

3. CONSULTATIONS

3.1. Introduction

3.1.1. The Parking Strategy has been developed taking into account consultation with key stakeholders and the public.

3.2. Previous CBC Consultations

3.2.1. Item 12 'Parking Issues In Charnwood Panel – Reference From Scrutiny' of the Cabinet Report dated 13th October 2005 (attached in **Appendix F**) refers to Stakeholder interviews held with representatives of the Loughborough Chamber of Trade and Commerce, Market Traders Federation, Transport 2000 and the Charnwood Disability Forum. The following issues were raised in relation to parking:-

- Lack of enforcement of on-street parking.
- Pay and Display charging mechanism considered inconvenient particularly following the introduction of pay on foot at The Rushes.
- Overall amount of parking considered to be adequate.
- Wider promotion of pre-payment options.
- The amount of parking is considered adequate although consideration needs to be given to longer term needs and potential new site.
- Provision and management of parking should form an integral part of the future of Loughborough.
- The importance of parking provision for minority groups should not be underestimated. It was added that pay and display adversely affects those with least control over their mobility such as the elderly, disabled, and single mothers.
- Park and Ride not considered viable.
- Market traders highlighted the need for vehicle parking on market days.
- Parking information should be more accessible.

3.2.2. Comments made by Stakeholders appear to have focused primarily on a preference for a pay on foot method of payment rather than pay and display, and increasing the provision of parking information. The amount of parking was generally considered suitable to the requirements of the town.

3.2.3. Representatives of the Panel were also invited to meet specifically with representatives of the Loughborough Chamber of Trade and Commerce. Key issues raised in relation to parking were as follows:-

- Promote free parking throughout Loughborough for the first 2 hours in a similar arrangement to the existing arrangement at The Rushes.
- Introduce Pay on Exit at all car parks where feasible.
- Simplify tariff structure, in particular in relation to the changeover from daytime to evening charges.
- Review the 2 hour parking charge. This is seen as a major disincentive to retaining shoppers in the town.
- Car park 'promotions' should be offered at times during town centre events such as late night shopping.
- The possibility of offering concessionary parking to market traders during market days.
- Parking provision for the disabled should be reviewed as well as the location of taxi parking.
- It is accepted that different charging regimes may apply.
- There was support for a wider review of the overall parking provision in Loughborough.

3.2.4. Comments made by the Loughborough Chamber of Trade and Commerce appear to have focused largely on providing increased flexibility in the tariff structure to allow for the specific needs of certain user groups i.e. by offering concessionary tickets. As with the Stakeholder consultation a preference for a pay on exit method of payment was highlighted.

3.2.5. A User Satisfaction Questionnaire of car park users was undertaken by Marketing Innovation on behalf of CBC between 25th July 2005 and 8th August 2005. 526 responses were received. A summary of the key results is as follows:-

- 90% of respondents had travelled less than 10 miles in to Loughborough;
- Convenience and proximity to the town centre were highlighted as key reasons for choosing a particular car park;
- 44.1% of respondents said they would welcome a change to pay on exit although only 39.1% of these would still do so if it meant an increase in parking charges;
- 86.5% of respondents indicated that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with parking as a whole.

3.2.6. The results of the questionnaire revealed that a high proportion of town centre users travel into town from Loughborough or its immediate surroundings. The level of satisfaction with the existing town centre is considered to be very high. Support for amending the payment

methodology from pay and display to pay on foot was not as high as amongst car park users as it was amongst Stakeholders or the Chamber of Trade and Commerce.

3.2.7. A town centre customer satisfaction survey was undertaken by BMG Research during October 2006 on behalf of LCC. The survey was undertaken throughout Leicestershire with 354 interviews being undertaken in Loughborough. A summary of the key results is as follows:-

- 49% of respondents had travelled to Loughborough by car, 27% by bus, and 21% on foot.
- A wider range of shops and retail facilities was highlighted as the main factor that would encourage people to visit Loughborough more often;
- Shopping trips accounted for 52% of the trips to Loughborough (weekly shopping 26%, comparison shopping 13%, top up shopping 13%).

3.2.8. A surprisingly low proportion of respondents visited Loughborough by car. A high proportion of respondents had visited Loughborough for shopping related reasons which is reflected in the fact that 'a wider range of shops and retail facilities' was highlighted as the main reason that would increase visits to Loughborough. Only 11% of those questioned work in a local business or were visiting on business.

3.2.9. It is considered that the sample of respondents is weighted towards users who are less likely to have time restrictions associated with their trip. It is possible that the sample of respondents is a reason for the low number of trips being made by car and the high proportion made by other modes, particularly by foot.

3.3. WYG Consultations

3.3.1. WYG held a workshop with local Stakeholders on Wednesday 13th December 2006. This involved a short presentation outlining the scope of the Parking Strategy and was followed by discussions with Stakeholders. Discussions were focused around key areas. Notes from the workshop are presented in **Appendix F**. Key issues raised were as follows:-

- ***Amount of parking***
 - The location of car parks was considered to be good, particularly for the less able bodied.
 - Wider footways and a reduction of on-street parking (particularly in the Wards End area) would encourage more trips to be made by car and cycle.

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- Traffic circulating the town searching for free on-street parking is considered a problem.
 - It is important to consider the type of space as well as the number of spaces.
 - Differing opinions were raised in relation to the impact of pedestrianisation on trade with some indicating that pedestrianisation would increase trade and others saying it would reduce trade.
 - The pedestrian links between Browns Lane Car Park and the town centre should be improved.
 - The signing of car parks should be improved.
 - Security was highlighted by the Police as the key factor in deciding where to park. Cleanliness and lighting were also considered important.
 - Concern was raised regarding competition from the '3 cities'. It was stated that Loughborough needs to find its niche in the market.
- ***Location / Distribution of Car Parks***
 - Car park signing is poor for traffic approaching the town centre from the Ashby Road direction.
 - The idea of a good standard of peripheral car parks was supported.
 - There was some concern that commerce could leave the centre of Loughborough.
 - Increased emphasis should be placed on public transport.
 - Granby Street is considered to have an important function in the town centre.
- ***Quality of Car Parks***
 - The external appearance of Beehive Lane Car Park is considered to be attractive.

- CCTV should be managed as part of the wider town centre provision.
 - The provision of PTW parking is considered to be good in Beehive Lane Car Park, but in the vicinity of Baxter Gate it is considered to be poor.
 - It was stated that pay and display is a problem when people do not have the correct change available to pay for their ticket.
 - When comparing bus fares with car parking charges the bus becomes an unattractive mode of travel.
 - Demand for cycle parking is increased during the summer. Market Street and Ashby Road are primary routes into the town centre. Market Street in particular is considered to be of a poor standard. Cycle stands are often located too close to buildings and other stands. This is evident at Loughborough College.
- ***Tariff Structures***
 - Competition from competing destinations and the internet needs to be recognised in deriving tariff structures.
 - The majority of retailers prefer a pay on foot method of payment rather than pay and display. It was stated that the level of support wasn't as high as it has been portrayed in the past. There is concern with pay on foot that it would result in a reduction in security staff patrolling car parks, and that the case for pay on foot wasn't supported by evidence.
 - There was an overall dislike of how income from fines is used by CBC.
 - It was considered that vehicles parking in The Rushes Car Park are staying for less than 2 hours.
 - There is confusion associated with evening charges at pay and display car parks. For example if someone arrives at 17:30 and intends to park until 19:30 there is uncertainty as to how much they should pay as daytime charges would apply for the first half an hour of the stay and evening charges for the remaining hour and a half.

- It was queried as to whether retailers could be charged a specific rate per year to allow for free parking in public car parks for shoppers. There was an alternative view that bus services should be subsidised.
 - **Longer Term Issues**
 - It was stated that CPE will force vehicles to park in car parks.
 - **Other Issues**
 - The appropriateness of locating a car park in the vicinity of Pinfold Gate and also the appropriateness of extending Browns Lane Car Park was questioned.
 - The location of future car parks should depend on ease of access to the road network and walking distances into town.
 - The integration of Somerfield Car Park with Granby Street Car Park has been considered in the past. A request was made that this issue was re-visited in the Parking Strategy.
- 3.3.2. A comprehensive list of issues was discussed at the Stakeholder Workshop with 'Amount of Parking' and 'Tariff Structures' generating the most discussion. It should be noted that no representation was made on behalf of the taxi drivers at the consultation.
- 3.3.3. WYG attended the monthly Chamber of Trade and Commerce meeting on 15th January 2007. Notes from the meeting are presented in **Appendix F**. Particular issues that were raised were as follows:-
- Doubts that the surveys of Loughborough reflect public opinion.
 - Concern relating to retail competition from Nottingham, Derby, and Leicester.
 - Doubts that the cost of introducing pay on exit is as financially expensive as CBC indicate.
 - Concern that the additional spaces identified in the TCMP will not be sufficient for future requirements.
 - A mixture of car parking types should be provided.
 - Concern that some sections of the TCMP are not an accurate reflection of the views of the Chamber of Trade and Commerce for example rationalising existing car parking.

- Bedford Square should be re-designed as an arrival point for Loughborough with an element of parking incorporated.
 - Some disagreement amongst attendees as to whether or not Regent Place is a town centre car park.
 - A preference for pay on exit rather than pay and display.
 - The uniqueness of Loughborough isn't overlooked when the Parking Strategy is finalised.
- 3.3.4. A meeting was held between WYG and Stewart Bradshaw of Leicestershire Constabulary to discuss the criteria and process involved in awarding 'Park Mark' status to a car park. Key points have already been discussed in section 2.14.
- 3.3.5. Consultation with the Browns Lane Leisure Centre manager indicated that some leisure centre users dislike the existing payment method at the car park. Under the existing system customers are required to obtain a ticket from the leisure centre before returning to their vehicles to put their ticket on display. It was also suggested by leisure centre management that some customers become frustrated by non-leisure centre users using the car park.
- 3.4. National Comparison
- 3.4.1. In order to gain a better understanding of existing car park conditions in Loughborough a comparison has been made with similar sized towns to Loughborough. A list of local authorities in CBCs 'near neighbour comparator group' was provided by CBC. Local authorities in this list are considered to be of a similar nature to Charnwood. **Table 18** shows a selection of these local authorities and the comparisons made with Charnwood / Loughborough.

Table 18:- Local authority tariff structure comparison

Local Authority	Key Town (2001 population estimate)	Tariff (Monday – Saturday)				Evening Charges	Sunday Charges	Disabled Charges	Motorcycle Charges
		1 hr	2 hrs	4 hrs	8 hrs				
Charnwood	Loughborough (55,000)	50p- £1.50	£1.40- £2.00	£3.00- £4.00	£5.70	Yes	Free in most car parks	Free	Free
Colchester	Colchester (100,000)	£1.80	£2.40	£2.60- £3.80	£4.00- £8.00	Yes	Yes	Free for 3 hours*	Free in most car parks
Stafford	Stafford (60,000)	70p	£1.00	£3.00	£3.00	No	Free	Free	Free
Warwick	Warwick (18,500)	50p- 80p	80p- £1.40	£2.20	£3.00- £5.00	No	Some	Free	
Chelmsford	Chelmsford (156,000)	70p- 80p	£1.00- £1.30	£2.90- £4.30	£2.90- £13.40	No	Some	Free for 3 hrs	some

* = additional charges apply in some car parks.

3.4.2. A comparison of the towns shown in **Table 18** reveals that Loughborough is amongst the cheapest for 1 hour of parking (the £1.50 charge in Loughborough is at Regent Place only). Parking charges for 2 and 4 hours are towards the higher end of the range of rates. Charges for daily parking (8 hours) vary between each location.

3.4.3. As with Loughborough, Colchester has evening parking charges whereas the other towns do not. Sunday charges apply at some car parks in Loughborough. Stafford is the only location where there are no Sunday charges. Disabled parking in Chelmsford and Colchester is free for 3 hours, whereas disabled parking is free for an unlimited period in the other towns. There are some charges for motorcycle parking in Colchester and Chelmsford but it is free for all the other destinations in **Table 18**.

3.5. Regional Comparison

3.5.1. A comparison has also been made between Loughborough and the neighbouring '3 cities' of Nottingham, Derby, and Leicester. Leicester City Centre is within a 10 mile radius, Nottingham City Centre is within a 12 mile radius, and Derby City Centre is within a 15 mile radius of Loughborough Town Centre. **Table 19** shows a comparison of each of the 3 cities with Loughborough.

Table 19:- '3 cities' comparison

Local Authority	Key Town / City (2001 population estimate)	Tariff (Monday – Saturday)				Evening Charges	Sunday Charges	Disabled Charges	Motorcycle Charges
		1 hr	2 hrs	4 hrs	8 hrs				
Charnwood	Loughborough (55,000)	50p- £1.50	£1.40- £2.00	£3.00- £4.00	£5.70	Yes	Free in most car parks	Free	Free
Nottingham	Nottingham (275,000)	£1.40	£2.50- £4.00	£4.50- £5.40	£8.60- £14.00	Yes	Yes	Free for 4 hrs	Yes
Leicester	Leicester (278,000)	£1.30	£2.20- £3.30	£3.80- £5.80	£3.80- £8.50	Yes	Yes	Free	Free
Derby	Derby (217,000)	80p- £1.60	£1.40- £2.70	£3.30- £4.90	£6.00- £13.10	Yes	Some	Free for 3 hrs	Free

- 3.5.2. A comparison of Loughborough with the 3 cities reveals that parking charges in Loughborough are cheapest for each of the time periods considered.
- 3.5.3. There are evening charges in all the locations in **Table 19**. Sunday charges apply throughout Nottingham and Leicester, and at some car parks in Derby and Loughborough. There are no disabled charges in Loughborough or Derby. Disabled parking in Nottingham and Leicester is free for a limited period. A reduced charge for PTWs applies in Nottingham but PTW parking is free in Loughborough, Leicester, and Derby.
- 3.5.4. A comparison has also been undertaken between Loughborough and other similar sized market towns in Leicestershire and is summarised in **Table 20** as follows:-

Table 20:- Market town comparison

Local Authority	Key Town / City (2001 population estimate)	Tariff (Monday – Saturday)				Evening Charges	Sunday Charges	Disabled Charges	Motorcycle Charges
		1 hr	2 hrs	4 hrs	8 hrs				
Charnwood	Loughborough (55,000)	50p-£1.50	£1.40-£2.00	£3.00-£4.00	£5.70	Yes	Free in most car parks	No	Free
North West Leicestershire	Ashby (13,000) and Coalville (33,000)	40p	70p	£1.80	£1.80	No	No	No	Free
Hinckley & Bosworth	Hinckley (43,000)	60p	£1.00	£1.20-£2.20	£2.00-£4.20	No	No	No	Free
Melton Mowbray	Melton Mowbray (25,300)	30p-70p	50p-£1.30	70p-£3.50	£2.00	No	No	Yes	Yes

3.5.5. Comparison of Loughborough with other Leicestershire market towns reveals that the parking tariff in Loughborough is the most expensive of the towns considered. Loughborough is also the only town to have evening charges. This is a reflection of the greater demand for parking in Loughborough. The commercial offering in Loughborough is greater than that offered in Ashby and Coalville, Hinckley, and Melton Mowbray and as such higher charges can be justified.

3.6. Fosse Park

3.6.1. Fosse Shopping Park has a large number of free parking spaces, is located in the vicinity of M1 Junction 21 and is easily accessible from the M1 and M69. Fosse Park is home to a number of stores including large branches of Marks and Spencer, Next, and BHS. The retail offering of Fosse Park is different from that of Loughborough because Loughborough has a number of smaller stores and although there are some large stores in the town centre, the size of these stores is generally smaller (with a few exceptions) than those at Fosse Park. When compared to Fosse Park Loughborough will always have its appeal because it is uniquely different from Fosse Park. It is unfair to undertake a like for like comparison between Loughborough and Fosse Park.

3.7. Summary of National and Regional Comparisons

3.7.1. The tariff structure currently operated in Loughborough is considered to be an accurate reflection of parking demand appropriate to the characteristics of the town. The charges are lower than those in each of the 3 cities, reflecting their status as regional centres and the fact that the opportunity for travel by modes other than the private car is greater in these locations. However, charges in Loughborough are greater than those in other

Leicestershire towns. This is considered appropriate given the greater commercial offering in Loughborough and the greater opportunities for travel by non-car modes available in Loughborough compared to other market towns.

- 3.7.2. There is some variation in the tariff structure between Loughborough and the towns in the 'near neighbour comparator list'. The variation is not considered to be significant and whilst these towns form part of the near neighbour comparator group it is considered that in this instance their location within the UK has a large influence upon parking policy. It is therefore considered more appropriate that the tariff structure in Loughborough is set in a manner to reflect its position within the Leicestershire and 3 cities region.