

**PEDESTRIANS FIRST**

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Dear County Councillors

As you may know, we are a small group of local people whose aim is to achieve a bus-free Loughborough town centre, with buses using the new Inner Relief Road and a free-flow of pedestrians across the Market Place into the Rushes. We are writing to you as a member of the Environment and Transport Scrutiny Committee, who will be part of the decision-making process about our town.

We believe that the scheme offers a splendid opportunity to create a new public space in the heart of the town, to join the Market Place and the Rushes, to increase foot-fall and to be safe for all pedestrians. It can be a place for new activities such as a big screen, live entertainment, street cafes and trees, where children can roam and people who are blind or partially sighted and those with walking difficulties can walk in safety. It can be pollution-free.

You will see the plans drawn up by Loughborough's BID and the ways they propose to use the new space to bring great economic and social improvements to our town. We draw your attention to Kettering town centre and the benefits brought by its prize-winning design. We are convinced by the opportunities and advantages of a traffic and bus-free town centre.

We understand the need for evidence rather than opinion. We have been told that shared space works in other places, but we have yet to see any evidence about schemes where pedestrians and buses/vehicles share the road space, in which the directions of flow are at 90 degrees to each other and the volumes are as great as they are in our Market Place crossing the A6 to the Rushes.

Therefore we recently carried out a count of pedestrians crossing the A6 in both directions, between 10.00 am and 1.00 pm on Thursday 6th February.

Thursday 06.02.14	McDonalds	Greenwoods	Tylers	Totals	No.of pedestrians per bus
Pedestrians					
10.00 - 11.00	523	1148	586	2257	45
11.00 - 12.00	592	1830	723	3145	63
12.00 - 13.00	630	2212	634	3476	70
TOTALS	1745	5190	1934	8878	60
Wheel/pushchair					
10.00 - 11.00	19	105	29	153	3
11.00 - 12.00	27	119	43	189	4
12.00 - 13.00	20	107	47	174	4
TOTALS	66	331	119	516	3
FULL TOTAL	1811	5521	2043	9394	63

Ours is a conservative estimate. There were three separate locations, and pedestrians crossing in between these locations were unlikely to be recorded. The count took place on a Thursday in February, a market day but also a cold day in a period of poor weather, and during a period with shoppers arriving in large numbers. We could safely predict higher figures in the summer when the schools are closed. Indeed, the County Council's own estimates show 27,000 pedestrians crossing during a full working day, 7am to 7pm.

9394 pedestrians (including some 500 wheelchair and pushchair users) indicates a very substantial number of people choosing to cross the road in a 3 hour period. This is no surprise as we were already aware of the tidal flow between the Market Place and the new shopping centre. Such pedestrian movements suggest that buses will be impeded and that the safety of pedestrians will be put at risk. People who move slowly or with difficulty and those looking after young children will not be care-free, but anxious.

At busy hours of the day, in good weather, school holidays or during the Christmas period, there could well be more than 100 people crossing for each bus passing through.

Our desire for a bus-free Market Place is totally supported by Loughborough BID, the Town Team, the Chamber of Commerce, Charnwood Borough Council and Nicky Morgan MP and many local residents. Each of the organisations represents a substantial body of opinion in the town. For example, the Town Team includes representatives from Loughborough Churches; behind them are the congregations of the churches across the town, who were asked for their views and supported the bus-free option. We urge you to take account of their numbers when considering the responses to the consultation.

We note that the bus stops in the Market Place/Swan Street will be moved to the edge of the centre in any event, and fear that many respondents were not aware of this. Even now, people ask if the traffic lights and bus stops will be removed, as we know they will. Also, people ask about a bus station. History tells us that the bus companies refused to use the bus station in the past; we would not expect them to use one now.

We note the desire for evidence and the suggestion that there should be pilots. We strongly urge you to consider the weight of evidence for full pedestrianisation and to insist on independent measurements to evaluate the claims of interested parties.

We ask you, as members of the Environment and Transport Scrutiny Committee, to support the wishes of the people of Loughborough in this matter.

Thank you for your consideration

Anne Kingston  
'Pedestrians First'