

**REPORT TO:** Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

**DATE:** 16<sup>th</sup> September 2009

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director - Environment

**SUBJECT:** Halton Lea and Runcorn and Widnes Town Centre Parking Studies

**WARDS:** Halton Lea, Mersey, Kingsway, Appleton, Riverside

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

To advise Members of the key results and recommendations of Town Centre Parking Studies and to seek approval to a number of actions that will enable a new parking strategy to be developed that will seek to sustain the viability of the Borough's town centres.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

- 1) The Board note the findings of the studies;**
- 2) The Board support the need to pursue and establish a formal Parking Partnership by mid 2010 between the Council and the private operators of car parks within the Borough, the purpose of which would be to consider options and propose measures that are required to manage parking demand both 'Off' and 'On' Street and also to agree the basis of a new draft Parking Strategy for future consideration by the Executive Board;**
- 3) The Board support the commissioning of a study, which is currently underway, that will explore the feasibility of the Council making an application for the introduction of its own Civil (Parking) Enforcement Powers and request that the results be brought back to a future meeting of this Board;**
- 3) The Board note the consultant's conclusion that there is a potential need for a multi-storey carpark in Runcorn, but endorse the recommendation that investigations into this proposal be deferred until the current economic climate improves;**
- 4) The current approach of seeking Section 106 agreements where appropriate to support small residential developments with no private off street parking around the**

**Victoria Square area and seeking a financial contribution towards parking or transport infrastructure, be continued;**

- 5) A further report on the establishment of a strategy for securing Section 106 contributions from development elsewhere within the Borough be prepared and submitted to a future meeting of the Board for consideration; and**
- 6) The Board support the proposal for officers to investigate the feasibility of the Council keeping the temporary carpark at Runcorn station open for use by rail users, to help ease parking problems on surrounding streets, and the potential for a charge to be imposed for its use with management by the private sector.**

### **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Halton is one of only two boroughs in Merseyside (the other being Knowsley) where car parking is free. It follows that the implications of imposing parking charges, parking enforcement and amending parking supply would need to be carefully considered in relation to their potential impact on the attractiveness (and hence economic viability) of the town centres, and on nearby residents. In determining car parking policy, the Council faces a somewhat unusual situation, due to a large number of the car parks within the Borough being privately owned. It is therefore essential, in developing new 'on' and 'off'-street car parking strategies, for the Council to work closely with the owners of these car parks to ensure that a consistent, practical and enforceable approach is adopted.
- 3.2 This issue is recognised within the Council's current Parking Strategy, which is incorporated within its Local Transport Plan (2006/07- 2010-11). Key elements of this strategy are: a) the need to establish a Parking Partnership with private car park operators - to review and monitor the impact of the emerging regeneration of the town centres on the demand for and provision of car parking, and; b) to consider the management of car parks, including limited stay and/or charging.
- 3.3 To progress this work, parking studies have been commissioned at three key locations within the Borough (Runcorn and Widnes Town Centres and Halton Lea). These studies provide the base data and analysis for consideration by the proposed Parking Partnership and thereby a foundation upon which decisions can be taken by the Council on future parking management policy and formation of a revised strategy. Whilst the existing strategy makes some mention of parking management, charging and residents only parking, it is important that upto date parking study data continues to be collected to allow updating of the strategy following the proposed formation of the Parking Partnership, particularly in the light of recent and proposed developments. A parking strategy which responds to the current needs of visitors to the town centres will help ensure that the town centres' attractiveness as destinations is

maintained, particularly in the light of new development and the current economic climate.

**3.4 PURPOSE OF THE CAR PARKING STUDIES:-** In commissioning the parking studies, comprehensive briefs were provided to the consultants, which detailed the following broad aims & objectives:

1. To assess current supply and demand for parking in the Borough by establishing an inventory of 'on' and 'off' street car parking provision in the Town Centres incorporating appropriate Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) and surveying the current usage of the car parking provision;
2. To identify parking problems in the Town Centres and other areas;
3. To assess the potential impacts of regeneration and new developments on parking, to ensure they contribute positively to the economic regeneration of the Town Centres, and do not adversely affect local businesses and residents (*by resulting in excessive parking demand versus supply which may deter potential visitors, and exacerbating parking management problems where commuters etc. may park inappropriately*);
4. To test a number of development scenarios (See Appendix 6) and their likely impact upon car parking supply and demand, and identify a preferred management solution looking at similar examples in other towns, and also new parking sites as necessary. This addressed the potential displacement of some or all of the existing parking, which is currently within development sites (for example the proposed Canal Quarter in Runcorn), and required recommendations to be made with regards to on street TROs, as part of the package of solutions. (the solutions being targeted towards a no net revenue increase in cost to the Council);
5. To produce options for parking management to ensure the town centres' attractiveness as destinations is maintained, in the light of new development;
6. To provide some of the necessary data and analysis to allow consideration of whether Civil Parking Enforcement<sup>1</sup> (CPE) throughout Halton is feasible, (*the results of the studies also allow for an initial assessment of potential income levels for example, from those parking illegally should charging be introduced and the number of penalty tickets likely to be issued to illegal parkers*);
7. To ensure proposals are compatible with emerging plans to delink the Silver Jubilee Bridge following construction of the Mersey Gateway

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<sup>1</sup> Civil Parking Enforcement is where a Local Authority takes on the powers for the enforcement of waiting restrictions from the police.

Based on their findings the consultants have put forward a number of recommendations for each of the three centres and these are set out in Appendix 7. In summary these are:

- Introduction of limited period parking;
- Introduction of off street parking charges;
- Introduction of on street parking charges;
- Introduction of Residents Only Parking schemes;
- Introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement;
- Provision of a multi-storey car park in Runcorn; and
- Provision of long stay parking in Widnes.

The Council officers' response to these recommendations is set out in paragraphs 3.8 to 3.9 below and Members are now asked to consider these. The following Appendices provide additional detailed information on the studies:

- Appendix 1 –Parking Survey Areas;
- Appendix 2 - Detailed summary of consultant's findings and recommendations;
- Appendix 3 - Alternative options considered to regulate long stay parking in Runcorn Old Town central area car parks;
- Appendix 4 – Percentage occupancy less than 3 hours, 3-6 hours and over 6 hours; and
- Appendix 5. – Occupancy diagrams at typical peak time;

Aims 1 to 7 above are cross referenced in the consultants recommendations set out in Appendix 7, to show how they have been met. Aims 1, 2 and 6 are met by a combination of the data analysed and the TRO information in the study reports. In the case of Aim 7 above, the Parking and Accessibility Study for Runcorn Old Town considered the information available at the time (Mid 2007) including development scenarios taken from the previous Draft Town Centre SPD, in making its recommendations for accessibility improvements and parking management. Since this time the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy and emerging revised SPD have been published, which present further development scenarios and delinking options. It follows therefore that further work would be needed to consider the latest options. It should also be noted that all surveys were conducted during the month of June and therefore give typical results, but do not allow for unusually high demand during Christmas and Easter.

- 3.5 Whilst the recently completed studies have focused on the three town centres, it is also clear from other observations that there is a particular problem in the streets adjoining Runcorn mainline railway station. Here, rail users seek to avoid the charges in the two station carparks, and this has been causing significant inconvenience to local residents. This has been exacerbated during Virgin Trains' recent works to construct a new multi-storey carpark. Virgin Trains have provided a temporary carpark on Council owned land at the nearby football ground on Picow

Farm Road and Virgins' usual charge was levied for its use. The new multi-storey has now opened with a revised charging regime with lower charges for shorter stays.

- 3.6 The new charges, at £6 before 10am and £3 after 10am on a weekday and £3 all day at the weekend, may provide some assistance with the parking issues on the nearby streets. Officers also requested that Virgin consider introductory offers to entice rail users back into the Virgin carparks as the new facility opened, but these have not been forthcoming. However, Virgin Trains do appear to have taken on board at least some of the Council officers' concerns, in introducing the lower short stay charge.
- 3.7 The temporary carpark is due to fall back into the ownership of the Council in its current state from September 2009 (although Virgin may remove their charging machines), and there is an opportunity for the carpark to remain open for use by rail users either free of charge or with a small fee, to help ease problems on the surrounding streets. The Board are asked to endorse the proposal that officers investigate the feasibility of keeping open this facility, including the potential for it to be managed by the private sector, which would in all probability require a fee to be charged in order to cover operational costs. A further report could then be submitted to a future meeting of this Board before making any firm recommendations to the Executive Board if this were deemed appropriate.

### **3.8 Council Officers' Response to the Recommendations**

The consultants have identified the parking patterns and problems for each of the centres. Whilst various recommendations are made, any decisions taken will need to take into account a range of factors and potential impacts. These include:

- town centre (economic) viability,
- the current economic downturn,
- impacts on residential parking,
- proposed tolling of the Mersey Gateway and Silver Jubilee Bridge,
- the costs and potential income from CPE,
- promotion of sustainable transport and
- public reaction to the imposition of charging and/or parking restrictions.

Clearly, there are considerable differences between the parking patterns and ownership in the three town centres. In Runcorn Old Town, with the exception of Somerfield & Poundstretcher, car parks are generally in the ownership of the Council. In the other Town Centres most are privately owned. Therefore, whilst their management requirements will vary, it is important that an agreed approach is developed, which is acceptable to the Council and all car park operators across the three Town Centres. The study identifies the

potential for a number of controversial decisions to be made to enable the three Town Centres to function and develop; unimpaired by inadequate parking provision resulting from current and future land uses. These include:

- **The introduction of limited period parking:** - This is the primary recommendation in the current situation for those car parks which are privately operated, for example (parts of) the Widnes Town Centre supermarket car parks and the Somerfield car park in Runcorn. However, whilst this would enable shoppers to find spaces closer to their destination, this option is considered unviable as a long term option as costs will be incurred because of the need for enforcement and recovery of penalties. An exception to this may be if the private operator is willing to subsidise these enforcement costs. Changes to the management of such car parks would need to be achieved through a Parking Partnership. It is therefore possible that the Council would be required to bear some of these costs, effectively subsidising the continuation of free parking (the form of control would need to be determined for each location). It should also be noted that the Consultant's comments with regard to taxi ranks, motorcycle parking and other accessibility recommendations will be considered;
- **The introduction of off street parking charges:** - This would clearly be a major change to the current policy of free parking within the Borough and would require detailed discussions with the private car park operators to ensure a consistency of approach. It would also require very careful consideration, as it could impact on the attractiveness and viability of the town centres, bearing in mind that Halton is one of very few boroughs in the sub-region that does not charge for parking. The retail offer may not be of a standard to ensure that shoppers would continue to visit if they were faced with car parking charges. There may also be an adverse reaction from those affected by the proposed toll charges, to be paid by those using the Mersey Gateway or the Silver Jubilee Bridge. It may be perceived that a visitor is paying twice to access facilities on the opposite side of the river. This measure would also have both capital and revenue implications for the authority (and private operators) in procuring, maintaining and operating the charging machines and in cash handling and enforcement. A rigorous consultation exercise would also need to be undertaken, involving Members, residents, local businesses and the police to ensure that the proposals address local concerns and enhance the prospects of regeneration within the Town Centres, by ensuring that parking is available in the right places at the right times;
- **The introduction of on street parking charges:**- Again, this proposal would result in a significant change to current parking policy within the Borough. However, it would be a necessary step, should a decision be taken to generally introduce off street parking charges, to control any displaced parking in the immediate areas around the car parks, and thereby ensure that both emergency and general access are safely

maintained. Again, there would be both capital and revenue implications for the Authority, as described above and a need to consult extensively on the proposals;

- **The Introduction of Residents' Only Parking Schemes (ROPS):**  
The Council's current policy on the provision of residents only parking prevents such measures being introduced within the Borough due to the problems that such measures can bring. This policy has been reviewed and a report on this matter is the subject of another item elsewhere on this agenda.
  
- **The Introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) in Halton:-** It can be seen from above that there is potential for a chain reaction to commence, should a decision be taken to control 'off' street parking by the introduction of 'Off' Street Charges which then leads to 'On' Street Charges (and/or additional waiting restrictions). A third element in this chain is the introduction of CPE. This would be required to enforce waiting restrictions in the area, but would also provide the opportunity for the Council to direct where all parking enforcement should take place and thereby ensure resources are focused on locations where need is greatest. It would also provide the opportunity to enforce ROPS, should the Council wish to see these types of measures introduced at a future date. However, the costs of implementing CPE are likely to be significant, as new processes and management structures would have to be established to ensure that the service was efficient and equitable. It is envisaged that the most effective way of introducing CPE would be as part of an existing operation already established by a neighbouring authority, but this would need to be explored in detail. Extensive consultation would also be required with the Police. To this end, Members are asked to endorse the commissioning of a CPE feasibility study which is currently underway and which will determine the potential costs and benefits of introducing a CPE regime. It should be noted that whilst CPE operations are not required to be self financing, authorities should run their CPE operations efficiently, effectively and economically. Guidance states that a sensible aim is that parking enforcement should be self-financing as soon is practicable and that any shortfall would need to be financed using existing funding. If a scheme is not self financing a resolution from full Council is required when applying for CPE. It is also worth noting that CPE cannot be seen as an income generator, as surplus revenues raised are required to be ploughed back into the CPE operation or used to finance other transport related services. In considering CPE it is important to gain an understanding of the **scale of illegal parking** and therefore the potential scale of any income resulting from enforcement. Numbers of illegal parkers on street on each day in each town centre are summarised below:

Widnes 12:00hrs Saturday = 82 vehicles

Widnes 12:00hrs Weekday = 137 vehicles

Runcorn 11:00hrs Saturday = 44 vehicles  
Runcorn 11:00hrs Weekday = 40 vehicles

To put this in context, if the maximum penalty charge was £60 and 50% of offenders paid within 14 days reducing their charge to £30, this would result in an income of approximately £14,000. However this level of offending would be expected to reduce significantly once enforcement commenced.

No illegal parking data was collected for Halton Lea as there is no on street parking permitted and illegal on street parking is minimal.

- **The provision of a Multi-Storey Car Park in Runcorn:-** Whilst a need has been identified for a 220-space MSCP, (based on the implementation of all major developments in Runcorn), careful consideration needs to be given as to how this could be delivered, both in terms of identifying and securing the necessary site, planning permission and funding package. The proposed funding mechanism is based on planning conditions, (Section 106 Agreements), being imposed on all the developments. A review needs to be undertaken on whether the developments are likely to proceed in their current form, following the recent dramatic international economic downturn and, even if they were to proceed, would they be able to support the necessary costs of constructing the MSCP? Elsewhere a cost of around £10,000 per space (plus land costs) has been allowed for when planning a MSCP. This would mean that a 220 space car park, as proposed would cost in the region of £2.2m. It should be noted that other funding opportunities (LTP), are unlikely to be able to support such a proposal given current commitments and reducing allocations. Consideration also needs to be given to the consistency of this measure with current transport policy, which is targeted towards delivering a sustainable transport system that provides safe, convenient and affordable access for all residents and not just those with access to a car. A more sustainable approach would be one which, is based on utilising Section 106 funding to support improvements to local bus services and walking and cycling facilities to ensure a wide range of key services are readily accessible to a broad spectrum of the Borough's residents. Given the above, it is unlikely that a MSCP will be provided, at least in the short term, and the consequences of not providing a MSCP and the possible alternatives will require further detailed consideration. The current economic climate further adds to these feasibility issues, therefore it is recommended that consideration be deferred until the current economic climate improves.
- **The Provision of Long Stay Parking In Widnes:-** The Consultant's recommend that one of three options should be considered. These being:



- The former B&Q site, subject to development plans and ownership (This site is currently the subject of a planning application);
- Consolidation of some of the Morrisons' parking into a low level multi-storey, on the outskirts of the parking area; and
- The possibility of land becoming available in the future.

The Consultant also recommends that the impact of the Windmill Centre development should be monitored post opening

It is considered that a combination of the above would help sustain the viability of the town centres, by ensuring that sufficient spaces are used by the right people at the right time, particularly in the light of new development proposals. Doing nothing will exacerbate existing problems as new development comes forward, creating problems for the local economy and residents.

### **3.9 Officer's Recommendations**

3.9.1 It is clear from the studies that there is a need to manage the demand for parking in Halton's Town Centres, but that the extent of measures to be taken and their consequences need further consideration to ensure that the proposals are acceptable, affordable, proportionate and can be practically applied to enhance the regeneration prospects of the Borough. The following actions are therefore recommended:

That:

- 1) A formal Parking Partnership be established between the Council and the private operators of car parks within the Borough, by mid 2010, to consider and agree measures that are required to manage both 'Off' and 'On' Street parking demand and to agree the basis of a new draft Parking Strategy, for consideration by the Council. This would be vital in determining our partners' appetite for charging, especially in light of the current economic downturn, the proposed tolling of the Mersey Gateway and the Silver Jubilee Bridge, and to ensure the long term viability of the town centres. It is also felt that an early priority should be afforded to resolving the problems of Runcorn town centre.
- 2) Endorsement be given to the commissioning of a feasibility study, which is currently underway, for the introduction of Civil Enforcement Powers the results of which be brought back to a future meeting of this Board;
- 3) Endorsement be given to further investigation into the need for and feasibility of a Multi Storey Car Park in Runcorn, in the light of the recent economic downturn, the ability of likely

developments to fund its construction and the effectiveness of alternative measures in providing a more sustainable approach. However, it is recommended that this investigation be deferred, until the current economic climate improves.

- 4) The current approach of supporting small residential developments with no private off street parking around the Victoria Square area and seeking a financial contribution towards parking or transport infrastructure, be continued (in response to the findings in Appendix 7 (A7.2))
- 5) A further report on the establishment of a strategy for securing Section 106 contributions from development elsewhere within the Borough be prepared and submitted to a future meeting of the Board for consideration
- 6) The Board support the proposal for officers to investigate the feasibility of the Council keeping the temporary carpark at Runcorn station open for use by rail users, to help ease parking problems on surrounding streets, and the potential for a charge to be imposed for its use with management by the private sector.

It should be noted that the parking studies were carried out only in the Borough's Town Centres. It is appreciated that there are other areas, where additional measures maybe required. These will also be addressed in the development of any new parking policy.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no specific implications on policies of this report, but the development of a new parking strategy could have implications on the Council's Local Transport Plan and policies associated with regeneration and economic development.

#### **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

##### **5.1 Resource implications**

In establishing a Parking Partnership, and following the consultants interim Borough wide recommendations, it is likely that the Council will incur some costs eg. enforcement, officer time, Member time, administration, venue costs and secretarial support . Contributions from developers to make up for lack of parking provision in some areas (eg. Victoria Square) may help to offset some of this cost, but it is unlikely to cover these ongoing costs indefinitely. The recommended further studies to consider a MSCP in the Old Town (if progressed in the future) and the feasibility of CPE will also have cost implications. In the longer term, given the scale of the Borough's parking stock, it is unlikely that charging

for parking and or CPE, will make a profit – however this will be considered in more detail through the recommended feasibility study.

- 5.2 Sustainability themes are addressed in the report, in terms of a future parking strategy assisting and not restricting future economic growth, together with a likely impact of parking controls on encouraging more sustainable modes of transport. Security improvements are also likely to have a positive impact on crime and disorder

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

- 6.1 **Children and Young People in Halton:** No direct implications
- 6.2 **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton:** - No direct implications
- 6.3 **A Healthy Halton:-** The introduction of various parking controls is likely to result in a shift in mode of travel towards healthier alternatives, such as walking and cycling (and buses).
- 6.4 **A Safer Halton:-** Improving the security of car parks should result in a reduction in crime and antisocial behaviour, together with improved perceived safety.
- 6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal:-** There are no specific implications of this report on urban renewal, but the development of a new parking policy could have implications, which will be considered and reported upon, should a new strategy be proposed.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

The measures proposed within the report will enable future decisions to be taken to allow car parking in the Borough to be managed to meet future needs of residents, businesses and visitors. When detailed proposals have been developed any risks associated with the proposals will be assessed at that time. Failure to take these decisions will increase the possibility of regeneration in the Borough being hampered by inadequate parking provision.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

There are no direct implications on equality and diversity considerations of this report. However, future parking policy will help to improve the provision of mobility standard spaces and enforcement, which will assist in ensuring the equitable use of on and off street parking.

## **9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

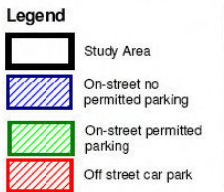
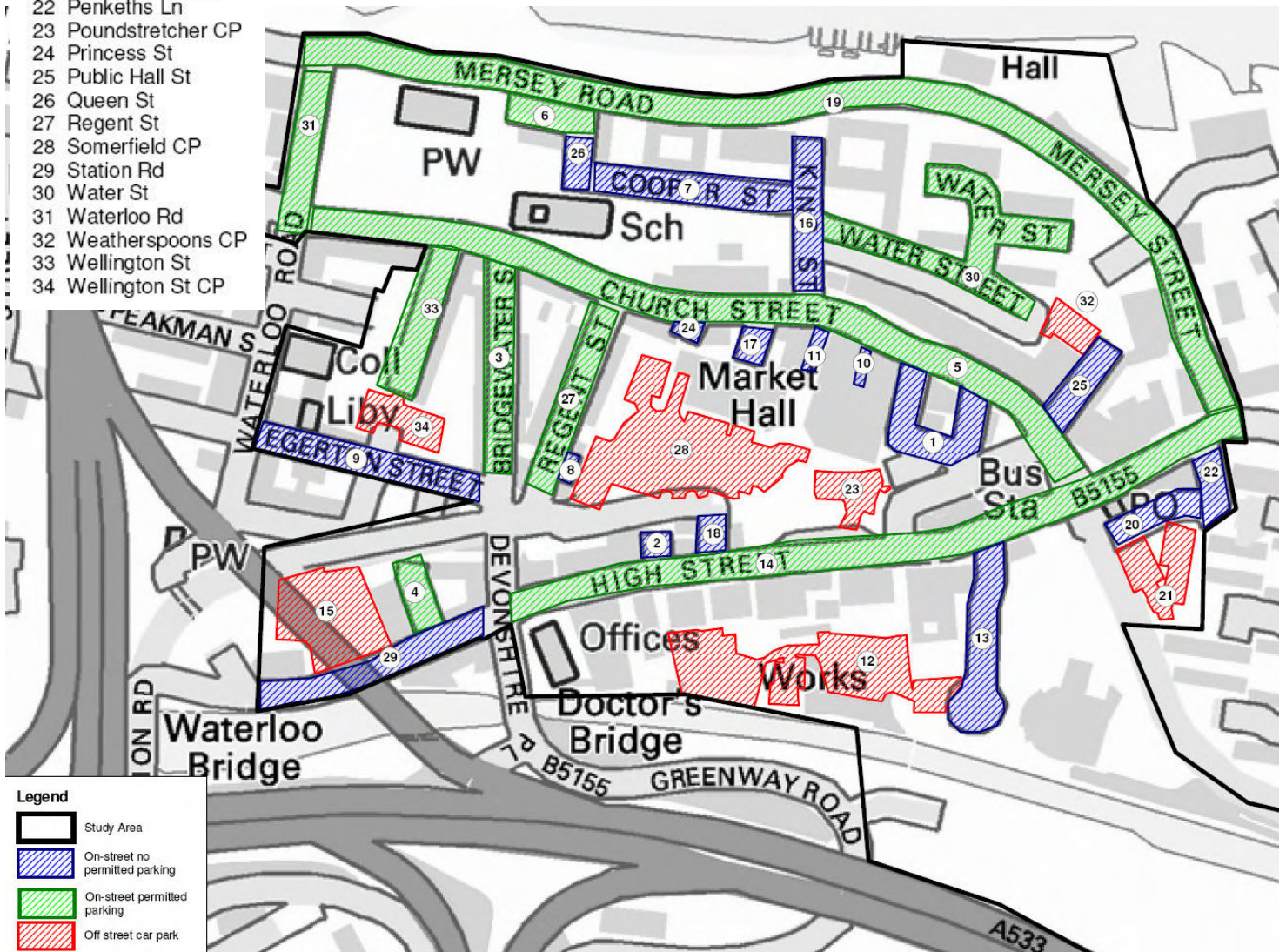
<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
<b>Parking Consultants (Runcorn Old Town and Widnes and Halton Lea) Studies Briefs</b>	<b>Rutland House</b>	<b>Jonathan Farmer</b>
<b>Runcorn Old Town Parking and Access Study (Rev B)</b>	<b>Rutland House</b>	<b>Jonathan Farmer</b>
<b>Halton Parking Study (Widnes and Halton Lea) Survey Results Summary Report (Rev B)</b>	<b>Rutland House</b>	<b>Jonathan Farmer</b>
<b>Halton Parking Study (Widnes and Halton Lea) Analysis and Recommendations</b>	<b>Rutland House</b>	<b>Jonathan Farmer</b>

## Appendix 1 – Parking Survey Areas

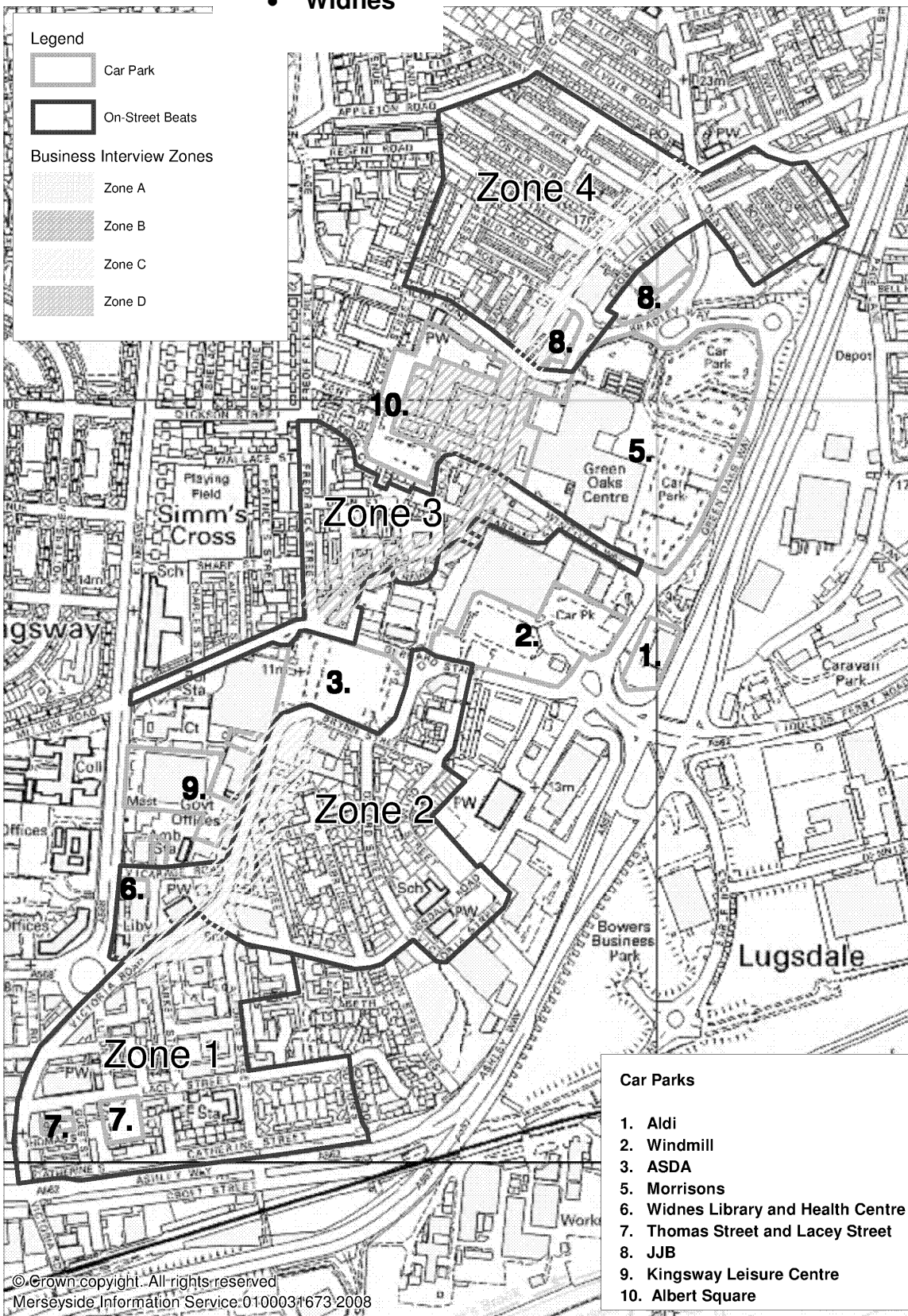
- **Runcorn**

- 1 Alcock St
- 2 Back High St
- 3 Bridgewater St
- 4 Brook St
- 5 Church Street
- 6 Clarence Ter
- 7 Cooper St
- 8 Cross St
- 9 Egerton Rd
- 10 Fryer St
- 11 Granville St
- 12 Health Centre CP
- 13 Health Centre Rd
- 14 High St
- 15 High St Cp
- 16 King St
- 17 Loch St 1
- 18 Loch St 2
- 19 Mersey Rd
- 20 Nelson St
- 21 Penkeths Crt CP
- 22 Penkeths Ln
- 23 Poundstretcher CP
- 24 Princess St
- 25 Public Hall St
- 26 Queen St
- 27 Regent St
- 28 Somerfield CP
- 29 Station Rd
- 30 Water St
- 31 Waterloo Rd
- 32 Weatherspoons CP
- 33 Wellington St
- 34 Wellington St CP

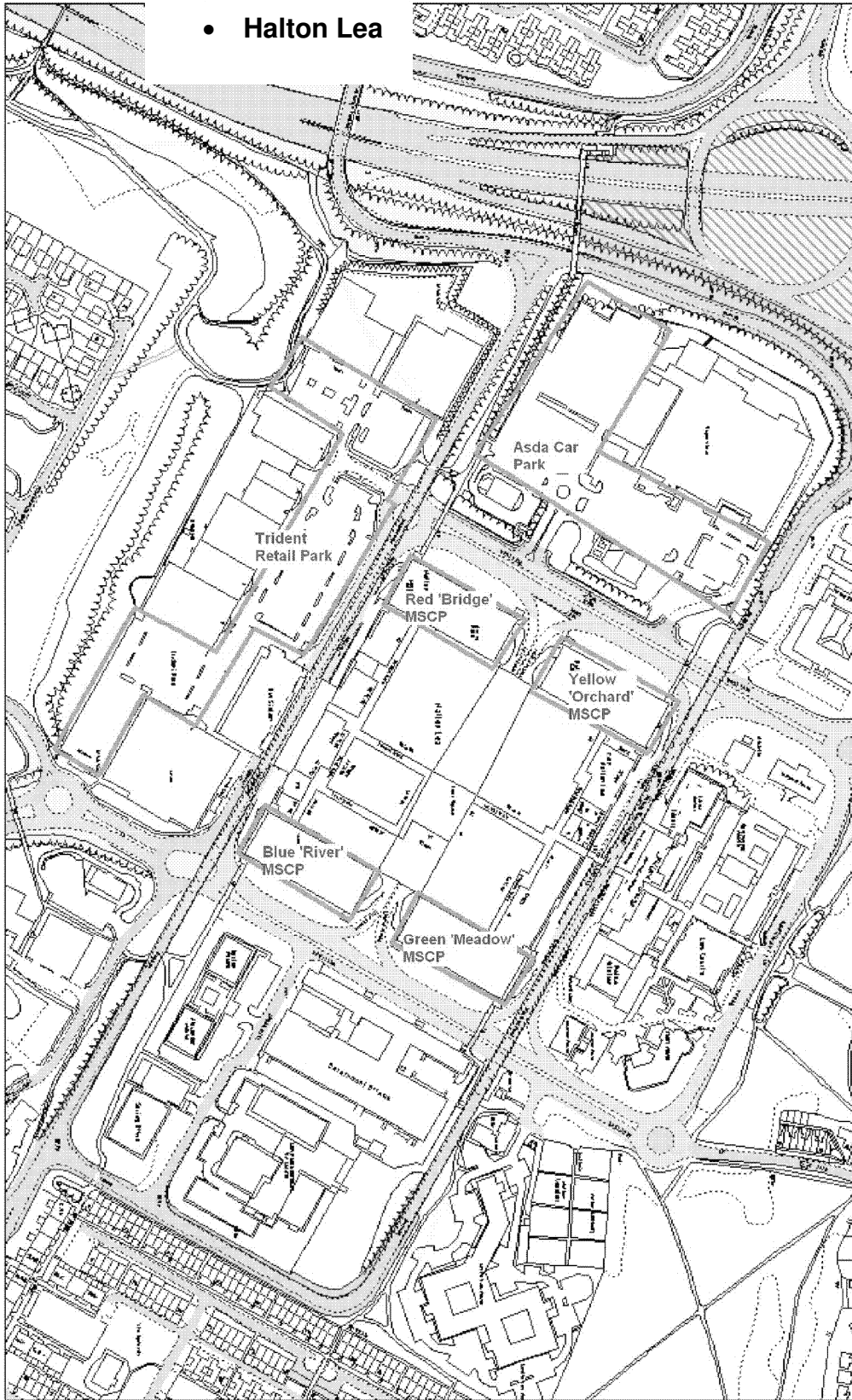
Note: Traffic Regulation Orders exist even on those roads where parking is shown as “permitted”



• Widnes



• Halton Lea



## Appendix 2 – Detailed summary of consultants findings

### A2.1 Runcorn Old Town

(It should be noted that throughout the Runcorn report 'Poundstretcher' refers to the informal car park on development land in front of the frozen food store).

The **key findings of the Runcorn Old Town Parking Study** are as follows:

- Hourly parking beat surveys were carried out in June 2007, between 7am and 11pm, both on street and in off street car parks, in the areas shown in Appendix 1. Attitude surveys of businesses and users were also carried out at the locations.
- Parking demand peaks at about 13.00hrs on a weekday, with about 330 cars parked off-street and about 150 cars parked on-street within the study area.
- The main trip purpose for those using off-street car parks on both a weekday and a Saturday was shopping (around 45% on a Saturday and 35% on a weekday). However personal business is also a major trip purpose particularly on a weekday (over 30% on a weekday and 25% on a Saturday). Work and employers business also accounted for around 10-15% of trips on a weekday (only around 5% on a Saturday), with a similar number (10-15%) visiting for leisure on a Saturday (only around 7% on a weekday).
- Off street parking demand is greater on a weekday than at the weekend. At present, approximately 70% of the total off street parking capacity is occupied at 13:00hrs on a weekday (around 30% in the evening). Daytime and evening peaks are only 40% and 15% respectively at the weekend.
- On street parking demand is also greater on a weekday than at the weekend. At present, approximately 45% of the total on street parking capacity is occupied at 13:00hrs on a weekday (around 25% in the evening). Daytime and evening peaks are only 35% and 15%, respectively, at the weekend.
- The central car parks of Somerfield and Poundstretcher (and to some degree Penketh Court) and the surrounding retail streets of High St, Church St and Regent St are busiest, with peak car park occupancies of 90-100%. Car parks and streets outside of this central core tend to offer more spare capacity. **In the central car parks between 40 and 60% of capacity is occupied by vehicles staying for more than 3 hours.** This is likely to be due to a combination of personal/employers' business, workplace or leisure, with only a very small percentage (3% of only the Penketh Court car park) being station related. Parking accumulation charts support



this finding, with no early morning 'all day' parkers shown (except for very small percentages at Penketh Court and the Health Centre car park).

- Non-work related and short stay (<3 hours) car park users are more in favour of the introduction of parking charges to deter long-stay use, than work related and long-stay users. 65% of short stay users have 'no opinion', 'support' or 'strongly support' a charge, whilst a similar number of long stay users 'oppose' or 'strongly oppose' the charge.
- Businesses are almost universally against the introduction of parking charges. However, it would appear from the above, that it is employees rather than Town Centre users (shoppers etc) who oppose charging. Interestingly, around 70% of businesses state that more than three quarters of their staff drive to work. It is therefore clear that should parking charges be based on length of stay it is likely that they will have a greater impact on employees than visitors/shoppers . It should be noted that this parking maybe displaced to other sites or residential areas
- On street parking demand is greater on a weekday than a Saturday. Church Street is the busiest of the three streets surrounding the town (Church Street, Regent Street, High Street), operating at capacity for much of a weekday, closely followed by Regent Street. There is spare capacity on High Street for much of the day. There is very little yellow line parking but a high degree of overstaying on limited waiting restrictions (63% on a Saturday, 50% on a weekday), but this is generally less than 3 hours suggesting shoppers rather than commuters.

## **A2.2 Widnes**

**The key findings of the Widnes and Halton Lea Parking Study, for Widnes, are as follows:**

- Hourly parking beat surveys were carried out in June 2008, between 7am and 10pm, both on street and in off street car parks. Attitude surveys of businesses, users and car park owners were also carried out.
- At the time of survey, total off-street parking capacity was measured at about 2,800 spaces, while total on-street parking capacity was measured at about 1,600 spaces.
- At peak times on a weekday, around 76% of occupied spaces (53% of total spaces) in off-street car parks are used for short-stay parking of up to 3 hrs. Parking for between 3 and 5.99 hrs accounted for less than 11% of occupied spaces (8% of total

spaces) and parking for over 6hrs again accounted for roughly 13% of occupied spaces (9% of total spaces). However, this is still 455 off street spaces being used for long stay parking (see table in Appendix 4).

- Patterns of occupancy in off-street car parks were similar for both weekdays and Saturdays with peak levels of occupancy (around 75% full) being reached at 11am.
- Interviews revealed that roughly 80% of those questioned had managed to find a space in their preferred car park. When asked which had been the preferred but unavailable car park, Albert Square, Morrisons, Asda and Aldi featured most frequently.
- During construction of the Windmill Centre, a £5 charge for parking over 1 hour is being levied, via a barrier system to ensure that only customers use the remaining car park. However, once the development is opened, the developer will be required to comply with a planning condition to agree any scheme of management with the Council, in the spirit of a Parking Partnership.
- The main trip purpose for those using off-street car parks was shopping (around 60% on both weekdays and Saturdays). Leisure/Recreation accounted for around 15% of trips, usual workplace accounted for less than 10% of trips and employers business for around 5%. Appendix 4 contains further information on parking numbers and percentages staying for less than or over 6 hours (ie. Commuters) in each town centre.
- Roughly 35% of those interviewed visited Widnes Town Centre 2 to 3 times a week and around 30% visited weekly. The frequency of visits was roughly similar for those who provided answers both on weekdays and Saturdays.
- When asked what measures should be implemented in Widnes Town Centre, 'None' was the most frequent answer (30-65%) and 'More Council Owned Parking' (15-40%) was the next most frequent.
- The majority of interviewees were against parking charges; between 40-50% 'strongly opposed' and 25-30% 'opposed' charges (total 65-80% depending on day when questioned). Roughly 17-21% had 'no opinion'. 10% of those questioned on a weekday expressed 'support' for charging and roughly 2% 'strong support' (total 12%). Of those questioned on a Saturday, 5% 'supported' charges and around 3% 'strongly supported' charges (total 8%).
- The maximum acceptable fee for any of those who did not oppose a charge would be £1 per hour.
- 'On'-street parking reached a maximum of around 30% occupied on Saturday and 35% occupied on weekdays.

- Levels of 'on'-street parking varied less throughout the day and generally showed a much flatter profile than off street. Parking for between 3 and 5.99 hrs accounted for approximately 5% of occupied spaces.
- There are pockets of congestion/misuse on street. Yellow line parking is more prevalent than overstay parking.
- Illegal parking is greatest on a weekday, with about half of all illegal parking being concentrated on Widnes Road, Winfield Way and Ross Street.
- Overstay parking in time restricted bays is most common on a weekday, with the greatest abuse being found on Widnes Road. 62-68% of parkers were found to overstay, indicating that perceived lack of customer parking may be caused by commuters.
- Satisfaction surveys (on issues such as cleanliness/quality, ease of finding space, accessibility, safety/security) showed that whilst cleanliness/quality and safety/security were the elements with which respondents were least satisfied, these still scored an average of 3.8 – 4 out of 5. Most, blue badge holders also stated that disabled spaces could be fairly difficult to find on a weekday. These issues could be looked at further as part of a Partnership's remit.

### **A2.3 Halton Lea**

The **key findings of the Widnes and Halton Lea Parking Study, for Halton Lea**, are as follows:

- A 3 hour waiting limit has recently been introduced in each Multi Storey Carpark (MSCP) on the three levels closest to the shops, enforced by clamping at Halton Lea's expense. A similar limit is anticipated on the Trident Park;
- Overall, less than 50% of all spaces are occupied in MSCP car parks (Blue, Green, Yellow, Red) on weekdays. This reduces to less than 30% occupied on Saturdays. Peak occupancy occurs generally around midday;
- The amount of occupied spaces varied considerably between individual MSCP car parks. Generally MSCP Blue car park had less than 40% of spaces occupied and MSCP Red car park had around 55% occupied. In contrast, MSCP Green car park had 80% spaces occupied and MSCP Yellow/Orange car park had around 85% of spaces occupied;
- When asked, most respondents (95-100%) had managed to find a space in the MSCP car park of their choice;

- On weekdays, short-stay parking of less than 3 hrs duration accounts for a maximum of 15% of spaces in MSCP car parks. Parking of over 6hrs duration accounts for 20% of spaces in MSCP car parks;
- A 3 hour waiting limit has also recently been introduced at Asda, Halton Lea to prevent parking by non customers; enforced by fixed price penalties, at Asda's expense;
- Surveys showed that the Asda car park is operating at around 100% occupancy midday to early afternoon and then again in early evening on weekdays, and midday/early afternoon on Saturdays. Parking of less than 1hr duration accounted for up to 30-40% of spaces, while parking between 1 hr and 3 hrs duration accounted for up to 40-50% of spaces (ie total 70-90% for 3hrs or less). Longer stay parking is likely to arise from staff parking;
- At the same peak times, Trident parking was around 80% occupied during weekdays and around 100% occupied during Saturday afternoon. Again the most frequent parking durations were less than 1hr (30-40% of spaces) and between 1 hr and 3 hrs (30-40% of spaces). The remaining longer stay parking is likely to arise from staff parking;
- Shopping accounted for around 65% of trips to Halton Lea. Usual workplace accounted for between 10-20% of trips;
- 25-30% of respondents visited Halton Lea daily. On weekdays, roughly 55% visited 2 to 3 times per week and 12% visited weekly. On Saturdays this was reversed with roughly 25% visiting 2-3 times per week and 45% weekly;
- The majority of interviewees were against parking charges; between 49-51% 'strongly opposed' and 40-45% 'opposed' charges (total 89-96% depending on day when questioned). Roughly 3-10% had 'no opinion'. Around 1% expressed 'support' for charges, but no interviewees were recorded as expressing 'strong support';
- Of those who did not oppose a charge around 50-60% stated up to 50p per hour was acceptable and 0-5% up to £1 per hour. However, 35-50% stated they thought 'zero' was an appropriate parking fee per hour;

### Appendix 3 - Alternatives

**Runcorn Old Town Parking Study** – the following potential management solutions were considered for the **existing situation** to reduce long stay parking in the central car parks:

- Late opening – preventing access to central car parks before 9am. Rejected as retail trade hours would be limited to start at 9am and it would not address the significant amount of long stay users arriving after 9am. The measure would also not influence modal shift.
- Limited period parking – free up to a maximum stay with a penalty charge thereafter. Would require signs to be erected, attendant to patrol and a back office operation for issuing penalties and recovering revenue. It is the view of the consultants that it would be uneconomical to establish a back office function for such a small number of car parks. A neighbouring authority could run the back office function, but there would be an ongoing charge for the service. However, for these small number of car parks, it was considered more economical to contract out the whole operation to a private operator. Indicative costs are £2000 set up plus £18000 per annum for attendants. The consultant has indicated that penalty charges would then cover the back office costs. The set up and attendants' costs would need to be borne by the Council and/or Somerfield, who have indicated a willingness to pay enforcement costs for their carpark. This option could therefore be feasible in the shorter term but only if Somerfield and/or the Council agree to pay the costs involved.
- Charging (combined with maximum stay). For the same reasons as above this would be best contracted to a private operator. Pay and Display is the preferred option as it reduces delays. It gives the opportunity for Somerfield to offer a refund scheme. If there were no refund scheme, a parking operator have suggested they could operate a tariff of 40p per hour, upto 3 hours on the Somerfield carpark, at no cost to the Council (and no setup costs) and a possible option of receiving a share of the income (although this would need to be shared under a partnership with Peel). Institution of Highways and Transportation (IHT) guidance states that *'parking which is controlled should also be charged, at the very least to cover enforcement costs. Free parking...in effect is subsidised by those who park in charged areas (or more likely the Council in this case) and this may be difficult to justify (in terms of Best Value in this case)'*. Therefore, Pay and Display at Somerfield and Poundstretcher is the recommended option if Somerfield do not agree to pay costs, but this would need their agreement.

- Impacts of the options considered above are as follows:
  - The desired 'swap over' effect with long stay users in less central car parks freeing up spaces for shorter stay users;
  - The undesirable migration of long stay users (or short stay users who do not wish to pay) to Church Street, Regent Street and High Street, where restrictions exist, but there may be calls for greater enforcement, which may lead to the need for Civil Parking Enforcement (which becomes more important when additional development is considered);
  - The undesirable migration of long stay users (or short stay users who do not wish to pay) into residential areas, although only Bridgewater Street is within the same walking distance to Somerfield as other off street car parks. Users could also be encouraged to use Mersey Road;
  - Possible undesirable migration of all users to other car parks if a charge were imposed. Although this is considered unlikely with the level of charge indicated above, this consequence could be limited by applying lower charges to other car parks. However, this may then lead to more parking on street, with the consequence of possibly giving necessity to Civil Parking Enforcement and Residents Parking Zones. This would need to be monitored and the Council prepared to pursue this if it were to become a problem; and
  - Town centre viability. It can be observed that when charges are introduced there is an initial dip in trade, but this tends to recover with greater post implementation custom as spaces are freed up for higher turnover shopping. IHT guidance states *"Where there is no charge for parking, access for short-term stops for shopping is often difficult. In some areas politicians and shopkeepers have a fear of on-street parking charges, although, where they have been introduced, they are often welcomed as the use of charges can ensure that spaces are available for customers. In considering representations on changes in parking and loading regulations, authorities should be aware that frontage businesses often claim that they are concerned about access for their customers but are actually protecting their own established practice of using the parking spaces themselves."* A similar scheme was introduced in Ellesmere Port in 2001, and has been successful. However, on street parking there is controlled by a residents Controlled Parking Zone.

**Appendix 4 – Percentage occupancy less than 3 hours, 3-6 hours and over 6 hours (ie. Commuters/workers)**

***Weekday occupancies at 11am***

<b>Runcorn</b>	Capacity	Demand (no spaces)				Proportion of Capacity (%)			
		Less than 3 hrs	3 to 6 hrs	6 hrs or more	Total	Less than 3 hrs	3 to 6 hrs	6 hrs or more	Total
On Street	298	79	29	42	150	27%	10%	14%	50%
Off Street	485	165	93	74	332	34%	19%	15%	68%
<b>Total</b>	<b>783</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>482</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>62%</b>

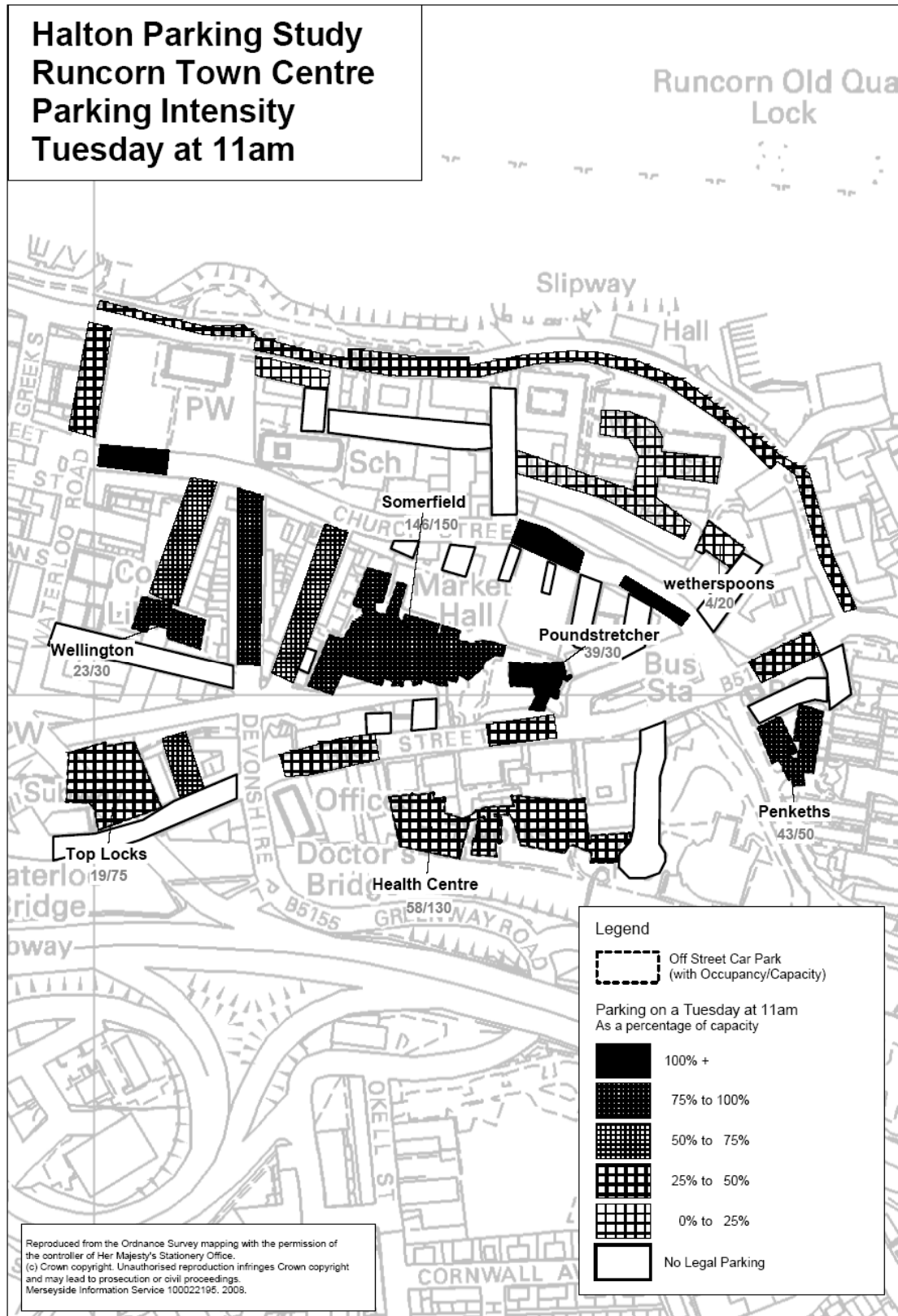
<b>Widnes</b>	Capacity	Demand (no spaces)				Proportion of Capacity (%)			
		Less than 3 hrs	3 to 6 hrs	6 hrs or more	Total	Less than 3 hrs	3 to 6 hrs	6 hrs or more	Total
On Street	1595	99	214	369	682	6%	13%	23%	43%
Off Street	2794	1491	212	243	1946	53%	8%	9%	70%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4389</b>	<b>1590</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>612</b>	<b>2628</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>60%</b>

<b>Halton Lea</b>	Capacity	Demand (no spaces)				Proportion of Capacity (%)			
		Less than 3 hrs	3 to 6 hrs	6 hrs or more	Total	Less than 3 hrs	3 to 6 hrs	6 hrs or more	Total
On Street	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Off Street	3089	949	297	577	1823	31%	10%	19%	59%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3089</b>	<b>949</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>577</b>	<b>1823</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>59%</b>

Please note: percentage occupancies do not sum to 100% as these are occupancies, expressed as a percentage of overall capacity.

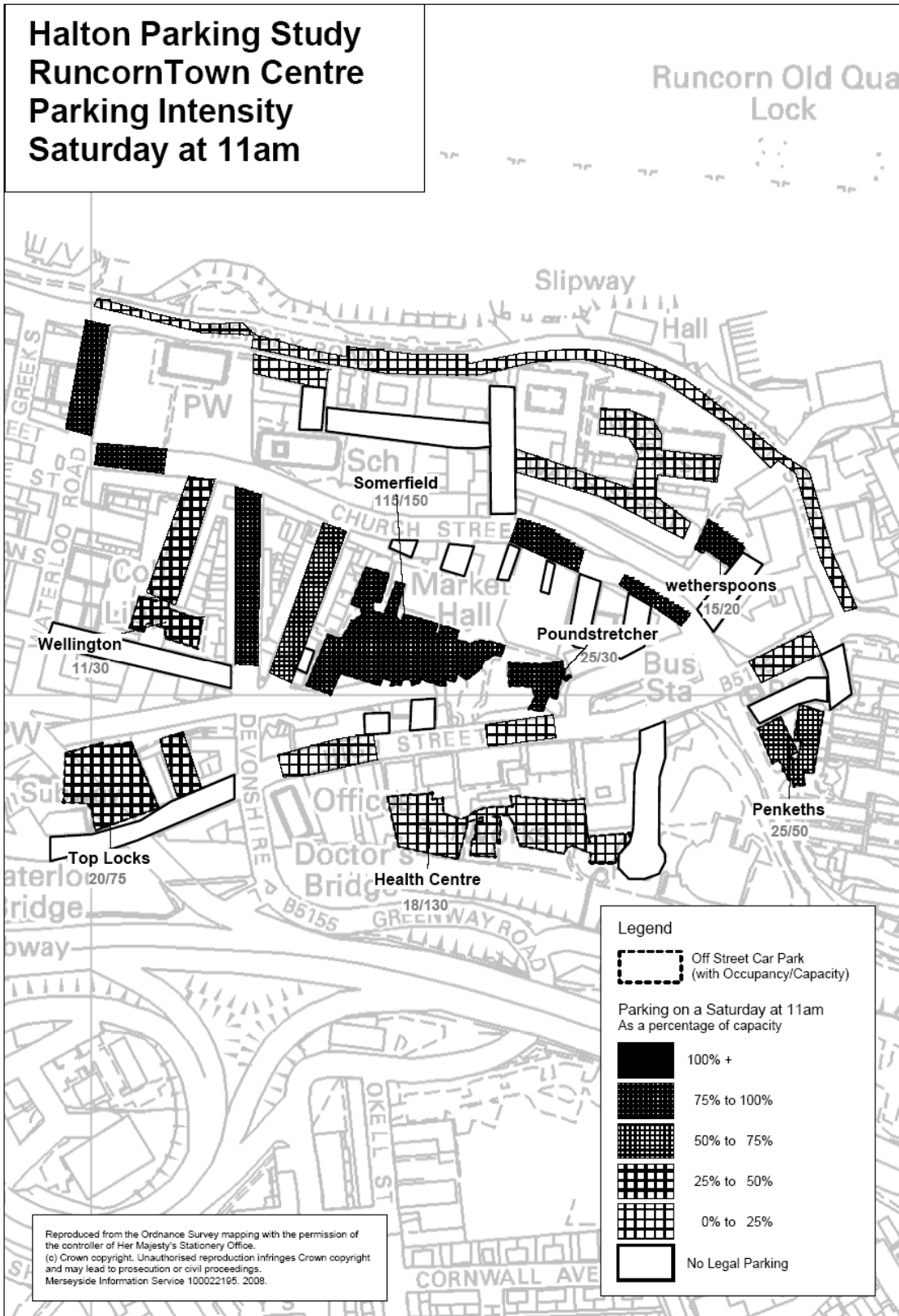
**Appendix 5 Occupancy diagrams at typical peak time**

**Runcorn town centre parking occupancy – Tuesday 11am**

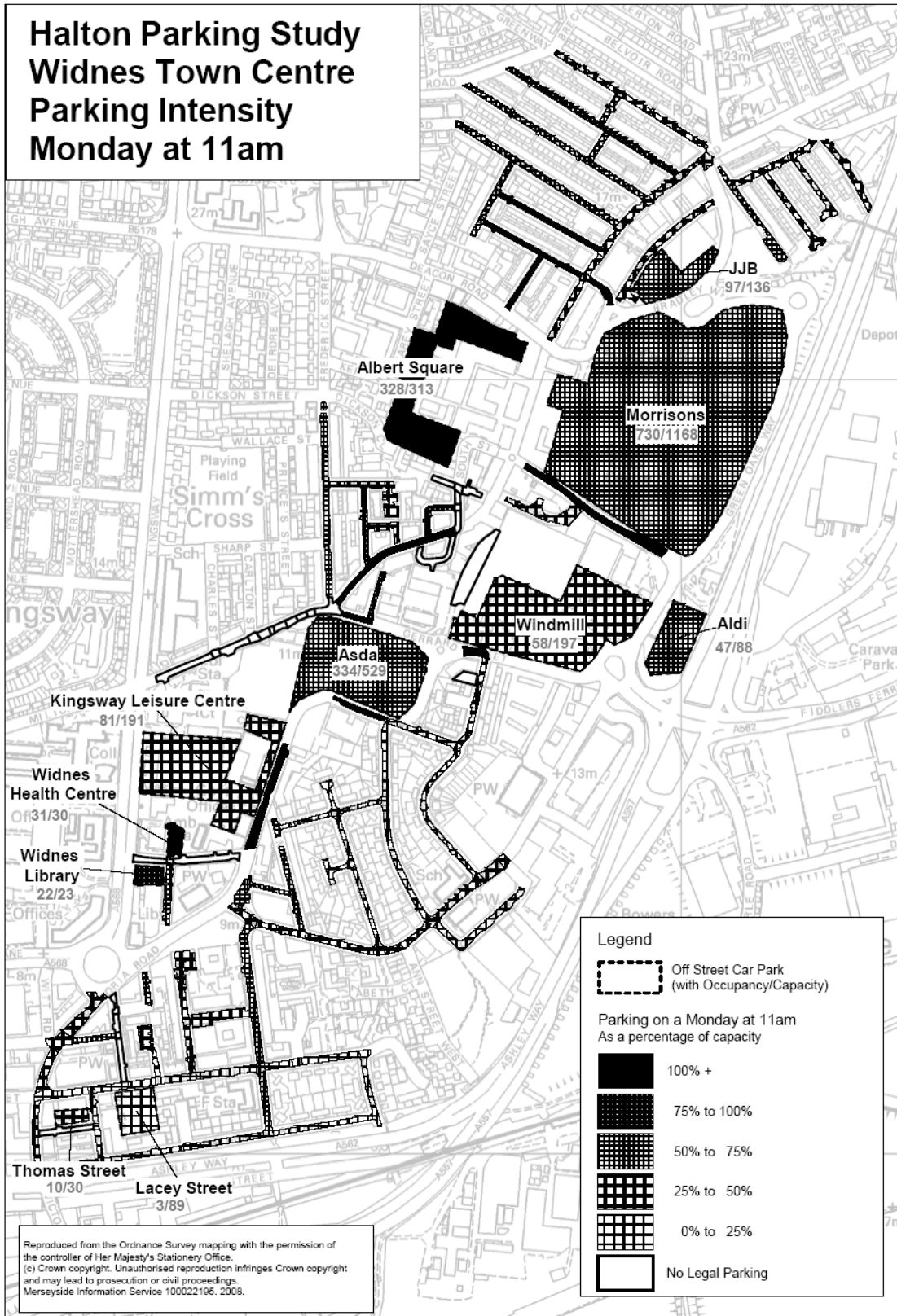




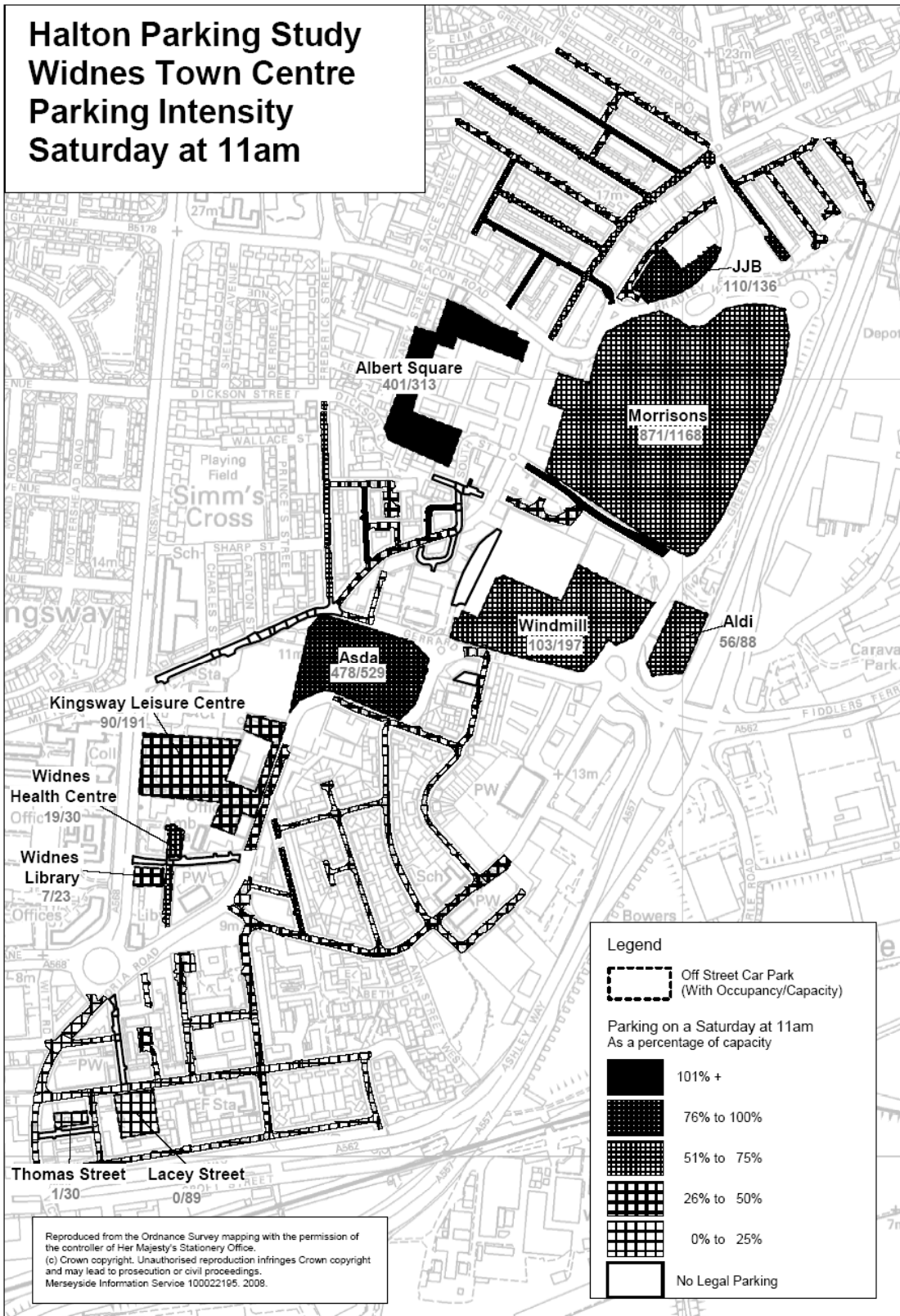
# Runcorn town centre parking occupancy – Saturday 11am



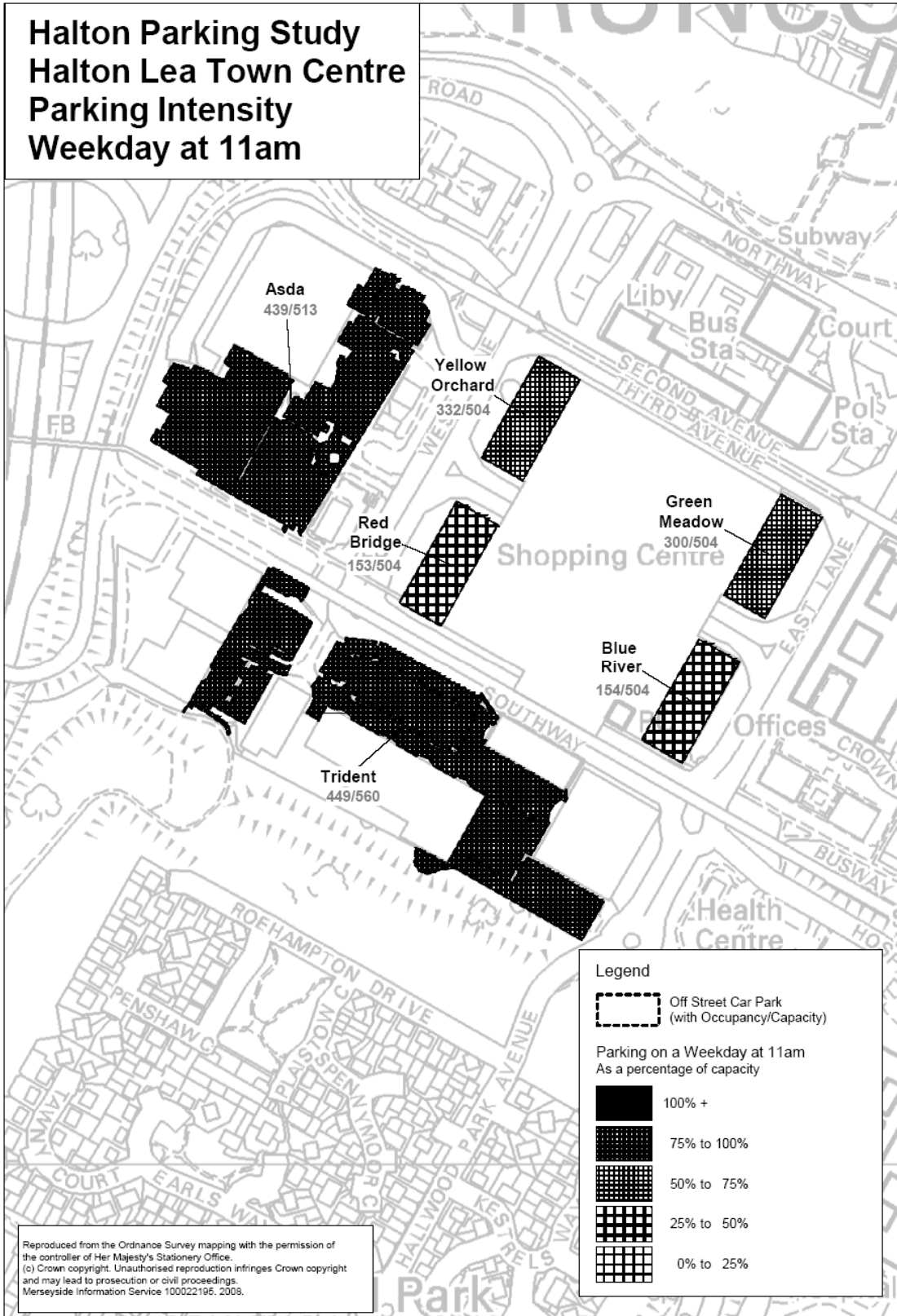
# Widnes town centre parking occupancy – Tuesday 11am



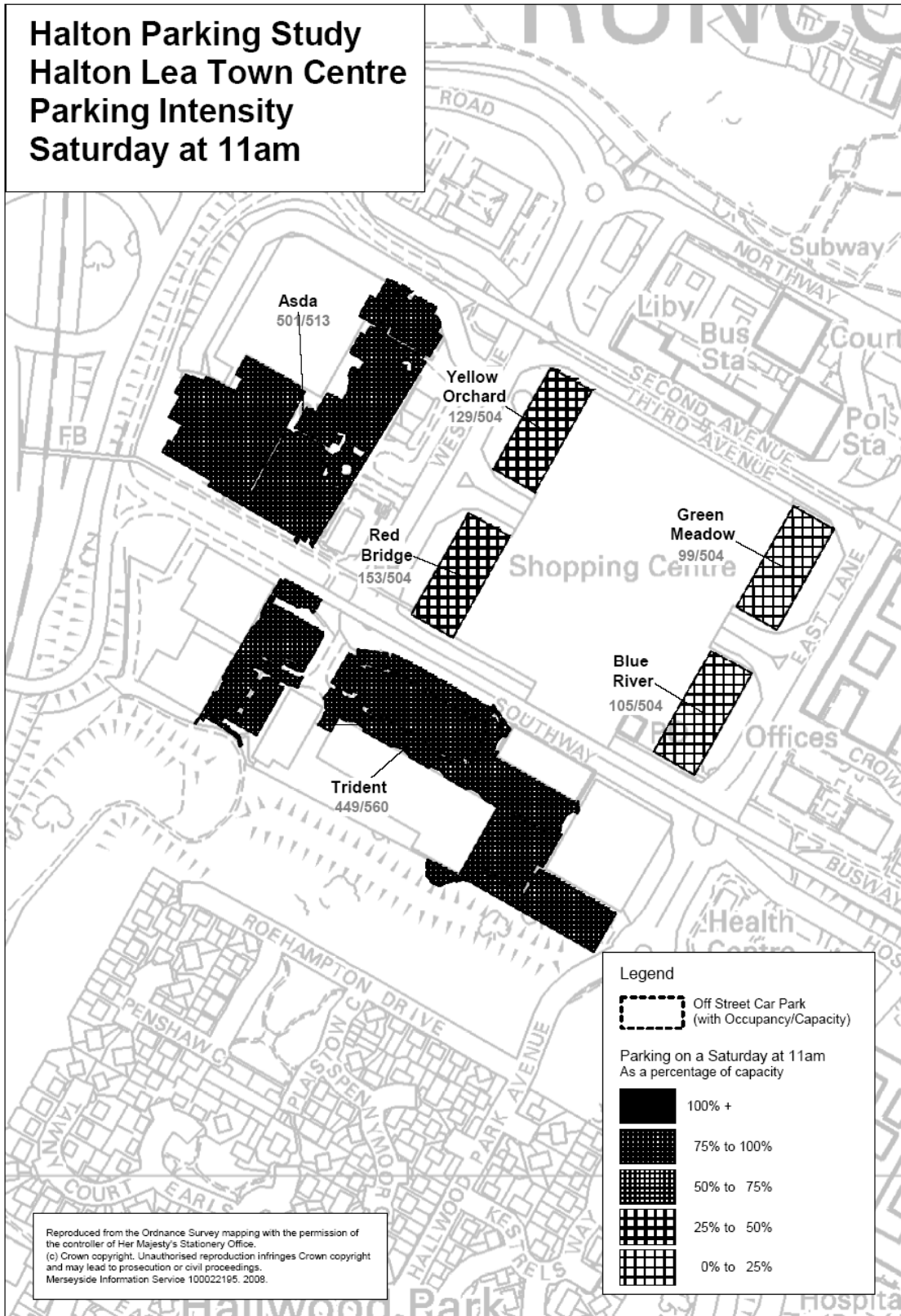
# Widnes town centre parking occupancy – Saturday 11am



# Halton Lea shopping centre parking occupancy – Tuesday 11am



# Halton Lea shopping centre parking occupancy – Saturday 11am



## **Appendix 6** Development Scenarios

The following development scenarios were tested by the Consultants.

### Runcorn Old Town:

- Canal Quarter development: commercial and residential development on the site of the Health Centre car park and also on the south side of the canal. Would include sufficient parking to satisfy residential demand. This is the most advanced and certain of the development proposals and is therefore the only one considered both on its own and together with the other proposals. (Scenario considered 892m<sup>2</sup> office and 2081m<sup>2</sup> retail, plus residential (which would have its own parking supply));
- Library site: potential residential development on the site of the existing library and Wellington St car park. Would include sufficient parking to satisfy residential demand. Therefore net loss of Wellington Street car park should development occur;
- Post Office site: potential retail and commercial development on the site of the existing Penketh Court car park. Might also include a new library to replace existing library if 'Library Site' development proposal takes place. 2393m<sup>2</sup> office assumed & would result in loss of Penketh car park should development occur;
- Central site: potential residential or office development on the site of the existing Poundstretcher car park. Would include sufficient parking to satisfy residential demand. Might also include a new library to replace existing library if 'Library Site' development proposal takes place. 2787m<sup>2</sup> office development assumed which would result in net loss of central ('Poundstretcher') car park should development occur

### Halton Lea:

- Existing permission for new units on Trident Park, which remove some parking supply and create new demand
- Large format superstore resolution to approve not considered as it replaces existing parking and caters for its own demand.

Widnes:

- The following table summarises the development scenarios tested for Widnes

Proposed Development	Planning application no	Study Zone		Additional GFA/dwellings compared with that in use at time of survey	Additional Parking spaces proposed
Conversion to apartments (upper floors) 24-28 Widnes Rd	97/00101/ful	2	Residential	5x 1bed	0
Apartments 1-5 Ollier St	07/00835/ful	1	Residential	14 x 2 bed	9
Resi on 1st floor	04/00343/cou	4	Residential	1x 3bed	0
Apartments Vine St/Keble St	04/01079/ful	2	Residential	10x2 bed	7
Apartments & retail 88a-92 Albert Rd	07/00716/ful	4	Residential / Retail	24 x 2 bed; 400m2 retail	24
Lugsdale Alforde Cornerhouse	05/00538/ful	1&2	Residential / Pub / Leisure	11 x 2 bed; 150m2 dance school; 400m2 pub	9
Appleton Village Retirement Homes and Surgery	04/00522/ful	3&4	Sheltered Hsg/Surgery/Office	(16x1bed; 2x2bed sheltered) 672m2 surgery, 238m2 office	41
153 Appleton Road	05/00486/ful	4	Sheltered Hsg	5 x 1 bed	6
73-75 Victoria Road	05/00904/cou	1	Residential/Retail	100sqm store replaced by 1x 2bed dwelling	1
71A Albert Road	07/00013/cou	3	Residential/Retail	2x 1 bed	0
79 Albert Road	07/00078/cou	3&4	Residential/Retail	1x 3bed (est)	0
171 Albert Road	07/00202/ful	4	Residential	4x1 bed	6
5 Thomas Street	07/00337/ful	1	Residential	( 12x1bed)	12
5 Widnes Road	07/00546/cou	2	Residential/Restaurant/bar	1bar:1 Restaurant 400m2 13x 1 bed replaces 800m2 office	13
Windmill Shopping Centre, Gerrard St.	06/00883/ful	Car park 2 Possible overspill into 1,3 &5. & Zones 2&3	Retail/ restaurant	23400m2 net gain in retail compared with that occupied at time of survey. Loss of 1900m2 of leisure (bingo)	483 in addition to those in operation at time of survey
Widnes Town Hall Victoria Square, WA8 7SP.	04/00545/ful	1	Restaurant/ bar	3085m2 bar/restaurant replaces 1250m2 office	-42
Land on Western Side of Widnes Road	04/00855/ful	2 (carpark 9)	Night Club	1275m2 nightclub	-24
18 Lugsdale Road	07/00621/cou	2	Office	320m2 doctors to office	0

loss spaces  
loss spaces from leisure centre

## Appendix 7 – Consultants Recommendations

### A7.1 Runcorn Old Town

The key findings of the Runcorn Old Town Parking Study are discussed in Appendix 2. Plans showing occupancy levels at the average peak time are shown in Appendix 5. (It should be noted that throughout the Runcorn report 'Poundstretcher' refers to the informal car park on development land in front of the frozen food store). The **CONSULTANTS' RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS FOR RUNCORN OLD TOWN** are as follows:

#### ➤ Existing Parking Situation:

- It is worth noting that **businesses are almost universally against the introduction of parking charges**. However, the surveys indicate that it is employees rather than town centre users who oppose charging (around 70% of businesses indicate that more than three quarters of their staff drive to work);
- To enable the objectives (3, 4 (part) and 5) presented in paragraph 3.4 to be achieved, it is recommended that pay & display controls are introduced to the central car parks (Sommerfield and Poundstretcher), which are jointly owned by Peel Holdings and the Council, on the following basis:
  - The operation is implemented and run by a private operator, commissioned on behalf of the car park landowners;
  - The tariff is set at a low rate, such as 40p per hour (*although a firm recommendation would need to be made based on costs vs. returns*);
  - A maximum period of stay is set at, say, 3 hours;
  - Enforcement of on-street parking restrictions on Church St, Regent St and High St is increased;
  - Appropriate signage is introduced to direct drivers to long-stay parking on Mersey Rd / Mersey St;
  - The Council work towards introducing decriminalised (Civil) parking enforcement;
  - Consideration is given to applying a nominal flat-rate charge (*around £1.20 a day would seem appropriate to be consistent with the central charge*) to outer off-street car parks and to introducing a residents' parking zone if migration from central car parks is too great; and
  - The scheme is only introduced after appropriate consultation with the local community.

As part of these proposals, the following controls on car park usage would apply:

- Health Centre - 130 Long-stay Free
- Top Locks - 75 Long-stay Free
- Penketh Court - 50 Long-stay Free



- Poundstretcher - 30 Short-stay P&D
- Somerfield -150 Short-stay P&D
- Wellington St - 30 Long stay Free

This regime would result in 180 charged short-stay spaces and 285 free long-stay spaces, but the nominal flat rate charge could be applied to the latter if required.

- There are few on street parking problems but some capacity for shoppers is being restricted eg. Church Street (on a weekday and Saturday morning), High Street (weekday), Regent Street (Saturday morning), which would benefit from increased enforcement;
- In the short term negotiations with the Police should be sought to increase enforcement;
- The preferred method of control for on street parking would be pay and display which should only be introduced, if and when CPE powers are gained; and
- Some changes to TRO's are suggested (in the accessibility assessment which accompanied the report) which mainly concern taxi ranks and motorcycle parking etc.

➤ **Development scenarios** (*see objectives 3,4 and 5 in paragraph 3.4*):

- Development proposals at the Canal Quarter, Library Site, Post Office Site (Penketh Court car park) and Central Site (Poundstretcher car park) were considered. These are listed in Appendix 6. These have the effect of increasing parking demand, whilst at the same time decreasing parking supply. (Additional parking demand was assessed on the basis that demand will be significantly less in town centres than the usual maximum parking standards set out in the current Regional Spatial Strategy. This is based on national trip generation figures and the principle is also endorsed in the emerging new regional parking standard, which is currently the subject of a partial review of the Regional Spatial Strategy. Halton's current Parking Standards are set out in the Unitary Development Plan and are based on older Regional Planning Guidance). Two scenarios were developed: the first assuming implementation of just the Canal Quarter Development; and the second assuming all four developments being in place. It should be noted that new housing development associated with Halton's designation as a Housing Growth Point (including significant growth at Runcorn Docks) has not been included. This will create additional demand for town centre services, including parking. However as part of the Growth Point Programme of Development, sustainable transport links are being promoted, which

should help decrease the need to travel by car. These will need to be considered at the appropriate time.

- **Scenario 1 - Canal Quarter Development:-** 80 public parking spaces are proposed to replace the 130 spaces lost, as a result of the development. The assessment concluded that the proposed replacement parking provision was essential and also recommended that a further 25 spaces be added to this amount, either within the development or elsewhere in the Town Centre. Failure to provide this extra supply was felt likely to result in increased pressure on 'on'-street parking, which would require greater enforcement and potentially a residents' parking zone in nearby residential streets eg. Water Street, Bridgewater Street. *The current supply and demand at the Health Centre Carpark (which will be affected by the Canal Quarter development) is 130 and 76 spaces, respectively, on a weekday peak (ie approx 60% full)*
- **Scenario 2- All Four Developments:-** Should all the potential development proposals be implemented, the study concluded that a new 200-250 space car park in the town centre would most likely be required. Given land constraints, this would probably have to be a Multi-Storey Car Park (MSCP). The report advises that the Council should only permit these developments on the basis that they contribute to the cost of constructing such a car park. It was also noted that it is likely that users of a MSCP would have to be charged to cover the operating costs of the car park. Therefore, as a consequence of this, it is also likely that: i) a pay & display operation would have to be rolled out to cover all 'off'-street car parks in the Town; and ii). a residents' parking zone would have to be implemented to protect these areas from displaced parking. Experience from other urban areas shows that such zones are most effective when enforced under a Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) regime. Again, the report recommended that the Council work towards achieving CPE status if it is intended to redevelop existing public car parks in Runcorn Town Centre.
- The alternative options considered and dismissed, for Runcorn, to regulate long stay parking in the central area car parks are discussed in Appendix 3. Briefly, they were late opening of car parks, limited period parking and charging. The potential impacts of these are also set out and indicate why none can be recommended for immediate implementation.

## A7.2 Widnes

The key findings of the Widnes and Halton Lea Parking Study, for Widnes, are discussed in Appendix 2. Plans showing occupancy levels at the average peak time are shown in Appendix 5. The **CONSULTANTS' RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS FOR WIDNES** (*addressing aims 3,4 and 5 in paragraph 3.4*) are as follows:

### ➤ Existing Parking Situation:

- There appears to be sufficient capacity to meet present demand at most times, the main demand and provision of off street spaces being in the central retail area;
- However, the majority of spare easily accessible capacity (around 200 on a Saturday and 300 on a weekday) is restricted to the Morrisons and Windmill Centre car parks (which due to construction work currently has a charge of £5 for a stay in excess of 1 hour);
- This reflects other car park owners' general concerns that their customers needs are not well met through capacity being taken up by long-stay users. The surveys showed that commuter parking (ie any 3-9 hours parking) is split 50:50 between on and off street and occupies 14-19% of Asda, Morrisons and Albert Square car parks. The majority of Saturday users requested "more Council owned parking" (in preference to managed/charged, improved signing/on street parking etc);
- Lack of disabled spaces was also expressed as a problem, this is reflected in most of the car parks having significantly less than the 10% mobility spaces, as recommended in the UDP;
- Widnes town centre provision has a weakness in that there are only a few non retail related car parks for long stay users eg. Lacey Street and Library car parks. Therefore shopper parking (short stay) availability is threatened, especially during peak occupancy periods on a Saturday;
- The situation is currently workable (apart from extremely busy periods such as Christmas and Easter), but problems may occur if more car park owners introduce long stay restrictions. This is a potential medium term risk for Widnes town centre. The recommended means of addressing this is through a proposed Parking Partnership, agreeing to introduce restrictions on length of stay on the more "popular" parts of the car parks. The form of restriction would be determined by the Parking Partnership (there will be costs incurred because of the need for enforcement and recovery of penalties). The Partnership could also address the disabled parking and cleanliness, quality & security issues which were raised by some respondents. This proposal is considered

preferable to charging, for which there is currently little support or need for in Widnes;

- The shortage of Widnes Road and Albert Road parking for businesses (shoppers and employees) is more difficult to address, with perhaps only scope for a small increase in on street parking. However, an improvement in the signage to nearby car parks may assist in this matter;
- It is also suggested that the police could increase enforcement presence to make short stay bays available for shoppers; and
- The revocation of north side restrictions on Ross Street and all of Winfield Way should be considered, to increase on street parking availability.

➤ **Development scenarios:**

- The effect upon parking supply and demand of extant planning consents, which are yet to be implemented, was considered, taking account of various large and small retail, residential, leisure, service and employment developments;
- This showed that in all but the central area (Windmill Centre, Asda), the changes in supply will broadly match changes in demand at peak times. It is considered that on street parking capacity can meet the excess demand of new residential properties, particularly in and around Victoria Square;
- The Windmill Centre redevelopment has the potential for most impact. Whilst the weekday supply/demand balance seems adequate, it is possible that supply will be inadequate for peak demand on Saturdays. (*The development will result in a demand for spaces of 533, but provide only 411*). There appears to be spare capacity in neighbouring car parks, but migration could make spaces more difficult to find in these car parks. This could enhance the need for the proposals giving priority to short stay parking over long stay in the 'popular' areas of off street car parks. Again, this can be addressed by a Parking Partnership. Annual surveys are suggested to monitor the impact of the Windmill Centre redevelopment post opening;
- It is recommended that a location for a potential new long stay car park be considered, should one be required in the longer term. The three possibilities put forward are: the former B&Q site (subject to development plans and ownership) *which could be picked up through the current planning application*; consolidation of some of the Morrisons parking into a low level multi storey on the outskirts of the parking area, (which could create long stay parking and space for further development, which is necessary to fund such

proposals); and consider the possibility of land becoming available in the future through demolition;

- The impact of a nightclub on Widnes Road upon off street parking (Leisure Centre) should be re-examined, should such a proposal ever be re-considered; and
- Should a similar development pattern continue to emerge in the future, it is unlikely that any significant issues would result, providing that any new developments accommodate their own parking demands. However, difficulties may occur where car parks are developed upon, or large developments are built with little proposed parking, and these should be assessed in the light of the study. *(Smaller developments similar to the small residential developments around Victoria Square should have little impact. However, the approach to date has been to seek contributions via Section 106 agreements towards transport/parking. This could be used to fund Parking Partnership proposals.)*

### **A7.3 Halton Lea**

The key findings of the Widnes and Halton Lea Parking Study, for Halton Lea, are discussed in Appendix 2. Plans showing occupancy levels at the average peak time are shown in Appendix 5. The **consultants' recommendations and conclusions for Halton Lea**, *(addressing aims 3,4 and 5 in paragraph 3.4)* are as follows:

#### ➤ **Existing Parking Situation:**

- Asda car park operates at capacity for much of both a weekday and Saturday. Parking over 3 hours accounts for 12-14%;
- Trident operates near capacity on a weekday and at capacity on a Saturday. Parking over 3 hours accounts for 32% on a weekday and 22% on a Saturday;
- Multi Storey Car Parks (MSCPs) are busier on weekdays than Saturdays, the main difference being office parking in the 2 north car parks, but no more than 50% of the total MSCP capacity is used on either day;
- There is potential for the long stay parking in the Trident car park, which is restricting shoppers parking, to be displaced to the nearby southern MSCPs, by introducing a 2 or 3 hour maximum stay. Trident businesses are almost all in support of this. A small charge may further assist if this is not successful, although businesses have stated that they do not support charging. (Update: It appears that since the surveys took place limited waiting is in the process of being implemented at present on Trident Park) (It also appears that there may be some potential to displace Asda staff to MSCPs); and

- Asda already operate a 2 hour waiting limit. A small charge may assist in displacing residual long stay parking to the MSCPs.

➤ **Development scenarios:**

- Planning consents, which have not yet been implemented, for extensions to Trident Park and their effect on supply and demand were considered;
- With current parking patterns, the changes are predicted to result in a shortfall of around 100 spaces. However, the same mitigation measures as recommended for the existing situation, would be essential for the development scenario. It is recommended that parking at the MSCPs should remain free in all cases; and
- There is also a proposal which has not yet been implemented for a new superstore at Halton Lea. This takes the place of one of the northern MSCPs. However, as this development is proposed to provide parking in accordance with UDP standards, and also provide replacement spaces in lieu of the MSCP it has not been necessary to take the development into consideration in this assessment.

**A7.4 Consultants' Borough Wide Recommendations**

- Pursue the establishment of Parking Partnerships in the three centres;
- Consider a phased strategy starting with off-street length-of-stay restrictions in all three centres at cost to the Partnership (including the Council), followed by charging when necessary and appropriate; and
- Through negotiation with the Police, delivery of increased enforcement of on street restricted parking spaces, to prioritise for short stay.