



Kirklees
METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

Town Centres Team- Planning Services
Birstall
Local Centre Assessment
August 2006



Introduction

This statement is the fourth annual publication of key economic information for Birstall. It enables comparisons with other small shopping areas within Kirklees to be made and provides a “snapshot” of the centre in terms of economic activity.

The indicators used in this publication cover:

- retail occupancy in terms of floorspace and shop units,
- vacancy rates,
- pedestrian footfall,
- car parking provision.

Floorspace, shop units and vacancy

A survey of shop units, vacancy and floorspace was undertaken in May 2006. This revealed that there is 2,830 sq.m. (30,451 sq.ft.) of net retail floorspace in Birstall shopping centre.

Birstall has seen a slight increase in the number of convenience and service units within the study area. Comparison units have recorded a decrease, however, three premises are currently under refurbishment.

Vacancy in the centre has increased both in terms of retail floorspace and units. Many of the vacant units are located on the periphery of the main shopping area. Further monitoring will take place over the next 12 months to determine the occupancy levels in the centre.

There are 7 national multiple retailers present within Birstall study boundary equating to 9.9% of occupied retail units, as well as one charity multiple.

Retail floorspace in Birstall (sq.m. net)

	Convenience	Comparison	Vacant	Under refurbishment ²	TOTAL
2004	780 27.7%	1,723 61.2%	313 11.1%	-	2,816 100%
2005	780 27.7%	1,875 66.9%	148 5.3%	-	2,803 100%
2006	796 28.1%	1,760 62.2%	183 6.5%	91 3.2%	2,830 100%
% change 05-06	+2.1%	-6.1%	+23.6%	N/A	+1.0%

Shop units in Birstall centre

	Convenience	Comparison ¹	Service	Vacant	Under refurbishment ²	TOTAL
2004	7 8.9%	38 48.1%	24 30.4%	10 12.6%	-	79 100%
2005	7 9%	42 53.9%	23 29.5%	6 7.7%	-	78 100%
2006	8 10.1%	36 45.6%	24 30.4%	8 10.1%	3 3.8%	79 100%
% change 05-06	+14.2%	-14.3%	+4.4%	+33.3%	N/A	+1.28%

The table below shows the make-up of Birstall in comparison with Mirfield and Ravensthorpe. A similar distribution of convenience and comparison goods shopping provision can be found in Birstall and Ravensthorpe although Ravensthorpe records a much higher floorspace and unit vacancy rate.

Floorspace & unit comparison (sq.m. net)³

	Birstall	Mirfield	Ravensthorpe
Convenience	796 28.1%	1,862 29.1%	679 30.3%
Comparison	1,760 62.2%	4,278 66.9%	1,156 51.5%
Vacant	183 6.5%	255 4%	379 16.9%
Under Refurbishment	91 3.2%	35 0.5%	31 1.4%
Total retail floorspace	2,830 100%	6,430 100%	2,245 100%
Number of vacant units	8 10.1%	8 7.8%	13 18.6%
Total number of units	79 100%	103 100%	70 100%

Pedestrian footfall⁴

A sample of the number of pedestrians using Birstall was undertaken on a market day in May 2006, using two count points.

In comparison to 2005, Low Lane recorded a significant increase in pedestrian numbers particularly in the morning. Overall, pedestrian numbers increased by 19.3% on the previous year.

This may have been due to the influence of the market in conjunction with good weather conditions.

From 2003 to 2006, there has been considerable fluctuation in the number of pedestrians recorded on Low Lane. This year saw the largest increase on Low Lane towards the Co-op, many people were walking from the Market and heading into the centre of Birstall throughout the counting period.

However, it must be noted that the centre attracts relatively small numbers of visitors and therefore proportionate changes are easily exaggerated.

Pedestrian numbers 2005-2006

Survey Location		2005	2006	% change
Co-op (In only)	a.m.	150	134	-10.6%
	p.m.	96	93	-3.0%
Low Lane towards Market	a.m.	222	298	+34.2%
	p.m.	164	195	+18.9%
Low Lane towards Co-op	a.m.	234	322	+37.6%
	p.m.	180	206	+14.4%
TOTAL		1,046	1,248	+19.3%

Off-street car parking provision

The shoppers car parks in Birstall are free of charge and are shown on the map overleaf.

Car Park	Ownership	Spaces
1. High Street	Council	45 spaces
2. Low Lane	Council	26 spaces
3. Market Place	Council	33 spaces
4. Smithies Lane	Council	27spaces

Car park capacities

Birstall has a car parking to floorspace ratio of 51.3 spaces per thousand sq.m of occupied retail floorspace. This compares well with similar sized towns elsewhere in the district and exceeds the provision of 43.2 per thousand sq.m in Mirfield.



High Street car park

Development information

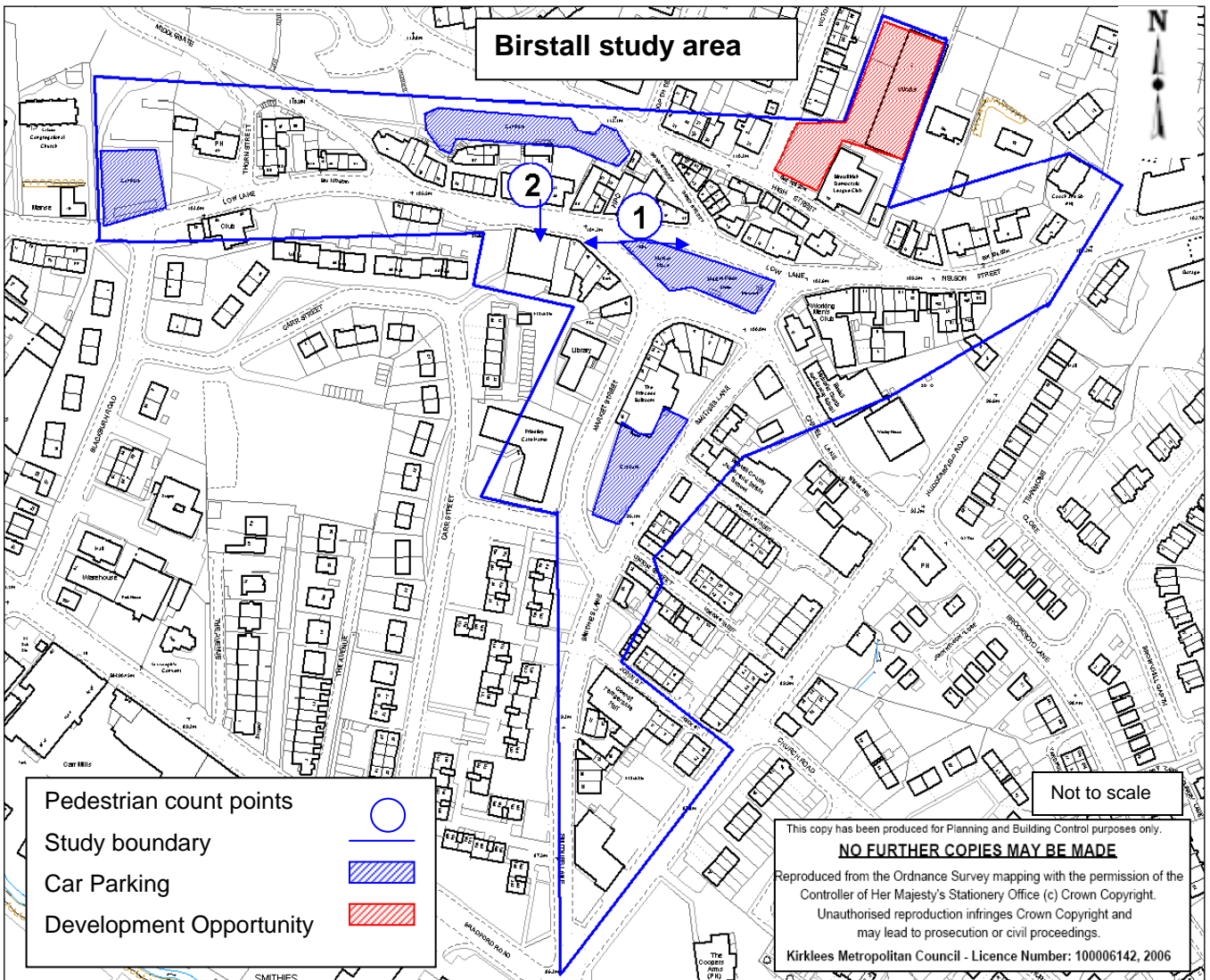
Since 2004, the new Kirklees Library and Information Centre located on Market Street has seen an increase of 93% in the number of customers using the service. This may well be generating spin-off benefits for the rest of the town centre.

Over the past twelve months there has been an increased opportunity for development in Birstall. Around the High Street and Market Place area of the centre, there are a number of vacant premises with off street parking provision available.

As part of Kirklees Council's Small Centres Improvement Programme, Birstall has been allocated funding for environmental, commercial property and highway improvements. Over the next two years in total approximately £1 million will be spent within the town centre on a variety of schemes.



Market Place



Notes:

1. Comparison goods figures also include A1 uses such as opticians/travel agents etc..
2. No data available pre 2006.
3. Floorspace relates to the units within the study boundary of selected local centres
4. Pedestrian counts were undertaken for an hour in the morning and the afternoon at the locations shown on the map.



Joseph Priestley Statue, Market Place

**The Town Centres Team
Planning Services, Kirklees M.C.
P.O Box B93, Civic Centre III
Huddersfield, HD1 2JR
Tel: 01484 221628 Fax: 01484 221613
E-mail: carol.dean@kirklees.gov.uk**

**For more information and/or
copies of this and other annual
statements, please access
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