Winchester 2013 Car Parking Review: Full Briefing (14 October Draft)

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2. Introduction

This briefing concentrates on how the new car parking strategy could be changed to improve conditions in Winchester City Centre. This is where changes in parking arrangements could have the most positive results for both trade and the environment.

We are grateful to the City Council for making available to us data on car park occupancy and survey responses gathered in preparation for this consultation. We have analysed these in detail, and believe that our analysis will be useful in ensuring that decisions made following this consultation will ensure a high quality future for Winchester City Centre.

The threat of runaway climate change is WinACC's concern. We see no conflict between the pressing need to reduce transport emissions in Winchester (they are 47% of the total of Greenhouse Gas emissions in the District), and the commercial benefits accrued from relieving businesses on the central Winchester one-way system from the negative commercial consequences of traffic blight. We seek to breathe new life into businesses in the many parts of the city centre that suffer from traffic blight.

We have added in, where appropriate, recent insights provided by academic studies into the relationship between parking strategies and retail economics. They frequently go against the grain of received wisdom. The Association of Town and City Management are particularly concerned that their members be more open to the complexities of this literature.

3. Summary

- The capacity of the central circulatory system is the main factor limiting car access to central Winchester. There will be almost permanent blockages on the system if the suggested 24% increase in central parking is implemented. Already suffering, the many parts of central Winchester struggling because of traffic blight will be even more threatened by these proposals. A smart parking strategy that reduces the volume of traffic on the central circulatory system will be more effective in bringing about commercial revival. It will halt the flight to the High Street by traders who can afford the rents there.
- Recent research shows that the high levels of traffic pollution and increased reliance on car transport brought about by adding parking spaces to central Winchester would increase the incidence of serious medical conditions: asthma, insulin tolerance, cardio-vascular problems, lung cancer and heart failure, obesity
- Levels of traffic on the one-way circulatory system should be reduced through better signage promoting parking at the city gates and by making better use of the disappointingly performing Park-and-Ride.
- Parking facilities should be tailored to the 'place of origin' results of the recent car parking survey which showed that 55% of parked cars approach Winchester from the south, and 18% approach from the north. This could be done by actively promoting Chesil, St Catherine's, South, and Cattle Market car parks.
- Decreases in the number of cars parking in Winchester over the last 6 years and increases in railway passengers are trends that will reduce the requirement for parking spaces in the future. This trend should be embraced as a way of increasing access and reducing pollution.
- With reductions in the numbers of cars parked in Winchester over the last six years, and with plans nonetheless to expand capacity there is a danger that the parking service will become less viable, and might even lose money. Over the last 6 years Winchester has increased parking provision by **15.12%** and in the same period numbers of parked cars have gone down by **1.69%**. All plans to increase the number of parking spaces should be abandoned. The strategy should concentrate on making smarter use of existing facilities. Demand management pricing could be a useful way of channelling cars towards car

parks with empty spaces; more efficient than simply decking over the most popular car park to increase its capacity.

- Free parking does not seem to boost demand: comparison of use of car parks in Winchester on Saturday (charged), and Sunday (free) show fewer cars parked on Sundays. Some local authorities do not operate charge-free periods. Oxford, for example, charges on Sundays and in the evenings.
- Transport emissions form a significant proportion (47%) of Winchester's greenhouse gas emissions and a continued reduction in the volume of car parking would help achieve Winchester's climate change targets.
- To remove traffic blight from the centre and to keep the parking service viable, there will have to be a programme of closures to counterbalance new construction and reflect recent reduced demand.
- Reducing traffic in the centre will permit better pedestrian facilities and enable currently blighted areas to share the favourable trading conditions in the paved part of the High Street. Winchester could then promote itself as a city for walking, and breathing in the air of history.

4. A Vibrant Economy for All Parts of Winchester

WinACC understands the priority set out in the car parking review 'to sustain the economic well-being of Winchester Town and District'. Unfortunately, the proposals set out and hinted at in the draft strategy are unlikely to achieve this. They will increase traffic congestion, traffic blight, and levels of pollution and thereby limit economic growth.

Access by car to shopping in Winchester is not limited by the number of parking spaces, of which there is a surplus, both in central Winchester and further out. It is limited by the capacity of the central circulatory system and its branches that provide access to the most central car parks. If central car parking is expanded (as proposed by 24%) in car parks that require access via the circulatory system, the system, currently at saturation point, will become blocked, and cars will not be able to gain access to the additional spaces. With this overload, emissions and pollution will increase in many streets.

A smarter parking strategy would save traffic-blighted parts of the city currently under visible signs of stress. It would promote trade by reducing the volume of traffic on the central circulatory system and the upper part of High Street. Areas that would benefit include:

- The upper part of High Street (increasingly dominated by estate agents less dependent on ambiance than retail or catering outlets; deserted recently by Moss Bros and a Jewellers, both of whom defected to traffic-free lower part of High Street; plentiful pedestrian traffic fails to pause and browse but scurries up/down the hill on the narrow pavements)
- The area outside Westgate (dominated by traffic, but mostly devoid of shops or cafés despite its massive commercial potential)
- Jewry Street (long-term shop vacancies, a new building opposite Discovery Centre finding it difficult to get tenants)

- The square at the junction of High Street and Jewry Street (dominated by three lines of traffic overwhelming the east-facing pavement cafés and restaurants that could otherwise grow and become a major attraction)
- Parchment Street (slow to replace retreating retailers, cut off from browsers by St George's Street, hampered by unnecessary all-day traffic and parking)
- St George's Street (high levels of pollution, excessive noise; unused and wasted medieval square behind God Begot, ignored by High Street shops - Waterstone's and LK Bennett have even locked their doors, and WH Smith have blocked their exit)
- The Broadway and the lowest part of High Street (high shop vacancies, unnecessary cluttering by 29 car parking spaces)
- The Square (despite the recent re-paving) seems to be in gentle decline (the perversely retained 16 parking spaces seem to repel pedestrians to the extent that one kitchen appliance shop desperately tries to lure customers walking to the cathedral, a delicatessen who vigorously campaigned to retain cars has closed down); wine bars would like to expand but cannot
- City Bridge and Bridge Street where pedestrians struggle to avoid traffic looming over the narrow pavements, cyclists on the NCN routes are in conflict with shopping buggy users.

Traders in these places must envy the conditions in the pedestrianised part of High Street and will continue to move there as soon as they can afford the higher rents.



Traffic-blight in western High Street

Given the regrettable number of Winchester shopping environments 'at danger' a smart parking strategy should concentrate on making it easy for people to avoid driving into central Winchester.

The council could ensure that, without realising it, drivers would no longer find it necessary to drive round the one-way system. Enough central parking space could

be freed up for every disability badge holder. Pedestrians, cyclists, and public transport users could circulate freely. Studies show that spending per person by these groups is higher than it is for car users who drive by, only some of whom stop. Well-managed schemes of this kind have been shown to increase business.

5. A Healthier City

Increasingly studies are identifying traffic reduction as a cheap and effective way of improving the health of the population. The corollary applies too – any increase traffic will have a negative effect on the health of the population.

Air quality on the circulatory system remains poor, and when the last published figures were taken (2011), levels had increased in key places by 25% over the previous year. Conditions in Winchester are deteriorating and as the Air Quality Progress Report written in 2010 by Air Quality Consultants says: 'This uncertainty in future emissions contrasts with the certainty of current monitoring demonstrating continuing widespread exceedences of the annual mean nitrogen dioxide objective. With the Action Plan now having been in place for four years and many of the actions having progressed (some to completion), and in light of current exceedences of the annual mean nitrogen dioxide objective, it is considered that the Action Plan should be reviewed, the current actions updated and more radical options considered.' Clearly an increase in central parking is going to make matters even worse.

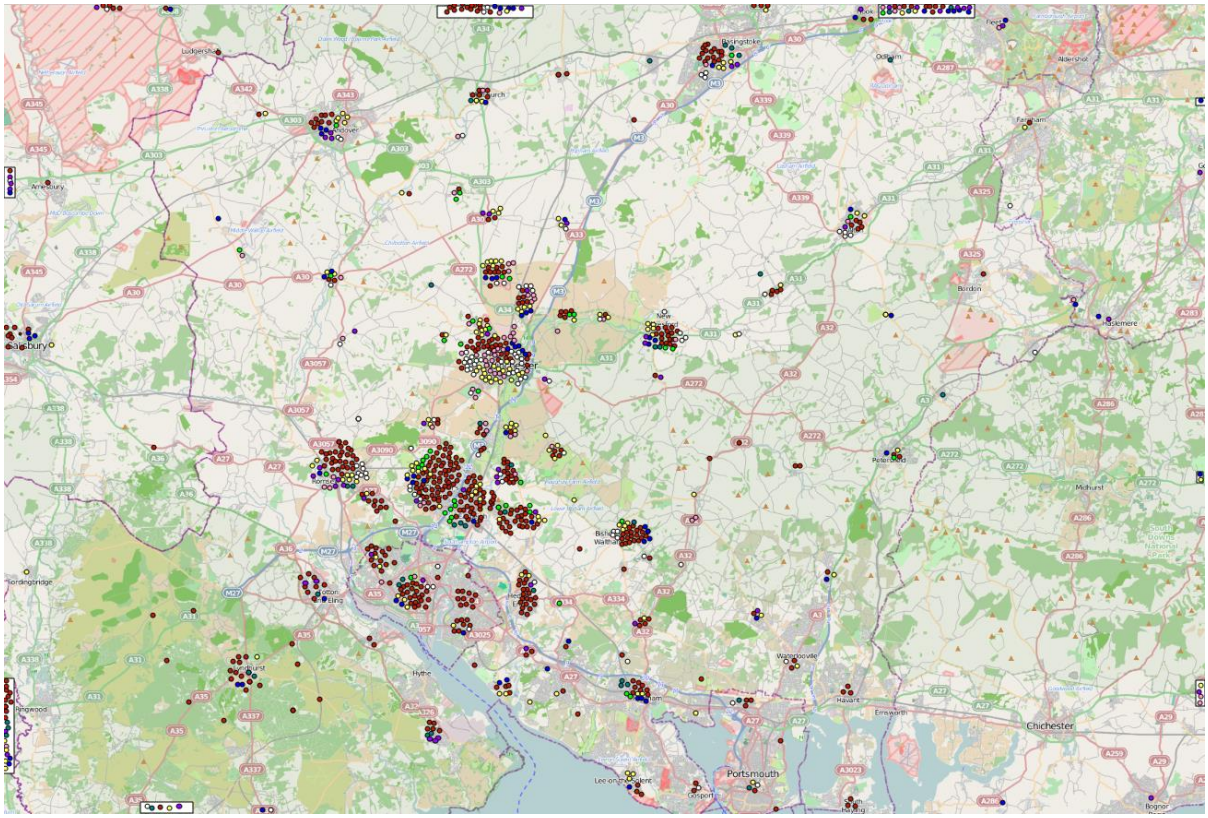
Recently, studies have linked the following conditions to traffic pollution and lack of pedestrian facilities:

- Insulin resistance limiting the effectiveness of treatment for diabetes: (http://www.diabetologia-journal.org/files/Thiering.pdf)
- Lung cancer and heart failure: (http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanonc/article/PIIS1470-2045(13)70279-1/abstract)
- Asthma and cardiovascular problems: a detailed study identified major reductions in hospital admissions following traffic reduction in Oxford in 1999: 'statistically significant reductions in asthma symptoms have been identified among some groups of schoolchildren and emergency cardiovascular admissions to hospitals were found to be 12% lower' http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1468-0270.00410/abstract;jsessionid=6540DB7E973294549E5354DC1F7DDD26.f03t03
- Obesity: In a video Jeff Speck sets out how obesity correlates with the 'walkability of cities'. http://t.co/0TMcHqzMaP The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) urges public authorities to encourage 'active travel': http://guidance.nice.org.uk/CG43/QuickRefGuide/LocalAuthorities/pdf/English

Inevitably the suggestions in the consultation to increase parking capacity in central Winchester, by increasing traffic flow and congestion, will have multiple undesirable impacts on the health of all those who live, work and visit Winchester.

6. Traffic reduction the painless way

Now that we know where people come from to park in Winchester it will be possible to provide good parking accommodation for everybody, and at the same time 'nudge' them out of their habits of unthinkingly parking in the centre and using the circulatory system. We can creatively anticipate their needs and reduce the detrimental impact of cars on the commercial environment.



Where people come from to park in Winchester

Colour	Reason for parking in Winchester
	Work
	Shopping
	Business
	Education
	Health
	Leisure
	Social
	Other

Each dot is on the place of origin for each reply given in the survey. Where the origin is outside the map the dot is placed on a white panel at the probable point of entry to the map. If you are viewing this on computer you can zoom to 400% to see the dots in detail.

a. New Signs and Names

Signage should be redesigned so that drivers have accurate information about what is on offer. The first step would be to replace the signs that unnecessarily encourage people to park in the centre, or to drive through the centre.

The distinction between ‘short stay’ and ‘long stay’ that dominates the signs should be abolished as a primary description of the car parks. It is confusing and inaccurate. Drivers coming for a short visit are currently explicitly directed to the ‘short stay’ car parks in the centre. They are misled. The surveys show that users of central car parks are predominantly short-stay and occasional, or very occasional, users, sometimes first-time users. They are not told that it is possible to park at Chesil multi-storey car park for £1.10 for one hour, as opposed to £1.30 at Colebrook Street for one hour, even though the former is wrongly labelled ‘long stay’ and the latter is wrongly labelled ‘short stay’.

A range of new signs should be designed that:

- Are easily visible (it is hard to spot signs to both South and Chesil)
- Indicate the level of charging (selling heavily the cheaper car parks outside the centre)
- Show how long it takes to get to the centre by walking or P&R bus
- Concentrate on the nearest car park (in some places signs point three ways to car parks; this is confusing and unhelpful)
- Do not give incorrect electronic occupancy information (Tower Street has sometimes shown 250 spaces available when the car park has been full).

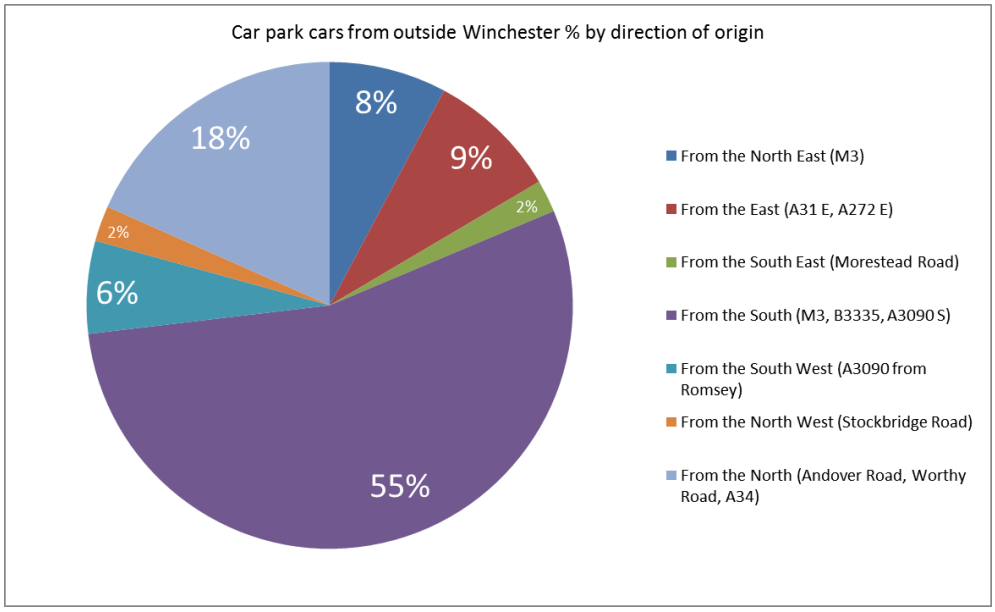
A range of new names should be chosen that:

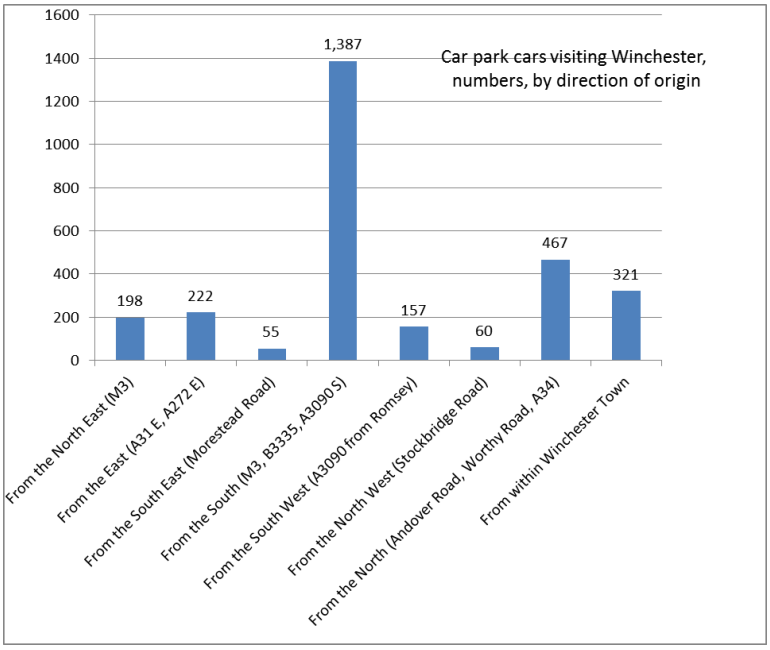
- Reinforce the historic nature of Winchester (Northgate, Eastgate, Westgate, Durngate)
- Reinforce the desirability of staying in the segment of the city that corresponds to the direction the car has come in from
- Warn people of the luxury pricing of central car parks (Brookes Executive, Silver Hill Crown Parking).

Unnecessary signage to car parks at opposite ends of the city (such as the sign on Stockbridge Road to Chesil Multistorey) should be removed.

b. Parking at the Gates of the City

The second step would be to encourage drivers to use the car park that corresponds to the point of the compass they have driven in from or their point of entry to Winchester. The graphs below are derived from the car park user survey 2013.





The overwhelming proportion of cars coming from the south (55%), and the large proportion from the north (18%) should make this exercise relatively simple, since both groups could be encouraged to approach via South P&R and Bar End (as many currently do) where there is much unused capacity.

A stronger signage and publicity campaign for South and St Catherine's P&R and Chesil could help satisfy the demand from the south and free up Tower Street for cars coming from Romsey.

It is regrettable that there are plans to close Andover Road / Worthy Road Car Park, because they have an important potential role in keeping cars out of the centre, and closing them would force even more cars into the centre. They could be the main parking for the Leisure centre and obviate any need to tarmac over the playing fields. Their potential could be exploited more effectively than it has been in the past.

Access directly from Andover Road to Cattle Market could help meet the need from the north. Cattle Market, Worthy Lane and Coach Park could hold all cars from the north. Some investment in improving pedestrian access from Cattle Market to the Leisure Centre and High Street would also encourage take-up.

c. A Relaunch for Parking

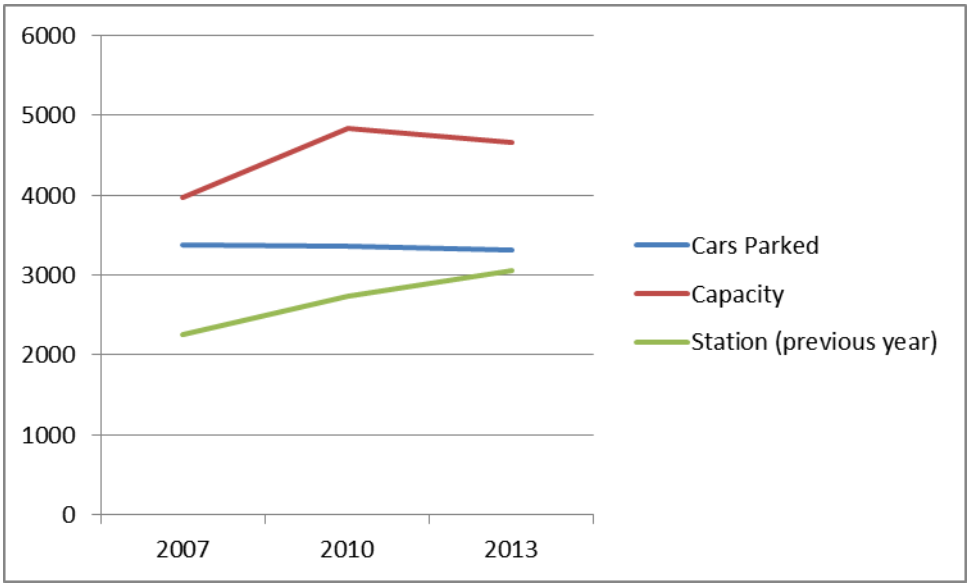
A big relaunch could help change parking habits (e.g. A big kick-start with vouchers for Chesil and Cattle Market, and 'I'm a responsible Parker' badges qualifying the wearer for discount in shops blighted by excessive traffic volumes in the centre). Guides to the new signage could be produced, and the website refreshed.

d. Time Share at Station Car Parks

Although the station car parks are fully used during weekday daytime there is scope for setting up an arrangement to make the station car parks available to Winchester shoppers at the weekends and in the evenings. In particular, the west station car park along Stockbridge Road could cater for people approaching from the west and north-west and mean they would not to enter the central circulatory system. They would have no further to walk to the centre than the millions of rail users, and could benefit from the high quality pedestrian route via Westgate that has been proposed.

7. Modal Transfer to Public Transport

It seems improbable, but the figures in the chart below suggest clearly that a major modal shift is underway. If this trend continues, the requirement for parking places in the future will be considerably less. Rail use is rising rapidly, numbers of parked cars are falling steadily. The initial parking report says quite clearly that since 2007 the number of parked cars has dropped and that the number of spaces available has increased. As a comparison we have added a line showing the incoming return rail journeys at Winchester railway station (25% of the ORR[i]-published entries and exits) It shows that journeys by rail have grown steadily in the period and will outstrip parked cars very soon if current trends continue. It suggests that modal transfer is an essential element that needs to be factored in to any parking strategy. This is something to embrace, rejoice in and reinforce; it will cut Winchester transport emissions and make the city more of a destination of choice.



The car park user survey could help public transport operators plan public transport expansion to serve the clusters of 'place of origin' that do not currently have a good service. This could include:

- improvements in the local rail services from the south,
- doubling of the frequency of the bus to Romsey,
- restoration of a frequent bus service to the north west suburbs of Southampton,
- splitting of the bus service to Bishops Waltham and Fair Oak (possibly by extending Blue Star 2 service from Fair Oak to Winchester),
- a regular direct bus service to Andover,
- better use of Southampton Airport Parkway as a Park-and-ride with rail connections to Winchester, and as a transport interchange for buses in northern South Hampshire to feed into fast trains to Winchester,
- better Winchester local bus services to reduce the high number of Winchester residents using the car parks. In particular, well-targeted additional public transport in the evenings and on Sundays would reduce the parking demand and could be combined with 'commuter buses' from the station once we know where railway commuters live.

8. A Robust Business Plan for Parking?

We are worried that major expansion of parking in the pipeline could mean that the parking service will fall into deficit. Unchecked, a diminishing number of cars will use the increased number of central parking spaces and leave the outer Park-and-Ride sites and gateway parking relatively empty.

The report shows that in business terms the provision of additional parking accommodation in Winchester over the last six years has been unnecessary. In the six years to 2013 for which data is given in the report **overall parking has declined by 1.69% (57 cars)** even though the number of spaces has **increased by 15.12% (672 spaces).** As if this were not enough, plans, unless they are checked, will

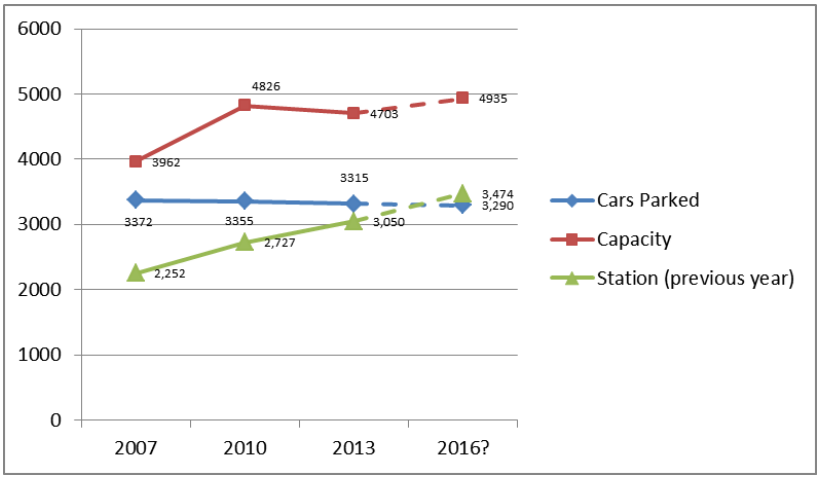
increase capacity still further, with no guarantee the increased capacity will ever be needed.

The report says that 'within the parking industry 85% full is considered to be the figure whereby operational capacity has been reached'. This means that provision should not fall below the number of cars parked plus 18 % more (15/85%). The corollary of this is that there should not be so many empty spaces that the cost of building and maintaining them will never be recouped through any but very highest charges. The figures that follow suggest there is a very real danger that capacity currently proposed will exceed the need by 50% even on the busiest days and that this could prove a very costly mistake.

This analysis will look at proposed expansion of parking facilities on two levels: a) the overall numbers, with a view to the threat this poses to the viability of the parking service, and b) the numbers requiring access from the one-way circulatory system, with a view to quantifying possible increased traffic blight (the detrimental impact of excessive traffic volume on business opportunity), and pollution.

a. Overall numbers

There is nothing to suggest that the volume of car parking will not continue to decline gently. If future reports suggest the decline will reverse they will need to make a convincing case. The graph below reflects current plans to extend car parks (see table below), projects current trends in the car parking figures shown in the report and also projects current ORR-estimated day trip to Winchester station usage figures.



The projected capacity figure for 2016 above refers to references in the report and elsewhere to proposals to increase parking capacity. The following table summarises possible changes to City Council car parks, and at the same time station car parking is also planned to grow by 110 spaces:

Item	Spaces	Notes
current spaces	4703	Report omitted 39 spaces in Jewry St
Replacement of Friarsgate by Silver Hill	80	Net increase
Pitt Manor P&R	200	New spaces
Barton Farm P&R	200	New spaces
New Leisure Centre	183	Additional spaces
Upper Brook Street	-58	
Colebrook Street	-81	
Cattlemarket and Worthy Lane	-350	
Chesil Surface	-82	
New deck on Middle Brook Street	140	Assuming one deck only
total	4935	

According to the report, the maximum number of cars in car parks during the survey was **3315**, but this figure was not reached on any single day. The figure is an aggregation of the highest level reached by each individual car park during the survey period. This was an unorthodox way of establishing maximum overall demand, and does not allow for diurnal migration from one car park to another. Some cars will have been counted twice in this total. The busiest day during the survey was Wednesday 15 May when **3021** cars were recorded. The figure given in the report overstates the actual maximum reached by **11%**. The average occupancy during the period was **2867**. A good business plan would need to take all this into account. The 'cars parked' projection in the graph above, is probably too generous; the 2016 number will almost certainly be lower.

This means that even if the current trends continue as in the graph, the number of spaces available will be 50% greater than the number of cars wanting to park in them, on the busiest days (over three times the conventionally determined additional 18% headroom mentioned in the report). Unless action is taken, this will result in well over half of P&R spaces remaining unused even at the busiest of times.

b. Car Parks Accessed from the Circulatory System

Currently there are 1262 spaces that require access through the centre and along the circulatory system. If the changes in the table above are implemented this figure will rise to 1562 spaces, and this will put 24% more pressure from cars accessing car parks on the traffic-blighted traffic-saturated bits of the circulatory system. The

resultant blockages will probably mean that cars will find it impossible to access any additional places that are created.

c. Demand Management

Airlines, Rail Companies, and retailers have developed techniques for varying prices in ways that balance demand. The council could copy these techniques and make strategic decisions about where it would like cars to park. A demand management programme could then set prices so that the desired profile of parking could be achieved, over space and time. This could be a very efficient way of reducing demand for central car parks and filling empty spaces in Inner and P&R car parks.

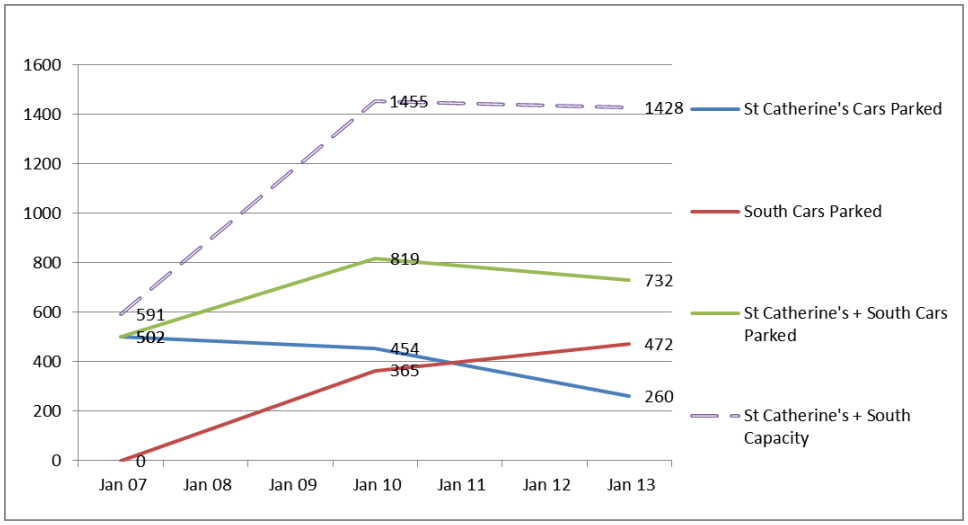
The current differential between central parking charges and P&R parking charges is modest in Winchester, and fails to encourage people to use the P&R, A day's parking in the centre is usually about 3 times the cost of parking in the P&R. This compares with a differential of almost ten times in Oxford. It seems that if the differential is set at this level it begins to have a major impact on parking behaviour.

Raising the differential would be a simpler and more cost-effective way of responding to the high demand for two small car parks in the centre than the approach suggested: constructing a new parking deck over Middle Brook Street Car Park.

d. Parking Service Viability

There is an obvious danger that if all the proposals for increasing parking capacity are implemented the parking service will no longer be viable. It will have overextended its assets and there is currently no evidence that car usage will grow, let alone that growth in car usage will bring in a sufficient return on those assets. Maintenance costs will increase, and income may reduce unless parking charges are increased substantially.

In particular, P&R sites will find it very difficult to repay even their operating costs, let alone the considerable development costs that went into them. Experience shows that any surplus parking in central Winchester will draw business away from P&R. Data behind the report shows that St Catherine's is already struggling as cars transfer to South, and that South is not itself performing very well.



Any further expansion of the parking service should not be done without a very clear business plan projecting likely occupancy of each car park.

9. The impact of not charging for car parking

It seems that car parking charges do not deter people from parking in Winchester. Income raised from parking should be used in ways that mitigate the traffic blight that central parking causes. Funding of evening and Sunday buses should be high on the list of possible uses for the additional income raised through charging in the evenings and on Sundays.

Currently car park charges operate on Saturdays but do not operate on Sundays. Numbers of cars parked on Saturdays were broadly comparable to the numbers parked on Sundays. The council survey took place on Saturdays 11 and 25 May, and Sundays 12 and 26 May. Counts took place on both the mornings and afternoons on all days. Average Saturday occupancy was 1413 in the central area. Average Sunday occupancy was 1370 in the central area. The Sunday numbers excluded Middle Brook Street car park (142 spaces) which was being used for the Farmers' Market, but with an average of 915 spaces empty the lower capacity did not suppress demand. There was a greater variation between morning and afternoon occupancy than there was between Saturday and Sunday.

10. Climate Change

Even clearer is the fact that an increase in parking capacity will, if it results in an increase in cars arriving in Winchester, increase Winchester's carbon footprint. Already 47% of Winchester District's carbon footprint is in transport-related emissions. Any increase in parking places will reduce the level of carbon reduction in Winchester, and jeopardise Winchester's carbon reduction target.

11. Car Park Closures

There are two possible alternative scenarios resulting from the current expansion plans as they are implicitly set out in the initial report:

- An increase in cars parked in car parks accessed via the circulatory system and increased traffic degradation of key shopping areas, probably with a reduction of cars parked in P&R car parks around Winchester,
- A continued decline in numbers of cars parked leaving car parks even emptier on average than they are to-day.

The first of these will increase traffic blight on businesses, the second will put the Parking Service under major financial pressure at a time of limited public resources.

The safest way to proceed would be to have an active closure programme to balance the expansions to which there is already commitment. It seems that 400 P&R spaces are tied in to planning agreements, as are the 80 additional spaces associated with Silver Hill. The closure of Middlebrook Street, Cossack Lane, St Peter's, Chesil Open, Upper Brook Street, Colebrook Street and Jewry Street would deliver a reduction of 576 spaces, keep the service viable, and help reduce traffic blight and emissions. Displaced vehicles would easily be accommodated elsewhere,

especially at Chesil and Cattlemarket and at the Park-and-Rides. Ideally, the proposed car park in Silver Hill could also be cancelled by mutual agreement. Certainly, none of the other expansion plans (such as decking Middle Brook Street, more spaces at the Leisure Centre) should be pursued if Winchester is not to worsen the current traffic blight and overextend the parking service.

12. Hope for the Future

The best outcome would be for Winchester City Council to realise the land value of its central car parks and succeed in transforming Chesil, Cattle Market, St Catherine's and South car parks into viable concerns. A drop in traffic volume on the circulatory system would enable creative traffic management initiatives (street closures, shared space). This would remove the traffic blight from many streets and allow them to share in the commercial success we see in the pedestrianised High Street. 'Walking within the Walls', or 'Walking and Breathing in the air of England's First Capital' could be branding that would transform Winchester into a major national magnate all year, on the scale of the three weeks before Christmas.

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[i] ORR = Office for Rail Regulation