

Parking in Broad Street

A survey by Oxford Civic Society, Oxford Consumers' Group and Oxford Pedestrians Association

Aims

The County Council will meet in December 2002 to consider the results of a 6 month experimental parking scheme in Broad Street. This has allowed 24 cars to park free of charge in the middle of the central open space for 30 minutes, and others to park alongside the kerbs together with traders' vans, cycles and motorbikes. The street is also on the route of the open-top tour buses. The three groups who planned this survey carried out a study to determine:

- what activities lead people to park in Broad Street
- what the public think of the current parking situation
- the practicality of the 30 minute restriction
- what alternative schemes people could suggest

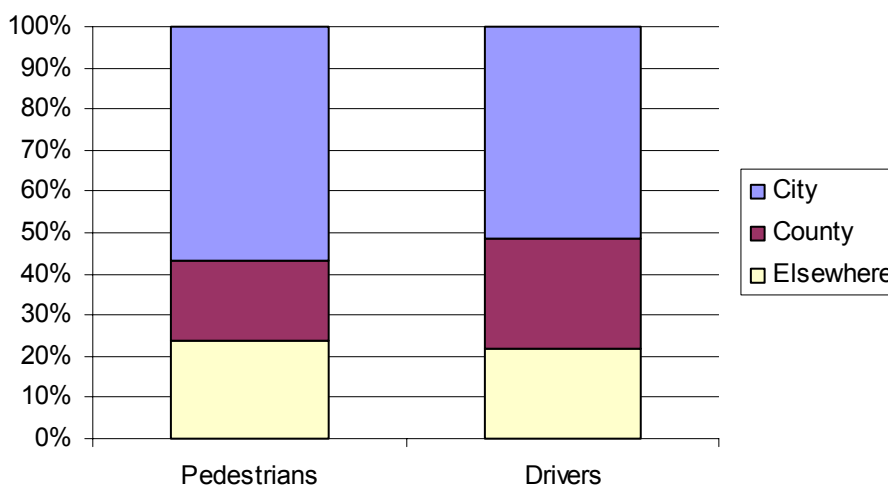
Methods

Following a 2 hour survey to pilot the questionnaire on 8th October, we carried out a survey in Broad Street on Wednesday 16th and Saturday 19th October between 9am and 5pm, interviewing drivers (immediately after parking) and pedestrians. A total of 452 interviews was conducted by 28 interviewers.

Results

Approximately 20% of those questioned were visitors from outside the County. There were more incomers on the Saturday than the Wednesday (27% as against 18%). City dwellers represent 52% of the drivers and 56% of the pedestrians (see figure 1).

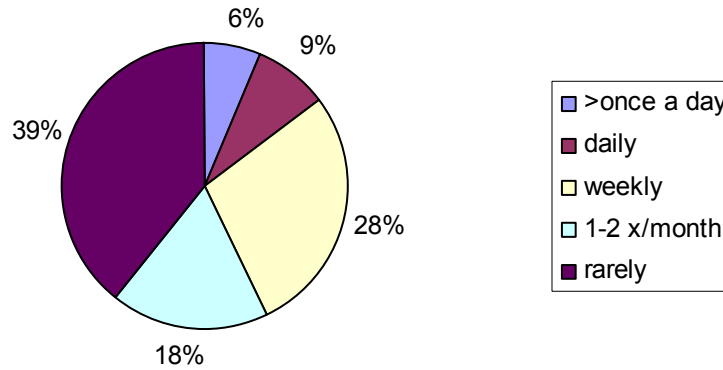
Figure 1: place of origin of respondents



Frequency of parking

The parkers were asked how often they parked in Broad Street (see figure 2). On both Saturday and Wednesday most people (39% of the overall total) said “rarely”, while 18 people said they parked there more than once a day.

Figure 2: frequency of parking in Broad Street

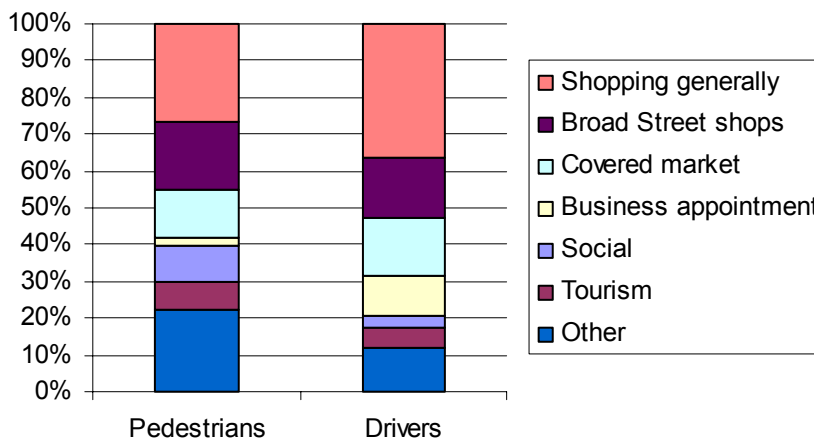


Purpose of visit

When asked what they were going to do 57 said the covered market, 51 said primarily the Broad Street shops, and 133 were going shopping generally. Business appointments, sightseeing and social meetings accounted for 72 others (see figure 3).

Other respondents had a variety of reasons for stopping there – to “get a coffee en route to Manchester”, to “pick up books from college”, to “go to evensong at Christchurch”, to “study”, and “to eat sandwiches in the car”. Only two people mentioned collecting heavy parcels; one was a business man carrying a large box and the other was a guesthouse owner buying food for his business.

Figure 3: purpose of visit



30 minute limit

We wanted to find out whether 30 minutes parking was long enough for the parkers to accomplish their errands. Here there was a real division of opinion: on the Wednesday 68 parkers said yes and 68 parkers said no. Saturday’s interviewees tipped in favour of ‘yes’ by 84 to 63.

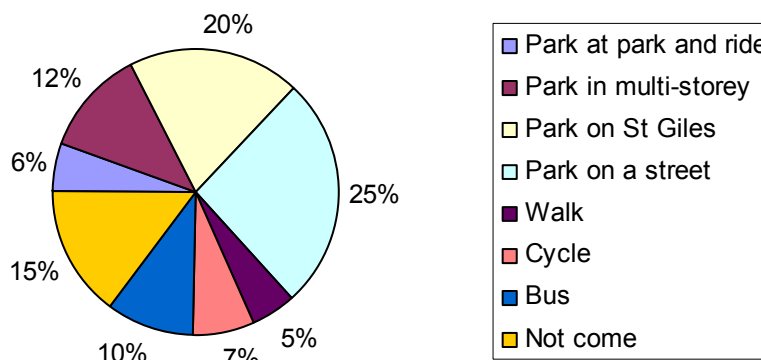
We were also interested to know whether the 30 minute time limit was strictly enforced. Although we observed many cars overstaying 30 minutes, only 34 out of 287 people admitted ever being ticketed in Broad Street. The traffic warden on duty said that “quite a few stay longer than 30 minutes”. Nearly half those questioned (131 out of 283) felt 30 minutes was not long enough.

Where else would people park?

It was clear that the main reasons for parking in the Broad were because it was near to the chosen destination and it was free. If the parking were to be discontinued:

- 64 would try St Giles
- 39 would use the multi-storey carpark
- 74 would try and park “on the street somewhere”
- 18 people would use the park and ride (some said that the Peartree park and ride had been full, and others that there had been a queue to get into Thornhill)
- 49 out of the 324 people who answered the question would give up and not come

Figure 4: what drivers would do if there were no parking in Broad Street



Future of Broad Street

Not everyone wanted to speculate on what should happen to the Broad Street layout - whether there was enough parking now or not or whether it should be landscaped in some way. Of those who had parked:

- 105 expressed a wish for more parking
- 70 thought it was alright as it is and 12 felt there should be less, admitting that they parked there because they could but thought no parking should be allowed
- 6 people wanted a different layout

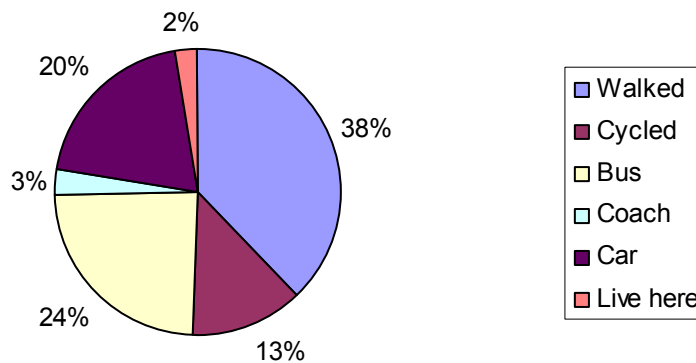
- 35 people expressed various ideas for its improvement including trees, pavement cafés, seats and a fountain

Pedestrians

We also asked pedestrians on Broad Street how they had reached the City centre (see figure 5):

- 62 had walked (including two who had started their journey by train)
- 39 came on the bus
- 21 cycled
- 33 had parked a car somewhere, mostly on the street though a few had used the multi-storey at Westgate
- 6 had used the park & ride
- 4 lived in the centre
- 5 were passengers on a Saturday coach trip

Figure 5: mode of travel to City centre by pedestrians



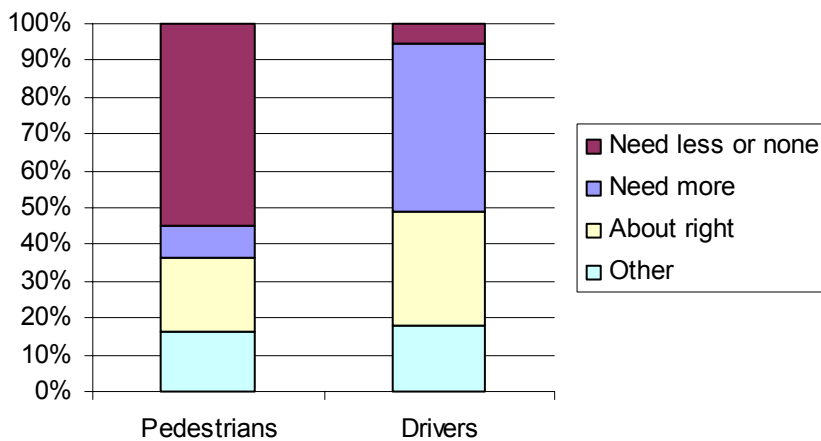
Purpose of visit and need for parking in Broad Street

On the Wednesday, shopping generally, in the Broad Street shops, or in the covered market was mentioned 88 times, with business appointments 6 and social meetings 8. All sorts of other reasons for being there were given including “to see my tutor”, and “to do some sketching”. On Saturday only 61 mentioned shopping anywhere; there were no business appointments but social meetings and tourism, predictably, were up at 33.

We asked if the pedestrians would be likely to spend more time in Broad Street if there were less traffic: 29 said yes, 30 said it made no difference, and 12 said no. When we asked what they thought about the issue of parking, the result was much more clear-cut than for the parkers (see figure 6):

- 42 said there should be no parking at all
- 35 felt there should be less
- 12 opted for more
- 28 thought it was alright now

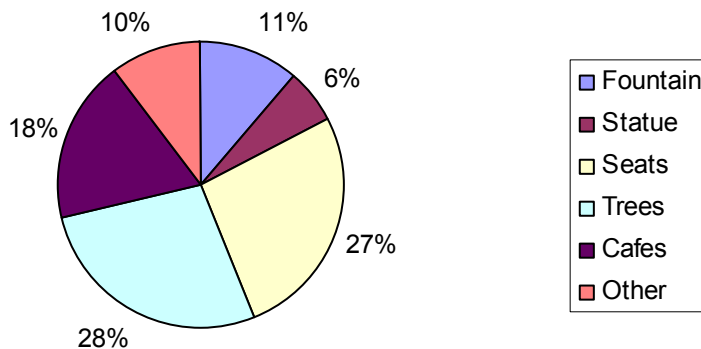
Figure 6: views on the need for parking in Broad Street



The future of Broad Street

The views of the pavement sample on what could replace parking in Broad Street are shown in figure 7.

Figure 7: preferences for Broad Street if parking were discontinued



Summary

- 1) On the whole the central parking zone is used because it is there and it is free. However, even among the parkers some felt there should be no central parking and a majority of the pavement sample wanted Broad Street parking to be reduced or eliminated, often adding a variant of “because you cannot appreciate the scale of the street when it is broken up by cars”.
- 2) The number of first time parkers, or those unaware of the 30 minute time limit or that it is free, suggests that it is not yet widely known about. If many more people than at present were trying to use the 24 places, congestion and dissatisfaction would be much increased.

- 3) It is to be expected that most people who had just succeeded in parking their car free of charge in the centre of Oxford would be appreciative of the facility offered. However, the fact that nearly half of them wanted longer than 30 minutes shows that the present arrangement is not entirely satisfactory
- 4) We saw almost no evidence of anyone collecting heavy items from the local shops.
- 5) Amongst other comments there was recognition of the necessity of parking for disabled people. We observed that the central zone is not suitable for disabled users; from watching people unloading wheelchairs it was clear that the spaces are too narrow and that constantly moving traffic in the middle of the road makes it a very hazardous operation.
- 6) Some pedestrians commented that the central parking zone creates a formidable barrier to safe crossing. The space between the cars is too narrow for comfort, and impossible with a pushchair, and visibility is too restricted for safety. Constantly circulating cars intent on manoeuvring into a slot present a further hazard, especially for the less agile.
- 7) The situation is not helped by the 30 minute time limit for parking, which has no impact on the number of parked cars, but greatly increases car turnover, and thus traffic, relative to what would result from a longer period.

Conclusions and proposals

- 1) From our survey, Broad Street and covered market shopping only comprise approximately 25% of the uses to which the central parking is put. We propose that the central parking zone is discontinued and that parking for disabled people and a limited amount of parking for those needing to collect heavy or bulky items be relocated to the kerbside.
- 2) A delivery service could be established for covered market and Broad Street shoppers within the City boundary and/or to a park & ride point for people outside the City.
- 3) There is a need for better signage to direct inappropriate traffic away from Broad Street.
- 4) Parking for collecting of heavy/bulky items could be provided in delivery bays outside commercial delivery times. More clearly defined delivery times and better enforcement would be needed.
- 5) There is a need for clear procedures for those who have to pick up goods from the Turl as well as the Broad. Perhaps a permanent warden able to check permits, give advice and move on the trade vehicles is the answer.
- 6) Most importantly, nothing should be done now which cannot easily be undone when the proposed study by Kim Wilkie is completed.