

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

This strategy provides the findings of a review of existing parking provision in Loughborough town centre and sets out the framework for parking policies in the town centre for the period to 2021 against the background of the overall vision for the town centre as outlined in the Town Centre Masterplan (TCMP).

Existing Parking Provision

There are a total of 2641 parking spaces within car parks (2733 on Saturdays) plus an additional 347 on-street spaces. Car parks with the highest proportion of disabled spaces are Granby Street and Macaulay House. All CBC operated car parks (with the exception of Browns Lane) operate using a single tariff structure. Each privately operated public car park has its own tariff structure with The Rushes, and Regent Place offering reduced rates to their customers. Somerfield and Sainsbury's car parks operate free of charge.

Existing occupancy levels demonstrate that during the week there is overall spare capacity in town centre car parks. However, during peak times of the week some car parks are near to capacity, in particular The Rushes and Granby Street car parks. Browns Lane car park effectively operates as a leisure centre and bowls club car park despite it being designated as a town centre car park. There is often spare capacity here during the day but during evening periods the car park is near to capacity. During peak times on Saturdays overall existing occupancy levels in car parks are near to capacity. A large proportion of the on-street parking spaces are occupied throughout most of the day with many vehicles parking for longer than the maximum time permitted.

Ticket sale income from CBC car parks demonstrates that approximately 76% of this income is generated at Beehive Lane and Granby Street car parks with 46% of tickets sold for a 2 hour maximum stay.

Consultations

In developing this parking strategy the issues raised during consultations were of key importance when forming any recommendations. Consideration has been given to Cabinet reports dated 13th October 2005 and 24th November 2005. Representatives of White Young Green met with key stakeholders, the Loughborough Chamber of Trade and Commerce, and Leicestershire Constabulary. Consideration was also given to a car park user questionnaire and a town centre user questionnaire.

Throughout the consultations it became apparent that a lack of enforcement of parking regulations is a concern. The current level of parking provision was seen by most as being suitable to current requirements, although the possibility of amending the method of payment in some car parks was raised.

Comparisons

Parking charges in Loughborough are below those in Nottingham, Derby, and Leicester but above those in other Leicestershire market towns. This is a reflection of Loughborough's status within the local area and the availability of alternatives to the private car in each of the areas considered. Parking tariffs in Loughborough are more closely matched to other towns in CBC's 'near neighbour comparator' list.

Policy Background

A review of national, regional and local parking policies has been undertaken in, together with relevant policies relating to the vitality and vibrancy of the town centre. The Council's aims and aspirations for the town centre recognise that parking management can influence the economic and environmental well being of an area.

Recommendations

1. *Future Parking Requirements*

- An assessment of future parking demand has been undertaken in 2016 and 2021. The proposals outlined in the TCMP indicate a reduction in the overall number of parking spaces in the town centre. In 2016 overall occupancy is estimated to be close to capacity on Saturdays throughout the year. Furthermore, during the Thursday peak hour of the busiest months of the year overall occupancy is estimated to be close to capacity. A similar situation is estimated in 2021 but with overall occupancy levels being greater than in 2016.
- Traffic modelling work should be undertaken at the Beehive Lane / Southfield Road, and Granby Street / Frederick Street junctions to assess the future operation of these junctions.
- This report recommends that a new parking area is created along Browns Lane as well as part of Southfield Offices car park being made available for public use. Giving consideration to these recommendations as well as those outlined in the TCMP overall occupancy levels are near to capacity during peak times on Saturdays.
- The proposed car park in the vicinity of the forthcoming Inner Relief Road should be operated by CBC. Any new car parks should be located in the southern area of the town.
- Overall occupancy levels are further reduced if a significant reduction in car usage occurs from a modal shift from car usage to other modes of travel. Nevertheless parking demand is estimated to exceed supply during peak times on Saturdays. In order to address this shortfall it is recommended that temporary solutions are implemented to accommodate peak demand.

- The overall provision of disabled parking spaces is considered to be adequate with spaces being available throughout the day. Nevertheless, it is below the recommended level and should be closely monitored by CBC.
- Existing parking provision for Powered Two Wheelers (PTWs) and Cyclists is considered to be poor. A number of new parking areas are recommended as part of this strategy. The quality of new parking areas should be of a higher standard than existing areas. Recommendations relating to cyclists should be considered by the Charnwood Cycle Forum. It is recommended that a similar group is formed to discuss issues relating to PTWs.
- A comparison of parking standards outlined in PPG13, PPS3, the RSS, and existing Leicestershire County Council standards has been made with existing CBC parking standards. Consideration has also been given to the maximum parking standards recommended in the Devonshire Square and Aumberry Gap Development Briefs. It is recommended that where the current parking standards in the Local Plan are less restrictive than the standards for the same class in other guidance documents the standards are revised to reflect the more restrictive standard.
- It is not considered that a permanent park and ride site serving Loughborough would be commercially viable at the present time. This should be reviewed beyond 2011.
- Following closure of Southfield Extension car park market trader parking should be provided at the existing Browns Lane car park in the extension part of this site.
- When CBC's lease of Macaulay House expires a review of the scope to include the shopmobility facility within the old Magistrates Court or Granby Street car park is recommended. Furthermore, a review of the scope to re-locate the disabled spaces in the old Magistrates Court, Granby Street car park, or Beehive Lane car park should be undertaken.
- Additional coach parking should be provided along Granby Street.

2. *Civil Parking Enforcement*

- The introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) will result in the enforcement of parking regulations passing from the Police to Leicestershire County Council. The introduction of CPE is expected to greatly improve enforcement of parking and therefore assist demand management in the town centre by freeing road space for through traffic. The turnover of on-street parking spaces should increase, resulting in economic benefits associated with easier access to shops and key services.

3. *Tariffs*

- It is recommended that a common charging policy is introduced throughout Loughborough in order to reduce the tendency for vehicles to travel through town searching for the cheapest parking spaces. It is also recommended that a standard 50p tariff is introduced on Sundays and Bank Holidays, evening parking charges are introduced at Browns Lane car park, and the current charges for 2 and 3 hour parking are amended.
- It is recommended that the existing Browns Lane car park is designated as a leisure centre and bowls club car park.
- A Green Badge scheme should be introduced for all permits and discounted tickets issued by CBC. Drivers of vehicles with carbon dioxide emissions below 120g/km should receive a discount of 25% on the price of a ticket.
- On-street parking charges are not recommended at the present time. Nevertheless once CPE has been in operation for 1 year the scope for introducing on-street parking charges should be investigated.
- In order to reduce the confusion relating to the correct payment amount when parking for a length of stay that overlaps between the daytime and evening tariff, the display on the existing pay and display ticket machines should be improved to indicate the length of stay purchased as coins are inserted into the machine.
- The existing capacity at Granby Street car park should not be reduced. It should also remain as a short stay car park but the maximum stay should be increased to 3 hours.
- Discussions should be held between CBC and Sainsbury's with a view to re-introducing parking charges at Sainsbury's car park.
- No changes are recommended to the existing provision of free disabled and motorcycle parking.
- A tariff review should be undertaken once a year.

4. Charging Mechanism

- It is recommended that a pay on foot method of payment is introduced at Beehive Lane car park. Pay on Foot is not feasible at Browns Lane car park but the existing pay and display system operating at Browns Lane car park should be improved to a two-part ticket system to eliminate the frustration caused by the existing system. A 6 month trial of a Park and Pay mobile top up payment system should be introduced at Granby Street car park to operate alongside the existing pay and display system with all remaining car parks continuing to

operate as pay and display car parks. All new multi-storey car parks should be designed as pay on foot car parks.

5. Signing

- It is considered that an improved signing strategy is critical to the success of the Parking Strategy. A combination of variable message and static signs is recommended. Variable Message Signs showing the number of available spaces should be used to direct traffic to key strategic car parks. These are considered to be Granby Street, Beehive Lane, The Rushes, and Carillon Court car parks.

6. Quality

- It is recommended that 'Park Mark' status should be sought at all new car parks as well as the existing Browns Lane car park. Discussions should be held between CBC and Somerfield regarding the future use of this car park. The car park is in a very poor condition and is in a prime location for re-development.
- A Quality Parking Partnership should be formed for Loughborough between appropriate organisations and would represent an agreement to work together to deliver improvements to parking in Loughborough. Efforts should be made to work closely with nearby towns to achieve a co-ordinated approach to parking.
- It is recommended that a minimum of 10% of the revenue generated by parking should be ring fenced for parking improvements.

7. Monitoring / Publicity

- An Annual Parking Strategy Progress Report (APSPR) should be produced by CBC. CBC should seek to obtain parking data for the privately operated public car parks. This information should be incorporated into the APSPR.
- CBC should have an active role in the marketing and promotion of alternative travel modes.

8. Financial Assessment

- An estimate of the financial gains and losses resulting from the recommendations in this Parking Strategy has been made and is summarised as follows:-

Financial Gain			Financial Loss		
	Revenue	Capital		Revenue	Capital
Changes to 2 and 3 hour tariff structure	£21,000		Two-part ticket at Browns Lane		£350
Introduction of 50p Sunday and Bank Holiday charges	£20,600		Introduction of pay on foot at Beehive Lane car park	£29,300	£96,000
Evening charge for leisure centre and bowls club	£35,000		Improved signing strategy		£198,000
Changes to the number of parking spaces in car parks throughout the town centre (see note)	£24,800		Construction of new Browns Lane car park		£100,000
			Introduction of Park and Pay at Granby Street car park	£360	£1,000
Total	£101,400			£29,660	£395,350

Note:- This includes new Browns Lane car park, public use of Southfield Offices car park, and closure of Pinfold Gate and Macaulay House car parks.

It is important to note that the estimated £198,000 required to introduce an improved signing strategy could be funded as part of the Local Transport Plan, and in part by the private car park operators. The remaining Capital of £197,350 could be generated in over the next 5 or 6 years if 10% of car parking revenue is ring fenced for parking related improvements.

1.0 **INTRODUCTION**

1.1. Overview

1.2. White Young Green (WYG) were appointed by Charnwood Borough Council (CBC) to develop a Parking Strategy for Loughborough Town Centre and the surrounding area as shown on **Figure 1**.

1.3. The requirement for a Parking Strategy originated as a result of the reduction in the number of parking spaces at Pinfold Gate Car Park following development of the new Magistrates Court along Pinfold Gate. The requirement for a Parking Strategy increased following recommendations in the recently completed Town Centre Masterplan (TCMP), and work undertaken in relation to the Loughborough Integrated Transport Project (LITP) to provide a new Inner Relief Road. A decision by Cabinet of 10th February 2005 stated:-

“That before construction of the Inner Relief Road commences, a new strategy for future car parking needs in Loughborough be produced to inform strategic choices”.

1.4. The TCMP produced by Atkins aims to produce a clear vision for the social, economic, and environmental development of Loughborough Town Centre for the next 15 years (2021). The Parking Strategy will assess the parking requirements and produce a coherent policy framework for the same period.

1.5. The scope of the study as outlined in the ‘Invitation to Tender’ document is summarised as follows:-

- Review the scale, location, and quality of existing on and off-street vehicle parking and recommend how this could be rationalised and improved,
- Estimate the scale of any additional car parking provision likely to be needed to serve Loughborough town centre over the period to 2016 taking into account:-
 - a. the need to replace existing parking provision lost as a result of the implementation of measures such as pedestrianisation and redevelopment.
 - b. the potential to make more effective use of existing parking provision.
 - c. an allowance for traffic growth associated with additions and improvements to the town centre.
 - d. an allowance for the potential reduction in car parking provision arising from greater use of non car modes, including the potential impact of park and ride and / or new demand management measures considered feasible to introduce in the timescale of this study.

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- e. variations in parking demand, economic and land use characteristics and the availability of alternative travel modes in Loughborough and neighbouring centres within Charnwood and the Three Cities sub area with particular regard to Derby, Leicester, Nottingham, Coalville, and Melton Mowbray.
 - f. Any other relevant considerations.
- Identify the form and most suitable locations for any additional on and off-street car parking to meet the estimated additional needs having regard to the scope for greater use of on-street spaces arising from the implementation of CPE and residents preference schemes.
 - Identify the appropriate balance between short and long stay provision and the optimal locations for each type of car parking.
 - Estimate the scale of any additional parking for cycles and powered two wheelers and identify the form and most suitable locations to accommodate this provision.
 - Provide guidelines on a charging policy to help deliver the proposed framework and in particular.
 - a. advise on the issues surrounding the introduction of a Pay on Foot system of charging.
 - b. advise on the continuation of the common pricing agreements that the Council has with private car park operators.
 - c. advise on the likely impact on car parking income of different charging methods.
 - Provide guidelines on the development of complementary parking standards for new development to help deliver the proposed framework.
 - Provide guidelines on the effective management and enforcement of parking to help deliver the proposed framework. This should include an assessment of the relative merits of pay on foot and pay and walk management systems.
 - Identify measures to improve public knowledge of parking and access to it.
- 1.6. The appointment relates to public car parks maintained by CBC. However, recommendations will also be made regarding public car parks maintained by private operators. A detailed assessment of future parking demand will be undertaken at a 2016 assessment year in accordance with the 'Invitation to Tender' document, and a 2021 assessment year in line with the TCMP.
 - 1.7. Background Information To Loughborough
 - 1.8. The 2001 Census indicates that the population of Loughborough was approximately 55,700 in 2001, of which approximately 12,000 are students at Loughborough University.

- 1.9. A customer satisfaction survey undertaken throughout Leicestershire by BMG Research on behalf of Leicestershire County Council (LCC) in October 2006 indicates that of the people questioned in Loughborough, 49% travelled in to town by car, 27% by bus, and 21% on foot. The remaining 2% consisted of taxi and cycle journeys. In Leicestershire 55% of the people questioned travelled to their destination by car, 14% by bus, 27% walked, with the remaining 3% consisting of cyclists and powered two wheelers (PTWs). The most common reason for visiting Loughborough was weekly shopping (26%) with other retail related trips accounting for a further 34% of the total. A similar situation was evident throughout Leicestershire with 22% of visits accounted for by weekly shopping trips and an additional 42% accounted for by other retail related trips. A relatively small percentage of people questioned worked in local business with 8% doing so in Loughborough and 11% in Leicestershire. Retail related trips will generally be short stay trips suggesting that the majority of trips in Loughborough and Leicestershire are of this nature.
- 1.10. Nottingham, Derby, and Leicester City Centres are located within approximately 15 miles of Loughborough town centre. The A6 bisects the centre of Loughborough in a north-south direction providing routes to Leicester (south) and Derby (north), the A60 extends from Loughborough towards Nottingham, and the A512 provides a link to the M1 in the west.
- 1.11. Format of Report
- 1.12. The structure of this report is as follows:-
- Chapter 2 describes the existing conditions
 - Chapter 3 summarises the results from consultations undertaken
 - Chapter 4 outlines key extracts from relevant planning policy documents
 - Chapter 5 assesses future parking
 - Chapter 6 presents the Parking Strategy recommendations