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OAKHAM TOWN TASK AND FINISH GROUP

Thursday 16 August 2018, Council Chamber, Catmose

PRESENT: **MEMBERS**

Mr D Bottomley	Oakham Town Council
Mr B Callaghan	Ward Member – Oakham South East
Mrs J Clough	Oakham Residents Group
Mr A Dewis	Oakham Town Partnership
Mr J Dale	Ward Member – Oakham North East
Mr P Dowse	Oakham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Grp
Mrs J Fox	Ward Member – Exton
Mr A Mann	Ward Member – Oakham North West
Mr C Wade	Independent Chairman

OFFICERS PRESENT:	Mrs H Bremner	Strategic Communications Advisor
	Mr S Ingram	Strategic Director for Places
	Mrs J Morley	Governance Officer

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr R Gale and Mr T Norton

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2018 were approved by the group.

3. ACTIONS FROM LAST MEETING

During discussion of outstanding items the following comments were made:

<u>Signage in the town to be photographed for circulation to group and discussion at a future meeting</u>

- As Mr Gale was absent from the meeting this item was carried forward. **RG**
- The signage could be clearly seen on Google maps and images could be taken from this.
- An effective way of assessing the effectiveness and prominence of the town's signage would be to invite people from another town to record it.

Youth Survey Work

- This item was on hold until the beginning of next term as it was going out under the aegis of Catmose College. **JC**
- The questions had been devised with the help of the focus group and results would later be fed in using survey monkey.

Revise map to include Tesco and Wilko

- Tesco and Wilko had been included in the business classification but clarification was sought as to whether they had physically been drawn on the map. **NT**

4. RESEARCH UPDATE INCLUDING PRESENTATION OF EVIDENCE

Town centre visitor and user surveys

Mrs Clough provided a brief overview of the work done on the town centre visitor and user surveys. During discussion the following points were noted:

- The surveys had all been completed and data uploaded. Mrs Clough was in the process of analysing the results and writing the reports which would be completed by 24 August. **JC**
- There would be 2 reports, one showing the town users and the other combining the visitor surveys
- On first view, the data looked very interesting and would bust a few myths about the town.
- Data showed that visitors that came for the day to Rutland water did not usually visit the town centre.
- It was suggested that because of the tight deadlines that another meeting be added to the schedule, preferably two weeks after the 19 September meeting so that all evidence gathered could be analysed together. **NT**

Performance Indicators including business audit, car parking and footfall.

Mrs Clough had collated the information on performance indicators and produced extra reports (appended to the minutes) which had been circulated to the group. During discussion the following points were made:

Footfall

- The data showed that when compared to other small towns, footfall on the high street was greater than average but that in other locations it was lower.
- It was suggested that those who walked into town cut through to the High street using Gaol Street and other routes, and did not pass other retail streets.
- Mill Street was considered a destination location rather than a thoroughfare. Many visitors to the town were unaware of the Mill Street offer.
- One of the challenges would be to get people moving around the different streets and it may be that an ambition of the group would be to increase the footfall to other areas by a third.
- The Chairman commended Mrs Clough and her team on the depth of

the data collated and the quality of its presentation.

Parking

- There was a national recommendation that car parks should aim to be 75-85% full to achieve an optimum level as this maximized revenue whilst still allowing visitors to get a space.
- Data revealed that there was fluctuating levels of occupancy during the day and between car parks but that the hours of 10.30 and 3.30pm were peak occupancy levels for all of the car parks.
- Across all 7 car parks during this time there would only be 30 spaces which meant that, at certain times, visitors would be unable to park.
- In time this will merit further investigation and discussion, e.g. there will be a domino effect of moving one group on such as dispersing workers from residential, on-street parking areas.
- Parking options needed to meet the needs of all of the different types of users.
- Mrs Fox asked Mr Ingram whether he could obtain any analysis or data from SKDC that showed how effective or not, the offer of free parking over the Xmas period in Grantham had been. **SI**
- There were always pros and cons to introducing parking schemes. Free parking meant that spaces didn't turn over.

Online Survey to find Town Non-users

- The four questions at the beginning of the draft on-line survey mirrored the previous survey.
- At 19 questions it was felt that the survey was too long and needed editing. People who had no commitment to the town wouldn't take the time to answer that many questions. **PD/HB**
- 10 questions was considered to be the optimum amount for a survey
- Mentioning issues such as the roadworks would usually elicit a negative response. It would be preferable to use open questions and ask what the 'barriers' to coming into the town were.
- The survey audience would be targeted using facebook and through the member organisations. **HB/DB**
- A prize could be offered to get sufficient engagement and offer an incentive to complete the survey. However an incentive may encourage those outside of the target market to complete it and therefore skew the results.
- Town *users* could be analysed to assess their age profile and where they were from and then any gaps could be identified. These 'gaps' could then be targeted by the online survey. **JC**
- In addition this could be checked against the demographics of Oakham to find out what groups were not represented.
- People could be targeted through 'Your Rutland' which had 5000 email addresses. The survey would miss the next edition of Your Rutland but a special edition could be sent out.*

**NB. Please note that Mrs Bremner has subsequently advised that due to GDPR the survey could not be sent out using the 'Your Rutland' email but a general press release could be sent instead.*

- It would be preferable to set up the survey using Survey Monkey so

that the collation and analysis of the results would be easier.

- Confirmation was sought on whether the Council had a paid account with Survey Monkey as the free account could only deal with up to 100 responses. If the Council did not have a paid account, other companies that could offer a survey monkey service for a single survey as opposed to paying an annual subscription fee, should be identified. **JM/Comms**
- The group were up against severe time restrictions to amend the survey, send it out and get the data back and collated before the next meeting on the 19 September. The following deadlines were therefore put forward;

Survey to be edited, set up on Survey Monkey & approved	- ASAP	**PD/HB/DB**
Survey to be sent out	- 24 August	**HB/DB**
Survey end date	- 07 Sept	
Input and collation of data complete	- 17 Sept	**JC**

Business Survey

- Mr Dewis had delivered the survey to 200 properties north of the town including the Lands End commercial area.
- 58 returns had been received which gave a 29% response rate. If the commercial area had been omitted the response rate would have been much higher at 53%.
- Businesses seemed reluctant to give financial information with many leaving the question on turnover blank and none reporting that turnover had gone down.
- Mrs Clough informed the group that Mr Norton had offered the use of his staff to help input the survey data.
- The business survey data needed to be presented in the same level of detail as the KPI's and needed to be circulated before the meeting on September 19th. **JC**
- There had been a patchy response to the postcode survey with businesses only recording 1 or 2 days or none at all. The Chairman suggested that the group used the data from the 6 Businesses which had gathered the most information, in order that it could be processed and included in the report.
- Every Monday it would be a good idea to have a weekly catch-up on everyone's progress targets. Governance to co-ordinate by email. **NT**
- Mrs Fox asked whether the imminent election in Cottesmore would cause any delays to the timetable. Confirmation that this would not be the case would be sought from the Council's legal officer, Phil Horsfield. **JM**

5. COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

- Mr Bottomley and Zoe would be managing the Facebook page.
- The page was up and live but had not yet been promoted.
- Once the online survey was ready it could be promoted on the Facebook page and the two could be launched in tandem.
- User protocols for the site had been set up and would be circulated to the group. Comments on the detail of these protocols were welcome by email so that any tweaks could be made at the next

meeting. The protocols would be operable however from the launch of the Facebook page.

- To be accepted into the group, the user would have to sign up to a terms of conduct and abide by house rules.
- The Council's Communications Department would be available to offer support and back up with the administration of the site

6. BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT/TIMETABLE

During discussion the following points were noted:

- The Chairman suggested that an informal breakfast meeting would be the best way to engage businesses. Findings to date could then be shared with them.
- Mr Dewis would take the lead on this action as the Oakham Town Partnership had held similar successful breakfast meetings. Mr Dewis would look to arrange a meeting in October and potentially use Oakham School as a venue. Mrs Bremner and Mr Bottomley would be kept informed of progress. **AD**
- The Chair also suggested that each member of the Task and Finish group should consult and get buy-in from their own organisations. This should happen by early October in order to fit with the Council schedule and the scrutiny timetable. **ALL**
- The group now had only six weeks in which to complete a 12 week timetable.
- The report needed to include not only what the issues were and ideas on how they were going to be resolved but also what the organisation that would deliver them would look like, in effect, what would be the successor organisation to the Task and Finish group. **ALL**
- The group needed to drill down on what the report would look like. Whatever stage the group got to, it needed to be clear so that everyone was brought along with it and there was buy-in to the project.
- The report would be a working document that would be reviewed annually.
- Ideally the group needed to get to the stage where the issues were outlined and groups for each section had been organised, together with a proposed group that would oversee the delivery of the project.
- The Chair tabled a proposed recommendation that the Task and Finish Group aims to produce an initial Forward Framework for the town. This would be based on the methodology in the recently published Local Government Association Handbook on Revitalising Town Centres (see note in appendix). It comprises:

    i. Factual evidence base of key performance indicators and user/non-user/business perceptions of issues and priorities.

    ii. Analysis and agreement on priority issues and monitoring indicators to guide project planning by partners and wider stakeholders

    iii. An ongoing communications and engagement plan for broadening understanding, support and involvement of

stakeholders

iv. An outline partnership structure including coordinating group, theme-based delivery sub-groups, partners and responsibilities

v. An initial statement of future resourcing needs for partnership development and project delivery

- The Group accepted these proposals as a good basis for further discussion at the next meeting and the Chair agreed to provide a background paper on the LGA Handbook and methodology for preparing a 'Forward Framework' document (see appendix).

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

8. SUMMARY OF AGREED ACTIONS AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

1.	Signage in the town to be photographed for circulation to group and discussion at a future meeting	**RG**
2.	Youth Survey to be issued and results collated	**JC**
3.	Check physical map has Tesco and Wilko included	**NT**
4.	Town centre and visitor user surveys reports to be completed by 24 August	**JC**
5.	Additional meeting to be organised after September 19th	**NT**
6.	Contact SKDC for data on Xmas free parking trail	**SI**
7.	Edit online survey and format using Survey Monkey ready to issue by August 24th	**HB/PD**
8.	Use Facebook and links to villages and key stakeholder groups such as school parents to promote survey and target audience	**HB/DB/JC**
9.	Confirm Council or other Survey Monkey account for use	**JM**
10.	Presentation of business survey data circulated ahead of meeting on September 19th	**JC**
11.	Arrange Monday updates	**NT**
12.	Confirm that Cottesmore election would not impact on the timetable	**JM**
13.	Arrange breakfast meeting for businesses in late September/early October	**AD**
14.	Consult and get buy in for proposed 'Forward Framework' from own organisations during October	**ALL**
15.	Consider what the final report should like based on recommendations and background paper from Chair	**CW/ALL**

Date of next meeting: 19 September 2018

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The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.00pm

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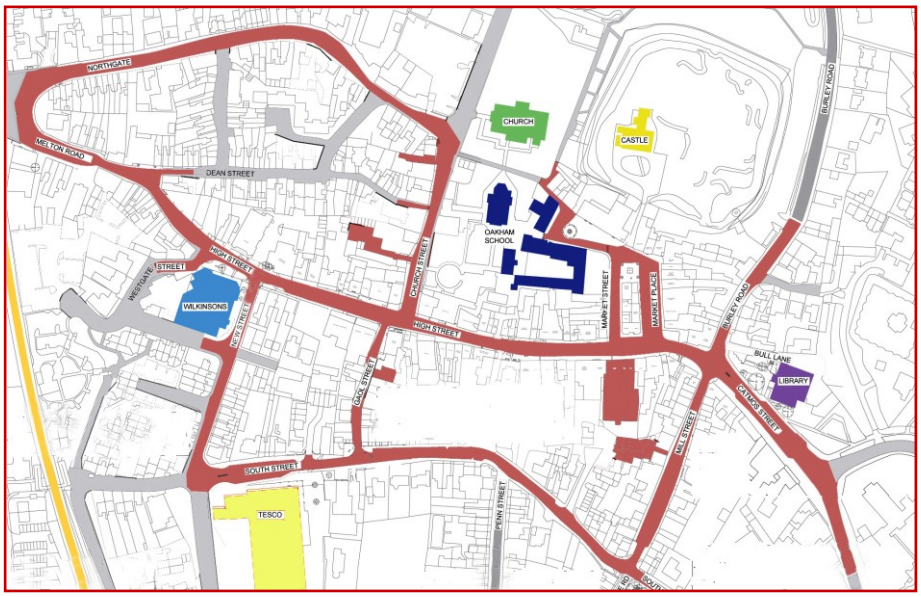
KPI 1, 2 3, 4 Oakham Business Classification Report – Oakham Residents Group – DRAFT

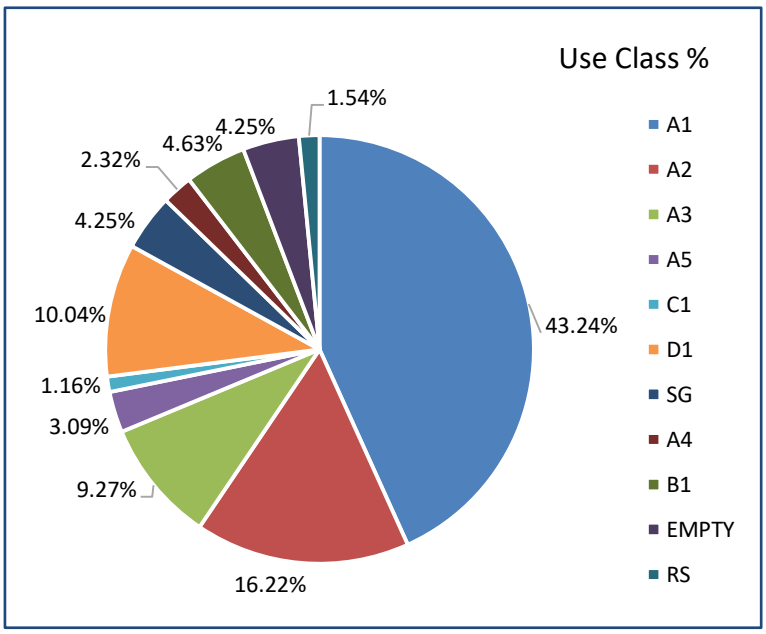
This is an analysis of 259 businesses in Oakham town centre. For the purposes of this report, the parameters of the commercial hub of Oakham have been set as illustrated on the map below. This covers the majority of retail businesses in the town and is done so that parallels may be drawn between these 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.



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



		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 the table 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

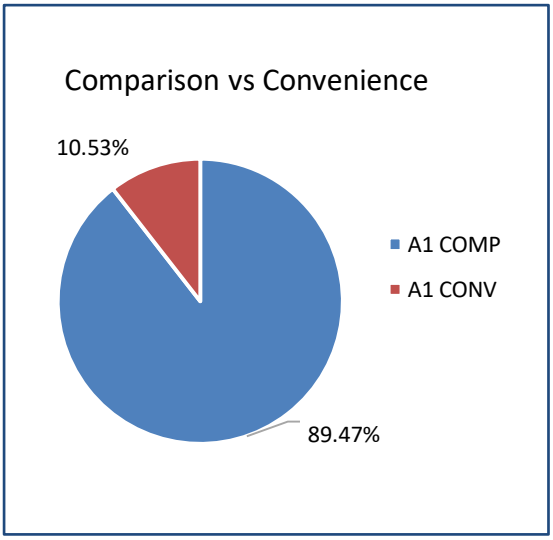
"The presence of a variety of shops in a town centre is important to its ability to remain competitive and continue to attract customers. A balance of both comparison and convenience retail units is therefore ideal in terms of encouraging visitors and potential customers." (*People and Places*)
A1 Retail 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



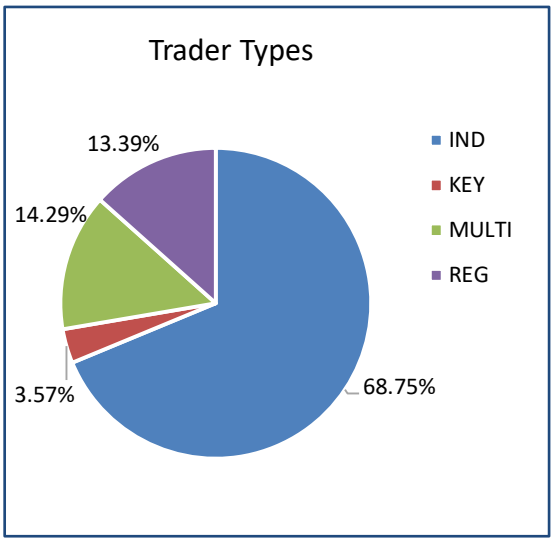
	Oakham 2018 Number	Oakham 2018 %	National Benchmark for Small Towns %
Comparison	99	89 %	82%
Convenience	13	11%	18%
Total	112	100%	100%

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 shops considered Key Attractors by Experian Goad, there are only four in Oakham Town Centre, although there is a Marks & Spencers Food outlet at the petrol filling station on the bypass. At just 4% this is substantially under the 7% national average for small towns.



	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%*

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*)

	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

Oakham Task & Finish Group

Oakham Residents Group

Reports to Oakham Town Task & Finish Group Meeting

16th August 2018

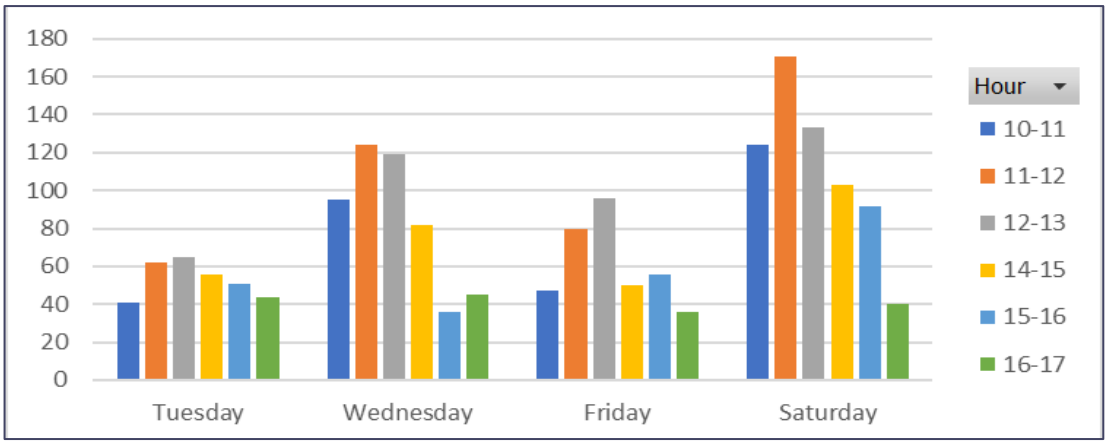
1.	**KPI 5**	**Oakham twice-weekly Market 2018**	**pp2–3**
2.	**KPI 8**	**Oakham footfall survey 2018**	**pp4–6**
3.	**KPI 9**	**Car Parking in Oakham 2018**	**pp7–17**

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

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

Oakham is a 'Market Town' with a market charter dating back to 1252. The market is a vital part of the town's historical identity. Local people feel very strongly about the market, no matter 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 can provide a local mechanism for a diverse range of local enterprises to start, flourish and grow, adding to the sustainable mix of retail services on offer in the town.



Graph showing footfall in the Market Place over four days.

That the footfall average in the Market Place is higher than the other roads off the High Street is entirely due to shoppers visiting the Wednesday and Saturday markets. The graph 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 perhaps 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 etc. There was 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 from this point 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.

	National Small Town Benchmark	Oakham Wednesday Market	Oakham Saturday Market
Average number of market traders	*15*	14	14

In the ORG'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 are added below.

Appendix 1: Comments about the Market 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

2 – KPI 8: Oakham Footfall Survey 2018 – Oakham Residents Group Report

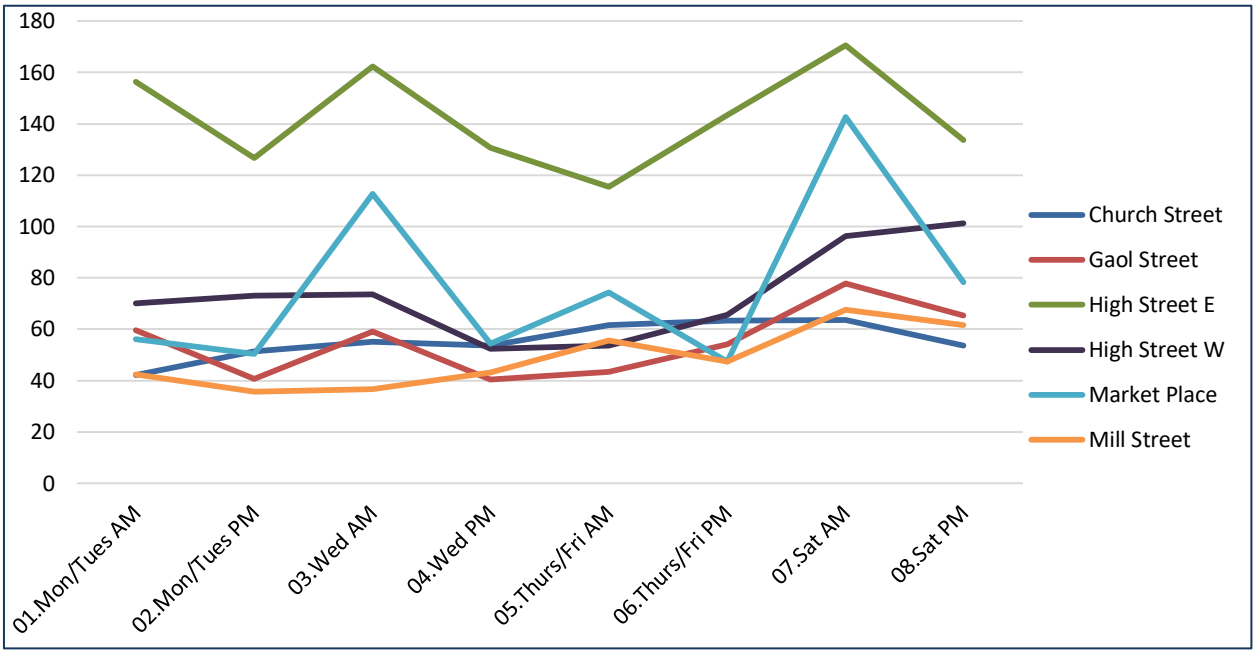
The people who come into Oakham town centre – residents, workers, visitors and shoppers – are vital to the success of the businesses within the town centre. Provided there is adequate available disposable income in the population, the more people who are attracted into the town, the better the trade, 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 taken was 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.



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.

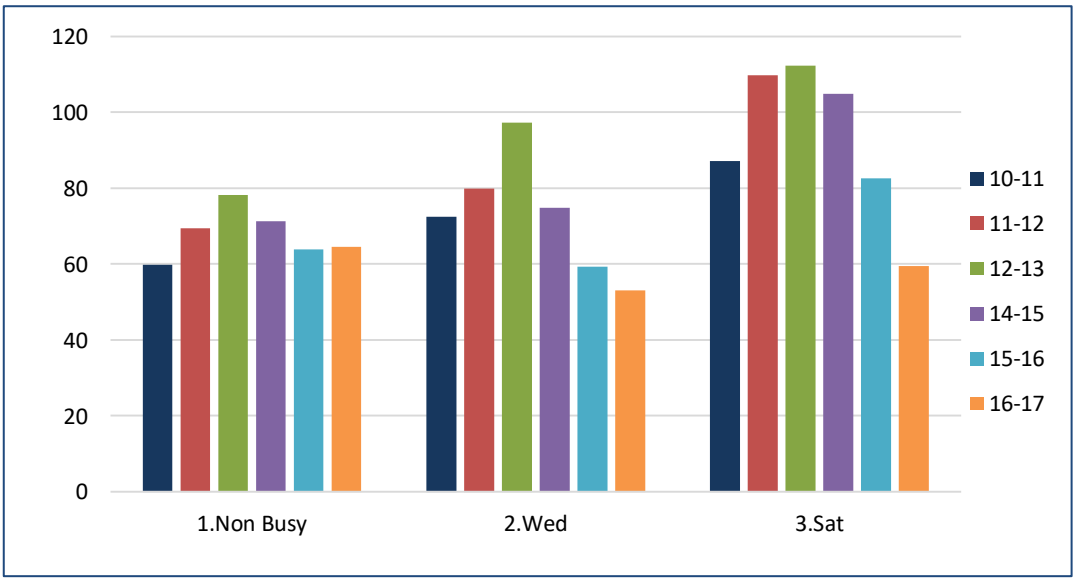
Average number of passers-by per 10 minutes by location taken over four full days					
High St – east	Market Place	High St – west	Church St	Gaol St	Mill St
142	77	73	56	55	49

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.

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

These data indicate that the footfall pattern in Oakham town centre needs 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 improve trade, is an issue which should be explored.

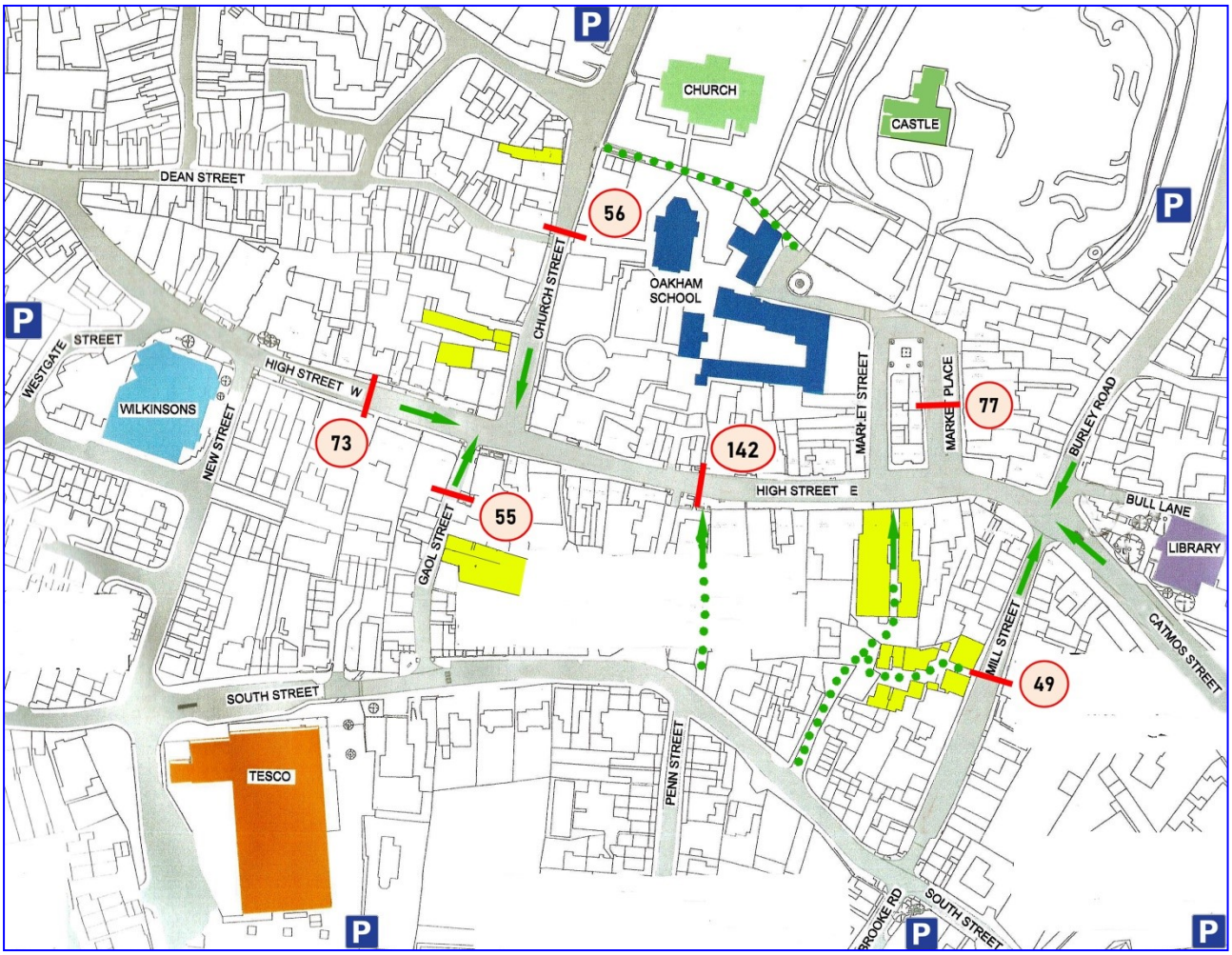
There is a noticeable difference in the average footfall between market and non-market days across the town. On the Wednesday (mid-week) market days the average footfall is 7% higher than on the other weekdays, but on the Saturday market day the difference is considerably higher at 35%. This does illustrate 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.



Graph showing comparison of footfall 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 it starts to drop down, 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 by raising the average figures for the two later afternoon readings on non-busy days.



Oakham Town Footfall Analysis – Average Footfall Results.

Approximate location of footfall count

49 Average footfall count over four days

Town centre car parks (approximate locations)

Pedestrian passages to High Street and Market Place

Pedestrian access along roads feeding to High Street

Off-street shopping arcades and yards

Joy Clough,
Oakham Residents Group
August 2013

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

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, as well as longer 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 into the equation must be factored the needs of town centre residents living in older properties without off-road parking.

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 unequal to 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 one week. Vacant parking spaces were counted at five regular intervals each day, for a full seven days. Whole days were counted, 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! Where you can't park' em!" were regrettably the first words uttered by the BBC One Show presenter who visited Oakham this year for a televised report. It was, otherwise, a very complimentary piece about our County Town. The collected parking data confirm this statement, 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). The on-street parking is yet more stretched to capacity, with only four of the 30 Monday to Saturday time slots registering less than 70% occupancy, again rising to 95% occupancy at times (fig. 2).

We are told 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 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.

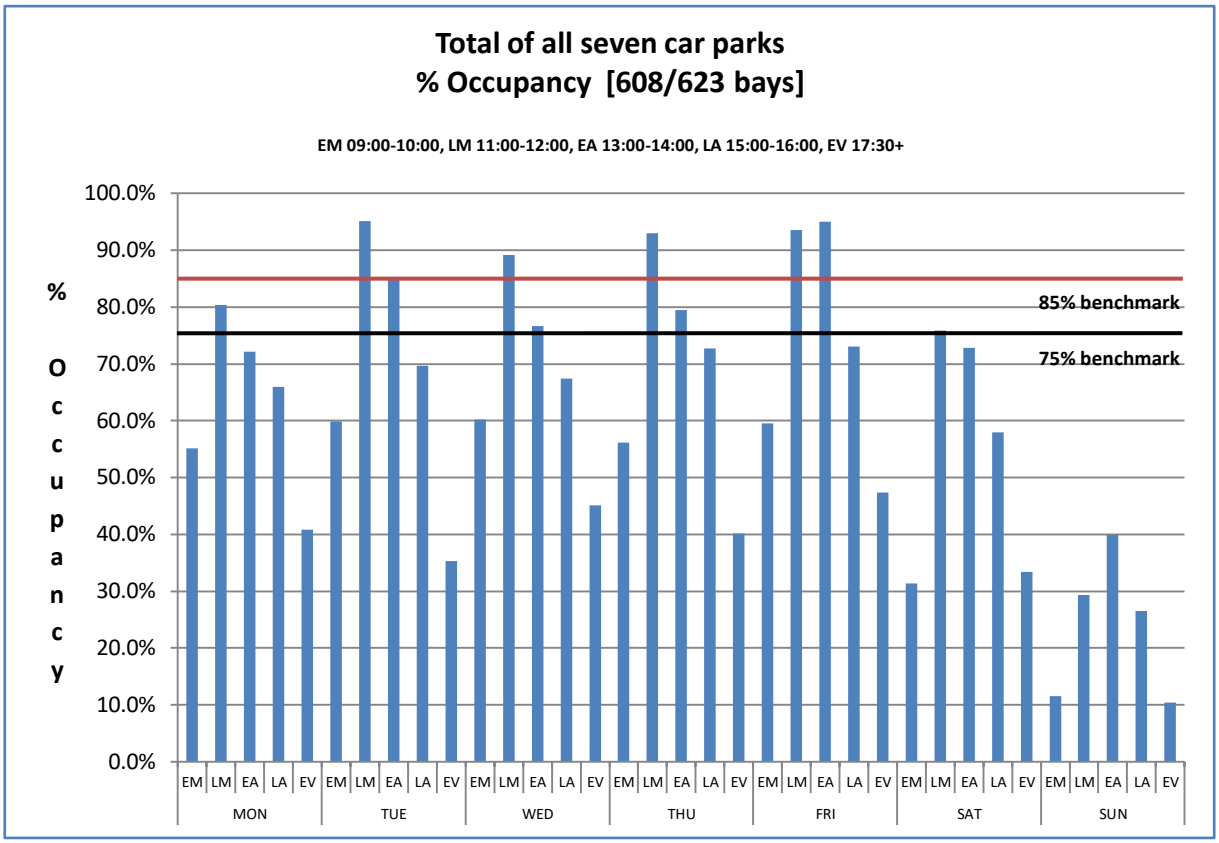


Fig. 1. Graph showing total percentage occupancy of all seven town car parks (608 bays + 15 museum & children's centre bays in South Street car park = 623 bays)

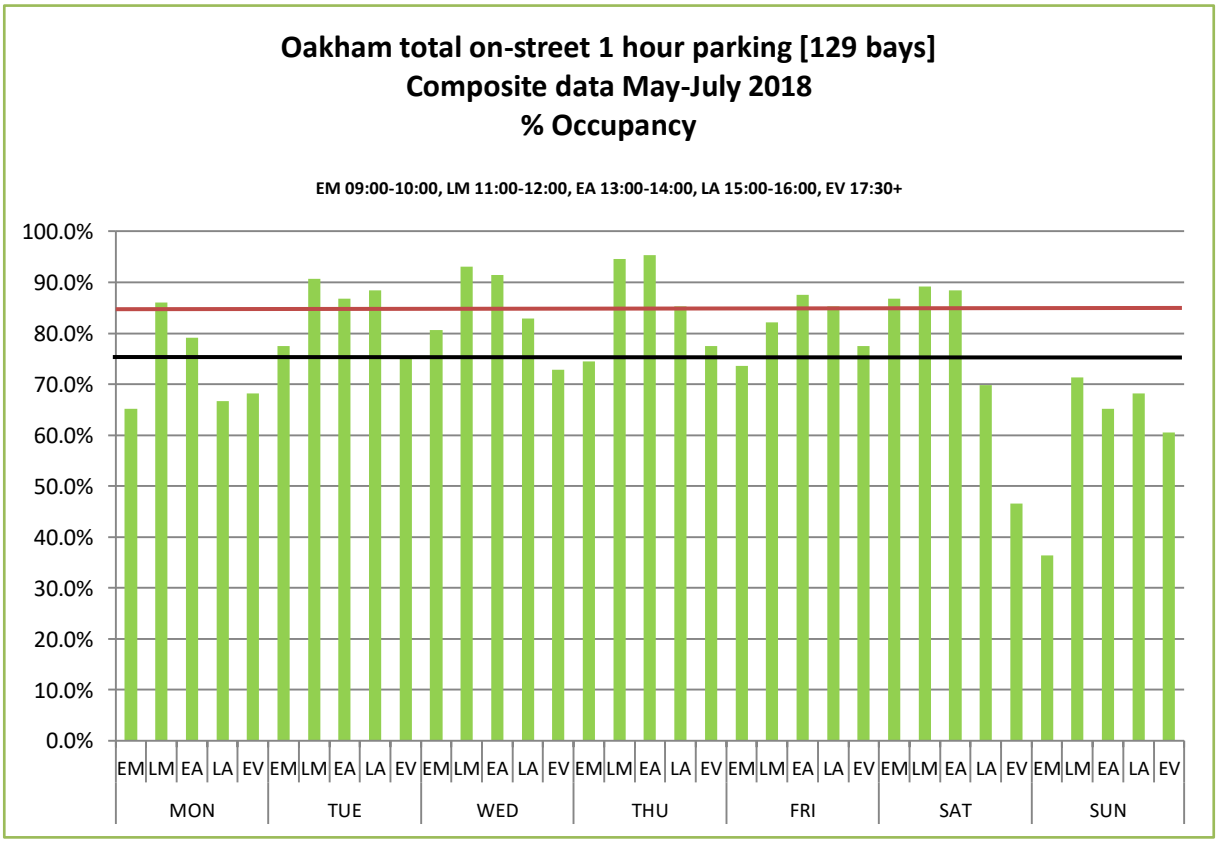


Fig. 2. Graph showing total percentage occupancy of all one-hour limited on-street parking bays

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

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 232 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 24 reserved spaces in an off-road car park beyond the level crossing for Barleythorpe Road residents.

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	147 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	**232 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 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 2 hrs free parking, 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 during their respective operating hours, and two blue badge spaces.

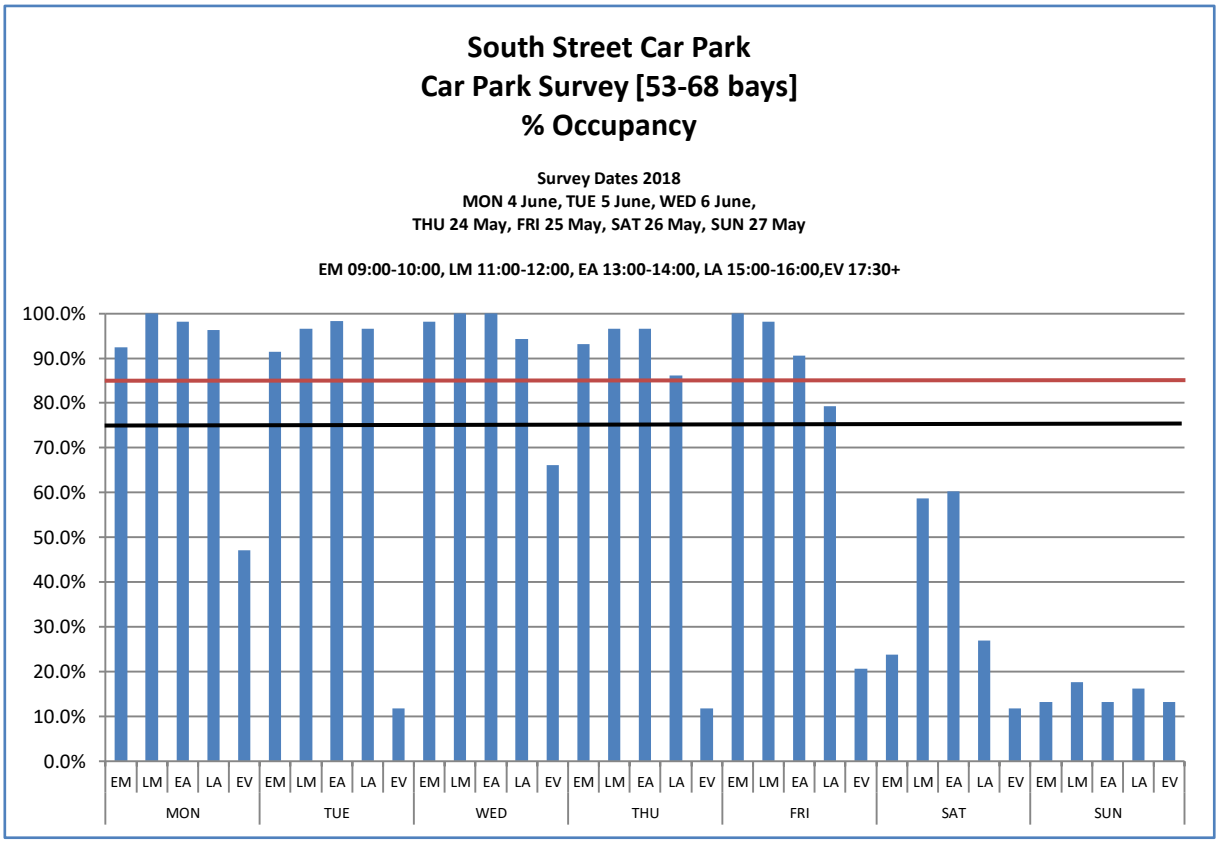


Fig. 3. Graph showing South Street car park occupancy (53 bays + 15 museum & children's centre = 68 bays)

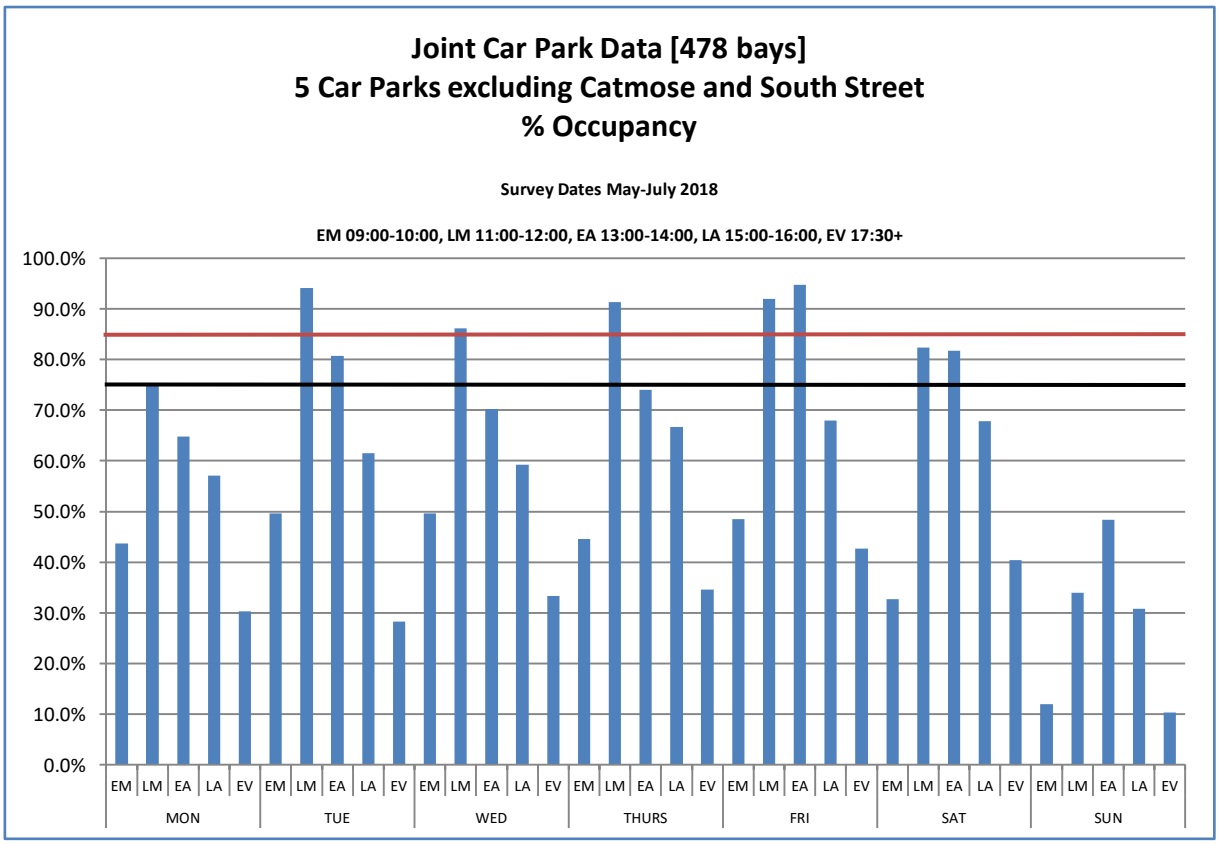


Fig. 4. Composite graph showing occupancy of all car parks apart from South Street and Catmose.

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 solidly 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.

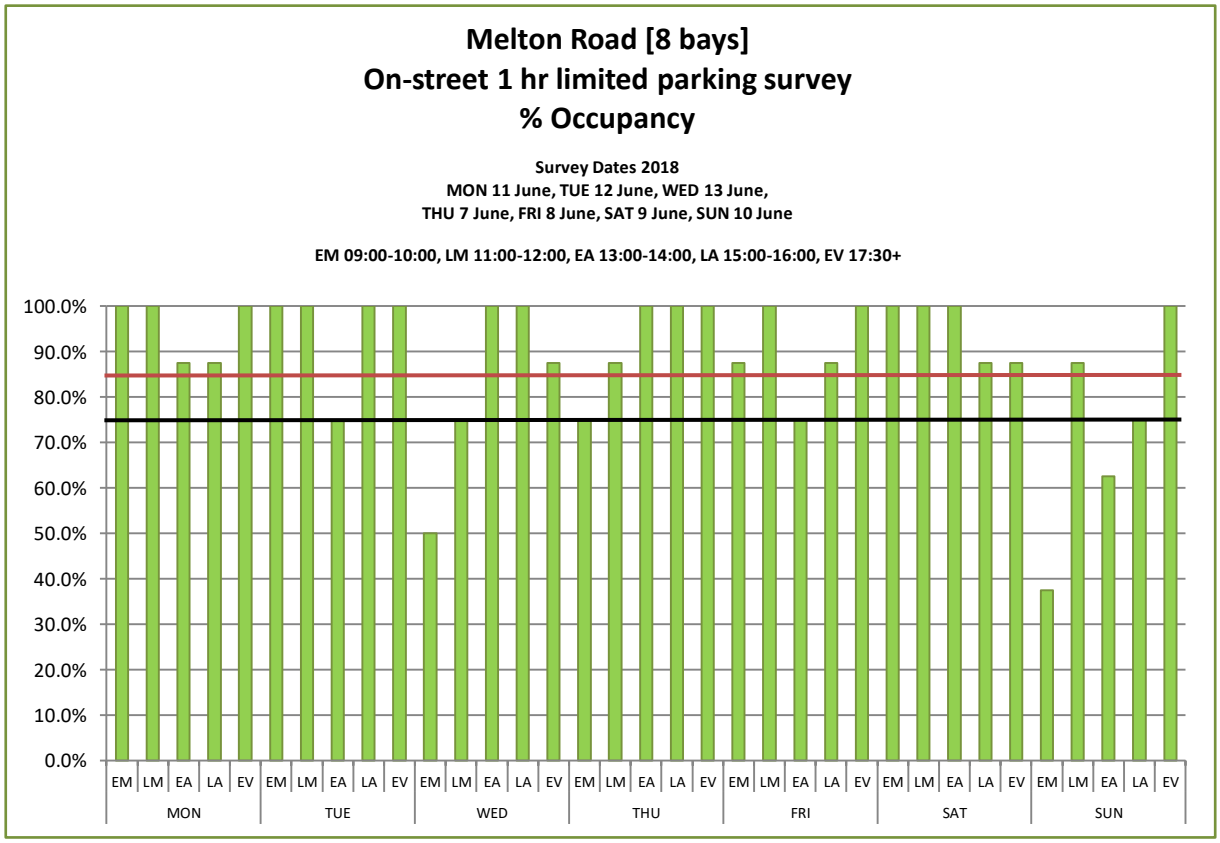
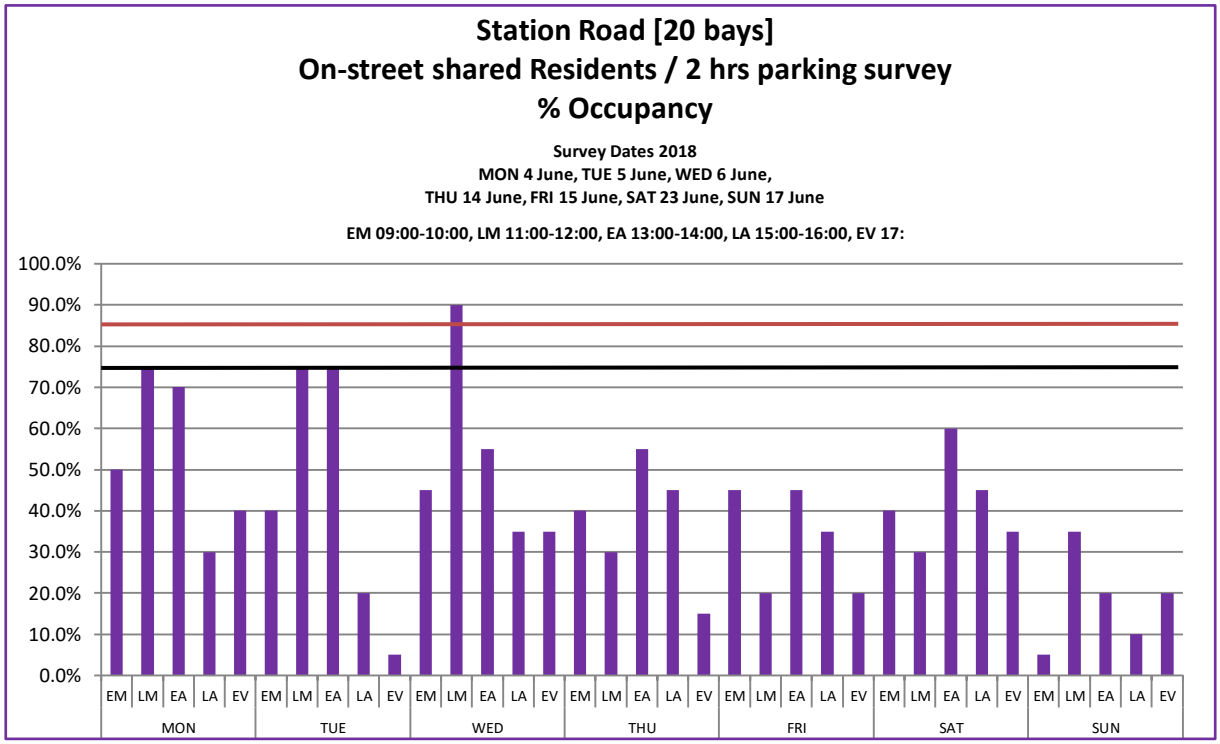
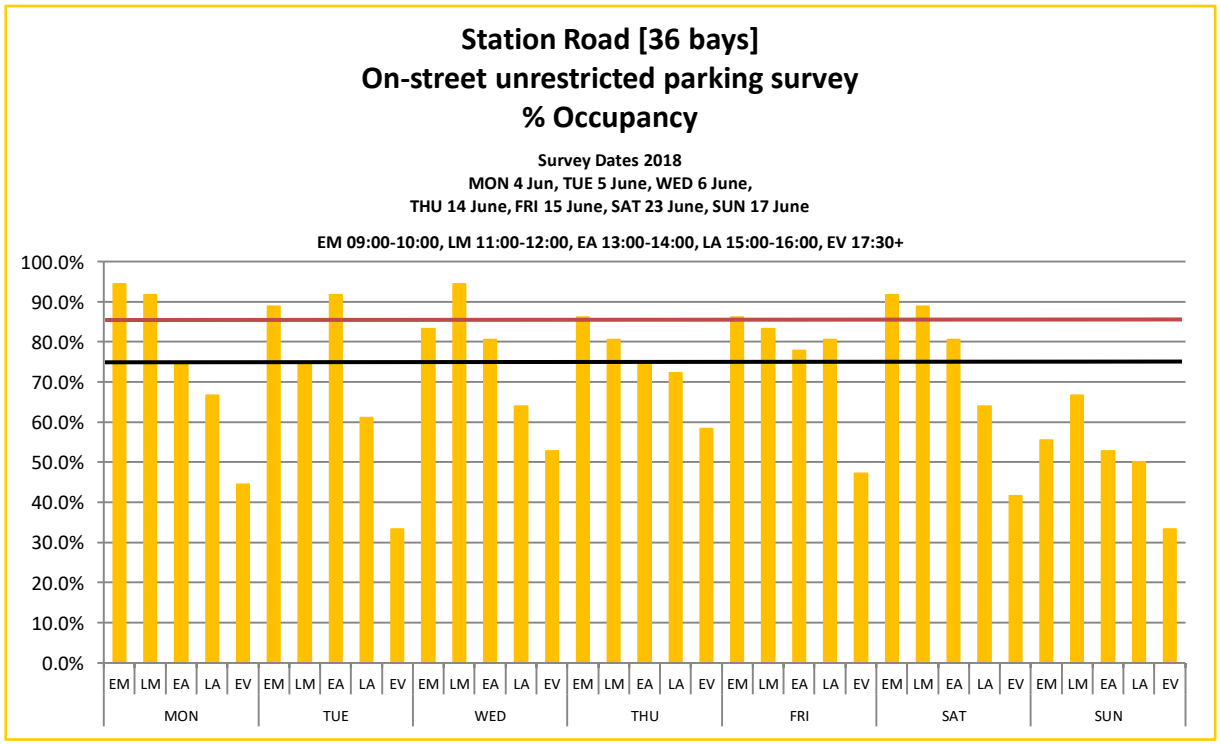


Fig. 5. Graph showing occupancy of Melton Road on-street parking bays

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.





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 (63%) 1hr and of the rest 16% is 2 hrs, 19% unrestricted and 3% blue badge. 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 119 (12%) 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.

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)	189	81%	*82%*
Long stay spaces (unrestricted)	36	16%	*12%*
Blue Badge spaces	7	3%	*6%*
Total on-street spaces	**232**		
Overall available spaces			
Short stay spaces (4 hours and under)	508	54%	*38%*
Long stay spaces (over 4 hours)	389	42%	*53%*
Blue Badge spaces	38	4%	*7%*
Total of all available spaces	**935**		

8. Blue Badge Parking

The other 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).

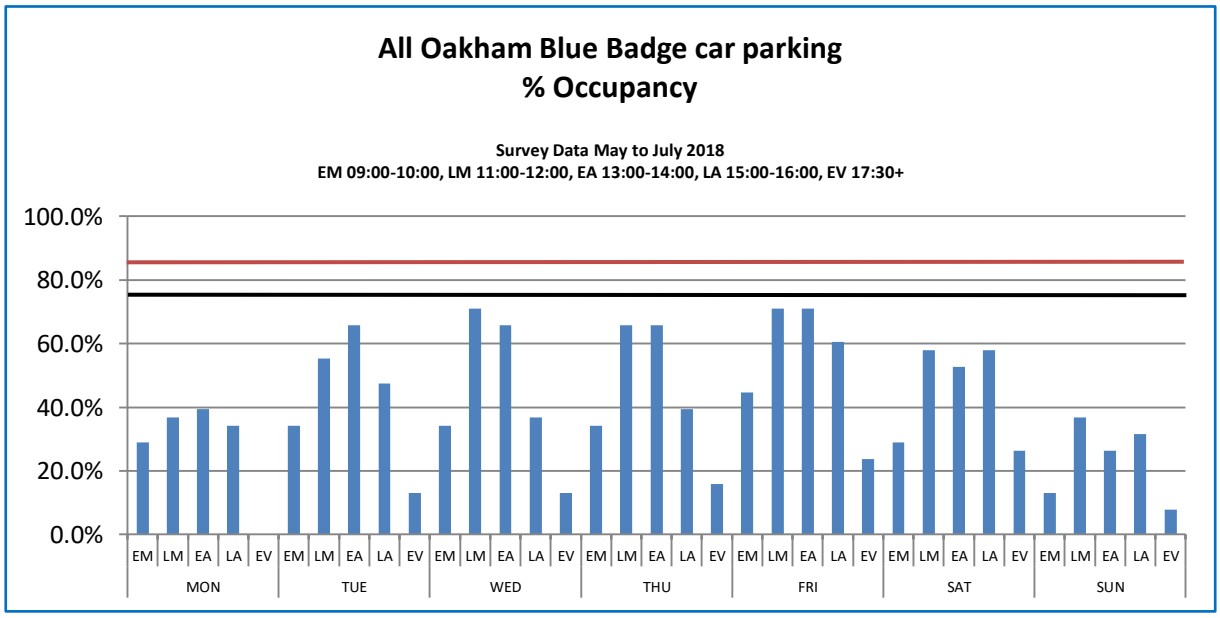
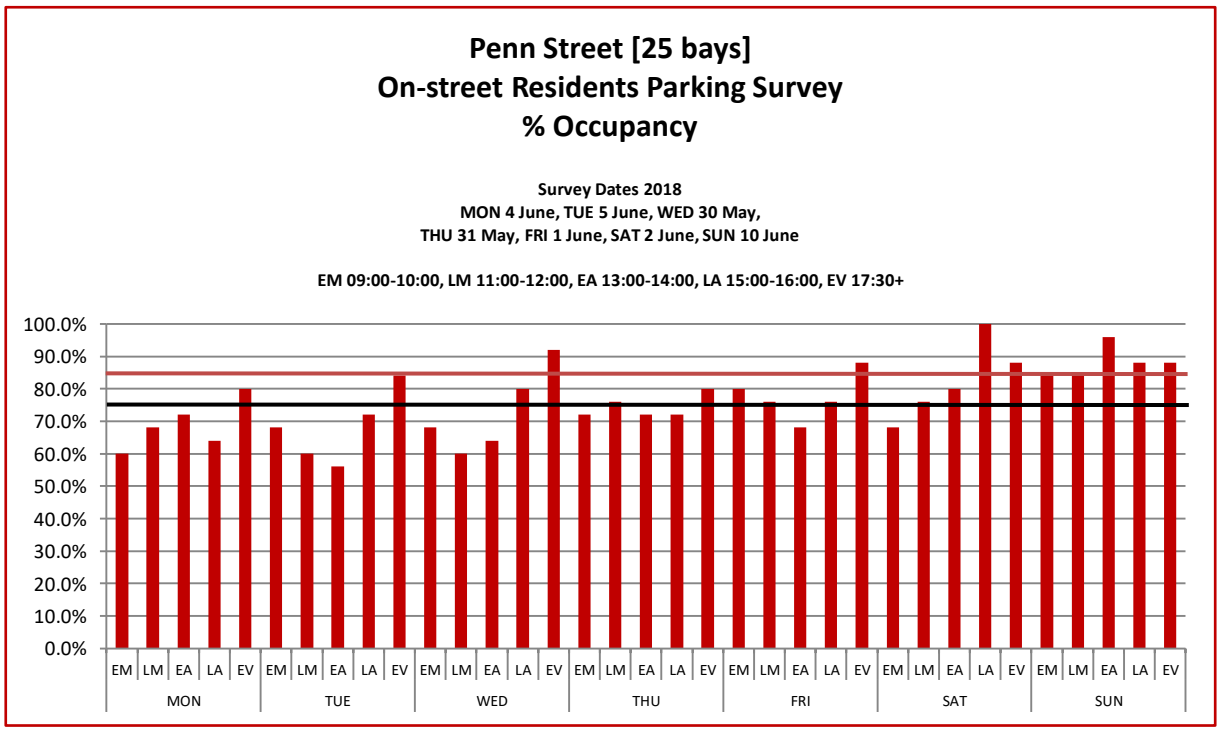
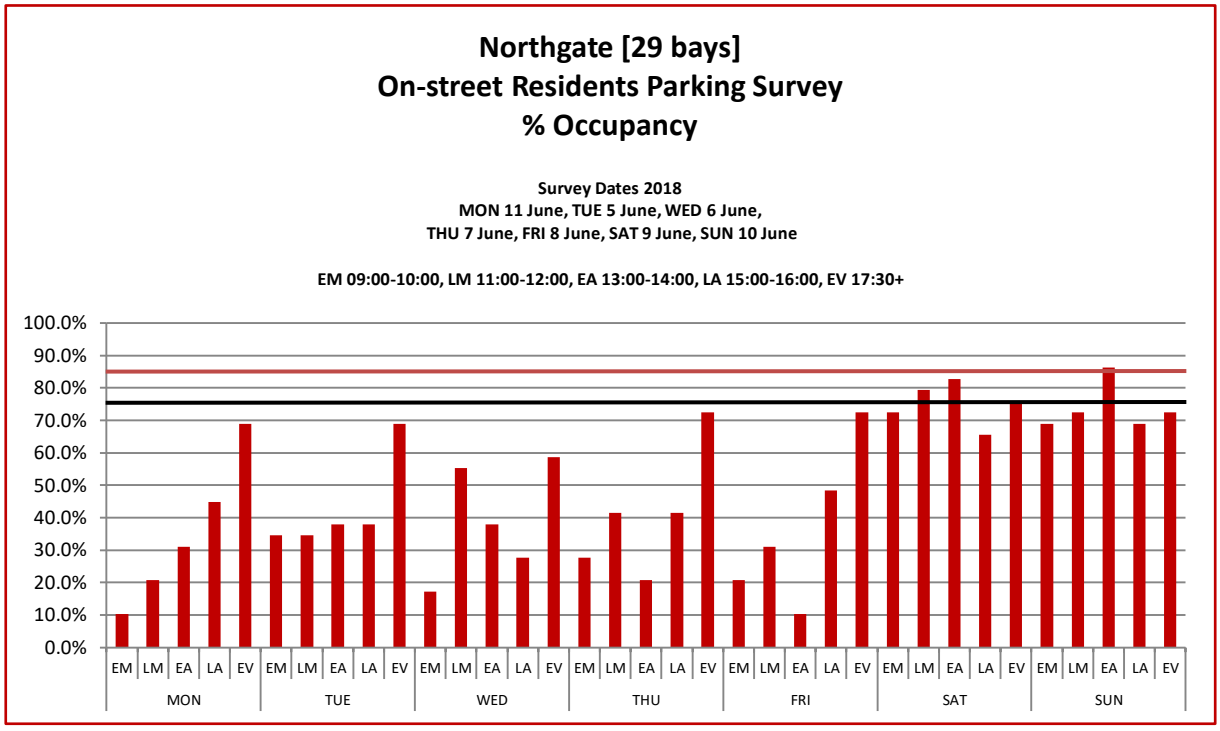


Fig. 8. Graph showing occupancy of all Blue Badge parking spaces in the town

9. Residents' Parking

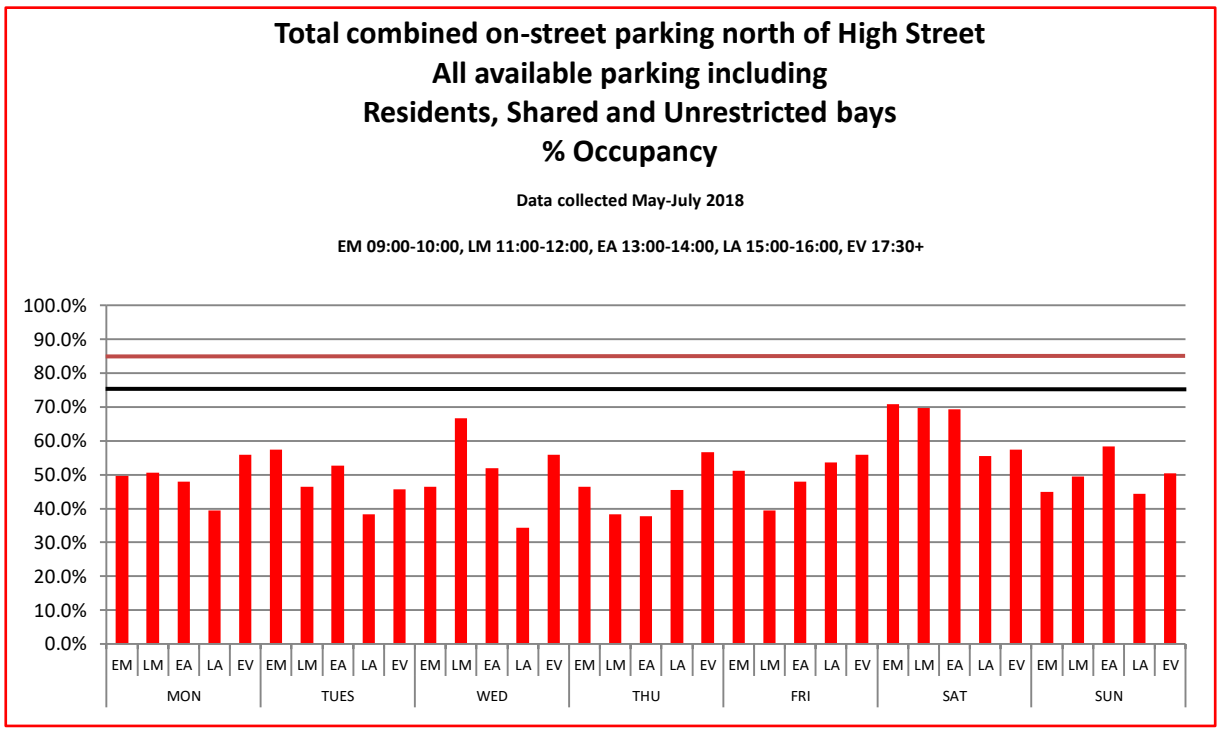
Oakham has many predominantly residential streets within the town centre. Very many of the houses in these streets, as well as a number of flats above retail and business premises, do not have off-road parking. The general pattern of residential parking is that where there is a spread of age groups, 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).

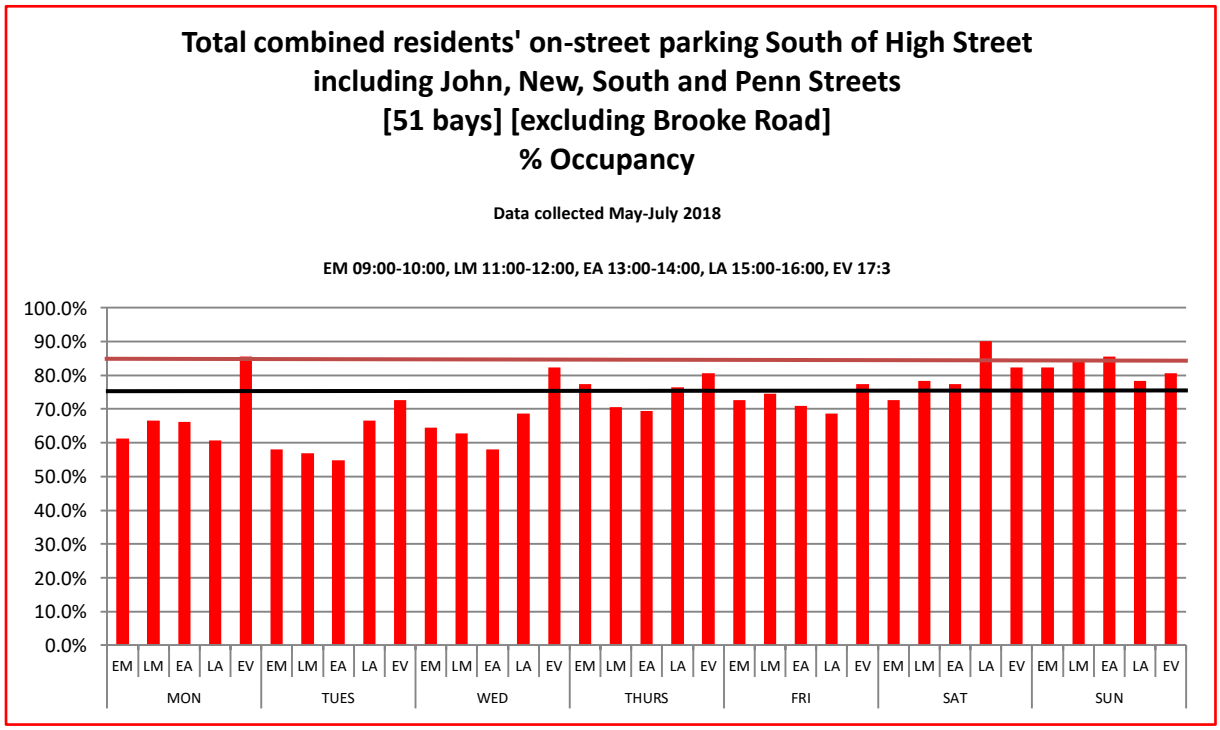




Figs. 9 (above) and 10 (below). Graphs showing the percentage occupancy of Penn Street and Northgate residents' on-street parking spaces

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 northern parking zone. However Northgate and Station Road to the north of the High Street 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 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.

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 is 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. 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

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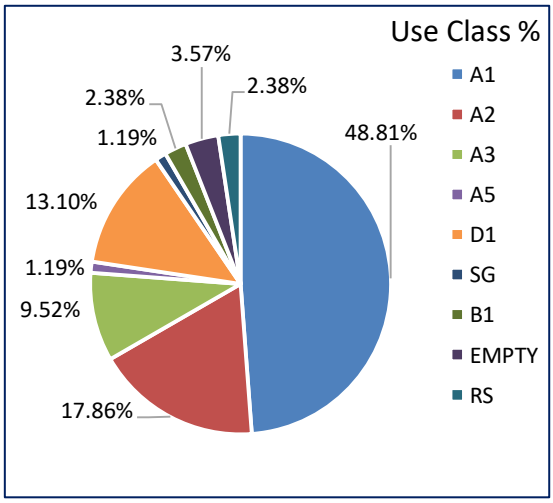
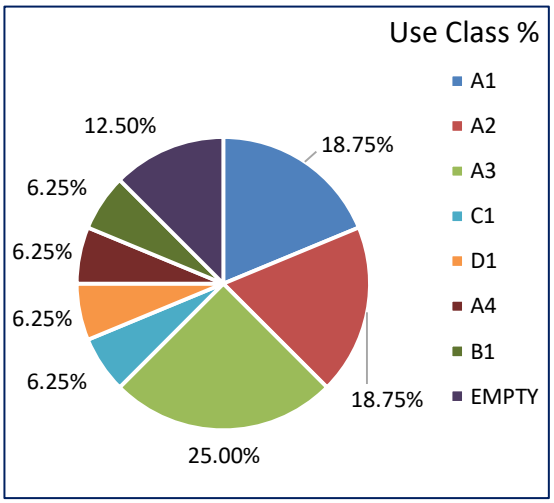
Appendix to KPI 8: Oakham Footfall Survey 2018 – Oakham Residents Group Report

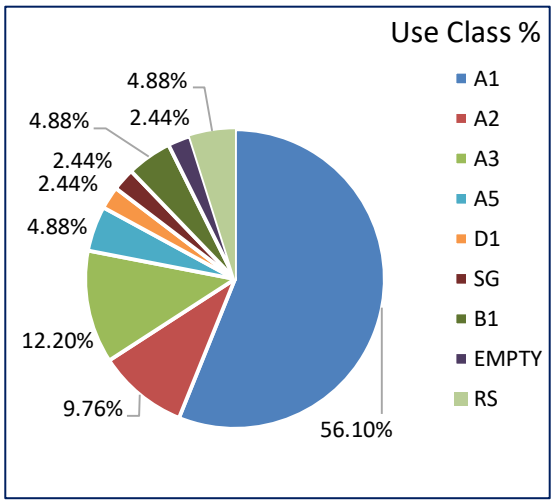
When considering the variation in footfall between the six locations, there is any number of possible reasons, such as: the volume of foot traffic into town along each town centre road from the car parks; the volume of foot traffic from the surrounding housing estates; the adequacy of signage or direction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



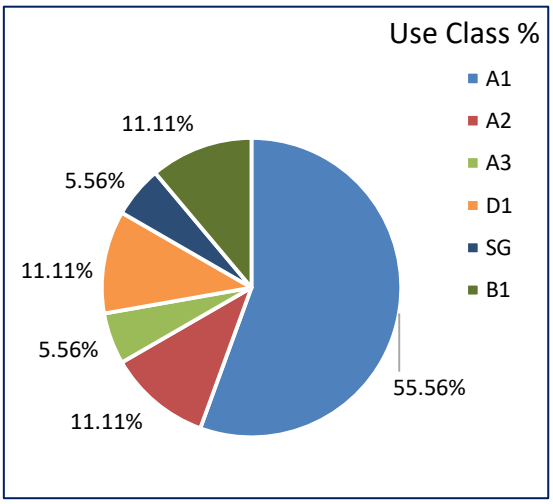
High Street with Crown Walk



Church Street with Bakers Yard



Mill Street with the Maltings



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 is three times that of Mill Street, and yet in the latter there are 23 shops and 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.

		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	

DRAFT- suggested questions for on-line survey to find town centre non-users - 19 questions

OTU 1	**How often do you visit Oakham town centre?** ***Please choose one option only***	◻ Daily ◻ More than once a week ◻ Weekly ◻ Fortnightly ◻ More than once a month ◻ Once a month or less ◻ Infrequently ◻ First visit	
OTU 2	**How long do you usually spend in town?**	◻ Up to 1 hour ◻ 1 – 3 hours ◻ More than 3 hours	
OTU 3	**How do you get into the town?**	◻ Walk ◻ Bicycle ◻ Bus ◻ Train ◻ Car	◻ Motorcycle ◻ Mobility vehicle ◻ Taxi ◻ Community transport
OTU 4	**If by car, where do you park?**	◻ On street ◻ Car park	◻ Private space ◻ Other
	If once a month or less:- **Why dont you visit Oakham town centre more often?**	◻ Can't get into town easily ◻ Difficulty in parking ◻ Doesn't have what I need ◻ Prefer to shop elsewhere ◻ Not enough choice ◻ Not enough major High St names	
	How often do you visit the market?	◻ More than once a week ◻ Weekly ◻ Fortnightly ◻ More than once a month ◻ Once a month or less ◻ Infrequently ◻ Never	
	If once a month or less:- **What would encourage you to visit the Market more often?**		
	Last year when there were roadworks in the High Street, did you go into town….	◻ Same as usual ◻ Less than usual ◻ Never	

	If less often or never, **Where did you go to shop instead?** **Tick all that apply**	☐ Uppingham ☐ Stamford ☐ Melton ☐ Corby ☐ Leicester ☐ Nottingham ☐ Peterborough ☐ On-line ☐ Other
	Now the roadworks are finished, how often are you coming into town?	☐ Same as usual ☐ Less than usual ☐ Never

OTU 5	**Do you think each of these things is, for you, a positive or a negative aspect of Oakham town centre?**			
	Positive +	**Negative --**		
Physical appearance	☐	☐		
Cleanliness	☐	☐		
Retail offer – groceries	☐	☐		
Retail offer – clothes, gifts etc	☐	☐		
Independent shops	☐	☐		
National chain shops	☐	☐		
Market(s)	☐	☐		
Cafés / restaurants	☐	☐		
Pubs / bars	☐	☐		
Customer service	☐	☐		
Friendliness	☐	☐		
Access to services,	☐	☐		
e.g. banks, Post Office, library	☐	☐		
Museum, Castle, historic buildings	☐	☐		
Leisure facilities	☐	☐		
Cultural activities / events	☐	☐		
Road links	☐	☐		
Traffic	☐	☐		
Car parking	☐	☐		
Public transport	☐	☐		
Ease of walking around the town	☐	☐		
Convenience, e.g. near to home	☐	☐		
Safety	☐	☐		
Other (please specify)	☐	☐		
……				
……				

Where would you be most likely to go to buy the following things? Tick all that apply	Oakham	Uppingham	Stamford	Melton	Corby	Leicester	Nottingham	Peterborough	online other
Groceries	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Clothing and shoes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Household items	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Stationary items	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gifts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Electrical goods	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
DIY items	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

OTU 6	**Would you recommend a visit to the town centre?**	☐ Yes ☐ No
OTU 7	**In one word, how would you sum up Oakham town centre?**	
OTU 8	**How has your experience of Oakham town centre changed for you in recent years?**	☐ Improved ☐ Stayed the same ☐ Changed with good & bad ☐ Worsened ☐ No opinion / cannot say
	What two improvements would encourage you to use the town centre more?	…… ……
	Please would you provide the first five digits of your main home's post code? e.g. LE15 6	
	Would you mind saying which age group you belong to please?	☐ 16-25 ☐ 26-35 ☐ 36-45 ☐ 46-55 ☐ 56-65 ☐ 66-75 ☐ Over 75

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.
Your views and opinions are appreciated.

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Developing a forward framework for Oakham

It is proposed that the report and recommendations for Oakham should follow the methodology recently published by the Local Government Association in its "Revitalising Town Centres".

https://www.local.gov.uk/revitalising-town-centres-handbook-council-leadership

This handbook proposes using the F-factors checklist developed by the People & Places Partnership for creating a 'forward framework' for town centre revitalisation. Key elements to consider are:

Foundations: the process should be underpinned by an up-to-date review of existing strategies, collective objectives and evidence from recent surveys.

Function: action planning should begin with a clear statement of identified issues; recognition of council and partners' roles; the creation of suitable responses; acknowledgment of gaps in delivery; and identification of impact measures.

Form and Folk: next comes the development of appropriate organisational 'form' to coordinate activity including defining the roles of key partners and wider stakeholder engagement through 'folk'.

Finances: financial planning needs to include identifying opportunities for fund raising, inward investment and partnership sustainability.

Forward planning: finally, everything gets written down as a 'forward framework' and regularly reviewed.

Using the 'town centre checklist'

Revitalising a town centre involves coordinating a range of activities, possibly over many years. The handbook provides a self-assessment 'town centre checklist' that can then be used to guide ongoing delivery. This checklist uses a series of prompts to help councils and their partners gauge current and future processes in strategy development and the delivery of town centre improvements. The remainder of this handbook provides advice on taking forward each of these component activities and links to further resources.

Town centre checklist: Success Factors	
FOUNDATION	
Evidence and objectives	Has a baseline survey of issues been completed, aims defined, objectives, scope and long-term monitoring of impacts agreed?
FUNCTION	
Parking, travel and access	Is an integrated and customer-focused parking, travel, and access strategy in place?
Planning and property	Are there robust town-centre-first policies, master-planning, priorities within and between towns and has work been coordinated with town centre businesses and landlords?
Streetscape and public realm	Has a funding strategy and ongoing, prioritised streetscape and public realm improvement plan been agreed with an understanding of 'connected value'?
Business support	Is there tailored training/mentoring and a strategy to enhance the quality and distinctiveness of retail, services, hospitality and leisure businesses based on current provision, trends and knowledge of competing centres?
Place branding and marketing	Is there a clear understanding of the town brand with pooled budgets and a creative, collective marketing campaign?
Digital technology and data	Is there an ongoing assessment of digital infrastructure and skills with an investment plan and approach for the collective use of data in marketing and monitoring the town centre?
FORM	
Governance and influence	Is there an appropriate structure, membership and credibility to coordinate local stakeholder activity and influence cross-departmental or other strategic partnerships?
FOLK	
Community engagement and coordination	Is there strong public, private and community engagement with active and coordinated involvement in planning and delivery that extends to community assets development and is backed by a clear communications plan?
Roles and capacity	Are there an effective chair, suitably skilled board, employment of necessary staff, effective management of trained volunteers and clear lines for joint working with other stakeholder groups?
FUNDING	
Finances and investment	Is there an organisation with robust financial procedures and strategy agreed for diverse and sustainable fund raising and income to support a town centre? Is it 'run as a business' with inter-relationships understood and investment secured?
FORWARD PLANNING	
Strategy and plans:	Is there a well-defined 'forward framework' comprising an overarching vision/strategy, a rolling organisational business plan and a parallel action plan coordinating delivery on the ground?

Forward Planning: Strategy and plans

The handbook advocates that for or a partnership to evolve in its effectiveness, it is important to plan for constant progress through regular review and writing things down.

This can be achieved by annually reviewing the checklist and updating a 'Forward Framework' comprising an overarching strategy and two component plans:

Business planning

An organisational business plan covering the foundations, form, folk and organisational finances will determine whether there is an effective and sustainable partnership able to deliver improvements. This organisational plan should define the interrelationship and respective roles of partners such as the local authority, town council, business partners, Chamber of Commerce or a BID.

Action planning

A town or city centre action plan is necessary to determine and define objectives, projects, responsibilities, budgets, timescales, outcomes and impact measures as the building blocks of the coordinated delivery of improvements on the ground. The annual review of such an action plan should begin and end with a review of available evidence and the monitoring of impacts and changes.

Recommendation

The recommendation for Oakham is that the Task and Finish Group produces an initial Forward Framework for the town comprising:

- Factual evidence base of key performance indicators and user/non-user/business perceptions of issues and priorities.
- Analysis and agreement on priority issues and monitoring indicators to guide project planning by partners and wider stakeholders
- An ongoing communications and engagement plan for broadening understanding, support and involvement of stakeholders
- An outline partnership structure including coordinating group, theme-based delivery sub-groups, partners and responsibilities
- An initial statement of future resourcing needs for partnership development and project delivery

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