

PARKING POLICY – PROVISION AND MANAGEMENT

1. Introduction

1.1 The private car is an essential part of modern life and car ownership continues to be a lifestyle choice for most people. However, as cars become relatively more affordable, and as a generation that has grown up with the car reaches the age where they can become owners themselves, the number of cars in use continues to rise, and this inexorable rise brings with it the attendant pressure to provide sufficient space to put them when not in use. Economic growth also generates associated traffic growth, and the continued economic success of the City requires that facilities are available to cater for the traffic that is essential to that success being achieved.

1.2 Simply providing enough resources to meet this continually rising demand is nevertheless, not the answer; overall transport policy must be framed in such a way that parking provision and management forms part of an integrated approach to the way in which people and goods move around.

1.3 It follows from this that the policy for parking must be compatible with the overall transport policy as set out in the Local Transport Plan (LTP) and also the Local Development Framework (LDF), these being the key statutory planning documents for the City, and forming part of the Council's Policy Framework. The policy must also take account of how parking can contribute towards the achievement of wider policy objectives, such as promoting economic development, reducing environmental impact and improving standards of health.

1.4 Parking policy also needs to be explicit about the management and enforcement processes, and why these are important aspects of the whole. Provision of facilities is, of itself, not enough: without a clear policy about the way the facilities will be managed, their effectiveness will be compromised and the benefits of the investment will not be realised.

2. Policy Background

2.1 In its consultation document 'Parking Policy and Enforcement Operational Guidance to Local Authorities', the Department for Transport (DfT) states: *'Parking policies need to be an integral part of a local authority's transport strategy and.....local authorities should have policies aimed at tackling congestion and changing travel behaviour, which could include restricting and/or charging for car parking.*

Discussions about parking tend to concentrate on enforcement but all local authorities need to develop a parking strategy for their area covering on- and off-street parking provision that is linked to local objectives and

circumstances, and put in place with Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's) the effect of which is indicated with appropriate traffic signs and road markings. This strategy needs to take account of planning policies and transport powers and consider the appropriate number of total spaces, the balance between short and long term spaces and the level of charges.'

2.2 The two main City Council policy documents that refer to parking are the LTP (approved March 2006) and the LDF (Submission Version of the Core Strategy, approved September 2007). The strategy of the LTP is framed around a series of objectives that reflect national and local priorities and circumstances, and it also contains a broad series of statements, derived from these objectives, that set out the proposed policy for parking as part of the overall policy of '**Reduce – Manage – Invest**' that forms the core strategic approach to transport, both in the City and the sub-region.

2.3 In line with this strategic approach, the policy for residential areas '*will continue to focus on ensuring that residents do not experience problems resulting from commuter parking, or from parking generated by major attractors.'*

2.4 For other areas, such as the City Centre and district centres, the LTP states '*the emphasis will be on maintaining the approach which requires users of parking facilities to pay a rate that reflects the value of the facility provided, and which also acts as an incentive to consider the use of other modes of travel.'* It should be noted that, in accordance with the Council's desire to support and promote the retail sector, the policy approach over a period of time has been to make all restricted on-street parking short-stay to support economic activity in shopping centres across the City, with longer stays being accommodated off-street.

2.5 The role of Park and Ride is described and the LTP is clear that '*introduction would [thus] need to be linked in delivery terms to further restriction of car access to the City Centre. The exact timing for implementation will need to be carefully considered to ensure that the long-term viability of the system is assured and this will require constant evaluation of a number of indicators relating to congestion levels, parking occupancy levels and development timetables (especially those outside the City itself).'*

2.6 The LTP also identifies the roles that lorry and coach parking facilities can play in promoting economic development. The relevant policy statements are: '*The City currently has a serious shortage of lorry parking facilities and.....there is a pressing need to identify a site in the Southampton area for a strategic lorry park.....*'; and '*[The Council] will also seek to provide the coach hire sector with improved coach parking facilities in the City, especially to serve visits to the City Centre'*.

2.7 The potential contribution that powered two-wheeler (PTW) vehicles can make to reducing congestion is recognised, and the LTP states that provision

will be made for them. *'Dedicated parking facilities for PTW's will be provided in the City Centre and key town and district centres to support their use.'*

2.8 Enhancing accessibility for disabled road users is vital to the promotion of social inclusion and the LTP sets out the policy for the provision of Disabled Persons' Parking Bays (DPPB's):

'To maximise accessibility for disabled people to the City Centre and district centres, the policy of creating DPPB's in the nearest safe locations to the centres will be continued, as will the policy of establishing similar bays for disabled residents in residential roads, in response to proven need.'

2.9 These principles are given more detailed consideration in the Submission Version of the Core Strategy. This describes how the Reduce – Manage – Invest strategy of the LTP is incorporated into the spatial strategy and how parking affects each element, and it also explains the ways in which parking contributes to the achievement of the individual LTP objectives, in particular:

- Promoting Economic Development – *a balanced approach to parking ensures that growth is encouraged without unduly restricting the market, yet having appreciation for social and environmental objectives;*
- Minimising Impact on the Environment – *reduced car use allows for physical enhancements to the streetscene and air quality improvements City-wide.*
- Improving the Standard of Health – *reduced parking alongside an active travel plan will encourage the use of cycles and walking, aiding public health. Air quality will also be enhanced.*

2.10 A clear direction can be inferred from these existing policy statements. Firstly, **parking is seen as one element of a wider strategy for movement** that seeks to influence travel behaviour, that includes the promotion of sustainable travel modes and which takes full account of the ability of transport to contribute to broader policy aims. There is a clear understanding that **there must be a balanced approach that minimises the adverse impacts of transport whilst supporting economic growth and not unduly constraining development**. Establishing the correct balance is vital if a long-term sustainable future for the City is to be provided; decisions made now will have a fundamental impact on its economy and environment in the years to come.

2.11 Secondly, there is recognition that **the needs of residents are different to the needs of business and visitors**, and that there is a basis for treating them differently. There is also an implication that how the respective groups are treated will depend on the location.

2.12 Finally, there is a clear recognition that **the provision and availability of parking facilities has a value, and that users should expect to contribute towards their provision, maintenance and management**. Charging policy is also seen as having the potential to influence travel behaviour.

2.13 Using these understandings as the starting point, a broad strategy can be established that provides a framework of reference from which a series of more detailed policy statements can be developed.

3. Overall Strategy

- 3.1 The overall objective of parking policy is not to attempt to control vehicle ownership, but to manage vehicle use** - this has important implications for planning policy and development control standards. It implies that, in general, controls should be applied at destinations more than at the point of residence. It also impacts on the extent to which parking facilities are provided, managed and enforced.
- 3.2 The provision and management of parking facilities creates a significant level of cost to the Council and users should thus pay for their use in recognition of the benefit they provide. Charges should be set at levels that reflect the value of the facility and that act as an incentive to consider the use of other modes of travel** – this provides the basis on which the Council charges for the use of car parks and for parking permits, applies differential charging scales to different facilities, and applies penalty charges for contraventions of the operational regulations. Parking tariffs should take account of regional conditions (even after the latest increase, City charges are still lower than equivalent centres in southern England) and, in the medium term, will need to facilitate Park and Ride for the City. Charging for use is also consistent with the policy approach of applying controls at destinations.
- 3.3 In the City Centre, the objective should be to balance the needs of visitors with those of residents, recognising the overall economic requirements of the City and that City Centre residents have the widest access to alternative modes of travel and to facilities in general** – this implies that as much parking space as possible in the City Centre should be available for general use, and that there should be a presumption against the reservation of any public parking specifically for residents because of the proximity to major facilities, the ready availability of alternative travel modes and the need to restrain long-term traffic growth in the City Centre. This has implications for development control standards. The City's economic requirements also generate the need for lorry and coach parking facilities.
- 3.4 In suburban areas away from the City Centre, the objective should be to manage the available kerbside parking space to the maximum benefit of existing residents** – this also has important implications for new developments as it implies that the associated parking should be provided on-site, and it also provides the basis for

the continuation and expansion of Residents' Parking Schemes, making it consistent with the policy approach (outlined above) of applying controls at destinations, not the point of residence (preference being given to residents).

3.5 Parking enforcement activities should be related to the impact that contravention creates, and should be self-financing – this implies differing levels of enforcement for different facilities and provides the basis on which emphasis could be placed on addressing specific problems. It provides the basis for applying penalty charges for contraventions of the operational regulations and it also reflects the Council's statutory duties under the Traffic Management Act.

3.6 Over time, the objective should be to achieve consistent development control parking standards across the Transport for South Hampshire (TfSH) area – as a more sub-regional approach to development is taken, there will be a need to employ a more consistent approach to assessing the impacts of new developments and how these should be addressed, in support of the overall Reduce – Manage – Invest strategy.

3.7 These six broad principles lead to a wider set of policy statements that together form a framework against which future initiatives should be assessed. These policies are grouped to reflect the main areas where parking is an issue and they have been developed from a detailed consideration of the current situation.

4. Detailed Policy Statements

4(a) City Centre (as defined in the LDF Core Strategy)

- The focus for control should be the weekday commuter journey, not off-peak leisure journeys.
- On-street parking should continue to be short-stay in nature to support the economic viability of the City Centre.
- In order to reduce the potential for future traffic problems in the City Centre, there is a need to manage traffic generation arising from new developments.
- Parking standards for commercial developments should continue to strike a balance between commercial and traffic management requirements, but over time they should be aligned with those of the sub-region.
- All new commercial developments should have associated travel plans intended to minimise the requirement for new parking provision.

- The use of car clubs should be encouraged, with specific provision incorporated into new developments.
- Developments should be designed in such a way that the land-take of the associated car parking is minimised.
- New parking provision should be accommodated within the existing total quantum of parking by re-allocation of current spare capacity and private non-residential parking spaces. (ie – no additional spaces should be provided in the long term over and above the existing total, although temporary short –term permissions could be granted pending development of Park & Ride)
- Additional parking provision in the long term should be provided by Park & Ride facilities.
- Recognising that an all-week Park and Ride operation is not likely to be a viable proposition in the short term, the Council should work with the business sector to identify opportunities for employer-based Park and Ride services (which may also have potential for general use at weekends).
- Charging policy should reflect the cost of provision, maintenance and enforcement of facilities, and should also be set to encourage the use of other modes of travel where these are feasible.
- Consideration should be given to the creation of a preferential charging rate that encourages car sharing.
- Residents' Parking Zones should not be created in the City Centre area; the ready availability of, and proximity to, extensive public transport networks makes this a highly accessible area, close to most of the City's major facilities.
- Consideration should be given to options that would allow City Centre residents to have access to Council-controlled parking spaces in the City Centre (as an alternative to Residents' Parking)
- Disabled Persons' Parking Bays should be provided in the nearest safe locations to the City Centre.
- Dedicated coach parking facilities should be provided in both the northern and southern areas of the City Centre.
- PTW parking bays should be provided in suitable locations.

4(b) Suburban Areas

4(b)(i) New development (both residential and non-residential)

- Current and anticipated car ownership patterns should be recognised when assessing development proposals.
- New developments should not introduce parking problems into existing residential areas.
- Parking provision for new developments should be calculated using the Assessment Matrix.
- Reduced parking standards should only be accepted if the adjacent on-street parking is fully controlled **and** there is adequate accessibility by

alternative modes of transport. However, visitor parking *should* be accommodated off-site.

- Travel plans should be used to help manage impacts of new developments.
- The use of car clubs should be encouraged.

4(b)(ii) Existing areas

- Residents' Parking Schemes should be introduced where there is excessive parking in an area by non-residents.
- Times of operation should be only those necessary to address the problem.
- No time limits should be applied to residents.
- Business permits should be time-limited to prevent their use for commuting purposes.
- Non-residents should be allowed to park if there is space available, but recognising the value of the space and the cost of managing it, they should pay for use.
- On the same basis, all types of permit should attract a fee, albeit on a sliding scale.
- The objective should be to make Residents' Parking Schemes self-funding.
- The total number of permits issued for a zone should relate to the available amount of parking space in that zone.
- There should be no guarantee of space for every resident.
- No permits should be issued to new developments unless there is demonstrably space available to accommodate the additional vehicles.
- Commercial and retail-related parking problems should be addressed by the use of TRO's and not Residents' Parking.
- Charges in district centre car parks should be set at levels that encourage local business but deter long stays.
- Disabled Persons' Parking Bays should be provided in the nearest safe locations to district centres, and also in residential roads where there is a proven need.
- PTW bays should be provided in suitable locations near to district centres.
- Identification of potential sites for a strategic lorry park should be progressed.

4(c) Enforcement and Management

- All parking enforcement powers available as a result of Special Parking Area status should be taken up and utilised.
- The level of control and enforcement should be related to the impact of the problems created by non-compliance.

- Enforcement should not be undertaken as a revenue-raising exercise; it should be undertaken to facilitate the achievement of overall transport objectives. It is however, reasonable to require that enforcement costs should be recovered through penalty charges (this reflects the policy direction set out in the recent DfT publication, *Better Parking – Keeping Traffic Moving*).
- The nature of restrictions put in place should be such as to minimise the enforcement requirement (eg design waiting restrictions to allow enforcement on a single visit rather than two or more).
- ‘Pay-on-foot’ should be adopted for off-street parking wherever practicable to improve customer perception of value-for-money and enable enforcement resources to be focussed towards on-street enforcement.
- More extensive use of Pay and Display parking should be made to control parking of non-residents in Residents’ Parking Zones.

5. Operational Policies

5.1 A range of operational policies is already in existence, most being consistent with these policy statements. There will, however, be a requirement to review these, and to decide where changes should be made. There may also be a need to introduce new policies to cover those areas where there is currently nothing in place. Existing policies cover:

- Development Control Standards
- Provision of Residents’ Parking Schemes
- Provision of Disabled Persons’ Parking Bays
- Enforcement Activities
- Guidance on Decriminalised Parking Enforcement outside London – Local Authority Circular 1/95 (**note:** there is currently a consultation exercise in progress on new Statutory Guidance on the Civil Enforcement of Parking Contraventions which will be introduced on 31 March 2008)

5.2 Particular areas where changes are likely to be required are development control parking standards, charging policies (both for residential and non-residential parking) and some enforcement priorities. In the medium term, there will be a need to review those areas of parking policy that would directly influence the success (or otherwise) of a Park & Ride network for the City.

5.3 This overall policy, as well as the subsidiary policies, should be subject to regular review to ensure that prevailing conditions are being appropriately reflected and that the policy approach remains valid.