

Creative Citizens

Creative Citizens Middlesbrough

Exploring the role and potential for grassroots creativity in Middlesbrough Town

Research report prepared for Middlesbrough Cultural Partnership
by Jess Plant, England Director, Creative Lives

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2023, Jason Hynes: 'Hometown', Middlesbrough Art Week (image credit: Rachel Deakin)

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About Creative Lives

Creative Lives is a registered charity that was established in 1991. We champion community and volunteer-led creative activity, and work to improve opportunities for everyone to be creative. In particular, we celebrate and promote people expressing themselves creatively with others, recognising the benefits this can bring. We know that creative expression in all its forms is a fundamental part of being human, but that individuals and communities need opportunities and support for creativity to flourish. We also know that people coming together to create, have fun, share experiences and support each other can have a positive impact on both their physical and emotional wellbeing.

To that end, Creative Lives works with communities, organisations, policy-makers, funders and creative individuals as a voice for positive change, to improve and expand the landscape in which creative participation can take place. We work to address inequalities in access to creative participation, promote inclusivity, connect people and communities, and seek to increase awareness of the links between creativity and wellbeing.

We do this on a local and national level through advocacy, development and celebrating the activities of creative people, groups and places through the [Creative Lives Awards](#), [Creative Lives On Air](#), our [Creative Networks](#) and [Creative Learning](#) sessions and a diverse range of creative projects. This report is part of [Creative Citizens](#), our tailored package of consultancy support for public bodies and arts organisations.

We have teams based across the UK and Ireland, and are funded by Arts Council England, the Arts Council of Ireland, Creative Scotland and the Arts Council of Wales.

About this report

This project was delivered pro-bono for the Cultural Partnership in Middlesbrough, led by Middlesbrough Council to test Creative Lives' [Creative Citizens](#) approach. We sought to find out what's going on locally, map activity, explore local community challenges and find out what creative groups need. We also considered potential opportunities and explored what the Middlesbrough Cultural partnership meant to creative grassroots groups.

About Middlesbrough Cultural Partnership

Middlesbrough Cultural Partnership (MCP) is a collective of arts, heritage, and culture organisations, businesses, and freelancers on a mission to Make Middlesbrough the Most Creative Town in the UK. The Partnership came together as a group of artists, arts and culture organisations, and professionals to be a voice for creativity in Middlesbrough. The Auxiliary Project Space, Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, Navigator North, Platform A Gallery, Tees Valley Arts, and Middlesbrough Council were the founding organisations and many more have since joined. There are now over 20 key partners. MCP is currently reviewing its membership to be broader and more inclusive, but aims to be a voice of the creative and cultural sector in Middlesbrough. More information can be found here: [Who are we? - Middlesbrough Cultural Partnership.](#)

What we know about the value of creative participation

Creative cultural pursuits bring people together, teach them new skills, boost confidence and bring about a sense of achievement, identity and place. Government research suggests they can also improve physical health and mental wellbeing [1]. The research report '[Common Ground - Rewilding the Garden](#)' [2], published by Creative Lives in November 2020, concluded that “there is a huge resource of grassroots arts groups right across the country with an important contribution to make to maintaining individual and community health”. Creative communities and engagement can drive equality and social cohesion. The report looked at reconnecting with often overlooked culture in our local communities and found that grassroots groups needed three core pillars to flourish:

- Space
- Creative citizens
- Recognition

And that there are three main benefits/motivations for people taking part, which include:

- Social connectedness and community identity
- Fun and enjoyment
- Health and well-being

[1] [Evidence summary for policy: The role of arts in improving health and wellbeing - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[2] [Common Ground: Rewilding the Garden | Creative Lives \(creative-lives.org\)](#)

Creative Engagement

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport's 'Taking Part' survey 2019/20 [3] looks at visitor numbers to arts, heritage and libraries as opposed to actively taking part in creative activity. Audience and visitor numbers is where most previous research into the impact of the arts has focused. However the 2017 'Active Lives' report, which was the last one to include figures on creative engagement, states that 34.7% of the adult population 'spent time doing a creative, artistic, theatrical or music activity or a craft' [4]. More recent evidence from the Audience Agency's Participation Monitor specifically exploring Everyday Creativity (2022) suggests the figure is higher, with 45% of the UK population engaging in some kind of creative activity. This figure increases to 86% if activities such as cooking, gardening, fashion, and creative gaming are included.

The figure for creative engagement in Middlesbrough was only 28.5%, which is significantly lower than the national average. Middlesbrough ranks 47 of 326 Local Authorities in England for the lowest levels of arts participation in England.



2022, Night Light Theatre and Recovery Connections

[3] IPSOS Mori, Taking Part Survey 2019/20 - Arts Questions (published 16 September 2020) <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/taking-part-201920-arts>, Heritage Questions <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/taking-part-201920-heritage>, Museums & Galleries Questions <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/taking-part-201920-museums>

[4] <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/research-and-data/active-lives-survey#t-in-page-nav-2>

What we did and our methodology

Middlesbrough Cultural Partnership asked us to investigate on-the-ground community arts activity in order to find out what's going on locally, identify groups as yet unknown to them, discover what support might be needed, test local awareness of the Cultural Partnership, and canvass opinions about its vision to become the most creative town in the UK. Two wards of particular interest were Brambles & Thorntree, Berwick Hills & Pallister, but the work extended to include much of Middlesbrough Town as a whole. To deliver this work we carried out:

- **Field research:** two days walking around local areas finding evidence of groups and activity in local communities and looking at notice boards in community centre and cafes.
- **Desk research:** to uncover local arts provision in Middlesbrough.
- **Data capture:** working in partnership with [Data Culture Change](#) to review local demographics across Middlesbrough, and within the two specific wards.
- **Focus groups:** two in-person focus groups with 16 attendees in total and one online focus group with four attendees.
- **Interviews:** seven one-to-one interviews (four online and three face-to-face).
- **Meetings:** with Middlesbrough Council cultural leads and attending the Middlesbrough Cultural Partnership.
- **An online survey:** completed by 16 people (conducted through the summer month of August, which perhaps indicates the low number of participants).

The meetings, research and interviews took place between April and July 2023. Face-to-face meetings were held in the Auxiliary Project Space and Navigator North in May 2023. The priority wards for this project are Brambles & Thorntree and Berwick Hills & Pallister, but the project primarily focused on Middlesbrough as a whole. Quotes referenced in the findings below are from interviews and focus group participants, which included artists, practitioners, project managers and organisers.

Creative contacts

We also looked at baseline data from the Middlesbrough Cultural Partnership of 24 creative organisations based in/working in Middlesbrough. Through the research we were able to increase this to 89 contacts (see attached list - appendix 5). This does not include a list of infrastructure organisations or art form groups, such as music hubs which may also exist locally.

Ethics

All feedback was anonymised and participants in survey, focus groups and interview were informed of the purpose of the activity. No contact details have been shared with the Cultural Partnership without permission. Data storage has followed Creative Lives' GDPR policy.



2022, Middlesbrough Mela (image credit: Rachel Teate)

Creative and cultural investment in Middlesbrough

Arts Council England (ACE) investment in National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) and Investment Principles Support Organisations (IPSOs) in the area will receive **£2m per year** between 2023-26 to serve Middlesbrough and the surrounding areas.

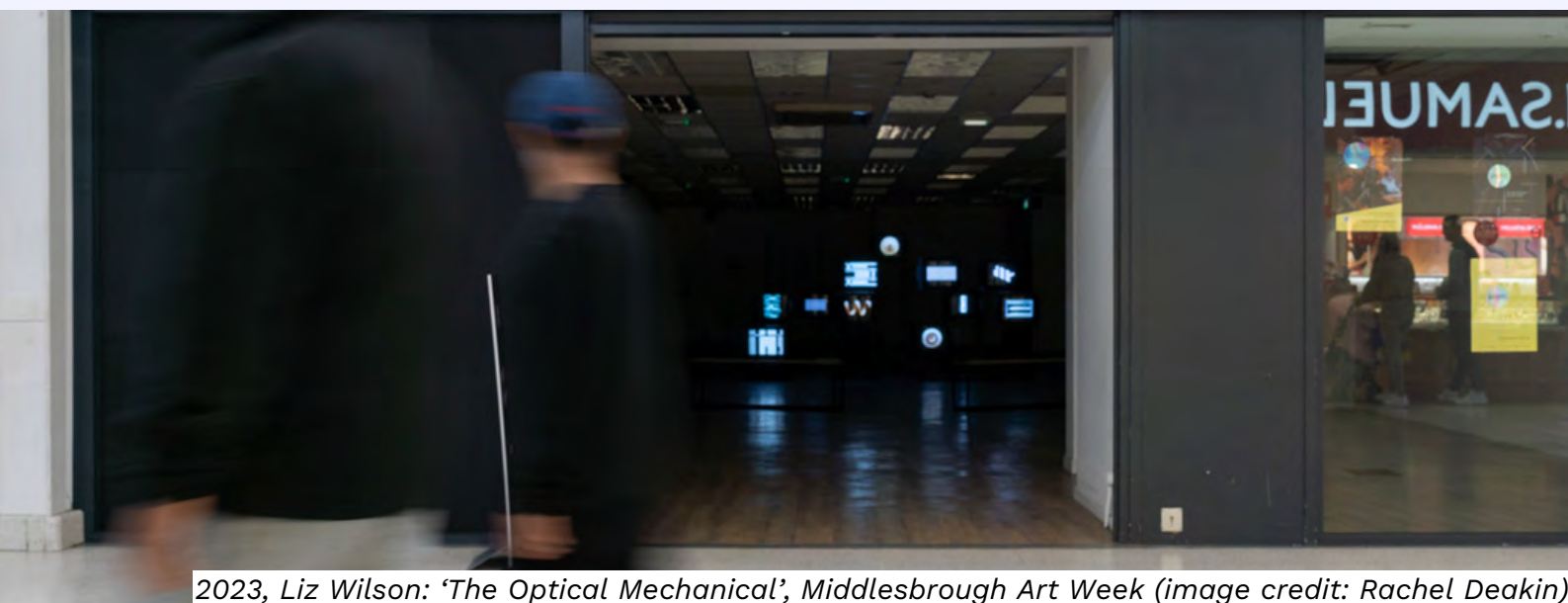
Middlesbrough is currently served by five Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations (NPO). These are Middlesbrough Town Hall, Teesside University (MIMA), The Auxiliary Project Space, Tees Valley Arts, and Tees Valley Museums Group. There are also three Investment Principle Sector Organisations based in the region. These are the Association for Cultural Enterprises, Family Arts Campaign Ltd and Future Arts Centres. These funded organisations are either based in the Middlesbrough area or funded to serve the area [5]. The Middlesbrough-serving NPOs alone will receive **£1,054,000** per year from Arts Council England between 2023 and 2026.

From 2021-2022, ACE made 16 Arts Grants to projects in the Middlesbrough area, totalling **£483,188**; award sizes ranged from £8,600 to £100,000. Seven of these were made to individuals and the other nine to organisations. Disciplines for successful funding applications included dance, combined arts, visual arts, music, and literature, with the highest representation for arts disciplines being visual arts (five grant awards) and combined arts (five grant awards).

[5] We have only included reference to North or North-East specific NPOs and IPSOs here. There are a wide range of NPOs and IPSOs funded to serve the whole of England that we have not included.

From 2022-2023, three awards from Arts Council England's Cultural Investment Funding [6] totalling **£4,801,994**, were made to Middlesbrough Council and Middlesbrough Council Cultural Services for Middlesbrough Central Library, the Dorman Museum and Middlesbrough Cultural Development Fund.

Five projects in Middlesbrough secured National Lottery Community Fund [7] Grants in 2022-23, totalling £45,610 for organisations including Clean Slate Solutions, The Link Tees Valley Ltd, The Halo Project, Inspiring Others, and the RDA Centre in Cleveland.



2023, Liz Wilson: 'The Optical Mechanical', Middlesbrough Art Week (image credit: Rachel Deakin)

[6] <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/our-open-funds/cultural-investment-fund>

[7] <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/>

About Middlesbrough

The borough of Middlesbrough, formerly of the county of North Yorkshire, now sits within the [Combined Authority of the Tees Valley](#). The Tees Valley is made up of Darlington, Hartlepool, Redcar and Cleveland, Stockton-on-Tees and Middlesbrough, which is the largest population centre in the area. This work focused specifically on Middlesbrough, which has a population of 143,924 [8]. There are 20 wards in Middlesbrough with 463 output areas [9]. In Middlesbrough there are 11 wards with high levels of multiple deprivation (over 5%) in relation to employment, education, health and housing.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is the official measure of relative deprivation in England and is calculated from a combination and weighting of seven factors: income, employment, health deprivation and disability, education/skills and training, crime, barriers to housing and services, and living environment. Middlesbrough is one of five local authorities with the highest proportions of neighbourhoods that are among the most deprived in England. [10]

Just under half (49%) of all neighbourhoods in the authority ranked in the most deprived decile nationally. Middlesbrough is both a UK Government Levelling Up area [11] and an Arts Council England Priority Place [12] and, as a result, should see investment over the coming years. According to the government's Levelling Up White Paper [13] Middlesbrough shows large disparities in outcomes and income deprivation across a relatively small geographical area.

[8] 2021 Census Area Profile, Office for National Statistics, published 28 June 2022, [2021 Census Profile for areas in England and Wales - Nomis \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](#)

[9] Appendix 5

[10] The English Indices of deprivation 2019, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/835115/IdD2019_Statistical_Release.pdf

[11] UK Levelling up areas can be founds here: [Levelling Up the United Kingdom - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[12] Arts Council England priority places: [Priority Places and Levelling Up for Culture Places | Arts Council England](#)

[13] [Levelling Up the United Kingdom \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

How is Middlesbrough changing?

New data from the 2021 Census [14] shows how the town is changing. Middlesbrough is growing, with over 5,000 new residents between 2011 and 2021. It is also more densely populated than it was in 2011, the most densely populated local authority in the North East. Middlesbrough is also increasingly ethnically diverse – residents who identified as ‘white’ fell from 88.2% to 82.4% in the same period. Middlesbrough has the second lowest median age in the North East (37, the same as 2011) and three years younger than the English average (40). It is comparatively unhealthy, (although improving) – 8.0% of Middlesbrough residents described their health as ‘bad’ or ‘very bad’ compared to an English average of 5.3%. Middlesbrough is home to a high proportion of Lone Parent Households (15.2% compared to the English average of 11.1%). The town is very reliant on rental accommodation (44.2% of the households compared to 37.6% across England). Middlesbrough is one of just 12 Local Authorities in England where more than half the adult population is economically inactive. [15]

Compared to the rest of England, Middlesbrough has high levels of households with dependent children, people living in social rented accommodation and relatively low numbers of people over the age 66. It has extremely high levels of people with low or no qualifications. It has high levels of people with no access to a car or van and a large propagation of people who walk less than two kilometres to work. An increasing population, with diverse needs, interests and backgrounds can present an opportunity for a thriving creative community. The ever-increasing working from home culture may also present opportunities for Middlesbrough to enable hyper local creative activity to thrive.

[14] <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E06000002/>

[15] <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/employmentinlocalauthoritiesenglandandwales/census2021>

Brambles & Thorntree and Berwick & Pallister

The priority wards for this project were Brambles & Thorntree and Berwick Hills & Pallister. In these wards there are even higher levels of people with dependent children and a lower number of people over the age of 66. There is a higher level of men living in the area and an even higher percentage of people with three or four dimensions of deprivation. No qualifications and access to transport were also extremely low. (see Appendix 3 for more detailed demographic details related to Middlesbrough and wards).

Brambles & Thorntree

The Council has also published 'Ward Reports' using the data used to calculate the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation. The Report for Brambles & Thorntree [16] highlighted the Ward ranked particularly highly for Income Deprivation (270), Education, Skills and Training Deprivation (333) and Employment Deprivation (475) out of nearly 7000 wards in England.

Working with Data Culture Change we have processed data from the 2021 Census to allow comparison of a place with the average percentile for England as a whole.

In general, Brambles & Thorntree reflects but also amplifies the differences between Middlesbrough and the national norm. Of particular note Brambles & Thorntree Ward has compared to the English national average:

- Higher than average households with Dependent Children
- Lower than average households of retirement age
- Higher than average persons with no qualifications
- Higher than average persons not working or never worked (L14)
- Higher than average full-time students
- Lower than average access to car or van transport
- Lower than average ethnic diversity

[16] <https://middlesbrough-council-middlesbrough.opendata.arcgis.com/documents/57cc82b696c649ddbf4ce5c56ea1cf63/explore>

Chart 1: Deviation from the English in norm (2021 Census) in Middlesbrough and Brambles & Thorntree Ward

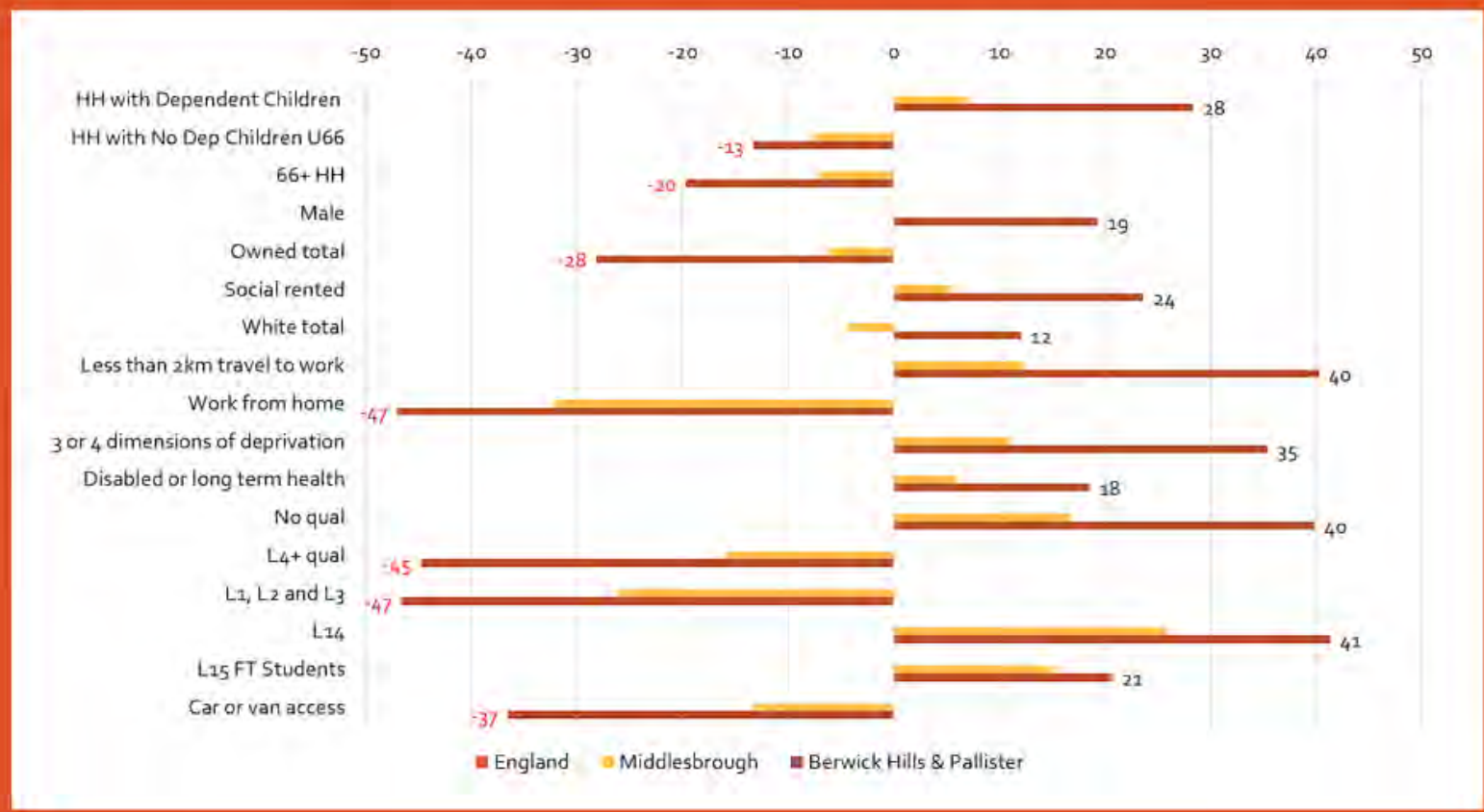
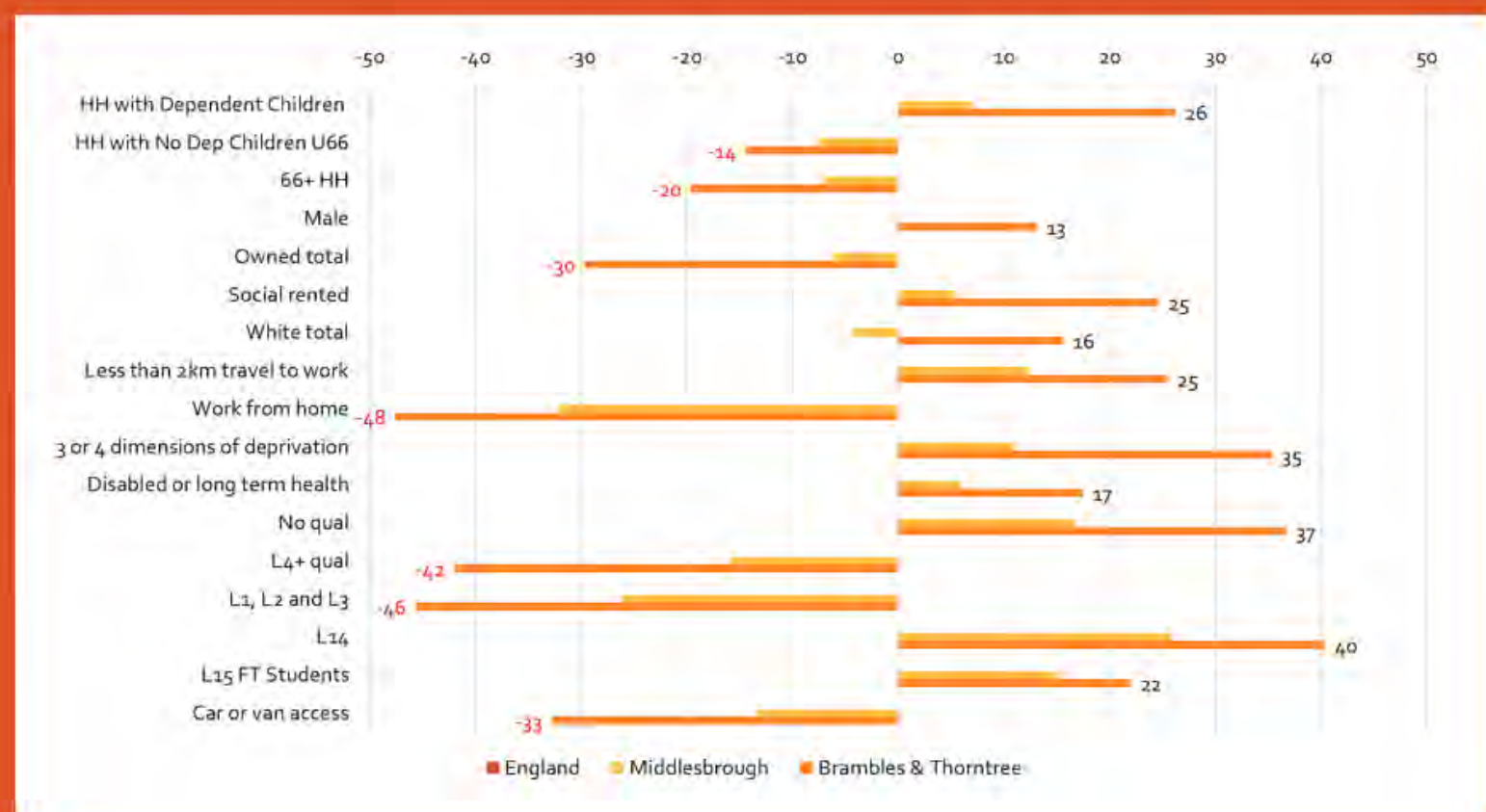


Chart 2: Deviation from the English in norm (2021 Census) in Middlesbrough and Berwick Hills & Pallister Ward

Berwick Hills & Pallister

The Report for Berwick Hills & Pallister [17] highlighted the Ward ranked particularly highly for Income Deprivation (592), Education, Employment Deprivation (691) and Health Deprivation and Disability (912) out of nearly 7000 wards in England.

In general, Berwick Hills & Pallister reflects but also amplifies the differences between Middlesbrough and the national norm. Of particular note Berwick Hills & Pallister Ward compared to the national average has:

1. Higher than average households with Dependent Children
2. Lower than average households of retirement age
3. Higher than average persons with no qualifications
4. Higher than average persons not working or never worked (L14)
5. Higher than average full-time students
6. Lower than average access to car or van transport
7. Lower than average ethnic diversity

While the analysis of characteristics for Berwick Hills & Pallister was very similar to Brambles & Thorntree, residents of Berwick Hills & Pallister are more likely to travel in excess of 2km to their place of work.

While these statistics are important, Creative Lives supports an asset-based approach and understands the dangers of consistently pointing out how particular places are failing or doing less well than other places. We hope to use the relevant data to make useful, supportive recommendations that enable communities to thrive.

[17] <https://middlesbrough-council-middlesbrough.opendata.arcgis.com/documents/berwick-hills-and-pallister-ward-report-2019-/explore>

Increasing arts participation in Berwick Hills & Pallister and Brambles & Thorntree

For 15 years we have known that the two most significant factors in determining whether somebody attends arts activities, are education and economic status. The higher an individual's level of education and economic status, the more likely they are to have high levels of formal arts engagement. [18] Given the economic activity and educational attainment data for the wards, we would therefore expect there to be less creative activity in both wards.

However we did find groups operating in both wards, although they were under the radar and hard to find. There was evidence of a knit and natter group in Thorntree, as well as music lessons and children's dance classes. There were also very active Facebook community groups, which promote local activities, news and opportunities. Positive Pathways is based in Pallister Park as well as yoga and wellbeing groups operating. The Neptune Centre also had creative groups.

When speaking to people in the areas they expressed a need and desire for more creative activity and a perception that there used to be more on offer for people. Analysis of available data suggests successful approaches to building arts participation will need to address:

- Financial barriers – activity would need to be free or extremely low cost to ensure engagement.
- Transport issues - be hyperlocal, so travel isn't an issue as many people do not have access to a car or van.
- Caring responsibilities - focus on families with children, including a particular focus on lone parent families.

The high proportion of households living in social rented accommodation presents an opportunity to partner with local Housing Associations and potentially food banks and warm spaces. The high proportion of households with dependent children suggests an opportunity to engage with primary and secondary schools to both reach potential participants and as a location for activities.

[18] <https://www.culturehive.co.uk/resources/what-the-taking-part-survey-reveals-about-audience-patterns-behavior-and-barriers-and-how-arts-marketers-can-work-effectively-with-different-groups/>

Grassroots creative engagement – our findings

Creative participation in Middlesbrough

As stated earlier in the report, the figure for creative engagement in Middlesbrough in 2017 was 28.5%, which is significantly lower than the national average of 37%. However we found a rich and vibrant grassroots creative scene in Middlesbrough, which champions diversity and offers potential for many aspiring creatives to be engaged in a wide range of activities. This section of the report highlights what we found and offers recommendations for the Cultural Partnership based on our conversations, knowledge and data analysis.

Creative Groups in Middlesbrough

In Middlesbrough there is a rich ecosystem of creative activity, where volunteers, practitioners and artists wear many hats, delivering workshops to the community, volunteering in their spare time and doing arts-based or unrelated paid work to make up their income.

The creative activity that we found was as diverse as the groups and people leading it, with an inclusive scene that welcomes difference and tries to support talent to stay locally. Many organisations came up time and time again, but specifically Pineapple Black and Taste of Africa were mentioned for doing a lot of amazing work with very few resources. We have collated a database of over 90 creative contacts, consisting of known contacts to Middlesbrough Council, groups we found via field research and desk/online research. We know there are many more creative organisations, groups and informal creative activity happening across Middlesbrough that we haven't captured, but this list provides a snapshot, which is included in Appendix 5.

We found everything from Lego clubs, choirs and dance groups to online crochet groups, magazines and gaming start-ups. There are both rich visual arts and music scenes existing in a formal capacity in schools and established venues, but also in vacant/disused buildings and units across the town centre.

Respondents to our fieldwork were enthusiastic about the wide variety of activity happening:

‘There is an untapped resource including ukulele, belly dancing, brass bands as well as new Ukrainian cultural and creative groups.’

We found a burgeoning arts and wellbeing sector, with practitioners using theatre to support women escaping domestic violence or craft workshops for people who have arrived new to the country as asylum seekers or refugees. There was also a need and desire for more creative activity. The survey we carried out asked people how could Middlesbrough be a more creative place to live and work and respondents said:

- Doing more for mental health through free craft groups
- More online activities
- Needs to be greater publicity about events
- Timing, a lot of things are weekdays 9 to 4 including exhibitions. Not very good timings for workers
- The level of support from higher up, politically, could be greater but also the influx of money on the ground for retention should be vastly improved, specifically in the performing arts

When speaking to grassroots groups across Middlesbrough there were a number of key themes which emerged. These included a **need for better spaces** for creative activity to happen, that was affordable and fit for purpose. There was also a desire for high quality progression routes from grassroots to professional opportunities.

Participants in our focus groups acknowledged that there were a range of different needs and communities that required different, bespoke creative pathways to suit people and communities. For example, some people take part in creativity for leisure or wellbeing. For others it's a profession and livelihood and there needs to be opportunities across the board to meet the needs of these different communities who support the whole creative ecosystem.

‘There are lots of smaller groups and practitioners, some want to just get on with it and others want more support and recognition.’

‘We need better pathways for creatives, there are lots of grassroots and then a big gap.’

Many participants talked about the need for **moments and events** where everyone can come together. There was also a desire to be acknowledged and recognised for the great community work a lot of volunteers and group leaders do that has a major impact on people's lives in terms of reducing loneliness and connecting people. For example respondents said:

‘A celebration event once a year - showcase without any costs - no stall fees, no charge. Put it in Middlesbrough Park, with big and small creatives in the same place, with little barrier to engage.’

‘We are missing larger events (weekender/music festival) and the Creative Factory.’

‘We do it because we love it, but we want to be acknowledged, feel valued and celebrated.’

‘We need more larger scale, big moment events that really bring people together. Some key ones have gone, but people really value the ones that happen.’

‘There's always loads of little things happening, but nothing massive that brings people together.’

There was also **a demand for creative networks** and for these to be responsive to changes in how people connect post-pandemic. The informal networking session held at MIMA were praised by participants, who hoped for more of this type of ongoing mechanism to network and stay informed.

‘We need more networks and ways for smaller groups, artists and practitioners to connect.’

‘Covid and technology have changed how people communicate and get together. Some people want to be more strategically involved, but some groups just want to carry on as they are, informally.’

Community and voluntary sector organisations

We also found many community and voluntary sector organisations delivering creative activity as a means to engage and support people. This included community food banks, local National Childbirth Trust (NCT) groups and Barefoot Kitchen doing activity such as basket weaving or children’s arts and crafts.

Challenges

The creative and arts scene is grappling with high levels of deprivation in the town centre, people with complex needs, including alcohol and substance misuse issues, financial hardship, single parent families, new arrivals and unemployment.

The presence of multiple art spaces within the town centre means the arts are playing a role in breaking down barriers as to who art is for and who it belongs to. There are some excellent examples of arts organisations using creativity to improve outcomes for individuals and communities, such as Borderlands (the Arts Council Creative People and Places project for the South Tees), Navigator North and Freestyle Community Projects. This is a positive approach to build on, but also requires arts practitioners to be highly skilled and flexible.

The barriers to participation they identified were many and included:

- Transport issues (people don't have car/vans and public transport is unreliable)
- Cost (to attend and deliver)
- Space (costs to hire/and availability of suitable spaces)
- Marketing (Knowing what's on and how to get involved is very difficult)
- Siloed community spaces (some places are for some people and not for others)
- Language barriers
- Fundraising (small groups can find it hard to raise money)
- The word 'art' is a barrier (people think it's not for me, what are the rules - can I come in?)
- Time (people working three jobs)
- Childcare (cost, priority and time)
- Hard to reform groups after Covid (they can't pivot back)
- Some areas less well-served
- Lack of confidence (facilitators and participants)
- High level of social needs (although arts can sometimes help with this and be a stepping stone to accessing support)
- Struggle to reach an ethnically diverse population.

Another key theme that came up time and time again was the problem with not knowing what's on, when and where it is happening. This was also echoed as a problem for organisers as they don't always get people attending workshops and events even when they are free, for example one participant said:

'It's a challenge for some organisations to get participants for workshops etc - lack of marketing and what's on guides.'

'We get the same people coming again and again, we would like to attract more people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.'

Middlesbrough Cultural Partnership's creative vision

During the focus groups, we asked for views on the Middlesbrough Cultural Partnership's vision to become the most creative town in the UK. The broad feeling is that there is a lot of potential, but more needs to be done to increase understanding of what this actually means in practice and take people with them, to make the vision feel more achievable and collective. It was also acknowledged that in terms of Middlesbrough as a place, like anywhere, identity to place is complex and shifting. Some people identify with Middlesbrough the 'town' and others more with the Tees Valley and others North Yorkshire. Shops closing down and the current and ongoing development in the town centre meant it was hard to see it as a creative place.

Feedback from participants included:

'We have a long way to go before we are the most creative town. We have a great grassroots scene, in fact pretty much everything is grassroots or DIY.'

'People are weary of vision, they feel let down and don't know when it will come.'

'I don't fully understand the vision.'

'How will we know we have achieved it? How would we measure it?'

'It doesn't really feel like it is a creative place, compared to the places in the UK.'

'The town is so run down, that it doesn't ring true.'

Communicating with small volunteer-led groups is challenging and there is more work to do to raise awareness of the Middlesbrough Cultural Partnership and its vision. Local people see the vision of Middlesbrough as a creative centre as a challenging concept given the starting point and the challenges they face in maintaining their own cultural activity.

Awareness of the Middlesbrough Cultural Partnership

We also asked participants for their views on the Middlesbrough Cultural Partnership, and participants said that they were unsure of its purpose and people were also unsure how to get involved. There was praise for the partnership approach, but if you aren't already involved it could feel exclusive. There was a need and desire for more networking activity, which could feed into the Cultural Partnership, but this needed to stay relevant and interesting to a range of different audiences. Creative Lives was delighted to introduce new members to the partnership via the process of this work. Participants said:

'It is hard to be engaged if you are freelance or doing lots of jobs and maybe not relevant even if you do.'

'The Cultural Partnership serves only one group and then these organisations get a bigger slice of the pie.'



2023, Sarah Maple: 'Labour of Love', Middlesbrough Art Week (image credit: Rachel Teate)

Conclusions and recommendations

1. Many groups operate effectively but would like **more acknowledgement and profile** for what they do.

2. They cite availability of affordable, fit for purpose **spaces** as an important barrier to putting on activities.

3. Although **money** is not a prime issue for all community groups, **access to modest funding** would be appreciated, as well as support in applying for grants.

4. They are aware that individuals are not always informed about what is available and would appreciate **marketing support**. Participants are not always up-to-date with what is happening and would like to see **more listings and promotional opportunities**.

5. They cite **inclusiveness**, or lack of it, or indeed perceptions that certain venues or activities are 'not for them' as a barrier. **Language** is sometimes an issue, including the language of 'art' and 'arts' for activities which can be off-putting particularly in a small social setting.

6. More challenging are issues around **caring responsibilities, time, transport issues** and **costs**.

7. An overarching theme was the absence of any **bigger events** bringing and profiling together small organisations' ongoing work. Several interviewees mentioned the loss of The Creative Factory.

8. More needs to be done through communication to promote Middlesbrough Cultural Partnership and its vision to local groups. They do not feel informed. Potentially changing the wording from 'the most creative town' to something which better reflects the current feeling such as 'celebrating the everyday creativity of the people of Middlesbrough' or 'Middlesbrough - Creativity For Everyone'.

Opportunities

1. Recognition

Groups that are mostly self-organised and volunteer-run have different needs from professional organisations. However they are often ‘under the radar’ and would appreciate recognition by local bodies, including by the local authority, local media and cultural arts organisations.

This could be an award ceremony or other mechanism to profile voluntary-led groups, potential partnerships with more established arts and heritage organisations. A quick win would be to have a Creative Award as part of Middlesbrough’s existing Civic Community Awards.

2. Spaces

All groups face issues of where to meet, particularly given the imperative for community groups to be near to the residential areas they serve. Participants cite travel costs and times as barriers.

Availability of free spaces or spaces within other organisations’ buildings is a bonus for community groups. Creative Lives [Spaces for Creativity](#) report may provide some useful suggestions about the pooling of resources and the types of specific spaces needed for grassroots activities to thrive.

3. Money

There are some local funds which could be promoted to local groups including as micro-grants. Creative Lives’ experience of micro-grants is that small grants of as little as £300 make a big difference to small groups, both because they enable small purchases but also give recognition. It is important to recognise that small groups need to be sustainable and not incur major costs. They can be overwhelmed by the potential for bigger funding which is often not sustainable long term.

Middlesbrough Council’s Community Grants Fund and the Tees Valley Community Foundation award grants for community projects. The Rose Foundation also offers small grants to artists. Work could be done with small groups to support them to make their activity relevant for community development projects, to attract National Lottery or Arts Council project grants.

4. Promotion of community-based activity

Groups and more formal organisations struggle to promote their activities, classes and events. Our respondents mentioned the idea of Middlesbrough-wide listings and the potential to be promoted on an ongoing basis. Groups would also like to know where there are other groups and what they are offering. Council-led ‘what’s on’ guides, regular e-bulletins or printed magazines could be a potential way to improve marketing. Middlesbrough could learn from pooled marketing projects like [Head East](#) developed in Norfolk and Suffolk. Linking in with active Facebook Groups such as [Friends of Linthorpe](#), which share local information, could also reach new audiences.

5. Inclusiveness

Consider the language and style used across all cultural communications so it’s more appealing to more people. There are some great examples to build upon such as Auxiliary’s ‘Summat for the Bairns’ programme of children’s activities. Potential participants do not always feel welcome to take part in activities. Helping groups to be more outward-facing, e.g. through inclusion in listings and pan-area advertising and through the use of appropriate ‘everyday’ non-arty language to describe arts activity and a higher profile for everyday creativity alongside professional work.

6. Breaking down barriers

When activities are being designed it is important to consider costs for travel and childcare to support people to access local opportunities. It is also worth encouraging larger creative and heritage organisations doing projects and outreach outside the town centre to engage new people.

7. Partnerships

Partnerships between housing associations, care homes, creative groups, larger arts and cultural venues, libraries and community spaces and venues should be fostered through networking opportunities. Working with national third sector organisations such as Age UK or NCT could also foster creative partnerships.

Events like a Taste of Africa and organisations such as Borderlands also help to break down barriers in Middlesbrough. The Dorman Museum was also praised for its approach to working with a wide range of communities, including specific projects to support people experiencing hearing loss. It was noted that projects labelled as 'heritage' as opposed to 'arts' projects can also foster greater engagement.

8. Neighbourhood Creativity Strategy

There are exciting things on the horizon for the town centre - how could this be drawn out to priority neighbourhoods? Consider developing a neighbourhood creativity strategy to sit alongside the ambitious new town centre initiatives that draws opportunities out of the centre and creates pathways for people. Focus efforts on a couple of neighbourhoods over a sustained period and measure the impact.

Could each of the main cultural partners commit part of their resources to specific neighbourhood work and collaborate to make the greatest impact? Could there be a voluntary-led arts piece as part of The Auxiliary's Middlesbrough Art Week? Could some (or all) of Middlesbrough Art Week and Sonic Arts Week happen in the priority neighbourhoods? Could the Auxiliary offer residencies in priority neighbourhoods similar to their work with VARC in rural Northumberland? Could Northern School of Art run taster sessions or student showcases in local neighbourhoods?

9. Delivering large-scale events

This aspiration is reflected in the new Creative Vision for Middlesbrough as demand is already recognised. Where possible, these events should include a range of mechanisms for community groups to get involved. A festival approach with multiple small events banded together to promote and elevate what is already there can be a cost-effective mechanism.

10. Widening the Cultural Partnership

This could be done through revolving membership or a creative network, which feeds into the Cultural Partnership via a formal mechanism. Specific targeted action may be needed to fully engage grassroots creatives working at a hyper local level who may not have the capacity or inclination to attend centrally held networks. This could be achieved by established partnership members ‘adopting’ a neighbourhood and spending a few hours attending activities, chatting and building rapport and trust over time.

11. Pathways

Ensuring suitable pathways and maintaining a high-quality offer both in terms of world class arts and high-quality community engagement. Middlesbrough has a good Further Education and High Education sector so more could be done to map and promote the pathways for residents into creative courses starting at grassroots activity, through entry level courses and/or adult learning and all the way to degree level.



2022 (right) / 2023 (left), Stellar Projects: 'Nightfall' (image credit: Rachel Teate)

Appendices

Appendix 1: Glossary

Key document	Weblink
National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs)	National Portfolio 2018-22 Arts Council England
DCMS Levelling Up areas	Over 100 places to see improved access to culture and arts across England - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Arts Council England (ACE) Priority Places	Priority Places and Levelling Up for Culture Places Arts Council England
DCMS Taking Part survey	Taking Part Survey - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Audience Agency summary of trends and creative engagement by place	https://www.theaudienceagency.org/evidence/covid-19-insights/nations/england

Appendix 2: Middlesbrough Demographics Summary

The median age in Middlesbrough is 37 compared to 40 in England and Wales as a whole. 58.4% of the Middlesbrough population is aged 20-65 (58.7%), with 25.4% aged 0-19 (22.9%), and 16.0% aged over 65 (18.3%).
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/dvc2202/fig1/datadownload.xlsx>

Ethnicity: 82.4% of the Middlesbrough population is White (81.7%), 10.5% Asian/Asian British/Asian Welsh (9.3%), 2.7% Black/Black British/Black Welsh/Caribbean/African (4%), 2.1% Mixed or multiple ethnic groups (2.9%), 2.4% other ethnic group (2.1%).
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/dvc2203/groupedbarchart/datadownload.xlsx>

Education Levels: 23.9% of Middlesbrough residents aged 16 years and over have no qualifications (compared to 18.2% of England and Wales residents 16 and over). 26.4% have Level 4 Qualifications or higher (compared to 33.8% of England residents).
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/dvc2217ts/fig2/datadownload.xlsx>

Health: Middlesbrough residents have slightly lower levels of fair/good health (92.7%) than the average across England and Wales (94.7%).
https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/dvc2218/health_fig1/small-multiple-stacked-area/datadownload.xlsx

Long term health problem or disability: A slightly higher proportion of Middlesbrough residents are Disabled under the Equality Act (20.5%) than the average for residents across England and Wales (17.8%).
https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/dvc2218/disability_fig1/region_groupedbar/datadownload.xlsx

New data from the 2021 Census [19] shows how the town is changing:

- Growing – over 5,000 new residents between 2011 and 2021
- More densely-populated – the most densely populated local authority in the North East
- Falling unemployment – down from 6.9% in 2011 to 3.8% in 2021
- Increasingly identifying with nations outside the UK - Middlesbrough saw the North East's largest rise in the proportion of people who did not identify with any UK national identity (up from 4.8% in 2011 to 7.9% in 2021)
- Increasingly ethnically diverse – residents who identified as 'White' fell from 88.2% to 82.4%. 10.5% of Middlesbrough residents identified their ethnic group within the "Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh" category, up from 7.8% in 2011.
- Healthier – there was a 2.2% rise in respondents stating they were in 'very good health'

Middlesbrough is also:

- Young – second lowest median age in the North East (37, the same as 2011) and three years younger than the English average (40)
- Comparatively unhealthy – 8.0% of Middlesbrough residents described their health as 'bad' or 'very bad' compared to an English average of 5.3%
- Home to a high proportion of Lone Parent Households (15.2% compared to the English average of 11.1%).
- Reliant on rental accommodation (44.2% of the households compared to 37.6% across England)
- One of just 12 Local Authorities in England where more than half the adult population is economically inactive [20]
- In the 15th percentile for the least highly qualified Local Authority in England and Wales [21]

[19] <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E06000002/>

[20] <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/employmentinlocalauthoritiesenglandandwales/census2021>

[21] <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/educationandchildcare/bulletins/educationenglandandwales/census2021>

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) uses seven ‘domains’ (income, employment, health, education, housing, crime and living environment) to calculate relative deprivation of neighbourhoods. In the most recent calculation (2019) [22], Middlesbrough ranked 6 most deprived of England’s 151 ‘top tier’ Local Authorities.

The Index is calculated at a level that allows an estimation of the relative deprivation of Middlesbrough’s 20 Wards. Middlesbrough Council’s published calculation of the ranking of the 7,180 Wards in England [23] places some of Middlesbrough’s Wards amongst the least deprived in the country: Nunthorpe (6,761) and Marton West (6,054). Six are in the top percentile, including Brambles & Thorntree (5) and Berwick Hills & Pallister (20).



Map 1: Heatmap of Arts Participation by Local Authority

[22] <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>

[23] <https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/open-data-and-foi/local-statistics-and-data/index-of-multiple-deprivation-2019/>

34.7% of the adult population 'Spent time doing a creative, artistic, theatrical or music activity or a craft' according to Arts Council England's 2015-17 Active Lives Survey [24].

The figure for Middlesbrough was just 28.5%. Middlesbrough ranks 47 of 326 Local Authorities in England for the lowest levels of arts participation in England.



2022, Night Light Theatre and Recovery Connections

[24] <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/research-and-data/active-lives-survey#t-in-page-nav-2>

Appendix 3: Summary of wards

Brambles & Thorntree

The Council has also published 'Ward Reports' using the data used to calculate the 2019 IMD. The Report for Brambles & Thorntree [25] highlighted the Ward ranked particularly highly for Income Deprivation (270), Education, Skills and Training Deprivation (333) and Employment Deprivation (475).

Data Culture Change has processed data from the 2021 Census to allow comparison of a place with the average percentile for England as a whole:



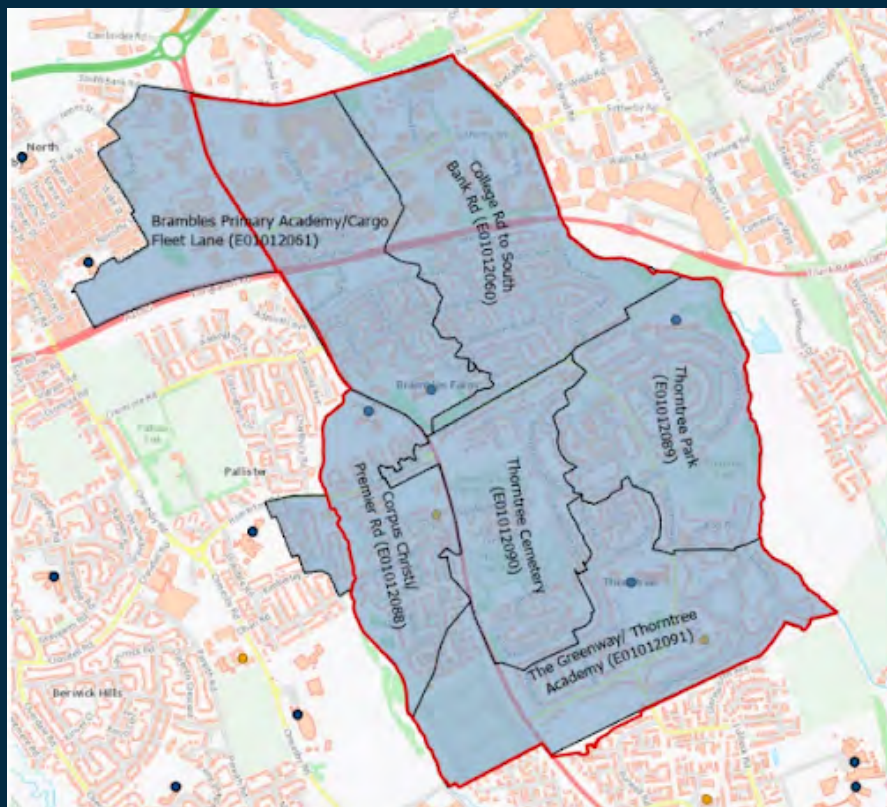
Chart 1: Deviation from the English in norm (2021 Census) in Middlesbrough and Brambles and Thorntree Ward

[25] <https://middlesbrough-council-middlesbrough.opendata.arcgis.com/documents/57cc82b696c649ddb4ce5c56ea1cf63/explore>

In general, Brambles & Thorntree reflects and amplifies the differences between Middlesbrough and the national norm. Of particular note:

1. Higher than average households with Dependent Children
2. Lower than average households of retirement age
3. Higher than average persons with no qualifications
4. Higher than average persons not working or never worked (L14)
5. Higher than average full-time students
6. Lower than average access to car or van transport
7. Lower than average ethnic diversity

Brambles & Thorntree is comprised of six Local Super Output Areas (LSOAs):



Map 2: LSOAs in Brambles & Thorntree (source: Middlesbrough Council)

There are 33,755 LSOAs in England. All six LSOAs in Brambles & Thorntree are in the top 1,000 most deprived in the country. The most deprived is Thorntree Cemetery (ranked 46).

Berwick Hills & Pallister

The Report for Berwick Hills & Pallister [26] highlighted the Ward ranked particularly highly for Income Deprivation (592), Education, Employment Deprivation (691) and Health Deprivation and Disability (912).

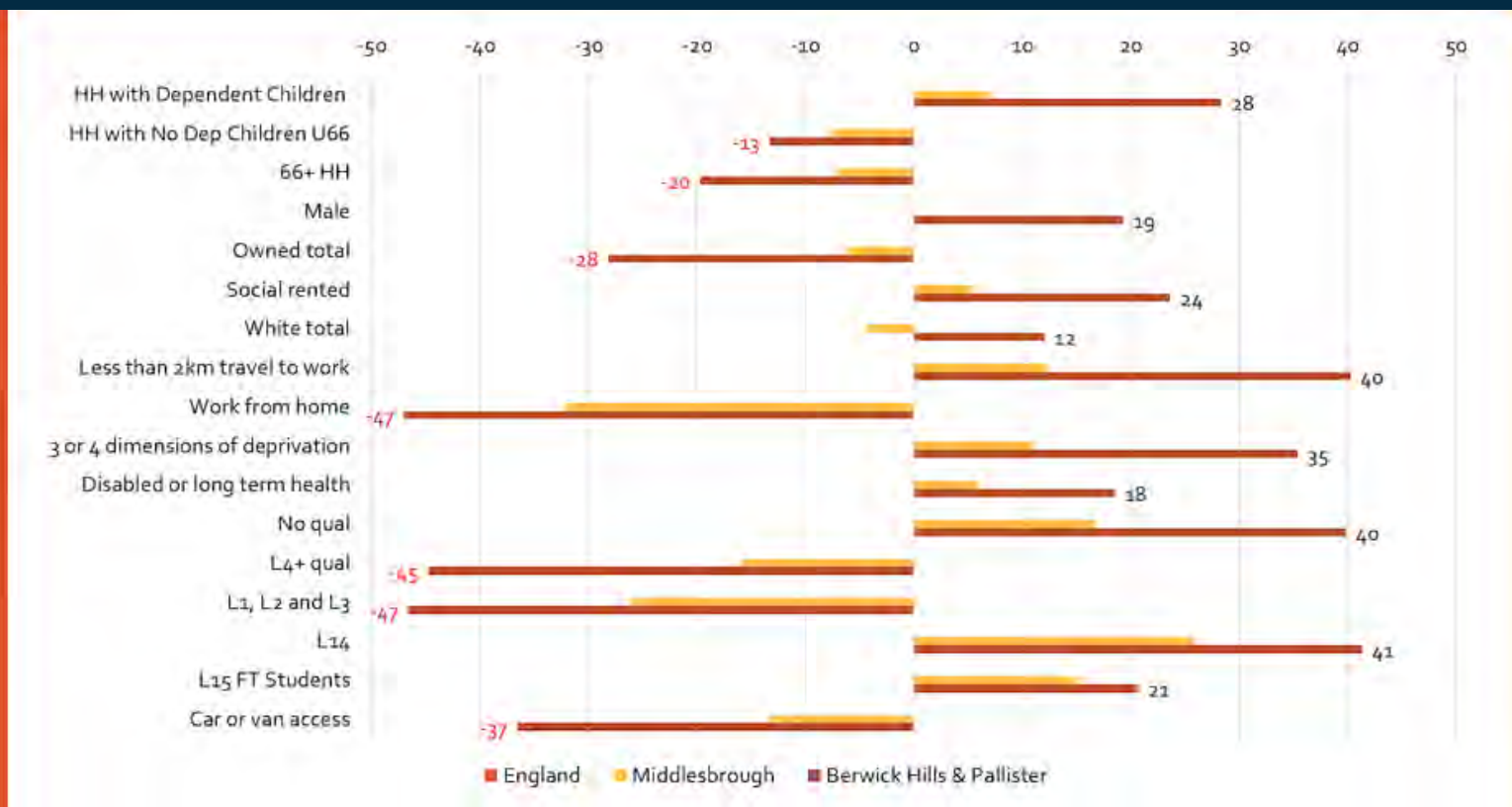


Chart 2: Deviation from the English in norm (2021 Census) in Middlesbrough and Berwick Hills & Pallister Ward

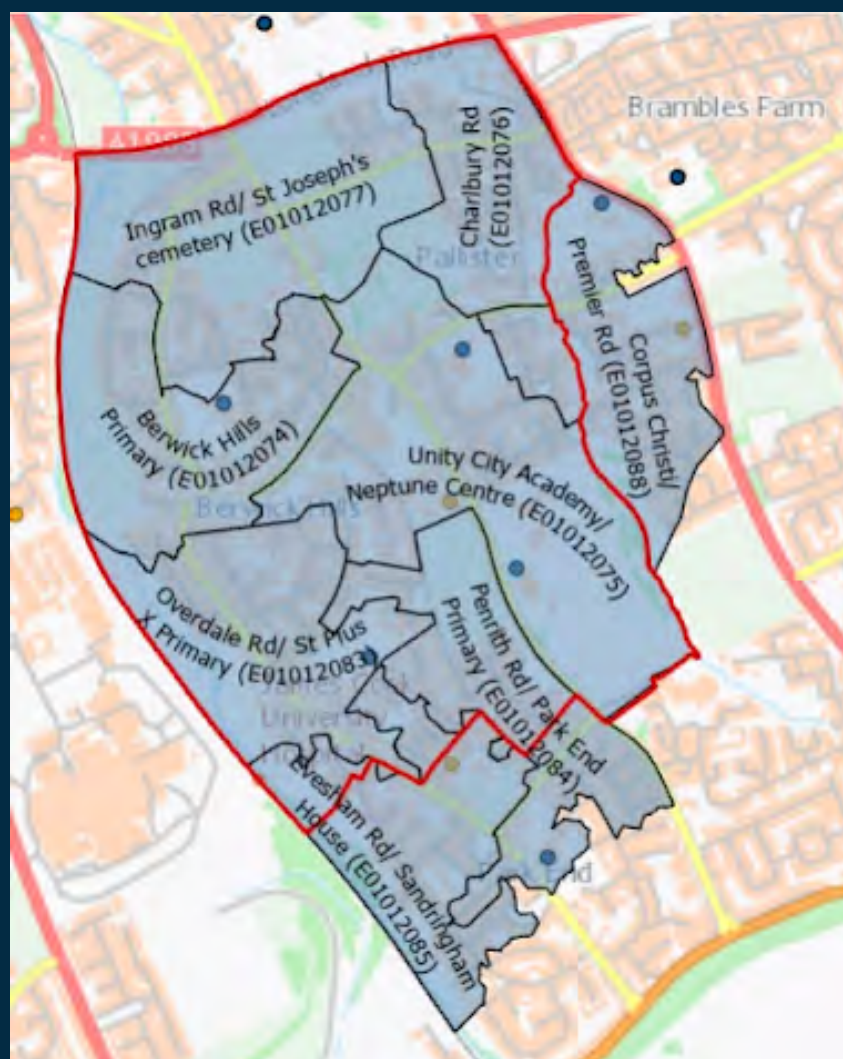
In general, Berwick Hills & Pallister reflects and amplifies the differences between Middlesbrough and the national norm. Of particular note:

1. Higher than average households with Dependent Children
2. Lower than average households of retirement age
3. Higher than average persons with no qualifications
4. Higher than average persons not working or never worked (L14)
5. Higher than average full-time students
6. Lower than average access to car or van transport
7. Lower than average ethnic diversity

[26] <https://middlesbrough-council-middlesbrough.opendata.arcgis.com/documents/berwick-hills-and-pallister-ward-report-2019-/explore>

While the analysis of characteristics for Berwick Hills & Pallister was very similar to Brambles & Thorntree, residents of Berwick Hills & Pallister are more likely to travel in excess of 2km to their place of work.

Berwick Hills & Pallister is comprised of eight LSOAs (some of which straddle the Ward boundaries):



Map 3: LSOAs in Berwick Hills & Pallister (source: Middlesbrough Council)

Of the six LSOAs mainly covered by the Ward, only Berwick Hills Primary (2,249) falls outside the 1,000 most deprived LSOAs in England. The most deprived LSOA is Charlbury Road (123).

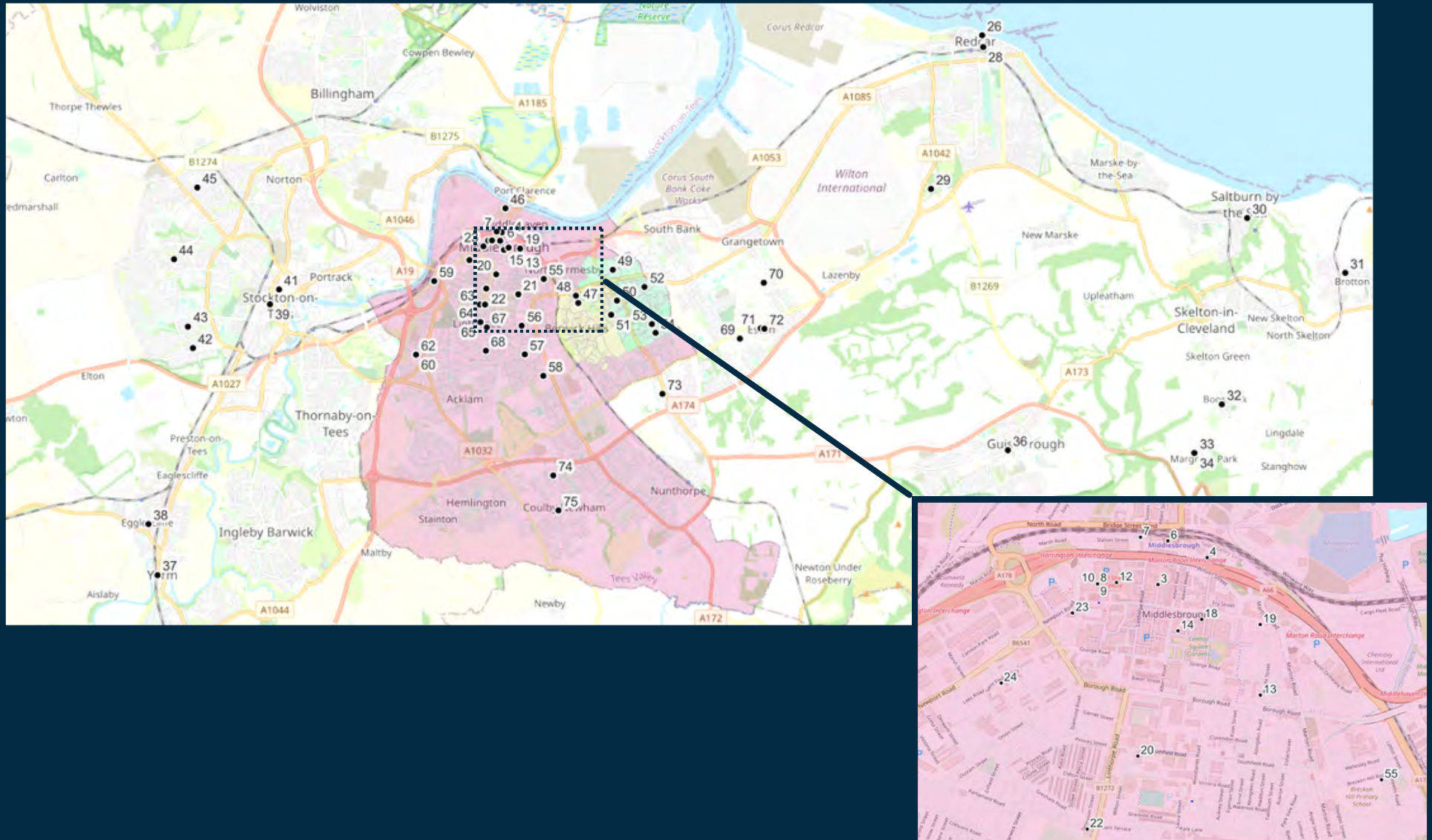
Appendix 4

NPOs and sector support organisations which serve the NORTH and may have capacity and obligations to work in Middlesbrough include:

Name of organisation	Artform
Booktrust	Literature
Community Arts North West	Combined Arts
Curious Minds	Not discipline specific
Generator North East	Music
Jazz North	Music
Loud in Libraries C.I.C.	Music
Mind the Gap	Theatre
National Youth Choirs of Great Britain	Music
New Writing North	Literature
North East Theatre Trust	Theatre

Name of organisation	Artform
Northern Ballet	Dance
Opera North Limited	Music
Orchestras Live	Music
South Asian Arts UK	Music
The Reader	Literature
The Writing Squad	Literature
Without Walls	Combined Arts

Name of organisation	Artform	Annual ACE Funding 23-26	Local Authority
AA2A Limited	Visual arts	£50,000.00	Sheffield
Association for Cultural Enterprises	Not discipline specific	£201,643.00	County Durham
Association of Independent Museums	Museums	£305,520.00	Cheshire West and Chester
Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians	Libraries	£200,000.00	Halton
Brass Bands England	Music	£405,809.00	Barnsley
Cause4	Not discipline specific	£509,200.00	Leeds
Culture, Health & Wellbeing Alliance CIC	Not discipline specific	£216,579.00	Barnsley
Family Arts Campaign Ltd	Not discipline specific	£175,000.00	Stockton-on-Tees
Future Arts Centres	Combined arts	£160,000.00	Stockton-on-Tees
Inpress Ltd	Literature	£161,405.00	Newcastle upon Tyne
Parents & Carers in Performing Arts (PIPA)	Not discipline specific	£200,000.00	Sheffield

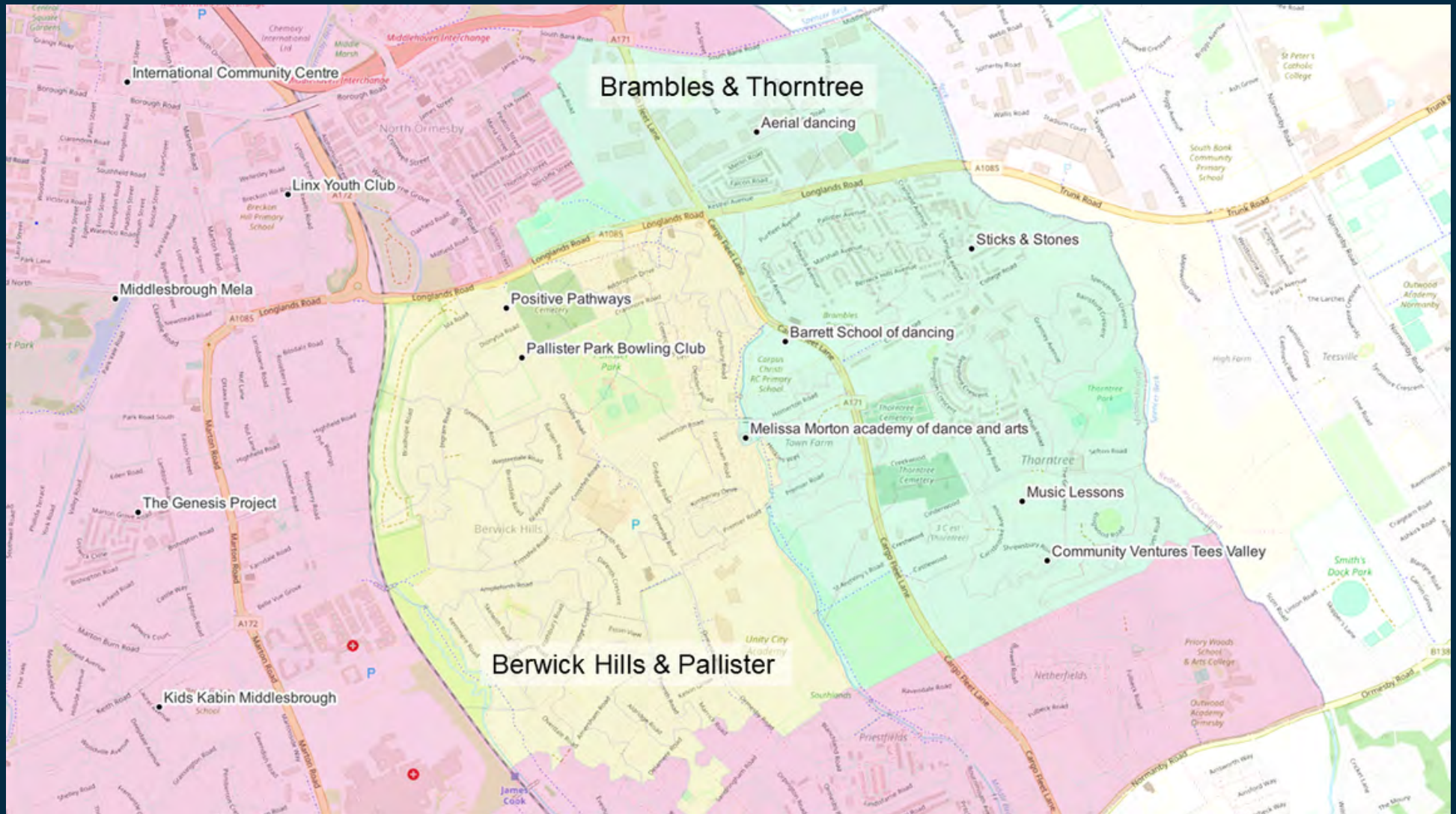


	Name	Postcode		Name	Postcode		Name	Postcode
1	MiXiT Days*	DH9 7RX	12	The Word	TS1 1TB	23	The Other Perspective	TS1 5JA
2	Kalma Yoga*	NE34 0EE	13	International Community Centre	TS1 2DP	24	Creative Minds	TS1 5NQ
3	Navigator North	TS1 1BA	14	Andy's Man Club (Middlesbrough)	TS1 2QJ	25	Linx Youth Club	TS1 5NQ
4	Base Camp Industries	TS1 1DB	15	Middlesbrough Town Hall Community Choir	TS1 2QJ	26	Redcar Palace	TS10 3AE
5	Platform A Gallery	TS1 1EG	16	MTH Performing Arts	TS1 2QJ	27	Tees Valley Arts	TS10 3AE
6	Platform Arts	TS1 1EG	17	Music Inc	TS1 2QJ	28	Redcar Literary Institute	TS10 3ER
7	The Auxiliary Project Space	TS1 1SR	18	NE Migration Partnership	TS1 2RH	29	Whippet Up sessions	TS10 5NW
8	2B Creative	TS1 1SU	19	Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency	TS1 2RW	30	Whippet Up sessions	TS12 1JW
9	Localmotion	TS1 1SU	20	Teesside University	TS1 3BX	31	Whippet Up	TS12 2PJ
10	The Exchange Middlesbrough	TS1 1SU	21	Middlesbrough Mela	TS1 3LB	32	Whippet Up sessions	TS12 3AL
11	Pineapple Black	TS1 1TB	22	The Loft Studios	TS1 4AW	33	Susan Antrobus	TS12 3BZ

	Name	Postcode		Name	Postcode		Name	Postcode
34	Tees Valley Wildlife	TS12 3BZ	45	Andy's Man Club (Stockton on Tees)	TS19 9BX	56	The Genesis Project	TS4 2SG
35	Moon and Jewel	TS13 4HG	46	Myplace	TS2 1JP	57	Kids Kabin Middlesbrough	TS4 3BN
36	Whippet Up sessions	TS14 6AP	47	Pallister Park Bowling Club	TS3 7AP	58	RLD Studios	TS4 3EE
37	Tees Valley Wellness Choir	TS15 9BQ	48	Positive Pathways	TS3 7AR	59	Simply Social School of School of Dance	TS5 4BT
38	Pixie Pots Ltd	TS16 0FG	49	Aerial dancing	TS3 8BT	60	Linx Youth Club	TS5 4JS
39	Future Creatives	TS18 1LL	50	Barrett School of dancing	TS3 8NL	61	Thorntree Roses craft club	TS5 4JS
40	Tees Valley New Creatives	TS18 1LL	51	Melissa Morton academy of dance and arts	TS3 8QD	62	Natty Knitters club	TS5 4JS
41	Night Lite Theatre	TS18 1PL	52	Sticks & Stones	TS3 9EU	63	Freestyle Community Projects	TS5 6AH
42	Mindful Science Club for Neurodivergent School Children	TS18 5EP	53	Music Lessons	TS3 9NH	64	Thornton Academy of Performing Arts	TS5 6HX
43	Taste of Africa (NE)	TS18 5QH	54	Community Ventures Tees Valley	TS3 9PA	65	Linthorpe Community Centre	TS5 6JG
44	Elm Tree Community Centre	TS19 0UW	55	Linx Youth Club	TS4 2DS	66	Whippet Up sessions	TS5 6LA

	Name	Postcode		Name	Postcode		Name	Postcode
67	Gardening and Upcycling club	TS5 6PH	78	Citizen Songwriters	Not mapped	89	St. Barnabas Church choir	Not mapped
68	Middlesbrough Theatre	TS5 6SA	79	Cleveland Art Society	Not mapped	90	Steel River Arts	Not mapped
69	SB Dance	TS6 0RE	80	Craft Fair	Not mapped	91	Steel River Crafts	Not mapped
70	One Voice Choir	TS6 7LY	81	Harmony	Not mapped	92	Steel River Crafts, St Barnabas Church	Not mapped
71	LA Academy of Dance	TS6 9EN	82	Hope foundation and cvl	Not mapped	93	Tees Valley Combined Authority (Creative Place Team)	Not mapped
72	Eston Arts Centre	TS6 9JA	83	Middlesbrough's Art Information Collective (Boro Art)	Not mapped	94	Tees Valley Festivals Volunteering Network	Not mapped
73	Dancewise Performing Arts	TS7 9BP	84	pre-loved market	Not mapped	95	TeesDance	Not mapped
74	Linx Youth Group	TS8 0TF	85	Rise Up Project	Not mapped	96	Twenty Six	Not mapped
75	Music for the mind	TS8 0TW	86	Saltburn Charity Crafters	Not mapped	97	Yoga, meditation and wellbeing	Not mapped
76	Black Creatives & Arts Network	Not mapped	87	Spanish beginner classes	Not mapped	98	Tegan's Poppin' Tie Dye	Not mapped TS1
77	Borderlands CPP	Not mapped	88	Sri Lankan Tees Angels	Not mapped	99	Northern Lass Lounge	Not mapped SR7





Appendix 6: Middlesbrough Art Map created by CVAN



2B

Unit 9, Chatterbox Mill,
Hill Street Shopping Centre
Middlesbrough
TS1 1TB
2b@middlebrough.co.uk
www.2bmiddlebrough.co.uk

2B is a community art space based in Hill Street Shopping Centre, set up by artists Miranda Richmond and Adrian Moule. As well as holding a variety of exhibitions, 2B has hosted workshops in ceramics, printmaking and drawing. The organisation supports people with health issues, asylum seekers and refugees.

The Auxiliary Project Space 2

21 Station Street,
Middlesbrough
TS1 1SR
theauxiliaryproject.co.uk
theauxiliaryproject.co.uk
Tue-Sat, 10-4
Middlesbrough

The Auxiliary Project Space is an art-led organisation comprising two galleries, a workshop, performance space and 15 studios. It creates & produces local, brilliant art through innovative methods of collaboration with peer organisations, building a vibrant arts ecology for and with its artists and communities.

Stunning, Fierce & Yellow Vol.2

16 April - 21 May
Preview 15 April, 6pm

With an exhibition title borrowed from Alaska Thunderfucks' infamous advert on *Rapal's Drag Race* Affinity, this new artist group show draws on the Auxiliary's warehouse aesthetic to produce a site-specific installation which layers materials, drawing on both low and high culture and transforming the space into the use of building site lighting.

Work In Progress

3 June - 2 July
A photography exhibition showcasing ongoing projects by a variety of photographers from across the world, curated by WAX.

Basocamp

Exchanga House,
Esplanade Square
Middlesbrough
TS1 1DB
basocampmiddlebrough.co.uk
basocampmiddlebrough.co.uk
01652 241785
Check website / brochure for times
Middlesbrough

Situated in the Grade II-listed former post office building in the heart of Middlesbrough, Basocamp provides a regular programme of exhibitions, performance, music, markets and cinema alongside food and drink in the heart of Middlesbrough's Historic Quarter.

Borderlands

6th Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art
Centre Square
Middlesbrough
TS1 2AZ
borderlandsmiddlebrough.co.uk

Part of Arts Council England's Creative People & Places programme, Borderlands is bringing creativity and community together across Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland. The project focuses on significantly increasing the number of local people taking part in cultural activity as well as embedding culture as a part of Tees Valley's approach to health, wellbeing, education and employability.

Captain Cook Birthplace Museum

Stewart Park,
Marton-on-Cleveland
Middlesbrough
TS7 8AT
captaincookmusem.co.uk
01642 312121
Open 2 days, 4 November
Tue-Sat, 10-4
Middlesbrough

Opened in 1973, the Captain Cook Birthplace Museum is located by the site of Cook's birthplace cottage in Stewart Park, Middlesbrough. The museum tells the story of one of the world's greatest navigators and mariners through five themed display galleries.

Dorman Museum

Linthorpe Road
Middlesbrough
TS1 6LA
dormanmuseum.co.uk
01642 912181
Tue-Sat, 10-4
Middlesbrough (1 mile) near 12, 13, 16, 63 from Town Hall

The Dorman Museum opened in 1904 as a purpose-built natural history museum. It now celebrates nature and art through natural and social history. It includes extensive exhibitions dedicated to Linthorpe Pottery, locally produced in the late 1800s, and Dr Christopher Dresser, the pre-eminent Victorian designer.

Eston Arts Centre

176 - 178 High Street,
Eston
Middlesbrough
TS9 6JA
estonartscentre.co.uk
estonartscentre.co.uk
Tue-Sat, 10-4
Tue-Sat, 10-4
Tue-Sat, 10-4
Tue-Sat, 10-4

Eston Arts Centre is a cultural venue and arts space in the historic town of Eston that holds regular exhibitions of contemporary art, talks and events.

Natalie Sharp: 36000 Scales of Fungi

16 April - 12 May
Natalie Sharp's first solo exhibition, *36000 Scales of Fungi* is an ongoing journey into physiological symbiosis with ecology and will feature sound, costume, performance and sculpture. The self-described octopus artist asks how we can gain enlightenment through our natural environment.

Any Hale: Magic Spells for Joy and Wonder
20 April - 30 August
Online, and events at Eston Arts Centre
Can we use magic to help us uncover more joyful ways of being? This project asks us to reconsider our own relationship to magic. We will engage our senses by immersing ourselves in the world right in front of us, uncovering details of color, shape and story which we may normally overlook, working to see familiar spaces with new eyes.

Rhian E Jones, Chris Shaw, Ariana Preston, Chris Thompson: Preston Arts Centre and The Dinosaur Coast
12 May - 4 June
Preview 11 May, 8-8pm

For May, Eston Arts Centre is being renamed as Preston Arts Centre, working with writer Rhian E Jones to look at the Preston Model, a term applied to how the council and partners are implementing the principles of Community Wealth Building. Within this, the exhibition *Dinosaur Coast* features artists from the coastal areas of Teesside and North Yorkshire.

Paul Eastwood: New Work

9 June - 2 July
Preview 8 June, 6-8pm
Paul Eastwood is a Wales-based artist who treats art as a form of chemical storytelling. He creates imagined histories and futures to investigate how spaces, artefacts and memory communicate identities. Language - fleeting or imprinted, natural or invented, hegemonic or minority - is a constant object and medium of his practice.

Gilkes Street Artists

65 Gilkes Street
Barnard Castle
Middlesbrough
TS1 5EH
facebook.com/gilkesstreetartists
facebook.com/gilkesstreetartists
Open by appointment only for Open Studio events and admissions
Middlesbrough

Gilkes Street Artists was formed in 2012. The studio group currently consists of seven resident artists. The studios are located on the first floor of the Barnard Castle (accessed by stairs). The group regularly opens to the public throughout the year for Open Studio events.

The Masham

27 Linthorpe Road
Middlesbrough
TS1 1RL
mashamarts.co.uk
mashamarts.co.uk
Tue-Sat, 10-4
Middlesbrough

After operating as a pillar of the local community for over 130 years, the Grade II listed Town Hall has undergone extensive renovations to restore the concert hall to its former glory and reveal fascinating areas unseen by the public in decades.

Navigator North

27 Linthorpe Road
Middlesbrough
TS1 1RL
navigatornorth.co.uk
navigatornorth.co.uk
Tue-Sat, 10-4
Middlesbrough

Navigator North is an art-led organisation working to raise the profile of artists and creative practice in the North East. Established in 2010, it has provided over 100 artists with studio space across 15 different sites, alongside professional development opportunities, bursaries, commissions, exhibitions, events and residencies.

Pineapple Black

Hill Street Shopping Centre
Middlesbrough
TS1 1DU
pineappleblack.co.uk
pineappleblack.co.uk
Tue-Sat, 10-4
Middlesbrough

Based in a former New Look store in the centre of Middlesbrough, Pineapple Black offers exhibition opportunities for artists of all disciplines. It is run by local artists and curators Bobby Benjamin and Cameron Lings with the aim of showcasing the best local, national and international talent.

Cameron Lings & Martin Smith: Homefront

15 April - 14 May
Preview 15 April, 7-8-8 after party
Two solo exhibitions, comprising paintings by Martin Smith and sculpture by Cameron Lings.

Rose Lombardi: Stubbomness, Resilience and the Modern Single Soul

15 April - 14 May
Preview 15 April, 7-8-8 after party
The first solo exhibition by artist and writer Ross Lombardi, in the Changed Rooms gallery.

Chemical City

29 May
Through archival materials, new artworks and design, Chemical City looks at the legacies of chemicals production in the Tees Valley. Starting with a focus on plastics manufacturing, how spaces, artefacts and memory communicate identities. Language - fleeting or imprinted, natural or invented, hegemonic or minority - is a constant object and medium of his practice.

Lubna Chowdhury

29 May - 10 October
Lubna Chowdhury's sculptural objects and installations combine industrial manufacturing technologies with highly-developed hand-making techniques. Her works create dialogue between visual languages and cultural references from the East and West.

Middlesbrough Collection

From June 2022
MIMA holds the Middlesbrough Collection of 2,300 works of art and craft from the 1600s to today. The collection is presented across the building from June onwards.

Middlesbrough Town Hall

Albion Road
Middlesbrough
TS1 1JL
middlesbroughtownhall.co.uk
01642 220 220
townhall@middlesbrough.gov.uk
Mon-Fri, Sat, 10-4 (outside of events)

After operating as a pillar of the local community for over 130 years, the Grade II listed Town Hall has undergone extensive renovations to restore the concert hall to its former glory and reveal fascinating areas unseen by the public in decades.

Jo Stanness: Southbank to South Bank

16 June - Friday 23 July
Preview Thursday 16 June, 6-8-8
Jo Stanness' first solo exhibition at Platform A Gallery is the culmination of a project examining the aesthetics of post-war architecture. Temporary site-specific works are shown in the pedestrian underpass in Middlesbrough. The exhibition comprises drawing which explores the geometry, design and space of modernist and brutalist architecture, reflecting the paradox of the strength and fragility of this style of architecture.

Python Gallery

Behol Zito
21 Gifford Street
Middlesbrough
TS2 4BB
pythonmiddlebrough.co.uk
pythonmiddlebrough.co.uk
01642 241785
Check website for times
Middlesbrough

The Python Gallery offers a changing programme of exhibitions, book launches and other events.

Dianne Bowell: Tales Remains

Unit 29 April
Focusing on the mythic, folklore and fantastical, Dianne Bowell's works celebrate through imaginary childhoods and the stories of her mother's family tales such as Andersen's *The Little Mermaid*. The show is visually joyful and optimistic but faced with pathos for the human condition and the characters trapped within.

Saabat Gallery

83 Northumbria Road
South Bank
Middlesbrough
TS5 6SA
saabatgallery.co.uk
saabatgallery.co.uk
01642 290229
Tue-Sat, 10-4
South Bank

Saabat is a contemporary art gallery which holds exhibitions for local, national and international artists. The gallery runs a variety of educational programmes alongside workshops, and hires out permanent artist studios and facilities.

Faith Maddison: Power

29 May - 4 May
Preview 15 April, 7-8-8 after party

Platform A Gallery

Former Royal School of Fine Arts
Middlesbrough
TS1 1EC
platforma.co.uk
platforma.co.uk
01642 232051
Tue-Sat, 10-4 and by appointment
Middlesbrough

Founded as an extension to Platform Art Studios in 2015, Platform A is a gallery dedicated to innovative developments in contemporary art through its diverse programme of exhibitions. Located in Middlesbrough railway station, the gallery represents emerging and established artists. It is committed to working creatively, exploring new approaches to arrive at the best possible outcome. It provides the highest calibre exhibition programme.

Jonny Green: Babel

Unit 12 May
Jonny Green makes paintings of sculptures: mad-men rendered crudely in plasticine and electrical tape; abject-looking brains adorned with thorny paper flowers and grubby paint. The paintings are a series of still-life and portrait - and the viewer finds themselves on unsteady ground in a point of tension between what is real and unreal.

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Middlesbrough
TS2 4BB
pythonmiddlebrough.co.uk
pythonmiddlebrough.co.uk
01642 241785
Check website for times
Middlesbrough

WedDoveTail Gallery and Workspace

Hill Street Shopping Centre
Middlesbrough
TS1 1DU
weddovetail.co.uk
weddovetail.co.uk
01642 241785
Check website for times
Middlesbrough

WedDoveTail is an in-person and virtual gallery project. 2022's season of online and offline productions has been generously funded by Arts Council England.

24/24: Open call exhibition

21 May - 11 June (2D open call 20 May)

Following 24/24: 24 is a physical solo exhibition for the artist selected from the open call. 24:24 an online group show in the virtual gallery.

Degree shows 2022

Teesside University BA Fine Art
What's the Code?
11-20 May
Preview Thursday 16 May, 6:30-8pm

Oliver Bragg: In Loving Memory

Various park benches in Albert Park
In *In Loving Memory* is a series of engraved brass plaques fixed onto benches throughout Middlesbrough's Albert Park. They are inspired by tales of local legends and anecdotes and fabricated to mimic those that often adorn benches to memorialise a person to a specific person.

Henwar Baker: PhD

29 May - 3 June
Preview 7 May, 5-7

Tees Valley Artists / Redcar Palace

The Palace Hub
26 - 29 Esplanade
Redcar
TS10 1AE
redcarpalace.org.uk
redcarpalace.org.uk
01642 232051
Tue-Sat, 10-4
Redcar Central

Redcar Palace is a new arts venue for Redcar, managed by Tees Valley Artists. Here you will find a warm welcome, alongside exhibitions by artists from the region and around the world. There is also homely made local produce to buy, a space to talk, learn and teach, a garden room to enjoy and a bar from the brewery and free WiFi.

Cassey Ott: Saturday Girl About Town

Unit 12 May
Saturday Girl About Town is an ongoing project by Cassey Ott that looks at how young people use the high street as a celebration of their sense of fashion, individuality and identity. Cassey has created a new series of portraits specifically for Redcar.

The Tunnel Gallery

Middlesbrough station and Underneath A66 bridge, Albert Road
the.tunnel.gallery
the.tunnel.gallery
01642 241785
Check website for times
Middlesbrough

John Ayscough: We Walked Out of the Wilderness

Near Artwork
The Auxiliary, Station Road
A celebration of economic, cultural and civic achievements, this work is intended as reconciliation with the past, celebrating the town's heritage, but suggesting that better times are ahead. It is inspired by an iconic photograph taken by Evening Gazette photographer Peter Keimann showing Margaret Thatcher walking into the wilderness across the former Head Wrighton works in Thornaby.

Andrew McKee: Endless Convenience

Steel recycled rubber crumb and recycled glass gravel
Albert Park, Stewart Park and near the Parkway Centre
Endless Convenience is a series of sculptures cast from plastic supermarket food containers. The columns have been made from recycled car tyres and glass granules. The artwork comments on society's reliance on convenience food and plastic packaging.

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Midweek Cultural Partnership

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