

PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT  
POLICY, DEVELOPMENT & SCRUTINY PANEL  
10<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2013

DRAFT BATH CAR PARKING STRATEGY

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is an update of the paper submitted to the Scrutiny Panel in September 2011 and sets out the Council's approach to parking issues in Bath, providing a framework for managing car parking spaces for the period 2013 to 2026. The plan will be developed as part of the Bath Transport Strategy and covers all aspects of car parking including:

- on and off-street parking;
- Park and Ride;
- future parking demand;
- residential parking standards and enforcement;
- management issues.

A key consideration is the need to accommodate between 4150 and 4900 jobs in the Bath City Riverside area up to the year 2031, which is central to the council's Economic Strategy.

Appendix 1 shows recent trends in cycle, bus and rail use set against Joint Local Transport Plan targets. The general thrust of the draft car parking strategy is to offset the growth in parking demand by increasing sustainable transport use, whilst compensating for the loss in city centre car parking spaces as a result of re-development by providing car parking spaces either within the development and/or at park and ride sites.

## 2. AIMS

The aim of the strategy is to help improve the quality of life of the people of Bath by establishing a balance between the social, economic, cultural and environmental needs of the whole community. A central objective is to reduce the need for drivers to travel to and from the city centre reflecting concerns about the impact of traffic congestion and carbon emissions on the environment and historic fabric of the World Heritage city, while providing parking provisions that meet a sustainable demand.

Parking cannot be considered in isolation and the objectives need to reflect the council's overall aims. The principles need to be consistent with other key documents and policies including the Sustainable Community Strategy, Core Strategy, Local Plan, Joint Local Transport Plan 3 and Equalities Act. It is also important that parking policies are compatible with the council's economic objectives for the city.

## 3. OBJECTIVES

The strategy complements policies to reduce traffic in the central area of Bath by controlling the availability of parking spaces, both on and off street, and by managing the overall supply to meet priority uses. In this way, the management of parking can support policies to promote economic development and assist with the reduction in the levels of congestion and carbon emissions, as well as supporting active travel.

The objectives of the policy are to:

- Manage travel demand by introducing restraint-based car parking standards to avoid the over provision of car parking spaces and provide disabled 'blue badge' parking spaces
- Sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of Bath by the introduction of transport policies which support the prosperity of the city and provide a balance of good public transport and short stay parking;
- Effectively manage the total parking supply which include all types of parking and consider short stay priorities, regulation, charges and enforcement.

## Planning Policy Guidance

Recently announced changes to Planning Policy Guidance give greater freedom to local authorities to adopt the right policies for their area. Local authorities will consider how their parking strategy should best fit with their overall strategy for promoting sustainable transport choices and the efficient use of land, enabling schemes to fit into central urban sites, promoting linked-trips and tackling congestion.

Local authorities can set their own parking policies and charges to meet the needs of the local area. This includes reducing the need for parking in city centres through well placed and well used Park and Ride schemes. For new residential developments, a parking strategy can include setting minimum or maximum levels of parking places, depending on what is right for the area.

To create the parking provision for electric vehicles, local authorities are encouraged to provide electric vehicle charging infrastructure in new developments, where this does not affect the development's overall viability. Local authorities may also wish to set aside some residential car parking spaces solely for car club vehicles.

### **Action A1 Review parking standards for new developments as part of the Local Development Framework process**

West of England Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP3) 2011-2026 recognises the supply and management of car parking is closely linked with the demand for car use and this in turn affects traffic levels, especially in peak periods and, ultimately, congestion. It is a key part of our range of demand management measures for tackling congestion and traffic growth in some areas.

Parking controls can be used, where appropriate, as part of an integrated strategy to contribute to:

- Reducing vehicle trips to central areas during peak times benefits in terms of congestion, local air quality, health and carbon reduction;
- Improving the financial viability of bus, Park and Ride and rail services;
- Encouraging shorter trips within the urban areas to transfer to walking, cycling and public transport;
- Locking in the benefits of reduced traffic by reallocating road space to people through public realm enhancements;
- Improving quality of life in both residential areas as well as the city centres through greater opportunities for active travel, less motorised travel movements and emissions.

## 4. ON STREET PARKING

The on-street parking policy objectives are:

- To provide improved parking facilities for city residents and short stay parking for visitors to local shops and businesses in areas otherwise used by long stay commuters to park during the working day.
- To encourage commuters to walk, cycle and use public transport, including park and ride facilities, at peak times in the morning and afternoon when roads in central Bath are congested and contribute to poor air quality.
- That the Controlled Parking Zone scheme should be supported by residents within the Zone and provide enough revenue to support sufficient levels of enforcement to cover the additional restrictions and residents parking facilities.

### Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ)

Bath city centre is divided into a central zone and 18 outer zones with on-street parking controls referred to as the Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ). The Central Zone includes pay and display areas with either a 1 hour limit or 2 hr limit to control the duration of stay.

Residents' parking permits cost £100 for the first permit and outside the central zone residents may purchase a second permit for £160.

Feedback from residents' parking surveys indicate in the central zone that there little spare capacity in these streets and bays are heavily used most of the time, with no spaces available on Saturday evenings after 7pm.

### **Action A2 Review parking provision within the Central Zone**

The surveys also indicate there is no strong demand to extend the CPZ by creating new zones, although there may be individual streets which could be considered for residents' parking. However the implications of extending residents' parking controls on adjacent streets will need to be fully considered.

**Action A3 Monitor parking issues in the Newbridge, Weston and Oldfield Park areas and assess when the level of concern justifies further consultation with residents on bringing additional streets into the CPZ in accordance with operational guidelines.**

## 5. OFF STREET PARKING

The off-street parking objectives are to:

- To provide for the future parking demand using Park and Ride sites situated on the edge of the city.
- To implement a charging structure that allows mainly short and medium stay parking in city centre car parks.

The strategy is aimed at reducing the need for traffic to enter the city to seek car parking spaces, which left unchecked would threaten both the historic fabric and quality of the environment in the city.

Setting the demand baseline on which to base future parking provision is a key question. If set too high, then the consequence of many empty parking spaces represents an inefficient use of assets. If set too low the following consequences are likely:

- increased congestion as drivers search for spaces;
- constrained economic growth for business/employment opportunities;
- Bath's position a major retail hub threatened; and

- reduced economic benefits brought by tourism and culture.

To assess future parking needs based on current trends towards sustainable transport, the baseline for parking provision is set just prior to the Christmas season at November 2011 levels.

It is important to note that we are not adopting an unsustainable 'predict and provide' approach. The parking strategy is a key component in a balanced traffic management plan aimed at reducing car usage and dependency and easing congestion. It is reasonable to assume a 10% modal shift is achievable for all employment trips and new shopping and tourism trips into the central area.

To meet regeneration objectives, the Core Strategy has allocated a number of city centre car parks for mainly employment use to 2031. An allocation does not necessarily mean the loss in the number of overall car parking spaces, as options for building over and retaining all or some of the spaces or decking over existing car parks or additional Park and Ride facilities will be considered.

This policy meets two key objectives:

- To continue the shift in parking from the city centre to Park and Ride car parks situated at the edge of the city.
- To maximise housing and economic development on land that has been previously developed within the urban areas.

The car parks which are currently allocated for economic regeneration are as follows:

- Saw Close (22 spaces)
- Cattle Market (57 spaces)
- Manvers Street (166 spaces)
- Avon Street Car Park (617 spaces)

**Principle P1: The baseline for city centre parking supply is set broadly at 2011 levels, with provision for the loss of up to 862 spaces to allow for the redevelopment Saw Close, Cattle Market, Manvers St and Avon Street car parks.**

New residential and business developments and new park and ride sites will affect city centre off-street parking demand in the future. A 10% modal shift from the private car to other forms of transport should be taken into account in setting future levels of parking provision.

**Action A4: An occupancy survey of all city centre off street car parks and park and ride sites be undertaken annually to monitor changes in parking demand and provision.**

## 6. PARK AND RIDE

Bath is currently served by three purpose built full time Park and Ride sites covering three of the main approaches to the city - from the north, east and west (M4/M5/A420), south (A367) and west (A4/A39). Over 1.7 million trips are made on Park and Ride services a year,

The only main route into the city currently not served by a Park and Ride site is the A4 to the east of Bath which experiences congestion at peak times.

**Action A5: Develop a P&R site to the east of Bath.**

Park and Ride services operate between the hours of 6.15am to 8.30pm Monday to Saturday and from 9.30am to 6pm on Sundays. Under the Park and Ride contract the operator is required to ensure that sufficient passenger capacity on Park and Ride buses is available at peak times.

During the Christmas shopping season, Bath Rugby match days and special events such as the Bath Half Marathon additional services are provided from Park and Ride sites. There is also a desire to provide services later into the evening to support the evening economy.

**Action A6: Keep under review the hours of operation of Park and Ride Services for Christmas and other special events.**

It is important that Park and Ride bus frequencies are reliable and journey times into the city centre are less than for other motorists, particularly in the congested peak hours.

**Principle P2: To continue to support the introduction of bus priority measures that improve journey times for Park and Ride buses.**

All day parking and unlimited travel is currently £3.20 per passenger on weekdays and £2.50 per passenger on Saturdays and Sundays with accompanied children travelling free. This compares with all day parking in city centre car parks of £8.50 for upto 11 hours. Other than before 9:00 Mondays to Fridays, concessionary bus pass users can use the service free of charge.

A ten ticket journey smart card is also available to regular users for £13, which provides up to 20% discount. The cost of on and off-street parking charges are considered annually.

**Principle P3: The tariff structure will continue to encourage long stay parking at Park and Ride sites.**

The Destination Management Plan notes that although park and ride sites are well used by commuters and shoppers, lack of knowledge about how park and ride services operate might deter visitors from using them. Parking in the city centre itself will become increasingly limited and although car parks are reasonably well located, it is difficult to know where to park in relation to the city centre.

This advanced car park management system, proposed as part of the Bath Transportation Package will reduce the time and frustration spent searching for spaces and consequently ease traffic congestion in Bath.

## 7. BUSINESS USER PARKING

Parking permits are available to business users who need to park close to their place of work in order to undertake regular journeys to and from that place of business throughout the day.

Two permits are available per business with the first permit costing £110 and the second permit costing £165, but may only be used in outside the Central Zone in Zones 1-14.

To apply for a business user permit, applicants need to declare that the need for the permit is for operational reasons, for example as part of a Travel Plan, and not simply for convenience.

**Principle P4: To continue to provide an appropriate level of business user parking spaces in the city centre.**

## 8. DISABLED PARKING

Blue Badge holder drivers can park free of charge on street anywhere within the city centre for an unlimited period.



The Park and Ride is operated using low floor buses with kneeling mechanisms and the interior layouts are designed to accommodate wheelchair users.

The Shop Mobility scheme operated in Bath has recently re-located in Lewis House in Manvers St that allows anyone with a mobility problem the ability to move around the city using scooters or wheelchairs (either manual or powered).

They can be used between 9.30am-4.30pm Monday to Friday and 9am – 1pm Saturday. A small charge is made to contribute towards running costs.

**Principle P5: If city centre parking spaces are reduced, then this will not result in an overall reduction in the number of dedicated disabled bays provided.**

**Principle P6: Ensure that disabled car parking spaces are compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act (2005) and access requirements, and are provided in accordance with Bath and North East Somerset Parking Standards.**

## 9. TARRIFF STRUCTURE

Parking charges are important tools that encourage drivers to park in the most appropriate place; they are a mechanism that enables the council to deliver an efficient and responsive service in the context of strategic policy aims. In all cases, tariffs must appear reasonable to those who use our parking places; they also need to be easily understood as complicated tariff structures will deter use and discourage return visits.

In Bath, there is currently a range of options:

- Short Stay and Short Stay Premium – for shoppers, personal business and visitors
- Medium stay – for shoppers and visitors
- Long Stay – for commuters and all-day visitors
- Park and Ride – for shoppers, commuters and visitors
- Residents' parking
- Business parking

**Principle P7: Retain the current range of off-street and on-street tariff options and to assess charges annually to ensure they are set at levels to encourage usage in the most appropriate places.**

**Principle P8: Ensure that the Controlled Parking Zone the costs of enforcement are affordable from parking permit income.**

## 10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This strategy identifies a number of actions that have capital or revenue implications. Many of these actions are already contained within the council's Bath Transportation Package and Local Sustainable Transport measures. However all proposals are subject to permission being sought and obtained at the appropriate time. In order for those actions not identified to proceed, detailed costings and bids will also need approval through the council's financial appraisal process.