills Development Scotland). There is a stand-alone children’s play centre and the library provides internet access and an IT learning suite, and regular activities for families and children.

Tennis courts, playing fields and a skate park are located just outside of the town centre, in Cowan Park, which has seen significant investment in the last few years, including a large play park, while there are also a number of bowling clubs. The football teams Barrhead Youth FC and Barrhead FC are based in the town.

Barrhead has a large number of community groups and a range of activities for different age groups were advertised in the town. Regular social events and group meetings are held at the churches around the town as well as smaller venues.



Voluntary Action, The Third Sector Interface for East Renfrewshire, located in the Westbourne retail block, provides community activities, opportunities for volunteering and support for community groups.

4.3 Attractions and Heritage

While there are minimal stand-alone tourist attractions in Barrhead, the town has an interesting history. A heritage trail has been developed which takes in 25 sites around the town, with a printed map available from the council office and on Google Maps. The trail consists of historical buildings and sites, marked with blue plaques on buildings providing historical context.



The Barrhead Community Museum and Visitor Information Centre on the Main Street also provides displays on local history.



A couple of recent art installations are found around the Main Street. A tree sculpture stands at the Health and Care Centre. Part of an old sculpture, the "Circle of Hands" known as the Barrhead eye containing handprints of local people was placed between the Foundry and ASDA after the redevelopment of Main Street.

To the east of Barrhead is the Dams to Darnley Country Park, a joint initiative between ERC and Glasgow City Council aimed at providing a park suitable for outdoor pursuits such as walking, cycling and horse riding. The country park includes the Barrhead Dams, constructed in the mid-19th century as part of a fresh water reservoir and now a popular spot for fishing. The countryside rangers based at the park hold a variety of nature-focused events throughout the year.

There is one hotel in Barrhead, located just outside of the town centre area. The Dalmeny Park Country House Hotel is rated four stars by Visit Scotland and is a popular wedding and event venue that has recently seen significant investment.

4.4 Attractiveness Review

The YTA includes an independent (and subjective) review of place and quality impressions, with scores in Barrhead similar to the national averages.

Individual unit fronts and shop window displays were graded out of ten during the on-street audit, with a town centre average score of 7.0 for the condition of unit fronts, and 7.3 for quality of window displays. This is slightly better than the average across other audited town centres, of 6.9 for both building fronts window displays (35 YTAs). There has been a very slight decline in the score for building fronts from 7.1 in the 2016 audit.



Business confidence in the town centre was gauged from a small sample of interviews undertaken with independent traders. There was substantial variation in the level of confidence that business owners had in their future business performance, with an average score of 4.4 / 10, lower than at the previous audit (6.4 / 10) but both were based on very small sample size, with a consequent large margin of error. The average across 32 other audited towns is 5.9 / 10, but with a very large range from 2.3 to 7.8 / 10 and results heavily dependent on wider external factors.

Respondents expressed that recent town centre developments, including the arrival of the new supermarket had not necessarily had positive effects on independent businesses. The sample reached by the audit however remained limited as only a few businesses were willing and able to respond to the survey. We would therefore caution against trust in the result and feedback, but they do indicate potential issues that could be explored further.

5. YTA Summary and Key Points

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

5.1 Accessible Town Centre

- Barrhead has good 4G mobile coverage and access to superfast broadband;
- Barrhead has excellent rail connections, with access to Glasgow city centre in as little as 12 minutes and Paisley in 17 minutes – this allows ready access to a large jobs market;
- the town centre has an important role as the most accessible centre for the adjacent town of Neilston which has a far smaller retail and service offer and no access to financial services;
- however, the town does lack direct public transport connections to some other towns in East Renfrewshire – in particular there are established commuting flows between Barrhead and Newton Mearns/ Thornliebank/ Neilston which might suggest opportunities to enhance access to work opportunities. Barrhead is also a central hub for ERC services for residents across the council area – improving public transport connectivity would increase access to these services;
- although the town centre is spread out (with the station on its very edge) most shops and services are still within walking distance of each other;
- while a concerted effort has been made to increase active travel in the town, cycle lanes could be extended to encourage sustainable travel and car-free access to services;
- improvement works on pavements, lighting, crossings and signposts are continuing, and will help to address the issues noted by the audit regarding the condition of the public realm, while issues with litter could also be addressed and recycling bins placed more widely; and
- previous investment increased the amount of free on-street parking spaces in the town centre, while the basement car park at the ASDA store is a good use of space within the Main Street area.



5.2 Active Town Centre

- the new civic quarter at the heart of the town, which has brought key services and workplaces into the town centre, will help ensure the continued vitality of Barrhead town centre by creating footfall from early in the morning till late in the evening;
- the unit vacancy rate in Barrhead remains low, and planned investment in e.g. road infrastructure is expected to enhance local business performance. However, with wider national trends in retailing and high levels of vacancy in other towns, there is a need to continue the positive efforts in Barrhead and adopt a proactive approach to uses, and supporting the independent business sector;



- the new housing developments in the town centre have been a very positive addition, bringing new customers and spend as well as creating attractive new housing options for local people – opportunities to deliver more town centre living could be explored, both in redevelopment of existing property but also through new-build projects;
- the evening economy in the town is very limited in scope – 5 bars, 12 hot food take-aways and 2 restaurants (both Indian cuisine offering hot food take-away) – this offer is unlikely to cater fully for the existing residents, some of whom will travel to other towns for activity e.g. different type of bars/ restaurants, cinema/ theatre, family-friendly activities;
- the 'All About Barrhead' BID website provides details on businesses in the town and also an events calendar of forthcoming activities, although the most recent event listed took place in 2019. The social media Facebook page (with 3,600 followers) does, however, provide regular and up-to-date information on a range of events and activities; and
- the area in front of the new ASDA store has potential to be used for a range of civic/ commercial/ cultural events, which has potential to generate spin-off benefits for nearby retailers by increasing footfall at the time of the event and encouraging people to return at a later date that might not otherwise venture into the town centre. It is important that maximum advantage is made of this opportunity for the town.

5.3 Attractive Town Centre

- the town centre has undergone considerable transformation and positive change over the past decade, making it a much more attractive place to live and work. In particular seasonal events have attracted large numbers of visitors into the town centre, and the future delivery of events and activities should be maintained and extended where possible;
- the public realm is, however, patchy and the town centre would benefit from some improvements particularly at the shopping centre;
- while the town does not have a large number of historic properties, the heritage trail maximises the assets it does possess, and it could be further promoted with visibility increased e.g. as a constant event on the All About Barrhead BID website;
- development of the Dams to Darnley Country Park is underway to reinforce its position as a key recreational and leisure asset to the population south of Glasgow – Barrhead can play an important part in realising this vision by emphasising the town's links to the park in relevant marketing materials as well as via footpath marker posts;
- the success of Barrhead's town centre regeneration has already been recognised at a national level, winning Scotland's Most Improved Small/Medium Town at the 2015 SURF Awards. It may be worth exploring other mechanisms through which Barrhead's achievements could be recognised at a UK or Scotland-wide level; and
- the social and economic history of Barrhead has been alluded to in the naming of the Barrhead Foundry and in the logo of the BID. There may be scope for public art works in the town centre that further celebrate this heritage, and other aspects of the town's contribution to public life.



Appendix: Barrhead SIMD 2020 Map

