# BATLEY TOWN CENTRE

## ANNUAL STATEMENT OF KEY ECONOMIC INDICATORS
## MARCH 2008

## INTRODUCTION

The health and vitality of shopping centres in the Kirklees District is monitored on an annual basis through the Town Centre Audit Programme undertaken by the Town Centres Team of Planning Services. The role of individual town centres is assessed and monitored through the collection and analysis of performance data which allows the scope for renewal, diversification and change to be identified.

Yearly statements on the health and vitality of Batley Town Centre have been produced along with two more extensive town centre audits in 1996 and 2004. The town is assessed against a series of indicators, which are:

- Shop unit and floorspace occupancy
- Vacancy rates
- Pedestrian footfall
- Retail development pipeline
- Retailer demand
- Prime retail rental levels
- Accessibility including car park usage levels

## FLOORSPACE, SHOP UNITS AND VACANCY

The most recent survey of shop unit occupancy was undertaken during November 2007. This reveals that Batley Town Centre provides a total of 206 shop units within the main shopping area shown on page 8. 54% of these are given over to comparison goods (non-food) retailing and 9% to convenience goods (food). 24% of shop units in the town are occupied by service uses. 157 units are either occupied by retailers or vacant and provide a total of almost 28,500 sq.m. of net floorspace. Figure 1 illustrates the make up of the main shopping area in both 2006 and 2007.

**Figure 1: Batley shop unit / floorspace statistics**

| | Nov 2006 | | Nov 2007 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Sales fl'space sq.m | Shop units | Sales fl'space sq.m | Shop units |
| Convenience (food) | 7,420 (25.9%) | 18 (8.6%) | 7,692 (27.0%) | 18 (8.7%) |
| Comparison[1] (non-food) | 19,692 (68.8%) | 122 (58.4%) | 18,869 (66.4%) | 111 (53.9%) |
| Service | N/A | 48 (23.0%) | N/A | 49 (23.8%) |
| Vacant | 1,441 (5.0%) | 20 (9.6%) | 1,877 (6.6%) | 28 (13.6%) |
| Under refurbishment | 76 (0.3%) | 1 (0.5%) | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | **28,629 (100%)** | **209 (100%)** | **28,438 (100%)** | **206 (100%)** |

The most noticeable changes in the make up of the town during the last 12 months have been the drop in comparison goods retail provision and the increase in vacancy. Figure 2 overleaf shows the percentage changes in each category of use and illustrates the sharp 40% rise in vacant units (30.3% in terms of vacant floorspace). Much of the new vacancy this year has occurred along Commercial Street where 5 units have been vacated since the last assessment. There have also been 7 changes into the pub/café/restaurant sector, which is particularly evident at the Bradford Road junction with Hick Lane. Despite these fluctuations within different categories of use, the overall trend shows no significant changes in the level of retail provision in Batley with reductions of 0.7% in terms of floorspace and 1.4% in terms of unit numbers.

Figure 3 shows the provision of units and floorspace in Batley town centre in comparison to the national average, and also indicates the change in this relationship since the last assessment.

**Figure 2: Percentage changes 2006-07**

| | Floorspace | Shop units |
|---|---|---|
| Convenience | +3.7 | 0 |
| Comparison | -4.2 | -9.0 |
| Service | N/A | +2.1 |
| Vacant | +30.3 | +40.0 |
| TOTAL | **-0.7** | **-1.4** |

It is clear from Figure 3 that service uses including pubs, clubs and restaurants, as well as vacant units are up on last year and in terms of the number of units are both above the national average. However, despite the growth in the number of vacant units, the amount of vacant floorspace remains below the national average which indicates the small size of many of the vacant shop units within the town. Retail floorspace devoted to the sale of clothing and footwear has dropped since last year and is now below the national average. However, this may in part be due to the increasing number of general, multi-sector retailers within the Mill at Bradford Road which has previously been home to more specific clothing sector retailers.

**Figure 3: Comparison with national averages[2]**

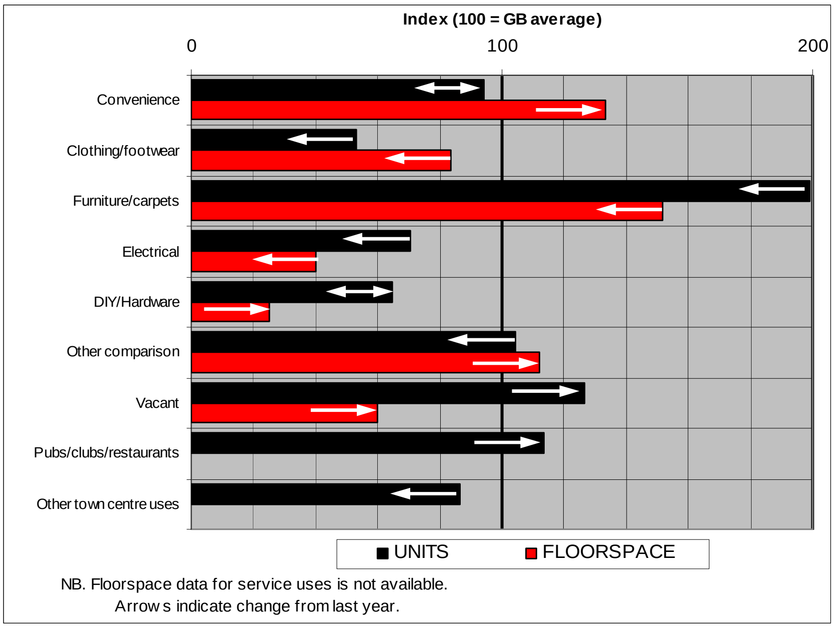



Figure 4 shows Batley's floorspace and vacant unit statistics in comparison to selected towns in north Kirklees. Batley continues to have one of the lowest floorspace vacancy rates of the district with only Holmfirth performing better at 5.3%. However, the town's unit vacancy rate is now above those of Holmfirth, Cleckheaton and Dewsbury, with only Heckmondwike recording a lower performance than Batley. There is also little evidence of shop unit refurbishment within the Batley study area, whilst all of the other towns in the district show signs of investment in this respect.

**Figure 4: Floorspace & vacant unit comparisons[3]**

| | Batley | Dewsbury | Heck'wike |
|---|---|---|---|
| Convenience sq.m. | 7,692 (27.0%) | 9,969 (20.2%) | 4,914 (44.2%) |
| Comparison$_1$ sq.m. | 18,869 (66.4%) | 32,011 (65.0%) | 4,543 (40.8%) |
| Vacant sq.m. | 1,877 (6.6%) | 6,304 (12.8%) | 1,549 (13.9%) |
| Under refurbishment sq.m. | 0 | 960 (1.9%) | 118 (1.1%) |
| Total retail floorspace sq.m. | **28,438 (100%)** | **49,244 (100%)** | **11,124 (100%)** |
| No. of vacant units | 28 (13.6%) | 45 (13.1%) | 36 (23.7%) |
| No. units under refurbishment | 0 | 9 (2.6%) | 1 (0.7%) |
| Total no. of units | **206 (100%)** | **344 (100%)** | **152 (100%)** |

***Upper photo: Former retail unit on Bradford Road now vacant***

***Lower photo: Batley Market Place***

## PEDESTRIAN FOOTFALL

Since 1994, pedestrian footfall counts have been undertaken on a yearly basis in Batley to measure the volume and pattern of visitor/shopper movement. The exercise takes place on a non-market day, market day and Saturday during November to provide a 'snapshot' picture at the same time each year. Counts are conducted for one hour in both the morning and afternoon (10.30am-11.30am and 2.30pm-3.30pm) with a series of sample counts in between these. The count locations cover main access points into the town centre and primary circulation routes including the bridge access to the town's main shopping street from the Tesco Extra store on Bradford Road. The distribution of count locations is shown on the map on page 8.

**Figure 5: Percentage change in pedestrian numbers**

| | | 2006 | 2007 | % change |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Non-market day | a.m. | 1706 | 1534 | -10.1 |
| | p.m. | 1306 | 1375 | +5.3 |
| Market day | a.m. | 2072 | 2039 | -1.6 |
| | p.m. | 1576 | 1619 | +2.7 |
| Saturday | a.m. | 1961 | 1979 | +0.9 |
| | p.m. | 1726 | 1843 | +6.8 |
| **TOTAL** | | **10347** | **10389** | **+0.4** |

Figure 5 shows the percentage changes in recorded levels of pedestrian footfall from the 2006 to 2007 assessments. Overall, there has been little change in the numbers of visitors counted at the given points, with the town achieving a slight gain of 0.4%. However, this masks fluctuations in pedestrian numbers at specific places and on the different days. For example, the non-market day morning assessment reveals a downturn in numbers of around 10% which could in part be due to poor weather or may reflect a more significant trend. Conversely, the Saturday and non-market day afternoon assessments have achieved around 7% and 5% growth on last year, respectively.

**Figure 6: Morning and Afternoon Hour Samples 2007**

| | Day/date | Non-Market Day Thu 8th Nov | | Market Day Fri 9th Nov | | Saturday 10th Nov | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Weather | Windy, cold, showers | | Cold, sunny | | Cold, dry | |
| | | a.m. | p.m. | a.m. | p.m. | a.m. | p.m. |
| 1. Commercial Street | | 232 | 200 | 332 | 339 | 324 | 259 |
| 2. Cambridge Street | | 70 | 75 | 177 | 97 | 116 | 75 |
| 3. Upper Commercial St / Branch Rd | | 268 | 213 | 555 | 301 | 287 | 143 |
| 4. Bradford Road | | 494 | 467 | 462 | 484 | 720 | 869 |
| 5. St James Street | | 470 | 420 | 513 | 398 | 532 | 497 |
| **TOTAL INTO TOWN** | | **1534** | **1375** | **2039** | **1619** | **1979** | **1843** |
| 6. Alfred's Way: | a) Up | 80 | 59 | 136 | 71 | 91 | 78 |
| | b) Down | 49 | 45 | 124 | 73 | 88 | 62 |
| 7. Tesco 'Extra': | a) In | 787 | 647 | 736 | 714 | 876 | 1155 |
| | b) Out | 798 | 518 | 807 | 897 | 778 | 1250 |
| 8. Bridge Link: | a) To Tesco | 188 | 129 | 304 | 236 | 300 | 207 |
| | b) From Tesco | 145 | 109 | 181 | 198 | 195 | 177 |
| 9. The Mill: | a) In | 300 | 280 | 315 | 280 | 629 | 577 |
| | b) Out | 155 | 328 | 164 | 324 | 269 | 526 |

All counts are flows into town unless otherwise stated. Counts at Bradford Rd, St James St and The Mill include both pedestrians and car occupants. Total into town includes count locations 1 to 5. The remaining counts relate to the movement of pedestrians around the town.

Figure 6 gives a street by street breakdown of pedestrian numbers recorded in the town. This shows the continued popularity of Bradford Road and St James Street as major entrance points to the town by car; and the strength of Commercial Street as the main shopping area. Tesco and the Mill are both strong destinations particularly on Saturdays. Cambridge Road and Alfred's Way record the lowest levels of footfall but nevertheless represent important routes into and around the town centre.

The bridge connecting Tesco with Commercial Street continues to be well used and provided pedestrian access for 16% more people on the Saturday assessment compared to last year, demonstrating its increasing importance.

The change in footfall levels recorded coming into Batley town centre since 1995 are shown in Figure 7. It illustrates the fluctuations experienced in visitor numbers and the overall recovery of pedestrian footfall after the dip recorded in 2001. Non-market day numbers have remained within a narrow range throughout the history of the data collection, whilst Saturday and market day have experienced more dramatic peaks and troughs. The level of activity recorded throughout the town during the course of each day is shown in Figure 8.

**Figure 7: Footfall levels 1995 – 2007 (at 5 locations)**

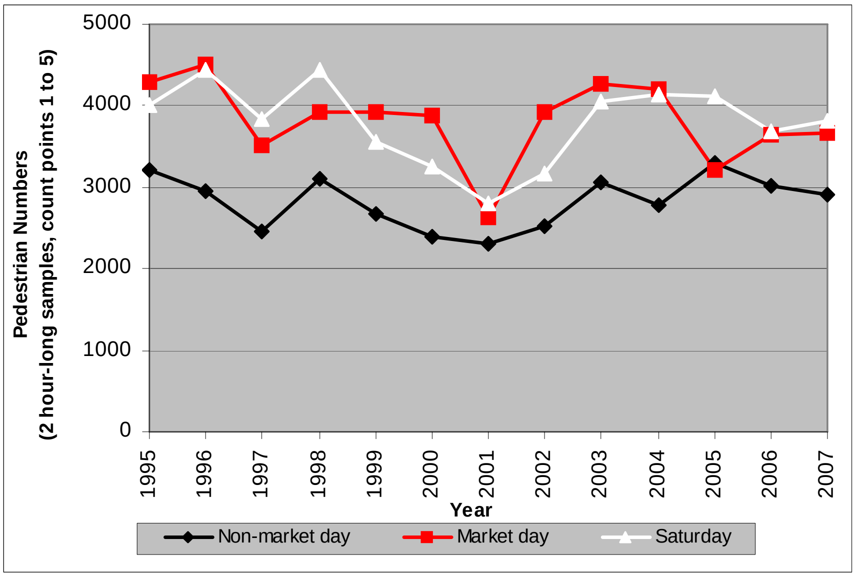
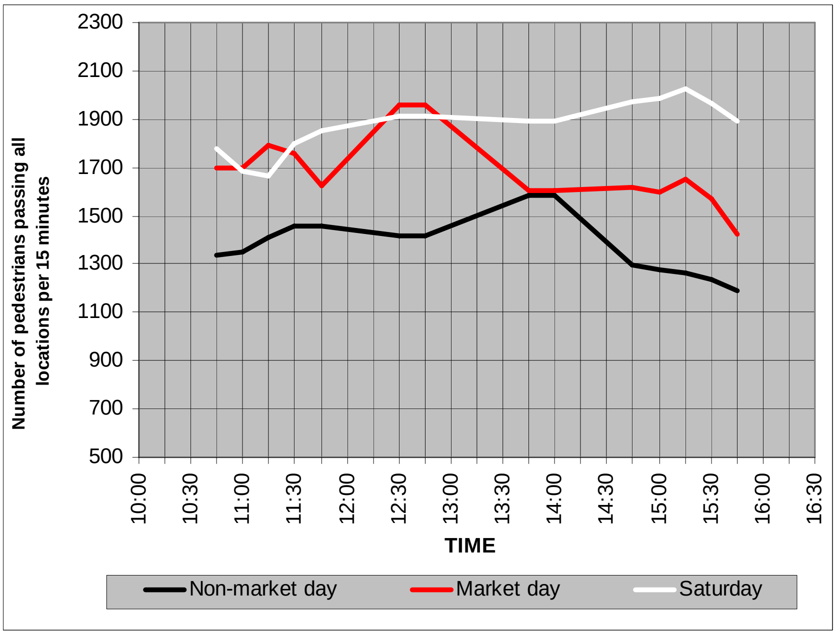



**Figure 8: Daily profile of activity**




Compared to the 2006 assessment, Figure 8 shows a less pronounced peak in activity on Saturday afternoon and a more constant level of pedestrian numbers during the course of the day. The distinctive lunch time weekday peak occurs earlier on market day than on non-market day, perhaps illustrating the busier morning trade period of the open market. Pedestrian footfall in the town will continue to be monitored using these methods to track future changes.

***Left photo: Market Place***
***Right photo: Batley Library***

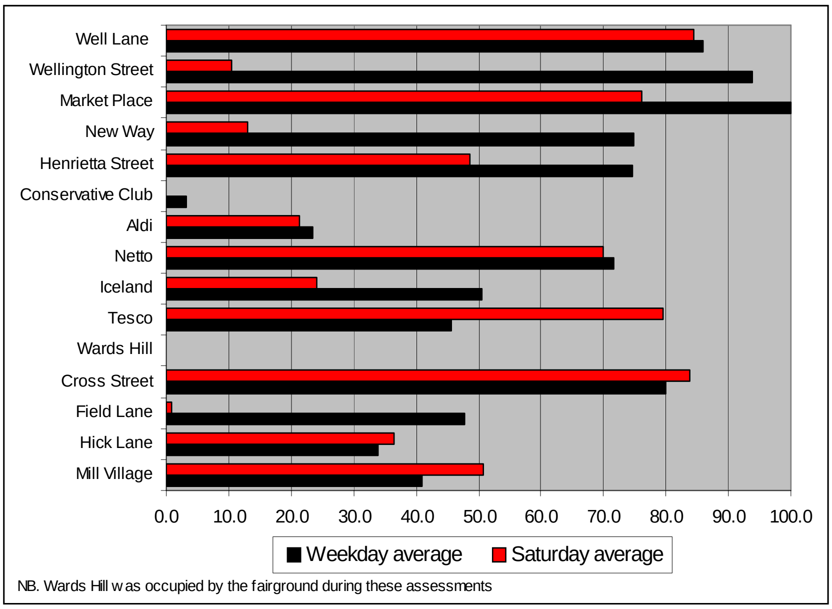
## ACCESSIBILITY

Government guidance contained in Planning Policy Statement 6 (Town Centres) states that visitors to town centres should have easy and convenient access to a range of means of travel including quality car parking, frequent public transport serving a good range of origins around the local area, and good quality provision for all visitors. A brief assessment of Batley's accessibility is given below.

### Car park occupancy levels

Since 2001, occupancy levels within Batley town centre car parks have been measured using 'spot' checks on the same days as the pedestrian footfall assessments. At four separate times through each day, the number of vehicles occupying parking spaces within the each of 15 car parks is recorded. The average daily occupancy rate can then be calculated. Figure 9 shows the average percentage occupancy rates for each car park assessed in 2007, comparing market day, non-market day and Saturday.

**Figure 9: Average percentage occupancy levels by car park**




Many of the Council owned car parks in the town are less well used on Saturday compared to weekdays, perhaps suggesting weekday usage by workers in the town. Only the car parks at Cross Street, Market Place and Well Lane consistently achieve occupancy rates of more than 70%. On weekdays, Wellington Street, New Way and Henrietta Street all achieve above 70% occupancy but are less well used at the weekend. Conversely, Tesco's car park is on average less than 50% occupied on weekdays but reaches nearly 80% use on Saturday.

### Pedestrians and cyclists

Batley town centre has no pedestrianised shopping areas except for the covered centre at Alfred's Way which provides a pedestrian link between the Bradford Road and Commercial Street sides of the town centre. This is a sloping arcade which is accessible to disabled people and opens out directly onto the main shopping street. Wide footways along Commercial Street make the town fairly pedestrian friendly but there is only one traffic light controlled crossing on this street. Provision for cyclists includes cycle lockers at both Commercial Street and the train station – giving access to a total of 7 secure, covered parking places. There are also cycle stands at various locations around the town.


***Above: Batley bus station***

### Public transport

The new £1.6m Batley bus station off Bradford Road was opened in April 2005 and provides a covered central concourse and waiting areas giving access to the 6 stands. The concourse is monitored by 24 hour CCTV and passengers can obtain departure details from electronic information boards. The station is operated by Metro and is used by around 1500 people per day. Bus stops are also provided on Commercial Street and Bradford Road. Bus routes in the area link the town centre with regular services to all local residential areas and nearby towns such as Heckmondwike, Cleckheaton, Leeds, Bradford, Huddersfield and Birstall.

Batley train station is located on Station Road a short distance uphill from The Mill, north east of the town centre. The station is on the Huddersfield line linking Batley with Huddersfield, Leeds, Dewsbury, Morley and Mirfield, and onwards from connecting stations on the Transpennine route to Hull and Newcastle in the east and Liverpool in the west. Services calling at Batley station run approximately twice per hour in each direction Monday to Saturday but are less frequent on Sundays. There are 23 car parking spaces at the station itself along with 4 cycle lockers, and the station is monitored by CCTV.

## DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

During the 12 months to February 2008, notable development activity in Batley town centre has included the formation of external market stalls and a café at the new Manna food hall to the rear of The Mill and the refurbishment of properties at the Hick Lane/Bradford Road junction where 2 pubs and a take-away have been re-opened after considerable investment. A number of smaller scale activities have also taken place in the form of shop front refurbishments around the Branch Road and Well Lane areas of the town.

*Below: Refurbished property on Bradford Road*


Ongoing development in the town centre includes the refurbishment of 1 Soothill to provide residential units, a restaurant and a shop; and the conversion of the former Jessops Wine Bar on Station Road to apartments.

Retail development schemes that are in the pipeline include alterations and a 200sq.m.extension to Batley Shopping Centre (Alfred's Way) which was granted planning permission in July 2006 but is yet to be implemented; and the extension of retail premises at The Mill on Bradford Road to provide an additional 1,400sq.m. of sales floorspace which was approved in 2004 but has not yet been built. In addition to these, various residential schemes are also in the pipeline including the conversion and redevelopment of Blakeridge Mills on Mayman Lane just outside the study area to create 380 apartments and 120 new build houses which was approved in February 2008; and an application to convert the former Salvation Army building on Branch Road to form 28 apartments which has yet to be decided.

*Below: Former Jessops Wine Bar*

In addition to development activity and investment in the town centre, Batley is also the subject of a range of public realm improvement schemes as part of the Council's Local Public Service Agreement and through other Council led regeneration initiatives. Completed projects include improved traffic and pedestrian signage on various routes into and around the town centre; and the installation of 'pea' lights in the trees that line the Branch Road approach to the town as a 'gateway' feature. Other projects currently being implemented include new trees in planters at Market Place; a series of roadside pole-mounted banners for use in advertising events and promoting the town; artwork installations on the tree planters on Commercial Street; and an on-going shop front improvement grant scheme aimed at assisting local business owners to improve their visual presence in the town. All of these schemes are helping to promote the town and improve its ability to attract investment.

## DEMAND FOR REPRESENTATION

A general assessment of demand for premises in Batley town centre from retail, leisure and commercial uses was undertaken in February 2008. This assessment is limited to registered interests and does not account for office or professional uses, nor does it include interest from existing businesses in the town who may be wishing to relocate within the area to larger premises. However, there are 5 registered requirements for representation in the town, which is the same level of interest expressed in last year's assessment. The requirements are summarised in Figure 10.

**Figure 10: Retail/commercial requirements 2008**

| Category of use | Number of requirements | Total sales floorspace sq.m. (sq.ft.) |
|---|---|---|
| Convenience (food) | 2 | 380 (4,100) |
| Comparison (non-food) | 2 | 1,860 (20,000) |
| Services | 1 | 140 (1,500) |
| **TOTAL** | **5** | **2,380 (25,600)** |

Source: FOCUS Information Ltd and Kirklees Council

All of the 4 retailer interests are national multiple companies, all of which would be new to the town if they found appropriate premises. The service operator is a financial institution which has expressed interest in the town for many years. The retailer interest is split evenly between a requirement for high street/prime locations and good secondary locations where passing traffic is high. The vacancy level in the town would suggest that these requirements can be met. However, the quality and size of the units available may not meet the specific expectations of these businesses.

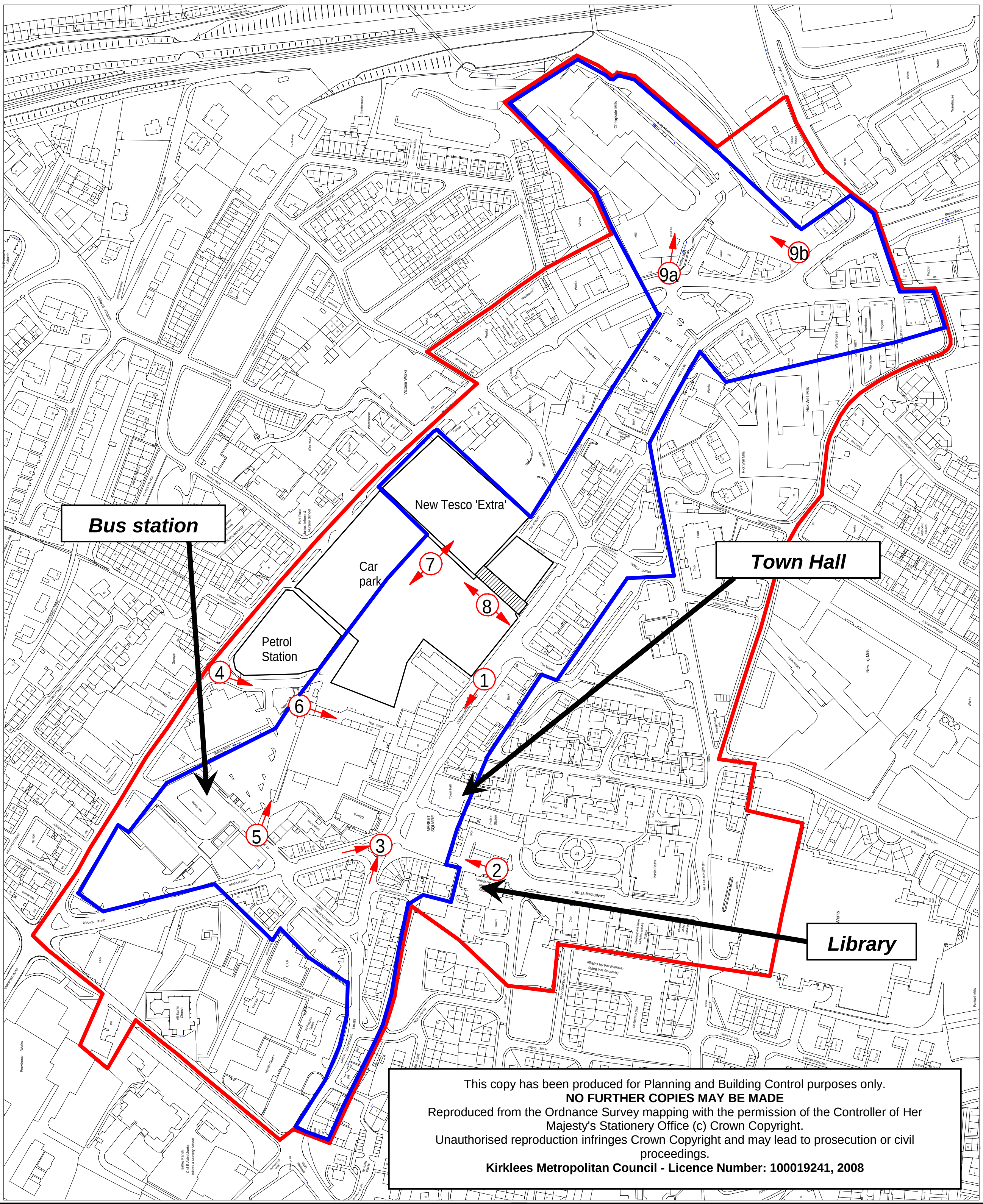
## PRIME RETAIL RENTAL LEVELS

During the 12 months to May 2007, the average UK prime retail rent achieved a growth of 2.9%. This rate of growth represents a weakening of the market which has seen slowing growth rates for 3 consecutive years. In the Yorkshire and Humber region, rental gain during the same period reached only 1.5% compared to the 4.0% of the previous year.

At the local level, the prime retail pitch in Batley town centre is located on Commercial Street, stretching from the Alfred's Way shopping centre down to the last shop unit before the bridge link to Tesco Extra. Independent evidence provided by Colliers CRE on behalf of the Council suggests that the benchmark rental level in Batley's prime pitch is represented by the letting achieved in April 2007 at 83/85 Commercial Street, securing a Zone A rental of £327 per sq.m. This represents a 1.2% improvement on the benchmark rental level registered by the previous assessment, which is in line with the regional trend.

**Notes:**
[1] Comparison goods figures include A1 uses such as opticians and travel agents etc.
[2]Based on the current UK average, 100 being the average proportion of floorspace or number of units for certain categories of use in a UK town, not including markets.
[3]Figures relate to the floorspace contained within the Town Centre Audit Study Boundary of each centre at the most recent published survey date

# BATLEY TOWN CENTRE PEDESTRIAN COUNT POINTS






## Key to map

- Red arrow: **Position/direction of count**
- Blue line: **Main shopping area**
- Red line: **Study boundary**

1. **Commercial Street**
2. **Cambridge Street**
3. **Upper Commercial Street/Branch Road**
4. **Bradford Road**
5. **St James Street**
6. **Alfred's Way**
7. **Tesco 'Extra' entrance (in/out)**
8. **Footbridge (to/from Tesco)**

**9a/9b. The Mill (both entrances)**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