

Date:
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Cabinet - 15th September 2026

Report by:
Head of Economy, Regeneration & Housing Delivery
Operations Manager, Parking & Markets Services

Lead Cllrs:
Cllr J Kerr - Executive Councillor for Parks and
Countryside, Waste & Street Scene
Cllr B Mickelburgh - Executive Councillor for Economy,
Regeneration & Housing Delivery

Parking Strategy

Executive Summary:

Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended in respect of the funding proposal to:

1. To consider and adopt the Parking Strategy

Key Corporate Plan Priorities

1	<i>Objective 33 - Progress the development of a parking strategy that informs our approach to the management of our car parks; and move to implement the adopted strategy and associated actions</i>
2	

Place Strategy Priorities

1	<i>Supporting economic growth</i>
2	<i>Boosting town centre vitality and Improving accessibility</i>

Report Author(s)

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek endorsement for the 'Parking Strategy'. The Parking Strategy includes objectives and sets an ambition for how we will operate our car parks. The strategy sets a *Vision, Themes, Objectives* and includes *Principles of parking charges*. The strategy does not set charges, however the elements that form it will inform how we establish our tariff structures.

2. BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

- 2.1 The Councils previous Parking Strategy was adopted in 2018 and applied until 2023. During this time, it was agreed that the Council would deviate from this strategy enabling the pursuit of Civil Enforcement in Huntingdonshire.
- 2.2 Key principles included *implementing technology that positively assists our car park users* which led to the installation of equipment that facilitated card and contactless payment, along with *promoting environmental sustainability by supporting alternative fuel and travel methods* that supported our installation of cycle shelters and our early works implementing EV charge points.
- 2.3 The Joint Administration committed to refreshing the strategy following significant local change with the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement in 2025. The development of the Parking Strategy is an objective within the Councils Corporate Plan.
- 2.4 That strategy review commenced in early October 2025 following a procurement exercise. There was also a clear desire for the evidence/data collection to take place during the pre-Christmas peak period. Rowley Arts Centre car park has not been included within the scope of this strategy as this forms part of the Councils commercial Estate.
- 2.5 Activities that have been undertaken to inform the strategy includes a review of the current car parks (e.g. features) and multiple occupancy studies to provide a robust evidence base to underpin any future considerations.
- 2.6 The strategy sets out a Vision
- The Huntingdonshire Car Park Strategy will enable a well-managed, balanced and future-focused parking service that supports vibrant town centres and sustainable economic growth, ensuring parking is appropriately located, efficiently operated and integrated with active and sustainable travel, whilst providing a safe, accessible and positive parking experience for residents, businesses and visitors.*
- 2.7 Underpinning the Vision are our Themes to:
- Support Thriving town centres and economic activity
 - Deliver a modern, efficient, and customer focussed parking service
 - Integrate parking with active travel and sustainable transport
 - Manage parking assets responsibly and plan for the future

- 2.8** The proposed strategy reflects the current position and aims to provide clear direction for the service and guide future courses of action. Similarity in the proposed and previous parking strategy can be seen as both recognise the importance of our car parks as a way in which we can support our towns; previously through 4 core priorities, and now through 4 themes.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1** The works undertaken as part of the development of the Parking Strategy included an assessment of our car park to understand in detail the features and standards at each location. The user surveys sought to understand what is important to respondents, which in turn informed the Vision, Themes and Objectives that include activities to explore and support improvement of our sites.
- 3.2** Data gathering has taken place including an extensive review of occupancy through studies undertaken to understand the levels of usage within our car parks to provide a robust evidence base for any future decision making. These were conducted:
- October 2025 (neutral week)
 - October 2025 (half-term)
 - December 2025
 - June 2026
- 3.3** The 'Parking Strategy' that has been developed provides clarity and direction that will inform service activity and future delivery.
- 3.4** For the reasons set out above, it is recommended that Cabinet considers and adopts the Parking Strategy.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 4.1** The Overview & Scrutiny (Performance & Growth) Panel discussed the report at its meeting on 2nd September 2026.
- 4.2** Councillor Blackwell sought clarification regarding parking provision in Godmanchester, specifically querying why Bridge Place had been included within the Godmanchester section of the report rather than being referenced under Huntingdon.
- 4.3** The Panel was advised that all car parks had been included within the survey to provide a comprehensive evidence base. Members were informed that Bridge Place had been identified as an underutilised car park. It was also confirmed that development work commenced in March 2026. Officers explained that Bridge Place had been included within the Godmanchester section of the report because it falls within the relevant town boundary.
- 4.4** Councillor Ascroft raised a query about EV charging stations, wondering what specific metric was being used to determine and justify transforming a standard public bay into a dedicated EV bay.

- 4.5** The Panel was advised that the Council has a separate Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Strategy which sets out its approach to investing in EV infrastructure across Council-owned car parks. Members heard that the Strategy is based on maximising the use of grant funding as and when it becomes available, with decisions on deployment informed by the most effective use of available resources. Officers explained that decisions on the location of new charging points would be informed by data from existing EV charging infrastructure, including usage levels, site locations and electricity grid capacity at individual sites.
- 4.6** Councillor Ascroft referred to Objective 4.5 concerning the repurposing or leasing of underutilised parking assets. She sought clarification on the threshold at which a car park would be considered persistently underutilised and what criteria would trigger the Council to undertake a feasibility assessment for its partial or full disposal.
- 4.7** The Panel was advised that it was difficult to provide a definitive threshold for determining when a car park would be considered suitable for disposal, as circumstances can change over time. Members were informed that underutilised car parks may still have strategic value, for example where future development proposals, such as the expansion of a nearby supermarket, could increase demand for parking. Therefore, each site would need to be considered on its individual merits.
- 4.8** Councillor Seeff commented that the Strategy did not appear to fully take account of wider external developments that could influence parking demand, including the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority's emerging bus strategy. He also referred to major external factors, such as the proposed Universal Studios development, and queried how the Council intended to respond to any resulting increase in traffic levels and associated pressures on parking provision.
- 4.9** In response, the Panel was advised that the previous strategy had been considered overly prescriptive. The new strategy was intended to provide greater flexibility by allowing car parks to be assessed on an individual basis rather than applying a single approach across all sites. Members were informed that this flexible approach would enable the Council to respond more effectively to external factors and future developments that may affect traffic and parking demand. Officers explained that the strategy had been designed to avoid pre-determining outcomes and to allow decisions to be taken in light of changing circumstances and emerging evidence.
- 4.10** Councillor Tomlinson sought confirmation that any assessment relating to the repurposing or redevelopment of a car park would be undertaken before the Council reached a formal commitment to proceed with development.
- 4.11** The Panel was advised that none of the car parks identified in the data were currently considered suitable for repurposing, as all were experiencing high levels of usage, with some operating beyond capacity. Members heard that consideration should instead be given to how the Council could secure the capital funding by making data driven decisions to expand certain car parks in order to accommodate future demand and prevent town centres from becoming overwhelmed.

- 4.12** Councillor Tomlinson acknowledged the current position regarding car park usage but questioned how the Strategy might be applied in future circumstances. He reiterated his earlier point and sought clarification on when elected Members would be involved in considering any proposals to repurpose or redevelop car parks should such proposals come forward in the future.
- 4.13** In response to a discussion on what recommendation could be made to Cabinet to provide sufficient assurance to Members, the Panel indicated that, in light of the issues arising from the Capital & Centric proposals, any future site-specific proposals should be brought to Panel's attention before any commitment was made. Members emphasised the importance of ensuring that the wider Council had an opportunity to contribute to and scrutinise such proposals at an early stage.
- 4.14** The Panel was reminded of the distinction between the roles of Members and Officers. Members are responsible for setting the Council's strategic direction and policy framework, while Officers are responsible for implementation and delivery. It was emphasised that Member involvement should be proportionate to the nature and significance of proposals as they emerge, with Members becoming involved at the appropriate stage in the decision-making process.
- 4.15** Councillor Gardener requested clarification on the projected increase in car parking demand over the Local Plan period.
- 4.16** The Panel was advised that the appendix to the report contained forward planning assumptions based on modest population growth.
- 4.17** Councillor Gardener queried whether regular reports would be provided to the Panel on car park performance and how any emerging issues would be addressed going forward.
- 4.18** It was explained that the aim is to direct parking demand towards underutilised car parks, with available capacity being maximised before further investment is considered elsewhere.
- 4.19** Councillor Cawley expressed the view that the report constituted a policy document rather than a strategy and suggested that it should include clear actions and timescales.
- 4.20** The Panel was advised that the Strategy establishes the criteria and framework that will guide future decision-making, with specific actions and delivery measures to be developed from it.
- 4.21** Councillor Smith welcomed the flexibility within the Strategy and sought clarification on how potential conflicts would be managed, such as balancing town centre regeneration objectives with higher parking charges in the most heavily used areas.
- 4.22** The Panel was advised that work was underway to ensure parking charges were applied more fairly. It was noted that town centres generally seek to discourage long-stay parking, and it was reiterated that the Strategy provides greater flexibility in determining the duration and use of individual car parks.

- 4.23** Councillor McIlwain sought assurance that the presence of two Park and Ride facilities in the area would not result in the development of, or reduction in, existing in-town parking spaces.
- 4.24** In response, the Panel was advised that such an assurance could not be given. However, it was noted that the matter could be considered further by Combined Authority Members through the appropriate forum.
- 4.25** In response to a question from Councillor Hassall, the Panel was advised that the Action Plan includes occupancy studies to assess parking capacity. It was noted that measures to improve utilisation could include initiatives such as the installation of Amazon lockers. The Panel was further advised that, once evidence on capacity and demand has been gathered, proposals could be developed and presented with associated budget bids.
- 4.26** Councillor Seeff expressed the view that car parking appeared to be treated as a service rather than a commercial operation and queried why pricing had not been included, noting that he did not see how the two could be considered separately.
- 4.27** The Panel was advised that pricing had been considered separately to ensure discussions on the Strategy remained focused on broader objectives rather than financial matters. It was also noted that dynamic pricing had been considered but was not supported due to concerns regarding fairness.
- 4.28** In response to a question from Councillor Tomlinson, the Panel was advised that matters relating to free parking fall within the remit of the CPCA. However, it was noted that the Strategy includes consideration of concessions and opportunities to reflect the Council's priorities while encouraging greater use of underutilised car parks.
- 4.29** Following a question from Councillor Ascroft, it was noted that matters relating to the CPCA fall within its remit. It was suggested that, as part of the wider strategy, consideration could be given to concessions or other measures to encourage use of underutilised car parks and help redistribute demand from busier sites. The CPCA will review the Council's data and assess outcomes; however, as the funding body, it may amend grant arrangements as it considers appropriate based on its analysis. Councillor Ashcroft was thanked for the question.
- 4.30** A Member referred to an earlier discussion regarding the distinction between the strategy and the detailed implementation plan. Clarification was sought on whether the findings of the implementation plan review, scheduled approximately 24 months after approval of the strategy, would be reported back to the Committee.
- 4.31** In response, it was acknowledged that local government reorganisation creates uncertainty regarding longer term implementation. It was noted that some short term improvements should be considered, particularly in relation to fairness of car park allocation and pricing structures. However, by the time longer term measures are due for review, responsibility is likely to rest with a successor authority.
- 4.32** Councillor Gammons raised concerns regarding parking provision in Ramsey, noting that the Ramsey Mews car park is understood to have been donated subject to a covenant preventing parking charges. He highlighted significant

parking pressures within the town, with demand frequently exceeding available spaces, and expressed concern about proposals that could result in the loss of additional parking spaces. Councillor Gammons emphasised the importance of protecting existing parking capacity and ensuring local residents' views are taken into account.

- 4.33** In response, it was noted that data shows the Ramsey car park to be the busiest in the district, with utilisation levels significantly higher than other sites, confirming the scale of the challenge. Reference was made to ongoing consultation regarding proposals affecting parking provision, and it was confirmed that discussions had taken place with local representatives and officers on the matter. It was acknowledged that any solution must carefully consider existing covenants and local concerns, with the aim of identifying the most appropriate way to address demand pressures. It was further observed that high parking demand reflects the town's success as a destination and the desire of people to visit the area.
- 4.34** It was further noted that a number of issues had been raised which extended beyond the scope of the Parking Strategy and related more broadly to market town regeneration. It was explained that the Great Whyte scheme in Ramsey had been under development for a considerable period and, as understood, had the support of the Town Council. Members were advised that further information on the scheme and its progress could be obtained separately through the Market Towns Programme. It was emphasised that these matters should be considered independently from the Committee's discussion of the Parking Strategy.
- 4.35** Councillor Kerr responded to an earlier point raised by a Member. She explained that cross-party discussions had sought to ensure that car parks such as the Cattle Market in St Ives, Tibb's Row and Princess Street, which had been considered as part of the Huntingdonshire Futures (Centric) programme, were appropriately protected from redevelopment or alternative uses. She noted that the wording had been carefully drafted to balance flexibility with the need to safeguard key parking assets. Councillor Kerr added that, should Members consider the wording could be strengthened, she would welcome recommendations and further discussion to refine the proposal.
- 4.36** Councillor Tomlinson suggested strengthening the Strategy's wording on the significant reduction, repurposing or redevelopment of car parks. He proposed that an assessment be completed and published, or made available to Members, before any decision is taken. He noted that the definition of "significant" would need careful consideration and invited officer views on the proposal.
- 4.37** Members discussed whether additional safeguards relating to the redevelopment or repurposing of car parks should be included within the Strategy. Officer advice noted that the Strategy forms only one part of the Council's wider decision-making framework and should be considered alongside other policies. Concerns were raised that additional requirements could duplicate existing governance and constitutional processes.
- 4.38** It was suggested that matters relating to the disposal or redevelopment of car parks may be more appropriately addressed through the Council's Disposal and Acquisition of Land and Buildings Policy. Councillor Tomlinson indicated that her

primary concern was ensuring that an appropriate evidence base is available to Members before any decision is taken, regardless of the mechanism used.

- 4.39** It was further noted that Members may make recommendations to Cabinet, although Cabinet is not bound by them, and existing constitutional processes are available to scrutinise future decisions.
- 4.40** It was suggested that regular parking performance reports be presented to the Committee and that town-specific action plans be developed to support implementation of the Strategy.
- 4.41** In response, it was confirmed that town-wide considerations would form part of future work on individual car parks. Officers also noted that performance monitoring could be considered through the Committee's KPI review arrangements.
- 4.42** Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for an informed decision to be made on the report recommendations.

5. POST ADOPTION / IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1** The strategy sets objectives which inform its actions. Following adoption, works will commence to deliver the quick wins identified with priority being given to those that can be achieved and delivered within in-year available resource
- 5.2** Other actions will inform future service plans. Any financial implications being considered through established governance and budget-setting arrangements.

6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

6.1 Council Key Priorities and Performance

6.1.1 Corporate Plan 2023 - 2028

The development of the Parking Strategy is in accordance with the **Council's Corporate Plan** objective 33:

- Priority - Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations
- Outcome - Forward-thinking economic growth
- Objective - *Progress the development of a parking strategy that informs our approach to the management of our car parks; and move to implement the adopted strategy and associated actions.*

Endorsement of the Parking Strategy would achieve this Corporate Plan Objective.

6.1.2 Huntingdonshire Futures Place Strategy

The **Huntingdonshire Futures Place Strategy** aims to make town centres more attractive and accessible.

The Parking Strategy recognises the importance that car parks play in supporting town centres through objectives that focus on providing the right parking in the right place, and others that consider wayfinding and pedestrian connections along with the overall appearance of our car parks.

6.2 Financial Implications

- 6.2.1** The adoption of the Parking Strategy does not introduce any new financial commitments or implications.
- 6.2.2** The Parking Strategy includes objectives and sets an ambition for how we will operate our car parks. These objectives will inform service actions, with future financial implications being considered through established governance and budget-setting arrangements.
- 6.2.3** The Parking Strategy sets a Vision, Themes, Objectives and includes 'Principles of parking charges'. The strategy does not set charges, however the elements that form it will inform how we establish our tariff structures.

6.3 Policy Implications

- 6.3.1** The proposal is considered to be in alignment with the Councils agreed policy framework with the development of the Parking Strategy being in accordance with the Council's Corporate Plan objective 33 (6.1.1).

6.4 Legal & Constitutional Implications

- 6.4.1** The Parking Strategy includes objectives and sets an ambition for how we will operate our car parks. These objectives will inform actions, with future financial implications being considered through established governance and budget-setting arrangements.
- 6.4.2** Endorsement of the Parking Strategy is an Executive function as confirmed by the DMO who had no adverse comments to make, there are therefore no legal or constitutional implications which should prevent this matter from proceeding.

6.5 Community Engagement

- 6.5.1** A Phase 1 user survey was conducted from 12th November 2025 and remained live until 21st December 2025. The survey received a total of 1,546 responses. A summary of the findings is in Appendix 3. The finding of this informed the early development of a Vision, Themes and Objectives.
- 6.5.2** A Phase 2 engagement was conducted from 16th July 2026 and remained live until 16th August 2026. The survey received a total of 1,472 responses. A summary of the findings is in Appendix 4. This survey aimed to test the Vision, Themes and Objectives to understand what was important to respondents. This has informed the ordering within the developed strategy, therefore leading to a difference when compared to the ordering in the other appended documents.

6.6 Environment & Climate Change Implications

- 6.6.1** The strategy considers through its themes how we integrate parking with active and suitable travel. The strategy reflects that the Council previously adopted its EV Strategy and looks at how active travel may be supported within our car parks by improving facilities for people walking and cycling, along with exploring other opportunities for wider active travel support.

6.7 Equality & Diversity Implications

- 6.7.1** Accessibility is fundamental to good parking management. Car parks should be safe and convenient for everyone, including disabled users, older people and those with temporary mobility impairments. The strategy looks at how we can deliver a customer focussed parking service, with an objective to undertake an accessibility review of council-operated car parks, including disabled parking provision and pedestrian accessibility.

6.8 Implications on Resources

- 6.8.1** The Parking Strategy includes objectives and sets an ambition for how we will operate our car parks. These objectives will inform actions undertaken by the service with initial focus on *quick wins* where possible to be delivered within in-year available resource. Other actions will inform future service plans with any financial implications being considered through established governance and budget-setting arrangements.

6.9 Health & Wellbeing Implications

- 6.9.1** The occupancy works undertaken included sites near our open spaces along with facilities at our One Leisure sites. The strategy sets out that we will provide the right parking in the right places, such as short-stay parking near shops and long-stay parking further away.

- 6.9.2** Two of our principles of parking charges are

‘Tariff structures are not just models of pricing; they determine the available durations of stay and can be used as a mechanism to promote access and turnover of space’

and

‘Car parks will be assessed on an individual basis considering location and desired usage which will inform the tariff structure’.

- 6.9.3** The strategy recognises and supports the need to make decisions based on the individual requirements of a location.

6.10 Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Implications

- 6.10.1** The parking strategy sets out how the Council operates its car parks with a focus on delivering the priorities for its users. As reorganisation progresses, the parking strategy may require review by the new authority.

- 6.10.2** The strategy will be less than 2 years old at the point currently envisaged for vesting day. The strategy is supported by evidence which can act as a baseline position; it therefore provides a document which the new authority can use in its own decision making and can act as an interim guide whilst it develops its own plans and strategies.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1** The ability to deliver all identified actions within available resources and timescales may be impacted by competing priorities, capacity constraints, or external factors. This risk will be managed through robust prioritisation, performance monitoring, and regular review of actions.

8. LIST OF APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 - Huntingdonshire District Council Car Park Strategy - 2026 08 20
- Appendix 2 - Parking Strategy - Evidence Report
- Appendix 3 - Parking Strategy - Phase 1 User Engagement Feedback Report
- Appendix 4 - Parking Strategy - Phase 2 User Engagement Feedback Report

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS– LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

- 9.1** Cabinet (18/10/2018) - Item 33 - Strategic Review of Parking

<https://democracy.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/moderngov/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?AllId=50418>