

Coalition for Healthy Streets and Active Travel

Car Free Broad Street (CoHSAT project 2019-20) -summary of findings

Oxford is one of the great jewels of Europe with a remarkable richness of architecture and urban life united in its streets and public spaces. Broad Street sits at the very heart of the city ... Chris Patten, Chancellor, University of Oxford (1)

1. Introduction

Broad Street is a remarkable space in the heart of the city but is blighted by motor traffic creating a chaotic unfriendly environment for the majority - people on foot and bikes. The opportunities that removing motor traffic create has been considered several times previously without result (ref 1, 2, 3).

People should be at the heart of our streets. The Coalition for Healthy Streets and Active Travel wish to see the 25 central car parking spaces removed from Broad Street (from Magdalen Street to Holywell Street) to create a city square like those of many equivalent medieval cities in Europe. This space should be a place to linger and enjoy, free from traffic movement, noise and air pollution. Traders have been concerned that taking away car parking would damage their trade, but the experience of many retail centres that have become traffic free is that the footfall increases and trade is enhanced (ref 4).

In support of this vision, CoHSAT undertook a survey to learn more about traffic movement and reasons people choose to park in Broad Street, with the intention of recommending a car-free Broad Street.

2. Objectives of the survey

- To audit traffic movement (bikes, cars, delivery vehicles, trucks) along and in and out of Broad Street.
- To better understand people's reasons for parking there.

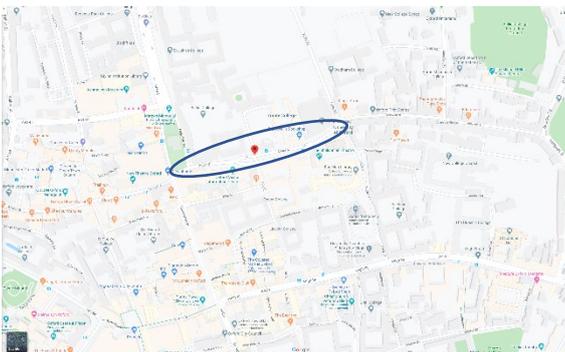


Figure 1: Map showing project area.



Figure 2: Aerial view of Broad Street.

3. What we did

Volunteers from the Oxford Pedestrians Association, the Oxford Civic Society and Cyclox, undertook the survey over 2 hours (10:00 to 11:00 and 11:30 to 12:30) on Wednesday 16th October 2019 and Saturday 26th October 2019.

4. Results of the survey

4.1 Traffic movements and parking

The numbers of cycle, cars and other motor vehicle movements are provided in tables 1 and 2 in the Appendix.

Cycle movements

People on bikes significantly outnumber cars and people arriving by car. On 16th October in 2 hours 329 cycles moved east-west, 301 cyclists west-east, 228 cyclists into Turl Street, 109 out of Turl, and on 26th October (a rainy day which may have deterred some people from cycling), in 2 hours 165 cycles travelled east-west, 148 cyclists west-east, 87 cyclists into Turl Street, and 79 out of Turl Street. In total approximately 1,000 cycle riders were counted over the two hours on Wednesday morning, and 500 on the rainy Saturday morning.

Circulating traffic

There were around 130 motorised traffic movements in and out of Turl Street on both survey days during the 2 hour counting period.

The car parking spaces were fully occupied on both days by 11:30. Some of the circulating cars in the first hour may have parked in the pay-and-display bays and then driven round as they were leaving. From 11.30, those circulating were likely to be cars looking for, and not finding, parking. Some drove round more than once, others left.

In total we counted 255 motor vehicle movements over the two hours on the Wednesday morning and 219 on the Saturday morning.

Quotes from two volunteers:

"I was completely amazed by the number of vehicles, many private cars, going down Turl St. We saw quite a lot of people driving in with a passenger holding the smart phone with a map app, obviously trying to get through, we saw quite a lot come back again It's an appalling and ridiculous state of affairs."

"It felt like there was a lot [of vans and lorries], at times bunching up, struggling to turn etc."

Illegal parking in unloading bays or double yellow lines

On average about 10 cars per hour parked in loading bays and on double-yellow lines in Broad Street, not obviously loading/ unloading, but using the spaces for short term parking. On Saturday 26th a civil enforcement officer was on duty on Broad Street and issued a substantial number of penalty charge notices for cars which had parked for 30 mins and over in the loading bays or on double yellow lines. Parking on double yellow lines

Parking on double yellow lines



During the morning of 16th one of our surveyors talked to a caterer from Northamptonshire supplying food for a function in or near the Bodleian. Apart from the Royal Mail van, all the vehicles parked in this picture were providing food for this function. The driver said that they were told where to park (on double yellow lines outside the Divinity School) by the organisers. They stayed from 10am to 12:15pm. The driver says that he parks here frequently, and no payment is required. He has experienced no problems parking here despite parking in a bus space.

Driving through bollards Broad Street and Magdalen Street East

On 19th October the rising bollards were being repaired at the west end of Broad Street so access blocked by high wire fences around the works. There was no passage of vehicles therefore.

By 26th October, the repair work was completed but the central rising bollard was down so vehicles were passing regularly. Two observers stood by the bollards to watch out for drivers who decided to transgress. See their comments in the box below. The majority of transgressors were taxis.

Our two observers talked to a number of drivers and caused several to turn round:

- Taxi driver said he always used the exit as bollard is always down. He turned back.
- Oxford City Taxi: video-ed and reported that was intending to use exit. Interesting language was used. Taxi did not go through.
- Vehicle stopped – might have been a taxi, as he referred to passenger in back seat. No markings. Was asked to turn around and did
- An 001 taxi turned round when asked
- Royal Mail van went through going the wrong way and delivered a small parcel to Balliol.
- Private vehicle turned round.

4.2 Survey of drivers parking their cars

The responses to the survey are provided in table 3. Of the 65 people surveyed, about 1 in 5 people were Oxford residents. Of those living outside Oxford several were overseas tourists in hire cars, who were guided to Broad Street by mapping apps. (Our surveyors had to multitask as ticket machine operators for many of the people who found the machines perplexing and as unofficial tour guides!)

On 16th October half the drivers were parking for business, a quarter were sightseeing, and a quarter visiting shops. On 26th almost all were sightseeing, shopping or social visits, with only three on business and three attending a demonstration outside the Sheldonian. Out of 65 responses, about a quarter cited shopping in Broad Street or the city centre as a reason for their visit.

On 16th October, half of drivers intended to park for one hour, but at the weekend, the majority planned to stay for 2 hours. More than half of those parking did so only rarely. No legally parked vehicles exceeded the time of their parking ticket without renewing.

The majority of those surveyed had found a parking place quickly, but by noon a number of respondents said that they hadn't found a parking spot immediately.

The reasons given for parking in Broad Street were various (see table 1 below), but convenience was the biggest category. A substantial number of people used mapping apps to find parking in the city centre and were directed to Broad Street.

	Convenience	Carrying stuff	Sat nav sent me	Work related	Cost saving	Weather	Other
16 th October 2019	15	3	5	3	1	0	3
26 th October 2019	15	2	6	0	3	3	5

Table 1: The reasons people chose Broad Street to park in

12 of the 32 respondents on the Wednesday, and 3 of the 33 respondents on the Saturday, said that they would take the bus, or cycle or walk if they couldn't park in Broad Street. Three people said that they would park illegally. Everyone else said that they would look for other places to park.

5. Conclusions

Broad Street is a beautiful public space blighted by motor traffic. It is a very busy thoroughfare for pedestrians and people on bikes.

Our survey showed that in total approximately 1,000 cycle riders used Broad Street over the two hours on Wednesday morning, and 500 on the rainy Saturday morning, and we counted 255 motor vehicles over the two hours on the Wednesday morning and 219 on the Saturday morning. The number of cycle movements greatly outweighed motor vehicle movements, even on a rainy weekend. During both the survey times the street felt chaotic and unwelcoming accommodating large numbers of motor vehicles, resulting in bike riders having to keep a watchful eye to avoid collisions.

The only legal access to Broad Street for motor vehicles at the time of these surveys was via Parks Road, though a number of vehicles crossed illegally through the bollards at the west end of Broad Street. The vehicle drivers are entering the space looking for somewhere to park or unload. They are parking both legally and illegally, unloading or circulating looking for a parking spot. Over 30 vehicles an hour entered Turl Street, their drivers presumably looking for somewhere for short term parking or unloading in Market Street.

The majority of people parking were visiting from outside Oxfordshire and many were tourists, directed to the parking spaces in Broad Street by satnavs. Only one fifth were Oxford residents. The primary reason for parking was convenience and if they couldn't park in Broad Street they would look elsewhere in the city centre to park, though on the weekday a third said that they might cycle, walk or take the bus. About a quarter of people cited shopping in Broad Street or the city centre as a reason for their visit.

Implications of Connecting Oxford and the Zero/Low Emission Zones proposals

Connecting Oxford will reduce through traffic, but motorists will still be able to go into the centre when there is parking still available to them (and also to load, unload, pick up and drop) as before. It is unlikely therefore that Connecting Oxford will help reduce city centre congestion and air pollution around car parks and places where unloading is allowed. The zero emission zone (ZEZ) will reduce polluting vehicles, but these will be replaced by other less polluting vehicles so again will have no effect on city centre congestion while there are still car parking places available. CoSHAT put in its response to the ZEZ consultation that the red zone should be extended to include the west end of Broad Street and Turl Street.

6. Recommendations

Broad Street should become a public square like the great squares of European medieval cities. Even before the new policies of Connecting Oxford and the zero emission zones are implemented, the lack of through traffic means it has great potential as an informal public space. However, the large amount of tarmac dedicated to vehicular traffic and the space occupied by on-street parking make it unattractive and restless.

- 1) Car parking spaces should be removed. This would prevent a lot of unnecessary motor traffic coming into Broad Street. We recognise that income to the councils would be lost as a result, but potentially this loss could be compensated for through the ZEZ levy, fines for illegal parking and illegal passage past the bollards.
- 2) Loading and unloading times need to be restricted to outside working hours and better enforcement is required to deter infringements.
- 3) Removal of the redundant bollards at the west end of Broad Street and replacement with number plate recognition cameras.
- 4) Broad Street markets are placed at the west of the street so as not to interfere with the parking spaces at the east end. The stalls extend across the width of the street, and cyclists are forced to dismount and walk their bikes on the pavement alongside large numbers of pedestrians. Markets should be situated at the east end of Broad Street and, while parking remains, it should be removed on market days. The revenue lost should be included in the stall rental.
- 5) The Zero Emission Zone should be extended to include the west end of Broad Street immediately.

7. Acknowledgements

Thanks to all our survey volunteers (Juliet Blackburn, Andy Chivers, Genefer Clark, Keith Frayn, Deborah Glass-Woodin, Peter Headicar, Theo Hopkins, Alison Hill, Penny Jaques, Martine Moon, Julia Patrick, Abena Poku-Awuah, Evelyn Sanderson, Peter Thompson) and to Abena Poku-Awuah for helping to coordinate the survey.

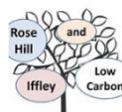
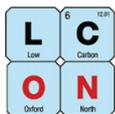
We were grateful to all the people answering the survey.

8. References

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About CoHSAT

The Coalition for Healthy Streets and Active Travel (CoHSAT) is a group of voluntary and campaigning organisations working across Oxfordshire to create attractive, accessible and people-friendly streets. We will do this by encouraging efficient, active, low carbon and sustainable travel, which will reduce traffic, air pollution and noise, and enable healthy and thriving communities. For further information on this and other CoHSAT activities see <http://www.cohsat.org.uk> or email us at CoHSATOxon@gmail.com.



Appendix

Broad Street Survey, Wednesday 16th October and Saturday 26th October 2019.

	16 th Oct 19	26 th Oct 19
	10:00 to 11:00 11:30 to 12:30	10:00 to 11:00 11:30 to 12:30
Out of Turl Street	109	79
Into Turl Street from East	125	41
Into Turl Street from West	103	46
Cycle riders along Broad Street west to east	347	148
Cycle riders along Broad Street east to west	329	165
Total cycle movements N.B. May be some double counting	1,013	479

Table 2: Cycle movements.

	16 th Oct 19	26 th Oct 19
	10:00 to 11:00 11:30 to 12:30	10:00 to 11:00 11:30 to 12:30
Cars parking in loading bays, on double-yellow lines, not obviously loading/ unloading:	19	19
Cars turning into and out of Turl St	75	88
Cars driving around Broad Street ^{1 2} :	43	42
Cars dropping off (person gets in or out and car drives off within about a minute):	11	16
Vans/ lorries/ delivery vehicles loading and/or unloading	27	16
Vans/ lorries/ delivery vehicles into or out of Turl Street	56	28
Vans/ lorries/ delivery vehicles driving around Broad Street (not obviously parking)	24	10
Total motor vehicle movements	255	219

Table 3: Motor vehicle movements (excluding motor bikes)

16th October 2019 (2 didn't answer. 32 responses)

1. What are you here to do today? (please tick)					
Museums	1	Colleges		Visit Oxford	7
Shops on Broad St	3	Covered market	2	City Centre shops and/or Westgate	3
Work/Business	16	Social/Meet friends	0	Other (please state)	0

2. How long do you intend to stay?							
Up to 15 mins	1	15-30 mins	1	30-60 minutes	17	Over 2 hours	13

¹ Some of these may have parked in the pay-and-display bays and then driven round as they were leaving.

² From 11.30 these are likely to be cars looking for, and not finding, parking. Some drove round more than once, others left.

3. Why did you choose to drive to Broad St today?							
	Convenience	Carrying stuff	Sat nav sent me	Work related	Cost saving	Weather	Other
16 th October	15	3	5	3	1	0	3

4. How often do you park here?					
Every day	2	Once a week/fortnight	4	Once a month	7
Rarely	5	One-off	13	Depends on work in the area	

5. How long did it take you to find a parking space? (please tick)							
Immediately	0	1-15 minutes	28	15-30 minutes	3	More than 30 minutes	1

6. If parking were not available on Broad St, which of the following ways would you use to get into the centre? (please tick)							
Use other street parking in city centre	14	Use city centre car park	4	Use Park and Ride	2	Bus	6
Cycle	2	Walk	4	Other (please state)	10		

7. Do you live in: (please tick)					
The City	7	The County	5	Elsewhere	19

Saturday 26th October 2019 (Raining throughout the survey period. 33 responses)

1. What are you here to do today? (please tick)		
Museums (5)	Colleges (1)	Visit Oxford (4)
Shops on Broad St (2)	Covered market	City Centre shops and/or Westgate (6)
Work/Business (3)	Social/Meet friends (9)	Other: 3 people were going to a demonstration.

2. How long do you intend to stay?

Up to 15 mins	1	15-30 mins	3	30-60 minutes	9	Over 2 hours	20
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3. Why did you choose to drive to Broad St today?

	Convenience	Carrying stuff	Sat nav sent me	Work related	Cost saving	Weather	Other
26 th October	15	2	6	0	3	3	5

4. How often do you park here?

Every day	0	Once a week/fortnight	4	Once a month	6
Rarely	6	One-off	16	Depends on work in the area	

5. How long did it take you to find a parking space? (please tick)

Immediately	25	1-15 minutes	5	15-30 minutes	1	More than 30 minutes	0
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6. If parking were not available on Broad St, which of the following ways would you use to get into the centre? (please tick)

Use other street parking in city centre	5	Use city centre car park	21	Use Park and Ride	0	Bus	3
Cycle	0	Walk	0	Other	2		

7. Do you live in: (please tick)

The City	7	The County	6	Elsewhere	20
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Table 4: Surveys of people parking in Broad Street