



Your Town Audit: Maybole

March 2023

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Report produced by:



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For: South Ayrshire Council

1. Understanding Scottish Places Summary

This report presents a summary of the Your Town Audit (YTA) for Maybole, conducted by Scotland's Towns Partnership and EKOS. The detailed YTA Framework and Data Workbook are provided under separate cover.

The YTA was developed to provide a framework to measure and monitor the performance of Scotland's towns and town centres using a series of Key Performance Indicators. It provides a comprehensive audit of Maybole with data on up to 180 KPIs across seven themes – Locality, Accessibility, Local Services, Activities + Events, Development Capacity, Tourism, and Place + Quality Impressions.

In total, 44 YTA audits have been prepared for towns across Scotland providing consistent data across the range of KPIs. Where appropriate, this report provides comparisons for Maybole against the YTA town average¹.

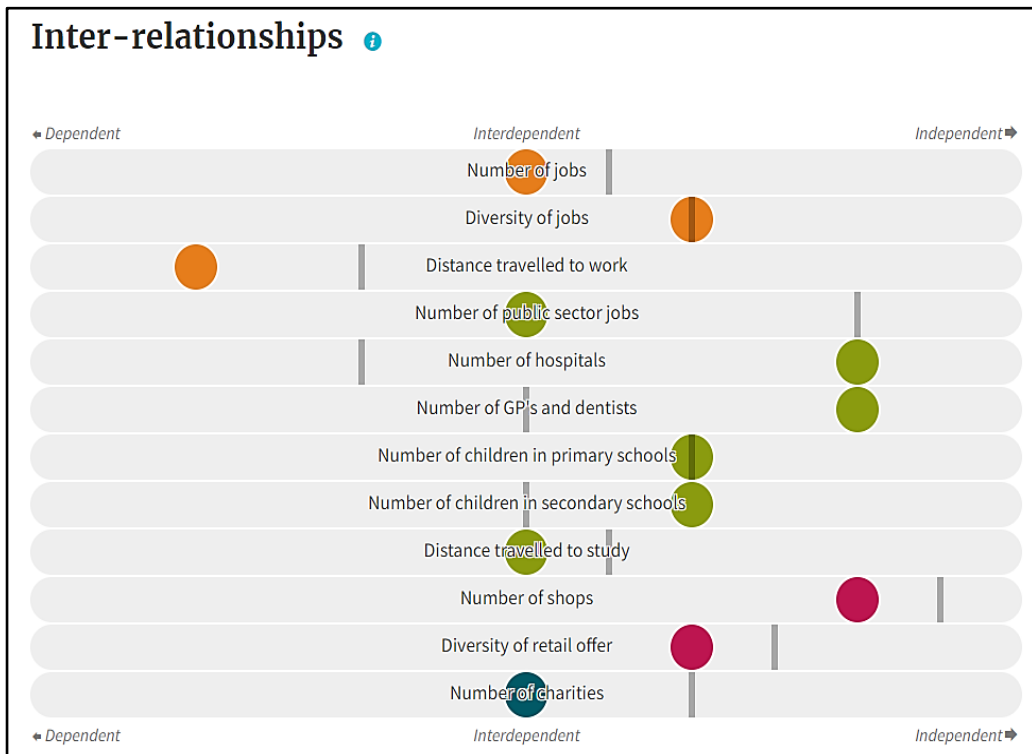
The [Understanding Scottish Places](#) (USP) data platform provides a summary analysis for Maybole and identifies seven comparator towns that have similar characteristics, with the most similar being Jedburgh, Cumnock, Alness and Brechin². The USP platform - www.usp.scot – describes Maybole in the following general terms:

Maybole's Interrelationships: an '*interdependent to independent town*', which means it has a good number of assets in relation to its population. Towns of this kind have some diversity of jobs; and residents on the whole travel shorter distances to work and study. These towns attract people from neighbouring towns to access some of their assets and jobs.

Maybole's Typology: Social and council housing are the norm in these medium towns. Manufacturing and construction are the dominant forms of employment. Health and social work services are particularly active. There is a higher level of unemployment. Educational attainment is low. Car ownership is low, meaning that many residents in these towns are reliant on public transport.

¹ It has not been possible to collect full KPI data for all towns – the number of YTA comparator towns therefore differs across this report.

² Other comparator towns include Denny.



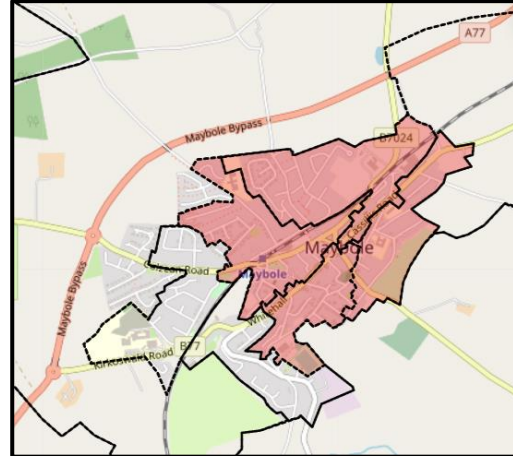
Comparing Maybole to towns with similar USP typology and interrelationships shows it has a similar number of charities, school children, jobs, shops, and similar diversity of retail offer and distances travelled to work and study. With no local higher or further education provision and a relative lack of hospitals, GPs and dentists, Maybole differs most from comparator towns in terms of the number of public sector jobs.

Building on the USP, this report presents the results of our detailed analysis of Maybole based around STP and the Scottish Government’s Town Toolkit – an online resource which provides advice and inspiration across five thematic areas: arts and culture; buildings and property; clean and green; enterprise and business; and streets and spaces. [The Town Toolkit](#) was revised and relaunched in 2021.

The report is designed as an audit of existing assets – physical and social – and concludes with a set of key findings and issues that will be important to the future performance of Maybole. Although the report has been informed by the [Maybole Community Action Plan 2019-2024](#) published by North Carrick Community Benefit Company, this report is not intended as a detailed strategy or action plan.

2. Accessible Town Centre

Maybole is a small town within Ayrshire in the south west of Scotland. The total population is around 4,400, a decline of 8% over the last decade³. Maybole is the fifth largest town within South Ayrshire local authority. While the town is an agricultural service centre, many residents commute to Ayr and Prestwick for work.



Source: NOMIS

The town centre, as defined in the Local Development Plan, is small and mainly focussed on the main shopping street of High Street. The landmark of Maybole Castle is situated at the beginning of High Street. Throughout the town centre, there are narrow streets, especially on High Street, and a few historic landmarks and ruins dating from as far back as 14th century – these are important to create a sense of place in the town, but where underused and vacant present challenges.

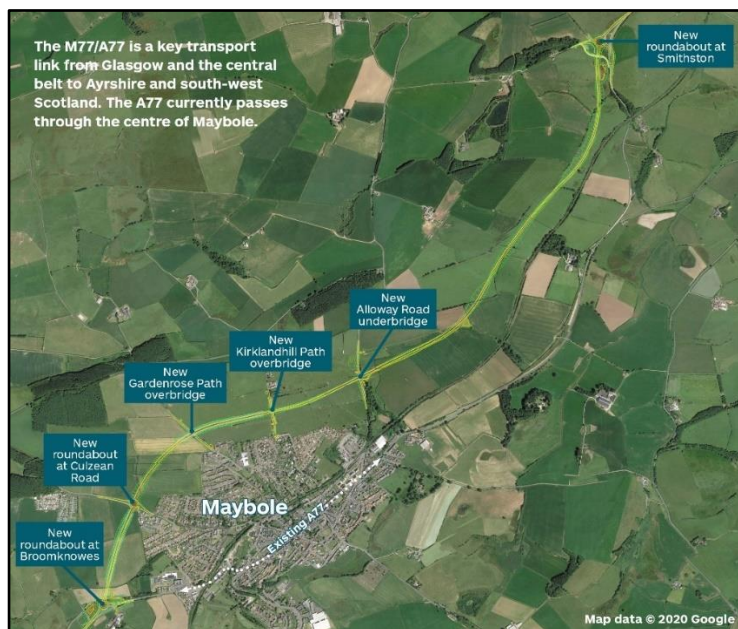


³ Defined using the 'Maybole' intermediate zone.

Maybole railway station is located to the north-west of the town centre, next to the Carrick Centre. On the Glasgow South West Line, trains typically run every hour and a half to/from Glasgow Central via Ayr (where a change is required) during the day with much fewer evening services.

The current cost of an anytime day return to Glasgow Central is £13.10, and off-peak £19.60. From Ayr, there are currently 14 daily rail services to Maybole from Monday-Saturday, running from 6am to 10pm, with five services running on a Sunday, from 11am to 7pm. With around 320 passengers passing through the station per day⁴, Maybole has the second largest number of outbound and inbound trips on the Glasgow South West Line, behind Girvan.

Buses operate around Maybole during the day, including services to other regional locations such as Ayr (relatively high frequency of services)⁵, Girvan and Stranraer. The main way of reaching Maybole by road is the A77 which runs along the coast towards Ayr and Stranraer in both directions. This runs around the north west outskirts of the town centre, with the aid of the recently opened Maybole Bypass which delivered a new 5km section of single carriageway to reduce town centre congestion. This connects to the B7023 via a roundabout, with Culzean Road running through the settlement and town centre.



Source: Transport Scotland [A77 Maybole Bypass](#)

⁴ Transport Scotland (2020) [South West Scotland Transport Study - Initial Appraisal: Case for Change](#)

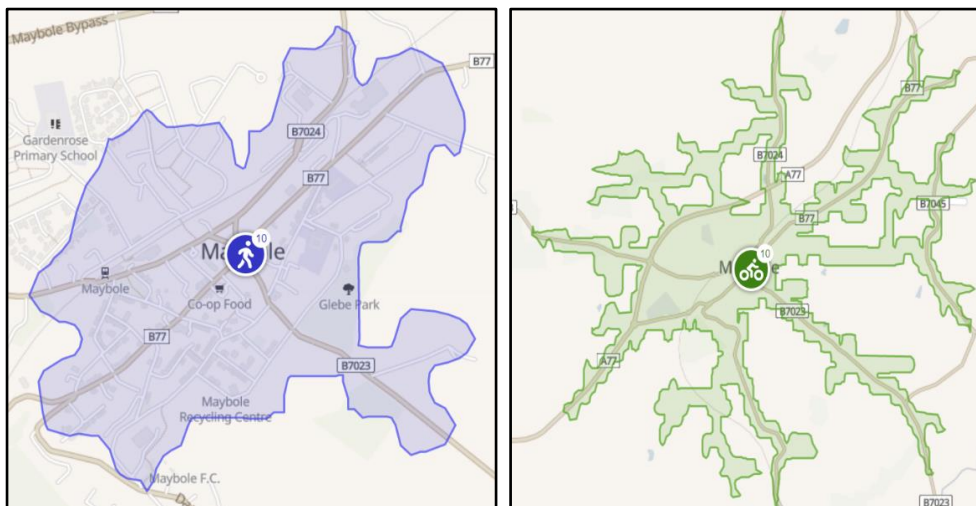
⁵ Ibid

A recent appraisal of transport in the region, undertaken by Transport Scotland, made a series of long-term recommendations for improving transport across the South West of Scotland⁶. Specific references to Maybole included that:

- The £30 million A77 Maybole Bypass involved the construction of a new 5.2km off-line bypass of the town of Maybole and associated junctions to connect to the existing A77 trunk road; and
- There are high levels of weekday commuting from Maybole by rail (71%). This is significantly less during weekends.

The concept of '[20-minute neighbourhoods](#)' has grown in prominence over recent years and is now a key priority for Scottish place and planning policy. This promotes the idea of people being able to reach all of their day-to-day needs within a 20-minute public transport trip or walk/cycle from home – i.e., a ten minute journey each way. By cutting down on unnecessary car travel, this has benefits for health outcomes, wellbeing and the environment, as well as supporting the local economy. Maybole is relatively compact and the entire town can be reached within a ten-minute cycle from the mid-point of the town centre, as shown on the maps below.

Maybole Town Centre – 10 Minute Walking and Cycling Distance



Source: [Commute Time Map](#)

Some housing in the town can also be reached within a ten-minute walk. Therefore, the town is well placed to build on this potential for growing active travel trips.

⁶ Transport Scotland (2020) [South West Scotland Transport Study - Initial Appraisal: Case for Change](#)

This is especially relevant as car ownership in Maybole is below the national average so shorter walking distances increase accessibility for more of the town's population. However, the narrow pavements throughout the town centre cause accessibility and safety issues for increasing active travel.

This is reflected within the [Maybole Community Plan 2019-2026](#) where young people suggested it was a priority to “*widen the pavements, especially on the High Street, to provide better access*”. Additionally, a priority of the Community Plan was to “*champion safer roads for walking and cycling*”, under which both adults and young people felt that Maybole needed traffic calming measures put in place and more sustainable transport infrastructure, i.e., cycle paths. There is a particular opportunity to develop active travel further with the recent opening of the Maybole Bypass diverting traffic away from the town centre. This can be seen in Active Travel Project as part of the [Maybole Regeneration Project](#) which aims to improve walking and cycling in Maybole town centre⁷.

Parking is fairly limited in Maybole town centre. On-street parking is not available on the High Street, which is Maybole's main shopping street. This also causes issues with the narrow pavements, as cars parking on the pavement further restrict access for pedestrians. There is some on-street parking available on side streets, such as Kirkland St and Greenside. Although relatively small, there is a surface car park on Kirkwynd behind the Co-operative Food.

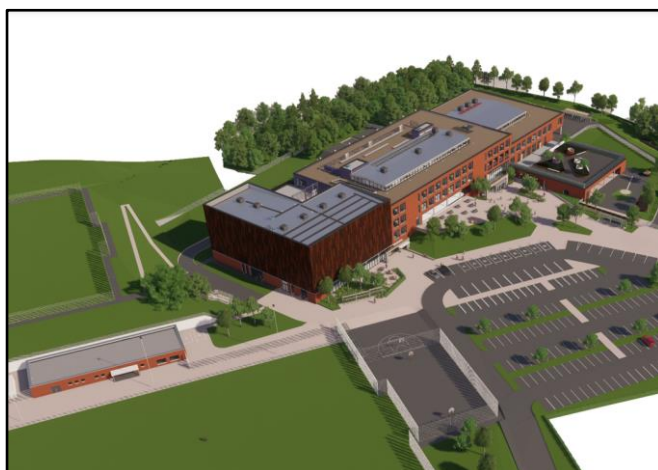
Maybole town centre has good to average mobile connectivity, with 4G coverage from all four networks. Though, some areas on the outskirts of the settlement face some problems with 4G coverage. Moreover, there is no 5G coverage within the settlement. Superfast broadband (at least 20 Mbps) is available in the town. Ultrafast broadband is not yet available.

The three primary schools are located centrally within the town centre. However, the secondary school, Carrick Academy, is located slightly outside of the town centre boundary, to the south west.

Adjacent to the current academy, a new Maybole Community Campus is currently in construction phase and set to open in Autumn 2023. This will include a new Carrick Academy as well as St Cuthbert's Primary and a new non-denominational primary school formed by merging Cairn and Gardenrose Primary Schools.

⁷ Maybole Town Centre Regeneration (2022) [Active Travel / Public Real High Street Scheme](#)

Other onsite public facilities to be developed include a swimming pool (forcing closure of existing building at Memorial Park), fitness gym, sports hall, and outdoor football and rugby pitches. The future of the existing primary school buildings within the town centre is unclear once they relocate to the new campus.



Source: [South Ayrshire Council](#)

In addition to the majority of Maybole's retail outlets, the town centre includes a library and a few bars and restaurants. Glebe Park, home to Carrick Rugby Club, is situated within the town centre, nearby to Cairn Primary School. Maybole's Ambulance Station is located on the outskirts of the town centre, whilst the Police and Fire stations are situated within the wider settlement.

3. Active Town Centre

3.1 Population and Housing

Just over 2,500 people live within the town centre area of Maybole, 56% of the total settlement population⁸. This proportion is much higher than the average of 18% in other YTA town centres as most of the town's housing stock is included within the town centre boundary. Over the last decade, the town centre population has decreased by 5%, while the whole settlement population has decreased by 8%. Other audited town centres have generally experienced an increase in town centre living, with an average 8.8% increase across YTA towns.

⁸ Based on the closest fitting datazones, S01012434 – Maybole 01, S01012435 – Maybole 02, S01012439 – Maybole 06, and S01012440 – Maybole 07.

In 2020, just over 1,300 houses were recorded within Maybole's town centre. Around two-fifths of housing in Maybole town centre is flats (43%). This is followed by semi-detached/detached houses (31%) and terraced homes (26%). Most commonly, residences in Maybole town centre have three or four-bedrooms. Around three-fifths of the housing stock in the town is privately owned (61% in the town centre; 60% in the wider settlement) which is slightly higher than the YTA average of 56%.

New planned and upcoming housing developments in Maybole include: Queen's Terrace (social housing development comprising 22 new houses, mostly two and three-bedroom houses as well as one-bedroom flats); and Tunnoch Drive (private development with three, four and five-bedroom detached houses).

In 2020, the residential town centre vacancy rate was 4%, similar to the average vacancy rate of other YTA town centres (3.8%). The whole settlement of Maybole also sees a 4% residential vacancy rate.



As town and city centres adjust to a changing retail climate,

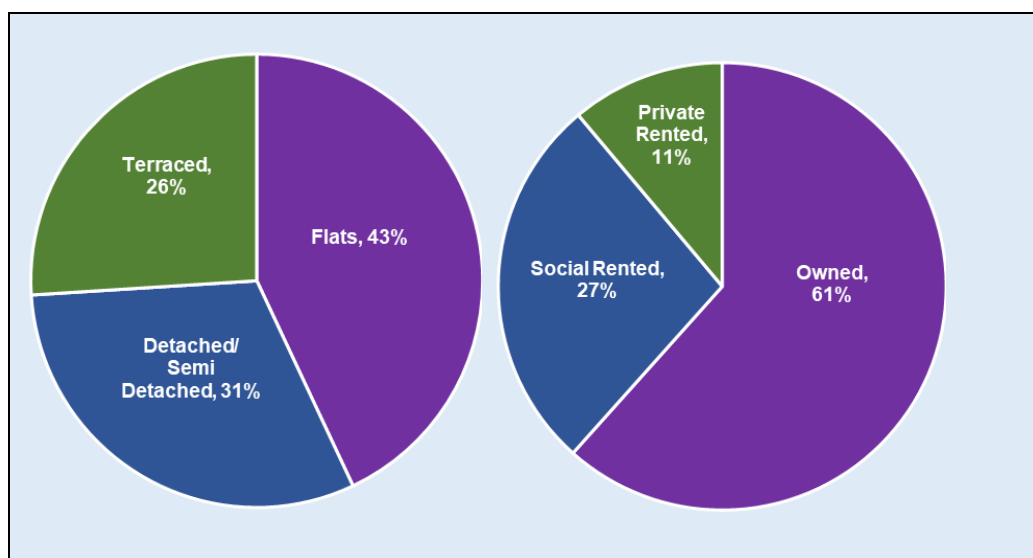
increasing town centre living is recognised as important throughout Scotland and is one of the key priorities for the Scottish Government's original [Town Centre Action Plan](#) (2013) and its more recent [refresh](#) (2020). That Maybole town centre already has a relatively high level of housing (56% of the total settlement's housing), puts it in a good position to grow this.

Housing – whether renovations or new developments – may present a sustainable (if initially expensive) solution to some of the vacant properties in the town centre. However, most of the prominent vacant properties have funding to be developed for other uses (such as enterprise and community uses) as part of the Maybole Regeneration project (see Chapter 4).

House prices within the town centre are slightly lower compared to average of other YTA town centres (£106,800 compared to £114,600) and the wider Maybole settlement (£114,400). Further, around three-quarters of the properties within the town centre (74%) are in council tax bands A, B or C.

More up-to-date market information from property website Zoopla⁹ places the average selling price for residential properties across the whole of Maybole at £154,800 over the last 12 months.

Maybole Town Centre Housing Mix



3.2 Businesses and Employment

In 2022, national statistics recorded 90 enterprises registered in the whole of Maybole, and 125 'local units' (an enterprise may have multiple local units). Around three in five (59%) of the 925 jobs in Maybole are located in the town centre area¹⁰.

The town centre audit located 84 units within the town centre area, with 34 units of these being retail or retail service units. Compared to the YTA average, retail makes up a slightly smaller proportion of town centre use in Maybole (40% compared to 45% across all towns).

For all units (both retail and otherwise, excluding housing), the vacancy rate was 25%, the highest of all YTA towns and much higher than the YTA average of 11%. This equated to 21 vacant units which were clustered along High Street as well as some units along Cassillis Road.

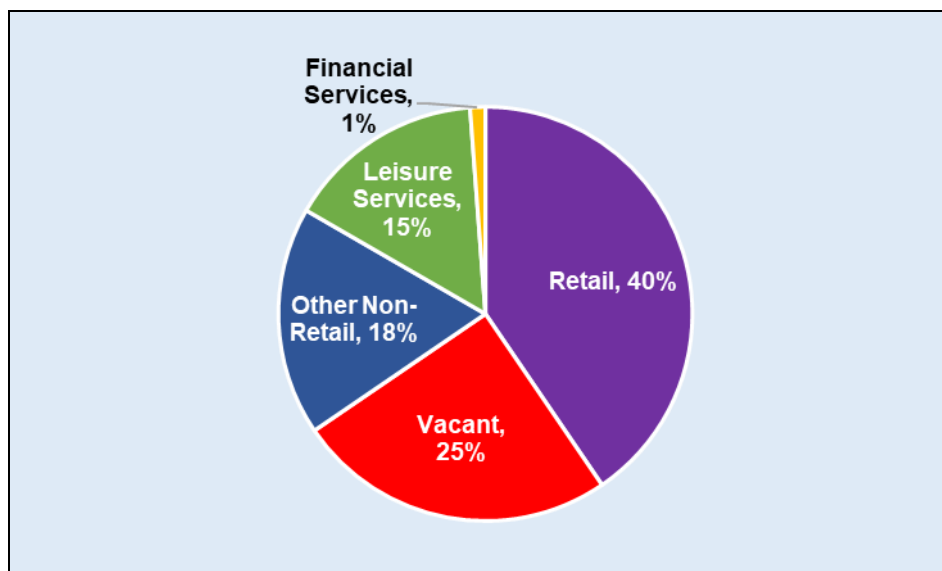
⁹ [Zoopla. House Prices in Maybole.](#)

¹⁰ Source: Business Register & Employment Survey

It is important to note that this is only the third Your Town Audit conducted since the start of COVID-19 pandemic. During the walk around, it was clear that some business units had been vacated or changed relatively recently.

Units classed as other non-retail such as places of worship and community halls/centres comprised relatively higher proportions of town centre unit use in Maybole (18% compared to YTA average of 14%). This reflects that most of these services in Maybole are located within the defined town centre along High Street and around the train station e.g. The Carrick Centre.

Maybole Town Centre Unit Mix



3.3 Retail

The retail offering in Maybole reflects its role as a local centre. Although there are some independent retailers, the town lacks much of a presence from both independent and national comparison retailers – particularly given that Ayr, the regional centre, is 20 minutes away. The vast majority of retail offer is concentrated along High Street. We identified 34 retailer operators in the town centre area from a total of 84 units.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the retail vacancy rate in Maybole town centre is 18%, equivalent to 13 units. This is much higher than the average YTA retail vacancy rate of 11% across 40 towns (albeit mostly based on pre-COVID data).

With over two-thirds of the vacant units, High Street had the most vacant retail units (nine units) followed by Cassillis Road (three units). Some of the vacant retail units were in clusters which highlighted the scale of the challenge to attract new owners and/or repurpose vacant units. Judging by the condition of the vacant retail units, there seemed to be a mixture of properties which have been vacant for a significant period of time and those which have been made newly vacant.

For example, the vacant unit of former Maybole Charity Shop and its neighbouring vacant units is the most prominent vacant cluster on High Street. Although, work is underway to develop these units into an enterprise centre.

This example is reflective of Maybole being in a 'state of change' – where long-term challenges in the town centre are being addressed with significant investment and partnership working.



With 131 residents per town centre retail outlet, Maybole town centre has a relatively high density of retail offering in relation to its population (YTA average: 228 residents per town centre retail outlet). This reflects the fact that it serves a wider rural area.

131 residents per town centre retail outlet

34 town centre retail units in use

13 vacant town centre retail units

Retail forms the largest town centre unit use, amounting to 40% of all units. This is slightly lower than YTA average of 45%.

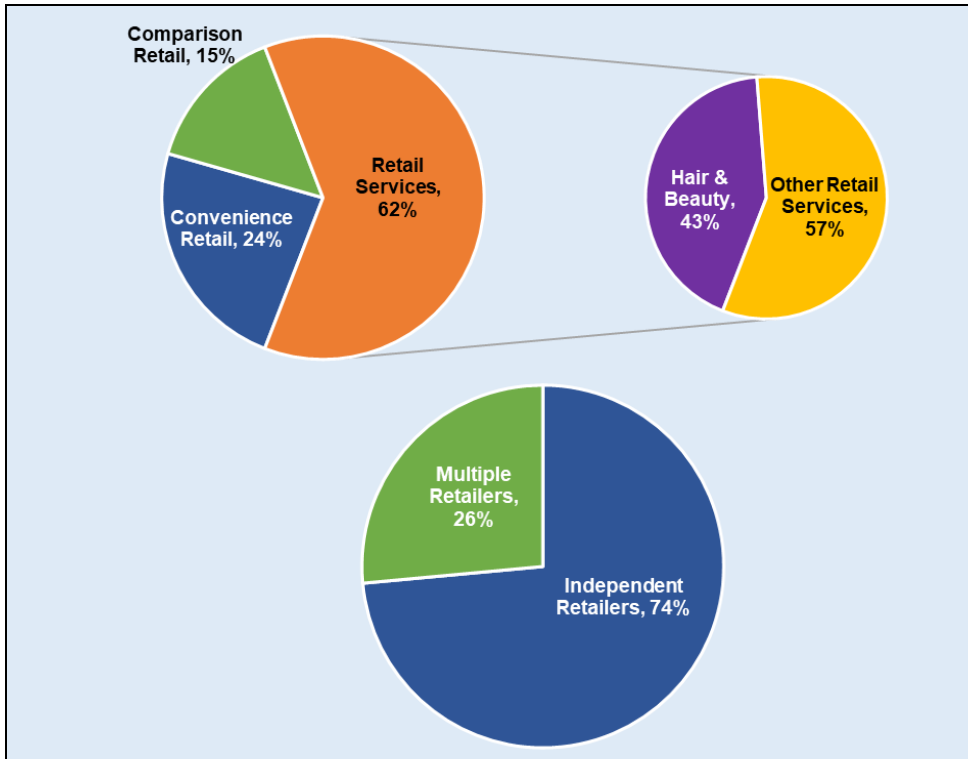
The YTA analysis is based on the following retail definitions:

- **Convenience Retail:** primarily low cost goods that are typically bought out of habit or on impulse i.e., food, drink (alcohol and non-alcohol), news, tobacco, etc. – *8 convenience retailers identified in Maybole town centre;*
- **Comparison Retail:** all other retail purchases comprising goods bought at infrequent intervals where consumers will compare and contrast products and prices – *5 comparison retailers identified in Maybole town centre;* and
- **Retail Services:** services that consumers would expect to find in a town centre including hairdresser, beauty salon, repair of goods, hire of specialist clothing, health clinics, post office, travel agent, etc. – *21 retail service operators identified in Maybole town centre.*



Although there is a relatively similar proportion of independent retailers in Maybole (74%) compared to the YTA average (72%), there could be a greater variety of shops as noted with the low number of comparison retailers. The number of national comparison retailers was also fairly low – this included Lloyd’s Pharmacy (two units), and Co-operative Food.

There are potential plans for the Co-operative Food (High Street) to relocate to the western outskirts of town opposite the site of the new Maybole Community Campus development. While this would double its size, the plans may result in another large vacant retail unit within the heart of the town centre.



4. Attractive Town Centre

4.1 Overview

As the town centre of Maybole has faced long-term challenges and decline, the recent wave of significant investment and regeneration activity (which is ongoing) presents a crucial opportunity and potential turning point for the future of the town as an attractive place to live, work and visit.

With high vacancy rates, especially over the longer term for some derelict and vacant buildings, local partners such as the Maybole Regeneration Project, North Carrick Community Benefit Company and South Ayrshire Council have explored ways to repurpose buildings to improve the vibrancy of the town centre. For example, [Maybole Regeneration Project](#) are making progress on a range of projects to improve Maybole town centre. These projects include:

- Priority Building Improvements;
- The Active Travel/Public Realm High Street Scheme;
- Shopfront Improvements and Small Grants Scheme; and
- Activity Programme.

The Priority Building Improvements project aims to invest £4.1m into five of Maybole's key historic buildings, namely Goudie's, the Town Hall, Maybole Castle, the Charity Shop and Camerons. The first completed building was Goudie's, formerly Speakers, which was refurbished and reopened as a charity-run bar, restaurant and events space by Carrick Community Leisure Group. However, Goudie's closed in November 2022 citing impact of rising energy costs. In January 2023, Carrick Centre Board of Directors expressed an interest in Goudie's to establish a community hub with youth space and opportunities for range of community groups.

During the audit visit, the Town Hall was scaffolded for renovation works which include conservation of architectural features (e.g. iconic tower dating from 1500s), new accessible entrance, carpark resurfacing with potential use for community events, internal redevelopment and modernisation.



The ambitious Priority Buildings Programme has the potential to improve the sustainability and resilience of the town centre by restoring and repurposing key assets and landmarks for a range of uses.

Another key project is the Active Travel/Public Realm High Street Scheme which aims to make the high street more accessible to all and encourage active travel. Plans include widening pavements and improving key cycling and walking routes which will encourage people to spend more time and money in the town centre.

The building condition of town centre units in Maybole scored well below the YTA average and was the lowest ranking of all YTA audited towns (see section 4.5). This reflected the large proportion of vacant and derelict properties, particularly retail units along High Street.



Many shopfronts had cracked paintwork or weeds growing from the gutter or exterior. As part of Maybole Regeneration activity, there are shopfront improvement grants of up to £23,750 available with five grants approved so far according to the Maybole Regeneration website. Encouraging business owners to apply for a Shopfront Improvement Grant should be a priority to maximise its impact.

On arrival to Maybole by train, Greenside is an attractive entry to the town with greenspace, memorials and seating. However, it was relatively underused and the lane linking Greenside to High Street was cluttered and could be improved.



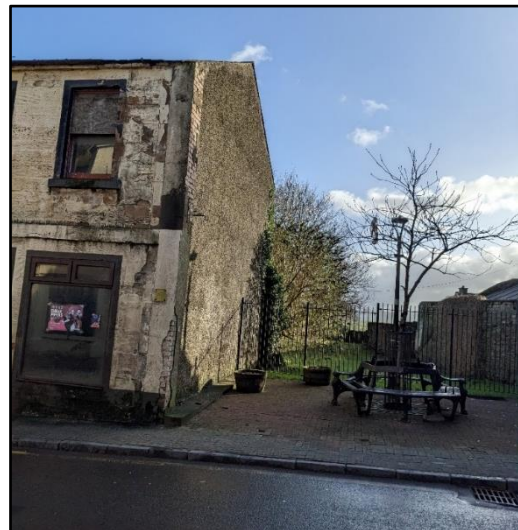
While there are some bins throughout the town centre, there is only a small number centrally given the lack of pavement space on High Street.

Dog mess and litter on the pavements were frequently noted during the audit visit. This was echoed in feedback from business owners who also suggested that the town centre was generally “a bit grubby”. It is hoped that the planned Maybole Regeneration projects, such as shopfront improvement scheme and public realm improvements, will help in this regard.

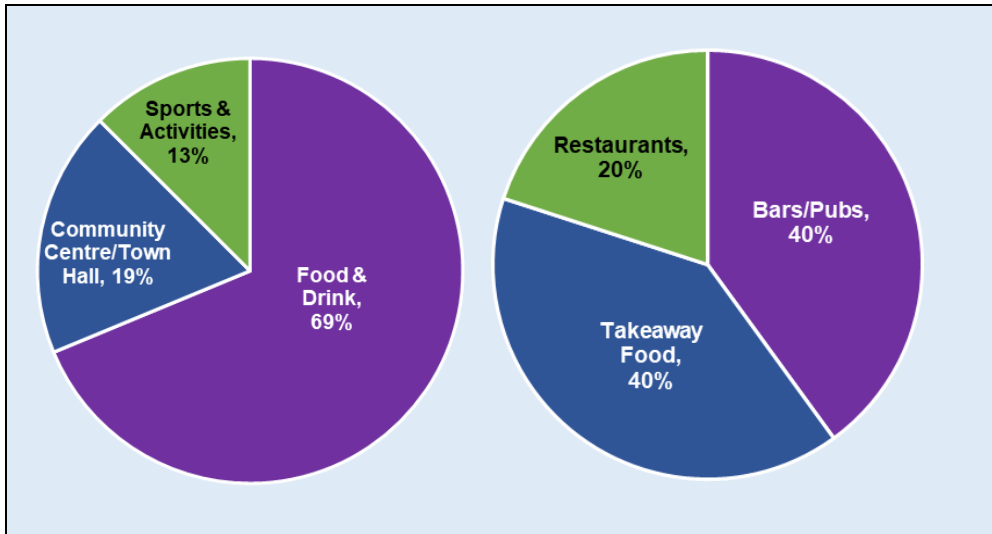
Compared to other town centres, there is little in the way of public art. However, the [Maybole Regeneration Project](#) appointed an artist in residence “to engage with the local community and co-produce events, activities and artworks that interpret Maybole’s history, heritage and change”. As part of the [Foundations for Recovery](#) programme, the consultancy firm Hall Aitken have explored the feasibility of project ideas in the North Carrick area including a significant sculpture ‘The Lion of Carrick’ for Maybole.

While the audit visit was carried out in January 2023 and flower displays around Greenside were yet to blossom, there still appeared to be a lack of displays and hanging baskets – more of which would help to increase the attractiveness particularly along the main shopping street of High Street.

A popular initiative adopted by many towns is the Royal Horticultural Society’s [Britain in Bloom](#) – a Maybole in Bloom (or similar) could be a useful and sustainable solution to improve (and then maintain) the attractiveness of the public realm and enhance pride in local area with volunteer and community buy-in.



4.2 Leisure Mix



Compared to other YTA towns, Maybole has a lower proportion of town centre units that are used for leisure services (15% compared to 22% average). Of the mix of leisure businesses in Maybole town centre, the vast majority are food and drink outlets (11 of 16 leisure units).

The evening economy is comprised of four takeaways, four bars/pubs and two restaurants. Maybole has a relatively high proportion of evening economy outlets (372 residents per evening economy outlet) compared to the YTA average (940 residents per evening economy outlet).



Opened in 2012, the Carrick Centre is an attractive and modern community and leisure facility with café, soft play, function and events spaces used by Maybole Parish Church and regular clubs including dance classes and craft clubs. Located next to Maybole Train Station in an accessible location, the Carrick Centre has a Visit Scotland Activity Centre 4-star rating.



Source: [Visit Scotland](#)

In terms of greenspace, Maybole is well-served with a few parks and playing fields. There is a range of outdoor sports and leisure provision in Maybole. Within the town centre, Glebe Park is a large open greenspace to the south of the town centre and is used for leisure and community use. With changing pavilion facilities, Carrick Rugby Club play their home games at Glebe Park.

In the wider settlement there is Memorial Park, which hosts the Maybole Memorial Park Bowling Club, as well as Maybole Golf Course and Maybole Swimming Pool (although new swimming pool as part of the new community campus would force its closure). The park is opposite Carrick Academy. While most clubs use either Glebe Park or Memorial Park as a venue for their activities, Maybole Juniors Football Club has its own dedicated ground, Ladywell Stadium, on the southern outskirts of the town. Adjacent to the Ladywell Stadium, there is a skatepark which will undergo £215,000 improvement works in summer 2023 – this was identified as a priority for young people in the Maybole Community Action Plan.

Indoor sports provision in Maybole is much more limited. As previously stated, the new Maybole Community Campus will include other sports and leisure facilities such as a swimming pool (forcing closure of existing swimming pool at Memorial Park), fitness gym, sports hall, and outdoor football and rugby pitches. Therefore, the development may begin to address this gap in indoor leisure provision.

As well as the famous Trump Turnberry Golf Course, around 15 minutes' drive from the town, [Maybole Golf Course](#) is located on the southern outskirts of the town centre. At nine holes in length, it is a suitable and affordable option for beginners with summer adult fee of £5 and £3 for under 18s. Facilities include: café, pro shop, visitor changing, practice facility, putting green and equipment hire.

As part of the [Foundations for Recovery](#) project by North Carrick Community Benefit Company, a report by [ARPL Architects](#) explored options for Maybole Golf Club and Swimming Pool building at Memorial Park. The report stated that the golf course is an “underused facility...with the potential to offer new activities and leisure facilities for the town and region”. The main aims of the project are to:

- ensure a longer-term use for the former pool building;
- enhance and expand the use of the golf course - bring new cycling facilities to the town;
- offer new indoor fitness facilities; and
- bring new activities for older children and teenagers the area.

4.3 Community Events and Festivals

As identified in the Maybole Community Plan, there is a lack of regular community festivals and events which take place in Maybole – this has been restricted further in the last couple of years with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, recent and planned community events and festivals tend to focus on the rich history of Maybole. For example, in 2017, Maybole Community Council organised an event programme to celebrate Maybole's 500th anniversary as a town. Events included a “mixed” Burns Supper, a torchlight parade and fireworks display, medieval jousting, weaving, a pageant, concerts, exhibitions, a mapping exercise of the town's history, burial of a time capsule and events organised by young people.

In May 2022, Maybole Heritage Fun Day took place at Glebe Park with historical re-enactment, fancy dress, puppy parade, and highland dancing. Although a similar event took place in August 2021, there appears to be no online promotion of another Heritage Fun Day for 2023.

As part of North Carrick Community Benefit Company's [Foundations for Recovery](#) programme, there are plans for a year-long programme of events and community celebrations in 2024 to mark the 750th anniversary of Robert The Bruce. The '[Bruce 750](#)' events will take place throughout North Carrick with Maybole at its centre. A range of suggested events include local galas, a play, walking, cycling and art trails as well as the use of augmented reality. A key goal is to leave a legacy of annual events for the future which could be significant to address the lack of regular events in Maybole.

4.4 Attractions and Heritage

Maybole has a rich heritage to draw on with buildings and ruins dating from the 14th century. Along High Street, Maybole Town Hall and Maybole Castle are key landmarks within the town centre. Located on John Knox Street, the impressive 14th century ruins of the Maybole Collegiate Church are currently closed to the public as a safety measure while masonry inspections are conducted.



However, it is acknowledged that most of Maybole's key heritage assets are underutilised which the Priority Buildings aspect of the Maybole Regeneration Project aims to address. In particular, funding has been secured for the restoration of Maybole Castle and its gardens into a visitor attraction creating local employment and business opportunities.

As noted above, Maybole's 500th anniversary included the creation of a [heritage route](#) with signs at key heritage sites throughout the town. However, these are very small and can be easily missed. Therefore, improved signage and interpretation could help to promote and connect these sites to attract footfall from High Street and train station.



Visit Scotland notes that there are 20 castles in the wider area. The most notable of these is [Culzean Castle and Country Park](#), which is a 15-minute drive away just north of Turnberry and has a 4-star Visit Scotland rating.

In terms of walking trails, South Ayrshire Council produced a [Paths Around Maybole](#) leaflet which details four routes from the town centre. Two of the trails head to the south (Kildoon Circuit and Drummochreen Cairn) with the remaining walks heading further afield to Kirkoswald in the west (13 miles) and Dunure to the northwest (7 miles).

While it does not pass through Maybole, the [South West Coastal 300](#) has been developed the South West region as a destination for road trips. It is a 300-mile scenic loop around the region from the coasts as well as towns as Dumfries and Moffat. It is the third route in the series of other driving routes in Scotland which have been developed over recent years, most famously the North Coast 500 and the North East 250.

South West Coastal 300 Route



Source: [South of Scotland](#)

Regional bodies, such as [Destination South Ayrshire](#), market Maybole within their own activity – but there is no local marketing body. It is important to ensure that there is a clear, shared and local vision for Maybole and its promotion.

4.5 Attractiveness Review

The YTA includes an independent review of place and quality impressions, with Maybole scoring below average in comparison to other towns.

Individual unit fronts and shop window displays were graded out of ten during the on-street audit, with a town centre average score of 6.0 for quality of window display and 5.0 for the condition of unit fronts. This is below the average of 6.8 across other YTA audited town centres for both measures. In particular, the quality of building fronts rating is the lowest rating of all YTA towns.

As disused or derelict buildings tend to bring the average score down, the high number and proportion of vacant properties and buildings in

Maybole town centre will likely have had an impact on these scores. Some of the buildings in use were in a poor condition which is also reflected in the scores.





Business confidence in the town centre was gauged from a small sample of interviews undertaken with independent traders. On a scale of 0 (not at all confident) to 10 (very confident), scores averaged at 5.1 / 10, below the 5.8 average of other YTA audited towns.

Some of Maybole's independent traders were uncertain of their confidence given the impact of global challenges of cost-of-living crisis and rising energy costs as well as declining footfall in town centres.

5. YTA Summary and Key Points

The following are offered as final comments on the Your Town Audit of Maybole, within the framework of the Scottish Government's Towns Toolkit.

5.1 Accessible Town Centre

- Maybole is relatively compact and much of the town is already a '20 minute neighbourhood' – which promotes the idea of people being able to reach all of their day to day needs within a 20 minute public transport trip or walk/cycle from home – benefitting the local economy, health outcomes and the environment. This is set to be a key national priority for planning and regeneration in future years, and finding ways to facilitate and encourage it will bring benefits for Maybole's economy and population.
- However, the current accessibility of Maybole's town centre is fairly limited with extremely narrow pavements, particularly on High Street, which raises safety concerns especially for people with a disability or with a pram. To address the challenge of accessibility, active travel and public realm improvements are planned as part of the Maybole Regeneration project. These improvement works, such as widening pavements and increased cycling provision, should help improve the pedestrian and visitor experience within the town centre. This would also help to maximise the opportunity of the new £30m Maybole Bypass which has reduced the volume of HGVs traffic through the town centre.
- Parking is fairly limited in Maybole town centre. On-street parking is not available on High Street, which is Maybole's main shopping street. This also causes issues with the narrow pavements, as cars parking on the pavement further restrict access for pedestrians.
- Scheduled to open in 2023, the new Maybole Community Campus will reshape education and leisure provision in the town. This will include a new Carrick Academy as well as St Cuthbert's Primary and a new non-denominational primary school formed by merging Cairn and Gardenrose Primary Schools. Other onsite public facilities to be developed include a swimming pool (forcing closure of existing building at Memorial Park), fitness gym, sports hall, and outdoor football and rugby pitches.
- As the transition to net zero speeds up, the availability of electric charging points in the town centre will be increasingly important. Currently, there are

two charging stations at Inches Close and Maybole Carwash with a total of five charging points.

- The town has good 4G mobile coverage and access to superfast broadband and is set to benefit from the continued national rollout of ultrafast fibre soon.

5.2 Active Town Centre

- Both total vacancy rate and retail vacancy rates were amongst the highest of all YTA towns. In total, 21 vacant units were recorded in the town centre which was equivalent to 25% of total units (11% YTA average) - 13 of these units were vacant retail units giving a retail vacancy rate of 18% (11% YTA average). This illustrates how Maybole town centre has been vulnerable to a general change in retail habits. Although as this is only the third audit completed since start of COVID-19 pandemic, comparisons with the YTA average should be treated with caution. While attracting new retailers is an obvious priority (and local entrepreneurial activity the ideal solution), consideration also needs to be given to finding new uses for vacant units, such as housing.
- Some of the larger vacant units, including cluster around Maybole Charity Shop, are already the focus of the Maybole Regeneration project. It is hoped that by repurposing these former retail units into an enterprise centre, as well as other regeneration activity, will help to attract footfall and businesses back into the town centre.
- While Maybole has a high density of retail offering in relation to its population, there is a lack of variety in the retail offering from independent and multiple retailers. If there is sufficient demand, pop-up shops/markets in the vacant shops or public space (e.g. around Maybole Town Hall, or Greenside) may be a useful tool to help attract more independent retailers into the town centre.
- There are potential plans for the Co-operative Food (High Street) to relocate to the western outskirts of the town, opposite the site of the new Maybole Community Campus development. While this would double its floorspace size, the plans may result in another large vacant retail unit within the heart of the town centre.
- It is encouraging that the Maybole Regeneration project and key community partners such as North Carrick Community Benefit Company and Maybole Community Council, have attracted significant funding and strong

partnership working to address the town's long-standing challenges. These projects reflect Maybole being in a 'state of change' with this activity (and follow-on activity) being crucial to the present and future success and vitality of the town centre. Continuing this mix of local authority investment, willing private investment, positive vision and strong volunteer input and community buy-in will be important to fully maximise the opportunities and benefits for Maybole.

5.3 Attractive Town Centre

- The scale of the challenge presented by the high volume of vacant and derelict buildings of Maybole town centre, which are clustered together, is well recognised and finding – and funding – sustainable solutions is far from easy. As stated above, significant investment in Maybole has already been secured which should improve attractiveness both in new and existing units.
- With the lowest building quality rating of all YTA towns, there is an ongoing and significant need for targeted improvements to shopfronts and the general appearance of buildings around the town centre. Encouraging business owners to apply for a Shopfront Improvement Grant (as part of the Maybole Regeneration project) should be a priority to maximise its impact.
- Dog mess and litter on the pavements were frequently noted during the audit visit. This was echoed in feedback from business owners who also suggested that the town centre was generally “a bit grubby”. It is hoped that the planned Maybole Regeneration projects, such as Shopfront Improvement Grants and public realm improvements, will help in this regard.
- As there is currently a lack in the variety of retailers, encouraging a more vibrant mix of retailers, cafes and other services will be important in ensuring an attractive town centre in future years.
- A popular initiative adopted by many towns is the Royal Horticultural Society's [Britain in Bloom](#) – a Maybole in Bloom (or similar) could be a useful and sustainable solution to improve (and then maintain) the attractiveness of the public realm and enhance pride in local area.
- Maybole has a number of heritage assets which are currently underutilised and could be better promoted. Improved interpretation and signage, with links to the planned new visitor centre, could help to promote and connect these sites to attract footfall from High Street and train station.



- As part of this research and in the Maybole Community Plan, a lack of regular community events and festivals was identified. In 2024, plans for 'The Bruce 750' present opportunity to focus community activity for residents, attract visitors from further afield, and to leave a legacy of regular community events.