

# Louth Car Park Survey July 2010



**Planning and Built Environment  
Department**

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## **Louth Car Park Survey 2010**

### Introduction

The Planning Policy & Conservation Section has carried out car parking Surveys in Louth since 1995, the last being in 2004. It was established in the 2004 survey that the car parking provision in the centre of Louth was "sufficient" and "adequate", with the busiest time being market day (Wednesday). This survey will reassess the conclusions of the 2004 survey bringing more relevant data and circumstances to the survey.

The reasons for undertaking this survey are:

- To gain an understanding of shoppers parking patterns;
- To assist in the determination of planning applications in the town centre
- To see if there are enough parking spaces to deal comfortably with demand;
- To provide information to help with the review of the town centre policies and land use proposals for emerging planning policy.

The survey includes private parking spaces, public parking and on street parking. In order to understand the parking habits of shoppers more accurately, permit parking provision has been excluded from the analysis of results. This will reflect parking trends of visitors in the town centre more accurately.

Prior to the counts, a preliminary study was undertaken to check car park capacities and on street parking capacities (figures were estimated based upon allowing for a medium-sized car leaving room to exit the space). Provision of disabled, parent and child, motorcycle and cycle spaces has also been included within the figures. From this preliminary study a number of changes were made to the routes including the following:

- The Cattle Market was added to route C. With a capacity of over 100 spaces the Cattle Market is regularly used for free, long stay parking. As there are no marked spaces within the Cattle Market capacity is only an estimate.
- Another important change is at the former Somerfield store. The Morrison's supermarket currently occupying the site has redesigned the old car park and reduced the capacity from 204 spaces in 2004 to 164 in 2010.
- To supplement parking at Morrison's Albium Place is used as a short stay parking area providing a further 10 spaces.
- Additionally a spot check at peak times between 11:30 and 12:30 on Thursday 29th July was carried out as the Cattle Market is now held on a Thursday; the public use of the car park is no longer available on this day.

As in 2004, the survey has been carried out over three days during the holiday season. This year the surveys were undertaken on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> July (to represent a standard weekday), Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> and Friday 30<sup>th</sup> July 2010, both of which are Market Days. The Cattle Market which took place in previous years on a Friday now takes place on a Thursday so no longer impacts on the Friday results.

Surveys were carried out every hour with the first survey beginning at 9.30am, and the final survey at 3.30pm, all surveys were completed by 4.30pm. The town was split into 3 distinct 'routes' so that all parking provision could be surveyed within the allocated hour.

One conclusion of the 2004 survey which has been further assessed within this document is the perceived lack of signage present in the town directing people, especially visitors from Lincoln, Horncastle and Grimsby, to the various car parks on offer.

## **Analysis of Results**

### **Amount of car parking space available**

<b><u>Type of Car Parking</u></b>	<b><u>Overall Capacity</u></b>	<b><u>% Capacity of Overall Total</u></b>
Public Car Parking	1209	66%
Private Car Parking	243	13.5%
On-street Parking	373	20.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1825</b>	<b>100%</b>

There has been an increase in the number of parking spaces when compared to the previous survey carried out in 2004, where there were 1774 spaces available in total, i.e. an increase of 51 spaces. However, as this year has seen the inclusion of the Cattle Market in the survey which counts for an additional 107 spaces, this therefore means that in fact there has been a small reduction in capacity in terms of the figures used in previous surveys. This reduction can be accounted for by a re-estimation of figures where parking bays are not clearly marked out (i.e. on street parking, private car parks) along with the reduction of parking at the former Somerfield store now Morrison's.

### **Tuesday 27th July 2010**

#### **On Street Parking**

This year has seen a rise in the number of spaces used throughout the day with an average of 79% of spaces being utilized. Compared with 78% in 2004, 72% in 2001, 65% in 1999, 70% in 1997 and 70% in 1995). The period with the highest usage of on-street parking was 10:30 am, where 82% of all spaces were in use. In common with the 2004 survey illegal parking on double yellow lines was prevalent throughout the day

which goes some way to explaining the high levels of usage in some areas. The following locations experienced very high levels of usage (when looking at percentage of average capacity used) – Eastgate West 109%, Cornmarket 112%, Aswell Street 133%, Ramsgate 114% and Uppgate 111%. Several other on-street locations experienced usage of more than 90% of available capacity.

### Public Parking

Public car parking had an average usage of 54% of available capacity. Whilst since 1995 there has been a steady rise in public car park use, this year saw a slight reduction from that of 58% recorded in 2004. The peak period was at 11:30am with 61% of all spaces being used, with 471 spaces remaining vacant. There is however considerable variation in the level of use between car parks, with Town Hall public car park experiencing the highest level of use at 158% of its available capacity on average. In contrast Northgate Corner, Northgate (large) and Newmarket all had an average use of less than 30% of available capacity.

### Summary of the Day

By far the highest level of use in terms of available capacity used was on-street parking. Over the entire day an average of 54% of public parking spaces, 55% of private parking spaces and 79% of on street parking spaces were utilised, giving an overall average of 59% of all available parking spaces, which is a 4% decrease over the 2004 survey.

## **Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> July 2010**

The market which is held in the Market Place and Cornmarket on a Wednesday results in a loss of 12 public car park spaces and 25 on street parking spaces (37 spaces in total).

### On Street Parking

This year has seen an average of 80 % of on street parking spaces used throughout the day which is an increase from 72% in the previous 2004 survey. The peak periods for on street parking were at 10:30 and 12:30 when 80% of available spaces were occupied.

Several on street parking locations were overused indicating possible illegal parking, i.e. Aswell Street (N) averaging 117%, Eastgate East (N) 100%, Eastgate East (S) 117%, Ramsgate 114% and Schoolhouse Lane 110%. However, these levels of over-capacity in some areas are not as significant as those found during the 2004 survey (Aswell Street (N) 126%, Eastgate East (S) 121%). In previous surveys it has been deduced that the re-estimation of capacities may have accounted for the high level of usage of on street parking, this year however has seen no adjustments being made. The loss of 25 on street parking spaces due to the closure of the Cornmarket undoubtedly influences these figures.

## Public Parking

Public Parking usage was much higher on the Wednesday than the Tuesday with an overall average of 69%. The peak period of public parking was at 11:30 am when 1049 of the 1197 (12 spaces lost due to presence of Market) spaces available were used representing 88% of the capacity. After this peak there was a steady decline in use throughout the afternoon.

Public car park usage ranged from an average of 38% to 108%. Notably the Newmarket car park continued to see reduced usage compared to previous years with 38% of spaces being used compared to 62% in 2004 and 97% in 2001.

## Summary of the Day

Over the entire day an average of 69% of public parking spaces, 63% of private parking spaces and 80% of on street parking spaces were utilised, giving an overall average of 71% off all available spaces. This represents a slight reduction when compared to the previous 2004 survey, when an average 81% of public spaces, 64% of private and 72% of on street spaces were in use, with an average of 76% of all available capacity in use.

## **Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> July 2010**

Due to the loss of over 100 spaces on a Thursday as a result of Cattle Market it was decided an additional survey during peak hours was necessary in order to ascertain what impact this loss has on parking provision across the town.

## On Street Parking

Between 11:30 and 12:30, it was recorded that 290 of the 373 available spaces were in use, representing 78% of the overall available capacity.

## Public Car Parking

In the same time frame, 720 cars were recorded as parked in the public car parks, representing 65% of the overall capacity. The Newmarket car park has no charge imposed on a Thursday; this is to help accommodate some of the cars which would have usually parked in the Cattle Market.

## Private Car Parking

On the Thursday survey a total of 113 cars were recorded as being parked in private car parks between the hours of 11:30 and 12:30, representing 47% of total available capacity for that type of provision. Between the same period on both the Tuesday and Wednesday a higher percentage of

cars were found to occupy these spaces with 58% of available spaces in use on the Tuesday and 67% on the Wednesday.

### Summary

Whilst during the Thursday survey a number of car parks, on street locations and private parking facilities were recorded as over capacity with areas such as Ramsgate seeing 157% of available capacity in use, this high usage across the town can not simply be associated with the loss of the Cattle Market. Whilst as stated it would be easy to misinterpret the data and conclude the high usage across the town was due to an increased demand resulting from a lack of spaces, looking at data collected during the same period on Tuesday highlights similar levels of usage and therefore price of parking, location or other factors are more likely to have produced such high usage in certain areas.

### **Friday 30<sup>th</sup> July 2010**

Friday is market day and in common with that held on a Wednesday means a loss of 37 spaces in total, 12 of which are public and 25 on-street.

#### On Street Parking

Figures show that unlike in previous years where there had been a notable decline in use, 2010 has seen a marked increase in on street parking usage with 80% of available spaces being used. The peak period for use was at 13:30pm when 86% of available spaces were occupied.

#### Public Car Parking

Figures show an average use throughout the day of 67% compared with 78% in 2004, 79% in 2001, 78% in 1999, 67% in 1997 and 67% in 1995. The peak period of usage was at 11:30am when 75% of all available public car parking spaces were in use.

Of the 17 public car parks surveyed, 10 of them had an average overall usage of between 70% and 106%. However, 7 car parks were considerably underused by comparison – Newmarket (24%), Kidgate (30%), Queen Street Public (66%), Northgate Large (51%), Northgate Corner (64%) and Broadbank (57%).

#### Summary of the Day

Over the entire day, on street parking by percentage had the highest number of users with a recorded figure of 80%, public car parks 67% and 59% of private spaces were utilised, giving an overall average of 69% of all available parking spaces.

## Other issues

### Disabled Parking.

Demand for designated disabled spaces within Louth's many public car parks remained constant with the highest demand recognised to be on market days. However whilst every effort had been made to record disabled space use as accurate as possible, doubts must be expressed over the accuracy none the less. For instance, Lindum Walk Corner has a total of 4 designated disabled bays and a total capacity of 28 spaces. On the Wednesday survey at no time had a record been made of the disabled spaces having been occupied, however from 09:30 to 12:30 the car park was at full capacity indicating these designated bays must have been in use. As those who undertook the survey are no longer available to clarify the records it has to be presumed however that the designated disabled bays were in use by blue badge holders and the discrepancies on the survey sheets were simply an oversight.

### Parent & Child Spaces.

This is only the second survey where the provision of parent and child spaces have been recorded. It was found that provision is extremely poor with only the two supermarket car parks making any provision at all. Morison's had the largest provision of spaces spaces, whilst the CO-OP had a rather more reduced offering.

### Motorcycles.

From preliminary research, it was found that there is very little dedicated provision for motorcycle parking in Louth. Motorbikes tend to occupy car spaces or informal spaces in car parks where there is enough room for a motorcycle but not enough for a car.

### Bicycles.

The cycle racks provided within the Eastgate and Somerfield car parks were not well used at any point across the four days.

## Overall Summery

Demand across the two market days was very similar, 71% on Wednesday and 69% on Friday. Even on the busiest of days there remains capacity within all three types of parking provision. On street parking experienced the highest level of use in relation to capacity with Wednesday and Friday experiencing 80% of available spaces being recorded as in use.

However, despite the figures indicating the availability of spaces across the town even on the busiest days, there were in fact numerous occasions when individual locations were either full or over capacity. For example, there were 53 occasions on the Wednesday when on street parking locations were recorded as being full or over capacity. Of the 24 on street locations surveyed on the Wednesday 10 of them experienced very high



demand (90%+ of available capacity) with 13 seeing similar levels of usage on the Friday. Therefore whilst when taking average usage across the whole day capacity in many car parks exists, the reality is that during peak times shoppers may experience considerable difficulties in finding a space close to the town centre. This issue is further exacerbated with the loss of parking facilities within the Market Place during market days.

Along with the loss of spaces in the Market Place on market days the town also sees an influx of large vehicles which are used by the stall holders to transport goods. These vehicles can often be found in various public and on street locations close to the centre further limiting the number of available spaces for visitors to the town.

From the small sample survey undertaken on the Thursday to coincide with the Cattle Market, it is clear to see that the Newmarket public car park in fact accommodates the bulk of vehicles which would usually have been parked at the Cattle Market. Being free of charge on a Thursday Newmarket car park witnessed a vast increase in the number of cars parked compared to the other survey days.

Newmarket car park was not the only public parking facility which witnessed an increase in use during the Thursday survey, the same was true for many on street locations as well. From the results of the Thursday survey it is clear to see the loss of the cattle market facility has a profound impact on the number of cars venturing in to the town centre in search of a parking space.

While private car parks have been considered within this report it is important to remember these are, usually, but not exclusively used by the same people for work purposes. Whilst not accessible to the general public the importance of private car parks can not be underestimated as they greatly reduce the number of additional vehicles seeking long stay provision in already limited on street locations around the town.

On street car parking is the most susceptible to going over capacity with some drivers choosing to park illegally on double yellow lines. On street locations closest to the centre typically can be seen to have witnessed the highest numbers of illegally parked cars during the survey period, suggesting that some will risk fines in order to park closer to a chosen facility above paying to park further from the centre

Previous research into the cause of congestion in Louth town centre highlighted obstacles such as illegal parking, delivery vehicles and buses as being key factors. The issue of congestion is particularly prevalent in the area surrounding Mercer Row and Market Place with the loss of parking spaces during market days further exacerbating this issue. Parking in restricted areas, particularly by blue badge holders, further hinders traffic movement through the town.

Another reason for the high levels of usage in some location is possibly the 'Five Minute Shopper'. Due to the compact nature of Louth town centre, often the shopper who only wants a few items are dropped off in the street.



The car driver then circles the town for a short period before collecting the shopper again, adding to the level of congestion witnessed in some locations.

The amount and location of appropriate signage may also be a contributing factor to the level of congestion that Louth suffers. Alongside the car park survey, a further study looked at the signage directing drivers to the parking facilities in and around Louth.

When travelling from Grimsby along the A16 following the signs for the town centre, a driver is directed down the B1520 (Grimsby Road) where there are no car park directions until the driver reaches the junction with Mercer Row. Following the sign down Mercer Row, then subsequently to Eastgate, a small sign directs the driver to Northgate car park. By this point the driver will have passed Bridge street car park, the Market Place/Cornmarket and possibly the Eastgate car park further from the junction with Northgate, depending on how busy the roads were at the time. The signs that direct drivers to Northgate from Eastgate are particularly small and not positioned in prominent locations.

Traveling west along Northgate a driver would come to the CO-OP car park, however due to its concealed access and lack of signage if they were not alert it could easily be missed. Neither the CO-OP, Cannon Street, Broadbank or Kiln Lane car parks are signed posted adequately from Northgate. There is no signage for any of these car parks from Grimsby Road itself even though they can be accessed via High Holme Road/Broadbank without the need to travel through the town centre at all.

When traveling from Lincoln (A157/B1200), the first car park sign is found at the junction of Breakneck Lane/Westgate, which directs you down Westgate to the church. At this junction there are no further signs and were a driver to follow the signs to the town centre they would find themselves in the one way system down Mercer Row/Eastgate/Northgate. It is only when a driver coming from Lincoln travels down St Marys Lane which is not signed as a route into the town centre that they would find themselves being directing to the Broadbank/CO-OP/Kiln Lane car parks via High Holme Road/Broadbank.

When traveling from Horncastle on the A153/B1200 (Horncastle Road) there are no signs directing motorists to parking facilities at the first set of traffic lights at the junction with Upgate/Horncastle Road. A driver therefore is likely to follow the town centre signs and once again find themselves in the one way system. This lack of clear signage provides no indication of the close proximity of two car parks directly ahead (Newmarket and Lindum Walk Corner) both of which are within approximately 200m of the junction.

When travelling from Boston and Skegness along the A16/ B1520 (London Road) drivers are directed to turn right onto Newmarket at the first set of traffic lights. The sign indicating this turn is both small and on the opposite side of the road. Once on Newmarket, drivers can either park at Newmarket, Lindum Walk Corner or the Cattle Market. However if the driver was to continue along Newmarket, there are no signs directing them down Church Street and onto Kidgate for the Kidgate car park, nor towards the Morrison's car park. Carrying on down Church Street there

are no Signs to indicate the location of Queen Street public car park. Continuing further down Church Street to the Junction with Eastgate, there are no signs directing drivers to either the Eastgate car park or to the Northgate car parks.

Cannon street car park, whilst of limited capacity, is only sign posted from the Cannon Street and Little Eastgate Junction. The Eastgate car park and the Queen Street car park are not signposted at all from Church Street. The CO-OP car park is not sign posted at all, however those directed to Kiln Lane could possible mistake the two and enter the Morrisons car park.

The insufficient sign posting of public car parks can be seen as a significant problem within Louth. This lack of signage and the natural instinct of visitors to head for the town centre thus finding themselves in the one way systems further exacerbates the issue of congestion during peak hours.

Where signs do exist, they are generally small and not always situated in the most prominent of locations making it hard for drivers to spot from a distance. The entrances to car parks in the town centre are not always well sign posted and subsequently, drivers unfamiliar with the area could pass before realising the entrance was there.

In summary, overall the provision of car parking in Louth is deemed sufficient on all but the peak periods of the busiest days of the year. In terms of average overall capacity demand is not vastly different to the last survey carried out in 2004. On a standard weekday capacity is clearly more than sufficient. However, on Market days whilst there is still reasonable capacity remaining it can clearly be seen that there are considerable pressures on some locations making parking difficult and further contributing to the issue of congestion. It would appear that this pressure is certainly a regular occurrence and therefore cause for concern. It may be suggested that whilst capacity is available attention should be paid to more appropriate signage to encourage people to use some of the more underused areas in order to reduce congestion in some areas.

The 2004 survey assessed that private car parking helped alleviate pressure from the public car parks and should be taken into consideration. These private car parks allow the workers of Louth to leave their cars in safe spaces during the day and frees up space in other car parks such as Lindum Walk Corner and the Cattle Market.

The inclusion of further possible sites should be assessed before undergoing future surveys. The inclusion of both sides of Newmarket seems appropriate as cars park on both sides of the street. The Ormes Lane garage site could be removed from future surveys as currently cars are prevented from entering the site. From the small sample study carried out on the Thursday it is suggested in future at the very least a similar survey takes place in order to fully understand the impact the cattle market has on parking provision.

Note: If you require any of the collected data with which informed this document please contact the Planning Policy team via email or phone on:

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