

## About Newton Mearns

### Overview

Newton Mearns is a commuter town situated seven miles south of Glasgow. With a population of 25,000. Newton Mearns is the largest settlement in East Renfrewshire. Its town centre is relatively compact, the main focus are the shopping centre; “The Avenue” and surrounding car parks, which are owned by New River Retail. Newton Mearns is largely residential and some of its other key services, including transport links and schools, are located on the periphery of the town centre.

The Avenue is the main location in Newton Mearns for convenience and comparison shopping. Built in the 1970s it has a range of national chains and local retailers, anchored by a large ASDA and M&S Food supermarket at either end. A number of other retail units are located on a pedestrianised street leading from the shopping centre to Ayr Road where there are also a small number of on street shopfronts. The town centre includes a range of services such as dentists, nursery, GP surgery, filling station, public halls, library and a church.

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There is large amount of green space included within the town centre, which extends to cover Fairweather Park This includes a children’s playground. Additionally, the Dams to Darnley Country Park, located between Newton Mearns and Barrhead, provides a recreational and leisure asset to the population south of Glasgow.

Fairweather Hall, a council operated community hall, is located inside the town centre area. Two full sized football pitches at Crookfur Park and another community hall, are located just outside of the town centre. Nearby is the Parklands Hotel and Country Club, which includes a gym and swimming pool, open to its members, and a sports hall which is open to the public.

### Town Centre Audit

An audit of the town centre was published in 2020. The main points identified are as follows

#### Accessible Town Centre

- Newton Mearns town centre is within walking distance of a large residential catchment area, and although there has been retail/ leisure development on the edge of the town, it remains the primary retail and service destination in the area;
- Car ownership in the town is very high (90%) However, the town’s proximity to the Silverburn shopping centre, in south west Glasgow, poses a challenge. The presence of two food stores and a range of good quality retailers will help retain important daily footfall in Newton Mearns;
- there is a large amount of green space in the town centre and footpaths through the park connect the shopping centre with other parts of the town for those travelling on foot/by bicycle. A cycle lane extends nearly all the way to the town coming from the Southside of Glasgow, but only on one side. There are cycle racks outside the front of The Avenue; and
- Newton Mearns has good 4G mobile coverage and access to superfast broadband, and free WiFi is also available.

#### Active Town Centre

- seven retail unit vacancies were recorded in the town centre, both in and outside The Avenue centre. The increase has likely been affected by the ongoing public health situation, otherwise the town appears well-used and well supported;

- there is a limited amount of leisure activity in Newton Mearns town centre, particularly compared to similar sized settlements. With the exception of two restaurants, little else is open during the evening. Given the large catchment population nearby, there may be scope for expanding the evening economy offer – particularly in light of the bars/restaurants that have opened at Greenlaw. There is, however, limited space in the town centre and short of a major reconfiguration of its layout or extension it may be difficult to increase leisure provision without reducing retail provision; and

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- an area of public realm has been developed between The Avenue shopping centre and Ayr Road, with potential to be used for events, small markets etc, but is owned by the shopping centre and activity would require permission.

#### Attractive Town Centre

- the range of retailers in Newton Mearns, with good representation from national chains, can draw in shoppers from a wider area, particularly with the ease of parking in the town and good road access. However, the number of residents in the town per town centre retail unit is far higher than the average of around 200 (373 residents per town centre retail unit). Retaining the retail mix, alongside the presence of the two anchor supermarkets, will be important in maintain the attractiveness of the town centre;

- the lack of retail frontages at street level can detract from the town centre's attractiveness to pedestrians. During hours when the shopping centre is closed, there is little activity in the town centre and although well lit, streets around The Avenue are unappealing to pedestrians and access to ASDA is through the car park. This is likely to discourage active travel around the town;

- there is little cultural activity in Newton Mearns town centre, such as museums or galleries. There may be scope to increase this in innovative ways – e.g. the local history group or artists staging exhibitions in empty units or within the shopping centre concourse; and

- the Dams to Darnley Country Park aims to be a key recreational and leisure asset to the population south of Glasgow, situated between Newton Mearns and Barrhead. The town could benefit from emphasising its links to the park to draw in visitors.

#### Other Engagements

In 2018 work using the Place Standard Tool took place with residents of Mearns Village. This information is available on a separate link. Further work on practical measures for improving walking and cycling in Newton Mearns will be taking place and will be informed by this survey.