

People For Ludlow (P4L) response to Shropshire Council Parking Consultation October 2017.

1. Introduction

P4L (www.people4ludlow.org.uk) is a community group representing the people who live and work in and around Ludlow. Our objective is to promote the long-term sustainability of Ludlow and its natural hinterlands as a vibrant and functioning community. In doing so we work with the Town Council and the many local groups in Ludlow supporting particular aspects of the town's life.

Our response to the parking consultation is based on this principle.

2. Overall response

We were very concerned that this consultation contained no real strategic considerations of the role of parking policy in the development of a sustainable transport policy for the area.

There are three key considerations that Shropshire Council should recognise when formulating a parking policy for Ludlow.

First, Ludlow should not be treated as a 'cash cow' by Shropshire Council. The present parking proposals are simply a means of raising revenue and do not address the long-term. A prosperous Ludlow is in everyone's interest and this means investment. We are very disappointed that the proposals do not include any use of the significantly increased revenue to develop transport facilities within the town, thus increasing its economic activity (e.g. in terms of access to employment) and attractiveness to visitors.

Second, Ludlow is a Market Town. This means that the small shops, as well as the market stalls, depend for their livelihood on a steady stream of customers, both from within the town and outlying areas. Visitors are very welcome but they do not represent the major source of income for the businesses represented on the Chamber of Commerce. They do, however, represent the difference between viability and closure for many of the shops that make Ludlow attractive to visitors. Any changes to parking provision must, therefore, recognise Ludlow's special requirements in this respect.

Third, the loss of most rural bus services in South Shropshire means that customers from outlying villages have to come to the town by car. It is therefore essential, for the future prosperity of the town, that there is adequate and convenient parking, at an affordable rate, in the town centre.

3. Detailed views.

On this basis, the following were agreed to be important aspects of the consultation response to be expressed by each group as seen fit.

15 Minute Pop and shop: An option for short stops for local shoppers to pick up supplies was essential. However, noting that there was provision within the new proposals for a 30 minute free parking (for Band A in Shrewsbury) we could agree to abandon the 15 minute option and use that instead.

Our View: Introduce Band A provision in Ludlow town centre at an appropriate, lower cost.

All day on-street parking: While potentially welcome for visitors, this will create serious problems for both residents and local shoppers. There are not enough street parking places for all residents who therefore rely on a reasonable turnover of spaces. Similarly, locals tend to use on street parking more than car parks as they are more convenient. If spaces are blocked by all day visitors, this could deter them from entering the town centre to shop. Visitors should be encouraged to use long term parking provision.

Our View: There should be a 3 hour maximum limit for non-resident on-street parking during the working day.

Charged Parking until 8pm: If implemented, this would have a major negative impact on night life in the town. Traffic management within the town centre is not an issue after 6pm and the implementation of an 8pm limit runs contrary to the principles espoused in Shropshire Council's strategy. People travelling to Ludlow for an evening at the Assembly Rooms (or acting as volunteers, on which a lot of activity depends) or to socialize in the many pubs and eateries would be deterred from doing so.

Our View: Free parking must, in our view, continue to begin at the end of the commercial day - 6pm.

Sunday Parking: this should be half the weekday rate to encourage visitors to continue to come to Ludlow on a non-commerce day and to help local people get into town for church services.

Our View: Half rate Sunday parking should remain

Car Parks:

a) The Castle/Market Square car park should be mainly short term parking for visitors and residents (not businesses who should use Galdeford and Smithfield parks) and one area should be restricted to 2 hours to improve turnover of space. There should continue to be a number of reserved spaces for market traders.

b) Upper Galdeford: agree that this should be used for short term parking.

Lower Galdeford: this should be used for long term/annual parking.

c) Smithfield: this should be an all day car park with bus/coach parking as well.

Our View: The new rates seem reasonable but there should be differential time periods.

Residents Parking Permits: the allocation of permits needs to be more strictly controlled to provide one permit per household and prevent sharing or transfer to non-residents.

Our View: one permit per household for use only by a vehicle registered at the household address.

It would demonstrate Shropshire Council's commitment to the environment if the permit cost was reduced for hybrid vehicles and further reduced for fully-electric vehicles. Since DVLA records are being used to verify ownership of vehicles, this should be a simple addition to the process.

Park and Ride: Ludlow needs a fit-for-purpose Park and Ride with toilet facilities, a good-sized shelter providing refreshments and information about Ludlow and a dedicated non-stop, comfortable and efficient bus service to the town centre and electric charging points. Visitors should be encouraged to use this rather than enter the town by car and, by doing so, many of the current traffic and parking problems in the town centre would be eliminated.

Our View: Plan for a fit-for purpose Park and Ride service. Revenue from parking should, and could, easily be used to develop this facility and the account of the use of these funds should be public.

Ludlow Car Club: as a non-profit organization aimed at reducing the number of cars in Ludlow, there should be free, preferably on-street, parking for the two club cars. This will help the Club to become economically viable and show its commitment to sustainable transport.

Our View: Provide free parking for Car Club cars

4. The process

Finally, we should add that we were not impressed with the means of consultation:

a) The consultation documents, whilst they may be meaningful to council officials, were fragmented in the way content was arranged – it was put to us that this was deliberate. Most people we spoke to had difficulty in understanding the overall picture and the proposed changes.

b) The consultation response forms were not of a structure to allow most people to present the views they wanted to express. By asking a series of fixed-topic questions and allowing little space for response, the consultation was effectively pre-judging the issues people would identify and was 'steering' the outcome.

c) There was no clarity in how responses other than using the consultation forms should be submitted.

d) Little effort was made by Shropshire Council to 'reach out' to the towns affected and explain what was to occur. In Ludlow, this was left to ward unitary councillors acting on their own initiative. For instance, attendance and presentations at the Local Joint committees would have been a good start.

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