

HUNTINGDONSHIRE CAR PARKING STRATEGY 2007

PROPOSED ACTION PLAN – 2008-2011

INTRODUCTION

The current District Council Car Parking Strategy (2004-2016) was approved by Cabinet in October 2004.

Emerging from that approval was the amendment of the required control orders to cover District-Wide off-street parking in 2005. Changes to the terms, conditions, charging and operating regimes relating to the use of the car parking stock were introduced from April 2005 onwards.

The strategy covers a range of issues with respect to car parking and not just off-street arrangements. It also covers issues such as parking standards relating to development and the forecast of likely delivery of private sector development including additional parking capacity.

Since that time, new Planning Policy Statements require parking standards to be reviewed which, taken with other Centre Vision projects and statements such as Town Centre Action Plans, made a review of our current Strategy an imperative. This particularly relates to the delay of development related parking provision, particularly within town centres. Review of development related parking standards continues to be part of the on-going Local Development Framework process. Consultants Steer Davies Gleave were appointed to undertake this review in May 2006.

BACKGROUND

The need for a review was dictated by a number of key issues;

- The shift towards the encouragement of additional residential development within town centres generally associated with reduced on-site parking provision. While town centres tend to provide more sustainable forms of living, including a reduced need to travel and the potential to make alternative transport choices, they are also areas where standards of parking provision are lower and this can create a higher demand for parking on-street or within public car parks
- The timing of a new strategy to coincide with the production of a spatial plan for Huntingdonshire to 2021 and beyond as part of the Local Development Framework
- The delay in the delivery of new retail development particularly in Huntingdon has resulted in the failure to deliver any major additional car parking capacity. Due to pressures on finding suitable land for car parking and the high associated land values for all types of acquisition, it is likely to that the Council will continue to have to explore this type of relationship/partnership with development opportunities
- To ensure that the balance between the numbers and location of short stay and long stay parking spaces is optimised for the benefit of the economy of the town centres in the future

- The need to consider the potential for the early delivery of additional long-stay parking in Huntingdon in view of the negative public reaction to the proposals at Riverside Park
- Continued pressures on town centres associated with rail commuter parking. This is particularly relevant in Huntingdon where there is a clear trend for commuters to utilise free or cheaper town centre parking rather than rail station car parks. In St. Neots, parking also occurs on surrounding streets due to a lack of available car parking capacity at the rail station.
- Our current strategy provides for the charging policy to be reviewed at intervals of not more than three years. Given that new charging levels were introduced in the first-half of 2005, the next review would be in 2008. Details of this are covered in this Action Plan.

THE STRATEGY REVIEW

Steer Davies Gleave (SDG) undertook a policy review of all national, regional, county and district policy that would influence and support the review, which included a diverse range of subjects such as air quality management to town centre development to housing. Within such a diverse range, the common theme that emerged was to provide adequate accessibility to support economic vitality.

SDG also undertook a review of Council parking data as part of our current monitoring regime, plus a review of the work done in 2004 and also carried out validation surveys of usage and capacity in all town centre car parks prior to the 2006 school holidays.

An Officer Working Group oversaw this work and this included representatives of the County Council in their role as both local highway authority and the body who control on-street parking policy.

SDG also undertook Stakeholder Briefings with representatives from within and outside the Council to ensure community engagement in the process and these were undertaken in the latter part of 2006. The primary objective of such briefings was to provide information to those attending, particularly on the current situation, to request information and feedback, to achieve a consensus view and support for the aims of the review and to understand perceptions of problems and issues.

Stakeholder events were held in each town and key issues were discussed on a town by town basis. While common themes were highlighted, there were also individual issues raised that were specific to each town and these are reflected in the Action Plan.

As part of each event, SDG outlined three broad strategic approaches that could be explored to manage future parking needs;

- Expansionist – building more spaces to meet continual rising demand
- Demand Management – control pricing and supply to reduce parking demand and reduce supply below current levels and encourage shift to other modes of transport
- Balanced – use pricing to keep demand at current levels balanced with minor provision of additional parking, improved signage to improve parking distribution and encouraging different travel choices in the future

SDG submitted their final report in early 2007 including their recommendations on how a Strategy and Action Plan should be developed and the approach to take for each market town. This was reported to Cabinet on 15th March 2007.

In discussing the key recommendations made by SDG, Cabinet acknowledged that doing nothing was not an option and the importance of developing a tailored approach to future car parking needs based on the specific requirements of individual market towns rather than the current generic-type district-wide approach. Members recognised that certain issues should be investigated further to alleviate parking problems in town centres including the viability of park and rides schemes, better signage and the management of disabled parking.

Cabinet resolved that;

- that the findings of the consultant's study be noted
- that a formal Car Parking Strategy and Action Plan be developed for future consideration by the Cabinet;
- that a Members' Car Parking Working Group comprising five Conservative, one Liberal Democrat and one Independent Member, be established to develop and recommend a district-wide car parking strategy and action plan; and

OTHER ISSUES

A particular issue that will need to be considered within any overall work across the District is the potential introduction of decriminalised parking enforcement (DPE) within Cambridgeshire, which currently operates only within Cambridge and Peterborough. Government is currently encouraging local transport authorities to explore the options of such introduction, and in partnership with District Council's, where two-tier local government is present.

While there is an over-riding aim of achieving better enforcement with particular benefits leading to better town centres, there is a bigger picture to consider and a balance needs to be struck. Key issues likely to emerge for Cambridgeshire include;

- If introduced, DPE would apply District/County) wide. It would include all towns and villages
- What levels of enforcement would apply across different areas?
- Would partial introduction of DPE undermine remaining Police enforcement regime?
- Would DPE be managed using District Council resources or would external contractors be appointed?
- Finance –
 - How would scheme be funded? Utilising current District Council car parking revenue?
 - How would authorities such as Fenland and East Cambs provide funding where they have no car parking revenue income stream?
 - Sharing operational surplus/deficit, how would this work?
 - Does Park & Ride financially support DPE in Cambridge?
 - Cost implications of operational arrangements/upgrade costs?

In their role as local transport authority, the County Council are undertaking a series of meetings with District Council's to discuss options but it is clear that this will also need to be carefully linked to the District Council car parking strategy and action plan to ensure that it does not become out-of-date if DPE were to be introduced.

THE ACTION PLAN

The Member Working Party met on five occasions between April and December 2007, including a tour of the Council car parking stock on 18th May 2007. Members were able to view first-hand the actual operation of a number of key sites across the District and to relate the recommendations of SDG with real-time events. Minutes of these meetings are available as Background Papers to this Action Plan

Following the issues debated and agreed, a Questionnaire was developed based on the emerging themes and circulated to all Members of the Working Party. These have been used to inform the proposed Action Plan.

While the issues are wide and varied, Working Party Members considered that as well as immediate actions to recommend in the short-term (one to three years), there also needed to be some medium and longer term recommendations to be made and these are reflected in the tables below.

In making the priority recommendations for the Action Plan, Members of the Working Party have debated the recommendations of SDG and understood the obvious desire within parts of the community to build more parking to meet demand whilst balancing that with the challenges faced by the Council in developing an Action Plan to provide more parking and those of a more balanced, demand management approach.

A key rationale in the development of the Action Plan has been the recognised need to provide continued accessibility to the town centres in order to encourage shoppers, to provide parking for those working in the town centres and to provide that parking in appropriate locations within each town to support overall economic activity. It has been recognised that parking provision impacts on different people in different ways across a broad spectrum of the population. Therefore the challenge of the Action Plan has been to recommend a programme that recognises those variations in each town and to ensure a degree of equality relating to overall accessibility.

Key issues discussed have included (in no priority order);

- The need for additional weekday parking in Huntingdon and provision to meet market day demand in St. Neots
- Effect on town centre provision of rail commuter parking in Huntingdon
- Free long-term parking in Huntingdon and St. Neots and effects of potential introduction of charging to balance overall demand including;
 - Charging at Riverside, Huntingdon with designated short-stay areas to reflect leisure usage
 - High leisure usage at Riverside, St. Neots and options to leave free of charge
- Comparison between free parking availability and costs of other modes of travel i.e. public transport
- Pricing options across all levels of car parking and consideration of future scaling of long-stay charges
- Managing parking space search in areas of high demand
- Options and methods to deliver additional car parking
- Proposals by First Capital Connect to increase car parking provision at both Huntingdon & St. Neots railway stations
- Changed parking regimes between short and long-term car parks

- Enforcement and financial issues arising from any change to current policies, particularly the potential change from free to charged long-stay car parks i.e. staffing levels
- Conflict between demand for residents parking and employment based season ticket parking
- Encouraging other forms of access to the car where appropriate to balance car parking demands
- Current levels of charging including possible effects on on-street parking and longer-term charging regimes
- The provision for Park & Ride
- Lack of (tourist) coach layover parking especially in Huntingdon & St. Ives
- Market trader parking within car parks on market days i.e. reduces available car parking space
- Effect of Guided Bus Park & Ride site in St. Ives on town centre car parking
- Free parking in Ramsey and the effects of off-street parking demands compared to on-street availability
- Car park accessibility and signage
- Levels of enforcement and decriminalisation
- Payment methods and ticket machine requirements
- On-street charging levels outstanding from 2004 review

SHORT, MEDIUM AND LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS - 2008-2011

The following are a series of short, medium and long-term recommendations for car parking within each town. This work is supported by a detailed financial analysis to reflect the effects of changed operating patterns including projected income and expenditure levels.

In terms of additional expenditure relating to any of the proposed recommendations over the life of the Action Plan, it will be necessary for the Medium Term Plan to be amended to reflect the agreed timescale for the delivery of emerging actions.

Following approval by Cabinet in October 2007, public consultation was undertaken during November/December 2007.

It is anticipated that all the proposed short-term actions will be developed and delivered within the 2008-2011 timescale of the proposed Action Plan and that significant progress will be made on the medium term actions. While the long-term actions are likely to emerge and develop as part of a future, revised Action Plan, it is proposed that reference should continue to be made to these and to progress these as necessary, particularly those requiring work with partners.

HUNTINGDON

Timescale	Issues	Recommendations
SHORT	Demand to meet immediate capacity issues	Provision of new long-stay car park at Bridge Place, Godmanchester
	Long and short stay parking imbalance	Mill Common to become all short-stay
	Free parking encourages car use and discourages other modes of travel where appropriate. Free parking also encourages rail commuters to park for free to avoid rail station car parking charges	Introduce appropriately targeted charges for long-stay car parking at Riverside and Bridge Place
	Encouraging leisure activities and use of Riverside Park	Introduce designated short-stay car parking at Riverside
	Managing car parking demand	Introduce new 3-year pricing policy and amend charges to keep demand at 2007 baseline
		Review Off-Street Parking Places Order including removal of employment-based Season ticket permits which currently allow parking inside ring-road by reallocating to long-stay charge car parks outside ring-road. For residents living within designated town centre zone, Permits and Season tickets will continue to allow use of certain car parks within ring-road
		Introduce low emission vehicle rate within Season Ticket regime for employees working in town centre or residents living within designated zone
		Work with CCC to review all one-hour on-street parking charges
Undertake trial of new ticket machine technology at Riverside and Bridge Place including alternative payment options to cash i.e. credit/debit cards/mobile phone		
MEDIUM	Demand to meet immediate capacity issues	Investigate leasing options for land for long-stay car parking at Brampton Road
	Managing car parking demand	Monitor effect of new ticket machine trial and investigate roll-out to other car parks including hand-held data capture technology
	Ineffective signage/distribution of vehicles across parking spaces	Investigate fixed or variable message signing
	Town Centre development requiring additional car parking	To continue to work with developers such as Chequers Court and West of Town Centre to secure additional car parking

	Promoting travel choice. Free parking encourages car use and discourages other modes of travel where appropriate	Begin scaling long-stay charging levels upwards to reflect local bus journey fare levels
LONG	Decriminalised parking	Continue to work with partners to explore the issues arising from decriminalisation
LONG (plus)	Economic growth, town centre parking supply and managed demand	Explore the possibility of Park & Ride but only when a business case can justify such provision

ST. NEOTS

Timescale	Issues	Recommendations
SHORT	Market Day demand to meet immediate short-term capacity	Tan Yard to become all short-stay
	Managing car parking demand	Introduce new 3-year pricing policy and amend charges to keep demand at 2007 baseline
		Review Off-Street Parking Places Order to reflect pricing and regime changes including removal of employment-based Season ticket use in Tan Yard and The Priory Car Park
		Introduce low emission vehicle rate within Season Ticket regime for employees working in town centre or residents living within the town
	Work with CCC to review all one-hour on-street parking charges	
MEDIUM	Long and short stay parking imbalance	Investigate; a) expansion of Cambridge Road long-stay to replace parking lost at Tan Yard, b) improved pedestrian access to Huntingdon Street following any relocation of HWRC and c) consider appropriately targeted charges for long-stay car parking at Cambridge Road
	Managing car parking demand	Monitor effect of new ticket machine trial in Huntingdon and investigate roll-out to other car parks including hand-held data capture technology
	Town Centre development requiring additional car parking	To continue to work with partners to secure additional parking in association with new development
	Promoting travel choice. Free parking encourages car use and discourages other modes of travel where appropriate	Begin scaling long-stay charging levels upwards to reflect local bus journey fare levels
	Free parking encourages car use and discourages other modes of travel where appropriate	Continue to evaluate whether the introduction of targeted long-stay parking charges at Cambridge Road would be appropriate

LONG	Meeting car parking demand	Work with partners to explore the possibility of additional car parking on the south side of the town centre
	Decriminalised parking	Continue to work with partners to explore the issues arising from decriminalisation
LONG (plus)	Economic growth, town centre parking supply and managed demand	Explore the possibility of Park & Ride but only when a business case can justify such provision

ST. IVES

Timescale	Issues	Recommendations
SHORT	Managing car parking demand	Introduce new 3-year pricing policy and amend charges to keep demand at 2007 baseline
		Review Off-Street Parking Places Order to reflect pricing and regime changes
		Introduce low emission vehicle rate within Season Ticket regime for employees working in town centre or residents living within designated zone
		Work with CCC to review all one-hour on-street parking charges
MEDIUM	Managing car parking demand	Monitor parking levels on London Road Flood Arches to ensure parking demand needs continue to be met
		Assess car parking needs in Market Hill as part of future Environmental Improvement scheme
		Monitor effect of new ticket machine trial in Huntingdon and investigate roll-out to other car parks including hand-held data capture technology
	Promoting travel choice. Free parking encourages car use and discourages other modes of travel where appropriate	Begin scaling long-stay charging levels upwards to reflect local bus journey fare levels
LONG	Economic growth, town centre parking supply and managed demand	Monitor effects of Guided Bus Park & Ride car park when open from early 2009 and effects on town centre car parking
	Decriminalised parking	Continue to work with partners to explore the issues arising from decriminalisation

RAMSEY

Timescale	Issues	Recommendations
SHORT	Managing car parking demand	Investigate the introduction of short-stay parking areas within Mews Close car park to control long-stay parking levels. Possible 'Disc Parking' permit, subject to revenue costs
		Review Off-Street Parking Places Order where necessary
MEDIUM	Loss of off-street parking at New Road with resultant loss of capacity	Investigate replacement provision on District Council land at Mews Close. Possible 50/50 scheme with residential provision. Proven area of demand
LONG	Removal of High Street parking	Work with County Council to investigate removal of on-street parking to improve safety and traffic flow
	Decriminalised parking	Continue to work with partners to explore the issues arising from decriminalisation