Oakham Town Task & Finish Group Evidence-base Report

as adopted on 18th October 2018

Reports prepared and collated by Joy Clough, Co-ordinator, Oakham Residents Group, on the basis of data collected and presented by volunteer residents of Oakham

Acknowledgements

The commitment of Oakham residents to this Task & Finish Group project looking at ways to regenerate the town is evident in the amount of time, work and effort they have put into the research which supports the reports presented here.

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With apologies to anyone whose name has been inadvertently omitted.

Introduction

The Oakham Regeneration Project Task & Finish Group, a Council and Community Working Party, was set up by Rutland County Council in the face of substantial public concern over the direction being taken for the future improvement and development of Oakham Town Centre. Guided by an Independent Chair, Chris Wade of 'People and Places', the aim has been to produce a body of research into the town to measure performance and assess any current issues and areas of concern, and on this basis to draw up recommendations to guide effective future town centre planning.

The research is based on the 'People & Places Town Centre Benchmarking System', which shows how to collect data corresponding to twelve Key Performance Indicators. These KPI relate to various aspects of the town centre, including the views of those who live, work and visit there. The data collected for those indicators which are relevant to Oakham (Table 1) have been compared with statistics in a National Benchmark Database for Small Towns, which consists of information from small towns which had participated in this process in 2016.

The benefit of using such a benchmarking system is that it will:-

- *provide baseline data to understand individual town centres issues*
- *identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement*
- *assist in preparing local action plans to address identified issues*
- *monitor impact of local town centre regeneration over several years*
- *act as an evidence base for funding applications*

(People & Places)

Table 1 – Key Performance Indicators relevant to Oakham	
The Place: Commercial Units	
KPI 1: Use Class	Visual survey
KPI 2: Comparison/Convenience	Visual survey
KPI 3: Trader Type	Visual survey
KPI 4: Vacancy Rates	Visual survey
The Place: Cross-town Trends	
KPI 5: Markets	Visual survey
KPI 8: Footfall	Survey on market & quiet days
KPI 9: Car Parking	Audit on busy & quiet days
The People: Stakeholder Surveys	
KPI 10: Business Confidence Surveys	Postal survey
KPI 11: Town Centre Users Surveys	Face to face surveys / Online survey
KPI 12: Shoppers Origin Surveys	Shoppers Origin survey

Between May and August 2018, with support from Oakham residents, data were collected for each KPI above. Additionally an extensive and detailed body of information on footfall across the town centre and on parking has been collected, and this includes car parks and on-street parking. A full database of all businesses in Oakham has been produced. In addition there were interviews with long-time market traders, and surveys carried out with Oakham Town Centre Visitors and Visitors to Rutland within a five-mile zone around Oakham.

The substantial body of data collected is the basis of these reports, and has been used to create the graphs and charts which illustrate them. All statistics given in the reports derive from these data, and statements alluding to 'additional data' refer to this overall body of evidence which is held in reserve but which may not be specifically illustrated.

Some numerical anomalies occur where average figures are shown, which have been rounded to the nearest whole number. Some discrepancies also occur when survey respondents omitted to answer specific questions.

An evaluation of the collected data follows to illustrate how each report, while offering valid specific information, relates to and impacts on each of the other reports to provide a very comprehensive overall picture. The reports, showing the findings for each Key Performance Indicator, then form the main body of this document.

The preliminary versions of the reports on KPI 1-4, 5, 8 and 9 which were submitted to the Task & Finish Group meeting on 16th August 2018 and bearing that date are superseded by the amended versions in this document.

Two additional surveys, an on-line survey and a Youth Survey, are currently awaiting completion. Reports on these will be submitted as supplementary documents later.

Appendix A contains the respondents' written comments from the Task & Finish Group surveys, listed under the headings of the relevant questions. Also extremely valid and available are the comments made in response to the 2017 consultations by RCC and the Oakham Neighbourhood Plan.

Joy Clough
Oakham Residents Group
September 2018

General Summary

This report for the Oakham Regeneration Project Task & Finish Group contains individual papers for each of the KPI indicators noted in the Introduction (p3, Table 1). The research for each topic is pertinent in its own right, but in this summary they are cross-referenced to illustrate a full picture of how Oakham currently performs.

Local Economic Performance

It is widely recognised that High Streets are economically struggling, both nationally and indeed across Europe. Oakham is a County Market Town situated in a rural area. However there is a choice of alternative shopping and business destinations for the people of Oakham and the surrounding villages. Within 10 to 15 miles we have the market towns of Stamford, Melton Mowbray and Market Harborough, and within 25 to 30 miles there are the cities of Leicester, Nottingham and Peterborough. For all these destinations most people are reliant upon cars or public transport, which involve cost and time and are detrimental to the environment.

Oakham is on our doorstep, and yet one of the most important insights that come out of the Business Confidence Survey is the slowly declining rate of year-on-year growth and the lower expectation of growth for 2018 in the Oakham business community, with two-thirds not expecting an increase in trade and 21% actually forecasting a decrease (p30, Table 2). It is also worrying that nearly half of the town centre businesses have been established for less than five years, which would seem to indicate a large turnover of retail premises even when allowance is made for several closures due to retirement (p39, Fig. 1). Customers build loyalties with local shops: individual customer comments were made bewailing the loss of well-liked shops and services, and a too-frequent coming and going of retail outlets does nothing for the economic stability of the town.

From the business perspective negative financial issues relating to fundamental business overheads, such as rates and rents (19%), were identified, as was competition from internet and other venues (16%). Marginally higher were concerns relating to the declining number of local clients, with low footfall (17%) and inadequate parking (22%) listed as causes (p31, Fig. 3). These factors beg the question as to whether if local trade were to increase, the financial strain would be correspondingly reduced.

With parking there were more comments overall relating to hourly car park charges than to availability; one business commented that parking provision should 'remove pressure from shoppers allowing them to relax and stay' in town. The research confirms inadequacies in both parking and footfall. The overall picture of parking in the town centre shows that at the height of each shopping day, from 11am to 3pm, the car parks are frequently well over accepted levels of occupancy (p19, Fig. 1), and the high levels of footfall in the main short stretch of the High Street between Mill Street and Gaol Street do not extend to any of the other town centre shopping areas (p15, Table 1).

The people living in Oakham who do use the town centre are very loyal, and in our surveys 70% of those interviewed came into town more than once a week (p34, Table 2). The Shoppers Origins survey also demonstrates that the majority of those using the local businesses come from Oakham and Rutland within 10 miles (p49, Fig. 1). Overall however, although half the Oakham town users walked into town, nearly 40% came by car and it is not therefore surprising that 10% of them put parking on the list of improvements they would like to see.

The main area of dissatisfaction for half those interviewed was with the available retail offer, many citing the lack of shops with mid price-range goods and High Street names, and a surfeit of charity shops of which there are seven in prime locations in the town centre (p39, Fig. 5). The analysis of businesses by class (p9, Table 1) shows that Oakham does in fact have a lower percentage of Class A1 shops (43%) than the National Database for Small Towns average (52%). In Oakham this difference equates to over 20 more retail outlets. The retail sector, however, is driven by financial viability and perhaps only a substantial increase in footfall and spending in the town would encourage an increase in the number and range of retail operations.

Oakham is fortunate in that the town is a regular destination for day visitors from a wide area with several major cities within driving distance. For them, with 78% coming by car, parking was one of the equal top two improvements they wished to see, although of those more were concerned with the availability of the parking than the cost (p47, Fig. 4). The other top improvement that would enhance their visit was a better retail mix, and for them the independent shops at 58% were recorded as one of the top positive attributes of the town, not far behind the cafés and restaurants at 64% (p44, Table 10). The retail offer in Oakham, although lower than the national average in High Street names, is strong in independent shops, which make up 69% of businesses compared with the national average of 64%.

Local Usage of the Town

The largest audience for Oakham and what it has to offer is the population of the town itself, including the new settlement on its fringe at Barleythorpe, as well as the surrounding villages. The perception of Oakham by those who live here is a positive one, and when asked for one word to describe the centre there were 73% positive words as against only 27% negative ones. Their image is of a quaint, attractive, pleasant place, friendly with a community feel, and useful, compact and convenient for their needs; 80% of them would recommend a visit to the town (p38, Fig. 4 & Table 6).

This positive image is reflected in the attributes of Oakham that people most valued, and it is the catering establishments, the cafés, restaurants, pubs and bars, that came top of their list with 73 positive comments. Levels of negativity for the town were indeed much lower, but leisure facilities with 35 negative ratings, along with parking (35) and the retail mix (38), was amongst the highest (p37, Table 5). On the list of improvements that would encourage people to use the town more, leisure facilities, with 24 comments, also featured second highest. In individual comments, activities for children and young people, bowling, and many specific calls for a cinema were noted (p39, Fig. 5). The 'tourist' attractions in Oakham, the Rutland County Museum, Oakham Castle and the Rutland Farm Park, show strong local usage (p50, Fig. 4).

Quite high up in the order of negative attributes came 'traffic', expanded with additional comments, and also with 7% of suggestions for improvements that would encourage people to use the town centre more. The railway crossings are a fact of life in Oakham, but as comments show, they are an on-going source of irritation and inconvenience for many, but parking on pavements, safer provision for pedestrians crossing near junctions, and particularly reduced traffic speed and flow through the High Street, especially involving heavy goods vehicles, were called for.

Despite the high level of positivity for the town centre, 12% of the suggestions for improvement related to general town centre maintenance. Repaired pavements, more seating areas, more planting, better new architecture and better disabled access were requested.

Tourism in Oakham

Oakham is a destination town, attracting visitors from a wide area (p50, Fig. 3), but the majority, 64%, come from within easy driving distance, from the areas immediately surrounding Rutland (p40, Table 2). Added to this, the Shoppers Origins survey shows that on an average day of the week in Oakham, 28% of those who use local businesses are visitors, coming from ten miles away or more (p48, Table 1).

A majority of visitors come to Oakham, and indeed Rutland, on day trips and stay for between one and three hours in town, with only a third staying longer, a reflection perhaps on how much there is for visitors to do. Asked what improvements would have helped them to enjoy their visit more, after parking and more diversity of shops, the most numerous visitor comments were related to signage in the town for tourists and more information about the town and events (p47, Fig. 4). In particular signage to the main attractions of the 12th century Castle and the Rutland County Museum is very poor and the latter is closed on Sundays and Bank Holidays when there are many more tourists in the town.

More of those visitors in Oakham were on occasional and regular day visits than were here for a one-off visit, which suggests visitor loyalty and a good return rate (p35, Table 3). Around half of these are pairs, or small groups of adults, with a smaller percentage coming with children, so their visits are presumably not limited to weekends and school holidays (p42). This view is upheld by the fact that the number of those using the retail and business outlets from more than 25 miles away was consistent across the week, rising steeply on the Saturday. Twice as many visitors were from only 11 to 25 miles away, and similarly consistent from Monday to Thursday but much higher on both Friday and Saturday. Sunday is a comparatively quiet day in the town, for locals and visitors alike (p49, Fig. 1), as the retail Sunday opening is fairly limited, and although the Castle is open in the afternoon, the Museum is closed. The overall percentage of visitors using Oakham shops and businesses is substantially higher than the national average (p48, Table 1).

Rutland Water and its associated local attractions are only a few miles from Oakham and yet there was a disappointingly low expectation amongst visitors at those locations of a visit to Oakham, with 15% having no idea what Oakham had to offer. In fact only 13% could recall having heard about Oakham from any source (p42, Table 7). For these visitors there was a low repeat visit rate amongst those who had been to Oakham on previous occasions. Those that came into the town were drawn mostly by the cafés and restaurants, the historic centre and shopping, but less than half of them were using each of these venues.

Despite the above, visitors hold a very positive image of Oakham: quaint, picturesque and historic, friendly and busy, and diverse and compact, were words they used to describe the town. This is a very similar selection to those used by the people who live here, and there were far fewer negative words used by visitors (p46, Fig. 3). Their perceptions of the town were positive, not just the cafés and restaurants, historic attractions and independent shops, but also the physical appearance of Oakham, its cleanliness, friendliness and the ease of walking around were appreciated (p44, Table 10).

Conclusion

This report looks at the interests of three groups of people, those who work in Oakham, those who live here and those who come to visit here. The same strands run through their comments, and the suggestions they make for a way forward are compatible. The issues that emerge from the research in this report might therefore form the basis of the future action which will affect all of them directly or indirectly.

The research draws a picture of Oakham as a traditional market town, with a strong and friendly identity, and an equally strong loyalty from those people who rely on it, and from those who visit regularly. These people all share the same attractive image of Oakham and similar positive views.

Maintaining and enhancing the identity of the town, building on its strengths, and addressing the issues highlighted by this report will encourage growth, with popular support, while still preserving Oakham's integrity.

Joy Clough
Oakham Residents Group

KPI 1, 2, 3, 4: Oakham Business Classification – Oakham Residents Group

This is an analysis of 259 businesses in Oakham town centre. For the purposes of this report, the parameters of the commercial hub of Oakham have been set as illustrated on the map below (Fig. 1). This covers the majority of retail businesses in the town and is done so that parallels may be drawn between these data and the data from the footfall and parking surveys which cover the same area. There are also commercial data available for the whole extent of the town including the industrial parks.

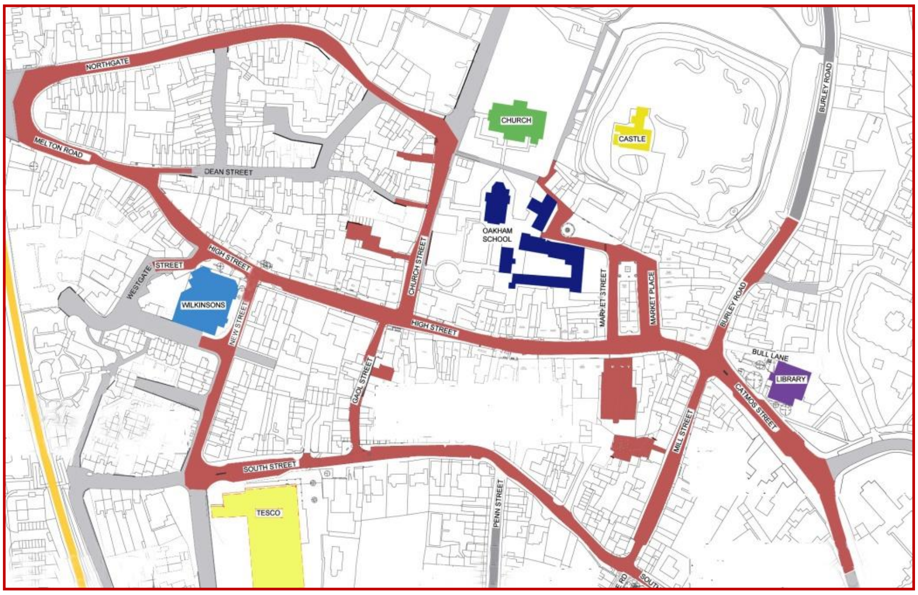


Fig. 1.
Map of Oakham town centre, indicating in pink the streets covered by the analysis in this report

"It is important to understand the scale and variety of the 'commercial offer' throughout the town. A variety of shops and a wide range of services in a town are important to its ability to remain competitive and continue to attract customers. Sustaining a balance between the different aspects of buying and selling goods and services ensures that the local population (and visitors from outside) can spend time and money there, keeping the generated wealth of the town within the local economy. Importantly, it forms the employment base for a substantial proportion of the community too, helping to retain the population rather than lose it to nearby towns and cities." (*People and Places*)

KPI 1 – Commercial Units: Use Class

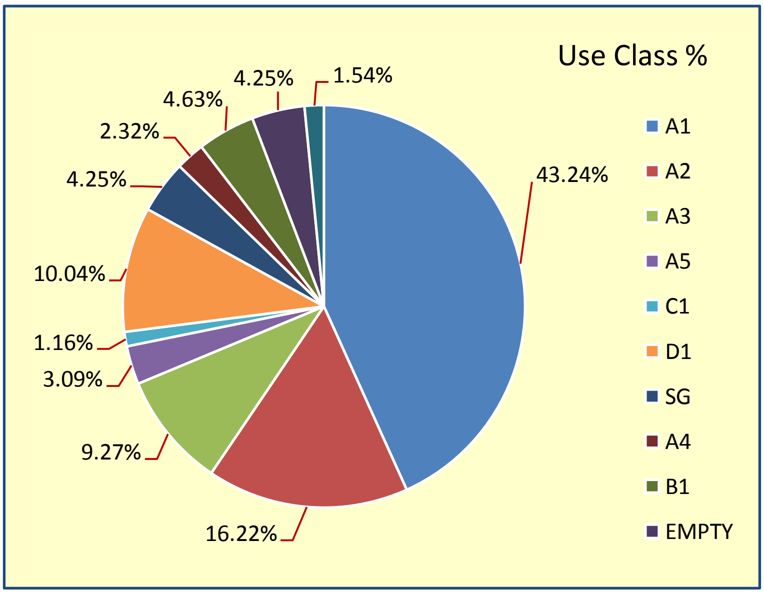


Fig. 2.
Use class of Oakham businesses by percentage

Table 1 – Oakham businesses classified by the Town & Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987		Oakham 2018 Number	Oakham 2018 %	National Benchmark for Small Towns %
A1	Shops	112	43%	*52%*
A2	Financial and Professional Services including banks, estate agents, betting offices	42	16%	*14%*
A3	Restaurants and Cafés	24	9%	*8%*
A4	Drinking Establishments	6	3%	*4%*
A5	Hot Food Takeaways	8	3%	*4%*
B1	Businesses	12	5%	*3%*
B2	General Industrial	-	-	*1%*
B8	Storage and Distribution	-	-	*0*
C1	Hotels	3	1%	*1%*
C2	Residential Institutions	-	-	*0*
C2A	Secure Residential Institution	-	-	*0*
D1	Non Residential Institutions e.g. halls, museums, libraries, places of worship	26	10%	*6%*
D2	Assembly and Leisure	-	-	*1%*
SG	Sui Generis ("unique" establishments) e.g. tanning and beauty salons, dog parlours, veterinary clinics, petrol filling stations, nightclubs, launderettes, and tattoo studios,	11	4%	*5%*
–	Vacant premises	11	4%	*9%*
RS	Residential	4	2%	-
	Total Premises	259		

The data analysis for Oakham in Table 1 above shows how the quantity and type of businesses compares to the benchmarking for small towns nationally. Oakham has a markedly smaller percentage of shops, only 43% compared to the average of 52%. However financial and professional services are 2% higher at 16% and businesses also come in slightly stronger, 2% above the benchmark. In hospitality the numbers of restaurants/cafés, takeaways and hotels are comparable with national averages. At 10% it would appear that there is a higher proportion of (D1) public buildings in Oakham, the national average being 6%.

KPI 2 – Commercial Units: Comparison versus Convenience

“The presence of a variety of shops in a town centre is important to its ability to remain competitive and continue to attract customers. A balance of both comparison and convenience retail units is therefore ideal in terms of encouraging visitors and potential customers.” (*People and Places*)
A1 Retail units selling goods can be split into two different types, Comparison and Convenience, thus:

Convenience goods – low-cost, everyday items that consumers are unlikely to travel far to purchase

- Food and non-alcoholic drinks
- Tobacco
- Alcohol
- Newspapers and magazines
- Non-durable household goods

Comparison goods – all other retail goods

- Books
- Clothing and footwear
- Furniture, floor coverings and household textiles
- Audio-visual equipment and other durable goods
- Hardware and DIY supplies
- Chemists goods
- Jewellery, watches and clocks
- Bicycles
- Recreational and miscellaneous goods
- Hairdressing

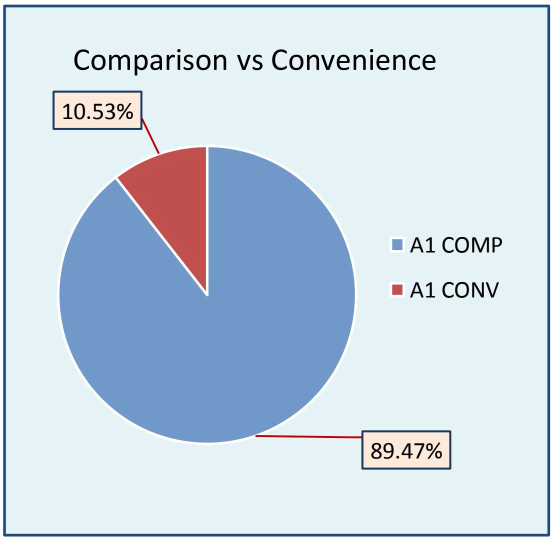


Fig. 2. Convenience and comparison stores in Oakham

Table 2	Oakham 2018 Number	Oakham 2018 %	National Benchmark for Small Towns %
Comparison	99	89 %	82%
Convenience	13	11%	18%
Total	112	100%	100%

It is interesting to see that Oakham has a different balance of shop categories to the national average with a greater proportion of comparison shops, 89 % compared to 82%, and a smaller number of convenience shops, with only 11% compared to the national average of 18%. The survey of town users shows that local people are coming very regularly into the town centre, 30% every day and 41% of them more than once a week, and in this scenario perhaps the town needs a greater number of convenience shops.

KPI 3 – Commercial Units: Trader Types

"The vitality of a town centre depends highly on the quality and variety of retailers represented. Certain national retail businesses are considered key attractors and are particularly important in terms of attracting visitors and shoppers to a town. The character and profile of a town often also depend on the variety and mix of independent shops that can give a town a 'unique selling point'. A sustainable balance of key attractors and multiple names alongside local independent shops is therefore likely to have the greatest positive impact on the vitality and viability of a town." (*People and Places*)

Of those retail chains considered Key Attractors by Experian Goad [global business location experts], there are only four in Oakham town centre (Table 4). At just 4% this is substantially under the 7% national average for small towns. A Marks & Spencers Food outlet at the petrol filling station on the bypass which might otherwise be counted is too far out to qualify, and the other supermarkets on the outskirts of Oakham, namely Aldi, Lidl and the Co-op, are not included in that list of Key Attractors.

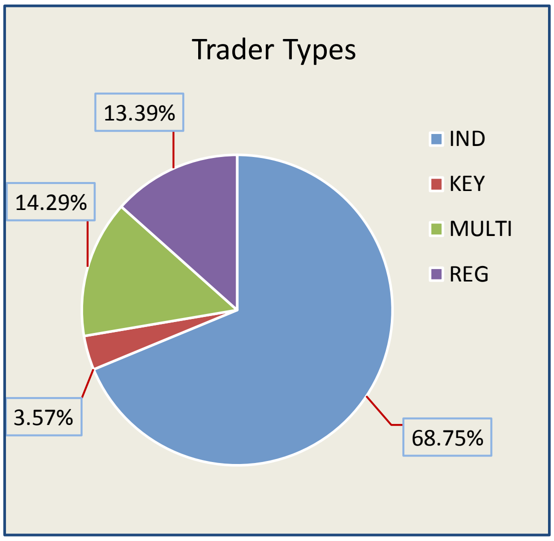


Fig. 3. Trader types in Oakham

Table 3	Oakham 2018 Number	Oakham 2018 %	National Benchmark for Small Towns %
Key attractor	4	4%	*7%*
Multiple	16	14%	*19%*
Regional	15	13%	*10%*
Independent	77	69%	*64%*
Total Shops A1	112	100%	*100%*

Table 4 – Town centre 'key attractors'	
Mixed Goods Retailers	Boots Wilkinson
Other Retailers	Carphone Warehouse
Supermarkets	Tesco

Of the multiple traders with household names Oakham again falls short, with 14% against the national average of 19%. In Oakham this category includes for example Carpet World, Mercury News and Fatface. However it also includes national charity shops of which there are seven in the town centre, which means that there is a very small proportion of High Street brands in the Town.

Oakham has a higher proportion of regional shops, with 13% to the national average of 10%. These shops include butchers, pet supplies, ladies' fashions and hairdressers amongst others.

Oakham is also strong in the final category of independent shops. Here we have 69% against the national average of 64%.

KPI 4 – Commercial Units: Vacancy Rates

"Vacant units are an important indicator of the vitality and viability of a town centre. The presence of vacant units over a period of time can identify potential weaknesses in a town centre, whether due to locational criteria, high rent levels or strong competition from other centres." (*People and Places*)

Table 5 – Vacant commercial premises	Oakham (number)	Oakham 2018 %	Nat. Small Towns %
Vacancy %	11	4%	*9%*

From the 259 commercial units in the retail, economic hub of Oakham here analysed, there are currently 11 vacant premises. This is 4% of the whole and as such registers less than half the comparative level recorded for small towns nationally. This is of course a fluid situation, as there are some businesses which are known to be closing shortly, while others may recently have been re-let.

Joy Clough, Jenny Hughes, Ann Robinson, Nick Woodley
Oakham Residents Group Report
August 2018

KPI 5: Oakham twice-weekly Market 2018 – Oakham Residents Group

Oakham is a 'Market Town' with a market charter dating back to 1252. The market is a significant part of the town's historical identity and is still the prerogative of the lord of the manor. Local people feel very strongly about the market, irrespective of how little they may actually use it (see comments in Appendix 1).

The market is also vital to the life and vibrancy of the town centre, and provides a mechanism for a diverse range of local enterprises to start, flourish and grow, supplementing the mix of retail services on offer in the town.

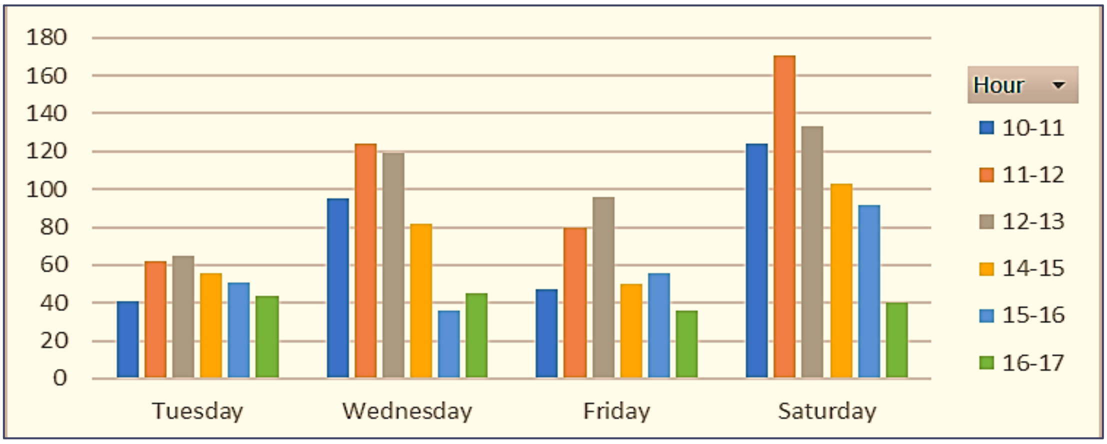


Fig. 1. Graph showing footfall in the Market Place over two market and two non-market days

That the footfall average in the Market Place is higher than the other roads off the High Street is largely due to shoppers visiting the Wednesday and Saturday markets. The graph (Fig. 1) clearly shows the spike in numbers on Wednesdays and Saturdays. There would be a similar considerable footfall spike on the chart for Gaol Street on the one Saturday a month when the popular Farmer's Market is held there.

Both the size and the composition of Oakham Market have changed over recent years, within the memory of many residents. Twenty to thirty years ago the market was larger with up to about 30 stalls and a waiting list. There was a good range of stalls selling provisions, with three greengrocers, fishmonger, meat and game, cheese and dairy products, bakery items and also a wide offering of other stalls. By then the area in front of the Post Office had been paved with York slabs and the market stalls extended to the Buttercross.

But in January 2014 the Post Office Counter was closed and relocated to the High Street, and the market manager is of the opinion that it is following this move that the market has slowly declined and shrunk back to mostly fit within the main Market Square. The empty Post Office building no longer draws people up to the top of Market Place. The future use of this building is critical to the growth of the Market and footfall in the Market Place.

Today, the number of market traders is below the average for towns of this size. There are fewer stalls and the offering is ever changing as stalls come and go. We have lost two of the three greengrocers – possibly due to competition with the supermarkets – but there are more specialist and local food offerings now. There is also a varied range of other products for sale and an extremely large and popular fresh flower and plant stall, in keeping with modern trends.

Table 1 – Number of market traders	**Wednesday Market**	**Saturday Market**	**National Small Town Benchmark**
Average number	14	14	*15*

In the Resident Group's Survey of Visitors to Rutland, 26% of those questioned had visited the market in Oakham.

In the Oakham Town Centre Visitor Survey, 44 % of respondents picked the market out as being a positive aspect of the town, with only 3% seeing it as having a negative aspect.

The result of the companion Oakham Town Centre Users Survey was slightly more complex as only 41% of local people highlighted the market as a positive aspect of the town, and of the 12% who thought it a negative aspect, many were commenting on its decline over recent years.

Comments about the market made by local people as part of one-way and Neighbourhood Plan consultations in 2017 (from Appendix 2) are added below.

Comments about the Market taken verbatim from the 2017 consultation documents

The market needs special attention. The roadworks have recently reduced the number of traders. Emphasis should be on an increase in traders as Oakham is a Market Town and this brings in visitors.

We need better markets.

Support for the market.

Please don't ruin the twice weekly market. We use the market each time and find it a marvellous addition to Oakham's poor retail offering.

Local, trendy crafts from more alternative market stalls (jewellery, bags, clothes, shoes) like Covent Garden.

Indoor market, more regular market.

Indoor markets are a magnet for visitors and we certainly should have one.

Wednesday and Saturday markets are a plus for Oakham and the farmers' market should be expanded.

Encourage larger market Wednesday & Saturday. Encourage art & craft markets in Market Place.

You could make the Market Place better for the stall holders.

Save our market!

The 'market' is no longer a market as such.

The attraction of an 'ancient' market.

The Market Square: Currently we have a twice weekly market with 3 in particular first class traders,

The reduction of the stalls area in the Market Place allowing for wider pavements would be another erosion of its character and charm. We need to keep things original as possible, retain its rustic appearance not clinicalise the town. We want Oakham to be an active, busy town, not a clean cut picture postcard.

My thoughts are that we are known as a market town but in reality we don't have much of a market to boast about! How nice would it be if we had this space to open up an area where we could introduce local and out of area market stalls who can trade 365 days of the year, coffee bars that can use outside seating during the warmer months of the year promote the town's market which seems to us to be in decline.

Joy Clough
Oakham Residents Group
August 2018

KPI 8: Oakham Footfall Survey 2018 – Oakham Residents Group

The people who come into Oakham town centre – residents, workers, visitors and shoppers – are vital to the success of the businesses within the town centre. Provided there is adequate available disposable income in the population, the more people who are attracted into the town, the better the trade, and the more prosperous local businesses become. One might expect that this in turn would benefit the town, for example by making longer opening hours or Sunday opening more viable, and by attracting other businesses, and thus more employment, to the town.

To build a picture of how Oakham currently functions, a footfall sample was taken in six locations around the town over a four-day period. These locations were:

High Street – east, between Mill St and Gaol St
High Street – west, between Gaol St and New St
Church Street
Mill Street
Gaol Street
Market Place

The sample comprised six 10-minute counts, three at hourly intervals between 10 am and 1 pm, to compare with national benchmarking figures, and another three at hourly intervals from 2pm to 5pm, to complete the bigger picture. These counts were done on four days: two non-busy days and the two market days, Wednesday and Saturday. Individual graphs have been produced for each location and are available.

An ideal sample would have been taken at exactly the same times on the same days across the six locations. However as we were reliant on the time available to our volunteers, the counts were made over a three-week period. The readings for each half day are consecutive, but the days are not necessarily consecutive, and some morning and afternoon counts were taken in different weeks. We are very grateful for the time given to the task by members of the Oakham Residents Group.

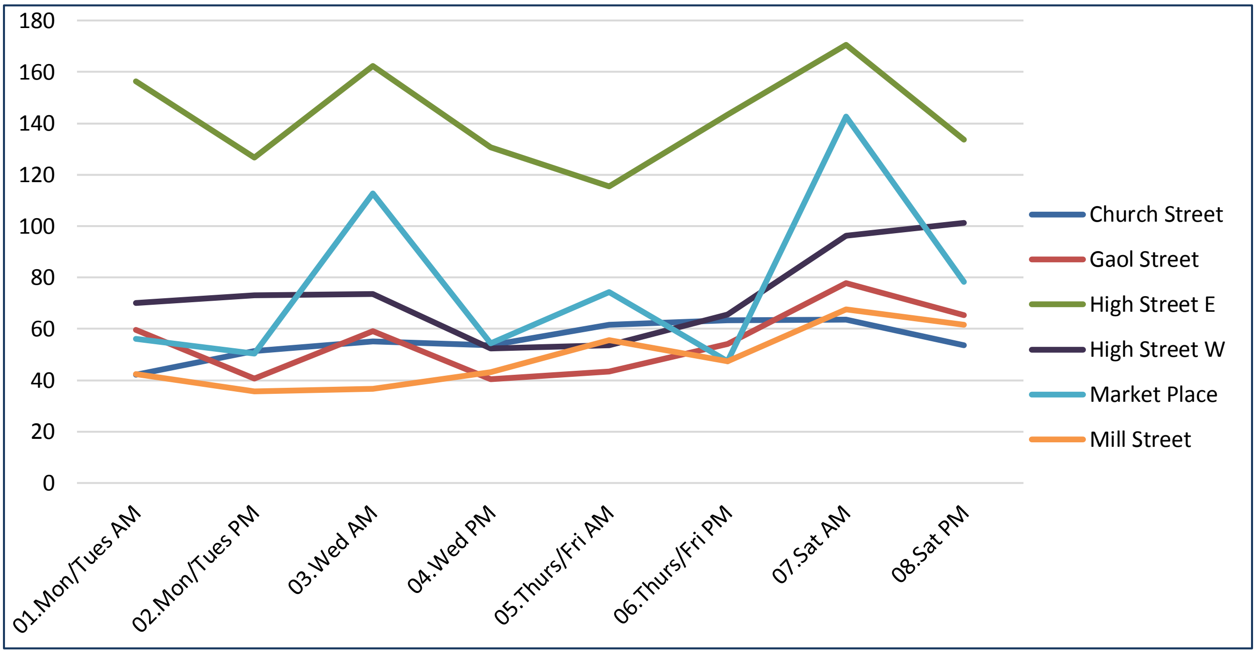


Fig. 1. Line graph showing average footfall in the six locations over the four days

The line graph shows quite clearly that the eastern half of the High Street is by far the most popular destination for town users, with an average footfall that is 50% to 65% higher than that of any other location.

Pedestrians access the central stretch of High Street via three roads at the east end and three at the west end, all of which lead to car parks which circle the town centre. There are also two well-used passages through to the High Street from South Street which are used by people walking into town along Penn Street and across South Street (see map). However, the footfall count would seem to indicate that visitors arriving via any one of these various routes do not circulate around the other shopping roads, thus depriving Church Street, Mill Street, Gaol Street and off-street shops (such as Crown Walk, Knights' Yard and the Maltings) of the benefit of the higher footfall enjoyed in the High Street. Of the other town centre shopping streets, Mill Street has the lowest overall footfall.

Table 1 – Average number of passers-by per 10 minutes by location taken over four full days					
High St – east	Market Place	High St – west	Church St	Gaol St	Mill St
142	77	73	56	55	49

When considering the variation in footfall between the six locations, there is any number of possible reasons, such as: the volume of foot traffic into town along each town centre road from the car parks; the volume of foot traffic from the surrounding housing estates; the adequacy of signage or direction into the smaller shopping streets and arcades from the High Street; or the attractiveness of the retail offer in each location.

Figs. 2–5. Percentage of businesses by usage class in primary retail locations

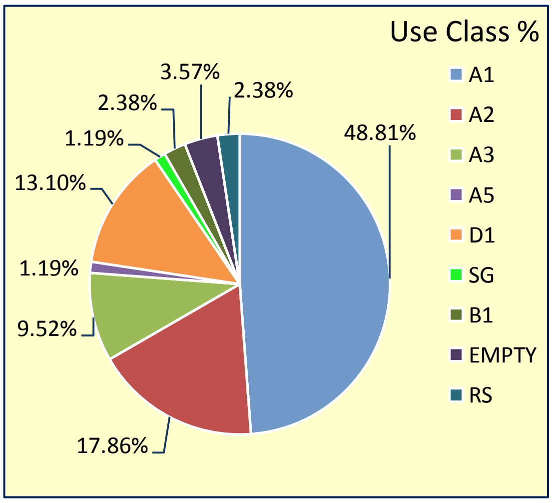


Fig. 2. High Street with Crown Walk

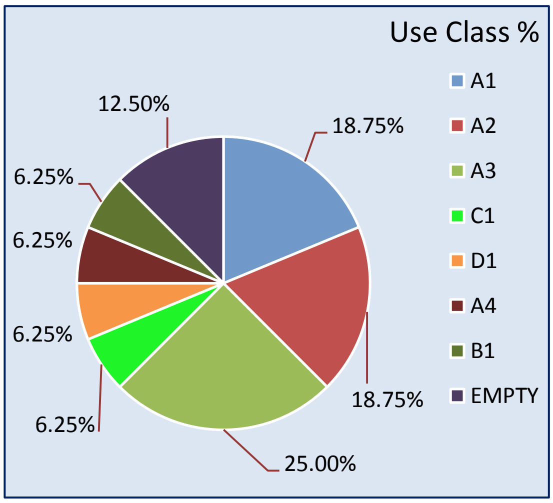


Fig. 3. Church Street with Baker's Yard

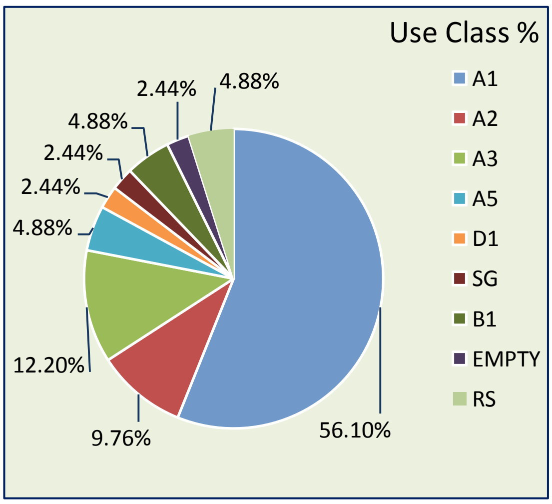


Fig. 4. Mill Street with the Maltings

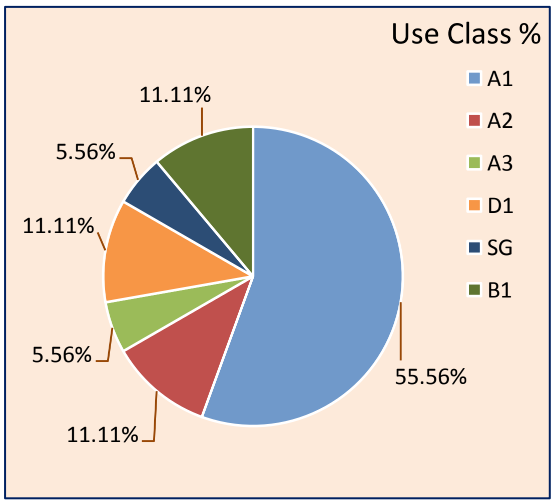


Fig. 5. Gaol Street with Knights' Yard

With regard to the retail character of the different locations, these four pie-charts compare the retail offering between the four main shopping locations, with the table below showing the precise figures. In three of the locations, High Street, Mill Street and Gaol Street, there are very similar proportions of business types. In Church Street, however, the pattern is noticeably different. Here there is a much smaller proportion of shops, less than half the other three, but a substantially higher percentage of cafés, restaurants and drinking establishments.

High Street, with the highest footfall, has by far the greatest offering as, with Crown Walk, there are 84 premises in all, slightly more than twice that of Mill Street with the Maltings which have a total of 41. Footfall in the High Street, however, is three times that of Mill Street, and yet in the latter there are 23 shops, slightly more than half the number in High Street plus 7 cafés, restaurants and takeaways.

Gaol Street with Knights Yard and Church Street with Bakers Yard have 18 and 16 businesses respectively. This is less than half of those in Mill Street, yet the footfall in each of these locations is a little greater, and although there is a contrast in the retail mix between these two areas, the footfall is about the same. Thus it would appear that the commercial offer may not be the main factor in this footfall anomaly.

Table 2 – Number of businesses by class in each location sampled		**High St & Crown Walk**		**Church St & Bakers Yard**		**Gaol St & Knights Yard**		**Mill St & The Maltings**	
A1	Shops	41	49%	3	19%	10	55%	23	56%
A2	Financial & Professional Services	15	18%	3	19%	2	11%	4	10%
A3	Restaurants and Cafés	8	10%	4	25%	1	6%	5	12%
A4	Drinking Establishments	–	–	1	6%	–	–	–	–
A5	Hot Food Takeaways	1	1%	–	–	–	–	2	5%
B1	Businesses	2	2%	1	6%	2	11%	2	5%
C1	Hotels	–	–	1	6%	–	–	–	–
D1	Non Residential Institutions	11	13%	1	6%	2	11%	1	2%
SG	Sui Generis ("unique" establishments)	1	1%	–	–	1	6%	1	3%
	Empty premises	3	4%	2	13%	–	–	1	2%
	Residential	2	2%	–	–	–	–	2	5%
	Total number of Businesses	84		16		18		41	

In comparison with other similar sized benchmarked towns, and using only the comparable data from the three 10am to 1pm readings, Oakham High Street is performing very well, with an average of 166 passers-by per 10 minutes on market days and 135 on non-market days. This compares to 98 and 86 respectively for small towns nationally on market day and non-market days. The other locations in the town however do not compare so well, falling well below the benchmarking figures, as can be seen in the table below.

Table 3	**Oakham High Street from Mill St to Gaol St**	**Average of all other locations in Oakham**	**National Small Town Benchmark**
Market day	166	78	*98*
Non market day	135	56	*86*

These data samples indicate that the footfall pattern in Oakham town centre needs further examination, and measures should be considered to encourage a better flow of visitors around these smaller side streets and off-street shopping areas. How to increase footfall in Church Street, Gaol Street and Mill Street, and therefore potentially improve trade, is an issue which should be explored.

There is a noticeable difference in the average footfall between market and non-market days across the town. On the Wednesday (mid-week) market days the average footfall is 7% higher than on the other weekdays, but on the Saturday market day the difference is considerably higher at 35%. This does illustrate the contributory value of the market in drawing people into the town. An increase in footfall in the town would possibly encourage new traders to the market, which in turn would attract more shoppers.

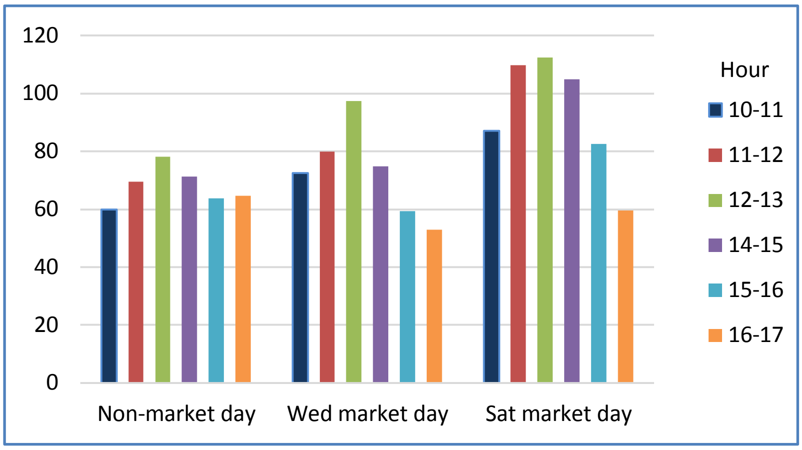


Fig. 6. Graph showing comparison of footfall numbers across the town between market days and non-market days

The graph also illustrates the gradual rise in the footfall count through the morning up to and including lunchtime, after which numbers start to drop, declining quite rapidly at the end of the afternoon, particularly on market days. The figures confirm that the average morning footfall was 15% higher than afternoon footfall.

The one exception to this pattern can be seen on Tuesdays and Thursdays in Church Street, where at the end of the school day many pupils from Oakham School take this road for permitted free time in town. This anomaly has somewhat skewed the graph above (Fig. 6) by raising the average figures for the later afternoon readings on non-market days.

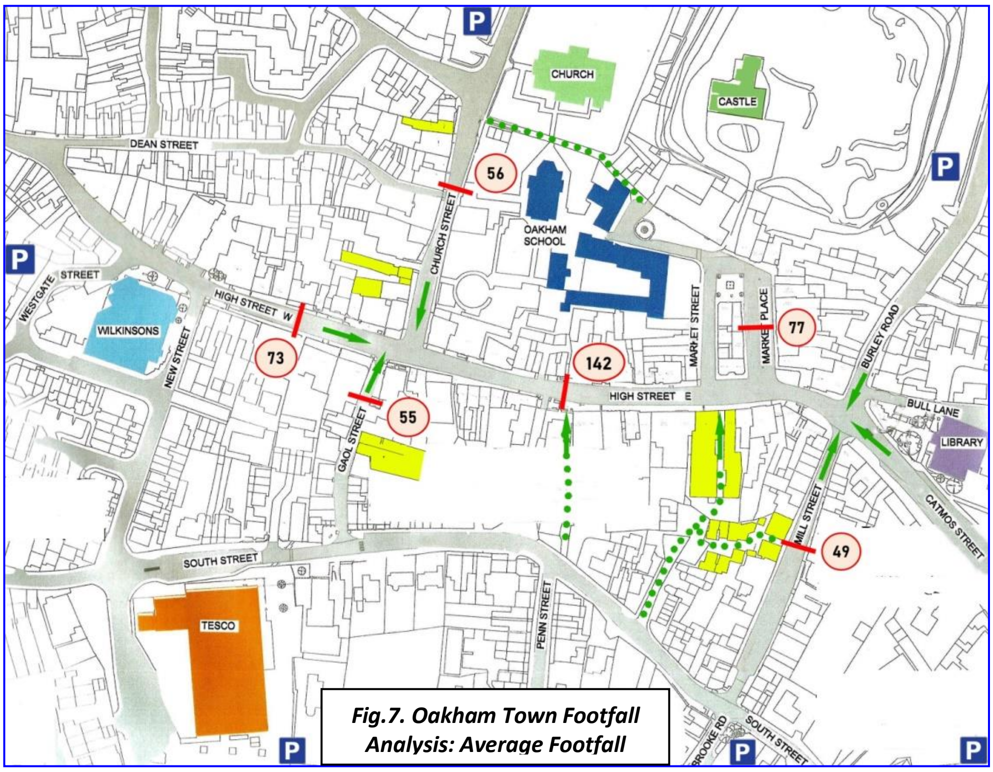


Fig.7. Oakham Town Footfall Analysis: Average Footfall

Approximate location of footfall count

49 Average footfall count over four days

P Town centre car parks (approximate locations)

Pedestrian passages to High Street & Market Place

Pedestrian access along roads feeding to High St

Off-street shopping arcades and yards

Joy Clough, Oakham Residents Group
August 2018

KPI 9: Car Parking in Oakham 2018 – Oakham Residents' Group

1. Introduction

Oakham is the County Town of Rutland, and services a large rural area with some 52 villages. Public transport is not particularly good, either into the town from the villages and neighbouring towns, or around the town itself to bring residents in to the centre. Reliance on the car is therefore essential for many people. There is a very great perception amongst residents and businesses alike that the parking facilities in the town centre are inadequate.

Oakham needs to provide parking for those shoppers who require a short stay to run quick errands and parking for those who require a few hours in town. It also needs long-term parking for those who work in the town, including the large number of employees of the Rutland County Council whose offices are on the edge of the town centre. Also, the needs of town centre residents living in older properties without off-road parking must be factored in.

Oakham Residents Group survey results in the town indicate that a high proportion of Oakham and Barleythorpe residents visit the town once a week or more, and that although half of them walk into town, half come by car. Of the out-of-town visitors interviewed, 78% had come by car. As the town population grows and tourism increases, the demand for parking will grow, and if parking availability is inadequate for the demand then people will go elsewhere. The provision of adequate and convenient car parking facilities is therefore a key element of town centre vitality and economic success.

2. Survey Methodology

A parking survey was undertaken by members of the Oakham Residents Group. The aim was to collect data to produce a snapshot of the occupancy of all the town's parking across a week. Vacant parking spaces were counted at five regular intervals each day for a full seven days, but due to limitations in the volunteers' available time the seven days were not necessarily consecutive as they were collected over a two-week period. Several of the smaller streets with resident-only parking were measured just three times a day. With some 20 roads and seven car parks it was a big undertaking, and we are grateful to all the volunteers who helped. The full data which form the basis of this report are available.

3. Oakham Parking Review

The overall result of the collected parking data confirms the widely held local perception that there is inadequate provision in the town, as every car park registers 70% to 95% occupancy Monday to Saturday in the time slots of late morning, early afternoon and late afternoon (Fig. 1). On-street parking is even further stretched to capacity, with only four of the 30 Monday to Saturday time slots observed registering less than 70% occupancy, again rising to 95% occupancy at times (Fig. 2).

We are advised that the British Parking Association suggests that acceptable parking occupancy should be no more than 75% to 85%, and these benchmark lines have been added to each graph. During the period the car park data were collected the figures tell us that at peak times a minimum of 60 and a maximum of over 120 parking spaces would need to be found to bring occupancy down below these benchmarks. The average parking occupancy rates of 69% for small towns nationally on market days and 63% on non-market days are goals we can currently only dream of. There is no discernible difference in Oakham between occupancy on market and non-market days.

In real terms this means that visitors to Oakham at peak times could be searching for one of only 30 out of 608 available spaces across all seven car parks, with the possibility of not finding any space at all in their chosen car park, since the raw data in the sample weeks show four of the car parks have time slots with zero vacancies.

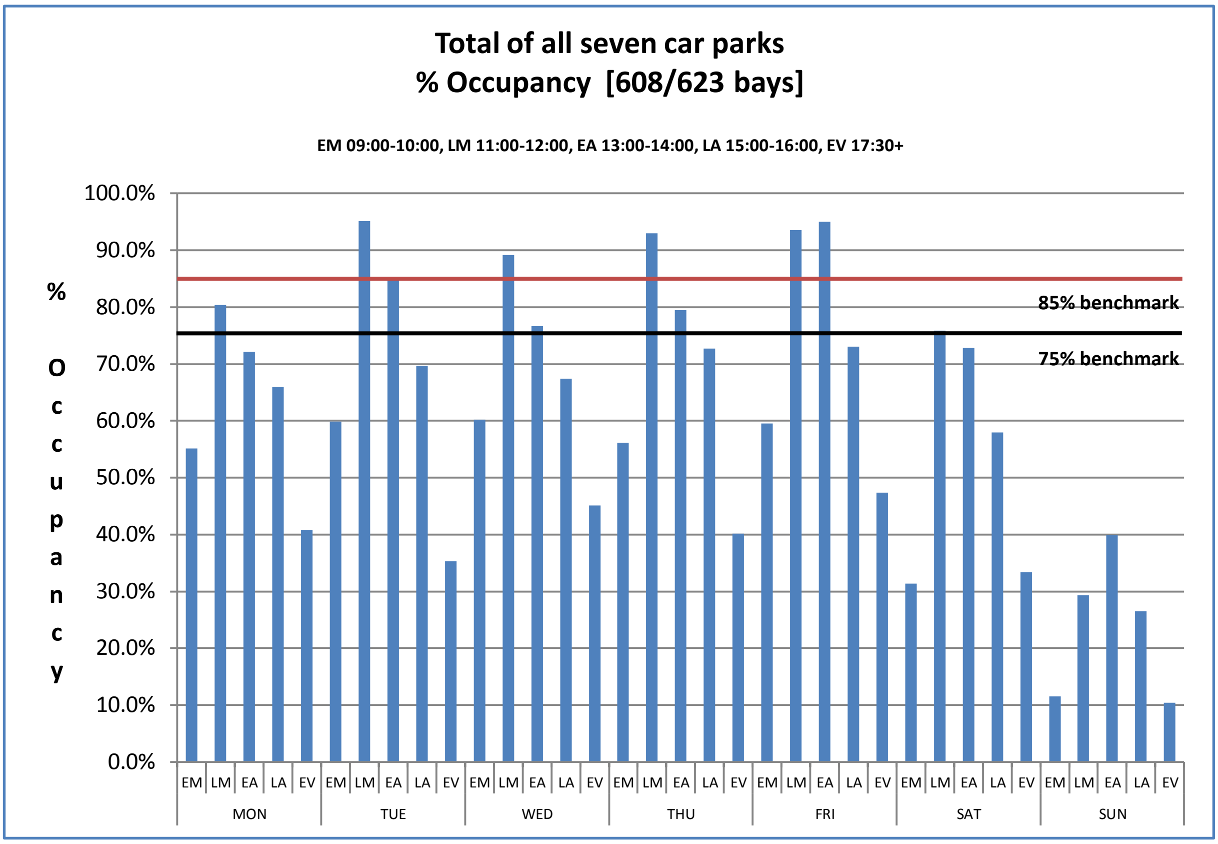


Fig. 1. Graph showing total percentage occupancy of all seven town car parks (608 bays + 15 museum & children's centre bays in South Street car park = 623 bays)

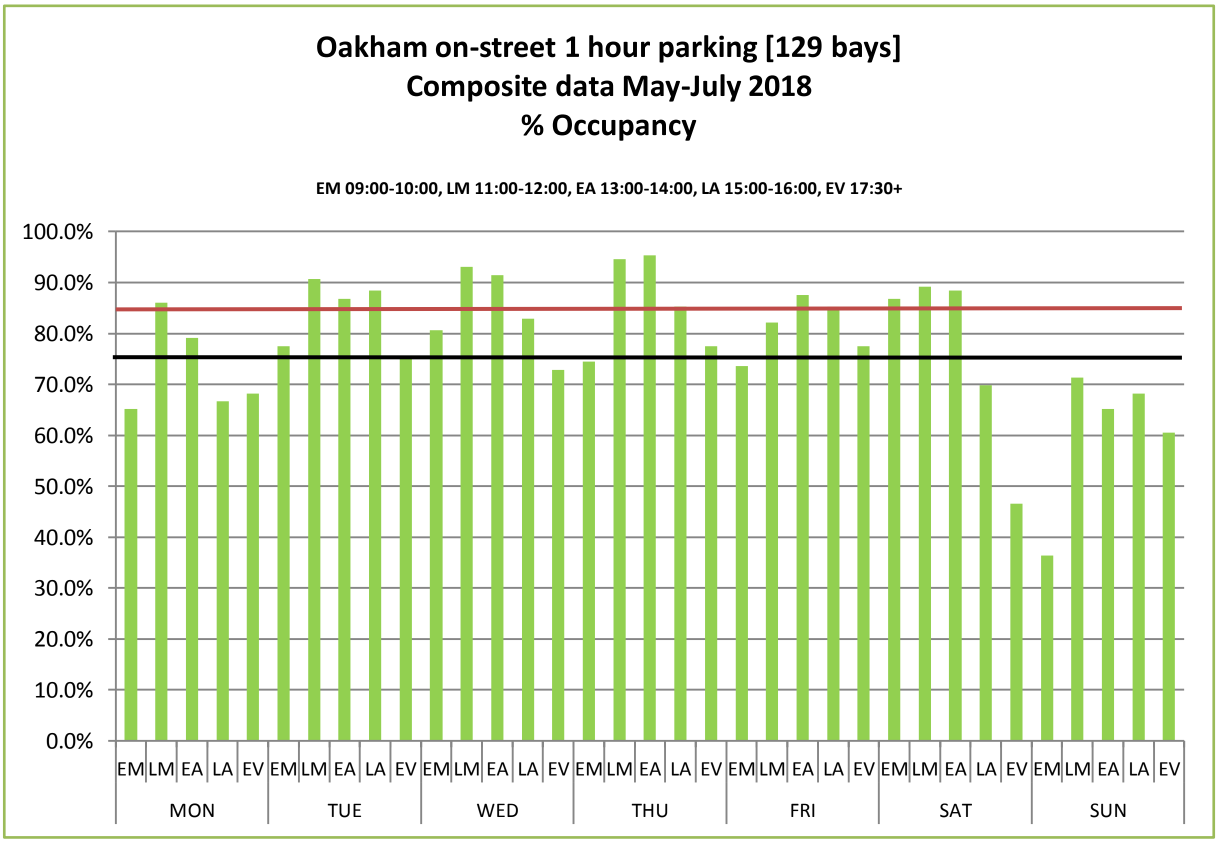


Fig. 2. Graph showing percentage occupancy of measured one-hour limited on-street parking bays

4. Parking Provision

Oakham has seven town centre car parks with a total of 703 spaces, including 31 blue badge spaces, and 14 parent and child spaces in Tesco car park

Table 1 – Car parks in Oakham town centre				
Brooke Road	42 spaces	short stay	pay and display 80p per hr up to 4 hours	
Church Street	75 spaces	short stay	pay and display 80p per hr up to 4 hours	Incl 3 blue badge spaces
Tesco	216 spaces	short stay	2hrs free maximum stay	Incl 14 mother and child and 11 blue badge spaces
Burley Road	104 spaces	long stay	pay and display 80p per hr	Incl 4 blue badge spaces
Westgate	74 spaces	long stay	pay and display 80p per hr	Incl 5 blue badge spaces
South Street	70 spaces	long stay	pay and display 80p per hr	Filled to near capacity Mon-Fri , thought to include many RCC employees. Incl 2 blue badge, 5 museum and 10 children's centre spaces
Catmose (RCC Offices)	77 spaces	long stay	pay and display 80p per hr 2hrs free parking Saturday	Filled to capacity Mon-Fri with RCC employees Incl 6 blue badge spaces
Catmose (RCC Offices) overflow car park	45 spaces	long stay	pay and display 80p per hr	Filled to capacity Mon-Fri with RCC employees
Total	**703 spaces**			

There are also 241 free on-street parking spaces available in Oakham. The spaces closest to the centre are limited to 1hr parking, but there are also both 2hr shared (public and residents) and unrestricted parking a very short walk out of the immediate centre. In addition there are also 148 dedicated residents' parking spaces close to the centre, plus 11 on-street spaces in Long Row and 24 reserved spaces in an off-road car park for Barleythorpe Road residents, both beyond the level crossing.

Table 2 – On-street parking in Oakham town centre		
Unrestricted parking	36 spaces	Station Road
2 hour/residents shared parking 8am-6pm	42 spaces	Station Road & Northgate
1 hour limited parking 8am-6pm	156 spaces	Distributed across the town
Blue Badge holders unrestricted	5 spaces	Market Street & Church Street
Blue Badge holders 3hrs 8am-6pm	2 spaces	Catmose Street (by Library) & Westgate
Total	**241 spaces**	
Residents only parking 8am-8pm	159 spaces (+ 42 shared)	236 residents parking permits issued @ £40 pa
Residents private car park Barleythorpe Road	24 spaces	Specific parking permits @ £200 per car pa

5. The Car Parks

Catmose Car Park is primarily used Monday to Friday for Council employees with season tickets. Although the public or Council visitors may pay and park there after 10am occupancy including the overflow area is usually at or near maximum. This car park was therefore only counted at weekends, but despite its closeness to the town centre and the lure of two hours free parking on Saturdays, it was found to be very little used.

South Street Car Park across the road from Catmose is also used by council employees and town traders. It is filled to 90-100% occupancy from before 9am till 5pm (earlier on Friday afternoons) (Fig. 3). It also has five spaces reserved for visitors to Rutland County Museum and ten for the Catmose Street Visions children's centre, but only during their respective operating hours, and two blue badge spaces.

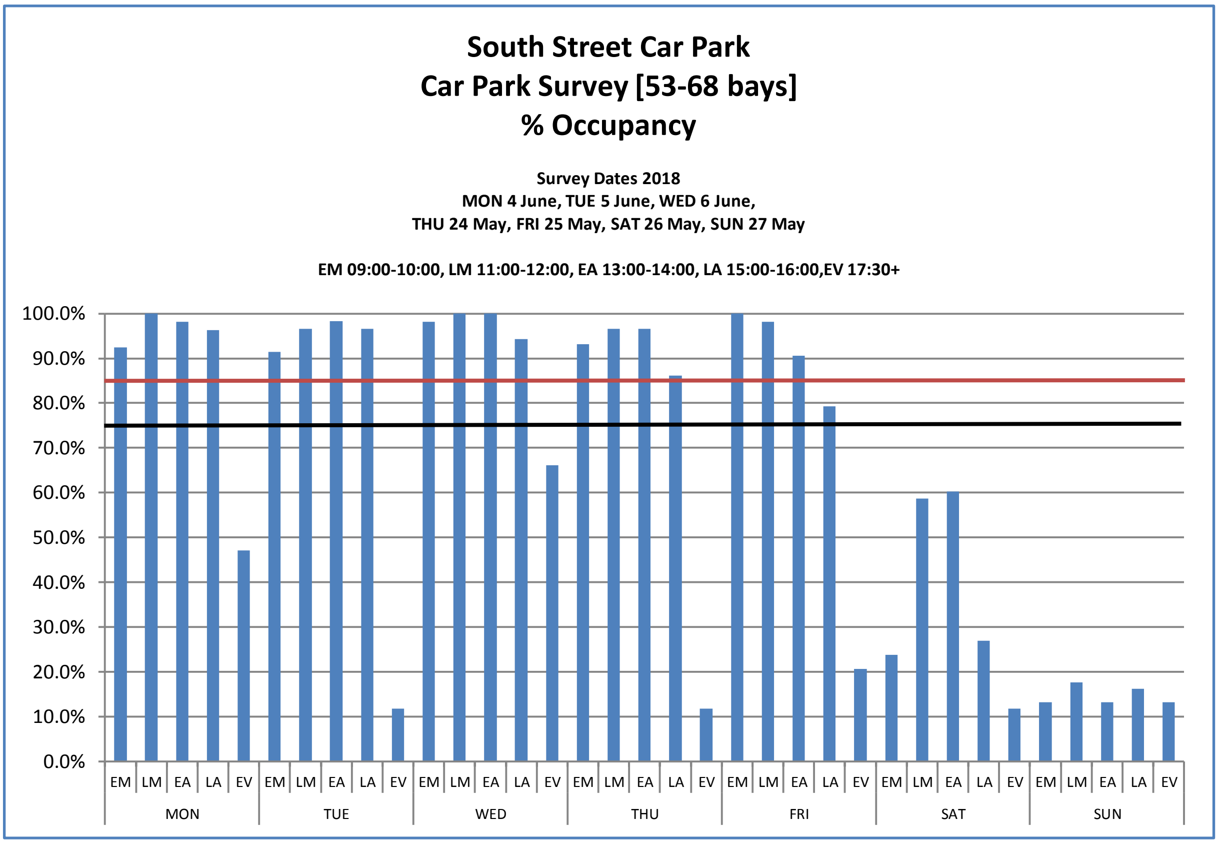


Fig. 3. Graph showing South Street car park occupancy (53 bays + 15 museum & children's centre = 68 bays)

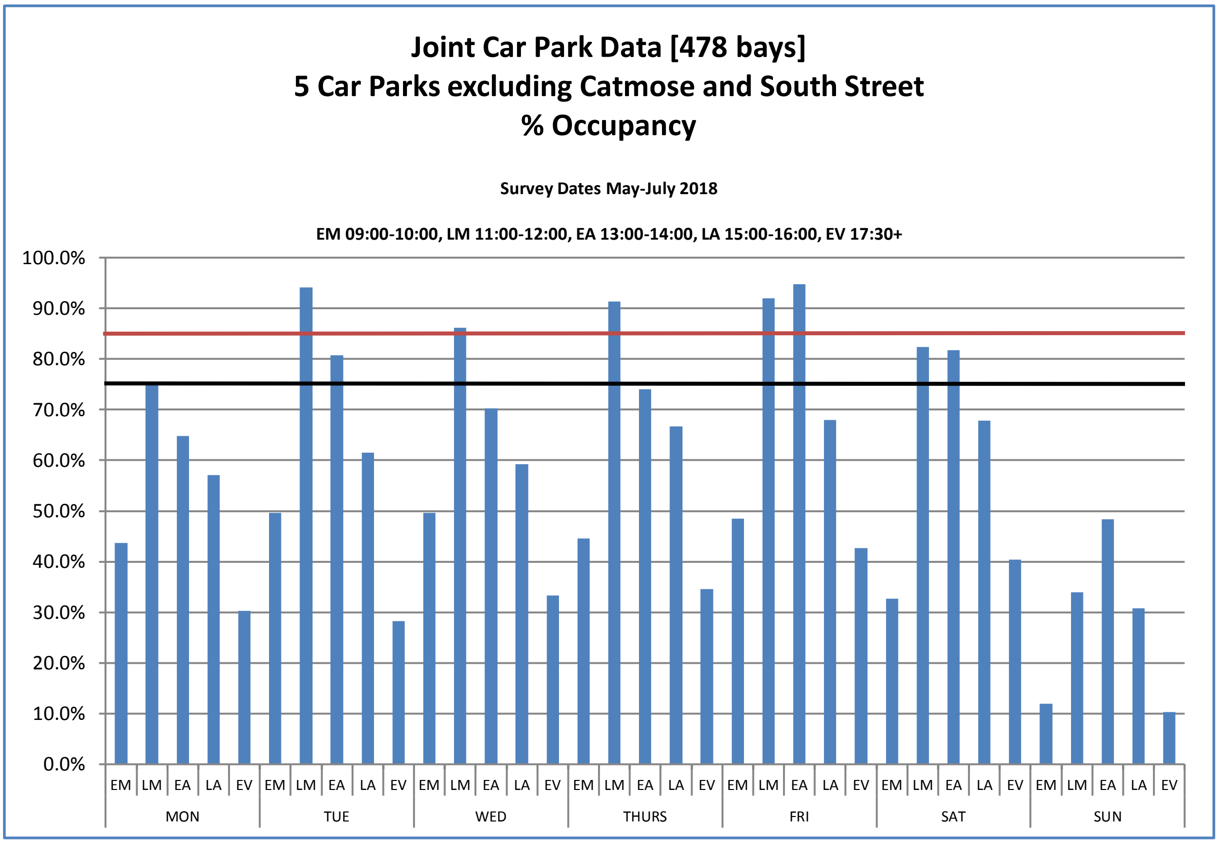


Fig. 4. Composite graph showing occupancy of all car parks apart from South Street and Catmose.

The remaining town car parks have a slightly different occupancy pattern in that the early morning slot averages at about 60%, only rising to unacceptably high levels late morning and early afternoon, before dropping down over the late afternoon (Fig. 4). This would suggest that these other car parks are more used by visitors and shoppers than workers in Oakham.

6. Public On-Street Parking

The national average for on-street parking occupancy in benchmarked small towns is 80%. Oakham's on-street parking is more consistently used than that of the car parks and the composite graph of all the one-hour parking in the town shows occupancy at all times (excepting the last reading on Saturday evening and the first on Sunday morning) to be at over 60% rising to 95%. In fact Melton Road has 50% of its readings showing a full 100% occupancy (Fig. 5). To attain that 80% benchmark at peak times would require a further 20 on-street parking spaces.

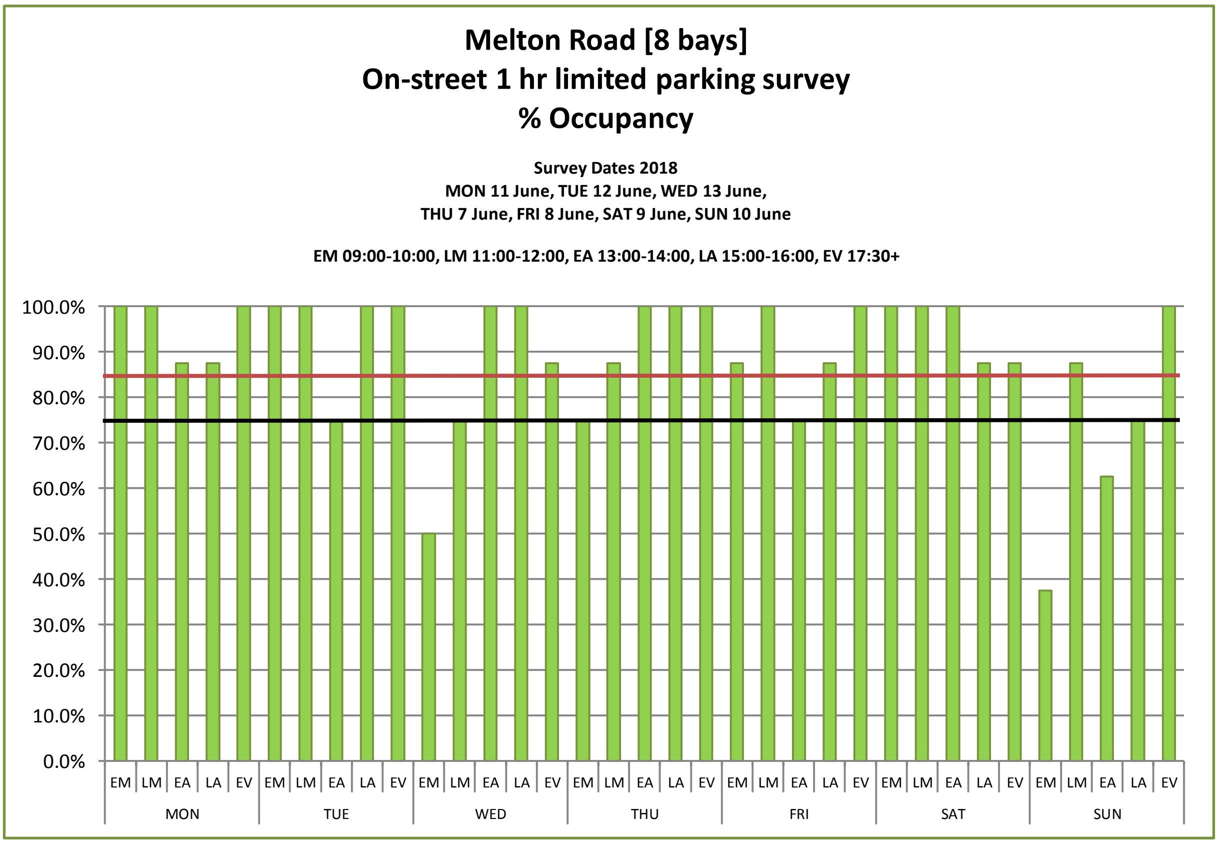
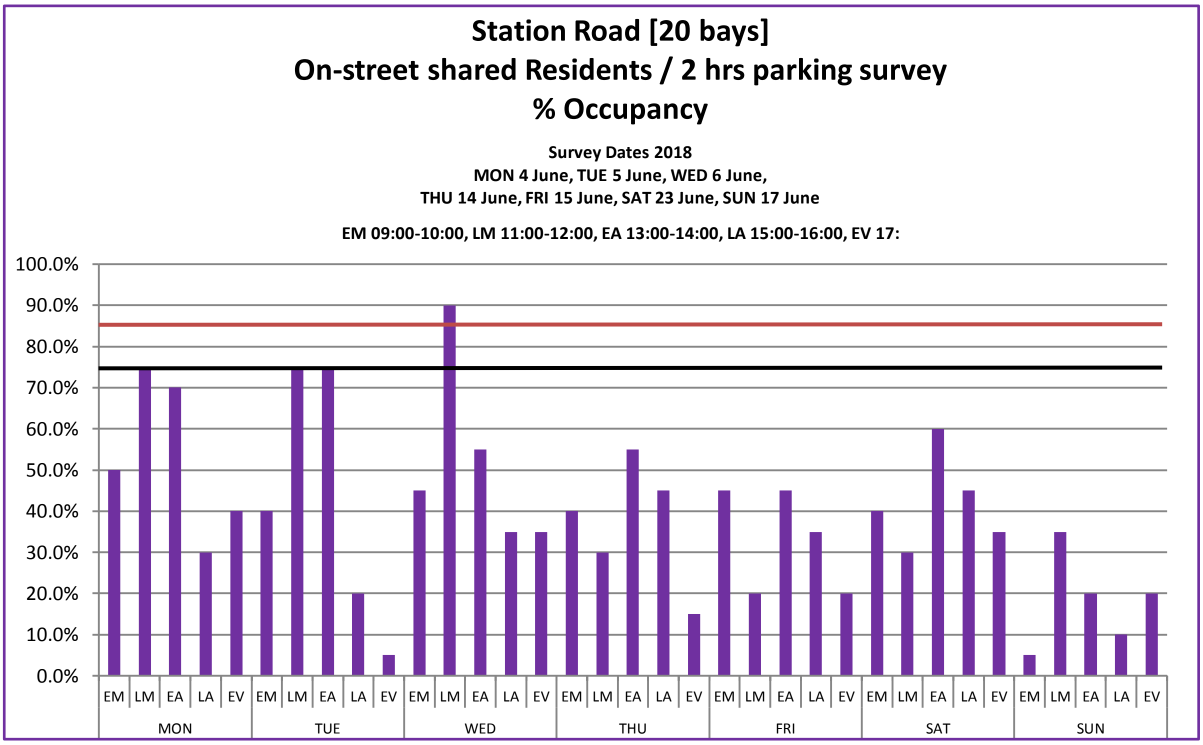
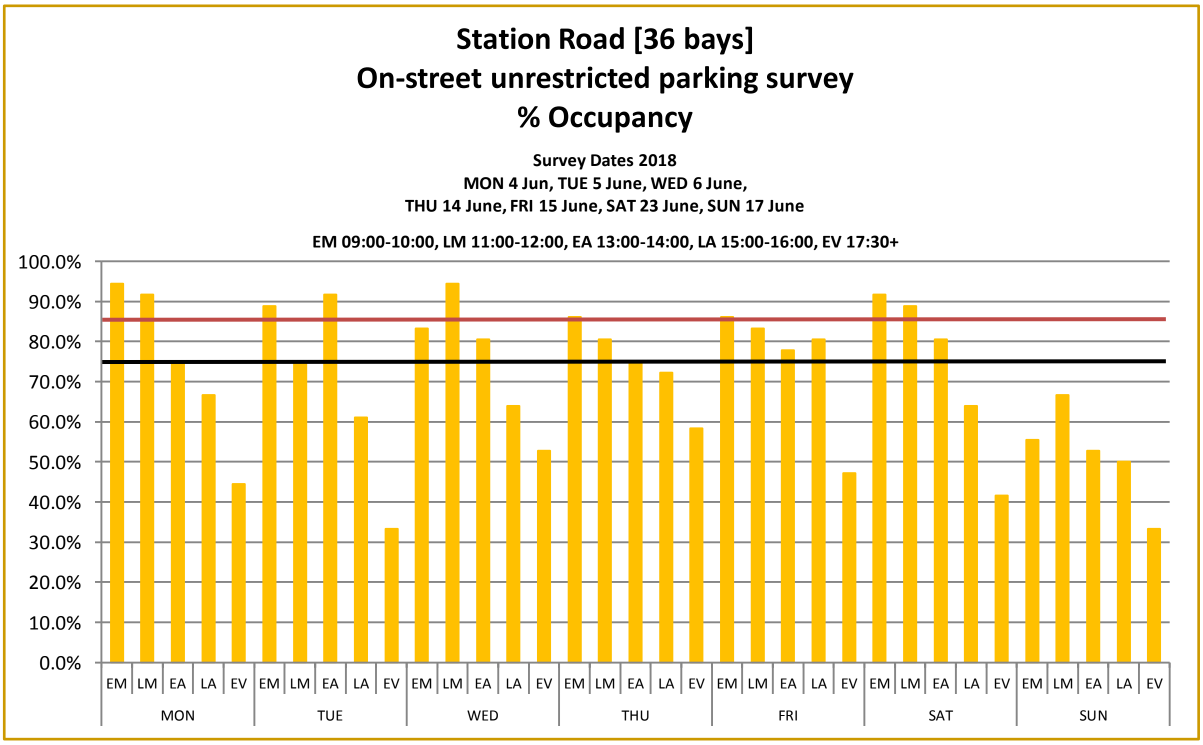


Fig. 5. Graph showing occupancy of Melton Road on-street parking bays

The unrestricted parking in Station Road is the furthest available on-street parking within easy walking distance of the town centre, and is used to acceptable capacity Monday–Saturday. However, the shared residents / 2hr spaces there are considerably under-used (figs. 6 & 7).

The only public on-street parking unmeasured for this study and excluded from the calculations was the Market Place. There are 18 parking spaces in the centre of the square. Two days of observation found that the centre was a merry-go-round of cars circling the centre through most of the day, re-filling empty parking spaces as soon as they appeared, and so it can be considered to be at 100% occupancy during the daytime on non-market days.





Figs. 6 (above) & 7 (below). Graphs showing occupancy of unrestricted and shared parking spaces on Station Road.

7. Long Stay/Short Stay Allocation

Oakham's on-street parking is mostly 1 hour (65%) and of the rest 17% is 2 hours, 15% unrestricted and 3% blue badge. Overall the car parks have only a small percentage (4%) more long stay than short stay. Across the town there are only 34 more long stay car park spaces than short stay. This means that overall Oakham has 128 (14%) fewer long stay spaces than short, which is a reversal of the average figures for small towns nationally which are recorded as having 15% fewer short stay than long stay spaces. This seems to indicate that there may be a shortage of long stay parking in Oakham, but it is unclear what benefits, if any, would be gained by converting any of the short stay provision to long stay.

Table 3 – Breakdown of town centre parking by location and type	Oakham		National Benchmark for Small Towns: % of total parking
	Available spaces	% of parking	
Car Park spaces			
Short stay spaces (4 hours and under)	319	46%	*29%*
Long stay spaces (over 4 hours)	353	50%	*61%*
Blue Badge spaces	31	4%	*7%*
Total Car Park spaces	**703**		
On-street spaces			
Short stay spaces (1hr and 2hr)	198	82%	*82%*
Long stay spaces (unrestricted)	36	15%	*12%*
Blue Badge spaces	7	3%	*6%*
Total on-street spaces	**241**		
Overall available spaces			
Short stay spaces (4 hours and under)	517	55%	*38%*
Long stay spaces (over 4 hours)	389	41%	*53%*
Blue Badge spaces	38	4%	*7%*
Total of all available spaces	**944**		

8. Blue Badge Parking

Another area where Oakham differs markedly from the national benchmarked average is in the provision of blue badge parking. Across the town there are 38 such spaces, which is 4% of total parking availability, as compared to 7% nationally, which for Oakham would be 65 spaces.

Oakham has 31 blue badge spaces allocated across six car parks, but only seven on-street designated spaces. This is half the national average. These are spaced out across the centre with most sited in Market Street. A comment received from the volunteer who counted the occupancy rates in Westgate was: '*There are a number of people who abandon their cars across the gateways of the three houses there. Often these are blue badge holders*'. Also, in Market Street it was reported that there could be twice as many blue badge cars as spaces, the rest being parked on the double yellow lines – as indeed they are often seen to be in other parts of the town (as may be their right). It is unclear if this indicates inadequate provision, or that on-street spaces are not located in the most appropriate places. That said, overall occupancy never rose above 70% (Fig. 8).

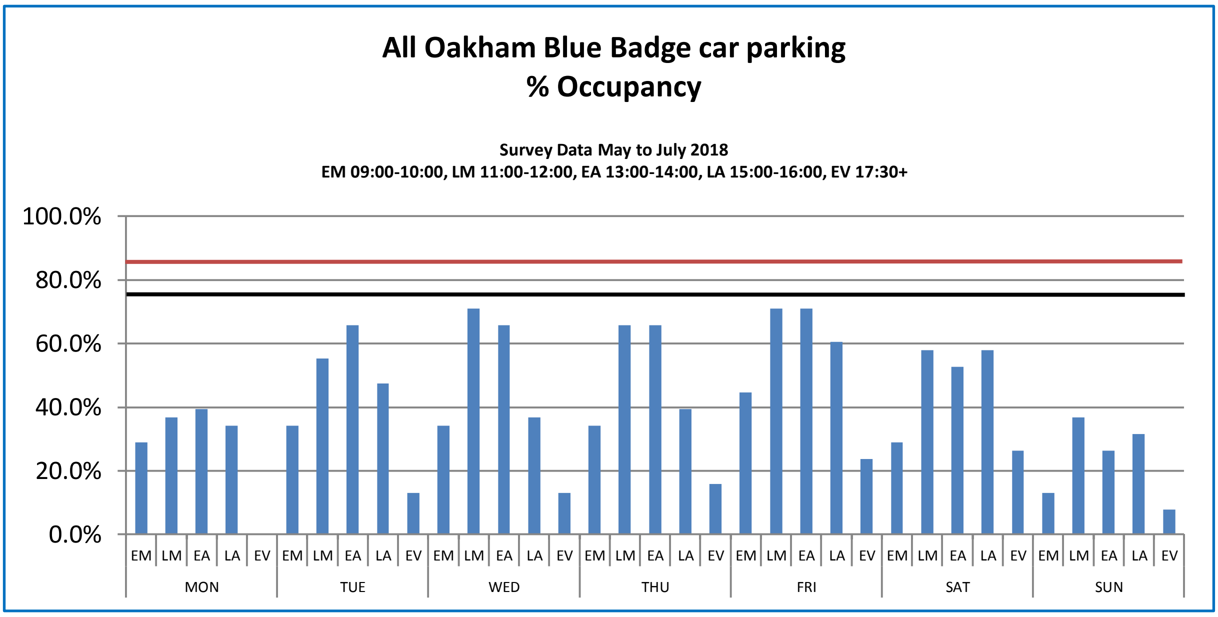
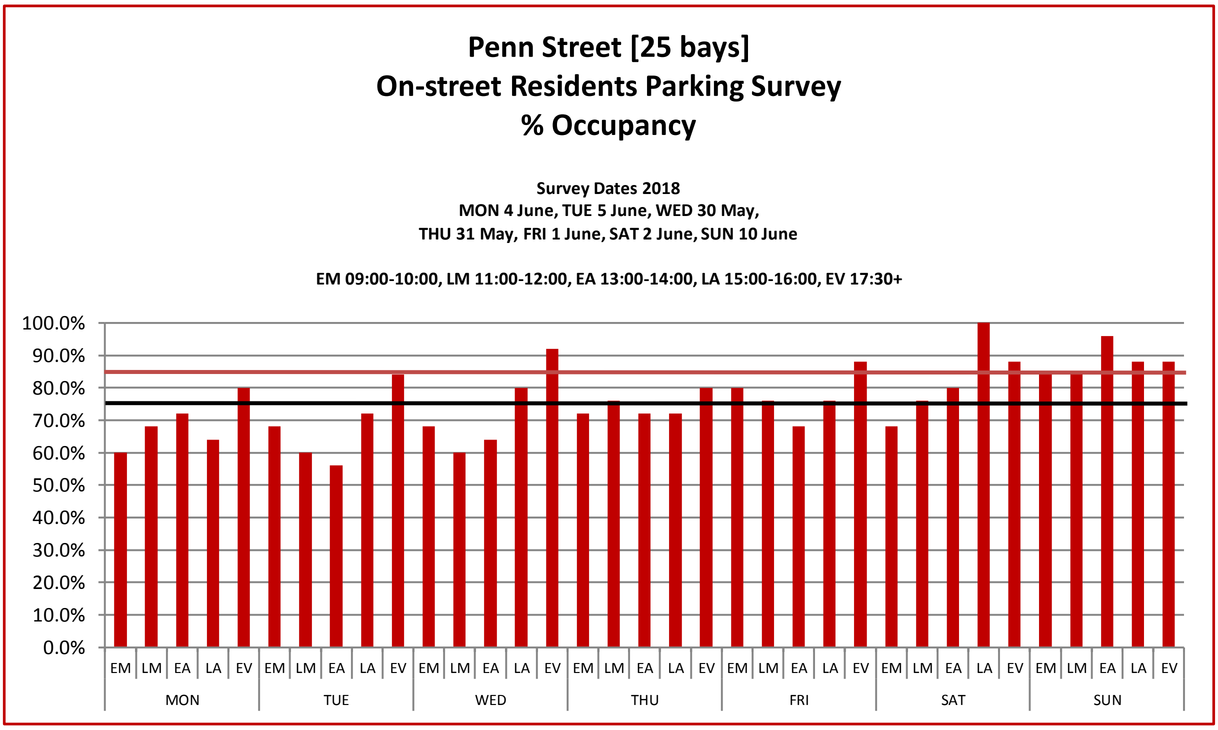
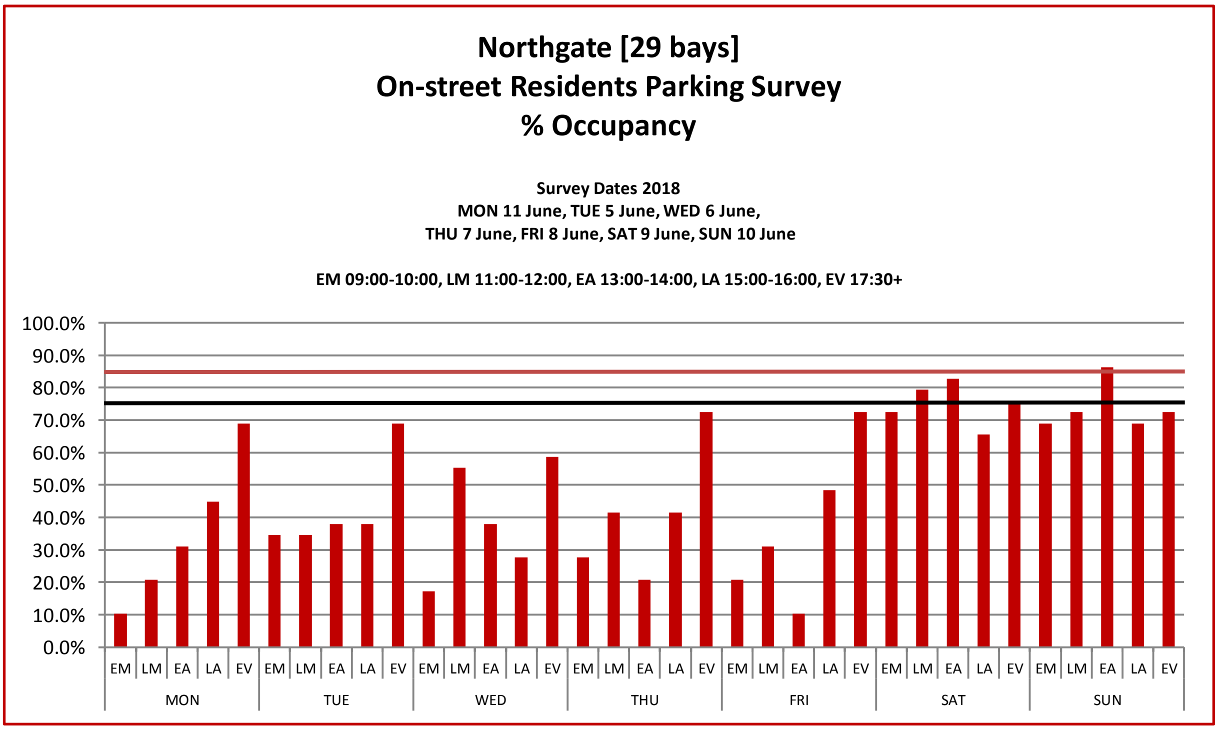


Fig. 8. Graph showing occupancy of all Blue Badge parking spaces in the town

9. Residents' Parking

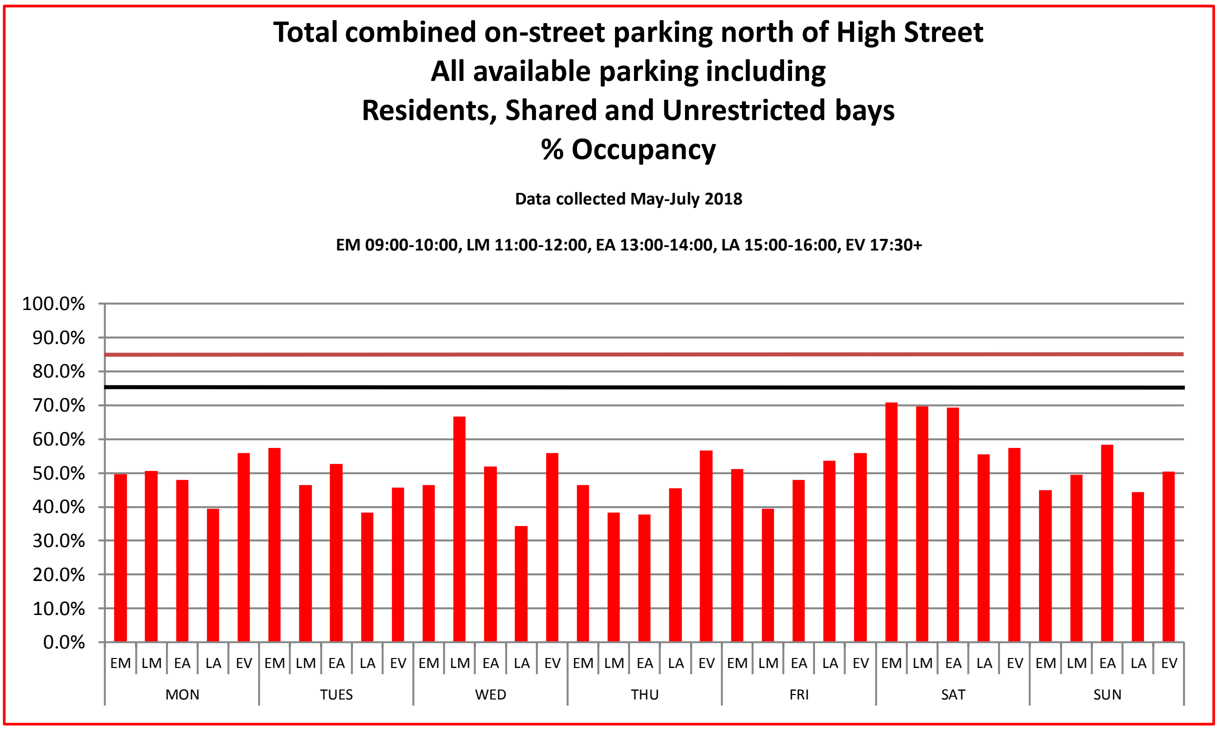
Oakham has many predominantly residential streets within the town centre. Very many of the houses in these streets, as well as a number of flats above retail and business premises, do not have off-road parking. The general pattern of residential parking is that where there is a spread of age groups, and people going off to work in their cars, there tends to be higher occupancy at weekends and evenings. In areas of predominantly older people there appears to be less variation in the occupancy level through the day. This may perhaps account for the contrast in occupancy between Northgate and Penn Street (figs. 9 & 10).

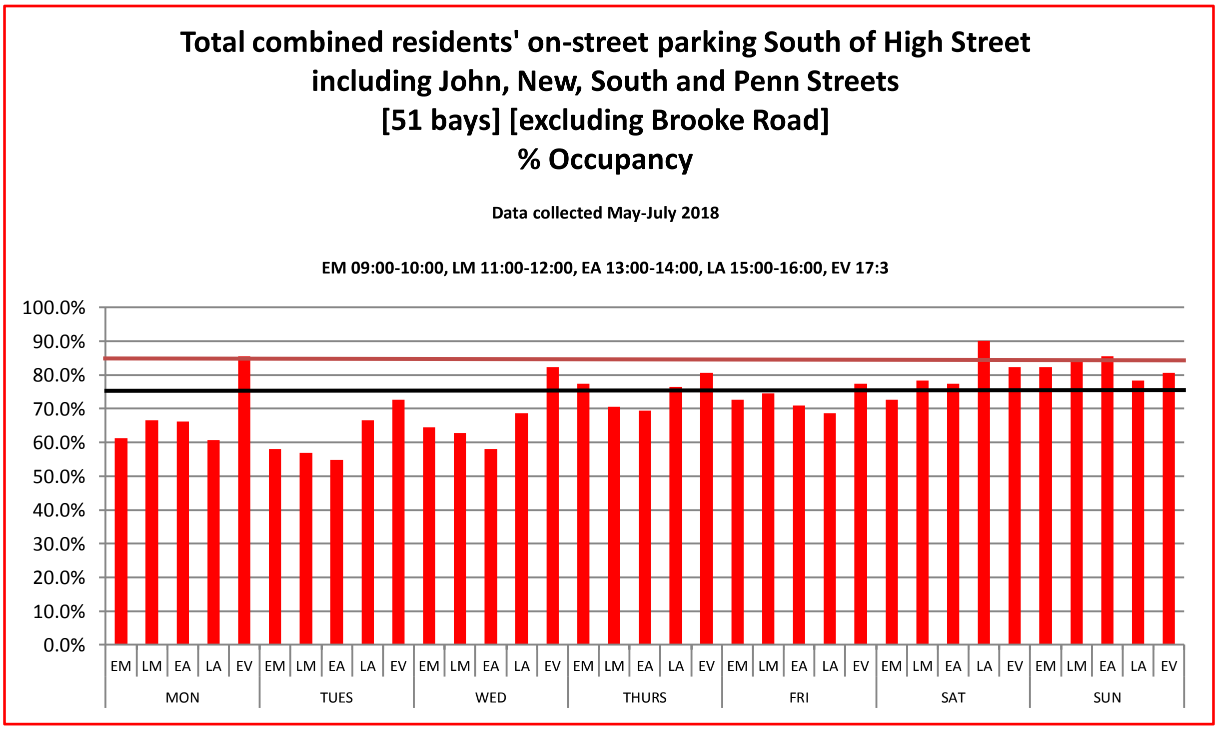




Figs. 9 (above) and 10 (below). Graphs showing the percentage occupancy of Penn Street and Northgate residents' on-street parking spaces

Rutland County Council has issued 236 residents' permits at a cost of £40 pa, including 31 permits for streets with no designated residents' spaces. There are currently 159 resident-only parking spaces in the town centre. There are 94 permits for 71 spaces in the parking zone north of the High Street. However, in this zone Northgate and Station Road also have 42 shared parking spaces (residents or 2hr public parking). In addition Station Road has 36 unrestricted parking bays. This northern zone was never observed to rise above 70% occupancy (Fig. 11). This means that the needs of daytime visitors and residents mesh reasonably well, and there is adequate parking which could also accommodate permit holders from the High Street and Melton Road.





Figs. 11 (above) & 12 (below). Graphs comparing percentage occupancy of all residents' on-street parking spaces in the northern and southern parts of the town

The situation is rather different to the south of the High Street where 99 permit holders share 73 parking bays. Here the parking bays are in substantial use, averaging 70% occupancy through the day and rising to 90% (Fig. 12). Further, with no other on-street parking available, in the evening it is quite common to see vehicles parked half on the pavement on the single yellow lines in Penn Street. With the number of mobility scooters in this area, likely to increase on completion of a large retirement home there, this is less than desirable.

The occupancy of the 11 spaces on Brooke Road for which 16 permits have been issued was not counted. The problems of Brooke Road relate more seriously to traffic flow and safety, which is a different issue.

Ten residents' permits have also been issued for Long Row and two for Burley Road. Since observation shows that there are enough residents' bays in each location, these two roads have not been factored into the calculations.

There is no provision in Oakham for residents to buy temporary visitors' permits, unlike certain other towns. North of the High Street there would be little difficulty accommodating a few such extra cars, but south of the High Street this could be more problematic. It would depend on the level of demand.

10. Coaches and Camper Vans

It is possible for coach drivers to set down and pick up their passengers at the bus stops on the High Street outside or opposite Crown Walk, and then to take their coaches to a designated but remote parking area on Kilburn Road. However there is currently no provision for camper vans, the marked spaces in the car parks being too small for them or indeed for minibuses. Several respondents of the Rutland Visitors Survey were camping just a few miles from Oakham but had not visited Oakham and were not intending to as they had found nowhere to park. There is an opportunity now to consider how this might be rectified.

11. Cost of Parking

For people who work in the town and need regular parking there are several available options.

Weekly parking permits	£15 for Monday to Friday	£18 for Monday to Saturday
Season tickets	£437 for Monday to Friday	£520 for Monday to Saturday

All of these weekly or season tickets represent discounted prices and are valid in the long stay car parks and for up to four hours in the short stay car parks. Currently there are 53 Monday–Friday and 30 Monday–Saturday season ticket holders, and 119 further season tickets are held by RCC employees. The total of 202 season tickets represents 41% of short stay and long stay car park spaces combined (excluding Tesco where they are not valid), or 57% of the long stay spaces. The incidence of season ticket use in the various car parks was not examined but clearly their regular use limits the number of spaces available for other car park users

Pay and Display parking in Oakham is charged at 80p per hour. For both long stay and short stay car parks this is 40p for half an hour, 80p for each of the first 3 hours and £4 for over 3 hours. In short stay car parks the maximum time allowed is 4 hours. The exception is the Tesco car park where, by agreement, there is 2 hours free parking regardless of whether people shop in the store. This car park is by far the largest of the car parks, with 216 spaces, and is about the same distance from the town centre as the Church Street, Brooke Road and Burley Road car parks. The penalty for overstaying the 2 hours is, however, a £70 fine, and there is an ANPR system in place to enforce this. The overstay penalty in the Council's car parks is £50 and other penalties can also be applied, such as for over-sized or wrongly parked vehicles.

In the Council Car parks, payment at the machines is by coin at the machine or by card using RingGo, for which there is an additional charge of 20p. There have been a number of issues with parking machines not working properly. At the time of the parking survey the machine in Westgate was out of order. We include below the full report from the survey volunteer, who was visiting this car park five times a day for 2½ weeks. These comments would probably be applicable to any car park with a faulty machine.

12. Westgate Car Park

During the survey there was an issue with the ticket machine. It was out of order for at least two weeks and the sign advised people to pay on RingGo or use coins only. However the machine rejected any attempt to put coins in thus leaving only the RingGo option. There was another phone number listed with the option to use a debit or credit card which would incur 'a small [unspecified] convenience charge'.

On umpteen occasions when doing the survey I found puzzled people trying to sort this out. Some of the difficulties were:-

- *No mobile phone*
- *No access to internet on phone to download RingGo app*
- *Mobile phone but no credit card with them*

A lot of people I spoke to said they would

- *Go and find a car park space somewhere else*
- *Go and park in Tesco*
- *Give up – they had come to Westgate car park because 'all the others were full'*

Nowadays the Pay and Display method of payment in many places is being replaced by more 'intelligent' systems. The disadvantage of the former method is that visitors must decide 'up front' how much time they wish to spend and when that time is running low must return to their cars.

A system of taking a ticket and paying pro rata on return for the exact amount of time taken can be more conducive to people relaxing and taking their time in town. During days on which volunteers were interviewing locals and visitors in the town centre, all reported that quite a number of people could not stop to give their views as they were in danger of over-running their parking tickets. Someone who has no time to stop and chat has no time to pop into another shop, or stop for coffee or refreshment. With the current limited availability of parking, a quicker turn-over of spaces may be desirable, but visitors spending longer in town might bring additional economic benefit. If increasing the footfall and hence trade in Oakham is our aim then our parking payment system would seem to be actively obstructing this.

Joy Clough
Oakham Residents Group
August 2018

KPI 10: Oakham Business Confidence Survey

A questionnaire was produced and hand-delivered to some 240 businesses in Oakham. The 108 responses, collected in person, represent a 45% return rate which when compared to the national average of 25% shows a keen interest in the economic future of the town on the part of the business community.

There was a high percentage of response from the retail sector (A1 and SG), a slightly lower percentage response from café-restaurants and bars, and only a 50% response from financial and commercial services. Two-thirds of the independent shops replied as opposed to only half of any regional chains and multiple traders. This is perhaps a reflection of the number of owner-manager businesses in the retail sector. The following analysis is based on the full sample of 108 returns as shown in Table 1, unless otherwise stated.

Table 1 – Oakham businesses classified by the Town & Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987		**Number of responses 2018**	**% of responses 2018**	**All Oakham Businesses 2018 %**
A1	Shops	63	58%	43%
A2	Financial and Professional Services including banks, estate agents, betting offices	8	8%	16%
A3	Restaurants and Cafés	7	6%	9%
A4	Drinking Establishments	1	1%	3%
A5	Hot Food Takeaways	4	4%	3%
B1	Businesses	7	6%	5%
C1	Hotels	1	1%	1%
D1	Non Residential Institutions, e.g. halls, museums, libraries, places of worship	6	6%	10%
SG	Sui Generis ("unique" establishments) e.g. beauty salons, dog parlours, veterinary clinics, petrol stations, nightclubs, launderettes	11	10%	4%
–	Vacant premises	–	–	4%
RS	Residential	–	–	2%
	Total Premises	108	100%	100%

As shown in Fig. 1 below, of the businesses that responded, the highest proportion, 48 (44%), have been established for more than ten years, which is below the national average of 58%. Only 10% have been in Oakham for 6-10 years, a little higher than the national average, but the 38% established for between 1 to 5 years is well above the 22% average. Just 6% are in their first year in the town, also a little higher than the national average. This suggests a relatively high turnover of businesses in Oakham.

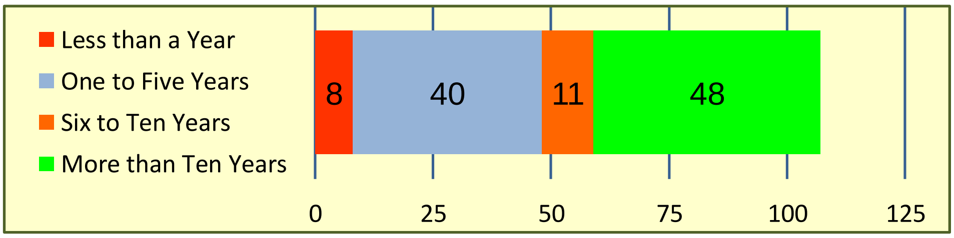


Fig. 1. How long has your business been in Oakham?

The businesses that responded employ 314 full-time and 237 part-time people in Oakham. Their responses also show that 80% of the businesses employ between 1 and 4 employees, a total of nearly 50% of the full-time work force. A further 14% of businesses employ between 5 and 8 staff which adds another quarter, and the final quarter of full-time workers are employed by just 6% of businesses. Of these 108 businesses, 35 have only one full-time employee, a third of them without part-time help. The largest employer in the town who responded to the survey employs 20 full-time and 35 part-time staff. The pattern is similar with part-time employees in that half of them work in 82% of the businesses, who each employ between 1 and 3 part-time staff.

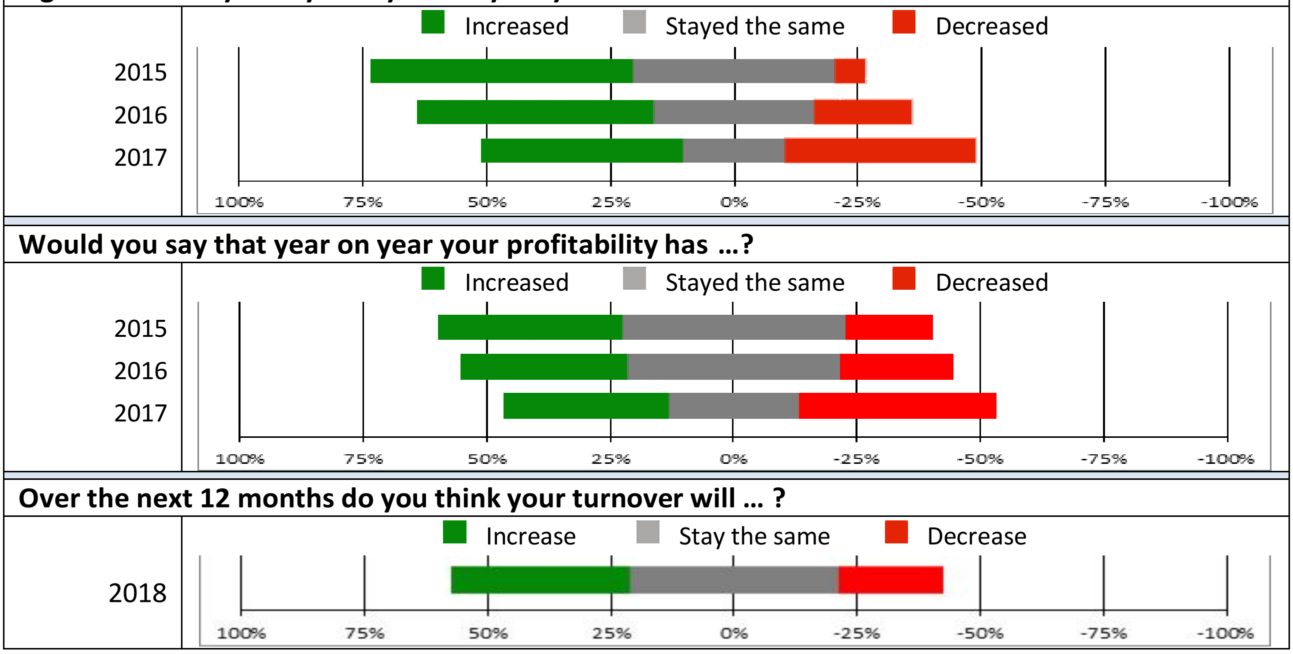
Although staff numbers were not quantified by mode of transport for each business, of the 551 employees in Oakham, it would appear that the majority of them come to work by car, parking in car-parks, in private parking or on-street. However many do walk into town, a minimum of 14 cycle to work, 14 come by bus, 7 by train, and 2 by motorbike. One person was recorded as coming to work by taxi.

1. Business performance assessment

In 2017 for most of the year the town was significantly affected by roadworks and diversions. The High Street through the centre of the Oakham was repeatedly closed to traffic, alternately in one direction and then the other, for major underground service replacement works. This made for difficulties and confusion for local people and had a marked effect on the town, with a noticeable drop in footfall and trade.

The business survey had optional confidential questions about business performance in turnover and profitability over the last three years. This was designed to give a representative picture, and to show the effects of the disturbance to the town in 2017. These questions were partially or fully completed by variously 60%–75% of respondents. The results are shown in Fig. 2 and Table 2.

Fig. 2 – Would you say that year on year your turnover has … ?



Approximately half the businesses indicated that over the last three years their turnover had increased, but only a third stated that profitability had similarly increased. Over the same period, there was a steep decline in the number of businesses reporting that their turnover had stayed the same, compounded by a steeper rise in those who confirmed turnover had decreased, from 6% in 2015 to 20% in 2016 and 38% in 2017.

As to profitability, in 2015 and 2016 a higher percentage of businesses said that this had stayed the same, but this dropped sharply in 2017 with a corresponding rise in those who reported a decreasing turnover, from 18% in 2015 and 23% in 2016 to 40% in 2017. The steady slide over the three years from the positive to the negative side of the graph is clear. The effect of the roadworks on trading in the town, mentioned by 11% of respondents, might be a contributing factor. Those businesses less affected were perhaps those less impacted by the loss of footfall.

Table 2 – Over the next 12 months do you think your turnover will…

	Oakham numbers	Oakham %	National benchmark %
Increase	27	36%	*44%*
Stay the Same	32	43%	*38%*
Decrease	16	21%	*19%*
Total	75	100%	*100%*

As noted in Table 2, in their prognosis for the current year 36% of businesses were expecting turnover to rise, a lower percentage than any over the previous three years, and 43% to stay much the same. However 21% were expecting turnover to continue to decrease. Compared to the national average, this is a lower expectation of growth in the current year. This should be qualified however in that the comparative national averages were taken in 2016 and the economic climate in view of Brexit is currently fluid.

2. Local pressures facing businesses which are out of their control (Fig. 3)

There were 110 comments in reply to this question. The main issues were parking (22% of comments), rates and rent costs (19%), low footfall (17%), business competition (16%), lack of support from authorities (11%), poor traffic management (11%), retail offer (3%), and finally one last comment about the lack of quality staff.

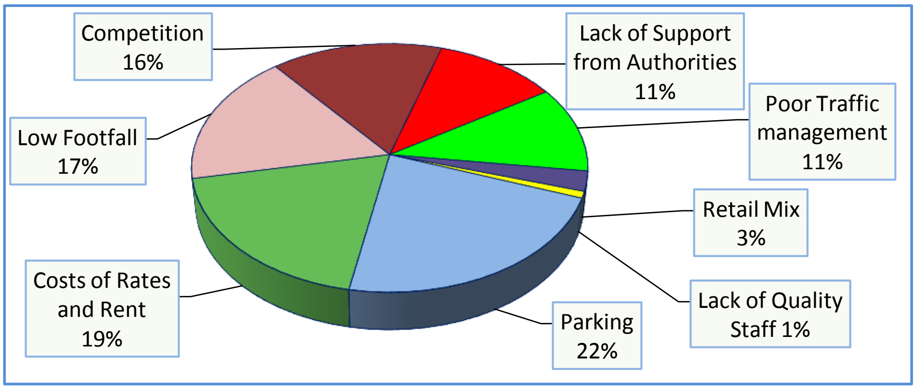


Fig. 3. What are the local pressures on your business which are out of your control?

Looking at these issues in detail, 75% of the comments on parking pressures related to availability, and only 25% to the cost. More comments were made about the high cost of rates than the cost of rents and the shortage of affordable premises. Several of the Footfall comments related to the disparities in footfall across the town, with 'off the High Street' areas suffering more than others, and the lack of bus services to help older clients access the town centre.

Of the 17 comments relating to competition, half concerned internet shopping, and the rest were about competition from superstores and the M&S shop on the bypass, with two comments on the emotive issue of competition from the many charity shops, some of which these days have a high proportion of new goods which they can sell at more competitive prices than independent shops as they have lower overhead costs.

There were nine comments which expressed quite strong views that the Councils were neglecting to support, if not actually working against the best interests of the retail sector. Out of the 11 comments about traffic management seven referred to the roadworks of 2017.

3. Positive and negative aspects of Oakham

Positive and negative aspects of the town as assessed by businesses are set out in Fig. 4 below.

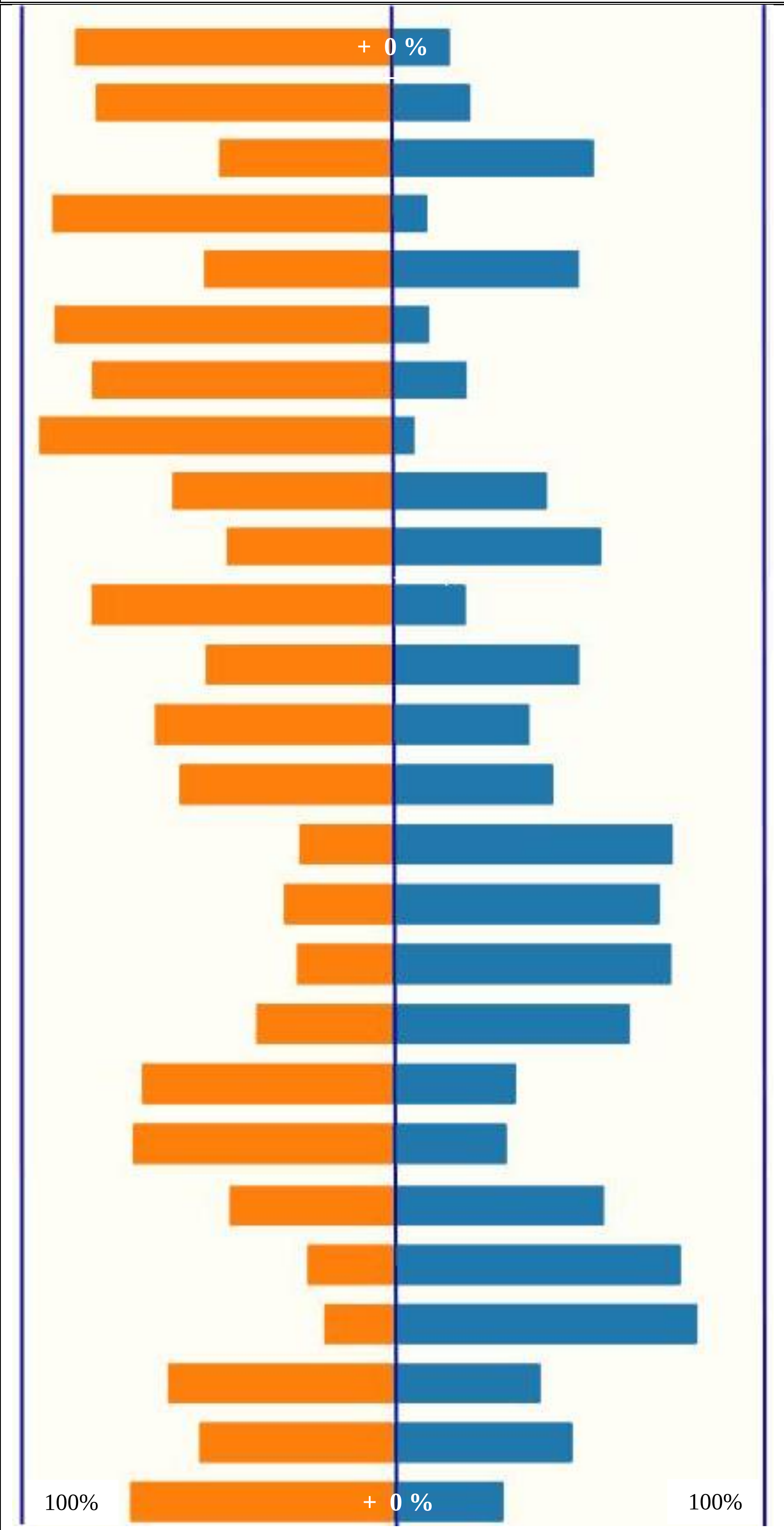
Looking at the list of positive advantages for businesses in Oakham, the potential value of local customers was rated most highly, at 83%, with physical appearance (70%), potential tourist customers (62%) and geographical location (61%) also near the top of the list. These levels of positive perception are all more than 20% higher than the benchmarked level for small towns nationally. Cafés, pubs and restaurants (58%), the prosperity of Oakham (55%), transport links (41%), markets (39%) and local business competition (39%) were also favourably rated by a third of respondents or more, again much higher than the national average.

On the negative side, top of the list came parking (58%) for both customers and employees. Following this came rental values/property costs (53%), competition from the internet (48%), competition from out of town (43%), and the mix of retail offer (35%). All of these reflect negative levels above the national average.

In fact levels of negative perception nearly across the board were higher than those recorded nationally, with the only exceptions being the physical appearance of Oakham and the prosperity of the town.

Fig. 4 – Positive and Negative Aspects of the Town Centre by number and percentage of respondents

	No	Positive % Negative	No
Physical appearance	69		13
Prosperity of the town	55		14
Labour pool	20		22
Geographical location	60		6
Mix of retail offer	36		36
Cafés, pubs, restaurants	57		7
Potential tourist customers	61		15
Potential local customers	82		5
Seasonal economy	30		20
Affordable housing	21		26
Road Links	42		10
Traffic	29		29
Public transport	38		22
Footfall	37		25
Employee car parking	20		57
Customer car parking	23		57
Rental values / rates	18		53
Availability of premises	20		32
Markets	39		20
Local business competition	39		18
Competition from other localities	21		28
Competition from out of town shopping	13		44
Competition from the internet	12		48
Events / activities	34		23
Marketing and promotion	28		27
Local partnerships and organisations	29		13



4. Suggestions for improving the town's economic performance

As with other surveys undertaken for the Task & Finish Group, we asked the business community what two things they felt would improve the town's economic performance. This produced 157 comments which fall into seven categories (Fig. 5), the first of which, with over a third of total comments, was parking. Various comments about the retail mix were the second priority with close to a quarter of all comments. The other suggestions concerned help for the retail sector (13%), promotion of Oakham and events (10%), traffic management (8%), town improvements (6%), and finally public transport at 1%.

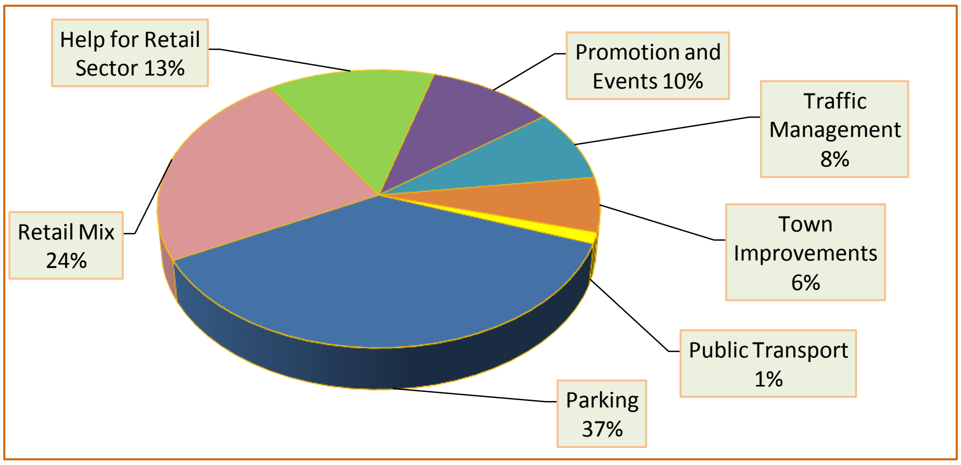


Fig. 5. What two suggestions would you make to improve Oakham's economic performance?

To understand the nature of these suggestions it is necessary to look at the data in more detail. On the question of parking 32 of the 58 comments were about reducing parking costs and about how this might be done in order to encourage shoppers, and 22 comments were simply suggesting that additional parking availability was needed. There were four suggestions that some provision should be made for more affordable parking for town centre workers.

On the question of the retail mix there were 21 suggestions that Oakham needs an increased mix of desirable shops, five of them specifically wanting to encourage more national chains, three wanting to encourage more street trading, and ten calls for reducing the number of charity shops. Allied to this were the 21 comments about financial support and incentives for businesses.

The 16 comments about promotion and the 10 for town improvements together were saying that Oakham should 'play to its strengths and its historic appearance', refurbish and improve the look of the town, improve signage, do more to promote tourism, open the museum and castle every day in summer and encourage more businesses to open on Sundays. There were several calls for more events and activities to bring in locals and tourists, and better promotion of upcoming events.

Traffic management and public transport accounted for the final 9% of comments. The three pro one-way comments were balanced by three calls to keep the traffic two-way. Strategic planning for roadworks, traffic flow and reducing HGVs through the town, plus a better bus services account for the final views.

These comments offer a clear picture of the wide range of measures that the business community would like to see implemented to improve the economic performance and viability of Oakham.

Joy Clough (ORG) &
Nick Woodley
September 2018

KPI 11 – A : Local Town Centre Users Survey – Oakham Residents Group

Three surveys were designed, produced and conducted as part of the Task & Finish process. The Local Town Centre Users and Oakham Town Visitors surveys were conducted over June and July 2018 in various locations across the town centre, and the Rutland County Visitors survey was carried out in the county outside Oakham, all by a small group of volunteers. The aim of the Local Town Centre Users survey, summarised in this section, was to establish how our town is seen by those local people who use it. Responses from Oakham Town Visitors and Rutland County Visitors are covered in report KPI 11 B.

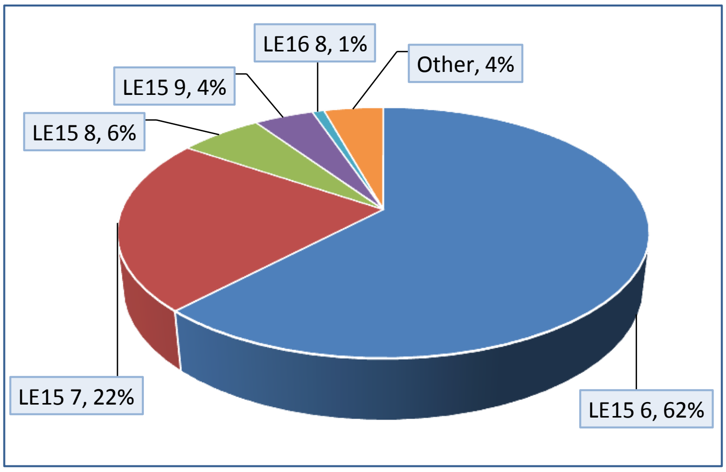
1. Survey sample

The number of interviews for each survey, a minimum of 100, was to ensure a reasonable sample and does not reflect the ratio of visitors to local users in Oakham at any one time.

Altogether 329 interviews were completed and, although a quota for age groups was not set, the balance on the whole is reasonable, the under-25s and over-70s being the least well represented (Table 1).

Respondents' age groups									
Respondents' Age	16–25	26–35	36–45	46–55	56–65	66–75	Over 75	blank	Total
Town Centre User	13	19	18	11	18	25	12	–	116
Oakham Town Visitor	10	10	17	16	18	25	3	1	100
Rutland County Visitor	5	16	22	19	27	19	5	–	113
Total	28	45	57	46	63	69	20	1	329
Total (% whole sample)	9%	14%	17%	14%	19%	21%	6%	0%	100%

Table 1. Respondents' ages by user type



Town Centre Users, as shown by their postcodes (Fig. 1), are very local. 62% come from LE15 6 (Oakham), 22 % from LE15 7 (Barleythorpe and villages to the north), 10% from LE15 8 and LE15 9 (villages to the east, south and west of Oakham), and 5% from a little further afield, and perhaps working regularly in Oakham.

Fig. 1. Town Centre Users by postcode

2. Visiting the Town Centre

How often do you visit the town centre?									
Respondent Status	Daily	More than once a week	Weekly	Fortnightly	More than once a month	Once a month or less	Infrequent	(blank)	Total
Town Centre User	35	48	15	10	5	1	1	1	116
Town Centre User %	30%	41%	13%	9%	4%	1%	1%	1%	100%
National Benchmark for small towns %	*20%*	*38%*	*21%*	*7%*	*4%*	*10%*	–	–	*100%*

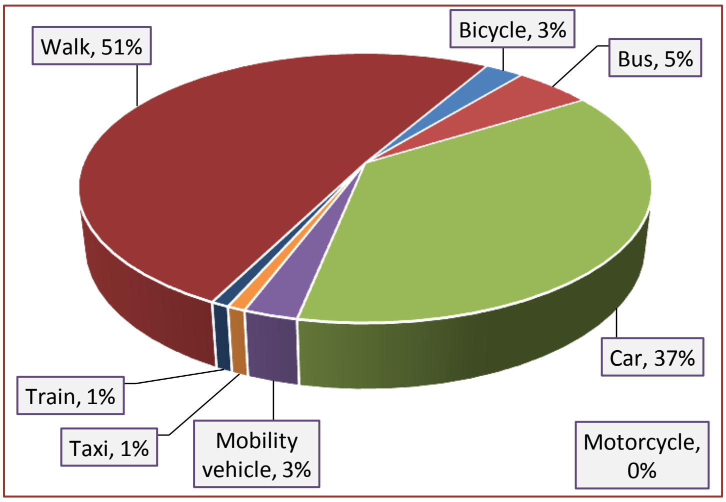
Table 2. Frequency of visits to the town centre

As shown in Table 2 it is interesting that 71% of the Town Centre Users interviewed visited Oakham more than once a week, 30% of them visiting every day. This is a much higher number than the 58% national average for small towns. 13% visited once a week, 9% once a fortnight, and 4% more than once a month. The national average has 10% visiting once a month or less but that figure is only 1% in Oakham.

How long do you usually spend in town?		
	Oakham %	Nat Benchmark %
Up to 1 hour	39%	*42%*
1 to 3 hours	51%	*44%*
More than 3 hours	9%	*13%*
(blank)	1%	–
Total	100%	*100%*

Table 3. Duration of visits to the town centre

Table 3 shows that these are not all flying visits, as 51% of respondents would be in Oakham for 1 to 3 hours, as against 39% staying less than an hour. Only 9% of local users would stay in town for over 3 hours. Comparing these numbers to the national average, Oakham Town Centre Users have a higher proportion staying 1 to 3 hours, but fewer staying for longer. Looking in detail, it is twice as many of the 16–25 year old and 66–75 year old age groups who are staying 1 to 3 hrs as opposed to up to an hour.



As for how Town Centre Users come into Oakham, a majority, 51%, walked, as opposed to 37% who came by car (Fig. 2 & Table 4). This is a reversal of the national average figure of 34% walking and 57% coming by car. Of the rest 5% came by bus, 3% each by bicycle and mobility scooter, and 1% each by taxi and train. None were recorded as coming by motorcycle.

Fig. 2. Town Centre Users: means of visiting the town centre

If we break that down still further we learn that of the 72 people from the Oakham postcode, 53 walked whereas only 11 came by car (six parking in a car park and three on-street), and of those from the postcode which includes Barleythorpe, only five walked but 18 came by car (ten parking in a car park and six on-street). Thus a higher proportion of people are walking in from Oakham than from the Barleythorpe direction, the latter being further out. Only a total of 5% came in by bus, two people from each postcode, and the three who cycled came from Oakham.

A further analysis shows us that a higher proportion of 16–25 year olds (69%) and then of 66–75 year olds (60%) walked into town, with the intervening age groups lower at 45–50%. This is mirrored in reverse for the use of cars, where it is the 16–25 year olds (15%) and 66–75 year olds (28%) who are using cars the least, with the age groups in between at 42–50% car users. In the over-75 age group we see the lowest percentage of walkers (25%) and highest of bus users (25%). In this age group also 33% were coming into town by car and 17% by mobility scooter.

How do you come into the town?		
	Oakham %	National benchmark %
Bicycle	3%	*2%*
Bus	5%	*4%*
Car	37%	*57%*
Mobility vehicle	3%	–
Motorcycle	–	*1%*
Taxi	1%	–
Train	1%	*1%*
Walk	51%	*34%*
Other	–	*1%*
Total	100%	*100%*

Table 4. Travelling to the town centre

3. Positive and negative perceptions of Oakham

Town Users were asked to highlight what they thought were the positive and negative aspects of Oakham. Aspects with the highest approval from the 116 respondents were the cafés and restaurants (73 people), followed by friendliness (66), pubs and bars (65), convenience and ease of walking about town (62 each), the Museum, Castle and historic buildings (61), and cleanliness (58).

Negative perceptions were noticeably fewer than positive ones. At the top of the negative aspects list comes national chain shops (41 people), followed closely by the retail offer (38), leisure facilities (35), parking (35), and traffic (33). However with these last two the corresponding balance of positives shows that they are not seen overall as extremely negative aspects of life in Oakham.

In all, respondents nominated 2.6 times as many positive aspects of Oakham as negative ones. In addition to these standard choices, respondents were invited to suggest other negative and positive aspects of Oakham. Of the 46 negative additional comments made, 18 referred to too many charity shops, although two other people counted them as a positive aspect. A further six people said the declining market was a negative aspect of the town although on balance twice as many thought the market to be a positive rather than negative feature.

It is interesting to note the number of people who did not comment on some of the various topics. Only 39 people failed to comment on the cafés and restaurants, whereas 72 people did not comment at all on road links. That for each item on the list an average of 60 people had no negative or positive comment to make seems to indicate that none of these are generally contentious attributes.

The positive perceptions of Oakham's cafés and restaurants and of its pubs and bars score a strong 20% and 30% higher than the national benchmarks for small towns, and the positive view of the market also recorded 20% higher. In other areas Oakham's levels of response compare reasonably with other towns nationally. With the exception of provision for leisure, levels of negativity are lower in Oakham than the national average.

Details are shown on Table 5 below, which should be compared with Table 9 in Report KPI 11 B.

Town Centre Users				
Attributes	Negative	Positive	(blank)	Total
Physical appearance	21	49	46	116
Cleanliness	2	58	56	116
Retail offer – groceries	17	32	67	116
Retail offer – clothes, gifts &c	38	13	65	116
Independent shops	16	49	51	116
National chain shops	41	23	52	116
Market(s)	14	47	55	116
Cafés / restaurants	4	73	39	116
Pubs / bars	1	65	50	116
Customer service	0	49	67	116
Friendliness	0	66	50	116
Access to services, e.g. banks, Post Office, library	14	52	50	116
Museum, Castle, historic buildings	2	61	53	116
Leisure facilities	35	19	62	116
Cultural activities / events	20	27	69	116
Road links	2	42	72	116
Traffic	33	27	56	116
Car parking	35	30	51	116
Public transport	24	27	65	116
Ease of walking around the town	8	62	46	116
Convenience, e.g. near to home	2	62	52	116
Safety	6	49	61	116
Other	46	7	63	116

Table 5. Negative and positive perceptions of Oakham (Town Centre Users)

***Key**: Table 5 gives the exact number of the 116 respondents who rated each attribute as either a negative or a positive aspect of Oakham, as well as the number who chose not to comment on each specific feature. The graded colours are a visual statement balancing the overall positive and negative perception ratings for each attribute, green being positive, through yellow, buff, pink and then red for negative. This is a valuable guide as the colouring takes into account the total percentage of people who were asked, those who didn't give an opinion as well as those who did (for example, Customer Service, where there were no negative comments and 49 positive ones: this is coloured yellow not green due to the lower number of responses).*

4. How the town centre has changed

Town Centre Users were asked how their experience of Oakham had changed in recent years. 33% thought it had worsened while another 33% thought it had stayed the same. A further 18% were of the opinion that it had changed, with both good and bad, but only 8% of respondents thought the town had improved (Fig. 3 below, and Fig. 2 in report KPI 11 B).

However, when asked, 80% of respondents said they would recommend a visit to Oakham town centre, a high proportion compared to 65% for small towns nationally. The 18% who said they would not recommend a visit compares favourably to the national average of 35%.

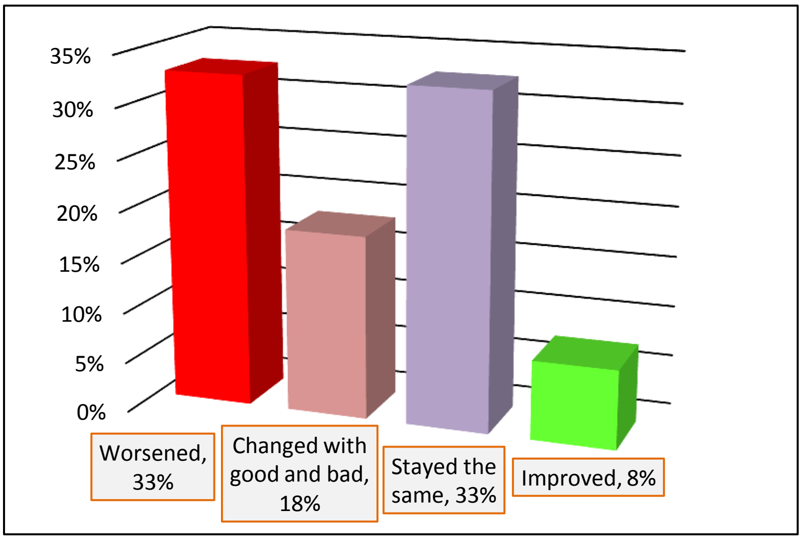


Fig. 3. Town Centre Users' perceptions of how the town centre has changed

Would you recommend a visit to the Town Centre?		
	Oakham %	National Benchmark for Small towns %
Yes	80%	*65%*
No	18%	*35%*

Table 6. Recommending a visit to the town centre

To complete the picture we asked our Town Centre Users which one word they would use to sum up Oakham town centre. In total 73% positive words were chosen as against 27% negative words. Negative words like 'boring' and 'dull' came from the 16–25 year age group, but nearly half of the negative comments, such as 'lacking', 'disappointing' and 'declining', were from the 56–75 year age group.

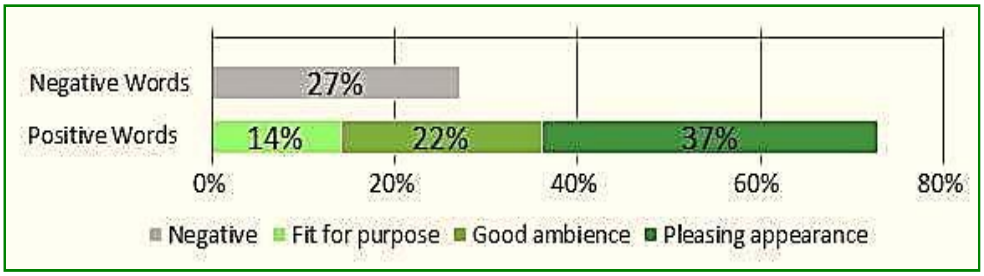


Fig. 4. Summing up the town centre

Positive words fell neatly into three groups. 14% related to Oakham's fitness for purpose, with words like 'useful', 'clean', 'compact' and 'convenient'. Then 22% described the ambience of the town as 'friendly and comfortable with community feel'. The largest group of words, 37%, related to the character and appearance of Oakham, and 'quaint' was the most commonly used, followed by 'pleasant', 'attractive' and 'historic'.

5. Suggested changes to the town centre

The final question asked what two improvements people would make to encourage them to use the town centre more, and 162 separate suggestions were recorded. Fig. 5 shows the categories of suggestions. The biggest issue raised, accounting for 51% of the comments, was concern with the retail offering. The other issues included leisure provision (15%), town centre improvements (12%), parking (10%), traffic flow (7%), food outlets (4%) and public transport (1%).

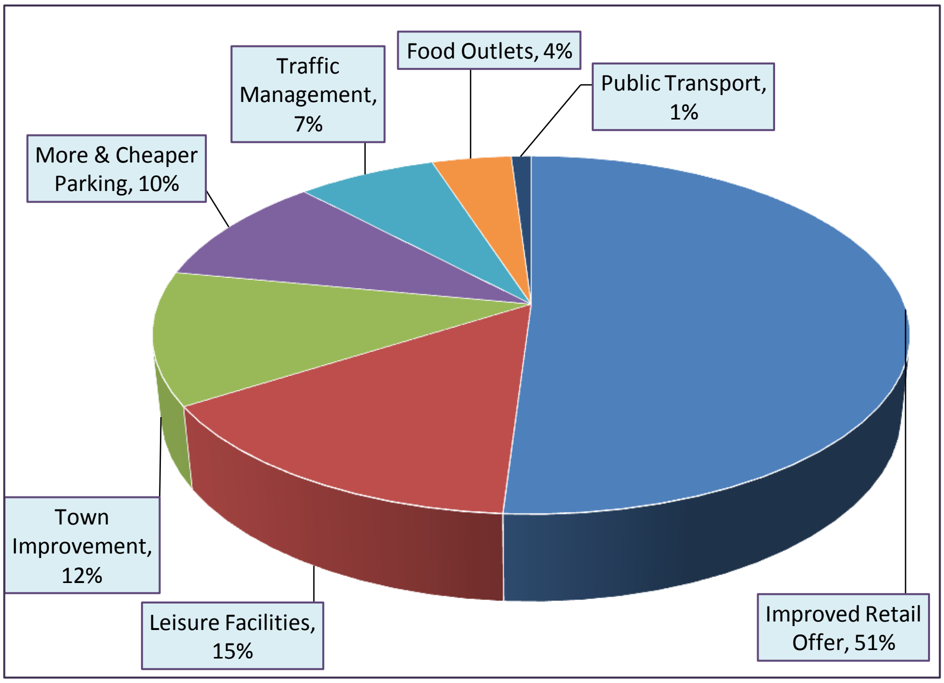


Fig. 5. Suggested Improvements to the town centre

There were 83 people who said that they would be encouraged to come into Oakham more if there was a better retail offer. In their comments the words 'affordable' or 'reasonably priced' appeared 26 times. The word 'clothing' appeared 24 times. Four people thought more High Street chains would be an advantage, and five thought more independent shops. Seven people wanted a better offer for children and young people, and twelve thought more diversity would help. Another twelve wanted the market to improve and for there to be a better grocery offering in the town centre.

Improved leisure provision ideas included more activities for children and teenagers, and six calls for a cinema. Town centre improvements mentioned were repairing pavements, more seating, better disabled access and an improved appearance. Parking entries were divided between more parking and free parking, and traffic management comments related to reducing traffic volume and speed in the town. Finally there were five calls for more restaurants and two for improved public transport.

Joy Clough (ORG) &
James Curtis (Curtis Associates Research)
September 2018

KP1 11 – B : Oakham Town Visitors and Rutland Visitors Surveys
Oakham Residents Group

Three surveys were designed, produced and conducted as part of the Task & Finish process. Two of these were to record the views of Oakham held by visitors, and are summarised in this section. They were completed during June and July 2018, one survey in the town, and the other in various locations less than 5 miles outside the town, at Rutland Water (at the Whitwell car park and the Lyndon birdwatching centre), at Barnsdale Gardens and at Lyndon Top camping and caravan site, all by a small group of volunteers.

1. Survey sample

Altogether 213 visitor interviews were completed with respondents whose postcodes were beyond those included in the Town Centre User group (covered in report KPI 11 A) and, although a quota for age groups was not set, the balance on the whole is reasonable, the under-25s and over-70s being the least well represented. The age groups of these respondents are shown in Table 1.

Respondents' age groups									
Respondents' Age	16–25	26–35	36–45	46–55	56–65	66–75	Over 75	blank	Total
Oakham Town Visitors	10	10	17	16	18	25	3	1	100
Rutland County Visitors	5	16	22	19	27	19	5	–	113
Total	15	26	39	35	45	44	8	1	213
Total (% whole sample)	7%	12%	18%	16%	21%	21%	4%	0%	100%

Table 1. Respondents' age groups

Origins of all visitors	Number	Percentage
LE postcodes	70	33%
PE postcodes	42	20%
NG postcodes	14	6%
NN postcodes	10	5%
Sub-total of local post-codes	136	64%
Other UK postcodes	68	32%
Overseas	9	4%
Total	213	100%

Table 2. Visitors' origins *by postcode*

Table 2 shows the home postcodes of the visitors to Oakham and Rutland who were interviewed. The table shows that they came predominately (64%) from the counties surrounding Rutland, i.e. Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Northamptonshire. A further 32% came from within the UK but further afield, and there were 4% from overseas – five from Europe, one from South Africa and three from Australia.

2. Visiting the Town Centre

Oakham Town Visitors		
How often do you visit Oakham town centre?	Number	%
Just passing through / one-off visit	39	39%
Occasional day trips	27	27%
Regular day visits throughout the year	20	20%
Sub-total of day trip visitors	86	86%
Occasional weekends or short breaks	8	8%
Regular weekend visits or short breaks	4	4%
Holiday	1	1%
Sub-total of longer term visitors	13	13%
(Blank)	1	1%
Total	100	100%

Table 3. Frequency of visiting: Town visitors

Rutland County Visitors		
How often do you visit Rutland?	Number	%
First visit	25	22%
Occasional day trips	45	40%
Regular day visits throughout the year	21	19%
Sub-total of day trip visitors	91	81%
Occasional weekends or short breaks	13	11%
Regular weekend visits or short breaks	9	8%
Sub-total of longer term visitors	22	19%
Total	113	100%

Table 4. Frequency of visiting: County visitors

Of the hundred interviewed in Oakham, 47% were here on an occasional or regular day trip, and a further 39% were making one-off visits or passing through the town. This is a total of 86% on day visits as opposed to only 13% here for a longer stay. This would be keeping with the fact that two-thirds of Oakham Town Visitors came from within a reasonable driving distance. A similar pattern can be seen with those visitors in Rutland but outside Oakham, although with 6% more visitors in Rutland for longer stays, and 5% fewer on day trips.

How long do you usually spend in town?			
	Oakham Visitors %	Town Centre Users %	Nat Benchmark %
Up to 1 hour	11%	39%	*42%*
1 to 3 hours	59%	51%	*44%*
More than 3 hours	30%	9%	*13%*
(Blank)	–	1%	–
Total	100%	100%	*100%*

Table 5. Length of visit

Table 5 shows that visitors spend longer in town than local users, with only 11% staying for less than an hour compared to 39% of local users, and 30% spending over three hours, compared to only 9% of locals.

How did you travel here?	Oakham Town Visitors	%	Rutland County Visitors	%
Bicycle	2	2%	1	1%
Bus/coach	5	5%	7	6%
Car	78	78%	100	89%
Motorcycle	1	1%	–	–
Train	3	3%	–	–
Walk	11	11%	–	–
Other	–	–	5	4%
Total	100	100%	113	100%

Table 6. Travelling to the town centre

Table 6 shows that the most common method of travel for both visitor groups was by car, namely 78% for those visiting the town and 89% for those visiting the county, although 5% and 6% respectively came by bus or coach. The 11% of visitors who walked into Oakham may have been staying in the town.

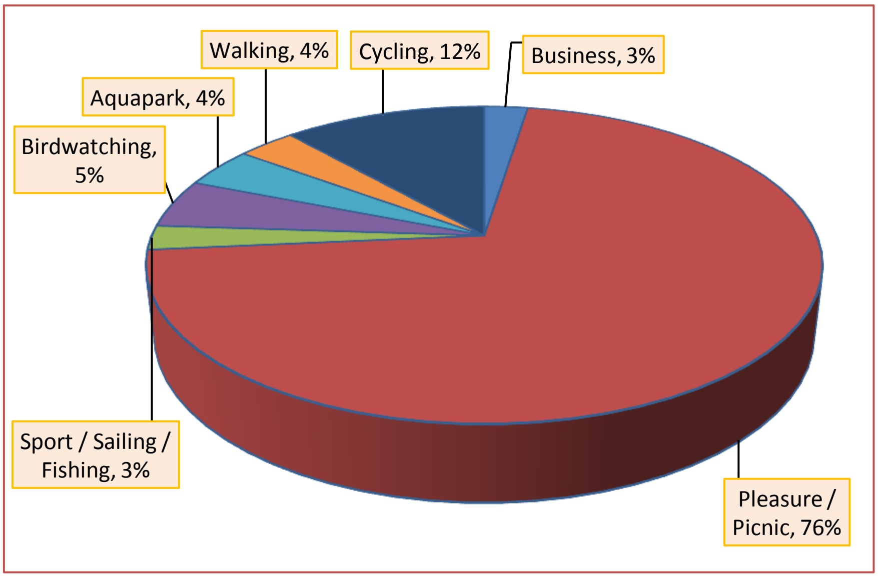


Fig. 1 shows that the most popular reason for visiting Rutland was for pleasure and picnicking, which accounted for 76% of those who came. Cycling brought 11% of the visitors, but the other attractions and activities each only drew a smaller percentage, 5% or less, to Rutland. However, some 7% of respondents cited more than one reason for their visit.

Fig. 1. Reasons for visiting

These visitors were also asked about the size of their parties. Just over half came with a second adult, but only about a fifth of the total visitors were accompanied by one or two children. Of those interviewed 14% were in Rutland with groups ranging from 8 to 53 adults, with anything from 4 to 19 children in a group. This reflects the nature of some of the attractions close to Oakham where the interviewing took place. Barnsdale Gardens have regular coach visits, and Rutland Water attracts large groups. The camping site at Lyndon Top also had groups of friends and families staying there.

3. Awareness of Oakham

As to awareness of Oakham as a destination, the level of response from Rutland County Visitors was very low: 9% had heard about it from family and friends, 3% from television, 1% from the internet, and none at all from tourism leaflets.

From where have you heard about Oakham?	
Family and Friends	9%
Television / Press	3%
Internet	1%
Tourism leaflets	0%

Table 7. Awareness of Rutland

4. Frequency of visits and attractions

Tables 3 and 4 compare the frequency with which Oakham Town Visitors and Rutland County Visitors come to the town. Tables 8 and 9 analyse when Rutland County Visitors go to Oakham and what they do when they are there.

A visit into Oakham was not intended to be part of this trip for 80% of the County visitors, and yet 67% of those interviewed had visited on a previous occasion. Looking further, data show us that of those 80% not visiting Oakham, 54% had visited on a previous trip, but they were not making a return visit this time. Of the 20% who were including a visit to Oakham, 13% had been before and were returning.

Of those with a particular reason for not visiting Oakham on this trip, 15% cited not having enough time, and 15% had no idea what Oakham had to offer.

Rutland County Visitors	Have you visited or will you visit Oakham on this trip?			Have you visited Oakham on a previous occasion?		
	No	Yes	Total	No	Yes	Total
First visit	16%	6%	22%	18%	4%	22%
Occasional day trips	35%	4%	40%	11%	29%	40%
Occasional weekends or short breaks	5%	6%	12%	2%	10%	12%
Regular day visits throughout the year	16%	3%	19%	2%	17%	19%
Regular weekend visits or short breaks	7%	1%	8%	1%	7%	8%
Total	80%	20%	100%	33%	67%	100%

Table 8. Current and previous visits

Those who had visited in the past and those who were intending to visit this time were asked which activities or attractions in Oakham they had used or visited, or were intending to. The cafés and restaurants (42%), the historic town centre (40%) and grocery shopping (35%) topped the list, followed by visits to pubs and bars (28%), retail shopping (28%) and the Castle, Museum and farm park (22%).

Rutland County Visitors			
On your visit(s) to Oakham which of the following did you or will you visit or do?			
	No	Yes	Total
Historic Town Centre	60%	40%	100%
Museum / Castle / Farm Park	78%	22%	100%
Shopping – groceries	65%	35%	100%
Shopping – gifts, clothes &c	72%	28%	100%
Market	74%	26%	100%
Cafés / Restaurants	58%	42%	100%
Pubs / Bars	72%	28%	100%
Entertainment	94%	6%	100%
Cultural events	93%	7%	100%
Services, e.g. chemist, petrol station	88%	12%	100%

Table 9. Locations and attractions visited

5. Positive and negative perceptions of Oakham

Visitors in Oakham were asked which features of the town they considered to be positive. 64% of them selected cafés and restaurants and 63% its physical appearance and cleanliness, all of these well above the national average for small towns. At 61% the ease of walking about town was slightly lower than the 67% national average. Next in positive perception came the independent shops (58%), the Museum, Castle and historic buildings (57%), and the friendliness of Oakham (53%).

Overall there was a very low level of negativity. The only attribute of the town which scored a more negative than positive score was leisure facilities. The attribute with the most negative perception, by 21% of visitors, was parking, although 35% thought this was a positive thing in Oakham. This balance is comparable to the national benchmark of 39% negative to 43% positive.

Oakham Town Visitors				
Attributes	Negative	Positive	(blank)	Total
Physical appearance	2	63	35	100
Cleanliness	2	63	35	100
Retail offer - groceries	6	19	75	100
Retail offer - clothes, gifts, &c	9	20	71	100
Independent shops	2	58	40	100
National chain shops	12	17	71	100
Market(s)	3	44	53	100
Cafes / restaurants	0	64	36	100
Pubs / bars	1	39	60	100
Customer service	0	29	71	100
Friendliness	0	53	47	100
Access to services, e.g. banks, Post Office, library	3	28	69	100
Museum, Castle, historic buildings	0	57	43	100
Leisure facilities	11	9	80	100
Cultural activities / events	6	16	78	100
Road links	1	29	70	100
Traffic	15	18	67	100
Car parking	21	35	44	100
Public transport	6	11	83	100
Ease of walking around the town	0	61	39	100
Convenience, e.g. near to home	0	25	75	100
Safety	2	26	72	100
Other	14	11	75	100

Table 10. Negative and positive perceptions of Oakham (Oakham Town Visitors)

***Key**: This table gives the exact number of the 100 respondents who rated each attribute as either a negative or a positive aspect of Oakham, as well as the number who chose not to comment on each specific feature. The graded colours are a visual statement balancing the overall positive and negative perception ratings for each attribute, green being positive, through yellow, buff, pink and then red for negative. This is a valuable guide as the colouring takes into account the total percentage of people who were asked, those who didn't give an opinion as well as those who did (for example, Customer Service, where there were no negative comments and 29 positive ones: this is coloured yellow not green due to the lower number of responses).*

Specific aspects of the town did not receive either positive or negative comments from an average of 64 visitors. Some 35 comments were made about unlisted aspects of Oakham; of these, three negative comments were made about the smelly condition and inadequate signage of the public toilets, with two further comments about signage generally, and specifically to the car parks. There were two comments on the uneven pavements. The positive comments were about the museum, the floral displays, the park [Cutts Close], the independent shops, charity shops and the small number of chain shops.

6. How the town centre has changed

How has your experience of Oakham town centre changed for you in recent years?			
	Town Centre Users	Oakham Town Visitors	Total
Worsened	33%	12%	23%
Changed with good and bad	18%	11%	15%
Stayed the same	33%	25%	29%
Improved	8%	12%	10%
No opinion / cannot say	7%	36%	20%
(Blank)	2%	4%	3%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Table 11. How the town centre has changed

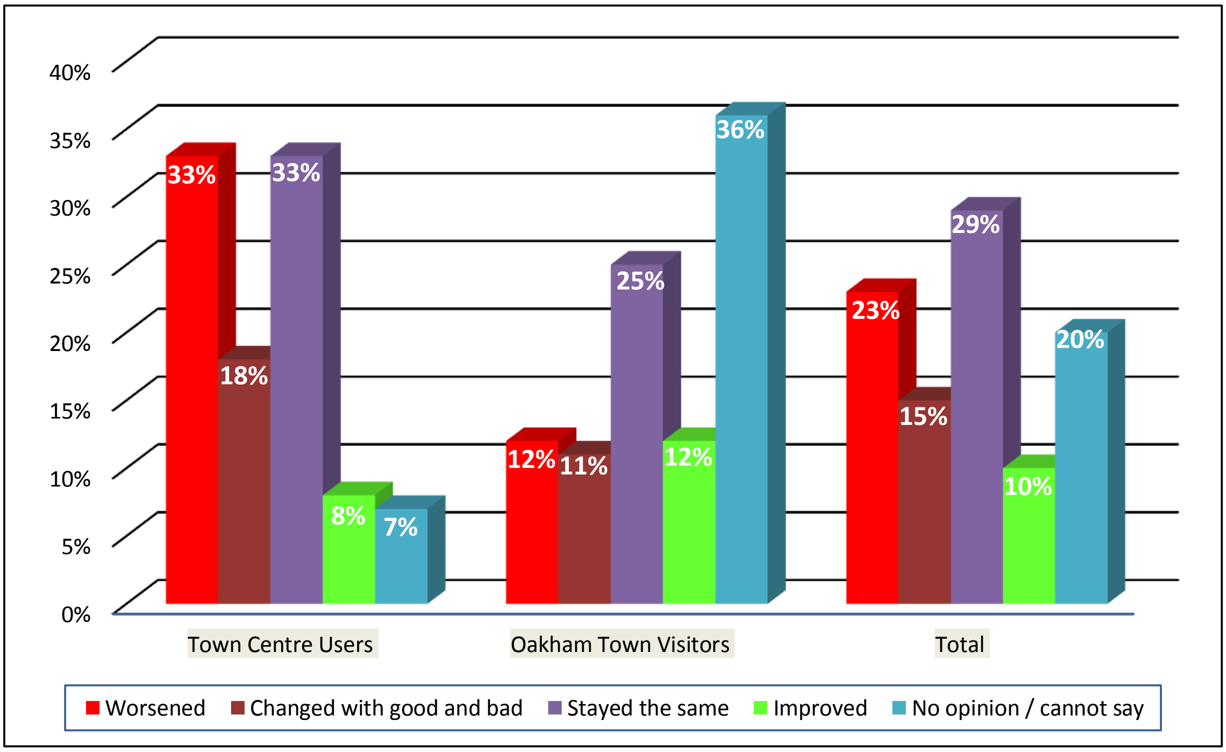


Fig. 2. Changes in the town centre as perceived by Town Centre Users and Town Visitors

A higher proportion of Oakham visitors felt the town had improved in recent years, 4% more than local town users, and a substantial third fewer visitors thought it had worsened than local users. 36 visitors did not have an answer for this question, which equates to number for whom this was a first visit. Table 11 shows that more Oakham Town Visitors than local Town Users would recommend Oakham as a place to visit.

Would you recommend a visit to the town centre?				
	No answer	No	Yes	Total
Town Centre Users	2%	18%	80%	100%
Oakham Town Visitors	1%	6%	93%	100%
Rutland County Visitors	31%	7%	62%	100%
National Benchmark for Small towns %	–	*35%*	*65%*	*100%*

Table 12. Recommending a visit to the town centre

Further examination of the data shows that the more time visitors spend in Oakham, the more highly they rate it. Of those here for the first time only 24% would recommend a visit; however, this percentage rises until of those who come on regular day trips and short breaks 90% and 100% respectively would do so.

What one word would best describe Oakham town centre?		
	Negative	Positive
Town Centre Users	27%	73%
Rutland & Oakham Visitors	7%	93%

Table 13. Describing Oakham town centre

Similarly, when asked for one word to describe Oakham town centre, there were far fewer negative words from the visitors than there were from the local users, just 7% negative as against 93% positive words. The visitors also used twice as many words as locals to comment favourably on the appearance of Oakham.

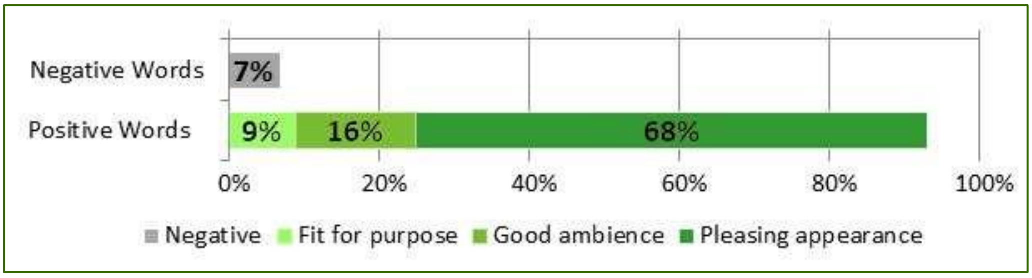


Fig. 3. Summing up the town centre

Negative comments from visitors were ‘lacklustre’, ‘stagnant’ and ‘declining’. Positive words used relating to Oakham’s fitness for purpose were ‘useful’, ‘convenient’, ‘diverse’ and ‘compact’, and the ambience was described as ‘pleasant’, ‘busy’ and ‘friendly’. Lastly, 11% of all the visitors chose the word ‘quaint’ to describe Oakham, followed by ‘picturesque’, ‘attractive’ and ’historic’. It may be noted that in fact visitors used almost exactly the same range of words to describe the town centre as did local town users.

7. Suggested changes to the town centre

As with the Town Centre Users survey, the aim of the final question in the survey was to find what improvements to the town would encourage visitors to come to Oakham more often. In all 120 suggestions were made, across a range of subjects, as shown in Fig. 4 below. Jointly, with 26% of comments each, the two most frequent subjects were the retail offer and parking, followed by 22% commenting on town centre improvements. Other suggestions covered leisure provision (12%), traffic management (10%), food outlets (3%) and public transport (2%). The difference between the visitors’ concerns and those of town users is very clear. The visitors have only half the degree of concern over the retail mix, but twice the concern for parking, and town centre improvements also feature twice as strongly on the visitors list.

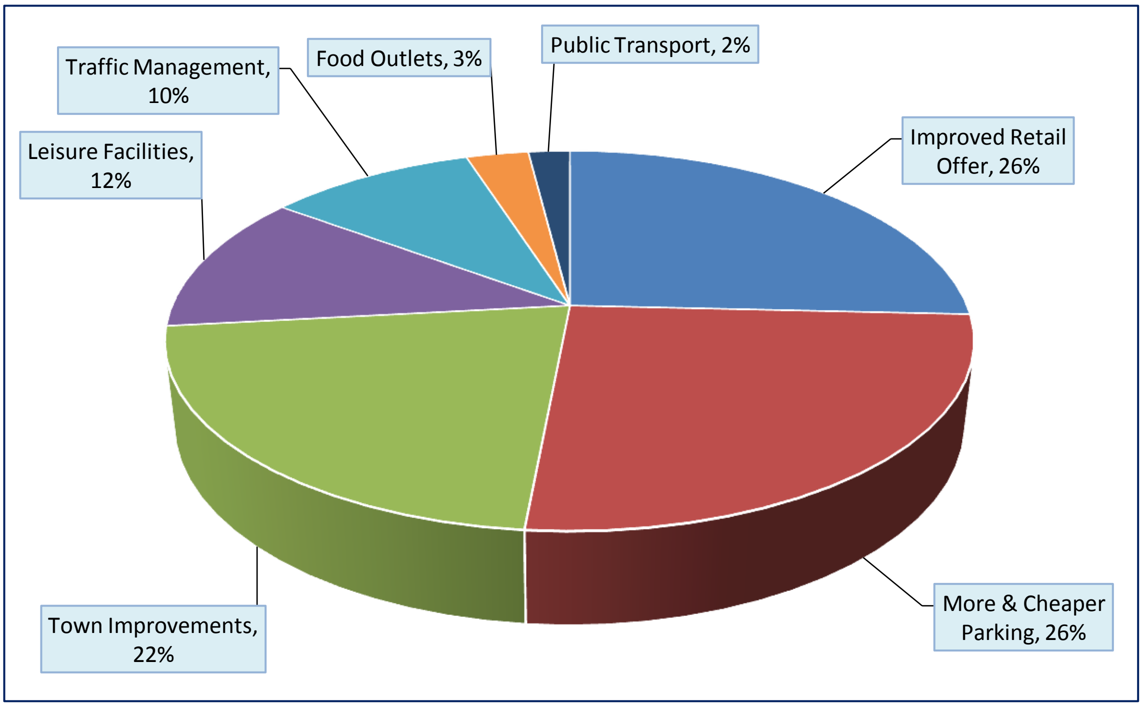


Fig. 4. Suggested improvements for the town centre

It is interesting to look in detail at the visitors' suggestions. Town users were divided equally between wanting more parking and wanting cheaper parking, yet twice as many visitors commented about parking, with over 70% of them wanting more parking, and only a little more than a quarter of that number wanting cheaper parking. There were also three people who commented that they were unable to visit Oakham as there was no provision for parking camper vans in any of the car parks. The comments on the retail offer were mostly about more shops and greater diversity. Some visitors thought more leisure facilities, more things to do, would encourage them to come more; and less traffic, heavy traffic and the speed of traffic in the centre were mentioned in 10% of comments. There were four comments about food outlets and two calling for better public transport. However where visitors' comments differed most widely from those made by town users is under the heading 'town improvements'. Here visitors made more than twice as many comments, and 54% of these concerned signage and information in the town centre. They mentioned signage to car parks, to public toilets and to hotels, and a need for tourist information and events advertising.

Joy Clough (ORG) &
James Curtis (Curtis Associates Research)
September 2018

KPI 12: Shoppers Origin Survey

The Shoppers Origin Survey records the home locations of all those who used the retail outlets and services in the town centre. These data are designed to illustrate which general geographical areas customers are coming from, and in what proportions. The information can then be used in a number of ways, for example to target advertising to expand the customer catchment area or to promote local events, for example in areas from where customers are regularly coming in good numbers.

1. The sample

Postcode Capture Record Sheets were delivered to all 240 businesses in Oakham with the Business Confidence Survey over the last two weeks of July 2018, and staff were asked to capture their customers' postcodes at point of sale over a full working week. The response, from just 43 businesses, was disappointing, but two-thirds of those had collected a good sample. Eleven businesses had collected their customer postcodes over 3 or 4 days, and 16 businesses over 5 or 6 days, and the evidence from the full total of 1766 postcode responses from all 43 businesses proves interesting.

Compared to the percentage classification of the business sector in Oakham the response sample was much stronger from the retail sector and very much weaker from financial services, but geographically the sampled premises were evenly spread through the town and all the central shopping streets were represented. Four non-retail businesses just outside the central hub also responded.

In addition to the business sector, postcodes were collected from the three main visitor attractions in the town, Oakham Castle, Rutland County Museum and the Rutland Farm Park, as well as Oakham Library, where tourist information is available.

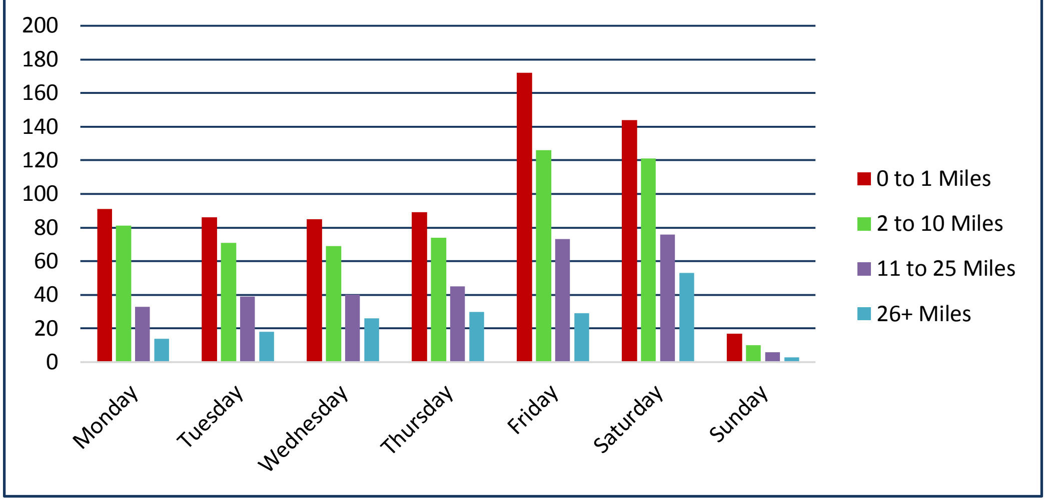
2. The Aggregated Data

In any interpretation of postcode data it is important to remember that these are based on historic post towns using a system which still owes a great deal to the nineteenth century railway network. Hence postcode areas are not coterminous with county or district boundaries. Locally, for example, Cold Overton in Leicestershire has Oakham as its post town with an LE15 7 postcode, and various parishes in the east of Rutland have Stamford in Lincolnshire as their post town and therefore PE9 postcodes. This *caveat* applies to all the postcode-based data assembled by means of any of the surveys undertaken for this project.

Table 1	Oakham %	National Small Towns %
Local: Oakham LE15 6 postcodes	40%	*66%*
Rutland Visitors: 1 to 10 miles from Oakham	32%	*27%*
Tourists & Visitors: over 10 miles from Oakham	28%	*7%*

Here the customer postcodes have been sorted into three classifications, those with LE15 6 Oakham postcodes, those with Rutland postcodes and therefore likely to live within ten miles of Oakham, and 'tourists' or other visitors living further than ten miles away. As percentages these figures are very different from those of the national averages shown in Table 1, as the number of tourists or distant visitors using Oakham businesses is very much higher. On the face of it the number of local shoppers seems much lower than the average but it is important to take into consideration that half of those living between 1 and 10 miles from Oakham had LE15 7 postcodes, and although this includes mostly Rutland villages to the north-east and north-west, it also includes the large Barleythorpe housing estates adjoining Oakham, and considered by many to be part of the town.

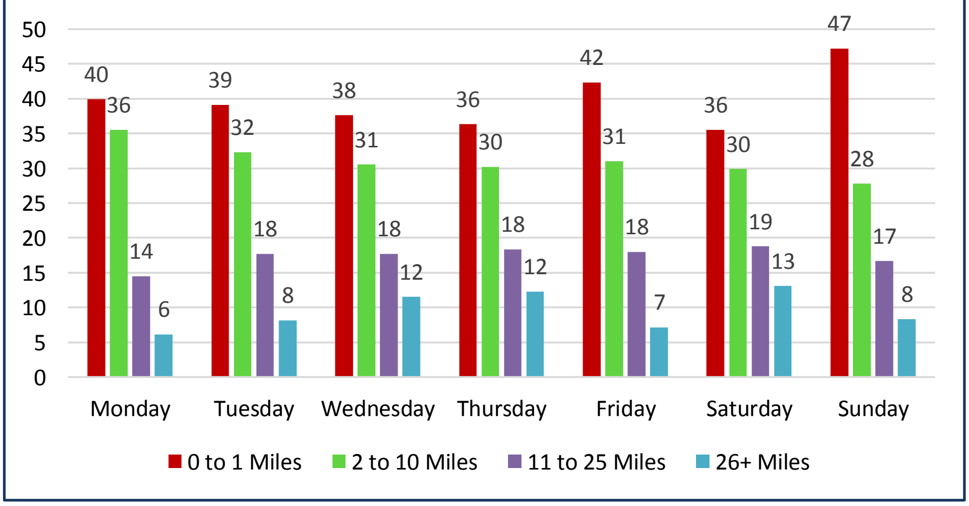
Fig. 1. Distance travelled to businesses by day



In the graph in Fig. 1 the postcode data are divided into four zones, for distances 0–1 mile from the town centre, 2–10 miles (of which half are Barleythorpe, Langham and other villages to the north), 11–25 miles, and over 25 miles, and this produces a consistent pattern when divided into the number of shoppers by day. The highest proportion of customers is local, and that number lessens as the distance they have travelled increases. To confirm this, taking into account the sparseness and erratic nature of some of the data, the second graph, Fig. 2, has the data for each day averaged: the same correlation emerges. It is demonstrable that the major percentage of Oakham customers either live in the town or within ten miles.

It is also notable that the highest levels of activity were on the Friday as well as the Saturday (Fig. 1). There is no perceptible difference between the Wednesday market day and the other weekdays, which seems to indicate that retail trade may not be boosted by those who come into town to use the mid-week market.

Fig. 2. Distance travelled as percentage of visits



Plotted on a map (Fig. 3), the postcodes of origin show the geographical spread of where Oakham's more distant customers are travelling from (excluding 16 customers from overseas or with no fixed address). There are scattered dots as far away as London, Norfolk, Northumberland and even Scotland, but the majority are within reasonable driving distance. Melton Mowbray and Stamford are discernible, and there appears to be a spread of customers coming from the Corby and Kettering direction to the south, but the 'hot-spots' are the neighbouring large cities of Peterborough, Leicester and Nottingham.

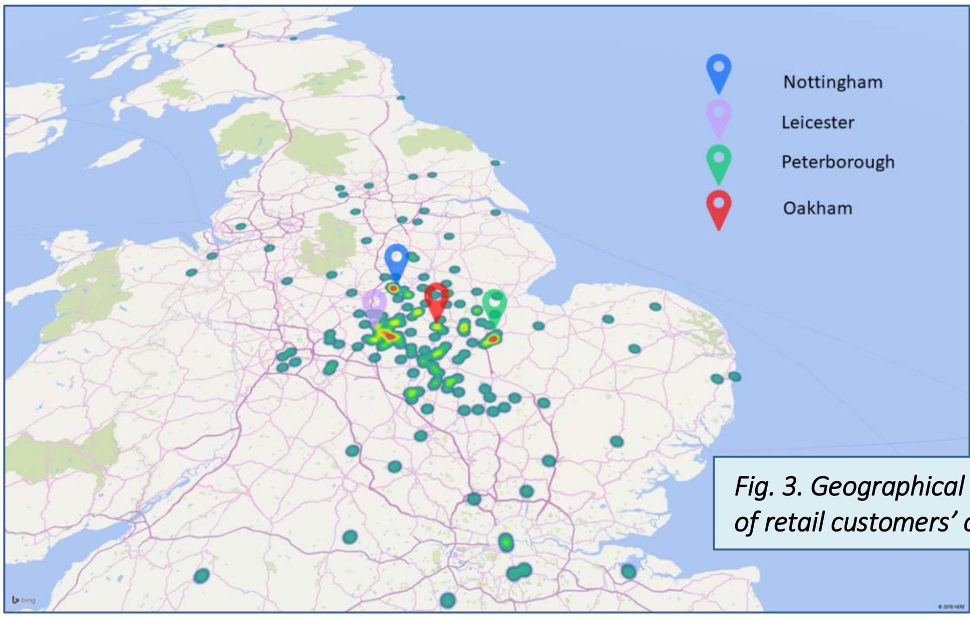


Fig. 3. Geographical spread of retail customers' origins

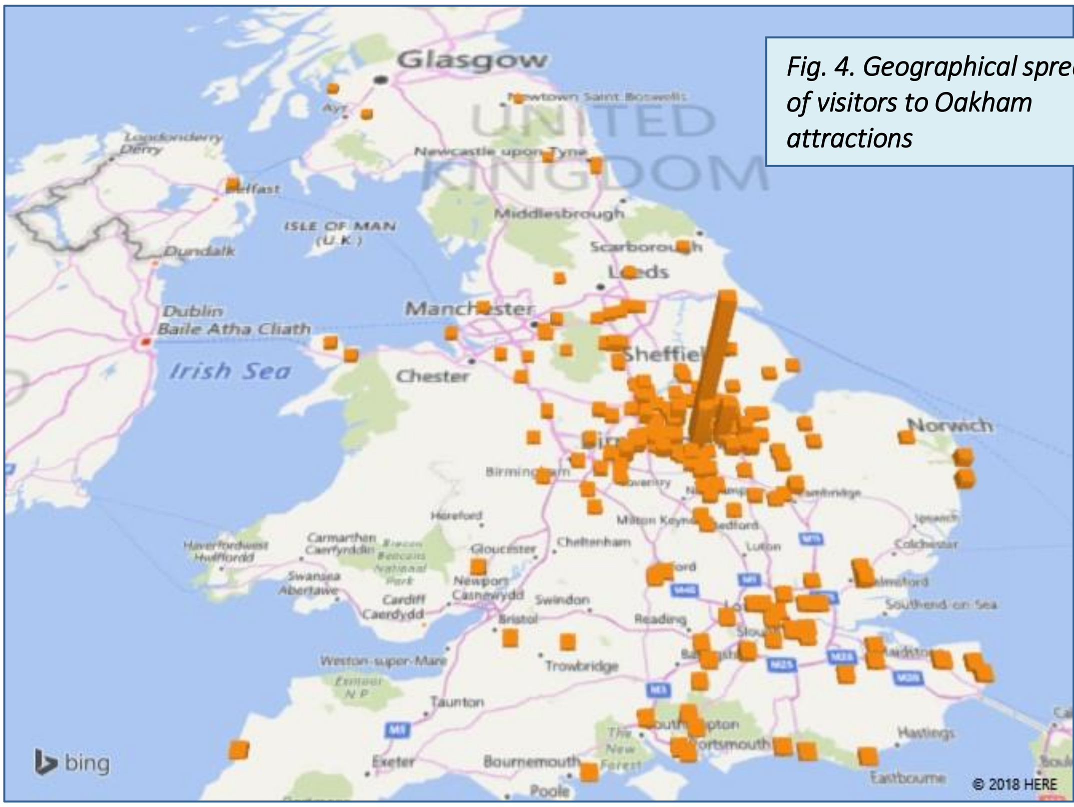


Fig. 4. Geographical spread of visitors to Oakham attractions

This second map (Fig. 4) plots the home location of the postcodes given by visitors to the Oakham attractions, namely the Castle, Museum, Farm Park and library. The spread is quite different from those collected at the retail and service businesses in the town. The 3D column format of this map shows that these venues are well supported by local people, but also by a heavy density of visitors from the surrounding towns and cities. Furthermore the spread across the country is much wider, especially from London and the Home Counties. Not shown at all here are overseas visitors – six from Europe plus a French group, and 20 from across the world, notably eight from Australia.

Enlarging each map, there is a hint that the pattern of dots follows the main arterial routes across the region. A much larger sample would be needed to substantiate this, but if true it might not be unexpected.

Joy Clough and Nick Woodley

The issue of air pollution around the Level Crossing on Brooke Road

***Note:** This pollution report is submitted by a member of the Residents Group. Although related to one specific location, it is equally pertinent to other locations in the town. The Task & Finish Group might ask Rutland CC whether pollution monitoring has been or could be done in Oakham, and look at the results with a view to considering recommendations.*

As a local resident and a Geography Teacher I have become concerned at the levels of air pollution around the Brooke Road level crossing. I have noted that motor vehicles waiting at the crossing tend to have their engines running whilst the drivers are waiting for the barriers to lift. It has been widely documented that idling motor vehicles emit significant amounts of air polluting chemicals that have harmful effects on people's health.

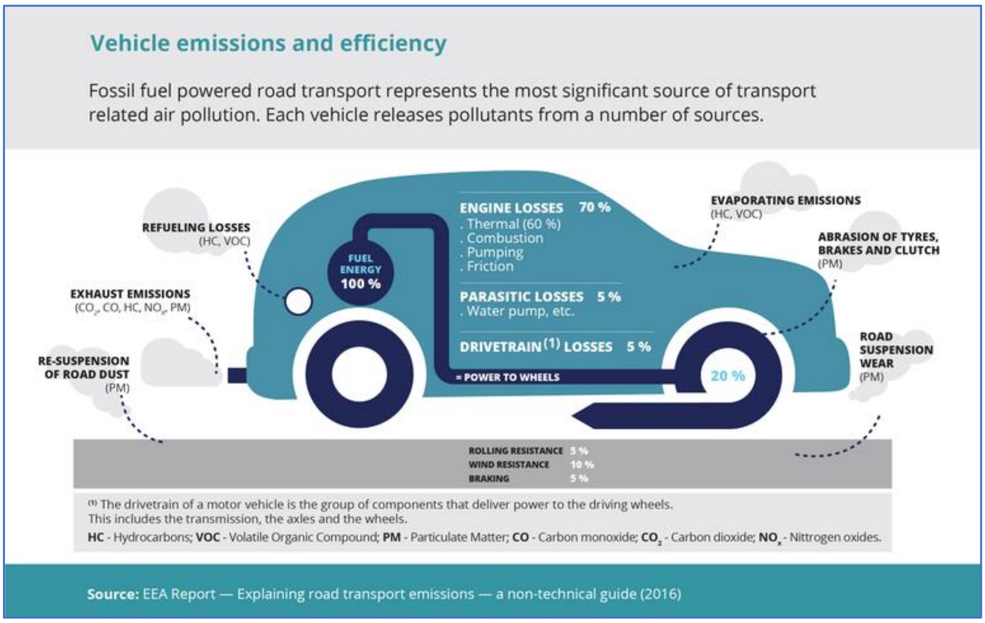


Fig. 1. Vehicle emissions and efficiency

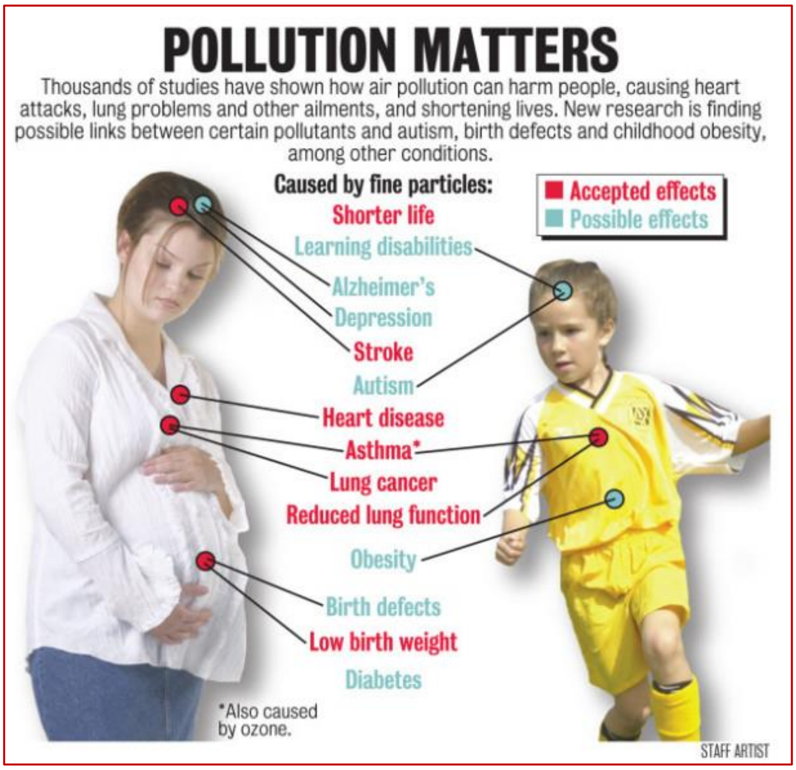


Fig. 2. Harmful effects of fine particle pollution

The level crossing is on a popular walking route for young school children who attend Brooke Hill School. Young children are particularly adversely affected by air pollution from motor vehicles as they are shorter and therefore their airways are closer to the exhaust pipes. Air pollution from vehicles has been linked to exacerbating health issues such as asthma and may even impair brain development.

The level crossing is also a place where pedestrians and cyclists wait as they travel to and from Oakham town centre or further afield. Once again this means that for the duration of the wait they are inhaling the airborne pollutants. For the cyclists who may be breathing hard from the exercise (like-wise for runners) then these pollutants will be inhaled deep into the lungs.

Fig. 3. An air pollution monitor

Clearly at present I have no factual data to present about air quality at the crossing, so I propose that a study be made. There are several readily available air monitoring kits that are affordable and easy to use that will measure nitrous oxide levels and other harmful gases (Fig. 3). Once reliable data have been collected they can be presented to help address the situation.

To reduce air pollution at the crossing a series of signs could be displayed urging drivers to turn their engines off whilst they are waiting. This has the added benefit of saving the driver money from greater fuel efficiency.

It should also be noted by urban planners that any increase in the number of motor vehicles on the approaches to the crossing – Derwent Drive, Brooke Road and Welland Way – would increase air pollution. The building of new houses along Brooke Road would lead to an increase in the number of vehicles waiting at the crossing, which would increase pollutants making the problem worse.

Further notes

A recent work published in the National Academy of Sciences of the USA where research was done on the effects of air pollution on thousands of Chinese people found that exposure to high levels of pollutions is the equivalent to losing one year of education. This alarming research is worse for older people. The research found that older men (over 64) particularly are at risk of impaired brain function from breathing in polluted air. From a Rutland point of view this is particularly concerning given our aging demographic and that many people wish to carry on working past traditional retirement ages. It would also be the case that many elderly Rutland residents would be involved in making complex decisions both at work and in their personal lives.

An Ontario study attributes one in ten dementia cases to living near busy roads. The cost of caring for dementia is a huge burden for both the carers and for the local councils who often part-fund the care requirements. This means it makes good economic sense to try to reduce levels of air pollution where ever possible.

The effects on the mental health of children and teenagers are also well documented. It is likely that because they are still growing they are more at risk from developing mental health issues. A study in Sweden found that a relatively small increase in the levels of Nitrous Oxide, a component of car exhaust, of 10 mcg per cubic metre caused a 9% increase in mental illness in children. The current EU and WHO maximum exposure to NO2 is set at 40mcg per cubic metre. Given that diesel vehicles generally emit more NO2 than petrol cars and that all motor vehicles emit more NO2 whilst idling then there is a clear risk to children's health if the number of vehicles waiting at the crossing were to increase because of a new housing development. It should further be noted that diesel cars are more popular in Rutland because of its rural nature (nationally 2 out of every 5 cars is a diesel) and that many diesel vans, which frequently have even higher NO2 emissions because of their greater mileage, also use this route. Because many people in any new estates would be travelling outside of Oakham for work it would be a safe assumption that they would be using motor vehicles. The government has said it wants to phase out petrol and diesel cars sales by 2040 but this is a long time to wait for improvements in air quality when children's health and educational attainment is at risk.

Bibliography and further reading

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Chris Moloney
28th August 2018

Appendix A: Individual comments from 2018 research

Note: Numbers indicate the number of occurrences of any comment or expression made more than once

Which one word would you use to describe Oakham Town Centre?

From the Town Users Survey

Positive ***85 comments (73.3%)***

quaint	9	average	good	rural
friendly	8	brilliant	I like it	safer than a city
pleasant	5	character	interesting	safe
quiet	4	characteristic	interesting, well	small
attractive	3	classic town centre	serviced for shops	traditional
historic[al]	3	clean & useful	market town	unique
busy	2	compact	nice little town	unique, historic
charming	2	community feel	oldy-worldy	useful
comfortable	2	conservative	perfect	variety
great	2	convenient	pleasant	vibrant
lovely	2	cosy	pleasing	welcoming
nice	2	fine	picturesque & traditional	
pretty	2	functional	quirky	
adequate		getting better	reasonably classy	

Negative ***31 comments (26.7%)***

boring	4	declining	2	disappointing compared	shabby
dull	4	disappointing	2	Stamford	unencouraging
dying	3	deteriorated		lacking	worsening
poor	3	dire		lifeless	
tired	3	failing		negative	

From the Town Centre Visitors Survey

Positive ***90 comments (92.8%)***

quaint	11	absolutely lovely	different	outing
pleasant	8	architecture &	exciting	quaint & friendly
attractive	5	surrounding scenery	friendly	quaint market town
pretty	4	a place to retire	great	quintessentially English
historic	3	brilliant, quaint	historic, delightful	rural
unique	3	character	idyllic	rustic
traditional	3	charming & interesting	like any other	safe
appealing	2	charming	lovely environment	special
beautiful	2	clean	lovely, interesting	tidy
busy	2	compact	medieval	traditional English
interesting	2	convenient	nice	unspoiled
lovely	2	country town	perfect	very lovely & peaceful
old England	2	cute	picturesque	
picturesque	2	delightfully English	pleasant worthwhile outing	

Negative ***7 comments (7.2%)***

boring	2	lacklustre	stagnant
disappointing		not like it used to be	improvement needed

From the Rutland County Visitors Survey

Positive ***73 comments (93.6%)***

quaint	8	atmosphere	nice little town	quirky, beautiful
picturesque	6	convenient	nice town	relaxing
pretty	6	civilised	old, attractive	refined
lovely	3	different, character	peaceful	rustic
pleasant	3	diverse	pleasant retreat	traditional
beautiful	2	friendly	picturesque, interesting	traditional mkt town
clean	2	good market	pretty & historical	unique
growing	2	handsome	pretty and quaint	useful
historic	2	looks pretty	pretty but getting bigger	very pleasant
nice	2	lovely historic town	pretty market town	
olde worldy	2	market town	quaint little town	
rural	2	nice people, beautiful	quintessentially British	

Negative ***5 comments (6.4%)***

decline	OK	no idea, don't remember
disjointed	quiet	

What do you think are the positive or negative aspects of Oakham?

From the Town Centre Users Survey

Positive 'other' comments

charity shop(s)	2	park [Cutts Close]	schools &
no empty shops		quiet	Oakham in bloom

Negative 'other' comments

Town Centre Improvements	
appalling state of pavements	dying : pavements need refurbishing
uneven paths	safety concern at pavement edges with mobility scooter
footpaths need sorting, including cobbles not tarmac to castle	safety issues crossing at Church St and for children at library
safety need for crossing from the Lodge	lack of benches
don't feel safe - young and vulnerable	drains smell West End
need to attract visitors	post office queues
parking on pavement	poor access to Post Office
maternity services	poor public transport, miss the hourly bus
medical services (?)	cash points on a Sunday
difficult to get pushchairs around	
Parking	
can wait too long for car park	have to know where car parks are
car parks should be free to encourage people to a) come and b) stay	paying for parking puts people off. Stow on the Wold and Witney both have free parking, we should or it kills trade
need free parking, because I work so difficult	too much infill building instead of car parks
Railway crossing	
traffic bad due to level crossing	stuck in traffic at crossing can affect enjoyment
level crossing **x 3**	

Retail Mix including Charity Shops	
more affordable clothes shops no affordable shoe shops need more shops for youngsters & affordable clothes nowhere to buy kids clothes & underwear more shops for children charity shops **x 11** estate agents **x 2** too many estate agents, charity shops, hairdressers	more chain shops shops dead - no choice too many pubs no greengrocers too many charity shops **x 4** too many charity shops & hairdressers too many estate agents, hairdressers, charity shops
Market	
market market dwindling	market declining x 3 market too small, not enough choice
Leisure	
need cinema & bowling alley not enough for teenagers	events not directed at young

From the Oakham Town Visitors Survey

Positive 'other' comments

beautiful museum, terrific guide
calm
charity shops
come to the new parenting classes at Children's Centre because better than Stamford
loved every minute, so much to do
lovely flowers
no national chain shops
not too busy, relaxing
park good air bnb place
unique, self-sufficient, individual shops
unspoilt
sitting out, quiet (positive)

Negative 'other' comments

car park signs hidden by trees
signage **x 3**
signage – parking
signage for toilets **x 2**
public toilets – cleanliness
uneven pavements
uneven pavements
lovely, but miss Furleys
lack of visible police
modern buildings (negative)
West End

What two improvements would encourage you to use the town centre more?

From the Town Users Survey

Town Centre Improvements	
outdoor seating areas	more greenery
semi-pedestrianised but with parking	better (old style) architecture
improved characterful shop fronts	nicer appearance
lower rent & rates for retail	make more attractive with cycle friendly
police presence w/e evenings - noise & violence	more bike parks
no more big roadworks	mend pavements **x 2**
disabled access	improved pavements
more disabled friendly	mostly pavement potholes
Parking	
free parking **x 5**	less traffic
more free parking **x 3**	less traffic & parking in High St
cheaper parking	slow traffic ban lorries
more parking	get rid of heavy duty traffic
more car parks – flat	traffic chaos jumping lights at train
parking, need more of it	traffic reduction increase civic pride
improve parking	better traffic control
parking	better traffic management **x 2**
more parking in market square	reduce traffic flow away from town centre
better parking	traffic to be directed to by-pass
less on street parking	
Retail Mix	
affordable shops **x 3**	children's clothes shops
cheaper shops **x 2**	more clothing stores, especially
better & affordable shops	cheaper shoe & clothes shops
better / wider / diverse / variety / range of shops **x 4**	more reasonably priced shoe & clothes shops
more affordable shops **x 3**	more reasonably priced clothing shops
better shops **x 5**	more affordable clothes & shoe shops poundland
better clothes shops **x 2**	some affordable clothing chains
affordable clothes shops **x 4**	reasonably priced shoe & ladies
more popular shops for clothes & shoes	better mid-priced shoe & clothes shops
better choice & cheaper shops	more reasonably priced ladies clothing shops
better shops, affordable clothes and national chains	more shoe, clothes
more reasonably priced shops	more clothes shops **x 3**
better variety of affordable shops for young and old	top shop or new look for school clothes
more retail shopping	generic clothing for younger people
more national / high street chain shops **x 3**	retail children's clothing
right shops mid-priced shops	more larger shops for men
no more chains	M&S Food
more independent shops **x 5**	grocery shop on High St
more shops **x 3**	another grocery shop in town centre
shops	vegetable shops
more affordable & variety shops	supermarket on High St
more & better quality shops better access to post office	affordable off licence
more shops for the young people	greengrocers
shops for teenagers	more olde worlde shops
more diversity of shops fewer charity shops	more gift shops
more shops - booksellers, antiques	more market stalls / bigger market **x 2**
less charity shops / too many charity shops **x 2**	better market **x 3**
more variety of shops like Mkt Harborough	more real shops more banks

Public Transport	
bring back 12.30 bus	
better public transport	

Food Outlets	
fast food restaurant for the young	family friendly restaurant
more proper restaurants	cheaper cafés
more restaurants	more restaurants less cafés

Leisure	
recreational activities for children & teenagers	more activity – bowling, dog crèche for town centre
activities for young couples	more events eg beer festivals
teenage friendly things safer places for teens & children	decent swimming pool
leisure activities esp. children's	councils to support events better – advertise
more for children to do & see	more activity eg bands in parks
activities for teenagers	open museum at weekends
cinema **x 5**	exhibitions and events
more things to do - cinema	leisure activities **x 3**
skateboard facility badly designed – it is for BMX, hard for kids with skate boards and scooters	somewhere where people can have coffee and play chess and board games

What two improvements would encourage you to come to Oakham more often?

From the Oakham Town Visitors Survey

Retail Mix	
better selective shops	good shops like Furleys
accessibility more shops	individual shops
more shops and businesses	more independent classy shops
better shops **x 2**	maintain independent shops
better shops more diversity	just great, don't want big national chains on holiday
variety shops **x 2**	more boutique shops
reasonably priced clothes shops	bring back the music shop
shopping offer limited, especially children	prevent out of town developments
more clothes shops for younger people **x 2**	longer shop opening
nice ordinary shops, clothes	larger market
more clothes shops at reasonable prices	market - more communal area
fewer charity shops	market to stay open to afternoon

Parking	
cheaper parking **x 2**	free parking like in other places better
better, more, cheaper parking	better parking **x 4**
more (public) parking **x 3**	parking **x 2**
more parking nearer the shops	

Town Centre Improvements	
signage to go out of town	tourist information
sign posting for hotels	more public information out on view
signage to public toilets / public conveniences **x 2**	daytime activities publicised
signage to toilets / better parking	more flowers (in town) **x 2**
signs to centre / market maps in car park	more benches
better signage, especially of car parks	visible policing
lop tree over the long stay carpark sign	keep its identity

Leisure	
leisure activities	more things for kids family events
more leisure activities	more things to do
leisure facilities - bowling	cinema
more leisure facilities eg. sports centres, leisure complex eg. bowling	ability to turn up at cinema for show without pre-booking
Food Outlets	
quieter places to eat	more cafés - basic prices
better food outlet	more gluten free dining
Public Transport	
public transport about transport	
better public transport different	
Traffic Management	
better crossing nr level crossing railway crossing without queues less traffic / zebra crossing crossings x 2 road bridge over railway eve end of day traffic volume and speed	weight restriction on high st reduce traffic in High Street traffic spoiling high st ensure deliveries are complete by 10.00am resurface Brooke Rd car park [*NB has now been done*]

What two improvements would encourage you to come to Oakham more often?

From the Rutland County Visitors Survey

Retail Mix	
noticed more charity shops	better clothes shops etc
more bookshops more clothes shops -white??	fewer shops closing down, more variety
more clothes shops	better range on market
Parking	
(car) parking **x 4**	more free parking
better (car) parking **x 4**	cost of car parks
more parking **x 2**	parking for motor homes **x 2**
improve layout & parking	parking for bigger vans
park and ride	
Town Centre Improvements	
advertising	better toilet facilities **x 2**
better signage	street too narrow
better signage for car park	improved pavements, worried about tripping
signage promoting the town from Rutland Water	dog-friendly pubs
Leisure	
museum, castle	prettier more nightlife
more entertainment / events **x 2**	nice area
more to do	always enjoyed
not a lot for kids	

From the Business Confidence Survey

What are the local pressures facing your business which are out of your control?

Rents, Rates & Financial Issues	
Business rates too high driving locals out of town	High rents make expansion difficult
High business rates	High rents **x 3**
Outrageous business rates	Rent
Business Rates **x 2**	Affordability of premises in Prime Locations.
Rates **x 4**	Lack of quality staff
Rates and Overheads	Living wage. . .
Rental / business rate costs **x 3**	Pensions
Rates are not applicable for me but I appreciate their impact on other businesses.	Lack of suitable office space may force a move to another town to enable expansion
Lack of Support from Councils	
Local authorities not working together	Government cuts
The County Council. Neglect of business. Groups are set up then fail due to apathy	The Council working against business such as one way system
Lack of confidence that council is making the right decisions in the interests of retailers	Town Council only appear interested in "Golden Triangle" : Church St.-High St.-Market Place-Mill St.
Unhelpful council	National economy and lack of proactive support from RCC
Councillors not listening to local business people	Council wasting money
Government changes to legislation affecting landlords	Brexit
In the short time I have been trading in Oakham, I have noticed a huge divide between Mill Street and the rest of the town. Nice if you have a business there and can afford to shop there. Why isn't there any promotion of important independent businesses in the Rutland Living who cannot afford to advertise? Money begets money and Oakham is losing independent stores because they are not promoted because they cannot afford to advertise. There are very wealthy people in this area and then there are normal hardworking people who cannot afford the housing, cannot afford the upmarket shops and from talking to them in my shop, they feel like they are left with the option of charity shops and ever dwindling independent shops that cannot survive.	Oakham doesn't need a one way system, it needs a drastic overhaul of its high street stores so people can afford to trade, maybe not in the conventional sense any more, but offer pop-up options. Look at changes to business contracts so that those who would like to trade could manage to do so. We can't keep blaming the downturn in Retail on the internet, people will buy on-line if there are no independent shops to go to, then where will your 'potential' tourist customers and 'potential' local customers go?? There are really talented people in the area and town who would be a real asset if they had the opportunity - give them a chance and promote them. My shop will be available in October, let's hope the next tenant has more luck.
Low Footfall	
During prolonged roadworks, nearly the whole of 2017, people stopped shopping in Oakham and haven't returned. They formed new buying patterns, which happens very quickly. We need to find a way to get people back, hence the 'shop-local' suggestion.	I have only been open for 14 months. The first 6 months were OK but the 2nd six months up until this past month have been awful. Much less footfall. The road works made a massive difference to a point where my takings were down by half.
getting people to shop on the high street	Quietness of the town
Attract more people into town	Footfall is dropping / declining footfall **x 2**
Lack of bus services for older clients	No passing trade at this end of town
Economic issues=poor spending	Very poor footfall at this end of town
Weather	Footfall
The Location	Lack of footfall / Poor footfall **x 3**
Customer flow	Less people coming into town as no reason
Local perception that Northgate is "Out of the way" or hidden	The lack of people through the town. Dropped off dramatically since Christmas.

Competition	
Other salons opening	Internet / Online shopping x 6
Supermarkets / Superstores x 2	Local perception that everything is cheaper online
Competition from BP M&S on bypass	Lure of internet shopping
Charity Shops	Mobile traders
Competition from quantity of Charity Shops	Local competition
Too many charity shops and decline of independent retailers	Attraction of customers to Oakham from surrounding towns

Parking	
Lack of / Availability of (car) parking &c x 9	Cost of parking / car park charges x 3
Lack of free or cheap parking	We need more free parking !!!!!
Increase car parking (in centre) x 2	Immediate parking restrictions.
Parking (issues) x 4	Ability to have customer car park
Parking (charges and lack of it)	1 hour fee parking removed?
Town planning-parking. Lack of space for van outside.	Parking. Can we have a business parking permit.

Retail Mix	
Poor mix of retail shops (too many of the same type)	Too many opticians
Insufficient choice for shoppers means they go elsewhere	Too many charity shops

Traffic Management	
Local road closures x 3	Any roadworks in the town has a significant impact on our turnover. We relocated our shop from Melton in Dec 2017 and did well until the roadworks started. Since they have finished our turnover has dramatically increased. We would not have been able to keep the shop open if these had continued for much longer. We are therefore against any unnecessary major works that have an impact on the traffic flow through the town and discourage people from visiting.
Long term digging up of main road	
Works in area, gas/road/water	
Seemingly endless traffic restrictions-works which are deterring clients	
Footfall used to be good, but lots stopped coming with the prolonged roadworks and never came back.	
Traffic Management	
Potential one way system	
Poor state of paved areas and street furniture	Train Crossing is a negative aspect

What two suggestions would you make to improve the town's economic performance?

Retail MIx	
More shop variety (no more charity shops and cafés)	Better shops in town
Less / stop / reduce number of Charity Shops x 4	Improve / increase / wider mix of retail shops x 8
Less charity shops and cafés / coffee shops x 2	Increase quantity of retail shops
Better selection of shops with far fewer charity shops	Increased mix of desirable shops
Stop any more Charity Shops/Cafés/Hairdressers opening	Improve / encourage mix of Independent retail shops and attract (national) chains x 2
Reduce quantity of Charity Shops & Estate Agents	Encourage more big name chain stores
More footfall. Fill vacant shops.	Encourage more quality national chains to open
Have the market all down the High St. when it's the Farmers Market	Better retail mix including attracting nationwide chain to stimulate more independents
More affordable shopping	Improved Retail Offering
No empty shops	Reduce quantity of same type of shops
More shops (fill empty ones)	Stop Superstores
More Market Shops and Pubs	Get rid of big multi nationals and supermarkets
Allow street traders May to September	

Public Transport
Add more bus services
Better public transport

Traffic Management	
Improve traffic flow	Keep two way traffic
Improve traffic management	Keep two-way traffic through the High St.
Sorting roads and public transport	Keep High St. open to traffic
Traffic management	Banning HGVs from town except for deliveries
Make town one-way/pedestrianised	"I strongly disagree with making Mill St one-way, it would kill the businesses. I feel something needs to be done to improve the High Street and would agree with an East to West one-way system."
One-way system	
Better Strategic Planning, so roads not dug up for months on end	
Town Centre Improvements	
Refurbish High St	Resurface the roads and restyle the market square
Improve town centre	Suggest a Council run shop-local initiative drive
Pedestrianised area within town	Tidy up streets from crossing to Wilko's
Improve signage	Improvement of appearance from crossing to Willco
Instead of talking about it, being negative and not spending the allocated money, Get on with it!	Increase footfall Refurbish High St
Tourism and Promotion	
Better / improve tourist promotion **x 2**	Play to the town's strengths i.e. historic
Better notification / promotion of events **x 2**	Incentives to bring trade back, events/things to do
Town Marketing (tourism)	Encourage more businesses in town to open on Sundays
Improved tourist promotion nationally	Castle & museum to be open every day in the summer
Better promotion of what Oakham has to offer (i.e. Melton Leaflet)	More events in Oakham to bring in the locals and attract tourists
Advertising for Oakham to bring more people into the town	The more events that bring people into Oakham the better
Events, activities to attract more youth	People
Parking	
Increased quantity of car parking **x 13**	Parking for Business owners and staff
Better / improved parking **x 3**	Employee parking free or reduced cost
Better on street parking	Would like to have employee car parking
Cheaper car parking / reduce parking costs **x 5**	Increase off-street parking
More and cheaper parking **x 4**	Better parking for customers
Cheaper parking. 1 hr free!!	Improved parking including longer free time
Cheaper off-street car parking and free on-street parking for longer	Increased quantity of parking for workers in town at an affordable rate
More free parking with no charge to access on the High Street	Affordable parking Rethink cost of parking, we want people to linger
Free parking **x 7**	Lower parking charges or free to encourage footfall
More parking free **x 3**	Free parking area on Market Days
Improved car parking – reduced price or FOC for short durations	Introduction of 2hr parking on the street - as in Uppingham
Free parking for (at least) 2 hours **x 2**	Saturday parking at nominal charge for all day (removes pressure from shoppers allowing them to relax and stay)
Parking **x 3**	
Availability of parking	
Support for Local Business	
Lower / cheaper Rents and Rates **x 3**	Help for smaller businesses
Business Rates rises and cost	More office space needed in/near town centre
Lower / cheaper / concessionary business rates **x 4**	Build affordable office space
Lower business rates on High St (to reduce business closures)	Encourage more independent shops (low rates to incentive)
Rents & Rates to be more attractive to retailers	More employment on outskirts of town
Make High Street premises affordable to Independents	More low rent shops/units for new businesses
Reduce rates for High St	Incentivise SM's & business owner
Affordable rent to allow more independents	