



# Bearsden Town Centre Strategy

## Draft - January 2018

## CONTENTS

### 1. Introduction

The Need for a Town Centre Strategy  
What Is The Purpose Of This Town Centre Strategy?  
Policy Context

### 2. Bearsden Today

Role and Development  
Health Check  
Recent Developments and Initiatives  
Key Issues and Opportunities

### 3. Vision, Objectives and Action Plan

Vision Statement

**Objective 1:** To protect and enhance the strong independent retail status and develop a diverse town centre core

**Objective 2:** To build on Bearsden's historic legacy and cultural heritage

**Objective 3:** To improve accessibility for all users and create a high quality public realm

**Objective 4:** To enhance the environmental quality and appearance of the town centre and surrounding areas

**Objective 5:** To ensure good availability of social and leisure facilities

### 4. Delivering the Strategy

How will we take the strategy forward?  
Future Work  
Community Participation  
Status, Monitoring and Review

### 5. Commenting on the Draft Strategy

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## The Need for a Town Centre Strategy

Town centres are the heart of our communities and a vital part of our past, present and future. They are places to shop, work and access the facilities and essential services that people require. But the role of our town centres is changing and people have more alternative choices than ever before. To continue attracting people and investment, town centres must offer better quality choices that reflect our changing habits and lifestyles. They need continuing support and investment to allow them to improve and develop new functions other than retail. It is therefore important that Bearsden town centre is better equipped to thrive and prosper, meeting the needs of all its residents, businesses and visitors.

## What is the Purpose of this draft Town Centre Strategy?

The purpose of this draft strategy is to propose a long term shared vision for the town centre and objectives and actions to underpin it. It has been prepared using a range of information gathered through engagement and research started in November 2016.

Once adopted, it will provide an agreed strategic approach to the issues faced by the town centre, and will inform future decision making to help achieve sustained long-term improvement.

The improvement of town centres is not solely in the gift of the Council. To develop and ensure ownership of the eventual final strategy, it will be vital to build on the initial engagement and

continue to work in partnership with local businesses, land and property owners, the local community, community councils, local interest groups and statutory agencies

The vision, objectives and actions outlined in this consultative draft strategy are taken from the comments made at the initial consultation but are still subject to discussion and may change as a result of this round of consultation. They are intended to form a basis for discussion and for all stakeholders to collectively share and take forward.

## Policy Context

This strategy has been prepared within the context of the Scottish Government's '*Town Centre First Principle*', which is set out in Scottish Planning Policy (2014), having emerged from a recent National Review of Town Centres<sup>1</sup>. This principle promotes a broader perspective to decision making that considers the vitality, viability and vibrancy of town centres. It states that "we must put the health of our town centres at the heart of our decision making processes" by enabling a wide range of uses which generate significant footfall, including retail and commercial leisure, residential, offices, civic, community and cultural facilities. It also reinforces the need for collective responsibility amongst government, local authorities, the wider public sector, businesses and communities to help town centres thrive. This reflects a wider Scottish policy ethos rooted in building on our local assets and empowering local action.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://beta.gov.scot/policies/regeneration/town-centre-regeneration/>

The strategy also sits within the context of the Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Strategic Development Plan (2017) spatial development strategy<sup>2</sup>. This is based on a 'compact city' model, which seeks to create high quality places through sustainable development that contributes to economic growth.

In terms of local policy, the strategy aligns with a number of key Council plans and strategies, including:

- Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) 2017-2027 (draft )
- Local Development Plan 2017
- Economic Development Strategy (Draft 2017)
- Active Travel Strategy 2015
- Local Transport Strategy 2013-2017
- Green Network Strategy 2017-22
- Air Quality Action Plan
- Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-21

The strategy will reflect the Council's core vision, as set out in the draft LOIP: "*Working together to achieve the best with the people of East Dunbartonshire*". The success of our town centres will form a key part of this vision and support many of the required changes that are identified in the LOIP. In particular, the aim of Local Outcome 1 is that East Dunbartonshire has "a sustainable and resilient economy with busy town and village centres, a growing business base, and is an attractive place in which to visit and invest". This strategy will play a central role in helping to achieve this aim.

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.clydeplan-sdpa.gov.uk/strategic-development-plan/current-plan/current-strategic-development-plan-july-2017>

The Local Development Plan (LDP) is the Council's key land use strategy and seeks to place town centres at the heart of our communities. It recognises town centres as being the focus for new retail, commercial, cultural, community and employment uses. Policy 11: *Network of Centres* of the LDP states that the Council will support any development that contributes to the vitality and viability of each centre, ensuring they are safe and vibrant places throughout the day and into the evening.



## 2. BEARSDEN TODAY

### Role and Development

Bearsden is situated approximately six miles north of Glasgow city centre on the A809 road to Drymen and Loch Lomond. It currently has a population of 27,237. The traditional centre, known locally as 'The Cross', is relatively small, but possesses a good range of independent shops, restaurants, cafes and services. It has a high standard of amenities along with its rich heritage of Victorian and Edwardian stone-built houses.

The town centre is a local centre which will provide amenities for the local population with a predominantly day time use with a number of restaurants and food retailer which offers a good evening economy relative to its size.



Image: New Kirk Road, Bearsden



The town centre lies on the line of the Antonine Wall World Heritage Site and although there are no visible parts of the wall within the centre itself, a well preserved Roman Bath House is located 150 metres east of the town centre. The town centre is also located within the Old Bearsden Conservation Area and has a high proportion of listed buildings, including the war memorial at Bearsden Primary School. The motto on the Bearsden town crest is 'Bear the Gree' which means "to take first place".

Overall, Bearsden is an affluent area and is typically associated with good quality schools and buoyant housing market. It is

identified nationally as a suburban or commuter locality with a prevalence of higher income and private housing<sup>3</sup>.

Bearsden also benefits from a highly active community. It has three Community Councils (Bearsden North, Bearsden East and Bearsden East) who all play an important role in terms of representing local people and addressing particular concerns. Local churches also play an active role within the local community, particularly in terms of facilitating and supporting social events and local groups. These existing community organisations, along with the traders group, local businesses and any new groups will have a key role in shaping, progressing and delivering the strategy.

For a detailed profile, including population data and baseline information, please refer to the accompanying Evidence and Health Check Report<sup>4</sup>.

---

<sup>3</sup> Understanding Scottish Places, 2016 ([www.usp.scot](http://www.usp.scot))

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/residents/planning-and-building-standards/planning-policy/town-centre-strategies>

## Health Check

The purpose of a health check is to assess a town centre's overall performance in terms of its strengths, weaknesses, vitality and viability. They also provide an understanding of how the town centre changes over time. The most recent health check for Bearsden was carried out in 2016 and you can view the outcomes in a report on the Council's website<sup>5</sup>. Key outcomes, in conjunction with place standards, are categorised into five main themes, as summarised below:

### Retail, Land Use and Economic Functions

- Small and vibrant local town centre
- Good variety of independent and specialist retailers
- High proportion of cafes and restaurants, which creates a level of evening activity in the centre
- Lacks of large supermarket within the town centre
- Modest amount of office and business space
- Centrally located primary school helps create vitality
- Day time facilities available within the church hall
- Relatively high number of residential properties within the town centre

### Public Realm and Accessibility

- Safe and high-quality public realm overall
- Buildings generally in good condition

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/residents/planning-and-building-standards/planning-policy/town-centre-strategies>

- Pedestrian accessibility is generally good, with a choice of crossing points crossing of Drymen Road and Roman Road can be difficult, especially at peak times.
- Footfall has remained relatively stable, despite a slight decline from 2012.
- Links to the town's Roman and Victorian heritage not always obvious to users of the centre.
- Good choice of routes into the town centre from neighbouring areas with barriers which includes busy roads.
- Poor access to parks and greenspaces
- Poor linkage to path networks, walking routes
- Issues with the storage and management of commercial waste.

### Access to Community Facilities

- The new Community Hub is clearly the dominant community resource within the town, offering a wide range of public facilities including Council services, toilets, meeting rooms and event spaces.
- Community space for available for hire at the local churches
- Recreational and leisure facilities are limited within the town centre but a wide variety is available elsewhere in the settlement.

### Transport and Parking

- Good public transport accessibility
- Two main car parks, one of which is subject to the Council's charging scheme (Douglas Place). Usage data shows that the number of unique daily visits has increased by almost four-fold since its introduction
- There are issues with speed, volume of traffic and congestion on Roman Road, Drymen Road and Manse Road.
- High number of pedestrians crossing Manse Road, fewer people crossing Drymen Road

- At Bearsden Cross, the busiest arm is on Roman Road, followed by Drymen Road North.
- Air quality data shows that levels of NO2 and PM10 are high and Bearsden is designated an **Air Quality Management Area**.

### Green Infrastructure

- Town centre lacks significant green infrastructure, mainly because of its space limitations.
- Surrounding residential areas, which generally include substantial garden ground, partly offset this in terms of providing local habitats and green corridors.
- Whilst a local path network does exist, linkages to surrounding areas including the countryside are not of a particularly high quality

## Recent Developments and Initiatives

Bearsden Community Hub, the new home for Council, library, leisure and cultural services in the town, was officially opened on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2017 following a £3m investment by the Council. Located in the heart of Bearsden on Drymen Road, it brings a wide range of services under one roof including Council Tax, benefits, registration, licensing, housing, general Council enquiries, library services, leisure services, arts and events. The new facility also contains meeting rooms and social work facilities, new public toilets and an entire upgrade of the current accommodation. An on-site customer services team is available to help residents access and obtain information about a variety of different Council services and make payments for them in one visit.

The Council's Streetscene team has also carried out upgrades to the path around St Andrew's Church at Douglas Place, including new planting funded by the 'Stalled Spaces' programme. Work is also being carried out to install a new signalised crossing close to the Drymen Road/Kirk Road junction, with the aim of providing easier access to and from the Community Hub. Prior to this, Bersden Cross benefitted from public realm improvement works in 2005.

The Bearsden community has successfully delivered the [Bearsden Festival](#) 2016 with support from Bearsden North and Bearsden East Community Councils, East Dunbartonshire Arts Council, New Kilpatrick Parish Church and local traders.

The Council would seek to support existing groups, local businesses and interested parties in representing the needs of their members to ensure that they have an empowered voice within the community. Above all it is important to ensure that such groups can collectively co-ordinate projects and proposals in the future, should they wish to do so.



Image: Bearsden Community Hub

## Key Issues and Opportunities

The strategy builds on existing strengths and reflects the outcomes of early consultation and engagement with local residents, town centre businesses, community groups and other Council services including Community Planning Partners.

A survey of challenges and key requirements found that the quality of the shopping experience, including the range of shops and services, was clearly a key issue for many people. This reinforces the importance of town centres as focal points for retail, and suggests that most people still expect their town centre to offer good quality shops. The need for a new public space also emerged as a common key requirement, closely followed by improved pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and the re-use of vacant buildings. The outcome of the early public engagement exercise provides more detail, as set out in the Bearsden Report of Consultation, East Dunbartonshire Council (2017)<sup>6</sup>.

A summary of the perceived strengths, weaknesses and opportunities that emerged are outlined below.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Independent shops and services contributes to a lively and distinctive town centre environment	Town centre feels slightly disconnected from the train station
Primary school helps to create high footfall during the day	Lack of public space for casual sitting/resting and outdoor events
Low number of vacancies and presence of long established local businesses contributes to a sense of stability	Pedestrian movement feels secondary to vehicles, especially at peak times
Residential population within the town centre and in surrounding areas helps to create a safe and vibrant atmosphere	Poor availability of indoor space for community groups, local clubs and societies to hire/use (it is noted that the survey was taken undertaken during the refurbishment of the Bearsden HUB)
Availability of public transport options including regular bus services and nearby train station	Lack of public toilets (survey undertaken during Bearsden HUB refurbishment)
Good short stay parking availability following implementation of Council charging scheme	Lack of central / local early years services and nursery

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/residents/planning-and-building-standards/planning-policy/town-centre-strategies>

High quality built environment within attractive listed buildings	Perceived difficulty accessing community floorspace, in terms of booking and availability
	Lack of sheltered and specialist housing for the elderly within the town centre
	Disproportionate number of cafes and restaurants in comparison with the number of grocery retailers
	Poor levels of air quality generated by congestion and high volume of traffic moving through the town centre.
	There is no easy access/egress to visitors viewing the Roman Bathhouse

It should be noted that Brookwood Villa was discussed during consultation and future uses are subject to ongoing work via the Brookwood Futures Group. Brookwood Villa is located just outwith the town centre, and any future use will clearly have an impact upon the town centre. Any development and progress will be reflected in updates to the strategy.

## Opportunities

- The currently vacant Bearsden North Church is in a prime location that lends itself to a range of town centre uses
- Improve connections to the new Community Hub building
- New Kilpatrick Old Hall could make a significant contribution as a key social and community resource
- Better exploit the town's Roman links and historic character
- Opportunity to make Bearsden a highly sustainable town due to its compact size and good access to frequent public transport
- To enhance access/egress to visitors viewing the Roman Bathhouse
- Potential to enhance linkages to the surrounding green network promoting
- Potential to maximise the linkage to key community buildings and leisure facilities within the vicinity of the town centre.
- To improve the storage of commercial waste.

**Q1. Do you agree with the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities stated above?**

**Can you suggest any others?**

### 3. VISION, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

Based on the outcomes of consultation, engagement and research the following long-term vision for Bearsden town centre is proposed.

*'We want Bearsden to be a lively and accessible town centre which maintains its good offer of local independent businesses and shops, and is an attractive place that is easy to walk to and move around for people on foot. It should also be a place where people can come to access services and shop, gather and socialise through at all times of the day and evening. Bearsden will also be a town centre that maximises the potential of its rich heritage and architectural character, with a range of meeting spaces for events, markets and socialising'.*

It is proposed that the vision for Bearsden town centre is supported by the following five objectives:

#### **Objective 1: To protect and enhance the strong independent retail status and develop a diverse town centre core**

**We want to ensure that Bearsden town centre offers a wide range of retailers and caters for the shopping needs of the community. Established local shops and businesses should be given the support needed to thrive and diversify their business base, and to adapt to changing retail and consumer trends.**

#### **We will achieve objective 1 by...**

- Ensuring implementation of the town centre first principle
- Providing support for pop-up businesses and small businesses, including shop front improvements
- Work with local traders to work collectively to enable shared knowledge, skills, and resources – to shape their own town centre.
- Embracing the use of new technology to promote the town centres retail offer

## **Objective 2: To build on Bearsden's historic legacy and cultural heritage**

**We want to better realise Bearsden's potential as a local visitor destination and strengthening its rich cultural heritage and history.**

### **We will achieve objective 2 by...**

- Working with key partners to explore ways to better promote the town centre
- Ensuring that Bearsden key historic assets are properly showcased
- Working closely with community groups to establish the potential for new cultural events and activities
- Maintaining the town's architectural quality and looking after the built environment

## **Objective 3: To improve accessibility for all users and create a high quality public realm**

**We want to further improve accessibility by creating a more pedestrian and cyclist friendly environment, without impacting on vehicular access. The public realm should be modern, fit for purpose and attractive.**

### **We will achieve objective 3 by...**

- Supporting streetscape improvements throughout the centre including consistent public realm branding and street cleanliness

- Improvements to buildings and shopfronts to complement public realm investment
- Improving connections to and from Bearsden Station
- Rebalancing the needs of pedestrian, cyclist and vehicles within the town centre to reduce the dominance of the car
- Improving existing spaces and connections—throughout the town centre
- Address issues relating to the management of commercial waste storage
- Removing unnecessary barriers and redundant street furniture

## **Objective 4: To enhance the environmental quality and appearance of the town centre and surrounding areas**

**We want to ensure that the town centre is a healthier place and better connected to surrounding areas of green space, with improved local air quality and enhanced access to the green network.**

### **We will achieve objective 4 by...**

- Working with local groups to identify opportunities for improvement to the fabric of the town centre
- Improving access to the core path network and areas of open space
- Supporting the actions of the Air Quality Management Plan (once adopted) to improve air quality and reduce the effect of pollution as a result of congestion and volume of cars

- Promote active travel in and around the town centre and ensure that the public realm and street furniture is appropriate

### **Objective 5: To ensure good availability of social and leisure facilities**

**We want to ensure that Bearsden offers a suitable range of modern and high quality spaces for public meetings, local clubs and societies and events.**

#### **We will achieve objective 5 by...**

- Ensuring that Council buildings are easily accessible for all users and that all members of the community can book and use available facilities.
- Supporting the refurbishment of New Kilpatrick Old Hall
- Support a suitable town centre use for vacant Bearsden North Church
- Supporting work towards the refurbishment and reuse of Brookwood Villa (as noted in Section 2).

These proposed objectives are flexible and subject to further refinement as part of the consultation process.




**Q2. Do you agree with the proposed vision and objectives identified above?**

**Can you suggest any others?**

Bringing all of the available evidence together, and taking into account the objectives that have been identified, we have identified a series of actions that we think should be taken forward to ensure that Bearsden town centre becomes a more successful place and fulfils its potential. These are set out below.

**Table 1- Proposed Actions to Take Forward**

<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	<b>Ref.</b>	<b>Proposed Action</b>	<b>Existing Council Commitment?</b>	<b>Estimated Timescale</b>
<b>Objective 1: To protect and enhance the strong independent retail status and develop a diverse town centre core</b>	1	Continue to support traders and businesses in examining the benefits of Business Improvement Districts, Community Development Trusts, or other support programmes which help communities lead or participate in activity within the town centre.	Economic Development Strategy	Short
	2	Work with the building owners to encourage and support an appropriate town centre use for the currently vacant Bearsden North Church	No	Medium
	3	Support local traders and property owners to look at ways for promoting the town centre and encouraging event/promo activity. This may include 'shop local' campaign in support of local businesses, pop-up business and events	Economic Development Strategy	Medium
	4	Undertake an analysis of the local retail market including a refreshed retail capacity assessment	No	Medium
<b>Objective 2: To build on Bearsden's historic legacy and cultural heritage</b>	5	Develop a co-ordinated, unique and distinctive brand, to form part of a new marketing strategy	No	Medium
	6	Create a schedule of promotional events and initiatives that can attract new visitors to the town	No	Medium
	7	Work with and support existing and new community groups promoting social and cultural events	No	Short
<b>Objective 3: An accessible and connected town centre</b>	8	Review the condition and suitability of streets, pavements, street furniture with a view to upgrading, removing or relocating	Local Transport Strategy	Short
	9	Continue work to assess how the town centre is currently connected to tourism attractions and walking, cycling and public transport routes. Carry out work to ensure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signposting to town centres</li> <li>• Links to active parts of town centres</li> <li>• Consistent and clear signage.</li> </ul>	Economic Development Strategy	Short
	10	Work with local businesses and landowners to explore options for public art enhancements these may include grass roots art and can be led by community partners	No	Medium

		  		
	11	Review the management of bins and waste facilities and identify options for improvements	No	Short
	12	Review the effectiveness of the pedestrian crossings at Bearsden Cross and Manse Road and across Drymen Road at the Community Hub	No	Medium
	13	Measure the effectiveness of East Dunbartonshire's Decriminalised Parking Enforcement programme in regards to turnover of parking and spaces for shoppers and town centre users.	Economic Development Strategy	Medium
	14	Monitor public car park arrangements within and around the town centre, including operation of the charging scheme, to inform potential improvements in terms of turnover and accessibility, with a view to increasing footfall.	No	Medium
	15	Improve the pedestrian route from the train station to the town centre	No	Long
	16	Improved signage and navigation aids, including to Bearsden train station	Local Transport Strategy	Short
	17	Identify opportunities for improved cycling infrastructure/storage at strategic points throughout the town centre	Active Travel Strategy	Medium
	18	Liaise with SPT to ensure the provision of real time bus information at bus stops is implemented	Local Transport Strategy	Short
	19	Enhance accessibility to surrounding cycle and walking networks	No	Long
<b>Objective 4: A sustainable and</b>	20	Improved access to Manse Burn including a review of the maintenance regime	No	Long

<b>community led town centre</b>	21	Upgrade green space around Bearsden station to improve the sense of arrival	No	Medium
	22	Explore opportunities to improve the access networks around the town centre where possible, along with extending paths links to open spaces in neighbouring areas and the surrounding countryside	Open Space Strategy	Medium
<b>Objective 5: To ensure good availability of social and leisure facilities</b>	23	Refurbishment of New Kilpatrick Old Halls as a resource that meets the needs of the local community and contributes to a high quality public realm	No	Long
	24	Establish the feasibility of new housing, employment and cultural uses within the wider boundary of New Kilpatrick Old Halls	No	Long

**Q3. Do you agree with these proposed actions?**

**Are there any others you think should be included to help us meet the objectives?**

## 4. DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

The actions identified above are by no means conclusive or finite and should be taken forward through the establishment of effective leadership representing all those with an interest in the town centre.

The Council will have a central role in terms of co-ordinating and facilitating delivery aspects of the strategy. However, the contribution of local residents, community groups, key landowners, local businesses and Community Planning partners will be equally important if the strategy is to be implemented successfully. In particular the local knowledge and experience of local residents and community groups will be critical.



### Future Work

Delivery will be led by the action plan. The need for more detailed design work or additional guidance may emerge during the lifespan of this strategy and we will ensure that these are reflected in any future updates. These will only be prepared where a clear need is identified and where they will help to deliver the identified actions.

### Community Participation and Empowerment

The input of local people and businesses is fundamental to the success of any town centre strategy. Their local knowledge and experience can often help to identify not only the key issues but also the best solutions. Whether they work for local businesses, the local authority, social enterprises, voluntary groups or other public agencies, it is the motivation and energy of local people which generates activity and civic pride. The Council will therefore provide support and encouragement in terms of building up the long-term capacity of community groups and social enterprises, so that they can take greater ownership of the town centre through community empowerment.

### Status, Monitoring and Review

Once adopted, the strategy will become non-statutory planning guidance to help deliver the development strategy set out in the East Dunbartonshire Local Development Plan 2017. All future development proposals and initiatives will be expected to support the actions set out within this strategy, which will be a prime consideration in the assessment of planning applications.

The strategy will also help to provide the context for future masterplans or design briefs that are required to implement any of the specific actions.

The delivery of actions within this strategy will be continually monitored and revised every two years. New actions may emerge as the strategy is taken forward and these will be built into the review process.

## **5. COMMENTING ON THE STRATEGY**

It is important that we hear your views on this strategy and in particular the objectives and proposed actions. If you have any comments or would like to contribute to the process in any way, you can contact us by email at:

**development.plan@eastdunbarton.gov.uk** or in writing at:

**East Dunbartonshire Council  
Planning and Building Standards  
Southbank House  
Strathkelvin Place  
Kirkintilloch  
G66 1XQ  
Tel: 0300 123 4510**

You are welcome to visit one of our 'drop-in' events, which provide a more informal opportunity to discuss the draft strategy. Please note that the consultation period will be open from 15 January 2018 and end on 26 February 2018.

Any comments on this strategy will be analysed and reported to the Council's Place, Neighbourhoods and Corporate Assets Committee, including any amendments where considered appropriate.

Following this process, the modified Strategy will be adopted as Supplementary Guidance to support the East Dunbartonshire Local Development Plan in 2018.

