



Oadby & Wigston

Town Centres Area Action Plan

Situation Update Matter Three/Four Issues 3.6 and 4.11





Outlining the resources required for the implementation of the proposals for new parking in both Wigston and Oadby, when these sources are likely to become available, especially in relation to the loss of the existing spaces, whether any delivery partners have been signed up (or are likely to be), and the impact of the loss of existing spaces on current users, particularly in relation to the elderly and mobility impaired, and affected local residents.

1. Required resources for new parking implementation

- 1.1 The resources required for the implementation of the proposals for parking in Wigston and Oadby are set out with a full explanation in the Oadby Town Centre Masterplan Delivery Strategy and the Wigston Town Centre Masterplan Delivery Strategy (Document Library reference: H6).
- 1.2 The Delivery Strategies also set out proposals for the various approaches to establish partnership(s) to manage the delivery of the proposals and also the various approaches to procure the delivery of development on the various sites. The Borough Council has deliberately chosen not to start pursuing these approaches until the Town Centres Area Action Plan has been adopted in order to ensure that the specific site allocations and policies are in place. This will provide an element of certainty that currently does not exist and will allow more detailed development briefs to be prepared in relation to specific sites.
- 1.3 The Borough Council has a dedicated Economic Development Team in place as part of a shared service with Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council. This team has a proven track record of delivering schemes such as those in the Town Centres Area Action Plan and has and is currently delivering similar schemes established through the Hinckley Town Centre Area Action Plan. In this respect, the Borough Council has a good understanding of the resources required to implement the schemes including, for example, car parking. However, given that it is the intention that the Borough Council will be to work pro-actively in partnership with key landowners and developers to see such schemes brought forward and delivered in the future, it would not be appropriate to go into such a level of detail at this stage.

2. Existing Car Parking

2.1 *Provision and Management of Borough Council Car Parks*

Car parks are essential to provide access to town and district centres for visitors, shoppers, workers, local businesses and residents. Car parks support the viability and vitality of town centres. They also assist with keeping highways clear of illegally parked vehicles, thereby supporting free access and flow of traffic and contributing towards road safety.



- 2.2** Car parks cost money to own and to run. The costs of owning and managing them are similar to those of any property and include business and water rates, electricity for lighting, maintenance, insurance, cleaning and litter collection, provision of signage and enforcement. The number of car parks that the Borough Council are able to provide is limited in terms of land constraints and the costs of acquiring, owning and managing them. Demand can often outweigh supply.
- 2.3** The provision of car parks is not a statutory function i.e. councils do not have to provide this service, but historically district and city councils have owned and managed public car parks because of their importance to the local economy. The present legislation (Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984) gives councils the power to provide off - street parking places and to charge for their use.
- 2.4** In order to manage the availability and location of spaces in the town centres the Borough Council has attempted to balance the number of spaces available for those using the town centres with those who are using the car parks to access public transport into Leicester City. Parking charges for long-stay users help to ensure that a few motorists do not monopolise the limited number of parking spaces available. These valuable spaces may be useful for many other shoppers/visitors to the area. Hence, parking turnover is important as it means that more potential shoppers/visitors spend time and money in the town centres thus supporting the local economy.
- 2.5** The Borough Council's car parks are valuable assets, as they are in key locations. This is why they are being looked at to provide essential land for schemes to help regenerate the two town centres.
- 2.6** The Borough of Oadby and Wigston adopted the current Off-Street Parking Places Order in 2008. This allowed them to exercise their legal powers under Sections 32 and 35 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1994 in order to provide, maintain and apply provisions to the appropriate use of the public car parks in the Wigston town and Oadby and South Wigston district centres. The main gist of this Off-Street Parking Order was that it restricted free parking to a time period of three hours in specific (white lined) bays and that payment was required for a longer stay (plus parking would need to be within a blue lined bay where provided). A further restriction was to prevent anyone returning to the same car park within one day.
- 2.7** *Paddock Street Car Park*
Essentially, the redevelopment of the Paddock Street Car Park is necessary to provide the site area to accommodate the number of housing units required by the adopted Core Strategy. However, the site must also continue to provide an element of public car parking. This is because there is recognition by the Borough Council that there still needs to be an element of public parking in this area to serve some of the existing users. Nevertheless, the size of the site would not be able to accommodate the current level or a similar level of public car parking.
- 2.8** Representations received in relation to redevelopment of Paddock Street car park are mainly related to the loss of public car parking and its impact on the elderly and mobility impaired, and local residents.



- 2.9** Paddock Street contains a number of terraced houses on both sides of the west end of the street. These were built without off-street parking as is expected from their early 1900s construction. Paddock Street is a public highway, therefore, Leicestershire County Council has designated a residents parking zone along part of Paddock Street to help residents park close to their homes and make it more difficult for non-residents to park. Residents of Paddock Street can apply to the County Council for a residents permit for which an annual fee is payable. Possession of a valid permit does not reserve places exclusively for permit holders but it does allow them to park without restriction on the designated area. This is defined as a Preferential Parking Scheme.
- 2.10** The Borough Council contacted the County Council to ascertain the level of uptake of the permits for Paddock Street residents. As at 16 January 2012 only 20 valid permits were in operation out of a possible 70 that could be issued.
- 2.11** Also in Paddock Street are the Oadby and Wigston Branch of Age Concern. Each Age Concern or Age UK is an independent charity. The Oadby and Wigston Branch offers a variety of services for example: day care, advice on home safety and home security, IT/computer training, runs a lunch club and other social activities and also has a retail unit selling mainly second hand goods. Although the Age Concern centre does have on-site parking this is of a very limited nature and would not be sufficient to accommodate visitors to the centre or volunteers working there. Due to the nature of the charity the users of this facility are mostly elderly and may be mobility impaired.
- 2.12** The Town Centres Area Action Plan does seek to provide sufficient disabled parking bays within the Chapel Mill redevelopment site (currently Spring Lane Car Park) so that is suitably located towards the retail centre of Wigston. Coupled with the redevelopment of The Lanes pedestrian network, the aim is to improve accessibility and circulation within the new tightly drawn Wigston town centre boundary.
- 2.13** Area Action Plan Policy 15 – The Lanes does state that the site will accommodate both private and public (along with associated disabled spaces) car parking facilities. There is no suggestion within the document that all public car parking spaces are to be removed within the Long Lanes (former Paddock Street Car Park) development.
- 2.14** Precise plans regarding the public/private parking split for the redevelopment site will need to be fully justified as part of a detailed proposal for development of Paddock Street car park. Such a justification process would need to take account of neighbouring land uses etc. This has not been explicitly stated in the policy or explanatory text of the Town Centres Area Action Plan but this is an omission that could be easily rectified.



- 2.15** The current assumption is that as the residential dwellings will be within the town centre boundary and adjacent to a public transport interchange it could be argued that the number of car parking spaces to serve the apartments would equate to approximately ½ a space per unit. From the 100 car parking spaces assumed on this site this would potentially give a maximum of 25-30 spaces reserved for public use.
- 2.16** It should be noted that although provision of ½ space per unit is less than the guidance contained in the 6C's Design Guide, this guidance specifies maximum vehicle parking standards and does not suggest that standards below this level are inadequate.
- 2.17** Parking standards for residential developments within the 6C's also refers to guidance provided by The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). This suggests that parking demand is based on a number of factors including:
- Sustainability and car ownership levels (car ownership levels are, and should be encouraged to be, less in a town centre served by a good level of public transport)
 - Size and type of housing (this will mainly consist of apartments)
 - Tenure (rented and older persons housing has lower car parking demand)
- 2.18** Regarding the further car parking survey work that was carried out by the Borough Council in January 2012, the findings were as follows. The survey showed that the Paddock Street car park was well used in terms of free spaces with an average of only 18% of spaces being available over the six days surveyed. Conversely, the long stay spaces averaged at 59% free and disabled spaces there was an average of 43% free which are both relatively high. Although the usage of the free car parking spaces was high, it is not known why people were using Paddock Street car park on those days. The survey results do not tell us why people chose to park in Paddock Street so we cannot ascertain the level of usage for just Age Concern on Paddock Street as opposed to other uses in the town centre which will be just as accessible from the reconfigured car parks at Junction Road and Spring Lane.
- 2.19** *East Street Car Park*
The current East street car park provides 182 car parking spaces. Sandhurst Street on the opposite side of Oadby's high street currently provides 191. This gives a total of 373. The submitted Town Centres Area Action Plan proposals would have seen a reduction of 56 car parking bays at East Street but an increase of 21 at Sandhurst Street. Therefore the total number of public spaces available would be reduced to 338.



- 2.20** As of March 2012, the Borough Council has given further consideration to the Town Centres Area Action Plan proposals regarding car parking in Oadby and in particular the proposals for the East Street car park. It has agreed a solution that should result in no loss to the current number of public car parking spaces within Oadby as a whole. This has been achieved by a redesign of the existing car park and the proposed public square to allow for 'shared use'. The public square can be used for car parking when the space is not being used for public events. The shared use public square will be able to accommodate 26 car parking spaces including spaces for disabled drivers and the existing car park redesign a further 9 spaces. It could also help to mitigate the concerns surrounding parking submitted by Oadby Trinity Methodist Church.
- 2.21** This suggested change would result in the existing total number of car parking spaces for Oadby being maintained at 373. However, the revised proposal would still see 21 of the existing parking spaces relocated to the Sandhurst Street car park.
- 2.22** Many of the representations in response to the proposals for the car parks in Oadby related to issues around accessibility to shops and services and the perception that East Street car park provided the best ease of access for the elderly and those with impaired mobility. East Street car park does provide direct access to shops on The Parade (via a slanted paved walkway) and the Marks and Spencer's store (via a back door into the store with stairs and a ramp) to the southern end as well as access from the northern end through South Street. Sandhurst Street is a large surface car park which provides flat, even pedestrian access to the main shopping street also. However, there is a general view that Sandhurst Street's relative position to the current shopping environment makes it rather detached from the centre of the town centre and there appears to be a strong perception that it is too far from the shops and other services in the town making it an inconvenient place to park. In terms of walking distance, both car parks are mere minutes from the main shopping area although East Street is directly behind the shops on the Eastern side. With the additional development proposed adjacent to Sandhurst Street this should help to alter this negative perception of the accessibility of Sandhurst Street car park.
- 2.23** The recent car parking survey carried out by the Borough Council did demonstrate that the East Street car park was better used than the Sandhurst Street car park. On average there were only around 14% of free spaces available over the 6 day survey period at East Street car park as opposed to 42% in Sandhurst Street. It is interesting to note that many of these vacant spaces were to north of the East Street car park and through observation it appeared that most car park users tended to favour the south of the site and were willing to wait in this area for a space to become available rather than check the north of the site. With regard to disabled bays there were a very high percentage of available bays in Sandhurst Street (76%) but also around 39% were available on East Street during the survey period.

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