

Listening to Birstall



Listening to Birstall action plan February 2023



Listening to Birstall - turning our conversations into action

What we did

230 people took part in the Listening to Birstall conversations in September 2019. Staff from local organisations including Kirklees Council and volunteers from the community talked to local people about what life is like in Birstall, Fieldhead, Cambridge Road and Nova. We used a tool called the “Place Standard”. This is a way of helping to get conversations going about any place (it could be your street, neighbourhood, or town), by using some simple questions. We have used what we learned to create this action plan, which includes ideas for how to improve the local area.



Our team of 25 volunteers talked with people in many local places, including Birstall Library, Birstall Methodist Church, St Peter’s Church, Fieldhead Primary Academy and Birstall and Howden Clough Community Centres. We talked with local groups such as Age UK, Slimming World Knit and Natter and the Job Club. We also had conversations at cafes, bus stops, shops, and local businesses, and on doorsteps. 62 people participated online.

Listening to Birstall overview & Results summary with full data

<https://howgoodisourplace.org.uk/listening-to-birstall/>

<https://howgoodisourplace.org.uk/2019/12/11/listening-to-birstall-results/>

How good is your home and your local place?

In addition to Listening to Birstall, during the summer of 2020 Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing completed their ‘How good is your home and your local place?’ activities, also using the Place Standard. This was an opportunity for all council tenants and leaseholders in Kirklees to share what it’s really like to live in their local community. 124 people in Birstall, Fieldhead, Cambridge Road and Nova took part, either via the post, online or via telephone.

<https://howgoodisourplace.org.uk/2020/11/26/how-good-is-your-home-and-your-local-place-results/>

About Birstall, Fieldhead, Cambridge Road and Nova

Birstall is a large historic village in the metropolitan borough of Kirklees, West Yorkshire, England. It is part of the Birstall and Birkenshaw ward.

Population (please use data from observatory.kirklees.gov.uk)

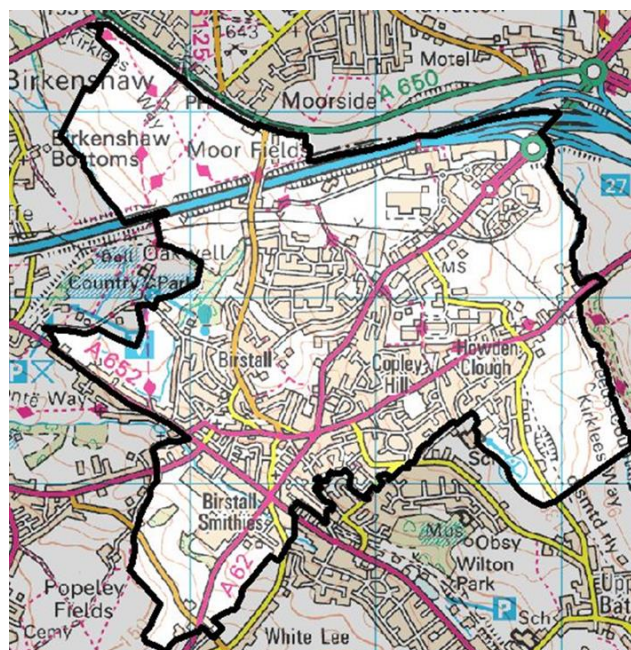
5220	Total population (2018 ONS estimate)
1191	Persons age group 0 – 15
3159	Persons age group 16 – 64
870	Persons age group 65+

Number and type of households

2440	Total households (Valuation Office Agency 2021)
110	Houses or bungalows
450	Flats or maisonettes
990	Number of terraced houses
650	Number of semi-detached houses
200	Number of detached houses

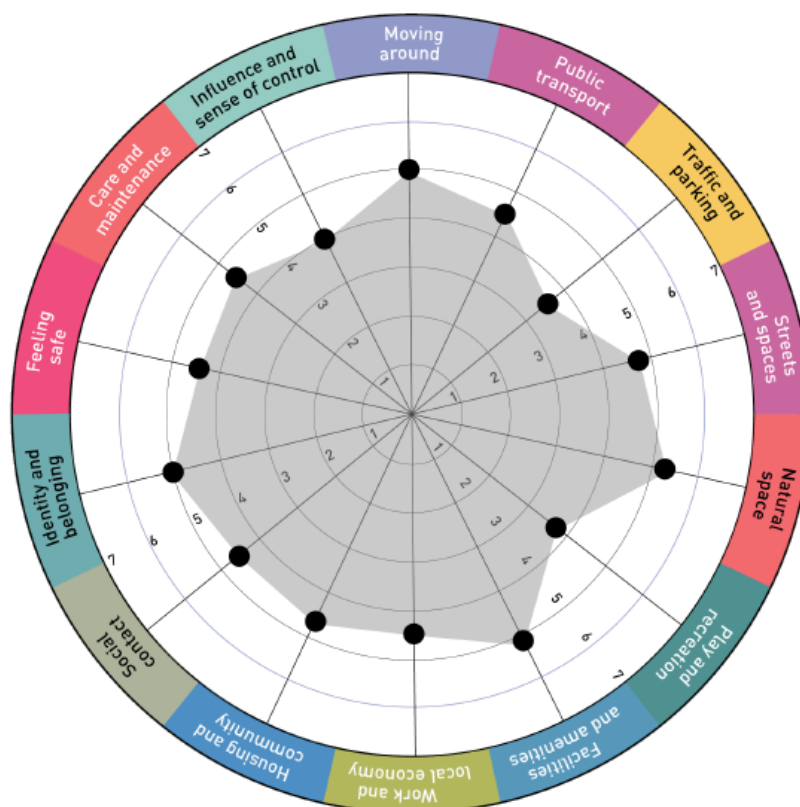
Ownership and tenancy by type (ONS 2011)

426	Owned: Owned outright
688	Owned: Owned with a mortgage or loan
7	Shared ownership (part owned and part rented)
235	Private rented: Private landlord or letting agency
33	Private rented: Other
649	Social rented: Rented from council (Local Authority)
44	Social rented: Other
75	Living rent free



This information is from the Kirklees Observatory: <https://observatory.kirklees.gov.uk/>

Overall scores for Listening to Birstall



How people in [place name] scored their place, on a scale of 1 to 7, whilst talking about 14 different themes, and how many comments we received about each of these themes.

Theme	Average score overall	Range of scores received	Number of comments made
Moving around	5	1 to 7	86
Public transport	4.5	1 to 7	83
Traffic and parking	3.6	1 to 7	113
Streets and spaces	4.8	1 to 7	80
Natural space	5.2	1 to 7	86
Play and recreation	3.8	1 to 7	101
Facilities and amenities	5.1	1 to 7	86
Work and local economy	4.4	1 to 7	91
Housing and community	4.7	1 to 7	59
Social contact	4.6	1 to 7	81
Identity and belonging	5	1 to 7	81
Feeling safe	4.4	1 to 7	93
Care and maintenance	4.6	1 to 7	78
Influence and sense of control	4	1 to 7	85

Full results, including information about how different people responded, are available at: <https://howgoodisourplace.org.uk/2019/12/11/listening-to-birstall-results/>

Strengths in Birstall

Natural space

Participants appreciate the natural spaces such as Oakwell Hall Country Park, Batley Park, the cemetery and church at Kirkgate and the golf club area on Fieldhead, the Greenway, recreation grounds and fields for kids to play. However, participants from Fieldhead commented about the lack of a park or playground for children. There are some access issues to the field at the top of Fieldhead estate and the MUGA (mixed use games area). Some said that schools have taken away the natural space.

Birstall Beck and the fishpond are a nice place to walk around, but the water is stagnant. Dog fouling is a common problem on several local green spaces, bins need emptying more, and there are issues with vandalism, motorbikes and antisocial behaviour. The fields at the top of Victoria Street get a lot of rubbish left on them. People recognise the good work that local volunteers are doing looking after natural spaces.

Suggestions from participants about natural space:

Natural spaces for those who have mobility challenges and for older people. Could do with benches so people can take a rest on the estate (Fieldhead). More litter bins (eco-friendly). More litter picks. More awareness of looking after dogs and not littering, including posters. Clean up spray paint.

Facilities and amenities

There is a consensus from our participants that Birstall has most things, whilst the wider areas lack community resources. Issues raised include services and schools being oversubscribed, access to doctors, lack of public toilets and limited access for wheelchair users. Junction 27 received positive comments. Some participants feel there are too many hairdressers, beauty places and cafes.

Suggestions from participants about facilities and amenities:

Public toilets. The library and community centre need protecting. Having somewhere positive for youths to go on an evening, so they are not hanging around the town. Maybe let young people do some work for older people or have a youth club. B&M would be good at Junction 27. Need extra capacity on local routes, in schools and in GP practices.

Moving around

Participants talked about there being a village feel and said that places are easy to get to. They generally feel safe. Parking was probably the most commented on, with issues including cars parked on kerbs, double parking, not enough parking, and parking outside schools. Participants also want to see the pavements and footpaths around Birstall being improved. Issues include overgrown footpaths, poor lighting, nuisance bikes, wheelie bins left on pathways and wheelchair access. Some improvements have been made to pavements in the area, but people are concerned about this work not being of good quality. People would like pedestrian crossings in various places.

Potholes and poor road surfaces are a common concern. The roads are busy, too many people are 'cutting through' the estates and the town centre on an evening and there are some issues with dangerous driving. There is also a lack of safe cycle routes. The cycle route that heads towards Batley is difficult to get to and then requires cycling on a dangerous and busy road to get into Batley.

Suggestions from participants about moving around:

There should be work done on the route to the school at the top of Nova Lane. Adjustments to cobbles and more dropped kerbs are needed as it's difficult for wheelchair users and for buggies. Traffic management, including traffic lights by Shirley Avenue and a crossing from the Market Place to the pharmacy. More good quality cycle routes for travel around (or to and from) Birstall.

Challenges and issues in Birstall

Traffic and parking

Participants commented on rat running between Junction 27 and Birstall town centre and through from the bypass at Driglington. People are also unhappy about HGV vehicles in Fieldhead, Dark Lane and Birstall town centre. Changes in road markings at the junction of Lowood Lane and Briarmains Road have caused traffic issues, with drivers not realising the right of way or not slowing for the junction due to confusion between road markings and the curvature of the road. Church Lane needs a traffic light system. There are issues with school parking - St-Patrick's School, St Peter's School, Upper Batley Lane, and Windmill Lane are all congested at school times. Participants raised lots of other issues with parking, particularly on Withens Road, Lowood Lane (which is very difficult for emergency services), Raikes Lane, and generally around Birstall town centre. People do not come to the market stalls for fear of getting a parking ticket.

Suggestions from participants about traffic and parking:

Speed restrictions through Birstall and on Bradford Road (just outside of Birstall). Traffic calming needed St Peter's School, with speed reduction in certain areas. Proper traffic lights or crossing lights for safety. The residential roads in the town centre should be for parking permit holders only. Relax parking restrictions on market days to encourage greater crowds for market sellers. Reduce, slow, or better control the traffic in the village centre, including parking on the roads blocking junctions. Maybe make the village a 20 mph zone.

Play and recreation

Participants commented about the lack of local, good quality play areas and said that there is very little to occupy youngsters. People are also concerned about antisocial behaviour and about children playing in unsafe spaces due to a lack of access to better spaces for play. Some said they don't like their children playing out as it is "not safe on the streets", which can be a rat run for traffic. The games area is fenced off, so children cannot use it (Fieldhead).

There isn't enough for teenagers to do and the cost of activities can be a barrier. People would like more local community activities and groups. There is lots of support for the library and community centre.

Suggestions from participants about play and recreation:

A simple Skate Park or something to encourage more teenagers to enjoy outdoor sports. The ball court should be unlocked. The council need to consider more play spaces. There could be a better play area at Cambridge Road. A play area for Fieldhead. Spaces around Birstall and at the Co-location Centre could be used more. The park near St Patrick's needs repairs or replacement equipment. A gaming shop. More promotion of what's available.

Influence and sense of control

People in the area are generally interested in taking part and having a community voice: "The new TRA (Tenants and Residents Association) should help improve this, providing people want to get involved." Unfortunately, people say that they never heard anything about the old TRA until it was falling apart and seeking new members, so there was no real outlet to have a say or encourage change. Participants gave positive feedback about Listening to Birstall and say that it should hopefully "make people feel like we're finally being listened to." People feel that they are often overlooked ("most info I receive in email from Kirklees Together focuses on the Huddersfield area and most of the interesting public events and courses"). Some said that whether they can take part "depends on outcome of these questions." The potential threat of closure for Birstall Library upsets residents. Some participants say that this is at the heart of why the community do not feel supported or listened to.

Suggestions from participants about influence and sense of control:

When a councillor is having an event at the library, could this be better advertised so people know about it? Have community meetings at different times so that more people can take part.

Ideas and actions

After reviewing the data, we identified a list of priorities that participants had commented on most. See appendix 1. These comments have been shared with local people, ward councillors and strategic partners. This has provided us with our initial set of priorities. For action planning, we have identified priorities from both 'Listening to Birstall' and 'How good is your home and your local place?'

Action plan

Ranks	Theme	Concern	Details	Actions Agreed Actions and Outcome Suggestions	Funding – identified funding and amount	Lead / Partners
1	Cross Cutting (Feeling Safe, Play and Recreation, Natural Space),	Greater Police presence	Speeding, Anti- social behaviour, Nuisance motorbikes	Visibility of Community Police in all areas of Birstall to tackle anti-social behaviour. Nuisance Motorbikes – Explore barriers to prevent motorbikes accessing footpaths	Ward Funds	Ward Councillors
2	Cross Cutting (Play and Recreation, Facilities and Amenities, Social Contact Natural Space)	Playground for children and spaces	New playground, Access to Multi Use Games Area. More access to play spaces	Playable spaces programme will include updates to Nova play space. Play space adjoining Co-Location Centre	Nova Play area is part of the Kirklees Councils Playable Spaces £80,000 Total Place Standard Investment	Kirklees Council, Ward Councillors Kirklees Council, Councillors, Voluntary Partners

					Fund and Partners (£40,000 PSIF)	
3	Cross Cutting (Play and Recreation, Social Contact, Feeling Safe)	Dealing with anti-social behaviour (youth activities)	Opportunities for young people, Places to go	Working with local youth providers to develop and support local offer. Funding requirement.	Some ward budgets have been released to local youth providers, for targeted activities.	Kirklees Council, Ward Councillors Voluntary Partners
4	Cross Cutting (Streets and Spaces, Natural Space, Care and Maintenance)	Litter, Fly tipping and Dog mess	Specific areas identified, Roads & Footpaths	Look at a programme of Dog Fouling prevention. (Local school campaign – Possibly Dog Fouling, School Parking & Speeding) Ward Wide (linked to East Bierley Action plan)	£10,000 Place standard investment funds	Kirklees MC, Schools
5	Cross Cutting	Parking	School pick up and collection, Specific roads, parking on pavements, Lack of official parking	Explore extension to parking times to ensure public can access market. Local School Campaign Project,	As identified above	Kirklees Council, Ward Councillors, Schools.
6	Cross Cutting (Traffic and Parking, Moving Around)	Roads and Traffic	Rat Run, crossing opportunities, specific roads, and junctions. Accessibility	Explore 20Mph scheme, that doesn't affect parking around the town centre. (This has been explored before, if future funding allows) Explore drop kerbs opportunities – recognising business needs and	Significate funding required.	Kirklees Council, Ward Councillors

				pedestrian access. (This has been explored before. Funding required)		
7	Public Transport		Bus routes, Timetable changes, Covered bus stops	Discussion to look at Improvement of bus stops and discuss more regular services are currently ongoing. Ongoing through west Yorkshire mayor)		Ward Councillors
8	Cross Cutting (Moving Around, Public Transport)		Cycle paths	The ward would welcome schemes that promoted walking and cycling in the area. Funding currentley a challenge.		Kirklees Council, Ward Councillors
9	Cross Cutting (Play and Recreation, Identity and belonging, Social Contact)		Local information	Members have supported an initiative to promote activities, project etc across the Batley and Spen area.	Ward funding	
10	Work and Local Economy	Support for Local business	Supporting local business initiatives to maintain business viability?	Working with the Birstall Chamber of trade, develop events and campaigns to promote Birstall Town Centre.	Project fund allocation through town centre vibrancy	Ward Members and Birstall Chamber of Trade

Appendix 1

Questions 1 – Moving Around	Listening to Birstall comments	Council tenant comments
Lack of Cycle facilities / Safety	19	2
Parking on Pavements	10	1
Pavements (Quality issues and access)	9	6
Blocked Footpath	8	
Lack of Crossings	8	
Dog Fouling	6	
Potholes / Road Surface	4	
Anti-social behaviour / Theft	4	
Motor Bikes	3	1
Litter	2	1
Speeding	2	2
Icy Footpaths	1	
Bus stops	1	
Hills	1	
Traffic through estate	1	
Parking (not on Pavement)	1	
Volume of Traffic	1	2
Hills – restricting opportunity		3

Question 2 – Public Transport		
Lack and Range of Bus service (including Hospital, Leeds, Batley, Dewsbury etc)	27	7
Bus Services (frequency and timing)	15	3
Anti-social behaviour	1	
Train Station	1	
Cost		2

Question 3 – Traffic and Parking		
General Parking or lack of	35	20
Parking on Pavements	21	5
Rat Run / Cut through	13	3
School Parking	13	5
Volume of Traffic or vehicles	8	1
Traffic Calming	5	
Speeding	5	3
Anti-social behaviour	3	
Motorbikes	3	
Support for creating parking	2	
HGV's	2	1
Disabled parking bays		3

Designated parking		4
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Question 4 – Streets and Spaces		
Litter / Fly Tipping	11	5
Run down building and Shop Fronts	6	2
Damage / Vandalism	4	
Youth anti-social behaviour	4	3
Billboards	2	
Night-time economy	2	
Dog Mess	2	
Motorbikes	2	1
Lack of Gritting	1	
Potholes	1	
Playground	1	
Paths and Public spaces (upkeep issues)	1	9
Drug Dealing	1	
Better Signs	1	
Lack of quality Open space	1	1
Parking (including school parking)	1	7
Individual maintenance	1	2
More planting		1
Overhanging trees		3

Question 5 – Natural Space		
Dog Mess / Pet Owners	7	2
Access to safe green/sports space/ Play Space	6	1
Wheelchair / Frailer individuals access	4	
Fly Tipping / Litter	3	
Anti-social behaviour (Motorbikes, Youth)	2	1
Development	2	
Volume of Traffic	1	
Local Benches	1	
Dog Mess		3
Overgrown public spaces (including grass cutting)		6

Question 6 – Play and Recreation		
Access to Activities Spaces or Play Spaces	48	11
Local Groups (information on)	7	
Anti-social behaviour / Safety concerns	7	2
Indoor Facilities	4	
Motorbikes	4	
Litter	1	
Rat Run	1	
Dog Mess		1

Question 7 – Facilities and Amenities		
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Public Toilets	11	1
Activities for Young People (children's centre)	10	1
Local Resources (Schools Places, Dentist, Doctors)	6	2
Run Down shops spaces	4	
Activities for Adults / Places for groups	11	4
Wheelchair Access	1	1
Local Supermarket / Other businesses	1	4

Question 8 – Work and Economy		
Lack of local employment opportunities (possibly outside of retail)	8	1
Opportunities at Junction 27 or wider	8	2
What's on Information (Job Clubs)	3	
Opportunities for New Business	1	
Concerns around Crime	1	
Opportunities for young People (community)	1	
Opportunities for older people		1
Cliques	1	
Access to banks		1

Question 9 – Housing and Community		
Waiting List for Social Housing / Lack of	9	
Lack of Larger Homes	7	
Maintenance Issues	3	
House prices	3	
Lack of Bungalows	2	
Clash of age groups (residential)	2	
Limited rental opportunities	1	
No Community Spirit	1	
Anti-social behaviour	1	

Question 10 - Social Contact		
Lack of places to meet up (disability access)	6	7
Co-Location not being used	6	
Lack of Youth Activities	4	
What on Guide (info on local services)	4	2
Lack of Community Support / Activities	3	6
Cost of activities	1	
Rat Run		1

Question 11 – Identity and Belonging		
Lack of positive identity	11	7
Anti-social behaviour / Drug related comments	6	5
Change of age restriction on Housing	3	3
Lack of Social / Community Opportunities	2	1
Lack of Council Support		1

Motorbikes	1	
Cleansing Issues		2

Question 12 – Feeling Safe		
Anti-social behaviour / Gangs / Criminality	31	15
Motorbikes	16	
Not feeling safe	10	8
Drug Dealing / Users	6	7
Burglary	6	
Policing	6	
Speeding Cars	1	3
Better internal lighting		1
Change in age restrictions		7
Overgrown paths		1

Question 13 – Care and Maintenance		
Litter / Fly Tipping	14	
Buildings and homes unkept / Lack of maintenance	10	
Dog Mess	10	
General Path and Road Maintenance (potholes)	8	
Vandalised	3	
Playground and Parks maintenance	3	
Motorbikes		
Block paths		
Recycling opportunities	2	

Question 14 – Influence and Sense of Control		
Not listened to / No Opportunity	18	17
Difficult or Don't know how to get involved	9	3
Reporting not acted on	1	4
Lack of Face to Face officers	1	
Advertised opportunities	1	
More Tenants meeting / Action from meeting		7

Get involved

To get involved or find out more, please contact:

Birstall and Birkenshaw ward councillors
www.kirklees.gov.uk/councillors or
 Ashley Fothergill (Democracy Service, Kirklees Council)
 Email: ashley.fothergill@kirklees.gov.uk

This document and more information is available online at:

www.HowGoodIsOurPlace.org.uk