

Shropshire Council parking consultation 2017

A response from Ludlow's unitary councillors

17 October 2017

Introduction

This is a response from the unitary councillors for Ludlow. It is based on our intimate knowledge of the town and hinterland it serves, and on the extensive feedback we have received from residents and visitors. We held a four-hour drop in session on 5 October, accompanied by council officers. Around 100 people attended and made comments.



The exhibition then travelled to the Ludlow and Clee LJC meeting on the 14 September, where council leader Peter Nutting spoke about the changes. We have collected opinion by email, through Andy Boddington's blog and on Facebook and Twitter. We have also talked to many residents and listened to the views of the town council and local amenity groups, including the Chamber of Commerce, Ludlow 21 and the Town Centre Residents Association. Inevitably, broader issues than the parking strategy were raised. We also discuss those in this document.

We must balance the needs of car drivers with those without a car. The vitality of Ludlow depends on meeting the needs of traders and businesses. Residents need somewhere to park. Our town, which is set to see significant expansion, must build its future around sustainable transport. Nothing else will work in a town both enlivened and constrained by its historic and environmental fabric.

We have addressed some of the issues in this document, though it is primarily a response to the specifics of the Shropshire Council parking consultation. Our short term proposals will create more than 50 extra car parking spaces in and around the town centre. Our longer term ideas will boost the sustainability of transport in the town and reduce reliance on car use.

Andy Boddington, Shropshire Councillor for Ludlow North

Tracey Huffer, Shropshire Councillor for Ludlow East

Vivienne Parry, Shropshire Councillor for Ludlow South

Our response and proposals at a glance

The parking strategy must be aligned with the economic, transport and environmental objectives for our town.

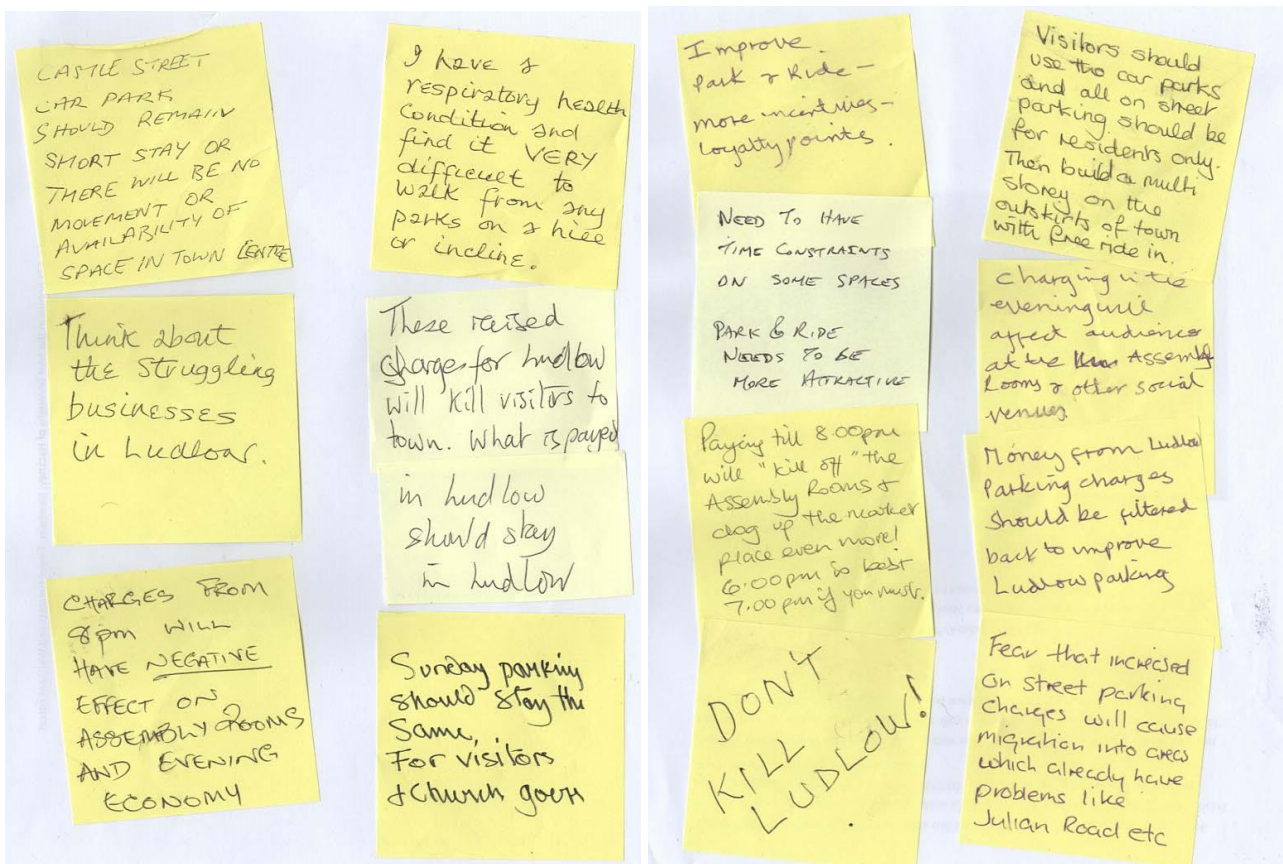
Parking must be an integral part of a sustainable transport strategy, including an enhanced park and ride and town bus service.

We should retain 15-minute pop and shop, free parking after 6pm and half price charges on Sunday.

We can create more car parking spaces at the Upper Galdeford and Smithfield car parks, also on our streets.

The black market in residents' parking permits must end.

We should retain short term parking in Castle Street car park and on-street, and create new short stay spaces in the Upper Galdeford car park.



A small sample of the feedback from our consultation

Strategic parking issues

1. Joining up strategies

The parking strategy is being considered in isolation and is not well aligned with the county's economic, planning and transport strategies, or the need to protect the environment. To manage car use effectively in a historic market town like Ludlow, parking cannot be considered independently of local economic ambitions and transport infrastructure. In the next 15 years, around 1,000 new homes are likely to be built within and on the outskirts of Ludlow, an increase of around 18%. This will lead to around 1,000 extra cars.¹

2. Protecting our local economy

Ludlow has a distinctive economy, reliant on tourist, retail, engineering and service industries. The visitor and retail economy is particularly dependent on parking. There is a general shortage of parking in the town, both for visitors and residents. To protect those businesses that rely on visitor income, we need an active turnover of parking spaces to serve the primary shopping area.²

3. Maintenance and updating

Ludlow's car parks are in a poor state of repair. Signs are missing or damaged. White and yellow lines are seriously eroded. Surfaces are damaged, especially at the Eco Park. This does nothing for the image of Ludlow as a tourist destination. It leads to motorists becoming confused and exposed to an unnecessary risk of penalties. Shropshire Council makes a surplus on Ludlow car parks of around £370,000 a year.³ There is no excuse, even in straightened times, for allowing the car parks to remain in such a poor state.



Eroded lines and missing signage in Upper Galdeford car park



Damaged surface and signs at the Eco Park

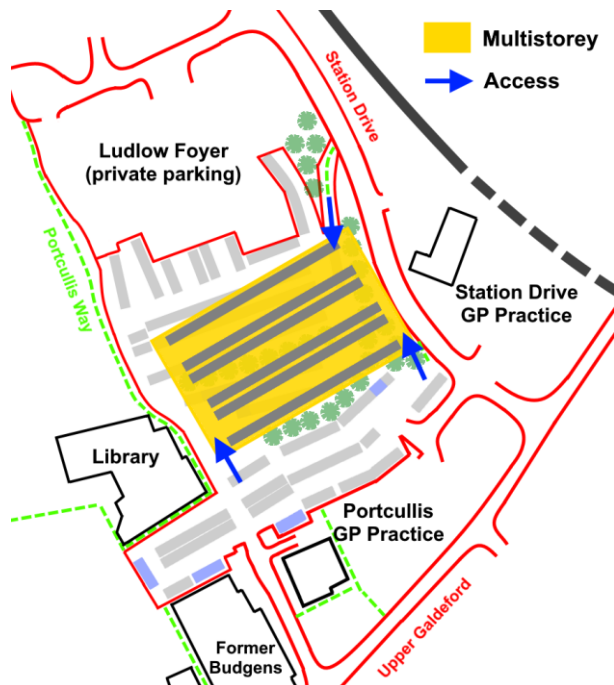
1. According to the 2011 census, Ludlow and Ludford households owned 5,699 cars.

2. The primary shopping area for Ludlow is defined in SAMDev.

3. Shropshire Council's [parking accounts](#) are partial and do not fully comply with the [local government transparency code 2015](#). It is not possible to discern the specific uses for 'surplus income', which must legally be spent on highways, transport or a limited range of environmental improvements as specified in the [Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 55\(4\)](#).

Shropshire Council is due to replace the car parking meters in Ludlow in the middle of 2018. We welcome the introduction of pay by phone but the council needs to go much further by accepting credit and debit cards at the point of payment. Most importantly, it should move to a pay on exit system to reduce the concern that motorists feel when their purchased time is running out.

4. Expanding capacity



Possible site for a multistorey car park

We have considered a call from the Chamber of Commerce to build a multistorey car park in the town centre area.⁴ This could only be built on the Upper Galdeford car park [above the lower levels](#). An [online vote](#) gained 135 responses, 57% in favour of the idea. But we also received many written comments calling for more sustainable transport based around the park and ride service.

We support a sustainable transport solution to Ludlow's parking pressures. There are several arguments against the multistorey car park: it would be challenging to raise finance; construction would cause considerable disruption; and the extra traffic would put pressure on Galdeford Corner and the even more difficult junction at One Stop in East Hamlet.

We support creating extra spaces in the Upper Galdeford car park and at the Youth Centre for the specific reasons we outline below. We also support the Mayor of Ludlow's proposal that street parking should be within marked bays to encourage vehicles to park closer together, thereby creating extra spaces. Together, these proposals could create nearly 40 extra car parking spaces during the week and around 60 at weekends.

5. Promoting sustainable transport

Transport and parking strategy in Ludlow should be built around the park and ride service. Facilities at the Eco Park should be improved, including a weatherproof bus shelter and toilets. The car park surface and signage should be repaired or replaced.

4. There were also earlier proposals to build a multistorey car park along with a bus hub on the Upper Galdeford car park.



Eco Park bus shelter

Charges should be introduced with discounted or free transport on the park and ride bus service. Upwards of a third of the park and ride car park is taken up by staff from Eco Park businesses during the week. Parking should not be free for those who work at the Eco Park. Charges will encourage those workers that live in Ludlow to use buses and the companies at the Eco Park to create more parking spaces.



Most cars in the park and ride are for Eco Park staff

The park and ride buses should run at a 20-minute frequency, Monday to Saturday, and half hourly on Sundays. An improved and extended town bus service would reduce pressure on town centre parking.

Electric car charging points should be installed as a priority at the Eco Park, Upper Galdeford and Smithfield car parks. As soon as is feasible, town and park and ride services should operate with electric vehicles.

6. Supporting vital services

There are two GP practices adjacent to the Upper Galdeford car park. Both are expanding their services. Patients, many of them have mobility problems, often find it difficult to find parking spaces. There is a clear need for short-term parking spaces adjacent to the medical practices.

7. Residents' parking

Parking for residents in Ludlow town centre is in short supply. The population in the town centre is increasing as space above shops are converted into apartments. They are no longer used for storage in an age of daily deliveries. Redevelopment of retail units such as One Stop on Tower Street will create more apartments. This will increase parking demand. There is a careful balance to be struck. Daytime and weekend residents' parking should not be permitted in Castle Street car park and the top level of Upper

Galdeford car park. This will help ensure sufficient parking turnover for the retail trade, visitors and medical practices.

Residents' parking permits are open to abuse because there is no need to demonstrate that the vehicle is registered at the resident's address when applying for a permit. We are aware that some residents pass on a second permit to friends or people working in town centre businesses. Some permits are allegedly sold on. This black market trade in permits reduces the availability of on-street parking spaces in the town for both residents and visitors. All vehicles that qualify for a permit in the red and blue zones should be registered in the zone for which the permit applies and at the address at which the applicant lives.

The consultation proposals

8. Pop and shop

We are strongly opposed to ending the 15 minute free parking period. Under the council's proposals, people could be forced pay £2 for picking up a loaf of bread and a newspaper in central Ludlow. This conflicts with the way that market towns like ours work. It will drive people to supermarkets with free car parks, threatening the survival of our independent shops.

We need to encourage people to come into town for their daily shop. The 15 minute drop and shop is a distinctive feature of Shropshire's parking policies and must be maintained for the benefit of retailers and services in Ludlow.

9. Linear pricing and capping parking time

We have no objection in principle to the principle of the same charge each hour during chargeable hours. But we do not believe that linear pricing is sufficient alone to create an adequate turnaround of parking spaces in Ludlow town centre. We need specific controls.

On-street parking without a permit should be limited to 4 hours between 9am and 6pm, seven days a week. Castle Street car park should also have the same limits, except for market traders with a waiver. We make specific proposals for the upper level of the Upper Galdeford car park below.

10. Zoning of parking areas

We recognise the work that has gone into working out what charges should apply at which location. We do not think the current proposals get the balance right for Ludlow. On-street charges in our town centre are due to rise to £2 an hour. This will discourage shoppers and drive from the town people using banking, medical, ecclesiastical and other services. A rise to £1 an hour is reasonable. We do not object to other proposed changes in hourly rates.

11. Evening parking

We oppose extension of parking charges from after 6pm to after 8pm.

The town is lively during the day but footfall drops rapidly after 5pm as shops close. Compared to many towns, we have a quiet night time economy based around the pubs and restaurants, Ludlow Assembly Rooms and concerts at locations such as St Laurence's and the Methodist Church. There are no buses after 5.30pm and the prospect of introducing night time services is vanishingly remote.

We would not wish to discourage any potential visitors. We also fear that charges will deter the volunteers upon which the Ludlow Assembly Rooms depend.

We are not alone in fearing an extension of parking charges will damage the night time economy. [Gloucester](#) and [Newcastle](#) are among many towns and cities that have launched free evening parking initiatives aimed at boosting the night time economy.

12. Sunday parking

Ludlow is open for business on Sundays but, as with our night time economy, trade is not strong. Currently parking charges are half the weekday rate. A full rate charge would damage trade, undermine local businesses and penalise churchgoers. The current arrangements of a 50% discount on parking on Sundays should be maintained to help keep our town centre attractive to shoppers and visitors.

13. Residents' permits

As we have said above, on-street permits should be restricted to residents with vehicles registered at their address in the blue or red zone. We acknowledge the shortage of parking spaces for residents in the town centre. However, issuing permits allowing residents to park in the Castle Street car park and on the top level of the Upper Galdeford car park all day, including weekends, would restrict the availability of spaces for visitors and shoppers. Residents off-street parking permits should be restricted to the lower levels of the Upper Galdeford car park and the Smithfield car park.

14. Who runs the car parks?

If financial terms can be agreed, we support council leader Peter Nutting's proposal that Ludlow's car parks should be managed by Ludlow Town Council, not the unitary council. We would wish the Eco Park car park to be included in any deal.

Ludlow Car Parking

15. Upper Galdeford car park

There is an urgent need to renew lining in the car park to identify spaces, including disable bays, and improve safety. This has been discussed with Shropshire Council officers. During those discussions we identified that 16-20 extra car parking spaces could be introduced on the upper deck through better use of available space and introducing a one-way flow around the car park. A one way flow will also promote safety.

We have also held discussions with GPs from both medical practices. This has identified a significant problem with patient parking. This leads to disabled and illegal parking on the access road from Upper Galdeford and on Station Drive. We have witnessed patients with limited mobility struggling up from the lower levels of the car park. Ludlow's population is due to grow by around 1,000 from approved planning consents alone. Our population is also growing older.⁵ Mobility is an important issue for our town. For many of our mobility impaired residents, car transport remains essential. The Station Drive practice has particular problems with access. We are in discussion with highways officers on creating a safe crossing from the car park to the front entrance of the surgery.

Having identified this specific need, we propose that around 20 car parking spaces on the top level are limited to 2 hours, Monday to Friday. This will also serve local businesses on the Galdeford corner, especially the pharmacy.

5. In Ludlow, 28% of residents are aged 65 or over, compared to 23% in Shropshire and 18% in England. On current trends, 40% of Ludlow residents will be age 65 or over by 2039.

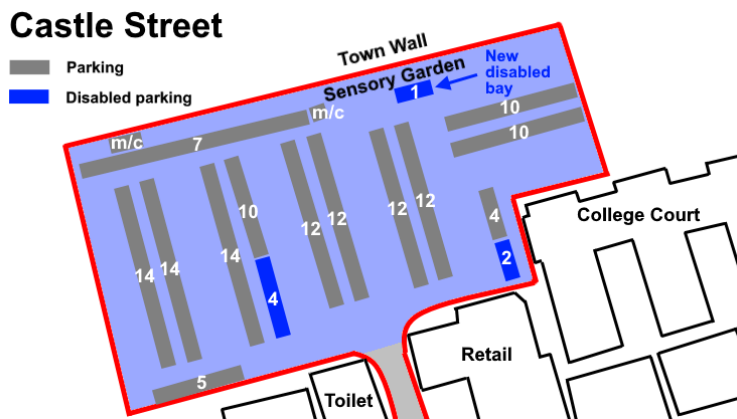


Our proposals for Upper Galdeford

Improvements to the Upper Galdeford should also include electric charging points on the lower levels, with capacity to increase these as demand grows.

Residents' season tickets should be restricted to the lower levels of this car park.

16. Castle Street car park



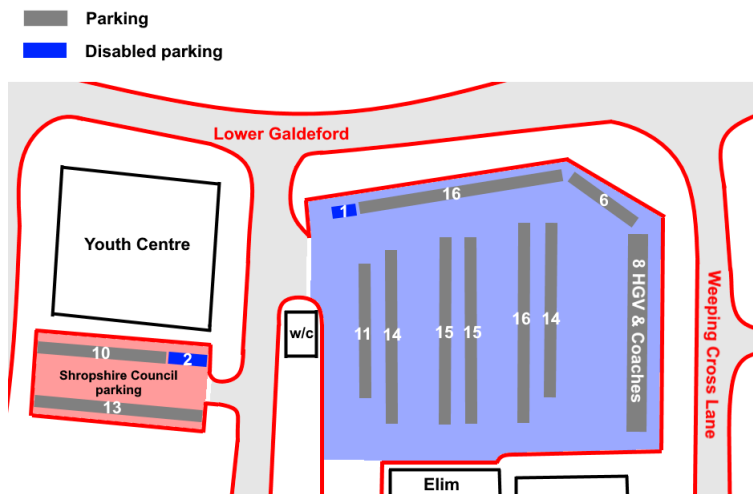
The car park should remain short term, with a maximum stay of 4 hours. We have no objections to a £1 an hour charge. Residents' season tickets should not be available for this car park.

The informal disabled bay adjacent to the new sensory garden should be designated as a formal disabled bay.

At present, some large market vans that arrive early in the day use the nearest bays. This blocks the view of empty spaces for car drivers entering the car park and creates problems with sightlines. A condition of the market waiver should be that market traders must park in bays on the west or east sides of the car park.

17. Smithfield car park

Smithfield car park



The current layout at Smithfield and the Youth Centre

We have not identified any required changes to the layout of this car park.

Electric charging points for cars, and in the longer term coaches, camper vans and HGVs, should be installed in the car park.

The adjacent Youth Centre car park could be brought into use for public parking at weekends and public holidays. This would add 25 car parking spaces, including 2 disabled spaces.

18. On-street parking

There is scope for changing some stretches of street with double yellow lines to single lines to allow parking between 6pm and 8am.

Parking bays should be marked to encourage tighter parking.



Marked bays would increase on-street parking spaces

Two-hour free parking should remain in the areas where it applies at present.

The proposal to double the charge for an annual permit to £100 is unjustified. Asking residents to pay £31 for parking enforcement is unacceptable. Enforcement is a revenue raising activity. Shropshire Council plans to spend £253 on setup costs and administration over five years for every property where a permit is issued. This is an unacceptable overhead and the council should look to minimise these administration costs before increasing its charges for residents.

We also regard the increase in costs of traders' permits to £20 a day as unjustified. Our town centre has around 500 listed buildings and a significant number of unlisted heritage assets. These require constant maintenance. Increasing fees to £100 a week will increase the costs to residents and business owners of their work. We can see not justification for this other than revenue raising.