



Your Town Audit: Barrhead

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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. 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 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 14 comparator towns that have similar characteristics, with the most similar being Renfrew, Tranent, Rosyth and Armadale. The USP platform - www.usp.scot - 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.

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

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.

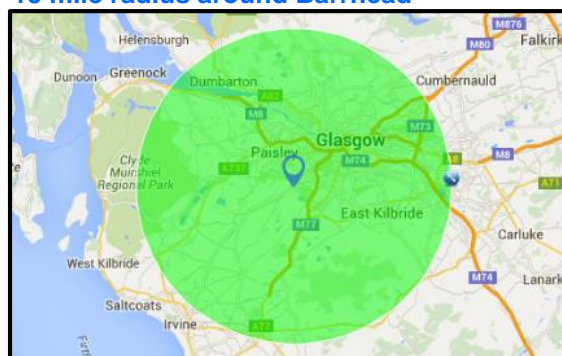
2. Accessible Town Centre

Located seven miles south-west of Glasgow city centre, Barrhead is a former industrial town within East Renfrewshire with a population of around 18,500¹. 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 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 and Clarkston.

Barrhead has bus connections to Glasgow, Paisley, Neilston and East Kilbride. The M77 motorway is around two miles east of the town and is easily accessible by road, providing fast access to Glasgow and Ayrshire.

15 mile radius around Barrhead



Limited on-street parking spaces are available in Barrhead town centre, with off-street car parks on Ralston Road and Cochrane Street. In 2014, ERC invested £100,000 in 26 new on-street spaces, while work is being completed on parking at the front of the Barrhead Foundry.

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 a new health and care centre, both in the heart of the town centre.

¹ ‘Whole town’ defined as intermediate zones S02000322 Auchenback, S02000329, Cross Stobbs, S02000328 Dunterlie, East Arthurlie and Dovecothall & S02000321 West Arthurlie and North Neilston

3. Active Town Centre

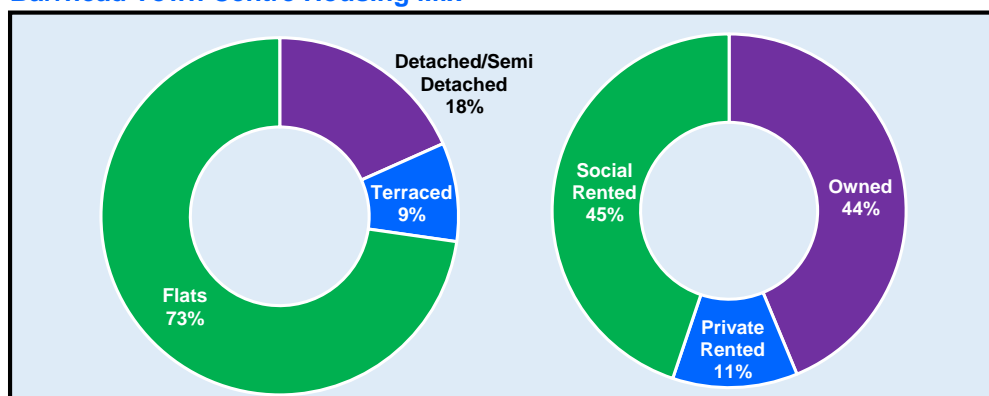
3.1 Population and Housing

Just under 3,000 people live within Barrhead's town centre datazones². At 16% of the total settlement population, this is generally higher than other audited towns, such as Alloa (8%) and Kilmarnock (3%). The town centre population increased by 4% from 2003 to 2013, compared with a 1% rise in the town as a whole. This compares with an increase of 2% for East Renfrewshire and a 5% increase in Scotland over this ten year period. This increase in town centre living follows trends found elsewhere but is less marked than the average among other audited towns (around 10%).

Housing in the town centre is mostly flatted accommodation (73%), typically with one or two bedrooms and in council tax banding A-C. 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 businesses.

The average purchase price of a town centre dwelling (£85,000) is lower than that of the town as a whole (£102,000) – although average prices in the town centre increased by 74% between 2003 and 2013, set against a 49% increase in Barrhead as a whole. Housing in the town centre is split between social housing (45%) and private ownership (44%), whereas in the wider town there is a much higher rate of private ownership (65%).

Barrhead Town Centre Housing Mix



² 2001 Datazones S01001759, S01001761, S01001765 & S01001770

3.2 Employment

Two fifths (40%) of Barrhead’s 5,700 jobs are located in the town centre datazones. National statistics record 435 businesses in Barrhead, with 245 in the town centre. The YTA street audit located 151 units in use within Barrhead town centre, confirming data provided by East Renfrewshire Council ahead of the audit. Barrhead has around 23 employees in the town for each town centre business, likely a consequence of the high number of public sector jobs in the town. This is higher than other audited towns including Kirkcaldy (17), Alloa (18.5) and Clydebank (22). It is also higher than Clarkston, the other East Renfrewshire town centre audited (15).



3.3 Retail

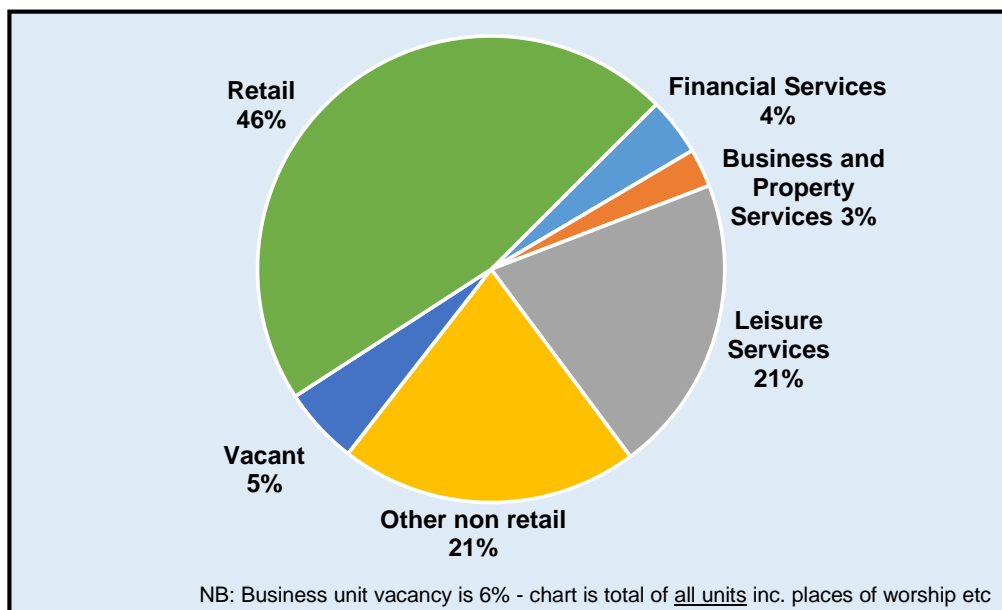
Retail units in Barrhead are spread throughout the town centre area. This can be broadly divided into three distinct areas:

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

Overall commercial unit vacancy in the town centre is 6%. This is low, particularly considering Barrhead is a fairly large and spread out town centre. In comparison, other audited towns have much higher vacancy rates, including Alloa (10%), Dumbarton (15%), Kilmarnock (15%), Ayr (16%) and Kirkcaldy (17%). The unit vacancy rate in Clarkston’s more concentrated town centre is 10%, albeit from a much smaller base number.

Shops in Barrhead town centre 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 till late evening.

Town Centre Unit Mix



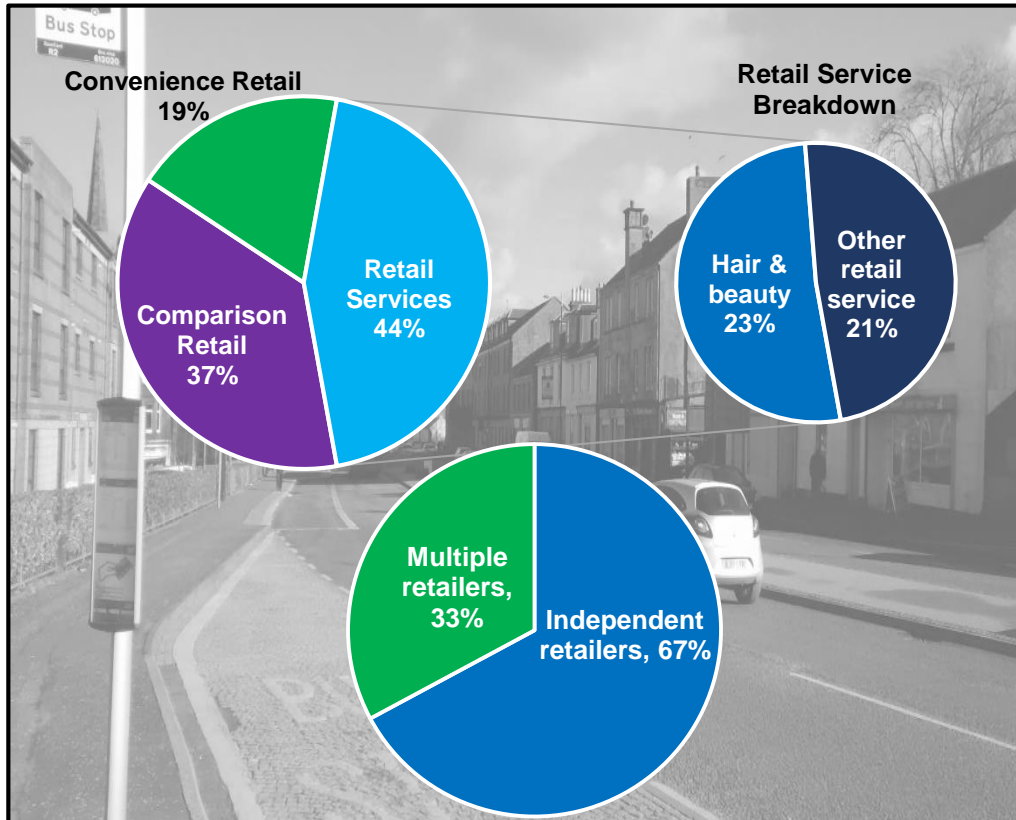
In line with other audited town centres, retail forms the largest single unit use, at 46% of all units, slightly higher than the 40% rate in Clarkston. Barrhead has a high proportion of 'other non-retail' units, largely due to a number of council facilities and advice offices located in and around the town centre, and light industrial units/workshops on its periphery, which fall under this category.

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 – 13 convenience retailers identified in Barrhead town centre;
- **Comparison Retail:** all other retail purchases comprising goods bought at infrequent intervals where consumers will compare and contrast products and prices – 26 comparison retailers identified in Barrhead town centre; 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 – 31 retail service operators identified in Barrhead town centre.

Retail Mix



Two-thirds of traders within Barrhead town centre are independent (67%) – this is in line with the average for other audited town centres, which range between 49% and 71% (excluding an outlier, Eyemouth).



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 of the shopping centre building on Main Street has been greatly improved, with the surrounding pavements repaved, metal barriers removed and new street furniture installed. The opposite side of Main Street has undergone a radical transformation. A new health 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, with potential to be used for public events (pictured).



The Barrhead Foundry, a modern concept sports, cultural and learning hub, then followed in early 2015, although some work was still taking place at the time of the audit in the car park at its front. 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 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. In 2012, a leaflet was produced with an inventory and map of the retail offering in the town centre, a project by the former Go Barrhead scheme, which was funded by the Scottish Government to encourage active travel around the town.

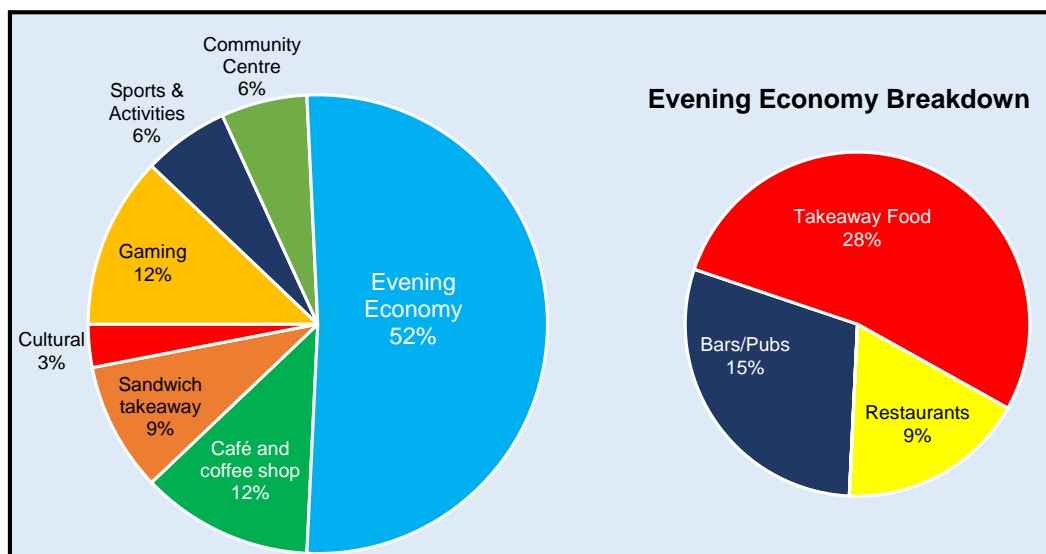
In 2014, local businesses were given the opportunity to have their branding displayed on lamppost banners around the town (pictured left), in a project funded by ERC and ASDA. Many of these are still on display in the town centre, although in some instances are faded/worn and could perhaps be refreshed.



Local businesses are now discussing the formation of a Business Improvement District in the town, which would allow projects such as the above to continue over the next five years. A ballot is set to be held, with a result expected by the end of June 2016. If successful, the BID will be branded as 'All About Barrhead' and cover the town centre area, extending as far north as the station.

While Main Street is busy with traffic, pedestrian crossings are well placed and pavements are wide on each side of the road. There are flower beds and hanging baskets throughout the town centre, and the quality of seating, lighting and litter bins are good and in many cases appear as new. Appropriate directional sign posting is also provided around the town.

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, with takeaway food outlets alone forming more than one quarter of all leisure units (28%). However, this does not fully reflect the range of facilities on offer within the new £3.8 m Barrhead Foundry facility, which takes in a swimming pool, gym, café, library and soft play area, alongside offices and employability services.

Tennis courts, playing fields and a skate park are located just outside of the town centre, in Cowan Park, while there are also a number of bowling clubs. A successful junior football team are based in the town.

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.



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 27 sites around the town, with a printed map and dedicated website. The website details three different walks around the town. Plaques adorn each building, which help provide historical context.



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.

4.4 Attractiveness Review

The YTA includes an independent review of place and quality impressions, with scores in Barrhead above the national average in each instance.

Business confidence in the town centre was gauged from a small sample of interviews undertaken with independent traders. Scores averaged at 6.4 / 10, above the national average of other audited towns of 5.6 / 10.

Individual unit fronts and shop window displays were graded out of ten during the on-street audit, with a town centre average score of 7.1 for the condition of unit fronts and 7.3 for quality of window display. This is just higher than the average across other audited town centres, of 6.9 for building fronts and 7.0 for window displays.



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 excellent rail connections, with access to Glasgow city centre in as little as 12 minutes – this allows ready access to a large jobs market;
- 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. A concerted effort has been made to increase active travel in the town, with positive outcomes reported. This has gone hand in hand with public realm improvements, good quality pavements, lighting, crossings and signposts;
- Barrhead has good 4G mobile coverage and access to superfast broadband; and
- there is very good provision of cycle racks around the town. Investment has been made in providing 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;
- Barrhead has a very low unit vacancy rate, and while its comparison retail offering is limited, this is not surprising given its proximity to Braehead and Silverburn Shopping Centres (by car) and ready access to Glasgow city centre; 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 new 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. Despite this positive change the town still retains a somewhat negative perception in people that don't live or visit – delivering a range of activities and events that attract new people into the town centre might help to address this unfair image;
- while the town does not have a large number of historic properties, the heritage trail maximises the assets it does possess and is a good example of what can be achieved in this regard;
- the Dams to Darnley Country Park aims to be 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 marketing;
- 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 prospective 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.