

## Birkenhead Town Centre Health Check Appraisal

Birkenhead is located on the eastern bank of the Wirral Peninsula on the Mersey estuary, opposite Liverpool City Centre. Birkenhead is by far the largest settlement in the Borough, with a population of around 89,000 people (2011 Census).

The core retailing area, as defined by the Wirral Unitary Development Plan (UDP) Proposals Map, is focused around a large area including Grange Road, Salisbury Street, Oxton Road, Cloughton Road, Conway Street, Argyle Street and Hamilton Square. The town centre also includes the Pyramids Shopping Centre, which comprises a enclosed shopping mall and outdoor shopping centre (previously in separate ownership as the Grange Precinct) and Birkenhead Market.

There are a number of out-of-centre retail parks in proximity to the town centre; The Rock Retail Park, located along New Chester Road, contains several major brands including Matalan, Home Bargains and B&M. New Chester Road itself has a number of retailer/trade counter uses located along it which are related to building services and car/automotive services, retailers include Wickes, Travis Perkins, Hertz and Halfords Autocentre. Junction One Retail park, located 5.3km to the north west of the town centre, contains retailers including B&Q, Oak Furniture Land, Halfords and Aldi.

The key national retail operators and community facilities currently located in Birkenhead Town Centre are set out in Figure 1 below:

**Figure 1: Key National Operators and Community Facilities**

National Operators	Total
<p><b>Key Anchor Stores:</b> Asda, House of Fraser, Primark, Wilko, T J Hughes, T K Maxx, Next</p> <p><b>Other National Operators:</b> Iceland, Home Bargains, Poundland, Farmfoods, Heron Foods, Pound Bakery, Holland &amp; Barrett, Bargain Booze, Greggs, Millie's Cookies, Sports Direct, H&amp;M, USC, Boots, Superdrug, B &amp; M, J D Sports, Pound Stretcher, W H Smith, Waterstones, New Look, Bonmarche, Savers, River Island, Card Factory, Wynsors, Select, Scotts, Deichmann, Clarks, CeX, Shoe Zone, Game, Millets, Clintons, Burton, 3, O2, Brighthouse, Tessuti, The Body Shop, Rowland Pharmacy, The Works, Vodaphone, Pandora, H Samuel, The Entertainer, The Fragrance Shop, Claire's Accessories, EE, Carphone Warehouse, Beaverbrooks, The Perfume Shop, Thomas Cook, Max Spielman, Boots (Opticians), Vision Express, Specsavers, Hays Travel, Co-operative Funeralcare, Betfred, J D Wetherspoon, Genting Casino, Domino's, Mecca Bingo, Costa, Subway, William Hill, McDonalds, Ladbrokes, Wimpy, Café Nero, Natwest, Barclays, Halifax, Santander, HSBC, Eurochange, Lloyds, Nationwide, Cash Converters.</p>	97
Community Facilities	
Chiropractic Clinic, Dental surgery, Morthyng Vocational College, County Courthouse, Wirral Town Hall	6

## Photographs of Birkenhead Town Centre



**Photograph 1:** Units along Grange Road



**Photograph 2:** The Pyramid Centre



**Photograph 3:** Units along Grange Road



**Photograph 4:** Public square in the Pyramid Centre

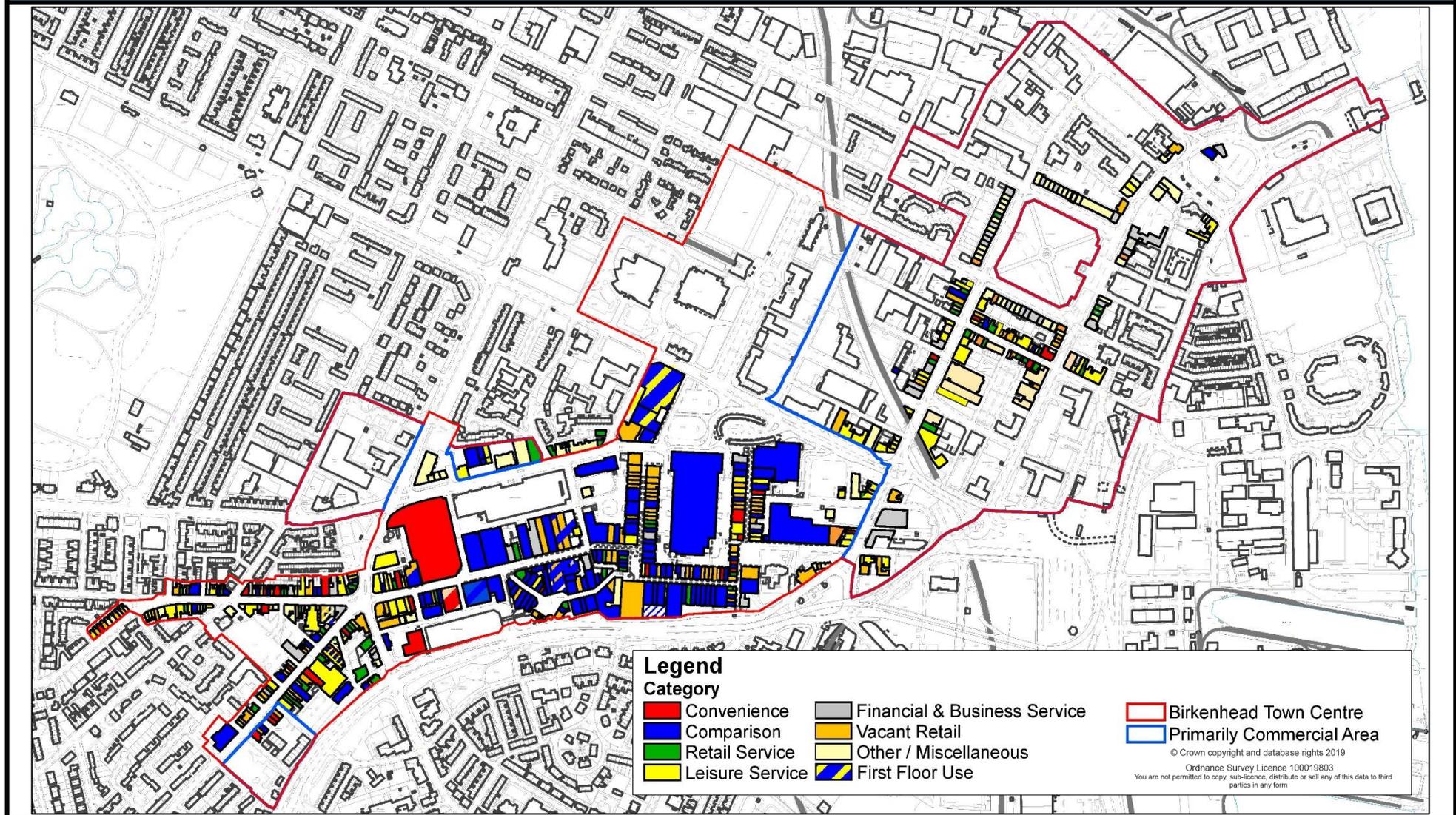


**Photograph 5:** Inside the Pyramid Centre



**Photograph 6:** Pyramid Centre exterior from Borough Road

## Diversity of Main Town Centre Uses



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**Figure 2: Number of Units in Birkenhead Town Centre (2015)**

Category	No.	%	UK Av. %
Convenience	17	7	9
Comparison	101	44	32
Retail Service	19	8	14
Leisure Services	27	12	23
Financial and Business Services	10	4	11
Vacant	56	24	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Wirral Council Surveys, July 2015

Notes: Experian, UK Average Figures, July 2015

**Figure 3: Number of Units in Birkenhead Town Centre (2019)**

Category	No.	%	UK Av. %
Convenience	32	7	9
Comparison	121	25	30
Retail Service	62	13	15
Leisure Services	93	19	24
Financial and Business Services	56	12	10
Vacant	116	24	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Wirral Council Surveys, July 2019

Notes: Experian Goad, UK Average Figures, May 2019

**Figure 4: Floorspace in Birkenhead Town Centre (2019)**

Category	Sq.m	%	UK Av. %
Convenience	13,572	9	15
Comparison	77,762	49	34
Retail Service	6,953	4	7
Leisure Services	20,546	13	25
Financial and Business Services	11,392	7	7
Vacant	28,311	18	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>158,356</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Wirral Council Surveys, July 2019

Notes: Experian Goad, UK Average Figures, May 2019

## Diversity of Main Town Centre Uses

The most recent survey of Birkenhead Town Centre identifies that the town centre currently provides 159,537sq m gross of retail/leisure/financial services floorspace within 480 units. Whilst Figures 2 and 3 suggest that the number of units has increased significantly since 2015, the two surveys are not directly comparable as the 2015 survey excluded the Argyle Street/Hamilton Square area.

### Convenience Goods Units

There were 32 units observed to be in convenience use, equating to 7% of the total. This is below the national average (9%). In terms of floorspace, the amount observed in Birkenhead Town Centre was in line with the national average of 15%. The largest convenience unit was the Asda foodstore. Other large convenience units include the Asda Superstore (7,187sq m), Iceland (1,321sq m) and Heron Foods (764sq m). The majority of convenience units (22) are less than 200sq m in size.

The composition of convenience uses in Birkenhead Town Centre included; 4 foodstores, 4 bakeries, 4 confectioner/tobacco and news stores, 7 convenience stores, 3 tobacconists/vape stores, 2 off licenses, 3 health food stores, a confectioner, a fishmongers, a greengrocer, a discount food store, a shoe repair store and a market hall. We would consider this spread of uses to be very broad and cover a range of needs. Additional convenience uses are found within Birkenhead Market. Proportionally, the number of convenience units in the town centre has remained the same between both surveys.

We note that Birkenhead Market contains a number of convenience retailers (including butchers fishmongers and bakeries), however, the majority of the market was occupied by comparison uses. In accordance with Experian Goad's classification of uses, Birkenhead Market has been classified as comparison goods floorspace.

We consider the convenience goods provision in Birkenhead Town Centre to be good.

### Comparison Goods Units

The town centre contains the largest concentration of comparison uses in the Borough, with 121 units observed. This translates to 25% of the overall number of units in the town centre, which is below the national average of 30%. In floorspace terms, 49% of the total amount in the centre was in comparison use, which is notably above the national average of 34%. This is above average for comparison goods floorspace and is primarily due to Birkenhead Market being classified by Experian Goad as comparison goods floorspace. Notwithstanding this, the town centre does provide a good number of large comparison goods units: 18 units with a floorspace greater than 1,000 sq m gross were observed in the centre, accounting for 52,175 sq m of floorspace. Large comparison goods retailers include Primark (7,487 sq m gross), House of Fraser (6,684 sq m gross), Wilkos (3,809 sq m gross) T J Hughes (3,409 sq.m gross) and T K Maxx (3,317 sq.m gross). The larger sized comparison units are primarily located within the Pyramids Centre.

In terms of the composition of comparison goods uses, the following stores are present: 29 clothing stores, 11 charity shops, 7 jewellers, 9 mobile phone stores, 4 toiletries stores, 4 footwear stores, 4 electrical goods stores, 5 discount stores, 2 carpet stores, 2 department stores, 3 computer gaming stores, 3 music stores, 3 hobby/craft stores, 3 furniture/decorating 2 pet stores, 5 card/gift stores, an art dealer, a catalogue showroom, a stationers, an antiques dealer, a florist and a pharmacy. Proportionally, the number of comparison uses in the town centre has decreased since 2015.

The centre provides a reasonably high level of discount or second-hand stores, including Home Bargains, Savers, CeX, Poundworld and it also includes independent retailers such as a discount electronics store and a second-hand general store. The town centre also provides a number of mid-range stores as well as a limited number of 'higher end' stores such as the art dealership, antiques store and jewellers.

Whilst the presence of a number of department/variety stores is a significant draw to the town centre, with the recent closure of the M&S store there is evidence of the town centre's comparison goods offering weakening. With the potential for further store closures by House of Fraser in the coming years, the town centre's comparison goods offer could weaken further.

### **Retail Services**

There are 62 town centre units currently in retail service use, equating to 13% of the overall total number of units. The current proportion of units in retail service use is slightly below the national average of 15%.

The breakdown of the retail services is as follows: 26 hairdressers/barbers, 15 beauty salons, 5 travel agents, 4 opticians, 3 tattooists, 3 funeral directors, two vehicle repair units, a clothing alteration store, a Post Office and a photograph processor. There is also a Post Office concession within the WH Smith store. Whilst this is a good variety of retail services, it is noted that there is a lack of laundrettes and dry cleaners.

Retail services in the town centre are primarily located in the more peripheral areas of the centre, to the north of Conway Street and along Grange Road, Grange Road West and Oxtan Road. A limited number of retail services are also located within the Pyramids Shopping Centre which is primarily occupied by national multiples.

Overall, we consider retail service provision in the town centre to be reasonable.

### **Leisure Services**

There are 93 units in the town centre currently in leisure service use. The proportion of units in leisure service use (19%) is significantly below the national average (24%). The largest leisure service unit is Mecca Bingo (3,024sq m). Other large units were the Genting Casino (1,077sq m), 75 nightclub (853sq m) and the Wine Lodge (628sq m).

A high proportion of the leisure service uses (32) occupy units between 100–200sq m in size. 31 leisure services occupy units less than 100sq m in size. In terms of their distribution, leisure services were mostly located to the north of Conway Street, along Grange Road, Grange Road West and Oxtan Road.

Leisure services in the town centre include: 35 take away outlets, 15 cafes, 14 public houses, 9 restaurants, 7 bookmakers, 5 bars, 4 night clubs, 3 casinos, 2 gymnasiums, a theatre, a hotel, an escape room and a bingo hall.

The number of take away outlets in the town centre is considered to be high, although there is an under provision of restaurants. Whilst there is a good number of public houses/bars and night clubs, these are primarily located towards the edge of the town centre with the central area not benefiting from an evening economy.

Whilst the large multiplex cinema (Vue, Conway Place) and Europa Pools leisure centre is located within the town centre boundary, its relationship with the main retail area is poor and it does not benefit from the ancillary restaurant uses which visitors now expect to be located alongside.

### **Financial and Business Services**

12% of the overall number of units are occupied by financial and business services, which is slightly above the national average of 10%. The proportion of floorspace in financial and business service use is in line with the national average (7%).

The financial and business service offering comprises of a broad range of uses including: 15 solicitors, 8 banks/building societies, 6 accountants, 5 financial services, 4 building services, 3 employment/training agencies, 2 pawnbrokers, 2 business services, 2 property consultants, a bureau de change and an architect firm.

Whilst financial and business services are located throughout the centre, concentrations were noted around Hamilton Square (Solicitors were particularly prevalent here), Oxton Road and Grange Road West. The majority of high street banks are present in the centre including Barclays, HSBC, Natwest, Nationwide, Lloyds and Yorkshire Bank.

### **Markets**

A large central covered market - 'Birkenhead Market' - is located off Claughton Road in a central position behind the Pyramids Shopping Centre. The market is open from 0900 to 1700 Monday to Saturday but closed on Sundays. Whilst underutilised (with circa 50% floorspace/units currently unoccupied), the market provides a selection of traders, including; butchers, fishmongers, cafes, clothing/footwear stores, home furnishings and cards/gifts. Whilst the market adds to the overall offering of the town centre, primarily due to its location to the rear of the Pyramids Shopping Centre, its linkage and relationship is weak. Furthermore, the amount of unoccupied space/units suggests that the market building itself is too large. The empty space does not assist in providing vibrancy to the market.

### **Non-Retail/Commercial Units**

Away from the core retail area, the town centre also accommodates several non-retail units which are classified as main town centre uses, these include the Wirral Town Hall, Courthouse, a dental surgery, and the Morthyng Vocational College.

In terms of centrally located office and residential provision within the town centre, it is considered to be limited. We would recommend any new masterplan or major redevelopment scheme in or on the edge of the town centre accommodate such uses to increase footfall, vitality and opening hours.

## Events

A number of events take place within or close to the town centre. The 'Summer of Cycling' in 2019 has seen a series of bike related events such as the Ovo Tour Series being held in Hamilton Square. Birkenhead Park accommodates the Wirral Food & Drink Festival and is also hosted the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra for a concert. The Williamson Art Gallery (outside of the centre) contains permanent and temporary art exhibitions and the Little Theatre on Grange Road West hosts several theatrical productions a year. The Birkenhead Business Improvement District (BID) promotes and supports events in the town centre including Christmas lights.

## Operator Requirements

A search on the 'Requirements List' has found 7 operators seeking to locate in the town centre. Of these, 2 are retail/service uses and 4 are leisure uses. For its size we consider that the number of identified market operator requirements is low. A summary of these operators and their size requirements is shown in Figure 6.

**Figure 6: Operator Requirements**

Name	Min Size (sq m)	Max Size (sq m)
<b>Retail/Services</b>		
Clearview	93	232
Calendar Club	74	186
<b>Leisure</b>		
Innkeepers Lodge	-	6,070
Hollywood Bowl	1,115	2,787
Snap Fitness	371	929
Pizza Hut Delivery	93	-

## Vacant Units

There are currently 116 vacant units in the town centre, which equates to 25% of the total number of units. The proportion of vacant units in the town centre is more than double the national average (12%). The proportion of vacant floorspace is also high (18%) and is 8% above the national average of 10%.

Despite occupying the majority of national multiples in the town centre, and the focus for pedestrian activity, notable concentrations of vacant units were observed in the outdoor Pyramid Shopping Centre. Other concentrations were noted along Oxton Road and Grange Road West. The largest vacant unit is located on Borough Pavement (former M&S store) and measures 5,710sq m in size. Other notable vacant units included 193 Grange Road (1,496sq m) and the former Oasis Amusements (1,111sq m). Some 38 vacant units measure less than 100sq m in size and 46 units between 100-200sq m in size which suggests that there is an overprovision of smaller units in the town centre.

As noted earlier, there is also a significant number of units/floorspace in the Indoor Market that are currently unoccupied.



**Photograph 7:** Vacant unit, Pyramid Centre



**Photograph 8:** Vacant unit, Pyramid Centre



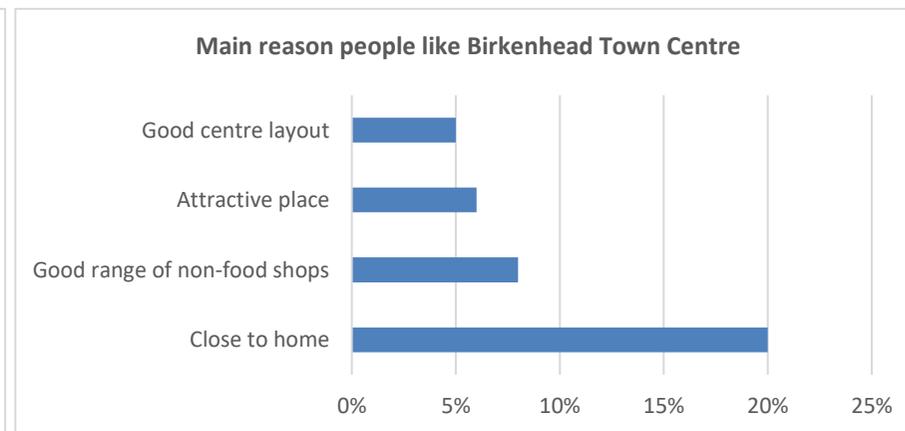
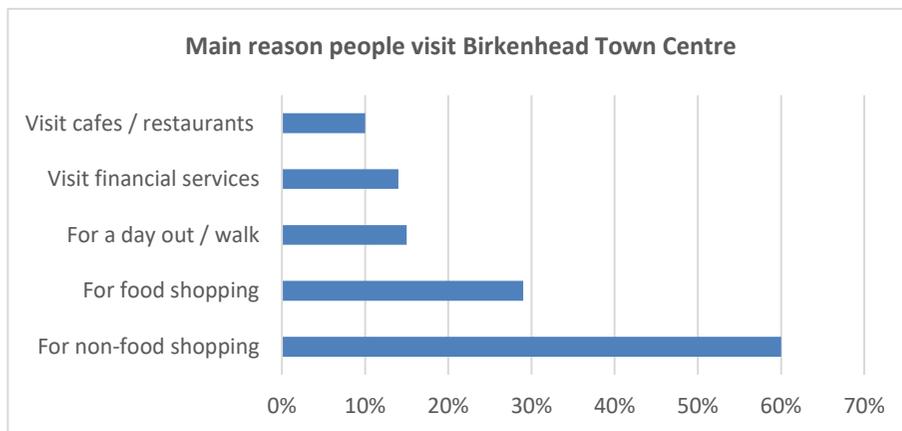
**Photograph 9:** Vacant units on Borough Road

## Customers' Views and Behaviour

In order to understand the behaviours and main reasons for visiting the town centre, we have utilised data obtained from the NEMS household survey. From this data we are also able to discern what users like about the centre and what measures, strategies or schemes could be implemented, if anything, to encourage them to visit Birkenhead Town Centre more often.

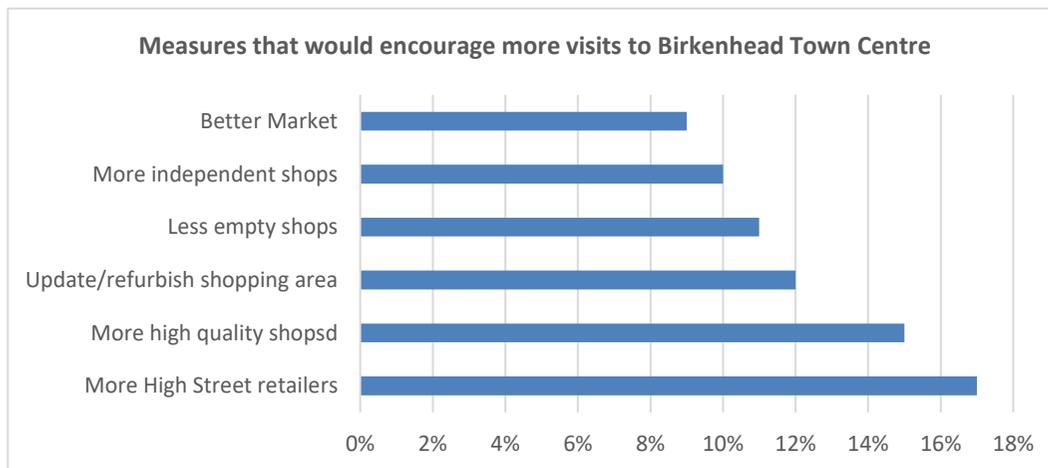
274 respondents stated they visited Birkenhead Town Centre, which is the highest response number for any of the town centres in this study. Of these respondents, 11% said they visited daily, 52% said they visited once or twice a week, 28% said they visited once or twice a month 7% said they visited at least once every 6 months and 2% said they did not know/it varies. When asked about their means of travel to the town centre, 61% of respondents said they visited the centre by car or van, 23% travelled by bus, 9% said they walked, 4% said it varies and 1% travelled by train and 2% used other means.

The main reason people visit the centre was to conduct non-food shopping (60%). Other popular responses included to carry out their food shopping (29%), for a day out/walk (15%), to visit financial services such as banks (14%) and to visit cafes/restaurants (10%).



Respondents were also asked what aspects they liked about Birkenhead Town Centre. The most popular responses were that the town centre was close to home (20%), that there are a good range of non-food shops (8%), that the centre was perceived to be attractive (6%) and that the centre had a good layout (5%).

When asked what would encourage them to visit more often, 17% of respondents desire additional high street retailers to be in the town centre, 15% said that more higher quality shops would encourage them to visit more frequently, 12% said update or refurbish the shopping area, 11% said less empty shops, 10% said more independent shops and 9% said a better market.



## Pedestrian Flows

In the absence of pedestrian count surveys, comments on pedestrian activity are based on observations during our visits to the centre in August 2019.

The eastern end of Grange Road in the vicinity of Next and New Look were a significant focus for pedestrian activity, with high levels also monitored outside the Asda store. Albeit the indoor part was observed to have low levels of activity. Other areas with notable levels of activity were around Europa Square, the Southern part of Pyramids Shopping Centre and the bus terminal. Much lower levels of pedestrian activity were monitored in the northern part of the town centre (north of Conway Street) and Grange Road West.

## Accessibility

The accessibility of the centre is determined by the ease and convenience of access by a choice of means of travel, including that which is provided to pedestrians, cyclists and disabled people, and the ease of access from the main arrival points to the principal attractions in the centre.

### Road Access

The town centre is well connected to the road network. The A552 Borough Road runs along the centre's southern boundary which directly connects to the suburban areas of the town and the M53 motorway. There are also connections to Liverpool via the Queensway Tunnel. The A554 and A41 offer connections to the northern (Wallasey and New Brighton) and southern areas (New Ferry and Bromborough) of the Wirral respectively. The A553 (Conway Street) offers connections to Birkenhead Park, North Birkenhead and mid-Wirral.

### Car Parking

Two of the main car parks in the town centre are operated by the Pyramids Shopping Centre- the Grange on Conway Street (495 spaces), and the Pyramids on Borough Road (685 spaces). The Pyramids operate their own tariff (£2 all day, free on Sunday) with operating hours tied to retail trading hours, limiting their scope to serve the evening economy. The Council operates the other large car parks in the town centre on a pay and display basis (charging hours for car parks are 8am - 6:30pm and apply 7 days a week) - Europa Pools (197 spaces), Europa Square (150 spaces) and Hinson Street (90 spaces). On street parking (pay & display) is available along a number of roads in the town centre including Argyle Street, Market Street, and Oliver Street. Disabled parking bays are provided in the majority of car parks and also along a number of on street parking areas. The pay and display decked car park on Oliver Street next to the Asda store is also a town centre

pay and display car park with 700 parking spaces – Asda customers get a refund on their ticket at the till in-store. This was the only car park to have electric charging points.

### **Public Transport**

Birkenhead Central is a large railway station located in the centre with frequent services towards Liverpool, Chester, Ellesmere Port and other locations on the Merseyrail network. The station is physically separated from the town centre by the A552 and Borough Road by-pass. A further railway station, Conway Park, is also located to the northern edge of the town centre on Europa Boulevard, and provides frequent services to New Brighton and West Kirby. Hamilton Square Railway station is at the very northern extremity of the centre boundary, where the Chester, New Brighton and West Kirby lines converge with the most frequent cross-river rail service.

Birkenhead bus and coach terminal is located on Claughton Road, providing bus services to Liverpool, New Brighton, Heswall, West Kirby and other destinations. The terminal also offers coach services to destinations in the wider region and nationally.

### **Walking, Cycling and Disabled Access**

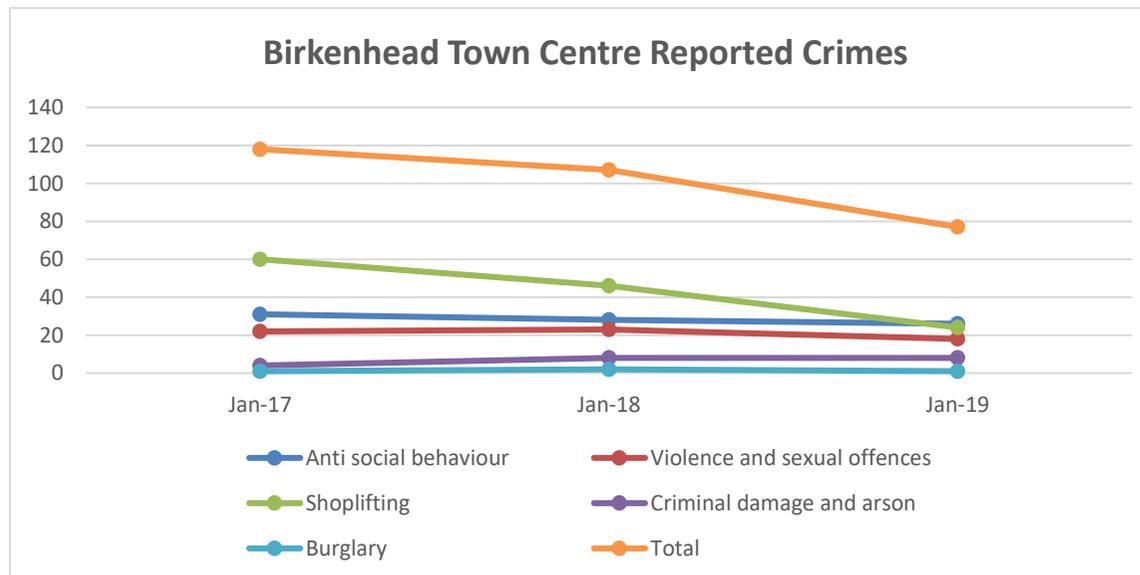
Pedestrian access to the centre is hindered in part by the A552 Borough Road which acts as a physical barrier to residents to the south. Conway Street is also a busy route which separates the northern part of the town centre from the Pyramid Shopping Centre. In the centre, pavements are walkable with the enclosed and outdoor Pyramid Shopping Centres and Grange Road being pedestrianised allowing for the free flow of people. The streets in the northern area of the centre are narrower, possibly due to accommodating more on street parking, but still considered accessible. Cycle parking is located in the centre although primarily concentrated in the vicinity of the enclosed Pyramids Shopping Centre. No dedicated cycle lanes or paths are located within the town centre.

## Perception of Safety and Occurrence of Crime

During the daytime, Birkenhead Town Centre provides a generally safe environment. CCTV was noted in the centre at the Pyramid Shopping Centre, in the larger stores and at the junction of Grange Road, Oxton Road and Whetstone Lane.

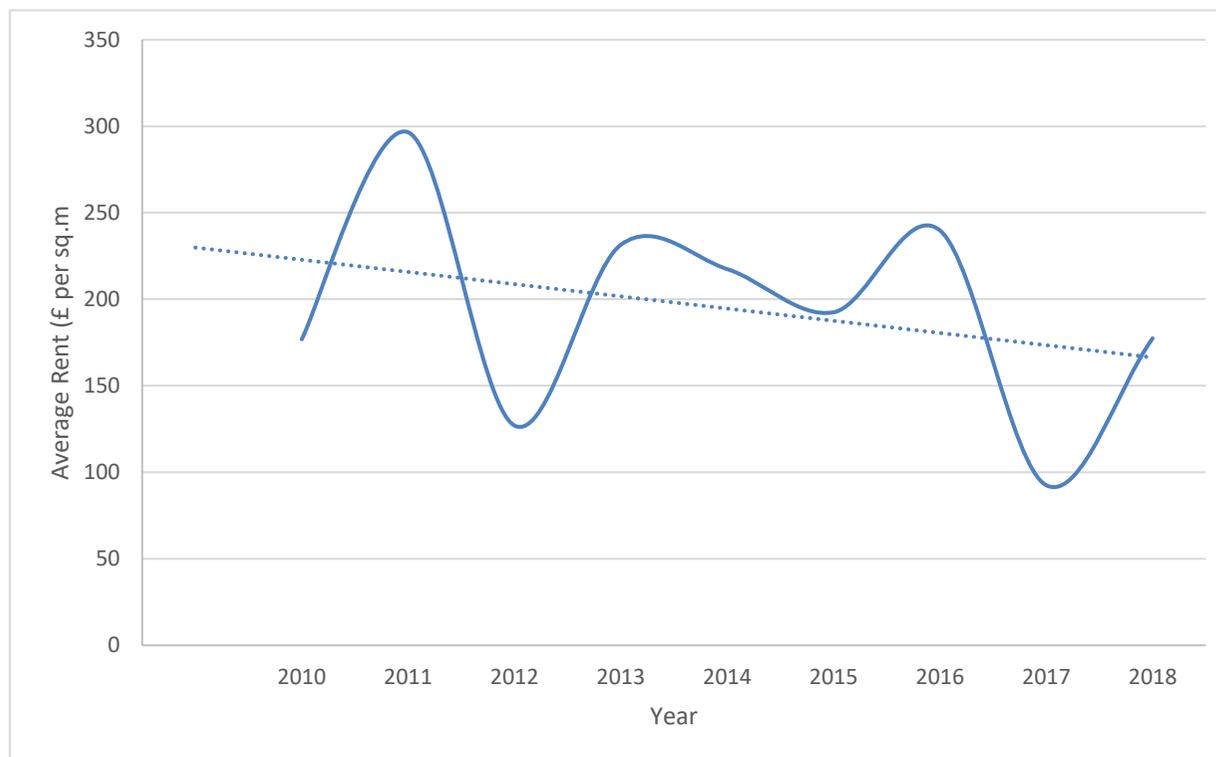
In contrast, at night, due to the lack of evening economy in the centre, the core retail area around Grange Road and the Pyramids feels unsafe and unwelcoming.

A study of crime statistics in the town centre (Police.uk) shows that reports of five common crimes has slightly increased over the past two years, as shown in the figure below. When combined the number of reports of anti-social behaviour, violent and sexual crime, shoplifting, criminal damage & arson and burglary have decreased from 118 reported incidences to 77 incidences between January 2017 and January 2019. Birkenhead BID have launched the Birkenhead BID Commercial Safety Partnership DISC information sharing facility which is now available to all security teams across the BID area. This digital system allows businesses to share information collectively with the BID's own Commercial Safety Coordinators, Wirral Borough Council Anti-Social Behaviour team and Merseyside Police.



## Rents on Non-Domestic Property

Rental data has been obtained from EGI which we have utilised to calculate yearly average rental prices and to determine if there are any emerging or prevailing trends. The data shows that, whilst there has been some significant yearly variations, there is a downwards trend and decline in overall average rental prices. The highest yearly rental price has been calculated to be £297 per sq m (2011) and the lowest was £92 per sq m (2017) the overall average for the available data is £195 sq m and the 5-year average is £184 sq m.



## Town Centre Environmental Quality

Birkenhead Town Centre's environmental quality is mixed. The Pyramids Shopping Centre, whilst in a general good condition, has a proliferation of vacant units which impacts the area's environmental quality. The external pedestrianised areas in this section feel somewhat enclosed and the hard landscaping would benefit from modernisation. The interior of the covered shopping mall was found to be in a good condition, state of maintenance and well lit. The Pyramids Centre 'turns its back' on the area to the south of the town centre, being a large presence with no natural surveillance or wholly obvious entrance. As mentioned previously, the journey from the railway station is not wholly legible due to the physical disconnect of the centre by the A552 and overpass, the lack of integration and interaction with the street scene adds to this.

The area around Hamilton Square is of a good architectural standard and is centred around a large greenspace. The Square is encompassed by the Hamilton Square Conservation Area and contains 63 Grade 1 Listed Buildings, all of which positively contribute to the area's environmental quality.

The area between Hamilton Square and Conway Street is punctuated by various styles and sizes of units and large car parks which creates a mixed and poor environmental quality.

The Market and its immediate surroundings are of a poor environmental quality, with imposing buildings which are showing signs of requiring upkeep and repair, a utilitarian/functional aesthetic and a lack of interaction with the street scene.

With the exception of Hamilton Square, generally, there is a lack of soft landscaping and greenspace in the centre. Birkenhead Park is located close by however this is not readily apparent from the town centre and could benefit from additional signage.

Overall, we consider, with the exception of Hamilton Square, that the town centre's environmental quality is generally poor and would benefit from improvement.

## Balance of Independent and Multiple Stores

102 units in the town centre are occupied by national multiple operators, which represents 21% of the overall number of units in the town centre. The majority (69%) of units in the town centre are occupied by independent retailers. In terms of distribution, it was generally observed that national operators were confined to the Pyramids Shopping Centre and independent retailers were located in the periphery of the centre, along Grange Road West, Oxton Road and the area Argyle Street/Market Street. The majority of the national operators fell into the comparison sub-category.

In terms of convenience goods retailers, of the 32 convenience units in the centre, 11 are occupied by national convenience operators, whilst 21 are occupied by independents. National retailers occupy larger units and included: Asda, Iceland, Farmfoods and Heron Foods, whilst independent retailers, which occupy smaller units included Abi Express, International Mini Market and Today's Local. Overall, the independent offering appears to cover more niche (vape) and immediate convenience needs whilst the national units accommodate regular and also immediate needs (top-up shopping etc). We consider the balance of independent and multiple convenience goods retailers to be good and they generally complement one another.

Turning to comparison goods retailers, of the 121 comparison units observed, 58 units (48%) are occupied by national retailers, whilst 63 units (52%) are occupied by independents. Multiple comparison goods retailers are key attractors to the town centre and, in the absence of the town centre not being well known for independent/specialist retailing, are important in generating footfall for the independent retailers. The national retailers present were predominantly clothing/footwear and fashion retailers, along with discount retailers, jewellers, toiletries suppliers and card stores. The independent offering also included clothing retailers, however this was of a notably smaller number and proportion when compared to that of nationals. It also included a more diverse range of businesses, such as furniture shops, music/media shops, second-hand and discount goods, florists and gift stores. The balance of comparison goods independent and multiple stores is generally considered to be good, but any potential further store closures from multiple retailers could negatively impact on this balance and on the town centre more widely.

For retail services, 9 (15%) of the 62 units are occupied by national operators with 53 (85%) occupied by independent retailers. The majority of national multiples are located in the centre of the town centre whilst independents located towards the more peripheral and secondary areas. The independent retail service offering is dominated by hairdressers and health and beauty uses and are considered to complement the national multiple offering.

Of the 93 leisure service units, 19 (20%) were occupied by national operators. These included J D Wetherspoon, Gentings, Mecca Bingo, Costa, Café Nero, Betfred (multiple premises), Ladbrokes, William Hill (multiple premises), McDonalds, Wimpy, Domino's and Subway. The independent offering (80%) mostly comprises of take away outlets, bars and cafes. Again, although we consider the town centre restaurant offering to be poor, the national and independent operators generally complement each other.

## Evidence of Barriers to Business

We consider that the main barriers to retail and commercial leisure businesses opening premises in the town centre are:

- The disconnected nature of the centre;
- The poor environmental quality in some areas;
- The rising levels of crime;
- High vacancy levels;
- Proximity to Liverpool; and
- Legibility issues.

## Opening Hours & Evening/Night-Time Economy Offer

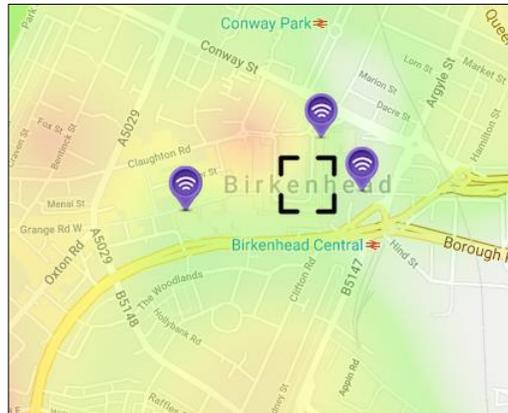
Opening hours of retail units varied across the centre. Whilst the majority of retail units in the centre operate under the traditional opening hours of 09.00-17.30 on Mondays to Saturdays and 10.00-16.00 on Sundays, there were some notable exceptions. Several units on the outdoor part of the Pyramid Shopping Centre seemed to be more flexible with their opening times, opening earlier than the traditional hours.

The Asda foodstore operates longer opening hours of 06.00-22.00 Mondays to Saturdays and 10.30-16.30 on Sundays. The other foodstores also operate extended hours but not to the same duration as the Asda.

Public houses, bars, clubs and take away outlets open later than traditional hours and remained open later into the evening and night, usually to 11.30-00.00 on weekdays and up until 03.00 on weekends. Mecca Bingo has operating times to 12.00-00.00 and Gentings is open from 12.00-06.00. Whilst these uses help to support an evening economy in the town centre, for its role and size, Birkenhead Town Centre's evening economy is poor and would benefit from enhancement/improvement. Activity in the town centre shopping area after normal shopping hours is very limited which is exacerbated by the closure of the car parks operated by Pyramid Shopping Centre at 17.45. Council operated pay and display car parks are, however, free after 6.30pm.

## Digital Facilities/Connectivity

### BT Wi-Fi Hotspots



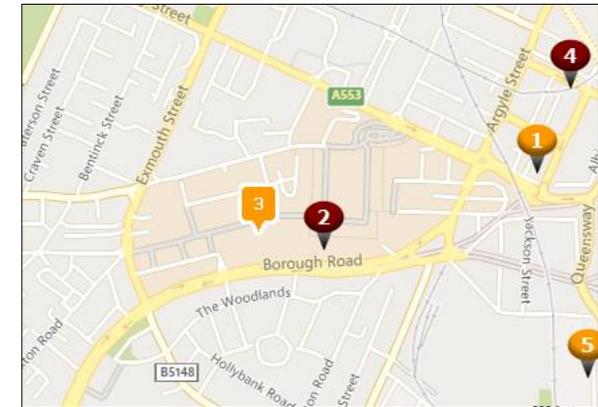
Source: [www.btwifi.co.uk/find/](http://www.btwifi.co.uk/find/)

### Collect+ Locations



Source: [www.collectplus.co.uk/store\\_locator/](http://www.collectplus.co.uk/store_locator/)

### Amazon Locker Locations



Source: [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)

Developing a 'bricks & clicks' environment can benefit a town centre by attracting additional visitors and bringing a further layer of interaction through the promotion of events and advertising. BT and The Cloud (now Sky) are identified by the ATCM (Association of Town & City Management) as providing the most commonly offered free Wi-Fi hotspots within town centres, while Collect + and Amazon commonly provide town centre facilities where customers can collect items that they have ordered from online retailers.

3 BT wifi hotspots are located in the town centre; at the Yorkshire Bank, HSBC and the EE store. BT wifi coverage is mixed with it being stronger around Grange Road and Oxtan Road. The Pyramid Shopping Centre has its own wifi coverage which explains its poor BT wifi coverage, it also has iPads available for public use.

The Asda foodstore operates a 'Click & Collect' service, none of the other food stores have this capability. Several of the major comparison retailers, namely House of Fraser, Argos and Next, also operate a collection service. 4 Amazon Lockers are located in the centre, 2 in the Pyramid Shopping Centre (the Amazon Hub counter and the Post Office/W H Smiths), the Post Office on Market Street and on Conway Street.

We consider the digital connectivity of the centre to be good.

## Conclusions

Overall, we would consider Birkenhead displays reasonable levels of viability and vitality. However, it is considered there to be a number of issues that a future town centre strategy should seek to address. Our findings and recommendations are outlined below:

### Strengths and Opportunities

- Reasonably good national retailer representation and independent retailers.
- The Market presents a potential opportunity for refurbishment/redevelopment for alternative use.
- Well connected by public and private transport, however we recommend exploration of additional cycle lanes and ensure a wider spread of cycle parking throughout the centre. Additional electric charging points is also advised.
- Potential opportunity to improve links between railway stations and the shopping area.
- Opportunity for more planting and soft landscaping measures in the centre to improve appearance in some areas.
- Hamilton Square is an area of high environmental and architectural quality. The square itself could be utilised for more public events as, at present, events are held in Birkenhead Park or other venues outside of the centre.
- Good wifi coverage and digital connectivity.
- Potential opportunity to improve linkages between the core shopping area and the Hamilton Square Conservation Area.
- Declining average rental prices may make Birkenhead more attractive for operators to locate to.
- The Council has been successful in reaching the second stage of the Government's Future High Streets Fund. Whilst this is not a confirmation of receiving a share of the funds, assuming the Council are successful, there is an opportunity to develop regeneration schemes for the town centre.

### **Weaknesses and Threats**

- The centre suffers from poor environmental quality, poor legibility and safety issues in key areas.
- Weak evening economy offer and absence of family friendly evening activities.
- The diversity of uses show that Birkenhead has below average representations in most retail sub-classes in terms of proportion and amount of floorspace
- Lack of other non-retail main town centre uses.
- High vacancy rates and concentrations of vacant units in some parts of the centre.
- Poor representation and presence of restaurants.
- Conway Street being a significant barrier which bisects the town centre.
- Measures to improve connectivity and link the Pyramids area to Hamilton Square are encouraged.
- The proximity to larger centres which have a wider regional and national draw.

Our recommendations on the extent of the town centre boundary and primary shopping area are set out in plan form at Appendix K of The Study. These are newly drawn boundaries as the previous UDP boundary designations for the town centre are not supported by the NPPF.

## Heswall Town Centre Health Check Appraisal

Heswall is somewhat more isolated than the other town centres in the Borough, being located on the western edge of the peninsula and the edge of the Local Authority, close to the border with Cheshire West & Cheshire.

The town centre, as designated on the Wirral Unitary Development Plan (UDP) Proposals Map, is primarily focused along the alignment of Telegraph Road and extends along Pensby Road, The Mount, May Road and Pye Road.

The survey of the town centre identifies the presence of 194 units. The key facilities currently located in the centre are set out in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1: Key Facilities Located in the Town Centre**

National Operators	Total
<p><b>Key Anchor Stores:</b> Aldi, Tesco, M&amp;S Simply Food</p>	
<p><b>Other National Operators:</b> Boots, Hallmark, Savers, Card Factory, WH Smiths, Rightway, Iceland, Timpson, Thorntons, Bargain Booze, Hunters, Barclays, HSBC, Santander, Yorkshire Building Society, Lloyds, Halifax, Nationwide, Domino's, Costa, Ladbrokes, Subway, Pizza Express, Papa Johns, Thomas Cook, Specsavers, Hayes Travel, Vision Express, Toni &amp; Guy, Max Spielmann.</p>	34
Community Facilities	
<p>Heswall Village Hall, Heswall Library, 5 x places of worship, Meeting House, 4 x dental surgeries, 3 x veterinary surgeries, medical/GP surgery</p>	16

## Photographs of Heswall Town Centre



**Photograph 1:** The Curve



**Photograph 2:** Units along Telegraph Road



**Photograph 3:** Units along Telegraph Road



**Photograph 4:** Units along Telegraph Road

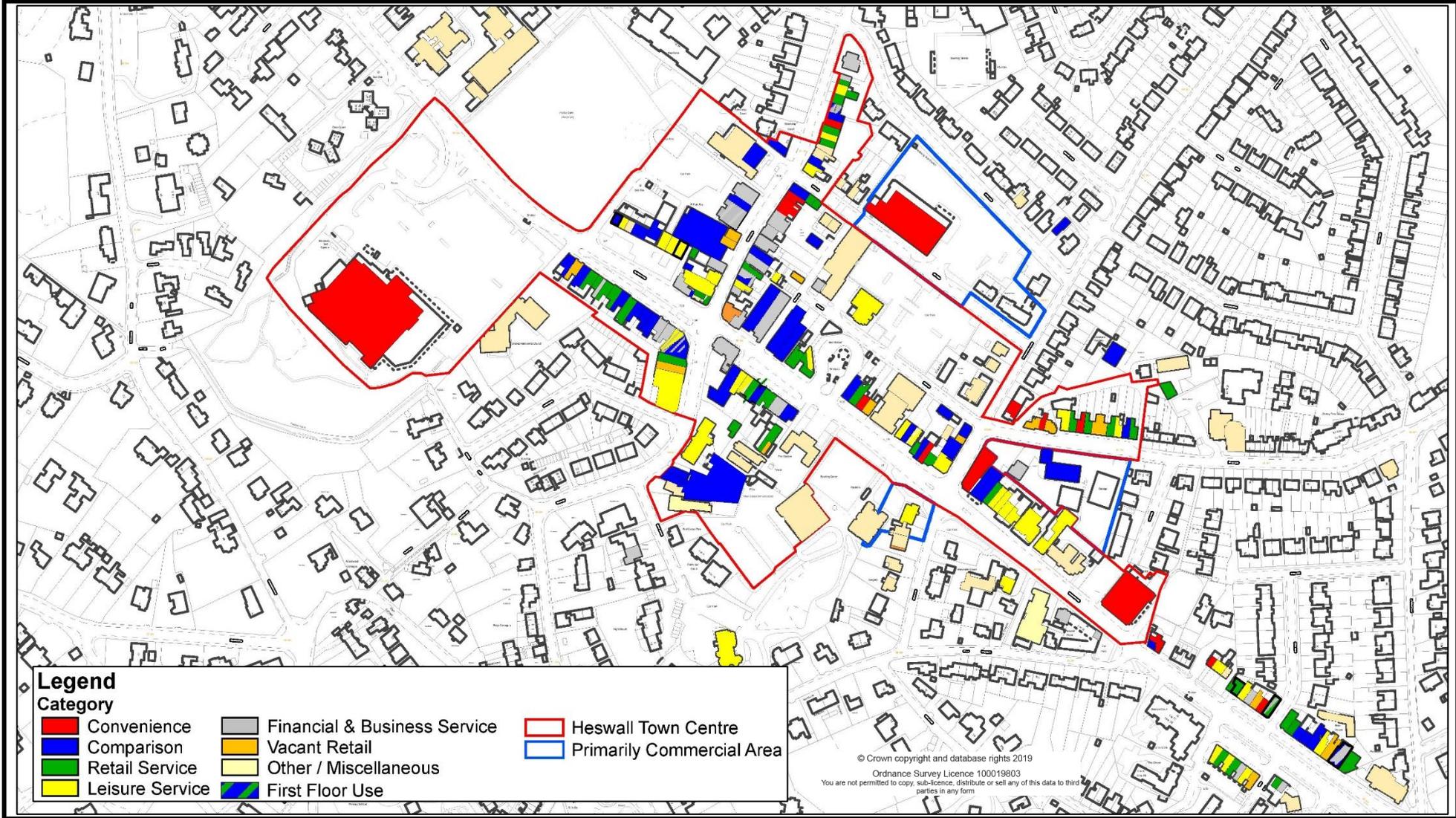


**Photograph 5:** Heswall Bus Station



**Photograph 6:** Units along Telegraph Road

## Diversity of Main Town Centre Uses



## Diversity of Main Town Centre Uses

**Figure 2: Number of Units in Heswall Town Centre (2015)**

Category	No.	%	UK Av. %
Convenience	12	7	9
Comparison	55	30	32
Retail Service	32	17	14
Leisure Services	35	19	23
Financial and Business Services	31	17	11
Vacant	21	11	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Wirral Council Surveys, July 2015

Notes: Experian, UK Average Figures, July 2015

**Figure 3: Number of Units in Heswall Town Centre (2019)**

Category	No.	%	UK Av. %
Convenience	13	7	9
Comparison	48	25	30
Retail Service	44	23	15
Leisure Services	38	20	24
Financial and Business Services	34	18	10
Vacant	17	9	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Wirral Council Surveys, July 2019

Notes: Experian Goad, UK Average Figures, May 2019

**Figure 4: Floorspace in Heswall Town Centre (2019)**

Category	Sq.m	%	UK Av. %
Convenience	9,689	27	15
Comparison	9,901	28	34
Retail Service	3,899	11	7
Leisure Services	5,844	16	25
Financial and Business Services	4,771	13	7
Vacant	1,443	4	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>35,547</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Wirral Council Surveys, July 2019

Notes: Experian Goad, UK Average Figures, May 2019

## Diversity of Main Town Centre Uses

Heswall Town Centre accommodates 194 retail and leisure units, which is an increase from the 186 units observed in 2015. The results of the survey show that overall the town centre provides 35,547sq m of retail and leisure floorspace.

### Convenience Goods Units

Of the 186 units present in the centre, 13 units are occupied by convenience retailers, which is the same amount observed in 2015. Whilst the proportion of convenience units in the town centre is below the UK average, in floorspace terms the proportion is significantly higher than the UK average (27% compared to 15%). This is primarily due to the presence of three foodstore operators: Tesco foodstore (5,621sq m), Telegraph Road, the Aldi foodstore (1,624sq m), May Road and the M&S Simply Food (1,545sq m), Telegraph Road. Other convenience uses in the centre include: an Iceland frozen foodstore; 2 delicatessens; 2 vape stores; a butchers; a confectioner; an off license and a local convenience store.

We consider that the convenience goods provision in the town centre to be good.

### Comparison Goods Units

48 units in the town centre are currently in comparison use, equating to 9,901sqm of floorspace. The proportion of comparison units (25%) and the amount of floorspace (28%) is below the respective national averages of 30% and 34%. Since 2015, there has been a decrease in comparison goods units (-7), which generally follows the national trend.

The largest comparison unit in the centre is M&Co (1,776sq m). Other large/medium sized units include Windsor's car showroom (1,148sq m), Boot's (502sq m) and Gould's Stationers (471sq m). The majority of comparison units in Heswall were less than 150 sq m in size. Comparison uses were observed to be clustered around Telegraph Road, Pensby Road and The Mount.

In terms of the composition of comparison uses, the survey noted the presence of: 9 clothing/footwear stores, 8 furniture and interior stores, 7 charity shops, 3 card stores, 3 car/vehicle sales garages, 2 jewellers, 2 electrical supply stores, 2 stationers, a pharmacy, a DIY store, a pet supplies store, a bookseller, a haberdashery, an art dealer and an antiques store.

For its size and role, Heswall's comparison offer is reasonably broad but appears to be more high-end in its offer, particularly with the presence of an antiques store, art dealer and a number of furniture / interior stores and car dealers.

Whilst the comparison offer has reduced by 7 units since 2015, we consider Heswall's comparison offer to be reasonably good for its size.

## **Retail Services**

The town centre currently provides 44 retail service units, equating to 23% of the total amount of units. This is notably above the national average of 15%. The amount of floorspace in retail service use in Heswall (11%) is also above the national average (7%). Since 2015, the number of units in retail service use has increased from 32 to 47 units.

Generally, retail services were located at the peripheral ends of the centre along Telegraph Road and also on Milner Road. The retail service composition includes: 17 hairdressers, 8 beauty salons, 3 electrical repair stores, 3 holistic therapy units, 3 opticians, 2 car repair units, 3 travel agents, a dry cleaners, a dog grooming salon, funeral director, a Max Spielman (in a unit shared with Timpsons) and a Post Office.

For its size, we do not consider that there are any particular deficiencies in the retail service offer in Heswall Town Centre. However, given the large number of hairdressers/beauty salons (25) we consider that the Council should continue to monitor the composition of the centre to ensure any increase in such uses does not materially impact on the range and offer of other uses in the town centre.

## **Leisure Services**

The proportion of units in leisure service use in the town centre (20%) is currently lower than the national average (24%). With regards to floorspace, 16% of the overall level of floorspace in the town centre is in leisure service use, which is notably lower than the national average of 25%. However, since the previous survey in 2015, there has been a slight increase in the overall number of leisure service units (from 35 to 37 units).

Despite this below average representation, the composition of leisure service units in Heswall is reasonably diverse, comprising of; 13 restaurants, 8 cafes, 8 take away outlets, 4 bars/public houses and 3 gymnasiums. There is also a good national multiple representation of leisure service uses in the centre, with brands such as Costa, Pizza Express, Gusto, Subway, Papa Johns, Domino's and Ladbrokes.

Overall, we consider that there is a good café and restaurant offer in Heswall. The take away outlet offer is also considered to be good and, in our view, does not detract from the vitality and viability of the town centre. Whilst the leisure services offer in the town centre is lower than the UK average, the overall provision/offer is considered to be reasonable for its size and role.

## **Financial and Business Services**

The amount of financial and business service units in Heswall (18%) is notably higher than the national average (10%). With regards to the amount of floorspace in financial and business service use (13%), this is nearly double the national average (7%). 7 retail banks and building societies are present, this included HSBC, Barclays, Santander and Lloyds. Other financial and business units include; 10 estate agents, 4 solicitors, 4 financial/wealth management services, 3 accountants, 2 mortgage brokers, an architectural firm and a web design firm.

Overall, we consider Heswall Town Centre has a strong financial and business service offer for a centre of Heswall's size.

## Markets

The retail offer of the town centre benefits from a farmers market which is held in the centre every third Saturday of the month at the Church of the Good Shepherd.

## Non-Retail/Commercial Units

In addition to the retail, commercial and leisure units identified above, the town centre also accommodates other non-retail uses, including 4 dental practices, 2 veterinary practices, a library, a village hall and a medical centre. There are also several places of worship present in the centre, some of which accommodate community functions and spaces for volunteer groups and creche's.

## Events

Alongside the monthly farmers market, there are other events which are hosted in the town centre. This includes hosting several events relating to the wider scale Wirral Arts festival; the annual Heswall Gardening Show; and Heswall Christmas festival. Heswall Hall and Lingham's bookstore also accommodates a number of events throughout the year, such as charity events, books signings and concerts.

## Operator Requirements

The 'Requirements List' identifies that there are currently 5 retail and leisure operators seeking premises in Heswall. These include a major discount retailer and gym operator.

**Figure 6: Operator Requirements**

Name	Min Size (sq m)	Max Size (sq m)
<b>Retail/Services</b>		
Holland & Barrett	83	650
Lidl	929	2,787
Hotter	139	279
Cats Protection	74	279
<b>Leisure</b>		
Pure Gym	557	1,858

## Vacant Units

17 units were observed as vacant in the centre, this is an improvement as this is a decrease of 4 units from the previous survey and a good proportional overall improvement given the increase in the amount of units in between surveys. Generally, the vacant units were located in peripheral or more outer areas of the centre, with the exception to this being the unit on the corner of Telegraph Road and Pensby Road.

11 of the vacant units were less than 100 sq m in size, the largest vacant unit was 137 sq m in size and was located on Telegraph Road (a former bank). Due to the categorisation used by Experian Goad, vacant offices and vacant non-retail uses are not captured within this category. We note that the former police station on Telegraph Road is significantly larger than the vacant retail units (333 sq m) and presents a good opportunity for a medium sized retail occupier to utilise.

Heswall has a lower than average amount of vacant units in the centre (9% observed in Heswall to 12% nationally) and a lower than average amount of floorspace (4% to 10% nationally), which is a positive indicator of its health.



**Photograph 7:** Vacant unit, London Road



**Photograph 8:** Vacant unit within the Town Centre

## Customers' Views and Behaviour

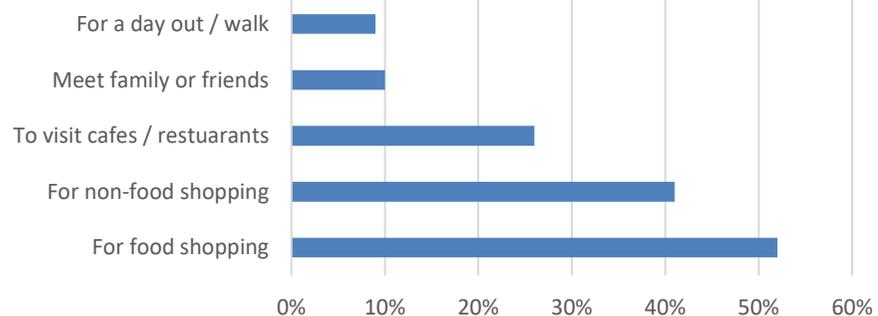
Using data from the NEMS household survey, we have been able to identify behaviour and the main reasons why respondents visit Heswall Town Centre, what they like about it and what, if anything, would encourage them to visit the centre more often.

Of the 116 respondents who said they visited Heswall, 16% stated they visited the town centre on a daily basis, 69% visited at least once or twice a week, and 10% visited at least once or twice a month. 3% said they visited at least once every six months and 2% stated they did not know how frequent they visited, or that it varied. In terms of travelling to the town centre, the majority travel by car (73%), whilst a quarter walk, and 3% travel by bus. No respondents cycled to the centre.

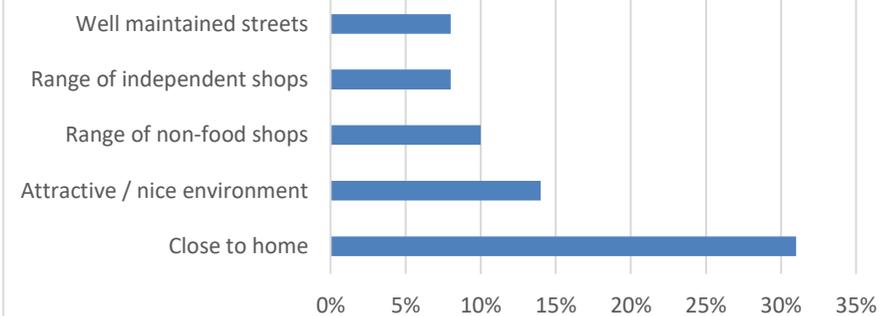
In terms of the main reasons for visiting the centre, just over half of respondents said it was for food shopping with 41% identifying it was for non-food shopping. Other reasons cited include visiting cafes/restaurants (26%), meeting friends or family (10%) and for a day out (9%).

Respondents were also asked what they liked most about Heswall Town Centre. The most popular answer was that it was close to home (31%). Other popular reasons cited by respondents included that the town centres environment was attractive (14%), good range of non-food shops (10%), the range of independent shops is considered to be good (8%) and the streets being well maintained (8%).

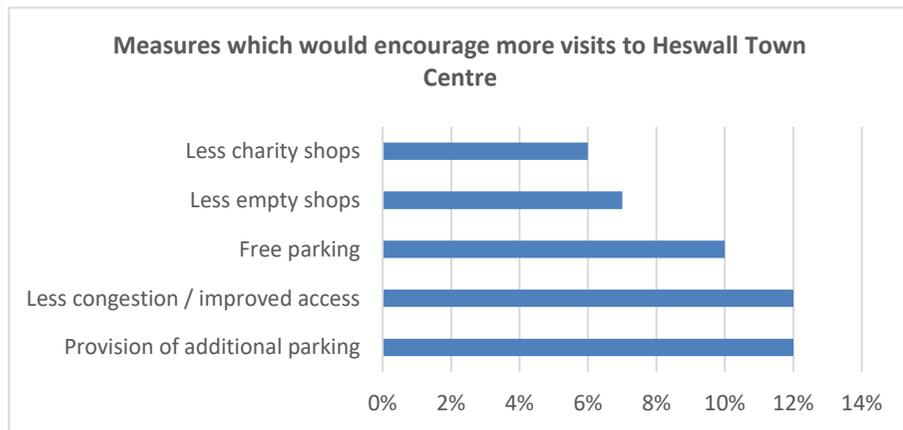
Main reason people visit Heswall Town Centre



Main reason people like Heswall Town Centre



When asked what measures would encourage them to visit more often, the most popular answer from respondents was the provision of additional parking (12%). Other popular answers included less traffic/improved access (12%), make parking free (10%), less empty shops (7%) and less charity shops (6%).



## Pedestrian Flows

At the time of our visits, the highest levels of pedestrian activity were observed in the vicinity of the Tesco and Aldi foodstores and also close to the bus station. A reasonable amount of pedestrian activity was also observed at the junction of Telegraph Road, the Mount and Pensby Road. Lower levels of activity were noted in the peripheral parts of the centre.

At the time of our visits we noted evidence of pedestrian activity taking place between Tesco and Aldi and the rest of the town centre

## Accessibility

The accessibility of the centre is determined by the ease and convenience of access by a choice of means of travel, including that which is provided to pedestrians, cyclists and disabled people, and the ease of access from the main arrival points to the principal attractions in the centre.

### Road Access

Telegraph Road (A540) is a key route on the western side of the Wirral peninsula, linking Heswall with West Kirby, Hoylake and several smaller villages. There are numerous roads linking the centre with the residential parts of the Heswall urban area. Strategic east to west road connections across the Wirral are generally more limited and this is the case with Heswall.

### Car Parking

The centre contains several Council operated car parks, including to the north of Telegraph Road at Puddydale (60 spaces), Pye Road (152 spaces) and Mount Avenue (88 spaces). There is also limited on-street parking available along Telegraph Road. Aldi and Tesco stores both have large car parks, however these are intended for customer use only. No electric vehicle charging points were noted.

At the time of our visits, car park provision was reasonably well used and observed to be operating within capacity.

### Public Transport

The town centre benefits from a small bus station located off Telegraph Road. Services are available to West Kirkby, Birkenhead, Liverpool and Chester. Further bus stops are also located along Telegraph Road, The Mount and Pensby Road

Heswall does have a train station, however this is located 2.0km to the east of the centre. We consider that trips to the centre via train are likely to be limited.

### Walking, Cycling and Disabled Access

The centre is surrounded by residential areas, meaning there is a large potential walk in catchment area. The survey results show that a quarter of respondents visit the town centre on foot which support this. The pavements are considered to be wide enough to accommodate pushchairs and wheelchairs, with the exception of sections on Pensby Road in the vicinity of the junction with Telegraph Rd, with all the main car parks observed to be providing disabled parking spaces.

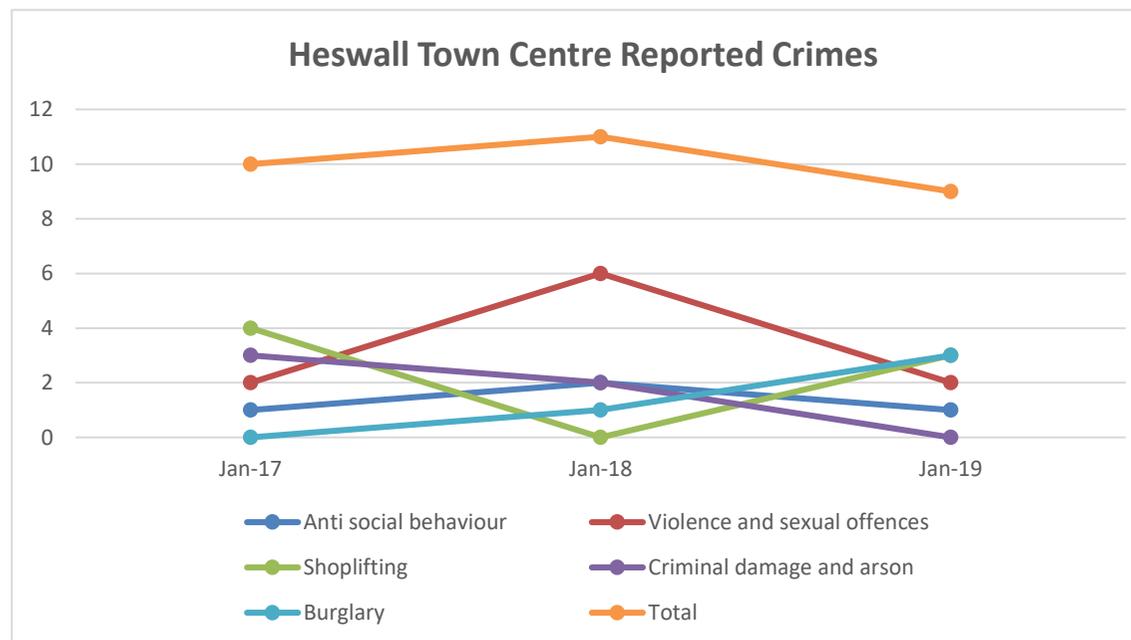
Cycle parking is available in the centre albeit primarily concentrated in the northern area.

## Perception of Safety and Occurrence of Crime

Heswall Town Centre generally feels safe and secure. Telegraph Road, being a major thoroughfare, sees a significant amount of traffic throughout the day and at night which animates the street scene. However, this does present potential issues in terms of pedestrian and highway safety. There is a seeming lack of safe pedestrian crossing points along Telegraph Road, particularly around the bus station. The shop fronts all have active frontages which maximise natural surveillance. Some of the pedestrian areas of Telegraph Road were more set back from the main carriageway which helps to minimise pedestrian/vehicular conflict.

We understand that CCTV is present in the centre albeit limited to Telegraph Road.

Data obtained from Police.uk shows the five most common forms of crime in the town centre over a three-year period, as shown in the figure below. Whilst the general trend demonstrates crime is low and remained at relatively the same levels, we note there has been a minor increase in burglaries. No notable clusters of criminal activity were observed from the data. Given the general low levels of crime, we consider Heswall to be a safe and secure centre.



## Town Centre Environmental Quality

Heswall Town Centre provides a good level of environmental quality despite the through traffic using Telegraph Road. Generally, the buildings in a good condition with shopfronts well maintained. Minimal instances of litter were noted with a good provision of bins along Telegraph Road, Pensby Road and The Mount.

Areas of soft landscaping, planting and vegetation are located throughout the centre, with open spaces located at the Puddydale (football pitch), at Heswall Village Hall and the open space at the south eastern end of the town centre at Boundary Lane.

The Curve is an attractive and modern addition to the centre at the prominent location and intersection of Telegraph Road, The Mount and Pensby Road. The centre contains an attractive Grade II Listed Building (Lloyds Bank) albeit the Town Centre is not included in any designated Conservation Areas (Heswall Lower Village Conservation Area is located to the west of the town centre boundary).

Overall, we consider the environmental quality of Heswall Town Centre to be good.

## Evidence of Barriers to Business

We consider that the main barriers to retail and commercial leisure businesses opening premises in the town centre are:

- The lack of large modern units to be meet potential future operator requirements; and
- for some occupiers, the limited catchment population.

## Balance of Independent and Multiple Stores

34 units, or 18%, of the overall number of units, are occupied by national retailers with the majority (82%) being occupied by independent retailers.

National convenience operators in the centre (M&S, Tesco, Iceland, Thorntons, Bargain Booze and Aldi) are considered to compliment the independent offering with both operating successfully alongside one another.

With regards to comparison uses, the centre is considered to have a stronger independent offering (50 units (83%)), which is more dominant than its national multiple offer (8 units (17%)). This benefits the town centre and makes it more unique in its comparison goods offering.

National retailers in the retail service sub-category include the Post Office, Max Spielmann, Specsavers, Vision Express and Toni & Guy. The majority of the independent retail service sector comprises health & beauty salons but also included mobile repairs. Again, we do raise any particular concerns with the balance of the retail service sector.

The balance of independent/multiple stores in the leisure service is also considered to be good with both generally complimenting one another. Independent café/restaurants in the town centre trade successfully alongside national multiple restaurants/cafes including Costa, Pizza Express, and Gusto.

The presence of 7 national banks/building societies is a positive aspect to the centre, particularly given the prevalent national trend of bank branches closing. The majority (76%) of financial and business units are occupied by independent operators and comprises of estate agents, solicitors and accountants/financial services. We consider there to be a good balance of multiple to independent stores.

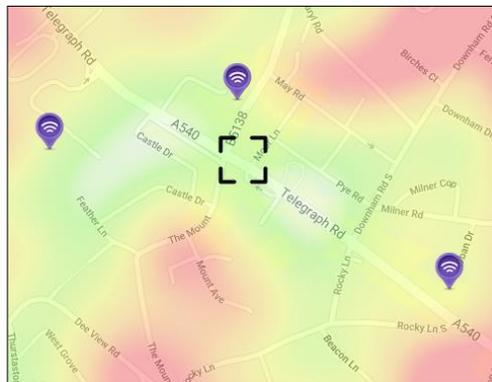
Overall, we consider, given its size, location and catchment, the balance of national and independent retailers to be good.

## Opening Hours & Evening/Night-Time Economy Offer

The majority of retail units in the centre operate under the traditional opening hours of 09.00-17.30 on weekdays and Saturdays and 10.00-16.00 on Sundays. The foodstores in the centre generally remain operational until 22.00-23.00 (weekdays and Saturday). The public houses, bars and restaurants also operate longer hours throughout the week until 22.30-23.00 (weekdays and Saturday), with some units extending their opening hours until 02.00 on weekends. The elongated hours, coupled with the number of restaurants and bars/public houses indicate that there is currently a good evening economy in the centre.

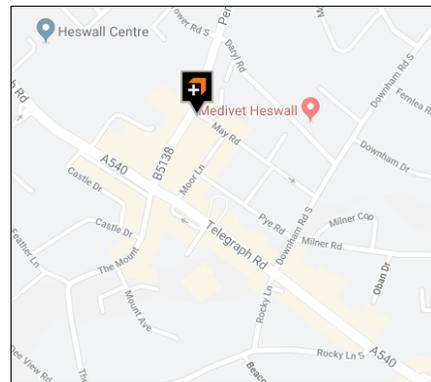
## Digital Facilities / Connectivity

### BT Wi-Fi Hotspots



Source: [www.btwifi.co.uk/find/](http://www.btwifi.co.uk/find/)

### Collect+ Locations



Source: [www.collectplus.co.uk/store\\_locator/](http://www.collectplus.co.uk/store_locator/)

### Amazon Locker Locations



Source: [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)

There are 3 BT wifi hotspots in the centre, located at the HSBC, the Tesco and the M&S Food store. Notwithstanding this, the overall wifi coverage of the centre appears to be somewhat poor. There is currently a single Collect+ location in the centre, which is the off license on Pensby Road. There are also two Amazon pickup locations in the centre, at the Post Office and the Royal Mail enquiries office. It is also noted that the Tesco store does not operate a click & collect service.

Overall, the town centre appears to be poorly served by free-wifi provision but reasonably catered for in terms of collect+ and Amazon parcel drop off/pick up points.

## Conclusions

Overall, we consider Heswall Town Centre to display good levels of vitality and viability. Having regard to our vitality and viability health check assessment, we consider that the principal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the centre are as follows:

### Strengths and Opportunities

- Strong convenience goods sector.
- Varied leisure offer is varied and supports a strong evening economy.
- Good evening economy (for its size and role).
- Good independent offering.
- Good range of events throughout the year for a centre of its size.
- Good financial and business service sector.
- Good environmental quality and condition of buildings, street scene and green space.
- Low vacancy rates which have improved over recent years.
- Low crime rates.

### Weaknesses and Threats

- The lack of large modern units to be meet potential future operator requirements.
- The limited catchment population and ability to attract certain occupiers.
- Poorly served by wifi

Our recommendations on the extent of the town centre boundary and primary shopping area are set out in plan form at Appendix K of The Study. These are newly drawn boundaries as the previous UDP boundary designations for the town centre are not supported by the NPPF.

## Liscard Town Centre Health Check Appraisal

Liscard is one of the Borough's four designated town centres and is located in the north eastern area of the Wirral peninsula. It is well connected to the surrounding areas and towns, being located in the centre of Wallasey. It lies 5.0km to the north of Birkenhead Town Centre and 7.0km to the north west of Liverpool City Centre via the Wallasey road tunnel. The centre itself is roughly T shaped in its character, extending to approximately 1.0km in length from north to south.

The town centre, as designated by the Wirral Unitary Development Plan (UDP) Proposals Map, extends along Seaview Road, Wallasey Road, Liscard Road and includes the Cherry Tree Shopping Centre. The town centre also currently includes an Asda foodstore, located off Seaview Road to the north.

The latest survey of Liscard Town Centre identifies that a total of 296 retail and commercial leisure units are present. The key facilities currently located in the town centre are set out in Figure 1 below:

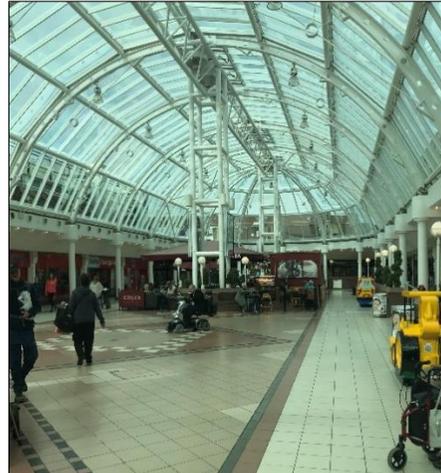
**Figure 1: Key Facilities Located in Liscard Town Centre**

National Operators	Total
<p><b>Key Anchor Stores:</b> Asda, Wilkos, Primark.</p> <p><b>Other National Operators:</b> Boots, Savers, Home Bargains, B&amp;M Bargains, Bon Marche, New Look, Peacocks, Superdrug, Tesco Express, Iceland, Greggs, Santander, Barclays, Halifax, Yorkshire Building Society, Holland &amp; Barrett, Natwest, Lloyds, HSBC, Cash Converters, Post Office, Premier, Heron Foods, Waterfields, William Hill, Dominos, Pizza Hut, KFC, Papa Johns, Costa, Ladbrokes, Subway, McDonalds, Betfred, Max Spielmann, Hayes.</p>	38
Community Facilities	
Liscard Community Centre, Dance and Drama Studio, Citizens Advice, St Thomas's Church and Church Hall	4

## Photographs of Liscard Town Centre



**Photograph 1:** Junction of Wallasey Road and Seaview Road



**Photograph 2:** Inside the Cherry Tree Centre



**Photograph 3:** Exterior of the Cherry Tree Centre



**Photograph 4:** Seaview Road looking north

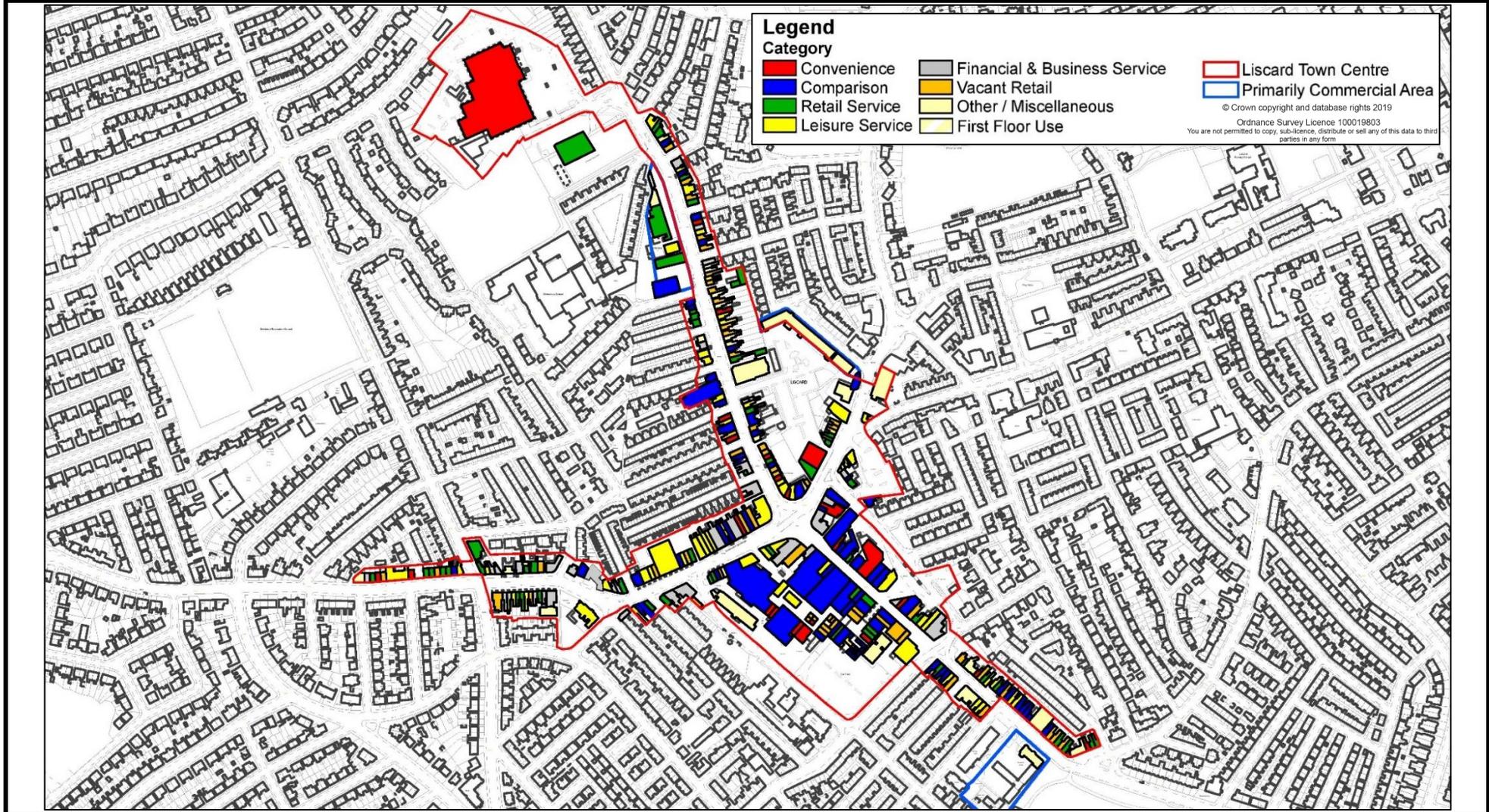


**Photograph 5:** Northern end of Liscard Way



**Photograph 6:** Liscard Way

## Diversity of Main Town Centre Uses



## Diversity of Main Town Centre Uses

**Figure 2: Number of Units in Liscard Town Centre (2015)**

Category	No.	%	UK Av. %
Convenience	20	7	9
Comparison	82	29	32
Retail Service	61	21	14
Leisure Services	45	16	23
Financial and Business Services	30	11	11
Vacant	48	17	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Wirral Council Surveys, July 2015  
Notes: Experian, UK Average Figures, July 2015

**Figure 3: Number of Units in Liscard Town Centre (2019)**

Category	No.	%	UK Av. %
Convenience	24	8	9
Comparison	71	24	30
Retail Service	55	18	15
Leisure Services	58	20	24
Financial and Business Services	35	12	10
Vacant	53	18	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Wirral Council Surveys, July 2019  
Notes: Experian, UK Average Figures, May 2019

**Figure 4: Floorspace in Liscard Town Centre (2019)**

Category	Sq.m	%	UK Av. %
Convenience	11,658	20	15
Comparison	20,944	35	34
Retail Service	6,536	10	7
Leisure Services	10,089	17	25
Financial and Business Services	6,390	11	7
Vacant	5,034	8	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>62,780</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Wirral Council Surveys, July 2019  
Notes: Experian, UK Average Figures, May 2019

## Diversity of Main Town Centre Uses

Liscard Town Centre accommodates 296 retail and commercial leisure units. Since 2015, the overall number of units has increased by 10 (from 286 units). In terms of the overall level of retail and commercial leisure floorspace, a total of 62,780sq m floorspace is provided.

### Convenience Goods Units

24 units in the centre are currently occupied by convenience goods retailers, equating to 8% of the overall number of units. This is broadly in line with the UK average of 9%. In terms of convenience floorspace in the centre, primarily due to the inclusion of the Asda foodstore within the centre, the current proportion (20%) is notably above the national average (15%). Since 2015, the number of units in convenience goods use has increased (+4 units).

The Asda foodstore, which provides 7,976sq m of floorspace, makes up 13% of the overall amount of floorspace in the centre. Convenience uses also comprise of 5 vape stores, 3 convenience stores, 2 shoe repair units, 2 frozen food stores, 2 confectionary stores, a butchers, a greengrocer and an off license.

Overall, we consider that the convenience offer in Liscard Town Centre to be good.

### Comparison Goods Units

A total of 20,944 sq m of floorspace across 71 units is occupied by comparison goods retailers. The proportion of comparison goods units in the centre (24%) is significantly below the national average (30%) whilst in floorspace terms (35%) is broadly in line with the UK average (36%). When compared to the 2015 figures, the comparison offer in Liscard has reduced by 11 units (82 units), which generally reflects wider national trends of a contraction in comparison retailing.

The majority of comparison uses (40) occupy units of less than 100sq m in size. However, there are some notable exceptions to this; B&M Bargains occupying 3,150sq m floorspace (the largest comparison unit observed in the centre), Wilkos occupying 2,849sq m floorspace and Primark occupying 2,492sq m floorspace. All these units are located in the Cherry Tree Shopping Centre.

In terms of the composition of comparison uses, there are currently 13 charity shops, 9 clothing/footwear stores, 5 interior and furniture stores, 4 carpets/flooring stores, 4 jewellers and 3 flooring stores. Overall, it is considered, given its size, the comparison goods offer for Liscard to be reasonable, albeit heavily skewed towards discount retailing.

## **Retail Services**

Liscard contains 55 retail service units (18% of the total number of units) which is above the national average of 15%. The amount of floorspace in retail service use is 6,536sq m, or 10% of the total amount observed – this is above the national average (7%).

Retail service uses are generally located in units away from the main core of the town centre; along Seaview road, Wallasey Road and Liscard Road. The centre contains a large number of hairdressers and beauty salons (29), together with other services including 5 tattoo units, 4 opticians, 3 travel agents and a Post Office.

Whilst since 2015 there has been a decrease in the number of retail service units in the town centre (-7), we consider that Liscard's retail service provision to be good.

## **Leisure Services**

20% of units and 17% of the floorspace in the town centre are occupied by leisure services. This is below the respective national averages of 24% and 25%. Since 2015, the centre has seen a significant increase of leisure service units (+13).

The composition of leisure service uses in Liscard includes; 20 take away outlets, 10 cafes, 9 restaurants, 7 public houses, 4 bookmakers, 2 amusement centres and 2 gyms.

For its size and role, the overall leisure service provision in the centre is considered to be reasonable. However, the centre does contain a high number of take away outlets which we consider should be carefully monitored by the Council.

## **Financial and Business Services**

Financial and business services in Liscard are above the national average in terms of both the proportion of units (12% to 10% nationally) and the amount of floorspace (11% to 7% nationally). The centre benefits from the presence of a number of the national banks including Natwest, Lloyds, HSBC, Barclays and Santander. Other financial and business services include 8 estate agents, 6 solicitors, 3 accountants and 2 financial advisors.

We consider that there to be a good presence of financial and business services in Liscard Town Centre.

## **Markets**

No market is currently held in Liscard Town Centre.

## Non-Retail/Commercial Units

In addition to the retail, commercial and leisure units identified above, the town centre also accommodates other non-retail but main town centre uses, including a community centre, a Citizens advice centre, St Thomas' Church and Church Hall, all of which contribute to the centre's overall offering and function. There are also some residential units located in the centre.

## Events

Whilst no regular events take place in the town centre, the Cherry Tree Shopping Centre hosts a number of pop-up stalls and events in the centre throughout the year.

## Operator Requirements

The 'Requirements List' identifies that there are currently 5 retail and leisure operators seeking premises within Liscard. The operators seeking space in the town are shown in Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4: Operator Requirements**

Name	Min Size (sq m)	Max Size (sq m)
<b>Retail/Services</b>		
Toolstation	260	557
<b>Leisure</b>		
Snap Fitness	371	929
Miller & Carter	278	557
KFC	167	325
Innkeepers Lodge	6,000+	

Given that KFC are already located in the town centre it is assumed that the food operator is seeking an additional outlet outside the town centre.

## Vacancies

A total of 53 properties in the town centre are currently vacant. The proportion of units vacant equates to 18% of all units, which is notably above the national average of 12%. It is noted that the number of vacant units in the town centre has increased since 2015 (+5).

In terms of floorspace, a total of 5,034sq m, or 8% of the total floorspace in the centre, is currently vacant. In contrast to the proportion of units, this is below the UK average (10%). The largest vacant unit is 389sq m in size.

37 of the units vacant are under 100sq m in size, 13 (23%) were between 100-200sq m in size and the remainder were larger than 200sq m. The largest vacant unit is 389sq m in size.

Vacant units are generally distributed throughout the centre, although there is a concentration along Seaview Road and the southern end of Liscard Walk.

Whilst not included in the main vacant unit count, there is a large vacant office building on Edgerton Grove, formerly occupied by the Council's Social Services Department, which is 1,168sq m in size. It is also noted that Dominic House (a five-storey office building) on Albion Way is vacant. Both buildings do not contribute to the environmental quality and overall vitality and viability of the centre.



**Photograph 7:** Vacant unit in Cherry Tree Centre



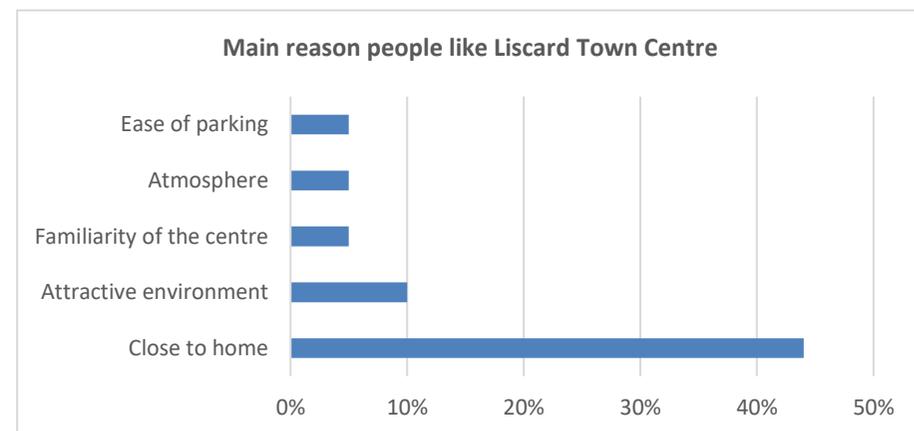
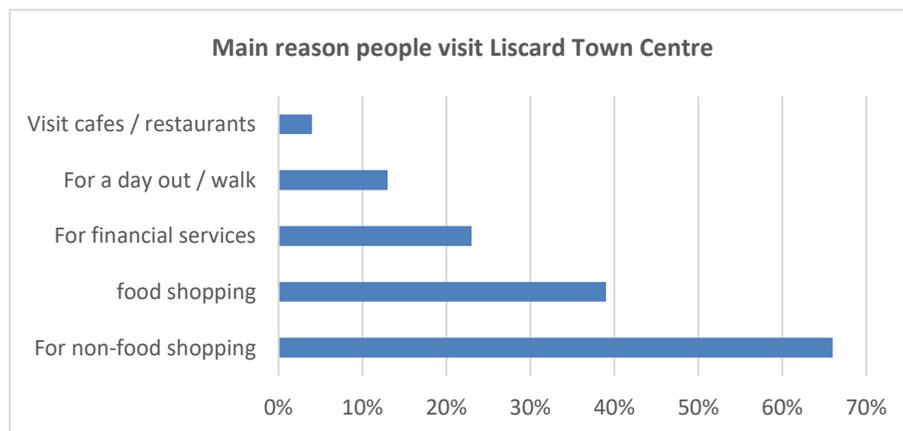
**Photograph 8:** Vacant unit on Liscard Way

## Customers' Views and Behaviour

The household survey, conducted by NEMS, posed a series of questions to respondents to determine their views, behaviours and main reasons for visiting the town centre.

Of the respondents who said they visited Liscard, 4% visit the town centre on a daily basis, 73% visit at least once or twice a week and 16% said they visited at least once or twice a month. Respondents were also asked how they travelled to the town centre, 43% travelled by car or van, 41% said they walked (the highest proportion recorded out of all the town centres) and 15% said they travelled by bus.

When asked about their main reason for visiting the centre, the most popular response was for non-food shopping (66%). Other reasons included for food shopping (39%), to visit financial services such as banks (23%), for a day out (13%) and to visit cafes or restaurants (4%).



Regarding the aspects people liked most about Liscard, 44% of respondents liked it due to the proximity to home, 10% cited the attractive environment of the town centre, 5% said it was because of the familiarity, 5% said it was due to its atmosphere and 5% said that it was due to parking being easy.

Respondents were also asked about what measures would encourage them to visit Liscard Town Centre more often. The most popular answer was the provision of more high street retailers (20%). Other popular answers included the provision of more independent shops (13%), providing more high-quality shops (12%), generally provide more or a have a better range of non-food shops (11%) and increase the amount of parking spaces (9%).



## Pedestrian Flows

Good levels of pedestrian activity were noted in the Cherry Tree Shopping Centre, particularly around the Costa Coffee unit. The pedestrianised section of the town centre, Liscard Way, was also noted as having a reasonable level of activity. Low levels of activity were observed in the southern end of Liscard Road to the south of Mill Lane and also the northern end of Seaview Road. At the time of our visit we noted that there was little evidence of footfall taking place between the Asda foodstore and the rest of the town centre.

## Accessibility

The accessibility of the centre is determined by the ease and convenience of access by a choice of means of travel, including that which is provided to pedestrians, cyclists and disabled people, and the ease of access from the main arrival points to the principal attractions in the centre.

### Road Access

Liscard is considered to be well connected to the surrounding areas and wider parts of the Wirral Peninsula. The centre is in close proximity to the A59 which connects to Liverpool City Centre via the Wallasey Tunnel, the A554 connecting to Birkenhead Town Centre and the M53 motorway. Numerous streets connect the centre to surrounding residential areas.

### Car Parking

Car parking is available throughout the centre, with notable sized car parks available at the Cherry Tree Shopping Centre (250 spaces) and on Seaview Road (193 spaces). On street parking pay and display parking is also available. There are also additional parking spaces located at the Asda foodstore (250 spaces) in the northern part of the centre. Car parking provision in the town centre appeared to be operating within capacity at the time of our visits.

### Public Transport

Liscard does not have a railway in, or nearby, to the town centre. The main means of public transportation is via bus, with clusters of bus stops located around the Cherry Tree Shopping Centre and along Seaview Road. Services run to numerous residential areas within the Wirral Borough and further afield to Liverpool.

### Walking, Cycling and Disabled Access

The centre benefits from a good walk in catchment area, with a good number of residential units within walking distance of the town centre. Liscard Way is pedestrianised and the Cherry Tree Centre is a covered shopping mall allowing for the free movement of pedestrians. We consider there to be sufficient crossing points along Seaview Road, however the connections on the streets surrounding the Cherry Tree Centre and the pedestrianised part of the centre could be improved to better connect with the remainder of the centre. The central area of the centre is in part 'hemmed in' by the road network including Mill Lane, St Alban's Road, and Liscard Crescent.

Cycling access has been improved through recent investment in a route from the south of the town centre from Central Park, however this route does not extend through the whole centre. Cycle parking provision in the centre is also limited and could be enhanced.

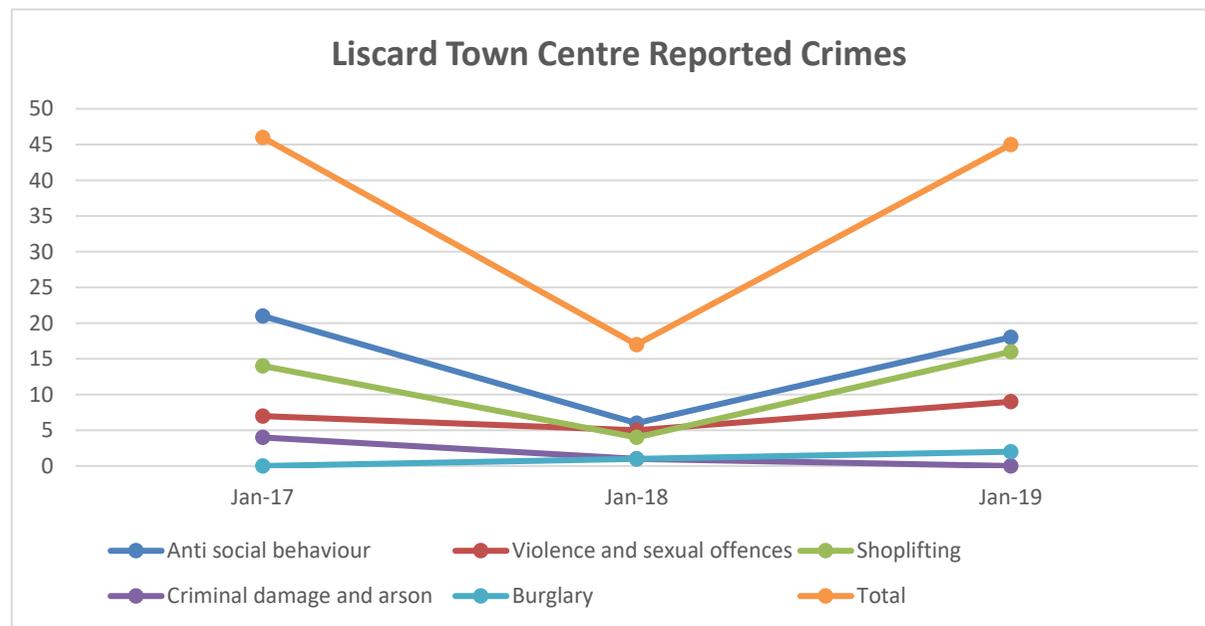
## Perception of Safety and Occurrence of Crime

Liscard Town Centre generally feels safe and secure. The centre was reasonably well served by dedicated pedestrian crossings which help to minimise conflict between pedestrians and vehicles.

Liscard Way is separated from vehicular traffic and benefits from a reasonable level of pedestrian activity. CCTV is present in the centre, both in the street and in individual retailer premises. However, primarily due to its reasonably limited night-time economy, the town centre feels less safe during the evening.

Crime statistics obtained from ukcrimestats.com shows the five most common forms of crime (anti-social behaviour/shoplifting/burglary/violent crime/criminal damage and arson) in the town centre over a two-year period has remained relatively static. The majority of crimes were reported in the vicinity of the Cherry Tree Shopping Centre/Liscard Way.

In the household survey, 3% of respondents stated that improved security and safety measures would encourage them to visit the town centre more often. This supports our own view that Liscard is generally considered to be a safe centre. The Council has confirmed that they have received a grant from the Liverpool City Region (LCR) Mayoral Towns Fund which will partly be used to create activities to discourage and reduce instances of anti-social behaviour in Liscard Town Centre.



## Town Centre Environmental Quality

Properties on Seaview Road, Wallasey Road and Liscard Road are generally in a good state of repair and condition. The Cherry Tree Centre itself is a managed shopping mall with its interior observed to be clean, well maintained and well lit. However, its exterior does not interact with the wider street scene.

The area along the centre's western boundary, fronting onto St Albans Road, has a poor environmental quality, with imposing buildings which interact poorly with their surroundings and is somewhat uninviting to users. The pedestrianised section of the centre along Liscard Way contains street furniture, lighting and planting. However, it would benefit from public realm enhancement/modernisation.

The centre contains no Listed Buildings, nor it is included within or partially covered by a Conservation Area. Central Park is located adjacent to the southern boundary of the centre which does provide recreation opportunities for users to the centre and does positively impact the centres environmental quality. However, given its peripheral location this impact is minimal.

Overall, it is considered the centres environmental quality is considered to be reasonably poor and would benefits from enhancement/investment.

## Balance of Independent and Multiple Stores

Of the 24 convenience units in the town centre, 9 (38%) are national multiple brands. National convenience multiples in the centre include Asda, Holland & Barrett, Greggs, Waterfields, Iceland, Heron Foods, Premier stores and Tesco Express. In terms of the independent offer, whilst it is reasonably diverse, there is a notable number of vape stores present. There are also butchers, greengrocers and convenience stores. Overall, we consider that the balance of independent and multiple convenience retailers to generally complement one another.

Of the 71 comparison units, 16 (23%) are national multiples and 55 (76%) were independent retailers. Both the national and independent offering is skewed towards discount retailing and whilst in this sense they complement one another, both would benefit from more mid-market operators. Attracting more mid-market retailers is likely to be challenging given the current economic retail climate and Liscard's close location to the larger centres of Birkenhead Town Centre and Liverpool City Centre.

For retail services, 48 out of the 55 units in this category are occupied by independent operators. These are predominantly health and beauty salons. Whilst there is only a small proportion of retail service national multiples (including Post Office, Hayes Travel, Specsavers, Kwik Fit and Max Spielmann), the range is considered typical for a centre the size of Liscard and compliments the independent offering.

Leisure service national multiples were mostly take-away outlets (McDonalds, Subway) with some Bookmakers (William Hill, Betfred). The independent offering was also mostly comprised of take away outlets with some cafes and restaurants. The balance of independent/national leisure service occupiers is not considered to be a cause for concern.

Generally, we consider, given its size, location and catchment, the balance of national and independent retailers to be reasonable. Whilst retaining existing and attracting new national multiples occupiers to the town centre is important, given the location of the town centre to larger surrounding centres it is considered that and likelihood of attracting further key multiples, it is considered that any future town centre strategy should seek to build on the centres independent offering.

## Evidence of Barriers to Business

We consider that the main barriers to retail and commercial businesses opening premises in the town centre are:

- The quality/suitability of the available units to meet operator requirements.
- For some occupiers, the proximity to Birkenhead Town Centre.
- Proliferation of budget retailers may detract higher quality operators from locating to the centre.
- Poor environmental quality and lack of investment in the centre.

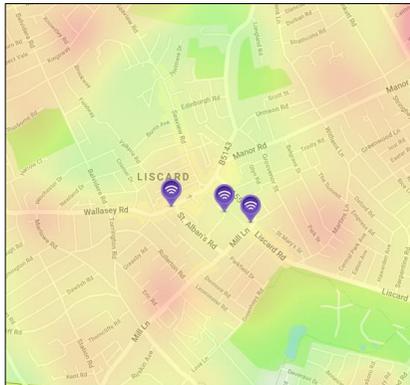
## Opening Hours & Evening/Night-Time Economy Offer

The majority of retail units in the centre operate under the traditional opening hours of 09.00-17.30 Monday to Saturday and 10.00-16.00 on Sundays. This applies to both the independent traders and the national multiple retailers. Notable exceptions are: the Asda foodstore (albeit located a distance from the town centre central area) which operates 08.00-22.00 Mondays to Saturdays and the traditional Sunday hours; and Tesco Express which operates 07.00-23.00 daily.

The leisure service units in Liscard have more flexible and longer opening hours, with some opening later in the day and remaining open until 23.00 or 00.00. Whilst there a number of public houses and restaurants the majority of the centre (particularly the pedestrianised part of Liscard Way) is inactive during the evening. The town centre's evening/night time economy offer would benefit from improvement to help increase the activity in the centre in the evening.

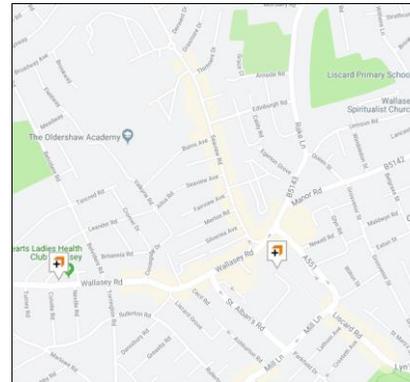
## Digital Facilities/Connectivity

### BT Wi-Fi Hotspots



Source: [www.btwifi.co.uk/find/](http://www.btwifi.co.uk/find/)

### Collect+ Locations



Source: [www.collectplus.co.uk/store\\_locator/](http://www.collectplus.co.uk/store_locator/)

### Amazon Locker Locations



Source: [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)

Developing a 'bricks & clicks' environment can benefit a town centre by attracting additional visitors and bringing a further layer of interaction through the promotion of events and advertising. BT is identified by the ATCM (Association of Town & City Management) as providing the most commonly offered free Wi-Fi hotspots within town centres, while Collect + and Amazon commonly provide town centre facilities where customers can collect items that they have ordered from online retailers.

There are 3 BT primary hotspots and eight Sky Cloud hotspots which are clustered around the pedestrianised section of the town centre and the Cherry Tree Shopping Centre. Liscard presently provides 2 Collect + location at Supernews and at the K L Wine and Food off license in the central and western parts of the town centre. There are also 2 Amazon lockers available, one in the Post Office and the other in the Royal Mail Depot. A further locker is located at the Wallasey Road Post Office, just outside of the centre boundary to the west.

Overall, the town centre appears to be reasonably well served by free-wifi provision and well served in terms of collect+ and Amazon parcel drop off/pick up points.

## Conclusions

Overall, the town centre is considered to display reasonable levels of vitality and viability albeit there are number of issues that any future town centre strategy will need to seek to address. We consider that the principal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the centre are as follows:

### Strengths and Opportunities

- The centre has good accessibility by a means of private and public transport.
- Retail service provision considered to be good.
- Opportunity to utilise the public realm and pedestrianised area of Liscard Way for events.
- Good digital facilities.
- The level of recorded crime has reduced in recent years.
- Potential to enhance the pedestrianised area public realm.
- The development of a masterplan, which has secured funding from the LCR Mayoral Towns Fund, provides a good opportunity to develop positive strategies to improve and enhance the centre and positively plan for its development.

### Weaknesses and Threats

- The vacancy rate is well above the national average and has increased.
- Whilst the comparison goods offer is reasonable, it has weakened over recent years and is heavily skewed towards discount retailing.
- The centre contains a high number of take away outlets.
- The majority of the centre (particularly the pedestrianised part of Liscard Way) is inactive during the evening.
- Reasonably poor environmental quality and needs investment.
- The proximity to larger centres and out-of-centre retail parks, primarily in Birkenhead and Liverpool.

Our recommendations on the extent of the town centre boundary and primary shopping area are set out in plan form at Appendix K of The Study. These are newly drawn boundaries as the previous UDP boundary designations for the town centre are not supported by the NPPF.

## Moreton Town Centre Health Check Appraisal

Moreton is located in the central northern area of the Borough. It is well connected to the surrounding areas and towns, located 5.7km to the west of Birkenhead Town Centre, 5.0km to the west of Liscard town centre and 6.7km to the east of West Kirby. Several Local Centres encircle the centre and are within 3.0km distance.

The town centre, as designated on the Wirral Unitary Development Plan (UDP) Proposals Map, is focused on Hoylake Road, Pasture Road and Upton Road. The survey identifies that there are currently 144 retail and leisure units present in the town centre.

The key facilities currently located in Moreton Town Centre are set out in Figure 1 below:

**Figure 1: Key Facilities Located in the Town Centre**

National Operators	Total
<p><b>Key Anchor Stores:</b> Home Bargains</p> <p><b>Other National Operators:</b> Boots, Rightway, Rowlands Pharmacy, Superdrug, Iceland, Tesco Express, Bargain Booze, Heron Foods, Greggs, Hunters, Barclays, Lloyds, Martin &amp; Co, Subway, Pizza Hut, William Hill, Ladbrokes, Betfred, Hayes Travel, the Post Office, Co-op Funeralcare.</p>	22
Community Facilities	
<p>Moreton Health Centre, Moreton Library, Council One-stop shop, youth and community centre, veterinary surgery, dental surgery</p>	6

## Photographs of Moreton Town Centre



**Photograph 1:** Junction of Upton Road and Hoylake Road



**Photograph 2:** Units along Hoylake Road



**Photograph 3:** Units along Hoylake Road



**Photograph 4:** Units along Hoylake Road

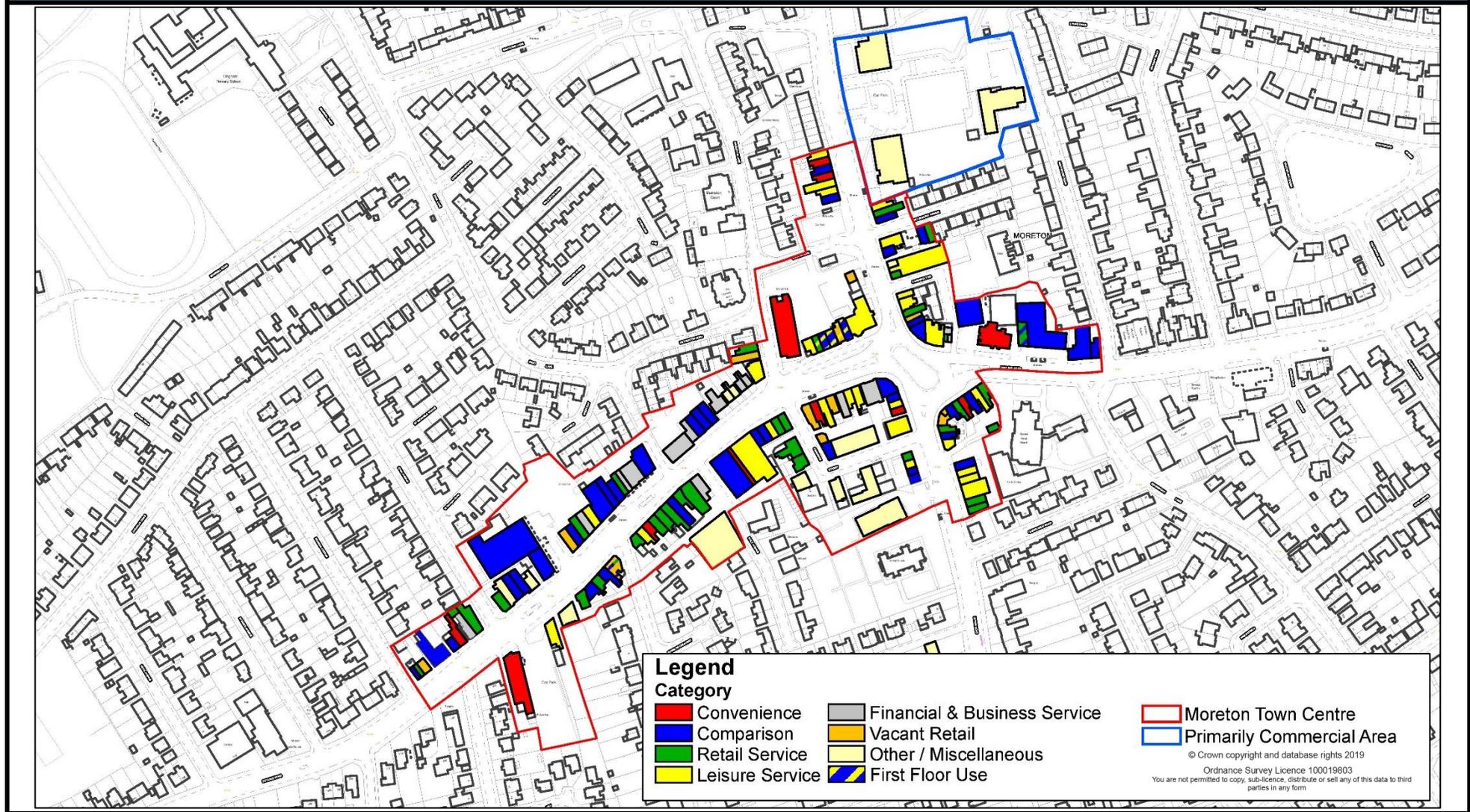


**Photograph 5:** Retail units on Pasture Road



**Photograph 6:** Hoylake Road facing towards Upton Road

## Diversity of Main Town Centre Uses



## Diversity of Main Town Centre Uses

**Figure 2: Number of Units in Moreton Town Centre (2015)**

Category	No.	%	UK Av. %
Convenience	16	11	9
Comparison	40	28	32
Retail Service	34	24	14
Leisure Services	23	16	23
Financial and Business Services	14	10	11
Vacant	14	10	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Wirral Council Surveys, July 2015

Notes: Experian, UK Average Figures, July 2015

**Figure 3: Number of Units in Moreton Town Centre (2019)**

Category	No.	%	UK Av. %
Convenience	11	8	9
Comparison	46	32	30
Retail Service	33	23	15
Leisure Services	28	19	24
Financial and Business Services	14	10	10
Vacant	12	8	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Wirral Council Surveys, July 2019

Notes: Experian Goad, UK Average Figures, May 2019

**Figure 4: Floorspace in Moreton Town Centre (2019)**

Category	Sq.m	%	UK Av. %
Convenience	2,284	12	15
Comparison	7,331	38	34
Retail Service	3,076	16	7
Leisure Services	4,020	21	25
Financial and Business Services	1,605	8	7
Vacant	898	5	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,214</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Wirral Council Surveys, July 2019

Notes: Experian Goad, UK Average Figures, May 2019

## Diversity of Main Town Centre Uses

Moreton Town Centre accommodates 144 retail and leisure units, an increase of 3 units from the previous survey, and contains 19,214sq m of floorspace. We are unable to determine if this is an increase from the 2015 survey due to the floorspace data from that time being unavailable.

### Convenience Goods Units

The centre provides 11 convenience units, which equates to 8% of all units. This is broadly in line with the national average (9%). The amount of floorspace in the town centre (12%) is however below the national average (15%). It is noted that since 2015 there has been a loss of 5 convenience units in the centre, most notably the Co-op supermarket (now Home Bargains).

The largest convenience unit is the Iceland store (862 sq m). Other convenience uses include: a Tesco Express store, Heron Frozen foodstore, 2 bakeries, an off-licence, a butcher, and a greengrocer.

Whilst convenience provision in the centre generally meets the daily needs of its catchment in comparison to the other town centres in the Borough, it is considered to be the weakest.

### Comparison Goods Units

46 units in the town centre are currently occupied by comparison goods retailers. The proportion of units in comparison goods use (32%) is above the national average (30%). In terms of floorspace, 38% of the overall total was observed to be in comparison use, which is above the national average of 34%. The number of comparison units in the town centre has increased since the previous 2015 survey, which is opposite to what has generally been observed in other centres and goes against the general national trend. The largest comparison unit is Home Bargains (1,159sq m), with the majority of the remaining comparison units being less than 150sq m in size.

In terms of the composition of comparison uses the centre provides, there are 5 clothing stores, 5 furnishing/interiors stores, 4 card shops, 3 pharmacies, 3 electrical/appliance stores, 2 newsagents, 2 flooring stores, 2 florists, 2 discount stores (operating under the same brand), a pet store, a florist, an antiques store, a DIY store and a gift store. The number of charity shops in the town centre (10) was notable at the time of our visits.

Whilst we consider the range of comparison goods in the centre to be quite broad, we note there are fewer clothing stores when compared to other centres and also that the nature of the goods sold were more discount in nature. We also note that the number of comparison retail units has increased since the 2015 survey, which is in contrast to the trend observed in the other town centres and also national trends.

Overall, whilst we note that the comparison offer in Moreton has increased in quantitative terms, we consider, with the provision of 10 charity shops and discount retailers, the centre would benefit from a wider variety of comparison goods retailers.

## Retail Services

Moreton's retail services occupy 33 units, or 23% of the total number of units. The proportion of units in retail service use is notably above the national average (15%). In terms of floorspace, 16% of the total is in retail service use, which is significantly above the national average (7%). The sector is dominated by hairdressers/beauty salons (20 units). Other retail services include: 2 tattooists, 3 travel agents, 2 opticians, a dry cleaners, a dog groomers and a Post Office. Retail service provision in the town centre has broadly remained unchanged since the 2015 Survey.

## Leisure Services

19% of units and 21% of the overall floorspace in Moreton Town Centre is in leisure service use, which is below the national averages of 24% and 25% respectively. The composition of leisure service uses include 12 take away outlets, 8 restaurants/cafes, 3 bookmakers, 2 public houses and an amusements centre. We note the presence of an additional public house, the Farmers Arms, adjacent to the town centre boundary, which will contribute to the town centre's evening economy offering. The amount of leisure service units in Moreton has increased since 2015, from 23 units to 28 units.

Overall, leisure provision in the town centre is below the UK average and is more limited than other town centres in Wirral. The high number of take away outlets needs to be carefully monitored going forward.

## Financial and Business Services

Financial and business service units occupy 10% of the units and 8% of the floorspace in the centre, which is broadly in line with the respective national averages of 10% and 7%. Financial and business service uses includes 2 banks, 6 estate agents, 3 solicitors and 2 financial management firms. For its size, it is considered that Moreton Town Centre provides a reasonable financial and business service provision.

## Markets

At the current time it is understood that no markets are held in Moreton Town Centre.

## Non-Retail/Commercial Units

In addition to the retail and leisure, the centre accommodates several other 'main town centre use' units. These uses include two dental surgeries and a medical centre. There is also a Library, a Council one-stop shop, a veterinary practice and a youth/community centre.

## Events

We understand that no events are currently being hosted in Moreton Town Centre.

## Operator Requirements

A search on the 'Requirements List' has found there are no operators seeking premises in the town centre.

## Vacancies

Moreton Town Centre currently contains 12 vacant units, which equates to 8% of the overall number of units in the centre. The current proportion of vacant units is below the national average of 12%. The vacancy rate in the centre has decreased over the past 4 years where 14 units were vacant in 2015.

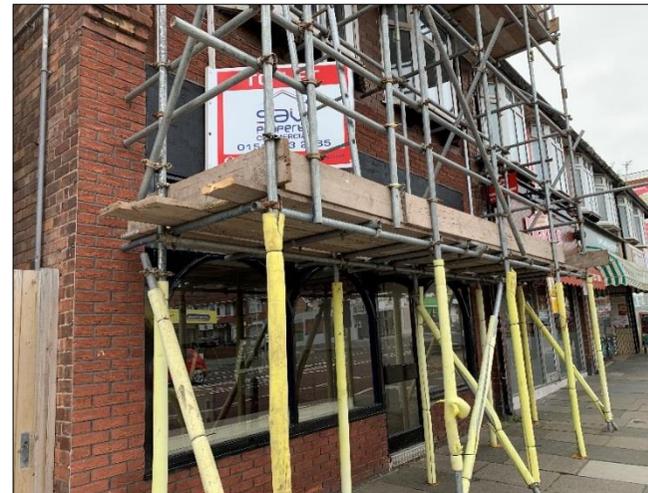
The level of floorspace that is currently vacant in the town centre totals just 898 sq m which represents 5% of the total floorspace within the centre. The vacancy floorspace rate in the centre (5%) is significantly below the national average (10%).

In terms of sizes, the majority of vacant units (10) measure less than 100 sq m in size, with the largest vacant unit measuring just 182 sq m in size.

Overall, the vacancy rate in the town centre is reasonably low and has decreased over recent years.



**Photograph 7:** Vacant unit on Hoylake Road



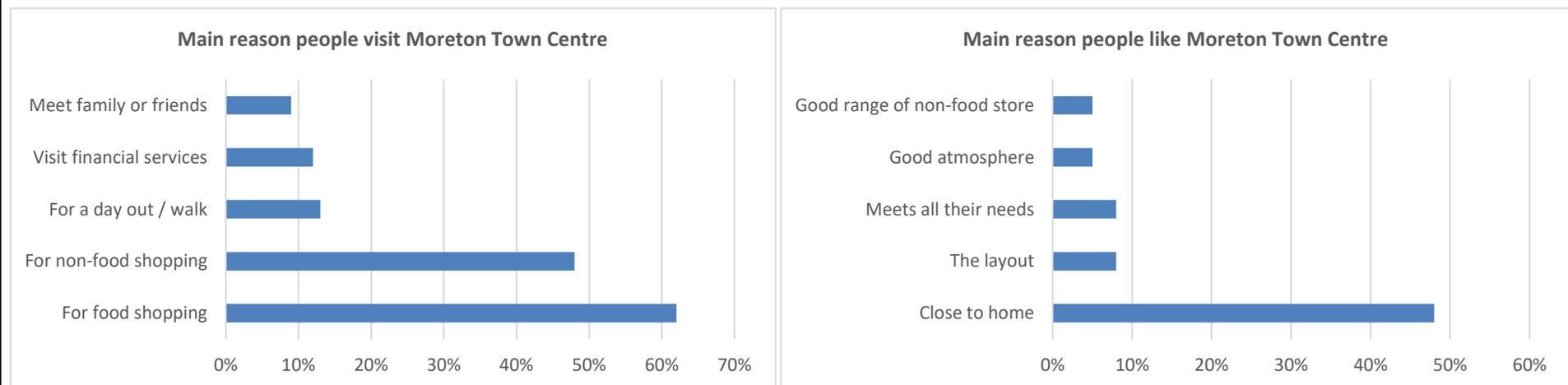
**Photograph 8:** Vacant unit on Hoylake Road

## Customers' Views and Behaviour

Using data from the NEMS household survey, we have been able to identify behaviour and the main reasons why respondents visit Moreton Town Centre, what they like about it and what measures, strategies or schemes could be implemented, if anything, to encourage them to visit the centre more often.

74 respondents stated they visited Moreton Town Centre, which is the lowest amount of any of the town centres. Of these respondents, 23% said they visited daily, 59% said they visited once or twice a week and 26% said they visited once or twice a month. When asked how they travelled to the centre, 49% of respondents said they visited the centre by car or van, 38% said they walked, 5% travelled by taxi and 4% travelled by bus. A single respondent stated they cycled to the centre.

With regards to the main reasons for visiting the town centre, the most popular purpose is for users to conduct their food shopping (62%). Other popular reasons stated by respondents were for non-food shopping (48%), for a day out (13%), to visit financial services such as banks (12%) and to meet family (9%).



Respondents were also asked what they liked most about Moreton Town Centre, with the most popular response being its proximity to their home (48%). 8% of respondents said they liked the layout of the town centre, 8% said that the town centre has everything they would need, 5% stated there was a good atmosphere and 5% said the range of non-food shops is good.

When asked what measures would encourage users to visit more often, the most popular response was increasing the number of parking spaces (15%). Other popular answers included the provision of more or better clothing shops (15%), more leisure facilities (14%), improving access/less congestion (6%) and more or a better range of non-food shops (6%).



## Pedestrian Flows

In the absence of pedestrian count surveys, comments on pedestrian activity are based on observation during our visits to the centre in August 2019.

Reasonable levels of activity were observed in the centre. Flows were mostly observed along Hoylake Road, to the east of the junction with Upton Road. Other areas of the centre were noted to be quieter.

Upton Road, despite being a major route, contains a number of crossing points to allow pedestrians to access both sides of the town centre. However, we note that the junction of Hoylake Road and Upton Road (Moreton Cross) impedes the flow of pedestrians in this part of the centre.

## Accessibility

The accessibility of the centre is determined by the ease and convenience of access by a choice of means of travel, including that which is provided to pedestrians, cyclists and disabled people, and the ease of access from the main arrival points to the principal attractions in the centre.

### Road Access

Moreton Town Centre is well connected to the highway network, with the centre being located on the junction of two key routes, the A553 and A551, with the latter leading to the M53 motorway towards Wallasey, Chester and the national highways network. The A553 is a key route linking the centre to the main residential areas and also to Birkenhead in the east and Hoylake to the West.

### Car Parking

Moreton has a medium sized car park located off Barnston Lane, another off Hoylake Road to the rear of Home Bargains and another beside the Iceland store. These car parks are privately managed and subject to restrictions. Council operated car parks in the vicinity include the Garden Lane Car Park (20 spaces) and the Holt Lane Car Park (28 spaces). No electric vehicle charging points were observed in the car parks. Disabled parking spaces were noted to be present in the car parks. On street parking is prevalent in the centre and there are also two areas of on street parking bays located at the front of units on Upton Road.

### Public Transport

The centre accommodates several bus stops along Upton Road and Hoylake Road, which provide reasonably frequent services to Birkenhead, Liverpool, Chester, West Kirby Seacombe and New Brighton. Moreton Railway Station is located approximately 750m to the north of the town centre. The station has frequent services to Birkenhead, Liverpool, West Kirby and the wider Merseyrail network.

### Walking, Cycling and Disabled Access

Moreton has a large residential catchment. The junction of Upton Road and Hoylake Road (Moreton Cross) is something of a barrier to pedestrian movement, however there are crossing points for pedestrians. Crossing points are more prevalent on Hoylake Road, to the west of the junction with Upton Road. Pavements in the centre were considered to be wide in locations, allowing for the easy movement of wheelchair and pushchair users.

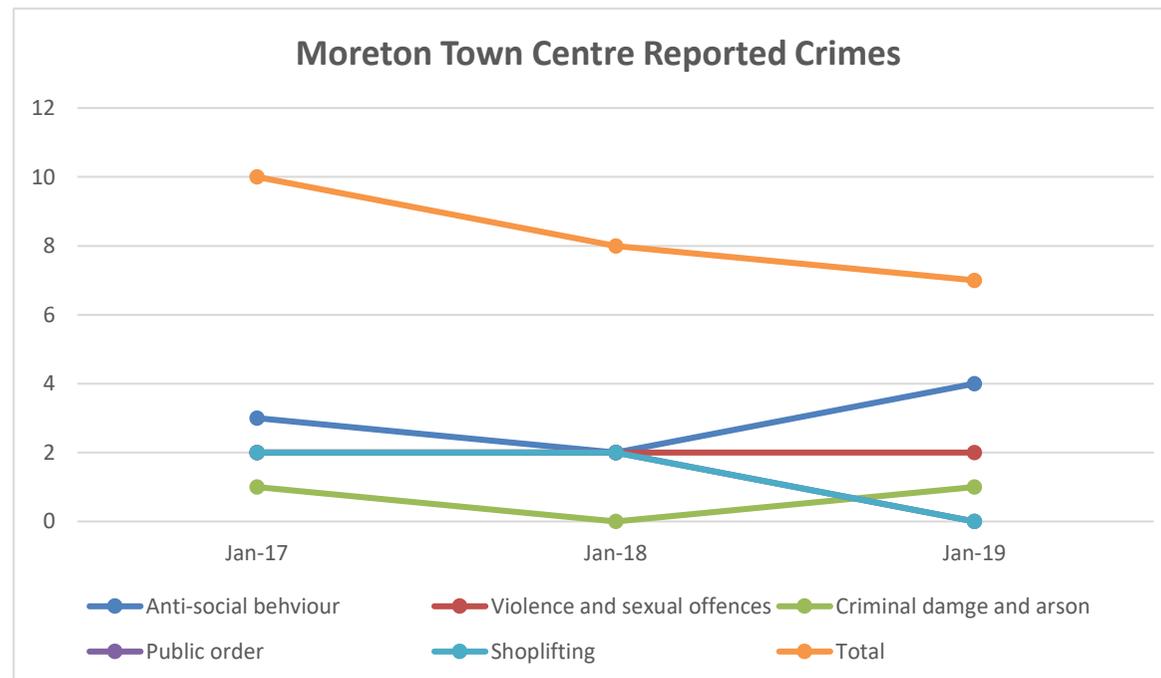
All car parks contain disabled car parking spaces. In terms of cycling, there are no dedicated cycle routes in the centre, although cycle parking is present in the centre.

## Perception of Safety and Occurrence of Crime

Moreton Town Centre generally feels safe and secure. It's position along two major routes sees vehicular movements throughout the day which animates the space and ensures a level of surveillance. Pedestrian crossings were observed in the centre along Hoylake Road, but there were minimal instances observed on other streets, which we recommend exploring. The busy intersection of Hoylake Road, Upton Road and Pasture Road had barriers around it to prevent informal crossing of the junction.

The units in the centre contained active frontages and face onto the main streets allowing for additional natural surveillance. The streets were considered to be well lit. CCTV cameras were noted at the junction of Hoylake Road and Upton Road but nowhere else in the centre.

Crime statistics have been obtained from police.co.uk. These statistics show that overall the five most common forms of reported crime occurrences in Moreton Town Centre have decreased in the last 2 years. However, whilst 4 of the five most common forms of reported crime has either reduced or stayed static, anti-social behaviour has increased



## Town Centre Environmental Quality

The centre has the look of a traditional style high street around the junction of Hoylake Road and Upton Road (Moreton Cross). Away from this focal point, more modern styles and forms become prevalent. These more modern units do not appear to have had the same level of upkeep as the more traditional units, with an example of this being the units on the junction of Hoylake Road with Rosslyn Drive having a 'half finished' appearance. Generally speaking, whilst the buildings in the centre were found to be of a reasonable state of repair, instances were noted where buildings required cosmetic works to improve their visual appearance and instances where buildings had been repaired unsympathetically.

Parts of the centre have a dated look and would benefit from cosmetic improvements. There were no real instances of prominent or landmark buildings, with the exception of the Coach and Horses public house.

The centre's location along two major vehicular routes for the Borough means that it sees a high volume of traffic throughout the day. The volume of traffic is considered to have a negative impact on the centre's environmental quality.

The town centre has very little in the ways of soft landscaping, planting and vegetation. Whilst there is greenspace at the junction of Hoylake Road and Upton Road, this is not publicly accessible and is of limited benefit beyond aesthetics.

Overall, we consider Moreton's environmental quality to be mixed, with parts in need of enhancement.

## Balance of Independent and Multiple Stores

23 units in Moreton Town Centre are currently occupied by national multiple occupiers, equating to 16% of the total. Accordingly, the majority of units are occupied by independent businesses (84%).

Of the 11 convenience units, 5 (45%) are multiple operators, which includes Tesco Express, Iceland, Heron Foods and Greggs the bakers. The independent offering caters to daily needs being comprised of bakers, greengrocers and butchers, along with some other more infrequent and niche needs such as a vape store and a cobbler.

For comparison uses, of the 46 units present, just 5 (11%) are multiple operators. These include Home Bargains, Boots, Rightway, Superdrug and Rowlands Pharmacy. These names are somewhat typical of what we would expect and have also observed in other town centres. The independent offering is substantially broader, offering furniture, electronics and other goods.

In terms of retail services, 4 (9%) are multiple operators. Brands include Hayes Travel, Co-operative Funeralcare and the Post Office. The remaining 29 units (91%) are occupied by independent businesses. The independent offering was predominantly health and beauty salons, with opticians and tattooists.

With regards to leisure services, of the 28 units, 5 (18%) are national multiples. These include Ladbrokes, William Hill, Subway, Pizza Hut and Bet Fred. The independent offering (82%) mostly comprises of take away outlets with some café and restaurant uses. These uses generally complement one another.

Finally, in terms of financial and business services, 4 national brands are located in the centre: Lloyds bank, Barclays, Hunters and Martin & Co. The independent offer in Moreton is predominantly estate agents.

The balance of national multiple and independent occupiers is considered to be reasonable with the centre benefiting from a good independent offering which should be acknowledged in any town centre strategy going forward.

## Barriers to Business

We consider that the main barriers to retail and commercial businesses opening premises in the town centre are:

- Main road location.
- Prevalence of discount retailers and take away outlets.
- Large number of charity shops.

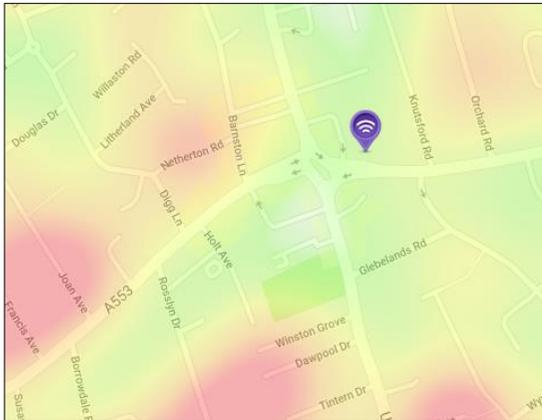
## Opening Hours & Evening/Night-Time Economy Offer

Most retail units in the centre operate under the traditional opening hours of 09.00-17.30 on Mondays to Saturdays and 10.00-16.00 on Sundays. The larger stores (Heron, Iceland and Home Bargains) operate extended hours of 08.00-20.00.

Leisure service units, particularly take away outlets, have more flexible opening hours and remain open late into the evening and night, in the instance of Subway this remains open until 21.00. The public houses, although there are only 2 present in the centre, have long opening hours (08.00-24.00 for the Mockbeggar Hall and 12.00-24.00 for the Coach & Horses) supporting a limited evening economy.

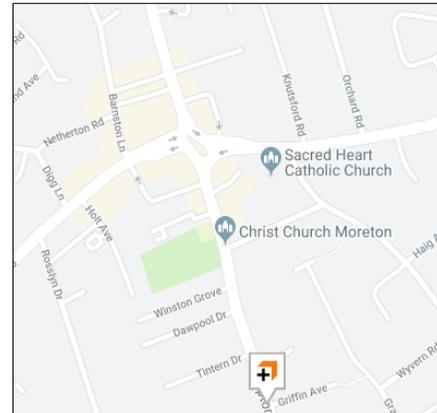
## Digital Facilities/Connectivity

### BT Wi-Fi Hotspots



Source: [www.btwifi.co.uk/find/](http://www.btwifi.co.uk/find/)

### Collect+ Locations



Source: [www.collectplus.co.uk/store\\_locator/](http://www.collectplus.co.uk/store_locator/)

### Amazon Locker Locations



Source: [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)

Developing a 'bricks & clicks' environment can benefit a town centre by attracting additional visitors and bringing a further layer of interaction through the promotion of events and advertising. BT and The Cloud (now Sky) are identified by the ATCM (Association of Town & City Management) as providing the most commonly offered free Wi-Fi hotspots within town centres, while Collect+ and Amazon commonly provide town centre facilities where customers can collect items that they have ordered from online retailers.

A single BT Wifi hotspot is located in the Tesco Express. Wifi coverage of the centre is quite poor although there is noticeably better coverage in the western area of the centre to the north of Hoylake Road. There are no Collect+ locations in the centre, however we recognise there is one at the newsagents to the south. Two Amazon lockers are located in the centre, one at the Royal Mail enquiry office and the other at the Post Office. The centre contains no large food stores which operate a click & collect service.

Overall, the wifi-provision is contained to the western part of the centre and could be improved. Amazon locker provision is considered to be good with Collect+ provision limited.

## Conclusions

Overall, we would consider Moreton to have reasonable levels of vitality and viability. Having regard to our vitality and viability health check assessment, including feedback from key stakeholders, we consider that the principal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the centre are as follows:

### Strengths and Opportunities

- Potential opportunities to improve environmental quality of, and buildings in, the centre.
- The vacancy rate in the town centre is reasonably low and has decreased over recent years.
- Good independent occupier offering.
- Decreasing crime level.
- Good connectivity to the immediate and surrounding areas by private and public transport.
- The now cleared sites off Pasture Road are a potential development opportunity.

### Weaknesses and Threats

- More discount and lower quality in their offering when compared to other town centres.
- The high number of charity shops.
- High number of take away outlets.
- Environmental quality mixed with parts in need of enhancement.
- Limited evening economy.
- Lack of medium sized foodstore capable of accommodating a main food shop.
- Lack of operators seeking requirements for a presence in the town centre.

Our recommendations on the extent of the town centre boundary and primary shopping area are set out in plan form at Appendix K of The Study. These are newly drawn boundaries as the previous UDP boundary designations for the town centre are not supported by the NPPF.

## West Kirby Town Centre Health Check Appraisal

West Kirby is located in the north western area of the Wirral peninsula. It is approximately 13.4km to the west of Birkenhead, 8.1km to the north of Heswall and 2.6km to the south of Hoylake. The bulk of West Kirby's residential areas are located to the east and south of the town centre, with the areas to the north and west being characterised by Green Belt/golf courses and the Dee Estuary respectively.

The town centre, as designated by the Wirral Unitary Development Plan (UDP) Proposals Map, is focused along Banks Road, The Crescent, Dee Lane and Grange Road. The town centre currently provides 171 retail and commercial leisure units. The town centre is peculiar in the sense that there is a physical disconnect between a northern core, centred around Grange Road, The Crescent and Dee Lane and a southern cluster along Banks Road. These two areas are separated by residential uses in between.

The key facilities currently located in the town centre are set out in Figure 1 below:

**Figure 1: Key Facilities Located in the Town Centre**

National Operators	Total
<p><b>Key Anchor Stores:</b> Morrisons, Aldi</p> <p><b>Other National Operators:</b> Go Local, Timpson, Premier, One Stop, Bargain Booze, Boots, Superdrug, Lloyds Pharmacy, Hallmark, M&amp;Co, Yorkshire Building Society, Barclays, Lloyds, Skipton Building Society, Natwest, Santander, Costa, J D Wetherspoon, Subway, Hayes Travel.</p>	22
Community Facilities	
<p>Medical centre, tuition centre, physiotherapy, dance studio, early learning centre</p>	5

## Photographs of West Kirby Town Centre



**Photograph 1:** Units on the Crescent



**Photograph 2:** Units on the Crescent



**Photograph 3:** Units on Acacia Grove



**Photograph 4:** Units on Banks Road

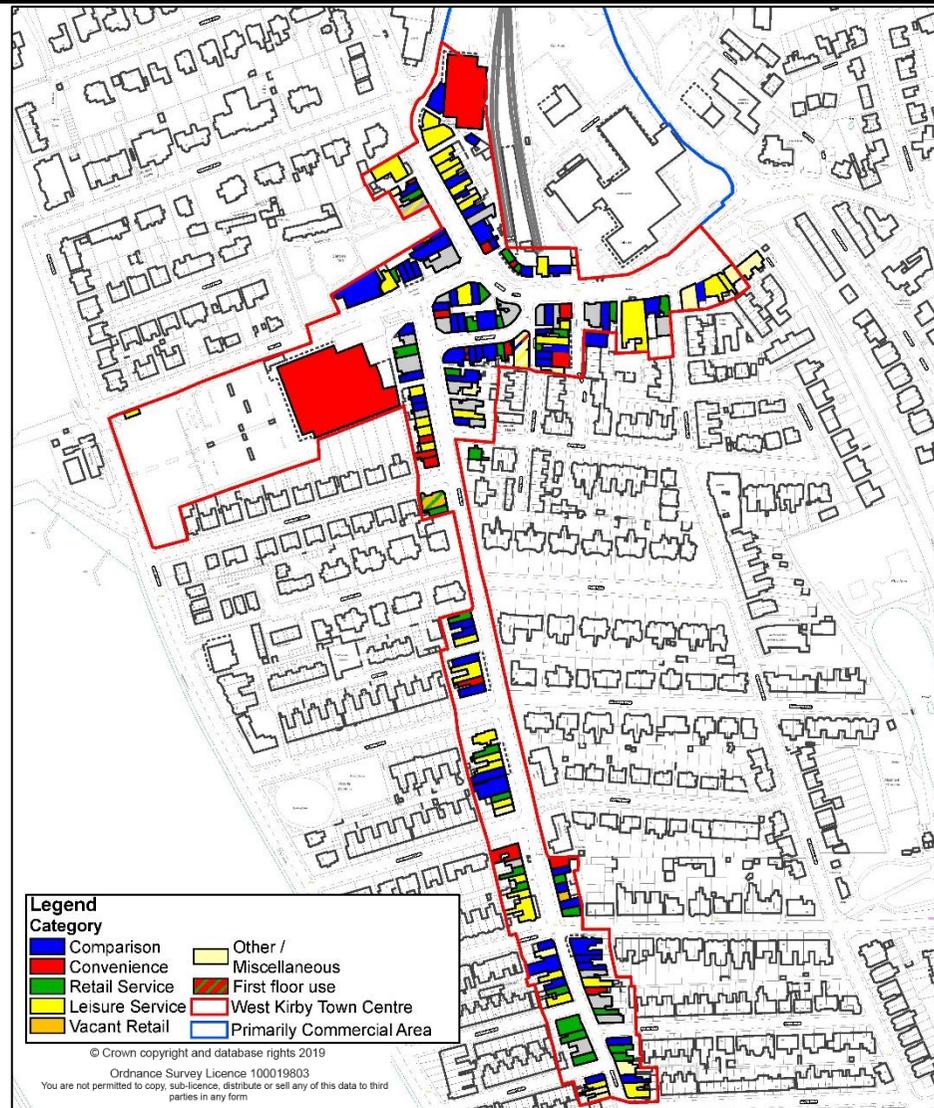


**Photograph 5:** View down Crescent Walk



**Photograph 6:** West Kirby railway station

## Diversity of Main Town Centre Uses



## Diversity of Main Town Centre Uses

**Figure 2: Number of Units in West Kirby Town Centre (2015)**

Category	No.	%	UK Av. %
Convenience	15	9	9
Comparison	67	40	32
Retail Service	21	13	14
Leisure Services	34	20	23
Financial and Business Services	26	16	11
Vacant	4	2	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Wirral Council surveys July 2015

Notes: Experian, UK Average Figures, July 2015

**Figure 3: Number of Units in West Kirby Town Centre (2019)**

Category	No.	%	UK Av. %
Convenience	17	10	9
Comparison	63	37	30
Retail Service	30	18	15
Leisure Services	38	22	24
Financial and Business Services	21	12	10
Vacant	2	1	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Wirral Council Surveys, July 2019

Notes: Experian Goad, UK Average Figures, May 2019

**Figure 4: Floorspace in West Kirby Town Centre (2019)**

Category	Sq.m	%	UK Av. %
Convenience	6,702	28	15
Comparison	6,972	29	34
Retail Service	2,408	10	7
Leisure Services	5,147	21	25
Financial and Business Services	2,603	11	7
Vacant	216	1	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,048</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Wirral Council Surveys, July 2019

Notes: Experian Goad, UK Average Figures, May 2019

## Diversity of Main Town Centre Uses

West Kirby Town Centre accommodates 171 retail and leisure units within 24,000sq m gross floorspace. There has been a minor increase in retail and commercial leisure units since 2015 (+4 units).

### Convenience Goods Units

17 convenience units are located in the centre, equating to 10% of the overall number of units, which is broadly comparable to the national average (9%). The amount of convenience floorspace in the centre (28%) is substantially higher than the national average (15%). This is due to the presence of two foodstores within the centre boundary: Morrisons (4,194sq m in size) and Aldi (1,443sq m). It is noted that the number of convenience units in West Kirby has increased by 2 units since 2015.

In addition to the two foodstores, West Kirby's convenience offer comprises: 3 convenience stores, 2 newsagents, 2 bakeries, 2 delicatessens, a butchers, an off license and a greengrocer. We consider this to be a good variety of convenience uses.

We consider that the convenience provision in West Kirby is strong and has improved since the previous 2015 survey.

### Comparison Goods Units

West Kirby provides 63 comparison units, equating to 37% of the overall total of units in the centre. This is notably above the national average (30%). In terms of the level of comparison floorspace in West Kirby, the centre provides circa 7,000sq m gross of floorspace, which represents 29% of the overall floorspace in the centre. In contrast to the proportion of units in the centre, the proportion of floorspace in comparison use is notably below the national average (34%). This can be attributed to the fact that nearly two thirds of all comparison units (65%) are less than 100sq m in size. The largest comparison unit is the M&Co clothing store (687sq m). Other larger comparison units include Barnardos (311sq m), Boots, (287sq m) and the Nancy Henry Boutique (279sq m).

The overall comparison offer in West Kirby has decreased in size from 67 units in 2015 to 63 units, reflecting the wider national trends of a decrease in comparison retailing. Despite the reduction in the number of units in this category, we note that West Kirby retains an above average representation of comparison retailers, something which was not observed in all other town centres.

Regarding the composition of comparison uses, for its size, West Kirby accommodates a good number of furnishing/furniture stores (10) and clothing and footwear shops (12). Other stores include: jewellers, pharmacies, card/gift stores, bridalwear stores, DIY stores, antique stores, florists and art dealers. We note the centre also contains a high number of charity shops (10). Despite the number of charity shops, we consider that the current level of provision does not detract from the vitality and viability of the centre.

Overall, we consider that, despite the reduction in the number of units in this category between surveys, for its size, the comparison offer in West Kirby is good and covers a reasonably wide range of goods.

### **Retail Services**

Retail services in West Kirby account for 18% of the overall total, which is above the national average of 15%. In terms of floorspace, 10% of the total amount of floorspace in West Kirby is in retail service use, which is also above the national average of 7%.

Of the 30 retail service units, two thirds are currently occupied by hairdressers and beauty salons. Other uses include opticians, travel agents, funeral directors, an upholsterer, a clothing alteration store, a mobile repair store, a dog groomer and a specialist watch repair store. We also note the presence of a Post Office in the centre as a concession within the Premier convenience store.

Overall, despite the majority of retail service units being occupied by hairdressers/beauty salons, the retail service provision in West Kirby Town Centre is considered to be reasonable.

### **Leisure Services**

38 units are currently occupied by leisure service uses, equating to 22% of all the units in the centre. This is slightly below the national average of 24%. The amount of floorspace in leisure use (21%) is also below the national average (25%). Despite the below average representation, the number of leisure service units in West Kirby has increased since the previous 2015 survey (+4).

The composition of leisure service units includes: 20 restaurants/cafes, 8 take away outlets, 7 bars/public houses and a social club. Adjacent to the town centre boundary is West Kirby Leisure Centre which includes a swimming pool, gymnasium and multi-use sports hall. Approximately 200m to the west of the centre, along Dee Lane, is the Wirral Sailing Centre and Marine Lake. There is also the West Kirby Sailing Club located approximately 400m to the south of the centre along South Parade. All of these facilities are significant leisure assets which, although falling outside of the boundary, potentially attract users to the centre.

Whilst the town centre has a below average leisure service representation, we consider that the leisure service offering to be reasonably good for its size.

### **Financial and Business Services**

West Kirby's financial and business service offering occupies 21 units. The current proportion of units in financial and business service use (12%) is slightly above the national average (10%). The amount of floorspace in use in this category (11%) is also above the national average (7%).

The financial and business service offering in West Kirby is considered to be good. It provides 6 banks/building societies, 6 estate agents, 4 solicitors, an employment agency, a professional cleaning service, a mortgage broker and an accountancy firm.

### **Markets**

A farmers market is held every fourth Saturday of the month in St Andrews Church Hall approximately 250m to the north of the town centre.

### **Non-Retail/Commercial Units**

In addition to the retail, commercial and leisure units identified above, West Kirby Town Centre contains a medical centre, tuition centre and other medical facilities. No other non-retail units were identified in the survey within the town centre boundary. We note the presence of West Kirby Library adjacent to the centre's north eastern boundary which will contribute to the role and function of the town centre. There is also the West Kirby Arts Centre, located on Brookfield Gardens, which is a multi-purpose community venue and events space

### **Events**

The town centre benefits from a number of events that take place within and close to the centre. The West Kirby Live Festival is a yearly event which sees a large number of acts perform in several venues both within and close to the town centre. There are also number of events which occur in locations close to the centre, including the British Open Dinghy Race Championships at the West Kirby Marine Lake and the Wirral Triathlon which is also hosted from the Marine lake. Numerous events are also hosted at the West Kirby Arts Centre including plays, poetry and concerts.

### **Operator Requirements**

A search on the 'Requirements List' has found there are no operators are currently seeking premises in West Kirby Town Centre.

## Vacancies

Just two properties are currently vacant in West Kirby Town Centre. This equates to just 1% of the overall total of units in the town centre which is significantly below than the national average of 12%. This is the lowest amount and proportion recorded in any of the town centres in the Borough.

Both of the vacant units are located along Banks Road and respectively measure 38sq m and 158sq m in size. In comparison to the national average, the proportion of vacant floorspace in West Kirby (1%) is also significantly lower.

Overall, the low vacancy rates in West Kirby are a positive indication of its health.



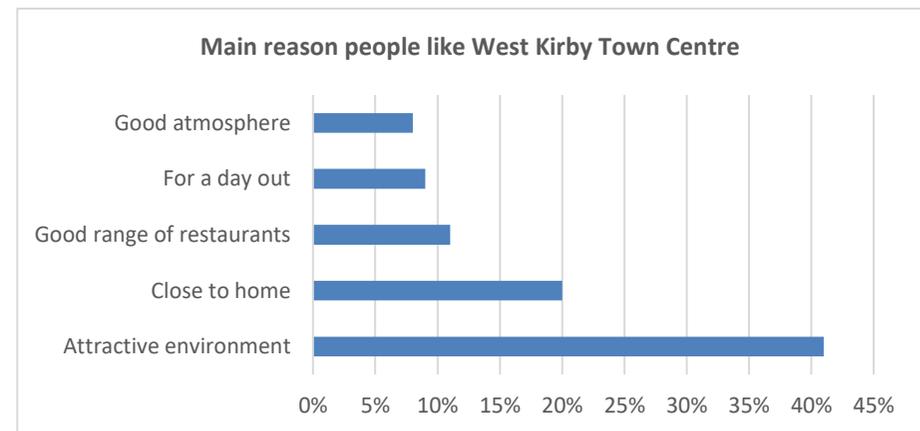
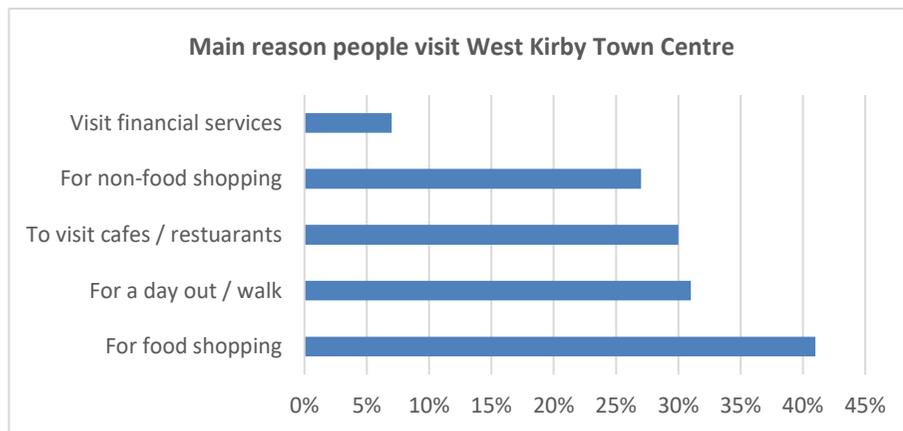
**Photograph 7:** Vacant unit on Banks Road

## Customers' Views and Behaviour

Using data from the NEMS household survey, we have identified behaviour and the main reasons why respondents visit West Kirby Town Centre, what they like about it and what, if anything, would encourage them to visit the centre more often.

Of the respondents who said they visited West Kirby, 11% visit the town centre on a daily basis, 65% visit at least once or twice a week, and 19% visit at least once or twice a month. In terms of how people travel to the centre, 63% travelled by car or van, 19% walked to the centre, 14% travelled by bus and 2% travelled by train.

When asked what their main reason for visiting the centre was, the most popular answer from respondents was to conduct their food shopping (41%). Other popular main reasons for the visiting the centre included visiting for a day out/walk (31%), to visit cafes/restaurants (30%), for non-food shopping (27%) and to visit financial services (7%).



41% of respondents stated that they liked West Kirby because of its attractive environment and it being a nice place to visit. Other answers included that it was close to home (20%), had a good range of restaurants (11%), was good for a day out (9%) and has a good atmosphere (8%).

Respondents were also invited to suggest measures that could be implemented which would encourage them to visit the centre more often, with the most popular answer being to increase the amount of available parking spaces (14%). Other suggestions included making parking free (8%), cleaner/better maintained streets (6%), more independent shops (5%) and more leisure facilities (5%).



## Pedestrian Flows

In the absence of pedestrian count surveys, comments on pedestrian activity are based on observation during our visits to the centre in August 2019.

The centre was observed to be reasonably busy. The area around the train station was a notable hub of activity and there were significant flows noted around The Crescent and on Dee Lane towards the beach. Pedestrian activity was observed along Banks Road, however this was less than that observed in the northern area of the centre.

## Accessibility

The accessibility of the centre is determined by the ease and convenience of access by a choice of means of travel, including that which is provided to pedestrians, cyclists and disabled people, and the ease of access from the main arrival points to the principal attractions in the centre.

### Road Access

Grange Road, in the northern area of the town centre, is part of the A540 which is a key route linking West Kirby to Hoylake in the north and Heswall to the south. Banks Road (B5141) is a key local route connecting to many streets in the town. We note that The Crescent has been modified to be a one-way system, presumably to aid the flow of traffic between the A540 and the B5141. We would consider road access to the centre to be adequate.

### Car Parking

There is a large council operated car park off Orrysdale Road, to the rear of the leisure centre (171 spaces) and another large car park on Dee Lane (173 spaces). The Aldi and the Morrisons also have large car parks, however these are for customer use only. On street parking was available along The Crescent and Banks Road, which were both observed to be very busy at the time of our visits.

### Public Transport

The provision of public transport in West Kirby is considered to be good. The centre contains West Kirby Railway Station within its boundary which offers frequent services towards Liverpool Central via Hoylake, Moreton, Birkenhead Central and other destinations on the Merseyrail network. Bus stops are located on Banks Road and Grange Road with services towards destinations in the Borough and beyond.

### Walking, Cycling and Disabled Access

The built form of West Kirby means that the bulk of residential areas are located to the east and south of the centre, with the area to the west being separated from Moreton and Greasby by the Green Belt. These characteristics coupled with the centre's proximity to the coastline does limit the potential residential catchment. The streets were considered to be walkable and wide enough to accommodate pushchairs and wheelchairs. Crescent Walk is a small pedestrianised street connecting The Crescent to Tynwald Road allowing for greater permeability to the centre.

The centre is located adjacent to the Wirral Way cycle track, an off-road path directly linking Hoylake with Heswall via West Kirby. Cycle parking is available in the centre however this is concentrated in the northern area around the railway station.

All car parks contain disabled spaces.

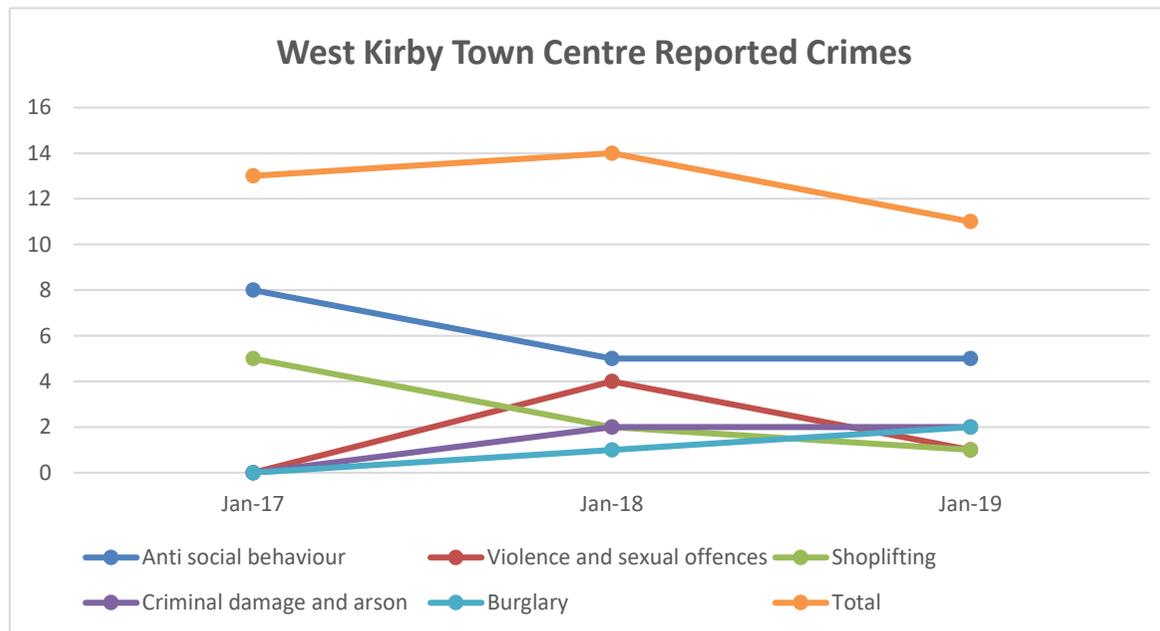
## Perception of Safety and Occurrence of Crime

West Kirby Town Centre generally feels safe and secure. The location of the centre along key thoroughfares means there is a regular flow of traffic throughout the daytime. CCTV was observed on Dee Lane and in individual premises in the centre. Morrisons Supermarket was noted as having CCTV coverage of the car park areas as well as in store.

Crime statistics have been obtained from police.uk and show the five most common forms of reported crime occurrences in the centre. Overall, the amount of crime is decreasing in the centre, despite a spike in June 2018.

There was a notable concentration of crime in Morrisons and shops along The Crescent, which were hubs for shoplifting.

Incidences of anti-social behaviour and shoplifting show a downwards trend, with burglary, criminal damage and violent offenses showing a slight upwards trend.



## Town Centre Environmental Quality

West Kirby is an attractive town centre which contains several prominent buildings, including a Grade II Listed Building (Barclays bank on Grange Road). Buildings along The Crescent provide a unique aesthetic. The southern area of the town centre, along Banks road, offers more of a traditional high street look, with shop units on the ground floor of terraced buildings with residential uses above. The northern area of the centre has more of a mix of styles.

Generally, the environmental quality of the town centre is considered to be good. Crescent Walk has a vibrant character which is different from the rest of the centre. The shopfronts are generally noted as being modern and in a good condition. There are specific buildings which seemed to impose on the street scene, whether through their design (M&Co) or their scale compared to surrounding units (Morrisons), however this does not significantly impact the centre's overall environmental quality.

Soft landscaping, vegetation and planting is present; however this was relatively minimal and seemingly more concentrated around the railway station. The area around the station would, however, benefit from cosmetic improvements or some degree of remodelling of a standard and quality to reflect it being a key location and gateway to the centre. Grange Road is noted as being particularly busy and the number of cars parked along The Crescent and Banks Road detracts from the centres environmental quality somewhat.

Overall, we would consider the centre's environmental quality is good. However, we believe it would benefit from some cosmetic improvements such as additional planting and exploring options to improve the area around the railway station.

## Balance of Independent and Multiple Stores

West Kirby Town Centre benefits from a strong independent offering. 148 (87%) of the units in the centre are occupied by independent businesses offering a range of services/retail provision. The town centre has the highest proportion of independent businesses of any town centre in Wirral.

Whilst just 23 (13%) of units are occupied by national multiple occupiers, the likes of Morrisons, Aldi, Boots, Superdrug, Timpson, Costa and major banks are present.

In terms of the detailed composition of national brands, of the 17 convenience units in the centre, 7 (41%) are national multiple operators. These operators include, Morrisons, Aldi, Premier and One Stop. The remaining 10 (59%) are independent retailers, which include bakeries, newsagents, grocers and delicatessens / butchers.

Turning to comparison provision, of the 63 units, 90% are occupied by independent stores. National comparison retailers are limited to Boots, Lloyds Pharmacy, Rightway, M&Co, Hallmark and Superdrug. The independent comparison offer in the centre is more oriented towards a higher end market and includes jewellers, bridalwear, interior furnishings, jewellers, clothing stores and boutiques.

For retail services, just 1 national retailer, Hayes Travel, is located in the centre, with the remainder being local traders. The independent offering predominantly comprises of health & beauty salons and also accommodates opticians, clothing alterations and more niche uses such as photographic studios and funeral directors.

In terms of leisure services, 3 (8%) national retailers were present (J D Wetherspoon, Costa and Subway), this is significantly less when compared to other town centres in the Borough. The rest of the leisure service units (82%) primarily comprises of restaurants and cafes, with notably less take away outlets than other centres.

Finally, in terms of financial services, national operators include Yorkshire Building Society, Barclays, Lloyds, Skipton Building Society, Natwest and Santander. The independent offering is underpinned by a mixture of estate agents, solicitors and accountants.

The overall balance of independent and multiple store offering is considered to be good with its strong independent sector adding to the uniqueness of the town centre offering.

## Evidence of Barriers to Business

We consider that the main barriers to retail and commercial leisure businesses opening premises in the town centre are:

- Limited/no potential development sites or vacant units for new businesses to locate to the centre
- Limited catchment by virtue of the centre's near-coastal location, proximity to Hoylake District Centre and the Green belt.
- Location on the edge of the Wirral away from the main bulk of the urban area.

## Opening Hours & Evening/Night-Time Economy Offer

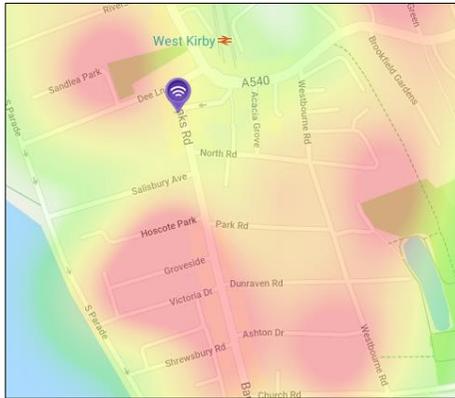
The majority of retail units in the centre operate under traditional opening hours of 09.00-17.30 on Monday to Saturdays and 10.00-16.00 on Sundays. Both of the foodstores have longer opening hours, opening from 07.00/08.00 up until 22.00.

The bars, public houses and restaurants have more flexible operating times, opening later in the day (from 11.00 onwards) and remaining open later until 22.00/23.00 during the week and a limited number remaining open slightly later (23.45) with one unit (Wetherspoons) remaining open until 01.00 on Fridays and Saturdays.

We would consider there is a reasonably good evening economy present in West Kirby although it is noted that users of the centre do identify that further leisure provision would encourage them to visit the centre more often.

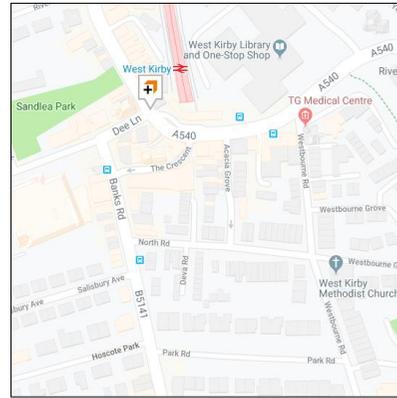
## Digital Facilities/Connectivity

### BT Wi-Fi Hotspots



Source: [www.btwifi.co.uk/find/](http://www.btwifi.co.uk/find/)

### Collect+ Locations



Source: [www.collectplus.co.uk/store\\_locator/](http://www.collectplus.co.uk/store_locator/)

### Amazon Locker Locations



Source: [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)

Developing a 'bricks & clicks' environment can benefit a town centre by attracting additional visitors and bringing a further layer of interaction through the promotion of events and advertising. BT and The Cloud (now Sky) are identified by the ATCM (Association of Town & City Management) as providing the most commonly offered free Wi-Fi hotspots within town centres, while Collect + and Amazon commonly provide town centre facilities where customers can collect items that they have ordered from online retailers.

There is a single BT Wifi hotspot in the centre located at the Natwest Bank. Generally, wifi coverage of the centre is mixed, with the southern area along Grange Road having a good degree of coverage and the northern area having poorer levels of coverage. There is currently a single Collect+ location in the centre, which is the Go Local store on Grange Road. There is also a single Amazon pickup location listed in West Kirby town centre, which is the Post Office at The Crescent.

Neither Morrisons nor Aldi operate a Click & Collect service, however, Morrisons is linked with Amazon to accommodate same day delivery services.

Overall, the town centre appears to be reasonably well served by free-wifi provision but not particularly well catered for in terms of collect+ and Amazon parcel drop off/pick up points.

## Conclusions

Overall, the town centre is considered to display good levels of vitality and viability. Having regard to our vitality and viability health check assessment, we consider that the principal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the centre are as follows:

### Strengths and Opportunities

- Strong convenience goods provision with two anchor foodstores present.
- Good comparison goods offer (for its size) covering a reasonably wide range of goods.
- Good independent retailing presence which offers a high end/quality goods.
- Good environmental quality and architectural character.
- Good financial and business service provision.
- Very low vacancy rates.
- Whilst a reasonably good leisure service provision, feedback from users identify that further services would encourage them to visit the town centre more often.
- Falling crime levels.
- Opportunity for some cosmetic improvements and additional planting.

### Weaknesses and Threats

- Currently no identified operator requirements.
- Lack of available units/sites for potential operator requirements.
- The high number of charity shops.

Our recommendations on the extent of the town centre boundary and primary shopping area are set out in plan form at Appendix K of The Study. These are newly drawn boundaries as the previous UDP boundary designations for the town centre are not supported by the NPPF.