

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

11 DECEMBER 2014

Leighton Buzzard town centre parking study

Earlier this year Central Bedfordshire Council commissioned specialist transport consultants to undertake a comprehensive survey of parking capacity in Leighton Buzzard town centre and to provide advice and guidance on a future management plan or strategy covering both on street car parking bays and off street car parks in the control of Central Bedfordshire Council.

The Council wished to better understand how parking was currently being used and where there were issues or opportunities to improve parking management so as to ensure the town centre economy is suitably supported.

Surveys were carried out across 6 areas of Leighton Buzzard town centre. These were

1. Northwest of town centre: on street parking in the area bounded by West Street/Leighton Road, North Street/Church Street, Ashwell Street and the Grand Union Canal
2. Northeast of town centre: on-street parking in the area bounded by West Street, North Street/Church Street, Plumtree Lane/Regent Street and Hockliffe Road
3. East of town centre: on-street parking in the area east of the town centre, which is bounded by the Hockliffe Road to Clipstone Brook, Lake Street, the Stanbridge Road and Brooklands Avenue
4. Town centre on-street parking
5. Large Off-Street Car Parks, including; Tesco, Aldi, West Street, Multi-storey and Morrison's car parks
6. Other Off-Street Car Parks; covers the smaller off-street car parks

Surveys were undertaken on two days in March 2014; Saturday 22nd March which represents a market day, and Monday 24th March which represents a typical neutral weekday. The typical neutral weekday was surveyed because it represents the most common day type across the year; the Saturday market is considered to represent a worst case due to coincidence of visitors and employees in the town centre, as well as the reduction in town centre parking due to market day restrictions in place on High Street.

In summary the conclusions drawn from the surveys were:

1. Off-street car parks were generally noted as operating at capacity on the market Saturday. Generally, there was an increase in occupancies at off-street car parks on the observed market Saturday over the neutral weekday. Both Tesco car park and the West Street Multi-Storey car park saw significant increases on market day. Some of these increases may be as a result of parking displacements due to the loss of parking spaces on the High Street, as

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- a result of market day restrictions, whilst some may be due to an increase in weekend visitors to the town centre;
2. Employee parking on residential streets has not been identified as a major issue, with the majority of employees parking in areas with spare capacity, or that are predominantly used by employees. The exceptions to this are Bossard Court, Church Avenue and Bedford Street, all of which are at, or near, capacity, and employees vehicles account for more than 20% of the vehicles throughout the surveyed period;
 3. Many of the town centre car parks and on-street parking streets operate close to or at capacity;
 4. On-street parking in the town centre area was observed with a significant proportion of users exceeding the permitted length of stay on the following streets; Bridge Street, Lake Street, North Street and the High Street. Elsewhere, violation rates were low.

The Council is now working with our advisers Parsons Brinckerhoff on developing and refining a range of management options. As part of this process it is important that we fully understand how the implementation of such options will impact on available parking capacity in the period to 2026. The overriding objective of this work is to increase available parking capacity.

We would expect to have further discussions with the Town Council on options for improving parking management during 2015. We are however already taking steps to substantially increase parking capacity. The area known as the Cattle Market site was recently purchased by Central Bedfordshire Council in order to support its eventual re-development as part of the Land South of High Street site.

The Council will be carrying out resurfacing works in this area with this part of the site being joined to the existing Duncombe Drive car park. We would expect between 60 and 80 car parking spaces to be created. Works are currently expected to be completed in early 2015 with the new spaces operational by the end of March 2015.