

**EAST HERTS COUNCIL
PARKING AND TRANSPORT STRATEGY 2012 / 21**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1	Page
Executive Summary	3-4
Glossary of Terms	5-6
Introduction	
- Scope and Objectives	7
- Council's Strategic Aims	8-9
- Strategic Context	10
- Strategic Aims of Strategy	11-12
First Principles	13
Background	14
Overarching Priorities	15-28
Chapter 2	Page
Local Priorities	
- Hertford	30-35
- Bishop's Stortford	36-41
- Ware	42-45
- Sawbridgeworth	46-49
- Buntingford	50-53
- Stanstead Abbots	54
- Rural Communities	55
Appendices	56-64
Decision Making Checklists	(To be prepared following Council adoption of Strategy).

CHAPTER 1

ISSUES AND COMPLEXITIES

This Chapter contains an assessment of the overarching parking and transport challenges facing East Herts and proposes a number of strategy ambitions in relation to each.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FOREWORD

When developed and managed effectively, parking and transport have considerable potential for good - for example through their role in promoting the economic wellbeing of our towns and villages and improving access for many in our communities. At the same time our reliance on the motor vehicle can cause significant problems. The importance of developing the positive aspects of parking and transport whilst minimising their negative aspects is growing. This is a significant challenge facing East Herts and its partner agencies.

A COMPLEX PICTURE

The necessary involvement of a number of agencies, each with their own statutory role and responsibilities, means that addressing the twin challenges of parking and transport is a complicated and difficult affair. East Herts must identify areas where it can act, where it must work in partnership with others, where it can only influence the actions of others and where it has no powers to act or influence others. This is particularly important in a period of significant financial austerity.

Individual outcomes that may appear desirable have the potential to conflict with others. Difficult choices have to be made and for the needs of some to be preferred it is sometimes the case that the freedoms of others must be curtailed.

Sometimes there appear to be no clear answers to the challenges that the management of parking and transport present, but this does not mean we should not constantly try to find them.

UNDERSTAND THE CHALLENGES

Unless the different challenges that face our communities are understood, it is difficult (and probably unwise) to attempt interventions. Each of our towns and villages has unique characteristics and our approach to their parking and transport needs must therefore be tailored where possible. One size does not necessarily fit all when it comes to addressing the parking and transport needs a rural district such as East Herts.

Our communities are often best placed to understand the parking and transport challenges they face and to suggest solutions. All agencies involved in these areas must ensure they listen to the views of our communities when devising policy and putting it into practice. The localism agenda has considerable relevance in these areas.

DISPEL THE MYTHS

Listening to the more strident voices among us might lead us to believe that parking is all about price and that if the price issue was resolved all would be well. A range of studies and, more importantly the stated views of our own communities, confirm this is not the case. Accessibility and convenience are of greater concern and this should be borne in mind when key decisions in the areas of parking and transport are made.

Many of the same studies and once again East Herts' communities identify that it is what we find at the *end* of our journey that determines our actions. However attractive a car park, we are unlikely to end up parking there if our journey is difficult and/or the retail and leisure offer of the destination town poor. Parking and transport and the economic wellbeing of our towns and villages are intrinsically linked and we must act decisively on both fronts to deliver beneficial outcomes.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Term	Description
ANPR - Automatic Number Plate Recognition	<p>The recording by automated means of a vehicle's registration plate (and by extension the identification of the registered keeper of a vehicle).</p> <p>A mechanism used increasingly for the management of car parks and the enforcement of alleged on-street and off-street parking contraventions.</p>
CPE - Civil Parking Enforcement	Decriminalised enforcement of parking restrictions undertaken by local authorities using Traffic Management Act 2004 powers.
Community Transport	Community based transport services, often owned and operated by independent charitable companies limited by guarantee and in partnership with a local authority.
Highway Authority	<p>The authority responsible for the provision and maintenance of most highways (excluding, for example, trunk roads).</p> <p>For the purpose of this Strategy, Hertfordshire County Council is the Highway Authority in East Herts.</p>
Link Magazine	East Herts Council's quarterly residents' magazine.
LTP - Local Transport Plan	A statutory document setting out the Highway Authority's vision and strategy for the long term development of transport in the county. Hertfordshire County Council published its third such document in 2011 – hence it is termed LTP3.

Term	Description
NPPF - National Planning Policy Framework	Government's streamlined planning framework which will supersede PPG13 from April 2012.
PPG13 - Planning Policy Guidance 13	Planning Policy Guidance on transport first issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government in March 2001.
Public Transport	A timetabled public transport service.
TMA 2004 – Traffic Management Act 2004	The Act of Parliament under which the Council enforces parking controls.
TRO - Traffic Regulation Order	A bylaw promoted by the Highway or Parking Authority and a prerequisite for the creation of most restricted and permitted parking controls on-street and in car parks.
UTP - Urban Transport Plan	<p>A subsidiary document to the LTP that promotes a strategy for the medium term development of transport in a defined area within the county.</p> <p>A UTP for Hertford and Ware was published in 2011. A UTP for Bishop's Stortford and Sawbridgeworth should be published in 2012.</p>

INTRODUCTION

Scope

This Strategy identifies the main parking and transport issues across East Herts and suggests a number of ambitions in respect of the development and delivery of each.

The Strategy recognises that there are tensions between the economic, social and environmental aspects of parking and transport management.

In particular the Council must balance;

- Its promotion of the economic wellbeing of its communities
- Its use of parking and transport as an effective demand management tool
- Its obligation to encourage the use of more environmentally friendly transport.

Additionally, the Council must increase mobility and access to services, particularly for the rural based and more vulnerable members of our communities.

The Strategy acknowledges that there are significant areas of parking and transport management - and in particular the latter - where East Herts has little or no statutory authority or control and must therefore seek to negotiate and influence the responsible bodies to secure its objectives.

The Strategy draws heavily on the views of residents, businesses, town councils and other stakeholders, gathered during a number of consultation exercises. In part, it seeks to apply national, regional and county wide policy at a local level in recognition of the varied and unique nature of our towns, villages and rural communities.

Strategy Objectives

The overarching objective of the Strategy is to provide a framework for decision making by ensuring conflicting demands are balanced in order to deliver the best possible outcomes.

This must be achieved whilst at the same time recognising that one size does *not* fit all when considering the parking and transport needs of our individual communities.

**EAST HERTS COUNCIL
STRATEGIC AIMS**

East Herts Council's current Corporate Vision is to ***improve the quality of people's lives and preserve all that's best in East Herts***. The Council has identified three strategic aims to guide its delivery of this vision, which underpin the themes of this Strategy:

East Herts Strategic Aim	Linked Parking and Transport Strategy Themes	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People - <i>enhancing the quality of life, health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, particularly those who are vulnerable.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Services • Sustainability 	<p>The transport and parking needs of those in rural communities are likely to be different and more pronounced than those of people living in urban areas.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place – <i>securing the standard of the built environment and our neighbourhoods and ensuring our towns and villages are safe and clean.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care for the Environment • Enforcement Priorities 	<p>Transport and parking considerations are an integral part of planning policy and therefore of individual planning decisions.</p> <p>An effective and integrated parking and transport service, including on and off-street controls and enforcement is an important contributor to road safety in our towns and villages.</p>

East Herts Strategic Aim	Linked Parking and Transport Strategy Themes	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prosperity - <i>safeguarding and enhancing our unique mix of rural and urban communities; promoting sustainable, economic and social opportunities.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability • Economic Wellbeing • Congestion • Access to Services 	<p>Our residents, town councils and businesses identify the economic wellbeing of their communities as of paramount importance to them when their parking and transport needs are being considered.</p> <p>Transport and parking considerations are an integral part of planning policy and therefore of individual planning decisions.</p> <p>The transport and parking needs of those in rural communities are likely to be different and more pronounced than those of people living in urban areas.</p>

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

East Herts Council manages approximately 3,000 parking spaces in twenty six off-street car parks and is the Parking Authority for the district.

Since 2005 the Council has enforced most on-street parking restrictions on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council (the Highway Authority).

East Herts Council is the planning authority for the district. Traffic management and parking considerations are integral elements of planning policy.

Hertfordshire County Council has a statutory responsibility to develop and support the provision of passenger transport across the county.

The promotion of on-street parking restrictions and on-street permitted parking is primarily the responsibility of the County Council. East Herts also possesses these powers, but tends to lead only on the implementation of on-street resident permit parking schemes.

Parking serves a vital economic and social function, with approximately two million visits made annually to our pay and display car parks. Income from paid for parking makes an important contribution to the delivery of important services.

Parking enforcement does not generate a surplus for the Council – the cost of enforcement exceeds the revenue received from the issue of penalty charges.

Accessible transport and parking are pre-requisites for the support of a healthy retail and business sector. Public transport in particular is a key enabler of access to services for a significant number of people, many of whom might be considered vulnerable or disadvantaged.

STRATEGIC AIMS

Although they have many positive aspects, parking and transport have their downsides. Our historic town centres were planned and built before the invention of the motor vehicle and our roads are becoming increasingly clogged with vehicles. Air quality in some areas has declined and the attractiveness of our urban and rural environment is frequently blighted by parked vehicles and traffic congestion.

In other words, parking and transport must be properly managed if their negative aspects are to be minimised and their potential for good fully exploited. This is not a once and for all exercise. These are dynamic issues. The tensions around them are fluid and boundaries necessarily flexible. At the same time, many of us tend to hold entrenched views on these issues.

For the needs of one user or group of users to be favoured, the freedoms of others may have to be curbed. There is no right answer and sometimes no answer at all to the challenges that the twin issues of parking and transport create.

The economic climate into which this Strategy is being delivered is challenging. Financial resources are extremely limited. This makes the setting of priorities particularly important. It will also be recognised that priorities will change over time; therefore, whilst outlining the aims and objectives of the Council, the Strategy must allow flexibility to accommodate a constantly changing environment.

Summary of Strategic Aims

- To identify a range of measures which if implemented will promote the economic wellbeing of East Herts and its communities.
- To identify a range of measures by which parking and transport can act as an effective demand management tool.
- To identify a range of measures by which the Council might promote use of more sustainable (i.e. environmentally friendly) transport.

Roles and Responsibilities – East Herts Council and Hertfordshire County Council

Issue	Function of East Herts Council	Function of Hertfordshire County Council
Provision of short stay parking	Provision of off-street car parks	N/A
	Provision of on-street permitted parking	Joint powers with East Herts
Provision of long stay parking	Provision of off-street car parks	N/A
Maintenance of off-street car parks.	Responsible	N/A
Maintenance of on-street parking related signs and lines.	Responsible under an Agency Agreement for maintenance of signs and lines after expiry of two year warranty period.	Promotion and implementation of new on-street restrictions.
Off-street enforcement	Enforcement of off-street car parks under TMA 2004 powers.	N/A
On-street enforcement	Enforcement of on-street restrictions under TMA 2004 powers on behalf of the County Council.	Enforcement Authority for on-street parking (delegated to districts under an Agency Agreement).
Support of transport infrastructure	N/A	Responsible except for Highways Agency roads
Promotion of access to services	Responsible	Responsible
Provision of concessionary bus passes.	Funded by way of reduction in grant from central government	Administers the scheme

POLICY PRINCIPLES

There is rarely a single correct answer when it comes to addressing parking and transport challenges. Conflicting needs and views abound and the resolution of a problem in one area can often create problems in others. There is the potential for a great many 'wicked issues' in the areas of parking and transport.

The Council believes there are a number of existing principles that must underpin the development of this Strategy and guide Members and officers in their development of parking and transport policies.

- *Any subsidy from council tax payers should be a deliberate choice.*
- *Discretionary fees and charges (such as car park pay and display charges) should generate income to help deliver improvements in priority services.*
- *Discretionary fees and charges should support the delivery of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.*
- *The Council should aim to secure a return on its assets.*

Additionally, the Parking and Transport Strategy:

- *Seeks to be consistent with national, regional and local planning policies.*
- *Seeks to balance the competing demands of residents, workers and visitors.*
- *Recognises that local conditions may warrant local approaches.*
- *Recognises the role of transport and parking management as a demand management tool, using considerations such as tariff and designation to influence behaviours and better balance the comparative costs of private and public transport.*
- *Seeks to support the transport and parking needs of the vulnerable and disadvantaged and those in our rural communities.*

BACKGROUND

A survey was published in East Herts Council's "Link" magazine in Autumn 2010 and delivered to all households in East Herts. This generated approximately 700 responses.

Together with a number of other consultation exercises, this process established a "long list" of parking and transport related objectives regarded by our communities as particularly important for the district as a whole. These are listed below in no order of priority.

Our Communities' Priorities (unranked)

- *Sufficient short term parking for shoppers*
- *Parking for residents*
- *Sufficient long term parking for workers*
- *Traffic free town centres*
- *Improved parking for blue badge holders*
- *Improved access to services for those in rural areas*
- *Pay on exit parking*
- *Improved public transport accessibility*
- *Improved road safety*
- *Environmental protection*
- *Economic wellbeing of our towns and villages*
- *Reduced congestion in our town centres*
- *A service that helps fund other services*
- *A service that places no burden on Council Tax payers*

At a round of focus group meetings in Autumn 2011, representatives of our individual towns and villages were asked to identify and rank a maximum of five of the above objectives they regarded as important for their local community. The local issues these have identified will be developed in Chapter 2.

COMMON ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

A number of parking and transport issues are of common concern across East Herts. We know this because County Council studies, our residents, the business community and others tell us. These issues can be considered under a number of headings.

1. Sustainability

With minor exceptions the County Council's Local Transport Plan 2011–2031 (LTP3) identifies improvements to *existing* passenger transport services, primarily buses, as a key tool for promoting modal shift. It does not however suggest a significant expansion of these services. Proposed improvements are likely to include the provision of Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) and bus priority schemes.

Subsidiary Urban Transport Plans (UTP) being developed for our main towns and villages indicate that our communities regard buses and cycling as being the transport modes most likely to reduce their car use within the district. For example, more than two thirds of stakeholder participants in the development of the Hertford and Ware UTP 2010 make this observation.

In the 2010 East Herts "Link" magazine survey, 65% of respondents suggest they would consider changing from use of a private motor vehicle to use of public transport; however in the same survey a large number of respondents identify public transport in Hertfordshire as insufficient, unreliable and expensive. This is seen by many as an impediment to modal shift.

Typical comments from "Link" survey:

"Currently, even taking into account wear and tear and depreciation, it costs me roughly 50% of the cost of public transport to drive to work. It also takes twice as long to travel by public transport and the train is massively overcrowded."

"Only more frequent and extensive public transport would really change my behaviour."¹

It may be that a significant proportion of the 65% who suggest they would consider modal shift would not be likely to do so in practice however much public transport alternatives were improved; however the inference to be drawn from comments such as these is that unless and until public transport options improve in terms of quantity, quality and price, significant numbers of motorists are unlikely to abandon their private cars in favour of more sustainable alternatives.

¹ East Herts Council "Link" Magazine survey 2012

Strategy Ambitions

- i) That East Herts works with the County Council and public transport providers for the preservation and development of alternatives to the use of the private motor vehicle.
- ii) That the Council works with partners to explore new models of scheduled and community transport that better meet the needs and wants of our communities, redirecting funding as appropriate.
- iii) That the Council continues to contribute to and seeks additional subsidy for scheduled and community transport initiatives.
- iv) That the Council works with partners and where possible stimulates directly the provision of cycle facilities, including cycle lanes and secure storage, to encourage cycle use.
- v) That the Council takes account of the imperative of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by directing people to public transport alternatives when making decisions concerning on and off street parking provision (i.e. location, designation, number of spaces and cost).
- vi) That the Council has due regard for the sustainable transport aspects of the forthcoming National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) when developing and discharging planning policy.

2. Care for the Environment

a) Care for our Streets

Parking on footways and grassed verges is at best anti-social and at worst dangerous. Most pavements are not capable of withstanding the weight of motor vehicles, which can lead to broken kerb stones and subsidence, sometimes damaging underground services. Parked vehicles can reduce grassed verges to mud in no time at all. It is a criminal offence to park wholly or partly across a footway where this *also* causes an obstruction; however most footway and grassed verge parking is not of this magnitude and therefore is not a matter for police intervention.

Should East Herts Council wish to take action against this form of parking it will be necessary to adopt the powers by means of a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO). In February 2011 the Local Transport Minister Norman Baker announced that local authorities will be able to promote TROs to ban the parking of cars wholly or fully on the footway on a designated length of highway or over a wider area, and to use signage to indicate the ban, without specific government authorisation. This would be of assistance to East Herts should it elect to proceed with a ban.

The 2010 “Link” survey suggests that 57% of East Herts residents wish to see the implementation of a targeted footway and grassed verge parking ban. (34% would not and 9% have no view).

There are some locations in the district where footway parking might be permitted on traffic management grounds, as to do otherwise would result in obstruction to the highway. At such locations footway parking must be managed. In the majority of locations footway and grassed verge parking is not necessary or appropriate.

Strategy Ambitions

- i) That East Herts implements a policy in respect of footway and grassed verge parking in line with the wishes of the majority of its residents.
- ii) That the Council formulates an appropriate means of prioritising locations for implementation and commits to the funding, over time, of a targeted footway and grassed verge parking ban.

b) Care for the Built Environment

In January 2011, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Eric Pickles and former Secretary of State for Transport Philip Hammond announced amendments to Planning Policy Guidance 13 (PPG13), billed as “a key step in ending the war on the motorist”.

These amendments:

- Weaken references to the role of parking availability in determining travel mode choice.
- Remove nationally-set limits on the provision of parking spaces in non-residential developments, leaving these to local discretion.
- Remove guidance that “*Car park charges should...be used to encourage the use of other modes*” and stress only that local authorities should set charges “*which do not undermine the vitality of town centres*”.
- Change a reference to “adequate” parking enforcement to “*proportionate*”.
- Remove reference in the parking sections to regional planning policy, which was abolished by the Localism Act 2011 and which could set out residential parking standards for a region.

The government also announced its intention to ensure that electric vehicle charging points can be installed as “*permitted development*” without the need for full planning permission.

In August 2011, shortly after publication of the government's draft National Planning Policy Framework which is due to come into effect by April 2012, Mr Pickles confirmed that the Framework, unlike PPG13 and regional planning policy, would make no provision for national limits on parking spaces in town centres, citing this policy change as "*standing up for local high streets*". In practice, this means that East Herts now has considerable discretion over the level of town centre parking provision it provides.

Strategy Ambitions

- i) That East Herts recognises the extension of local discretion in the area of parking provision provided by the National Planning Policy Framework.
- ii) That the Council acknowledges that the tensions between the roles of transport and parking provision in promoting sustainable transport alternatives and promoting economic wellbeing are likely to become more pronounced as a result of these central government policy changes.
- iii) That the Council commits to addressing these tensions when developing and implementing its planning and parking policies.
- iv) That the Council emphasises its commitment to using parking provision, designation and charging as a demand management tool, as part of a strategy towards encouraging the use of more sustainable forms of transport.

3. Enforcement Priorities

A clear majority of "Link" respondents support an emphasis on the traffic management purposes of Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) by using it as a tool to promote:

- i) **Safety around schools**
(69% made this their highest or second highest priority)
- ii) **Safer parking in general**
(67% made this their highest or second highest priority)
- iii) **Keeping traffic moving**
(34% made this their highest or second highest priority)

These priorities echo the purpose of CPE as set out in Statutory Guidance issued under the Traffic Management Act 2004, and summarised below:

Enforcement authorities should design their parking policies with particular regard to:

- *managing the traffic network to ensure expeditious movement of traffic, (including pedestrians and cyclists), as required under the TMA Network Management Duty 4*
- *improving road safety*
- *improving the local environment*
- *improving the quality and accessibility of public transport*
- *meeting the needs of people with disabilities, some of whom will be unable to use public transport and depend entirely on the use of a car*
- *managing and reconciling the competing demands for kerb space.²*

Strategy Ambition

- i) That East Herts subscribes publicly to the traffic management objectives of CPE as set out above and commits to operating its parking management and enforcement service in ways that can demonstrate delivery against these objectives.
- ii) That East Herts implements additional enforcement powers, including the targeted use of camera based ANPR and the limited use of vehicle removals, where these are capable of promoting the statutory objectives of CPE as set out above.

² Statutory Guidance issued under the Traffic Management Act 2004.

4. Economic Wellbeing

Parking and transport play a pivotal role in supporting the economic wellbeing of our towns and rural communities. This is underlined by our residents' response to a question in the "Link" Magazine survey, reproduced below.

Q. One of the challenges of providing and managing parking is trying to balance the needs and wants of the community as a whole. What is most important to you from the list of aims below? (1 = highest priority, 3 = lowest priority)

Objective	1st priority	2nd priority	3rd priority
A healthy town centre (e.g. encouraging shoppers into town centres)	75%	19%	5%
Plenty of all day parking for commuters/traders	14%	38%	48%
Reducing congestion (and pollution) and improving the environment	15%	41%	44%

Nowhere are the tensions between different aspects of parking and transport management as clearly exposed. For example, whilst town centre workers would doubtless wish to be able to park as close and as cheaply as possible to their place of employment, this would be of no benefit if as a result the customers on whom their business depends could not park and went elsewhere. Similarly, the congestion that would be caused by uncontrolled parking in our town centres would, over time, act as a significant dampener on economic activity. A correct balance has to be struck and aspects of this balance are addressed under 'Pricing and Designation Strategies' below.

In 2007, Yorkshire Forward, the Regional Development Agency for Yorkshire and Humberside commissioned a study into the role of parking management in the economic wellbeing of its rural market towns. An executive summary of that study's findings is attached as Appendix B.

Their study of a largely rural area dotted with market towns has obvious parallels with East Herts and confirms an important finding that has arisen elsewhere – not least in East Herts' own surveys – that it is not the price of parking that is of paramount importance to motorists when they make key decisions about where to shop and spend their leisure time.

*"Above all else, customers value the certainty of being able to park when and where they want it. Convenience is a quality which most are prepared to pay for."*³

³ Yorkshire Forward (2007)

The Yorkshire First study goes on to identify the principal factor that can promote the economic wellbeing of a market town as the draw of the facilities on offer. This aspect will become increasingly important as internet shopping continues to expand its reach in the UK.

“...the primary factor affecting a town’s competitiveness is the town’s offer. Therefore, a town with a good retail offer will continue to attract customers despite poor parking facilities. Meanwhile, a town with very good parking facilities but a limited retail offer will struggle to attract customers.”⁴

One size does not always fit all. The findings of the “Yorkshire Forward” study may have more relevance to our main market towns, Bishop’s Stortford and Hertford, than to our smaller towns and villages. That said, the findings and recommendations of the study are recommended as ones that the Council may wish to emulate when making parking and transport policy decisions that have implications for the economic wellbeing of our communities.

Also linked to the economic wellbeing agenda is the management system used across the district’s car parks. The ‘pay and display’ system is regarded by some as damaging to the economic wellbeing of our towns and there are calls for the adoption of an alternative management system such as pay on exit, whereby the motorist bears no risk of being penalised for overstaying and pays only for the parking time used.

Their design and scattered location means that many car parks in East Herts are not suited to the introduction of a barrier controlled pay on exit management system. When the current pay and display machines were procured and installed in 2004 there were few, if any, alternatives other than barrier controlled systems on the market.

The current ‘pay and display’ machines have a useful lifespan of approximately twelve years; therefore the Council will be replacing them during the lifetime of this Strategy. The development since 2004 of new car park management systems, some linked to automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) will open up new opportunities to move towards a cost effective ‘pay on exit’ approach to car park management. Such options must be properly evaluated and exploited at the appropriate time.

Strategy Ambitions

- i) That East Herts publicly endorses our communities’ view that the economic wellbeing of our towns and villages is paramount and takes this into account when setting parking and transport policy.
- ii) That the Council recognises that parking and transport are elements of a wider range of measures that may contribute to the

⁴ Yorkshire Forward (2007)

economic wellbeing of our communities and progresses policy development with this in mind.

- iii) That as the existing “pay and display” machines in East Herts car parks come to the end of their working life, the Council reviews all options for their replacement and makes the promotion of the economic wellbeing of the district a central plank of its procurement decisions.
- iv) That until the ambition in (iii) has been realised, the Council continues to offer a ‘pay by phone’ service in its car parks, which offers motorists many of the benefits of a ‘pay on exit’ system, whilst making best use of the existing ‘pay and display’ machines.

5. Congestion

Congestion imposes direct costs on businesses as well as discouraging visits to our towns by shoppers. It is identified in the County Council’s LTP3 and other policy papers as one of the three major long term issues affecting transport in the county, the others being ‘emissions and climate change’ and ‘accessibility and quality of life’.

“The demands for travel from the million residents plus that from people travelling into and through the county are greater than the capacity of the road and rail network”.⁵

“Hertfordshire is well connected, but traffic flows are 34% higher than the national average. Congestion is seen by local people as one of the biggest issues facing Hertfordshire and something that is worsening. Indeed the volume of traffic on our roads is predicted to increase even further between now and 2021”.⁶

The 2010 “Link” magazine survey of East Herts residents suggests that a significant majority of would like to see our historic town centres operate as largely traffic-free zones (see below).

Q. Would you like to see our historic town centres operate as largely traffic free zones?

Yes	58%
No	36%
No View	6%

East Herts “Link” Survey 2010

⁵ LTP3 (2011)

⁶ Hertfordshire County Council Sustainable Community Strategy 201.

Strategy Ambitions

- i) That East Herts develops and deploys its parking service (i.e. car park location, designation, pricing and enforcement policies) and works with the County Council on initiatives to reduce levels of congestion in the centres of our towns.
- ii) That for reasons linked primarily to congestion East Herts does not provide additional on-street parking in our town centres and considers the introduction of charges for existing bays, reflecting their premium status and to improve turnover.
- iii) That East Herts works with the County Council and other partners towards the pedestrianisation of appropriate areas of our historic town centres.

6. Pricing and Designation Strategies

The Government-sponsored Portas Review on the future of high streets published in the lead up to Christmas 2011 contains 28 Policy Ambitions, of which only one relates directly to the issue of parking; however this is the one that the media, politicians and some members of the business community have tended to focus on, possibly to the exclusion of others.

The dominant assumption in debates such as this appears to be that expensive or insufficient parking in town centres drives shoppers to out of town shopping centres where parking is ostensibly free. This is to fundamentally misunderstand the issue.

In its 2011 paper *“A Manifesto for Town Centres and High Streets”*, launched partially in response to the Portas Review, the Association of Town Centre Management tackles apparent inconsistencies between how town centre and out of town parking operates. The relevant section of this document is reproduced as Appendix C.

Building on the above, it must be appreciated that stores and shopping centres that provide “free” parking do not do so out of altruism, but because it is a key element of their business model. The capital cost of acquisition, the opportunity cost, the cost of maintenance and management of the parking are all factored into their business model and therefore into the pricing of their goods and services. In other words, the user pays for their car parking one way or another – whether “up front” or through the cost of the goods or services they buy.

The Department for Transport estimates the direct cost of providing a single, basic car parking space at between £400 and £1,000 a year, with the cost of a multi-storey space put at between £9,000 and £17,000. (A proposal to recommend a levy on the provision of out of town parking spaces to promote a level playing field between town centres and out of town shopping centres

was dropped from the Portas Review when supermarkets made it clear they would simply pass these costs on to their customers).

As identified earlier, a number of studies into car parking and its links with the economic wellbeing of communities suggest that price is *not* the most important factor we take into account when visiting a town centre. Other considerations such as accessibility, safety and cleanliness are frequently deemed to be even more important.

This important point is supported in East Herts' "Link" magazine survey as demonstrated below:

*Q.What is most important to you when choosing when to park?
(1 = highest priority and 5 = lowest priority)*

Factor	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Quality of Facility	5%	10%	20%	60%	5%	100%
Cost	31%	30%	21%	15%	3%	100%
Convenience	53%	31%	10%	5%	1%	100%
Safety/Security	14%	27%	45%	12%	2%	100%
Other	14%	5%	3%	8%	70%	100%

(The 70% of respondents who identified "other" as their lowest priority were invited to offer free text comments to clarify their choice. There is no clear theme to these responses and no significant issue that cannot be addressed within one of the other four themes in the table).

The most recent of the biennial East Herts Residents' Surveys, published in December 2011, further underlines this point. When asked what influences residents' decisions about where to shop, 86% of respondents identified choice and range of shops as the key determining factor. Second at 65% was the availability of parking and only third, at 46% was the cost of parking.

This further underlines the vital importance of not focussing on price alone when key parking policy decisions are made. Accessibility in the widest sense of the term is far more important. That said, from a policy perspective, parking charges and car park designation play a central role in shaping parking demand and are therefore vital traffic management tools.

Our towns and villages have historic cores that developed long before the invention of the motor vehicle. Congestion is a regular occurrence and there is little reserve capacity should something go wrong. For example, something as apparently remote as an accident on the M11 can be sufficient to cause gridlock in central Bishop's Stortford.

A commonly used model in respect of parking designation and pricing is based very loosely on concentric rings. In this model, on-street town centre parking bays, adjacent to premium shopping and entertainment destinations

are designated as short stay and are often charged for in recognition of their premium status. Town centre off-street car parks are also predominantly short stay to cater for the visitors on which many of our businesses depend. Together these form an inner ring of premium parking.

An outer ring will contain car parks catering mainly for longer term parking (which may include park and ride). These will be predominantly used by town workers and commuters using our towns as a travel hub. In this model they tend to be situated just outside the town centre, on major vehicular access points. They are typically charged at a lower per hour rate to incentivise their use and in recognition of the fact that the motorist is likely to have to finish their journey on foot.

The concentric ring model with its inner and outer zones has some validity for Hertford and Bishop's Stortford, as will be demonstrated later. It has less validity in Ware, but will not be relevant to smaller communities set out on a more linear basis, such as Sawbridgeworth, Buntingford and Stanstead Abbots.

Strategy Ambitions

- i) That East Herts recognises the complex link between economically vibrant towns and villages and parking provision and in particular that price is not the main determining factor when people make shopping and leisure decisions.
- iii) That the Council adopts a form of the "concentric rings" model of parking designation and charging for its main towns and has regard to this model when making decisions in relation to car park designation and charging in these towns.
- iv) That the Council reviews existing charging structures and models alternatives which take better account of the nature of the economy of each of our towns, whilst adhering to the 'first principles' stated above.
- v) That the Council engages more fully with its community in terms of debating the complex financial considerations that underpin a parking service and their relationship to the funding of other services.

7. Access to Services

a) Public and Community Transport

For many in East Herts, a shift towards the use of more sustainable transport might be a positive choice; however for a significant minority non-private transport is their only means of accessing services and of enjoying mobility in general. The County Council's LTP3 confirms that across Hertfordshire 10%

of households do not own or have access to a vehicle. This percentage can be higher within individual towns and villages. Whilst no village in the district is more than five miles from a medium sized town, there are large rural areas where travel other than by car is difficult.

As many of our smaller towns and villages do not offer easy access to a railway station, for these one in ten households the bus network is a key means of accessing services. This presents difficulties for commercial bus operators. The average passenger journey in Hertfordshire is less than three miles and many buses have to cover large rural areas, making longer distance journeys slow and uneconomic. County and district council subsidies for such routes have reduced and continue to experience severe pressure. These and other considerations have been important factors in foreseeing a developing role for the voluntary and community sector in providing transport aimed specifically at those unable or unwilling, for whatever reason, to use public, scheduled bus and rail services:

*“The county council aims to ensure passenger transport services can provide accessibility for all and that where they cannot, such as in some rural areas, other special services, including those provided by the voluntary sector, can maybe fill the gap. The provision of information and support for sustainable modes should also contribute to improving some peoples’ accessibility, but support for ‘special arrangement’ transport remains essential for the minority of disadvantage residents, including the elderly and disabled”.*⁷

For one town in East Herts faced with the challenge of reduced passenger transport provision, especially to its more remote communities, the answer was the creation of a community bus scheme. (See Sawbridgeworth case study in Appendix D). As timetabled services struggle to survive, innovative, risk sharing community services such as this should be seen a model for the provision of services to our rural communities in particular and of course as a lifeline for those without access to private motor transport.

Strategy Ambition

- i) That East Herts uses its position as a community leader to identify and promote innovative ways of delivering public and community transport for the benefit of those in rural areas and particularly for those without access to a private motor vehicle.

- b) Blue Badge Holders

The Blue Badge scheme provides a range of parking concessions for people with severe mobility problems who have difficulty using public transport. The badge enables holders to park close to where they need to go. In simple terms, blue badge holders may park on single and double yellow lines for a maximum of three hours. They may park in limited waiting bays on-street,

⁷ LTP3 (2011)

typically without time limit and may also enjoy price or time concessions in off-street car parks. The extent of the latter is at the discretion of the local authority.

East Herts tends towards the more generous end of the spectrum in terms of the blue badge concessions it offers; however the needs of blue badge holders must be balanced with the needs of the wider community. Unmanaged blue badge parking can cause congestion and unrestricted time limits can result in poor turnover of spaces to the detriment of other users, including blue badge holders. It is also important to stress that possession of a blue badge is about access, not the holder's ability to pay a parking charge.

Strategy Ambitions

- i) That East Herts reviews its provision of blue badge parking and commits to maintaining or even expanding the number and location of spaces available.
- ii) That the Council recognises that access to blue badge spaces must be managed to the benefit of all users and that blue badge holders should be required, under certain circumstances to contribute towards the costs of the provision of the facility.
- iii) That over time the Council moves towards a model of blue badge parking concessions as proposed in the table below.

Proposed Revision of Blue Badge Parking Concessions in East Herts

Current Position	Recommended Position
Parking permitted free of charge for a maximum of three hours on single or double yellow lines	No change
Parking permitted in on-street blue badge bays free of charge and without time limit	Parking restricted to a maximum of three hours in town centre blue badge bays, with no return within a specified period
Parking permitted in on-street limited waiting bays free of charge and without time limit	Parking restricted to the maximum time permitted in the relevant bay
Parking permitted in blue badge bays in EHC car parks free of charge and without time limit	First three hours free, charged thereafter
Parking permitted in all other bays in EHC car parks free of charge and without time limit	First three hours free. Motorist required to pay and display for stays of more than three hours

c) The 'Ageing Well' Agenda

The Office for National Statistics estimates that 24,600 residents of East Herts will be aged 65 or over by 2015. This is 17.5% of the projected population of the district for that year.

Public transport that fully met the needs of these older people would enable them to go shopping and undertake other leisure activities, to meet friends and relatives and look after their own health and wellbeing.

The national concessionary travel scheme for older and some disabled people has enabled many to enjoy access to local services and amenities; however possession of a bus pass is of little use if services do not exist or are inaccessible. This problem is particularly acute in rural areas.

In the current climate of economic austerity, reducing subsidies for transport may seem an attractive option; however it must be recognised that lack of transport can have a profound impact on people's lives. Without accessible transport, older people experience greater social isolation, which is likely to result in an increased demand on adult social care services. In contrast, access to public transport helps older people stay socially connected and active.

Strategy Ambitions

- That East Herts makes access to services (and in particular the public transport needs of older people) a central plank of its response to the new "living well" agenda for older people.
- That East Herts uses its role as community leader and works in partnership with other agencies and the voluntary sector to identify and deliver the parking transport needs of older people.

CHAPTER 2

LOCAL PERSPECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

This Chapter contains an assessment of the parking and transport challenges of our individual towns, with particular emphasis placed those areas where they differ from the overarching challenges addressed in Chapter One

HERTFORD

Main Transport and Parking Challenges in Hertford

1) Findings of Hertford and Ware Urban Transport Plan (2010)

- 88% of commuters into Hertford travel by car.
- 83% of Hertford residents own a car.
- There is peak time congestion on key roads – e.g. A119, Old Cross/Bengeo and A414.
- Existing bus services are poorly used for commuting.
- The public favours schemes to alleviate problems/deliver transport improvements that deliver sustainability, over merely creating more road capacity.
- Traffic is brought into conflict with pedestrians in the main shopping streets.

2) Comments from East Herts Council Resident Survey (2010)

The survey of residents in the Council's Autumn 2010 "Link" magazine was conducted at a time when Hertford's principal car park, Gascoyne Way, was closed for refurbishment. Many resident comments must be read in this context.

The primary concerns of residents in respect of parking and transport in Hertford can be summarised as follows:

- Too few, free on-street limited waiting bays in the town centre.
- Parking difficult – especially on Saturdays.
- Pay and display system of car park management not liked.
- Parking charges too expensive.
- Condition of car parks poor.

3) Priorities Identified by Stakeholder Focus Groups (2011)

In meetings with representatives of local businesses and Hertford Town Council the need to promote the economic wellbeing of the town is identified as their overarching objective. This manifests itself in the identification of a number of subsidiary objectives:

- Introduce alternative car park management system.
- Extend on-street free bay provision
- Improve parking for workers (i.e. cost, availability and location)
- Improve signage to car parks.
- Use on-street permitted parking more flexibly.

1. Sustainability

As identified in the County Council's 2010 Urban Transport Plan, Hertford faces the twin challenges of peak time road congestion and a lack of public transport alternatives to the private motor vehicle. Encouragingly, the UTP also confirms that the public favour schemes to alleviate problems and deliver transport improvements that deliver sustainability, over merely creating more road capacity.

The UTP identifies a number of short term (1-2 years), medium term (3-5 years) and longer term (5+ years) proposals for the development of sustainable alternatives to use of the private motor vehicle.

Chief among the County Council's short term proposals is the provision of cycle storage at key locations throughout Hertford and the linking of existing cycle and pedestrian routes to create a more attractive environment for cycling and walking. Among the medium term proposals are improvements to the prioritisation of bus services and the possible closure to motorised traffic of the town centre. Longer term proposals include the possible implementation of a park and ride facility serving both Hertford and Ware.

2. Care for the Environment

a) Care for our Streets

There are a number of residential streets in Hertford where footway parking might be at least tolerated if those streets are not to become impassable to motor vehicles. An example is the Folly Island area with its streets of Victorian terraced houses. At present residents in these areas tend to self-manage their parking and the East Herts rarely receives complaints that footways are obstructed. That said, unmanaged parking on footways and grassed verges can cause obstruction and can damage the surface and the services that run beneath them. Accordingly, as identified in Chapter 1, East Herts should adopt a policy in favour of footway and grassed verge parking ban. Once funding and an appropriate method for prioritisation have been agreed Hertford should be surveyed and a priority list for the implementation of a footway and grassed verge parking ban created.

3. Enforcement Priorities

A clear majority of "Link" magazine respondents support an emphasis on the traffic management purposes of Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) by using it as a tool to promote;

- i) safety around schools
- ii) safer parking in general
- iii) keeping traffic moving

These priorities echo the statutory purpose of CPE as set out in Statutory Guidance issued in parallel to the Traffic Management Act 2004, and summarised earlier in this Strategy.

Strategy Ambition

- i) That East Herts subscribes publicly to the traffic management objectives of CPE as set out in Statutory Guidance and commits to operating its enforcement regime in Hertford in ways that can demonstrate delivery against these objectives included the targeted use of ANPR where appropriate.

4. Economic Wellbeing

As identified earlier, our residents, town councils and business communities identify promotion of the economic wellbeing of our towns and villages as of primary concern, although this objective is not necessarily couched in these terms.

In the case of Hertford, consultation with residents, the Town Council and the business community identified a number of objectives aimed at promoting the economic wellbeing of the town.

Chief among these is the management system of the town's car parks. The 'pay and display' system is regarded by the business community in Hertford in particular as damaging to the economic wellbeing of the town and there is a call for the adoption of an alternative management system such as pay on exit, whereby the motorist bears no risk of being penalised for overstaying and pays only for the parking time used.

Many car parks in Hertford are not suited to the introduction of a barrier controlled pay on exit management system. When the current pay and display machines were procured and installed in 2004 there were few, if any, alternatives, other than barrier controlled systems, on the market.

The current 'pay and display' machines have a useful lifespan of approximately twelve years; therefore the Council will be replacing them during the lifetime of this Strategy. The development since 2004 of new car park management systems, some linked to automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) will open up new opportunities that must be properly evaluated and exploited at the appropriate time.

Strategy Ambitions

- i) That East Herts publicly endorses our communities' view that the economic wellbeing of Hertford is paramount and takes this into account when implementing its transport and parking strategy in the town.

- ii) That the Council recognises that parking and transport are only elements of a wider range of measures that will contribute to the economic wellbeing of Hertford and that the Council implements its transport and parking strategy with this in mind.
- iii) That as the existing “pay and display” machines in Hertford’s car parks come to the end of their working life, the Council reviews all options for their replacement and makes the promotion of the economic wellbeing of the town the central plank of its procurement process.
- iv) That until the ambition in (iii) has been realised, the Council continues to offer a ‘pay by phone’ service in its Hertford car parks, which offers motorists many of the benefits of a ‘pay on exit’ system, whilst making the best economic use of the existing ‘pay and display’ machines.

5. Congestion

The congested nature of the historic town centre in Hertford is remarked upon by “Link” magazine respondents and the Hertford and Ware UTP (2010), identifies a number of locations in the town where congestion is a problem;

- i) A414
- ii) Old Cross
- iii) Railway Street/Fore Street

The UTP does not anticipate a Hertford bypass being built during its lifetime, but identifies a number of short and medium term objectives aimed at alleviating congestion problems in the town.

Strategy Ambition

- i) That East Herts continues to support and lobby the County Council for the implementation of short, medium and longer term measures designed to alleviate problems of congestion in Hertford town centre.

6. Pricing and Designation Strategies

A common concern of our residents and businesses in Hertford is a perceived lack of free, on-street limited waiting bays.

There is a certain inconsistency in the fact that what might be regarded as a premium parking facility, usually located right outside the shopper’s destination, should be supplied free of charge. On the basis of free market principles alone these parking spaces might attract a premium charge. The financial model on which Civil Parking Enforcement in East Herts was founded anticipated the introduction of on-street charging; however this option

was not progressed. Given their central location, motorists seeking out free parking bays can add to congestion problems in Hertford town centre.

Such bays, typically allowing one hour of free parking are regarded by our traders as a vital support for their businesses and by our residents as particularly convenient for shorter shopping trips. Accordingly they should be retained, although for reasons linked to problems of congestion their number should not be added to.

As identified earlier, the view of respondents to the 2010 "Link" magazine survey supports the findings of studies undertaken elsewhere in that cost of parking ranks below convenience when they make decisions about where to shop. There are approximately 1,000 off-street parking places in Hertford under East Herts control. Occasional space counts and customer feedback suggest that capacity is sufficient under normal circumstances, with around 70% occupancy, although provision can come under strain at weekends and at key times such as Christmas and the New Year.

An unwelcome side effect of creating more and more parking in our town centres is that it stimulates additional demand and does nothing to encourage a shift to more sustainable modes of transport such as buses, bicycles and walking. It is also not realistic to cater for the occasional days when demand might exceed supply.

The Council's car parks play an important role in supporting the vibrant evening economy in Hertford; however users of the service at these times make little or no contribution towards their provision. With the policy principles on page 13 in mind, the Council should consider the adoption of a modest charge for use of its car parks in the evening, particularly if this could support the granting of additional concessions to other users at other times (e.g. town centre workers).

Appropriate designation of car parks in Hertford is of particular importance. Using the concentric ring model described earlier, long stay parking in particular should be deflected to the edge of the town. In Hertford this is largely the case, with long stay and mixed use car parks located at Old London Road, Gascoyne Way (part) and the Harthams. Short stay parking is concentrated more centrally in Bircherley Green, St Andrew Street and Gascoyne way (part).

In the longer term the County Council's 2010 Urban Transport Plan for Hertford and Ware envisages the creation of a park and ride facility serving the two towns, possibly starting from the A10 at Wadesmill. The financial viability of such a proposal is doubtful at this time; however should this be developed the designation and pricing of town centre car parks should be revisited to discourage private motor vehicles and encourage the use of the park and ride. In the interim it is not recommended that additional off-street parking be provided.

Strategy Ambitions

- i) That East Herts recognises the complex link between economically vibrant towns and villages and parking provision and in particular that price is not the main determining factor when people make shopping and leisure decisions.
- ii) That the Council adopts the “concentric rings” model of parking designation and charging as broadly appropriate for Hertford and has regard to this model when making decisions in relation to car park designation and charging in Hertford.
- iii) That the Council reviews existing charging structures and models alternatives which take better account of the nature of the economy of Hertford, including its evening economy whilst adhering to the ‘first principles’ stated above.

7. Access to Services

Issues relating to access to services in Hertford are addressed in the relevant section in Chapter 1.

BISHOPS STORTFORD

Main Transport and Parking Challenges in Bishop's Stortford

1. Eastern Herts Transport Plan 2007 and Steer Davies Gleave study (2006)

- There is considerable peak hour congestion at key junctions throughout the town, due to over-dependence on private car use.
- The Little Hadham junction on the A120 is a known bottleneck on the approach from the west.
- On-street parking in residential areas by commuters and town workers is perceived as a problem.
- Public transport is seen as inadequate and bus use is significantly lower than the county and national averages.
- There is concern that the proposed absorption of the town's housing requirements on the Areas of Special Restraint to the north of the town will exacerbate existing congestion problems.

2. Comments from East Herts Council Resident Survey (2010)

The primary concerns of residents in respect of parking and transport in Bishop's Stortford can be summarised as follows:

- Difficulty in finding off-street parking at weekends.
- Off-street parking places too small for modern cars.
- Introduce alternative car park management system.
- Congestion problems in and around town centre.

3. Priorities Identified by Stakeholder Focus Groups (2011)

In meetings with representatives of local businesses (and to an extent with the Town Council) the need to promote the economic wellbeing of the town was identified as their overarching objective. This manifests itself in the identification of a number of subsidiary objectives:

- Improve availability and accessibility of parking.
- Review car park pricing structures.
- Address congestion in town centre.
- Improve public transport options.
- Reform blue badge parking provision.
- Harmonise parking and transport and planning policy objectives.

1. Sustainability

As identified in the County Council's Eastern Herts Transport Plan (2007) and the Steer Davies Gleave study (2006) Bishop's Stortford also faces the twin challenges of road congestion, especially at peak times, with a lack of public transport alternatives to the private motor vehicle.

2. Care for the Environment

a) Care for our Streets

There are a number of residential streets in Bishop's Stortford where footway parking must be at least tolerated if those streets are not to become impassable to motor vehicles. Examples of these include the Victorian terraced houses in the central, "Newtown" area. At present residents in these areas tend to self-manage their parking and the East Herts rarely receives complaints that footways are obstructed. That said, unmanaged parking on footways and grassed verges can cause obstruction and can damage the footways and the services that run beneath them.

Strategy Ambition

- i) As identified in Chapter 1, East Herts should adopt a policy in favour of footway and grassed verge parking ban. Once funding and an appropriate method for prioritisation have been agreed Bishop's Stortford should be surveyed and a priority list for the implementation of a footway and grassed verge parking ban created.

3. Enforcement Priorities

A clear majority of "Link" magazine respondents support an emphasis on the traffic management purposes of Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) by using it as a tool to promote;

1. safety around schools
2. safer parking in general
3. keeping traffic moving

These priorities echo the statutory purpose of CPE as set out in Statutory Guidance as summarised earlier.

Strategy Ambition

- i) That East Herts publicly subscribes to the traffic management objectives of CPE as set out in Statutory Guidance and commits to operating its enforcement regime in Bishop's Stortford in ways that can demonstrate delivery against these objectives.

4. Economic Wellbeing

It is apparent from the views of residents, the Town Council and businesses in Bishop's Stortford that accessibility in its widest sense is seen as a significant impediment to the economic wellbeing of the town. Whatever the management system operating in a car park, this is of little interest to motorists if they are unable to enjoy a reasonable journey to that car park or find a space when they get there.

The proposed 'Old River Lane' development in Bishop's Stortford will create a net increase in the number of off-street parking places in the town; however occasional problems that currently arise from insufficient capacity may be exacerbated should significant additional volumes of traffic be brought into the town. This in turn would have the potential to impair the economic wellbeing of the town (see 'Pricing and Designation Strategies' below).

Strategy Ambition

- i) That as the existing "pay and display" machines in Bishop's Stortford's car parks come to the end of their working life, the Council reviews all options for their replacement and makes the promotion of the economic wellbeing of the town a central plank of its procurement decisions.
- ii) That until the ambition in (iii) has been realised, the Council continues to offer a 'pay by phone' service in its Bishop's Stortford car parks, which offers motorists many of the benefits of a 'pay on exit' system, whilst making best use of the existing 'pay and display' machines.

5. Congestion

A study commissioned by East Herts in 2006 and undertaken by Steer Davies Gleave confirmed the town's position as being one of the country's national growth areas and acknowledged there will be significant expansion in housing and employment levels over the next ten to fifteen years. The same report identifies that 24% of all traffic entering Bishop's Stortford terminates in the town centre and that 41% is through traffic.

The figure of 24% will include visitors and shoppers; however a significant proportion is commuters working within the town centre or making an onward journey from the bus or rail station and on-street parking by travellers using the nearby Stansted Airport is known to be a problem in some areas. The high level of through traffic may, during term times, be attributable to their need for parents to deliver their children to school and can rise significantly when congestion is experienced on the bypass or the nearby M11.

The congestion problems engendered as a result are identified by residents, businesses and others as a significant problem for the town – particularly at peak hours.

Parking designation and pricing strategies, discussed below, are important tools in achieving traffic management objectives; however given the current situation, the likely growth of incoming traffic following the 'Old River Lane' development and the likely development of the Areas of Special Restraint (ASR) on the fringe of the town, these and other measures such as junction signal overhauls are only likely to act as a sticking plaster rather than solve underlying problems.

Actions planned for 2012 and subsequent years to direct more long stay parking towards the fringe of the town centre are a step in the right direction; however more substantial measures are advocated for the medium and longer term.

Strategy Ambitions

- i) That East Herts develops and deploys its parking service in Bishop's Stortford (including car park location, pricing, designation and enforcement policies) and works with the County Council on initiatives to reduce congestion in the centres of our towns and villages.
- ii) That East Herts supports and lobbies the County Council for the implementation of short, medium and longer term measures designed to alleviate known problems of congestion in Bishop's Stortford town centre.
- iii) That East Herts works with the County Council and others towards the pedestrianisation of appropriate areas of Bishop's Stortford town centre.

6. Pricing and Designation Strategies

A common concern of residents and businesses in Bishop's Stortford is a perceived lack of free, on-street limited waiting bays.

There is a certain incongruity in the fact that what might be regarded as a premium parking facility, usually located right outside the shopper's destination, should be supplied free of charge. On the basis of free market principles alone these premium parking spaces should attract a premium charge. The financial model on which Civil Parking Enforcement in East Herts was adopted anticipated the introduction of on-street charging; however this option was not progressed. Given their central location, motorists seeking out free parking bays can add considerably to occasional congestion problems in Bishop's Stortford town centre – for example in North Street.

Such bays, typically allowing half an hour or one hour of free parking are regarded by our traders as a vital support for their businesses and by our residents as particularly convenient for shorter shopping trips. Accordingly, they should be retained, although for reasons linked to congestion their number should not be added to.

There are approximately 1,750 off-street parking places in Bishop's Stortford under East Herts control. Occasional space counts and customer feedback suggest that capacity is sufficient under most circumstances, with around 80% occupancy, although parking provision can come under strain, particularly at weekends and key times such as Christmas.

The Council's car parks play an important role in supporting the vibrant evening economy in Bishop's Stortford; however users of the service at these times make little or no contribution towards their provision. With the policy principles on page 13 in mind, the Council should consider the adoption of a modest charge for use of its car parks in the evening, particularly if this could support the granting of additional concessions to other users, (e.g. town centre workers).

The 'Old River Lane' development would create a modest net increase in parking spaces, almost certainly short stay, in the centre of the town; however occasional problems arising from insufficient capacity may be exacerbated should significant additional traffic be brought into the town and this would have the potential to impair its economic wellbeing. Additional capacity is likely to be required – particularly in the short to medium term – and there is potential to create additional spaces by making better use of the areas around the Link Road and Northgate End car parks.

The appropriate designation of car parks in Bishop's Stortford is of particular importance. Using the concentric ring model described earlier, long stay parking in particular should be deflected to the edge of the town. The re-designation of car parks to take place in 2012, with the fringe car parks at Elm Road and Grange Paddocks becoming long stay facilities, is a tangible example of this approach.

In the longer term and particularly if the Areas of Special Restraint are developed, consideration should be given to the creation of a park and ride or similar facility, keeping many private motor vehicles on the fringe of the town, with journeys being completed by more sustainable means. Should this be developed, the designation and pricing of town centre car parks should be revisited to discourage private motor vehicles and encourage the use of the park and ride.

Strategy Ambitions

- iii) That East Herts recognises the complex link between the economic wellbeing of Bishop's Stortford and parking provision in the town and in particular that price is not the main determining factor when people make shopping and leisure decisions.

- iv) That the Council recognises the “concentric rings” model of parking designation and charging as broadly appropriate for Bishop’s Stortford and has regard to this model when making decisions in relation to car park designation and charging in its individual towns.
- v) That the Council reviews existing charging structures and models alternatives which take better account of the nature of the economy of Bishop’s Stortford, including the evening economy, whilst adhering to the ‘first principles’ stated above.
- vi) That the Council explores options to increase off-street parking capacity in the town, using location and designation to support its traffic management objectives.

7. Access to Services

The transport needs of those living in the rural hinterland of Bishop’s Stortford and in particular the elderly and those without access to private transport are particularly pronounced. Partly in recognition of the fact that a number of scheduled services have been axed in recent years, Hertfordshire County Council intends to fund the creation of a community bus service, commencing in May 2012. As will have been noted earlier, this is one of the key objectives in its LTP3.

Strategy Ambition

- i) That East Herts uses its position as a community leader to identify and promote further innovative ways of delivering public and community transport for the benefit of those in the rural hinterland of Bishop’s Stortford and particularly for those without access to a private motor vehicle.

WARE

Main Parking and Transport Challenges in Ware

1. Hertford and Ware Urban Transport Plan (2010)

- 90% of commuters into Ware travel by car.
- 83% of Ware residents own a car.
- There is frequent congestion on Ware High Street and surrounding streets.
- Existing bus services are poorly used for commuting.
- The public favours schemes to alleviate problems/deliver transport improvements that deliver sustainability, over merely creating more road capacity.

2. Comments from East Herts Council Resident Survey (2010)

The primary concerns of residents in respect of parking and transport in Ware can be summarised as follows:

- Too few, free on-street limited waiting bays in the town centre.
- Pay and display system of car park management not liked.
- Parking charges too expensive.

3. Priorities Identified by Stakeholder Focus Groups (2011)

In meetings with representatives of local businesses (and to an extent with the Town Council) the following objectives were identified as a priority for Ware:

- Provision of sufficient and attractive parking for shoppers.
- Improved signage to and from car parks to the town centre.
- Higher level enforcement of school zig-zags and footway parking contraventions.
- Promotion of the economic wellbeing of the town.

1. Sustainability

Issues around sustainability that impact on Ware are those that apply generally to the district and are identified in Chapter 1 of this document.

2. Care for the Environment

a) Care for our Streets

There are likely to be a number of residential streets in Ware where footway parking must be at least tolerated if those streets are not to become impassable to motor vehicles. Unmanaged parking on footways and grassed verges can cause obstruction and can damage the footways and the services that run beneath them.

Strategy Ambition

- i) As identified in Chapter 1, East Herts should adopt a policy in favour of footway and grassed verge parking ban. Once funding and an appropriate method for prioritisation have been agreed Ware should be surveyed and a priority list for the implementation of a footway and grassed verge parking ban created.

3. Enforcement Priorities

The primary purpose of CPE as set out in Statutory Guidance and our communities' priorities as reproduced below are fully supportive of the perceived enforcement needs of Ware.

- i) safety around schools
- ii) safer parking in general
- iii) keeping traffic moving

There are a number of schools in Ware where inconsiderate and illegal parking compromises not only the safety of pupils but of other road users. In respect of the need to keep traffic moving, the High Street is particularly prone to illegal parking which in turn engenders congestion (see below).

Strategy Ambition

- i) That East Herts publicly subscribes to the traffic management objectives of CPE as set out in Statutory Guidance and endorsed by our residents and commits to operating its enforcement service in Ware in ways that can demonstrate delivery against these objectives.

4. Economic Wellbeing

The parking and transport challenges faced by Ware, with its range of smaller shops and evening economy, are as described in Chapter 1 of this strategy.

5. Congestion

The congested nature of the High Street and adjacent roads is commented upon in the 2010 UTP. The UTP identifies vehicles loading and unloading from commercial properties on the High Street as being a significant cause of this congestion.

Consultation with the business community in Ware suggests that due to the number of small, independent retailers in the town, there is little scope for loading and unloading activities on the High Street to be constrained.

6. Pricing and Designation Strategies

A common concern of our residents and businesses in Ware is a perceived lack of free, on-street limited waiting bays.

There is a certain incongruity in the fact that what might be regarded as a premium parking facility, usually located right outside the shopper's destination, should be supplied free of charge. On the basis of free market principles alone these parking spaces should attract a premium charge. The financial model on which Civil Parking Enforcement in East Herts was adopted anticipated the introduction of on-street charging; however this option was not progressed. Given their central location, motorists seeking out free parking bays can also add considerably to occasional congestion problems in Ware town centre.

Such bays, typically allowing half an hour or one hour of free parking are regarded by our traders as a vital support for their businesses and by our residents as particularly convenient for shorter shopping trips. Accordingly, they should be retained, although for reasons linked to congestion their number should not be added to.

There are approximately 370 off-street parking places in Ware under East Herts control. Occasional space counts and customer feedback suggest that capacity is sufficient under normal circumstances, with around 70% occupancy, although provision can come under strain at weekends and at key times such as Christmas and New Year.

An unwelcome side effect of creating more and more parking in our town centres is that it creates additional demand and does nothing to encourage a shift to more sustainable modes of transport such as buses, bicycles and foot. It is also not realistic to cater for the occasional days when demand might exceed supply.

The designation of individual car parks in Ware is of lesser importance than it is in Hertford or Bishop's Stortford due to the relatively compact nature of the town centre. There is no evidence of a lack of supply of off-street parking in the town.

As identified earlier, the view of residents in the EHC "Link" magazine survey supports the findings of studies undertaken elsewhere in that cost of parking ranks below convenience when motorists make decisions in terms of where they will go for shopping and leisure services.

In the longer term the County Council's 2010 Urban Transport Plan for Hertford and Ware envisages the creation of a park and ride facility serving the two towns, possibly starting from the A10 at Wadesmill. Should this be developed, the designation and pricing of town centre car parks should be revisited to discourage private motor vehicles and encourage the use of the park and ride. In the interim it is not recommended that additional off-street parking be provided.

Strategy Ambitions

- i) That East Herts recognises the complex link between the economic wellbeing of Ware and parking provision in the town and in particular that price is not the main determining factor when people make shopping and leisure decisions.
- ii) That the Council reviews existing charging structures and models alternatives which take better account of the nature of the economy of Ware whilst adhering to the 'first principles' stated above.

7. Access to Services

Issues relating to Access to services in Ware are addressed in the relevant section in Chapter 1.

SAWBRIDGEWORTH

Main Parking and Transport Challenges in Sawbridgeworth

1. Comments from EHC Resident Survey (2010)

The primary concerns of residents in respect of parking and transport in Sawbridgeworth can be summarised as follows:

- Bell Street car park should be made free – at least for the first one or two hours.
- Insufficient blue badge parking

2. Priorities Identified by Stakeholder Focus Groups (2011)

In meetings with representatives of local businesses (and to an extent with the Town Council) the following objectives were identified as a priority for the town:

- Lack of availability of short stay parking
- Too few, free on-street limited waiting bays in the town centre
- Lack of appropriately priced long stay parking
- Improved road safety (especially around schools and cashpoint machines)

1. Sustainability

The challenges around sustainability that impact on Sawbridgeworth are those that apply generally to the district and are identified in Chapter 1 of this document.

Strategy Ambitions

- i) That the Council continues to support the “Sawbobus” community transport initiative and seeks to replicate the model in other locations within the district where access to public transport is limited or non-existent.
- ii) That the Council continues to lobby for and where possible stimulate directly the provision of cycle facilities, including cycle lanes and secure storage, to encourage cycle use.
- iii) That the Council takes account of the imperative of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by directing people to public transport alternatives when making decisions concerning on and off street parking provision (e.g. location, number and cost).

2. Care for the Environment

a) Care for our Streets

The Council has received few, if any, complaints of footway or grassed verge parking in Sawbridgeworth.

Strategy Ambition

- i) That East Herts adopts a policy in favour of a footway and grassed verge parking ban. Once funding and an appropriate method for prioritisation have been agreed, that Sawbridgeworth be surveyed and a priority list for the implementation of a ban created.

3. Enforcement Priorities

A clear majority of “Link” respondents support an emphasis on the traffic management purposes of Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) by using it as a tool to promote;

- a. safety around schools
- b. safer parking in general
- c. keeping traffic moving

These priorities echo the statutory purpose of CPE as set out in Statutory Guidance issued in parallel to the Traffic Management Act 2004, as set out earlier.

Strategy Ambition

- i) That East Herts publicly subscribes to the traffic management objectives of CPE as set out in Statutory Guidance and endorsed by its communities and commits to operating its enforcement service in Sawbridgeworth in ways that can demonstrate delivery against these objectives.

4. Economic Wellbeing

Although it has a population of approximately 10,500, Sawbridgeworth is not a major shopping destination in its own right. Bishop's Stortford to the north and Harlow to the south cater for many shopping trips. Most shops and businesses in Sawbridgeworth are operated by smaller, individual traders.

The Council's Bell Street car park is a significant asset for the town. Members of the Sawbridgeworth community have requested that the first one or two hours use of the car park be made free of charge, to encourage local use of local facilities, with charges for longer stays being increased to compensate.

Most users of this car park stay for two hours or less and there is little use of the long stay area – perhaps unsurprising when there a significant amount of uncontrolled parking is available in nearby streets. Applying the principles that the Council should secure a return on its assets and that the user should pay, it is suggested that to match current income levels the creation of a free first hour might require other tariffs to increase markedly and that this might drive cars out onto nearby streets, increasing congestion and reducing amenity for local residents, although this is an option that should be explored.

Other challenges around the economic wellbeing of Sawbridgeworth are as set out in Chapter 1 of this document.

Strategy Ambition

- i) That the Council works with the Town Council and others to explores options to further promote the economic wellbeing of Sawbridgeworth whilst taking into account the 'first principles' established earlier in this Strategy.

5. Congestion

With the possible exception of the peak hours of the morning and evening, linked to school start and end times, the Council is not aware of particular congestion problems in Sawbridgeworth. The forthcoming Urban Transport Plan for Bishop's Stortford and Sawbridgeworth may identify areas of concern, in which case it will be important for the Council to further amend its enforcement regime to ensure these are managed.

6. Pricing and Designation Strategies

A common concern of residents and businesses in Sawbridgeworth is a perceived lack of free, on-street limited waiting bays. Additional bays have been called for by some Bell Street traders, although close examination by the County and District Councils has established that it would not be appropriate to position on-street bays on Bell Street on traffic management and safety grounds. Where such bays exist elsewhere they should be retained, but for reasons cited above their number should not be added to.

As identified earlier, the view of residents in the East Herts "Link" magazine survey supports the findings of studies undertaken elsewhere in that cost of parking ranks below other factors such as accessibility and condition. The Bell Street car park in Sawbridgeworth has approximately 100 spaces. Occasional space counts and customer feedback suggest that capacity is sufficient under normal circumstances.

Strategy Ambitions

- i) That East Herts recognises the complex link between the economic wellbeing of Sawbridgeworth and parking provision in the town and in particular that price is not the main determining factor when people make shopping and leisure decisions.
- ii) That the Council reviews existing car park charging structures and models alternatives which may take better account of the nature of the economy of Sawbridgeworth, whilst adhering to the 'first principles' stated above.

7. Access to Services

Issues relating to access to services in Sawbridgeworth are addressed in the relevant section in Chapter 1.

BUNTINGFORD

Although Hertfordshire's smallest town, with a population of 5,000, Buntingford serves a large hinterland of small villages and hamlets. Public transport is limited and reliance on the private motor vehicle is high. Additional housing development is taking place on the fringes of the town. The possible re-opening of the former Sainsbury distribution centre on the edge of the town may generate significant extra employment and therefore additional vehicle traffic to the town.

1. Sustainability

A small number of bus services serve Buntingford and its surrounding towns and villages on varying frequencies. A focus group meeting with representatives of the community held in September 2010 discussed the potential of a community bus service, linking the smaller villages around the town and, perhaps when the town grows, different areas of Buntingford itself. The "Sawbobus" model was discussed and attendees were advised of the significant annual subsidy (£40,000) that even this successful initiative requires.

Although the development of additional housing and possibly a growth in employment opportunities in Buntingford might require that the matter be revisited, it is suggested that because of the paucity of public transport and thinly populated nature of its hinterland, the majority of visitors to and residents of Buntingford are likely to regard their private motor vehicle as their primary means of travel and the development of parking and transport policy in Buntingford should be based on this premise.

2. Care for the Environment

a) Care for our Streets

The Council has received few, if any, complaints of footway or grassed verge parking in Buntingford. The High Street aside, many roads in the town are of comparatively recent construction (e.g. the Bovis estate) and are capable of accommodating pedestrians and motorists.

Strategy Ambition

- i) That East Herts should adopt a policy in favour of a footway and grassed verge parking ban. Once funding and an appropriate method for prioritisation have been agreed, Buntingford should be surveyed and a priority list for the implementation of a ban created.

3. Enforcement Priorities

Buntingford's historic high street is the focus of economic activity in the town. Notwithstanding the fact that it has now been bypassed by the A10, the potential for traffic congestion on the High Street arising from illegally parked vehicles is significant. The two schools on Bowling Green Lane also generate considerable congestion at the start and end of the school day, mainly due to the wide catchment area of both. The availability of the nearby car park to serve as a pick up and drop off point, free of charge, has not proved attractive.

On the basis of the above, enforcement priorities in Buntingford should be emphasise the traffic management aspects of CPE – i.e. promoting compliance in the High Street restricted zone and surrounding streets, promoting safe and legal parking around the Schools on Bowling Green Lane, and ensuring turnover of the limited waiting bays on-street. Whilst enforcement of the Bowling Green Lane car park is necessary in order to promote compliance, this is of lesser importance.

Strategy Ambition

- i) That East Herts publicly subscribes to the traffic management objectives of CPE as set out in Statutory Guidance and endorsed by our residents and commits to operating its enforcement service in Buntingford in ways that can demonstrate delivery against these objectives.

4. Economic Wellbeing

As has been established, studies on the relationship of car parking to economic wellbeing support the views of residents expressed in the 2010 East Herts "Link" survey – that price is not the main determinant for people when they make their choice of where to park. Of greater importance is the retail offer in the town and the convenience of parking. The existence of a substantial number of on-street permitted parking free bays, a degree of uncontrolled parking and an off-street car park means that there is sufficient parking capacity to cater for the needs of visitors, residents and businesses in Buntingford.

The High Street is among Buntingford's chief attractions. Its visual appeal is diminished by illegal and inconsiderate parking which can also lead to congestion. Accordingly, it is suggested that firm but fair management of parking in Buntingford, encouraging a regular of the limited waiting, uncontrolled parking and off-street parking in the town is a tangible example of the Council's commitment to supporting its economic wellbeing whilst at the same time adhering to the first principles set out on page 13.

The needs of workers, many of whom work in the retail sector, as well as those of town centre residents whose properties do not enjoy off-street parking have become more prominent since charging was introduced in the Bowling Green Lane car park. That said, when it was free at the point of use, the car park was heavily parked by these groups and others, often at the expense of visitors to the town being able to park. The size of the car park offers opportunities to balance the needs of residents, workers and shoppers, possibly through the creation of a low cost permit scheme for the former.

Strategy Ambitions

- i) That East Herts recognises the role of Buntingford's Bowling Green Lane car park in supporting the economic wellbeing of the town and implements measures to support this objective whilst mindful of the 'first principles' outlined earlier in this Strategy.
- ii) That the Council examines the potential for a discounted permit scheme for the car park, available to local businesses and residents with no access to off-street parking of their own, with precise terms to be agreed.

5. Congestion

The primary cause of congestion in Buntingford is parked cars on the High Street. Whilst some vehicles are parked legitimately – i.e. for loading, unloading or by blue badge holders, others are parked in contravention and it is imperative that such illegal parking is managed through regular enforcement.

Strategy Ambition

- i) That in accordance with the priorities set by respondents to the "Link" magazine survey and in line with the traffic management objectives of the TMA 2004, the Council should continue with its existing enforcement priorities in Buntingford which include;
 - effective enforcement of the restricted zone on Buntingford High Street
 - effective control of the limited waiting bays in the immediate vicinity of the High Street
 - safety related enforcement of the area around the schools in Bowling Green Lane

6. Pricing and Designation Strategies

The 100 space Bowling Green Lane car park in Buntingford is the Council's sole off-street car park in the town. The implementation of pay and display charges in 2009 generated a degree of resistance, a measure of which remains to this day.

The car park is mixed use, serving both long and short stay parkers and (with Stanstead Abbots) has the lowest charges of any East Herts car park.

As discussed earlier, there is no such thing as a free car park. The only honest debate is whether the cost of running the service should be:

- met at the point of use
- met by the taxpayer
- met through a combination of the two.

East Herts' decision to charge users to park in the Bowling Green Lane car park is compatible with current Council policy that where possible and appropriate the user should pay for the service rather than the burden falling on the council tax payer and that council owned assets should generate an appropriate return.

The role of this car park in supporting the parking needs of local residents, businesses, shoppers and parents of children at local schools, is reflected in the hours and days of charging and the amount of the charges themselves. The possibility of further amending the designation and use of this car park to better support the needs of local businesses and town centre residents is addressed in the 'Economic Wellbeing' section above.

Strategy Ambitions

- i) That East Herts recognises the complex link between the economic wellbeing of Buntingford and parking provision in the town and in particular that price is not the main determining factor when people make shopping and leisure decisions.
- ii) That the Council reviews existing charging structures and models alternatives which take better account of the nature of the economy and the needs of Buntingford residents, whilst adhering to the 'first principles' stated above.

7. Access to Services

The transport needs of those living in the rural hinterland of Buntingford and in particular the elderly and those without access to private transport are particularly pronounced.

Strategy Ambition

- ii) That East Herts uses its position as a community leader to identify and promote innovative ways of delivering public and community transport for the benefit of those in the rural hinterland of Buntingford and particularly for those without access to a private motor vehicle.

STANSTEAD ABBOTTS

With a population of 2,000 it is perhaps inevitable that very few comments were received from residents in respect of the parking and transport challenges in the village following the 2012 “Link” magazine survey.

It is suggested that key strategic objectives for Stanstead Abbots might be expressed as follows:

- The village has a 90 space car park which operates at around 30% - 40% occupancy. Opportunities to increase use of the car park should be explored and these may include the offer of discounted parking to local businesses and residents.
- Whilst there is no evidence of a call for a changed car park management system in Stanstead Abbots, this should be considered at the time procurement decisions are made as the current pay and display machines near the end of their working lives.
- The existing on-street limited waiting bays are an important element of parking provision in the village and should be retained and their number augmented if possible.

RURAL COMMUNITIES

Transport is of huge importance to our rural communities, since it allows them to access employment, services and other opportunities. A national Ipsos Mori 2009 survey of residents in rural areas found that public transport was the top priority for improving their quality of life.

The transport challenges faced by those in our rural communities are recognised in LTP3

*“No village [in Hertfordshire] is more than five miles from a medium sized town but there are large rural areas of the county where travel other than by car is difficult”.*⁸

A survey distributed to parish councils in East Herts as part of the evidence gathering process for this Strategy underlines this point. Improved public transport accessibility is identified as their highest or second highest parking and transport related priority by the great majority of respondents. For many rural residents, ownership of a car is a necessity rather than a luxury and for some the costs of motoring can swallow a disproportionate amount of their income. For others, even if they were minded to change their mode of transport, a dearth of public transport options means that the car is the only realistic form of transport.

In 2011/12 revenue funding for transport authorities was sharply reduced and the way concessionary fares are reimbursed was altered, leaving many shire authorities with a budget shortfall. In 2012/13 Bus Service Operator Grant will shrink by 20%. HCC has XXXXXX. EHC has XXXXXXX

In 2011 the Department for Transport announced £10 million of additional funding to stimulate the further development of community transport, advocating it as the model for the future – especially for securing access to services for those who live in rural or isolated communities.

Strategy Ambitions

- i) That East Herts recognises that community transport is a key solution to the challenge of access to services – especially for those without access to private transport and in our rural communities.
- ii) That the Council increases its partnership working with town and parish councils, voluntary and community groups and local businesses to stimulate the development of community transport initiatives service our rural communities.

⁸ LTP3 (2011)

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

METHODOLOGY

Hertfordshire County Council's publication of its Local Transport Plan 2011-31 (LTP3) and 'daughter' documents such as the Hertford and Ware Urban Transport Plan 2010 have served as a partial stimulus for the development of this East Herts Parking and Transport Strategy. By definition, such plans deal with higher level highways issues and rarely dwell on the issue of parking, which is primarily a district council function.

The key findings of these documents (and to an extent the statutory framework under which they have been constructed) has informed the development of this Strategy. It will be appreciated there is little point in East Herts promoting parking and transport strategies if they are in clear conflict with those in operation at a county, regional or national level.

Where other strategy or policy documents are available, these have also been analysed as part of the evidence gathering process. This has been particularly relevant in the case of Bishop's Stortford and the "Steer Davies Gleave" report dating from 2006

As advised above, the views of East Herts residents are particularly important in the formulation of this Strategy; therefore East Herts' "Link" magazine was used to distribute a survey all households at the end of 2010. Some seven hundred responses were received and these contributed to the identification of a range of issues and objectives for the district.

Recognising that parking and transport are local issues and that the needs of our communities will vary, a round of consultation meetings was held with all Town Councils and at the East Herts Rural Conference in 2011. This led to the identification of further issues and objectives. To ensure maximum canvassing of views, a survey form was also distributed to all Parish Councils.

Analysis of the "Link" magazine based survey and the findings from these consultation events has led to the identification of a range of outcomes which our community wishes to be addressed in this Strategy. It is apparent that a number are mutually exclusive and that delivery of some would be difficult in a period of economic austerity.

Due to the above and as a further demonstration of the Council's commitment to making the Strategy as local as possible, a Member Task and Finish Group was established in mid-2011 to guide the preparation of the Strategy to its conclusion. The Group held a further round of meetings in each of the district's main towns, where community representatives were invited to debate the list of priorities and identify those which are particularly relevant to them.

APPENDIX B

Car Parking Research – Executive summary on how parking can be managed in the region's market towns (2007).

Yorkshire Forward

(Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Development Agency)

FOREWORD

It is widely recognised that parking is one of the more controversial issues facing our Renaissance Market Towns. Dealing with parking problems – such as a lack of supply or the dominance of parked cars in beautiful locations within our towns – is often important in achieving a town's renaissance objectives, but experience shows that overcoming them can initially appear difficult.

That is why Yorkshire Forward commissioned Steer Davies Gleave to research how parking can be managed in our market towns, and to investigate possible solutions.

The overall message of this research is a positive one: if done properly, managing parking is good for a town. The advantages are potentially numerous and sizeable: reducing the dominance of the car whilst enhancing, not reducing access. There is also evidence to suggest that introducing better managed parking can benefit a town's economy rather than damaging it.

Rhona Pringle
Renaissance Market Towns
Programme Manager

PARKING MANAGEMENT CAN BE A VERY POWERFUL TOOL

- Effectively managing parking supply and behaviour is a very powerful and direct way of supporting a town's broader objectives. In transport terms, Councils have more control over parking than virtually anything else.
- However, to be effective, a managed parking regime must be properly enforced. One way to achieve this is through Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE), where the Authority takes over control of the enforcement of parking regulations from the Police.
- Other attributes which can be managed to positive effect include: the quality of the parking stock (CCTV, lighting, information, toilets and so on) and signing and information to minimise searching traffic.

IN ORDER TO MANAGE PARKING EFFECTIVELY, THERE IS A NEED TO FIRST UNDERSTAND THE TOWN'S NEEDS

Informal surveys in a number of Renaissance Market Towns suggests that typically between 20%-40% of central short-stay parking spaces are being used by long-stay traffic.

- It is important to understand the nature of a town and the travel behaviour of the town's users before making changes to how the parking is managed.

PARKING PROVISION IS A CUSTOMER SERVICE, PROVIDING ACCESS TO TOWNS

- The aim of the service is ultimately to provide good access to towns for residents, workers, shoppers and other visitors. For those who drive, the act of parking is their first impression of the town.
- ‘Good access’ means making sure that customers can access appropriate parking at appropriate locations to suit their needs.
- Above all else, customers value the certainty of being able to park when and where they want it. Convenience is a quality which most are willing to pay for.
- Different customers (e.g. residents, shoppers, workers) have different needs and priorities.

PARKING IS AN ASSET WHICH NEEDS TO BE MANAGED

- Managing parking to maximise access is not the same as providing as many parking spaces as possible. Rather it is about managing the parking stock so that appropriate spaces are kept available for customers. It is the number of parking ‘acts’, rather than the number of parking spaces that is important.
- Proper management of parking benefits towns in many ways, including contributing positively to economic performance and visual amenity.
- A parking ‘free for all’ (with no restrictions or controls on parking and no enforcement) represents

- Key features to consider include: the size and nature of the employment, retail and visitor sectors, the strength and vitality of the retail sector; and the nature and proximity of competing settlements.
- As for the users of the town, the following factors should be considered:
 - the relative importance to the town’s economy of workers, shoppers, visitors and residents;
 - the parking behaviour of each segment;
 - the factors which influence when and how often each visit the town;
 - the attributes of the town and parking they value most (such as convenience, reliability, security and cost).

PARKING MANAGEMENT SHOULD BE PART OF A BROADER INTEGRATED APPROACH TO TRANSPORT

On-street and off-street parking must be managed as one...and linked to policies improving access by alternative modes.

- The parking management regime is one part of an integrated transport policy for market towns. Parking must be considered in parallel with:
 - measures to promote walking, cycling and public transport access into towns;
 - managing the demand for travel;
 - traffic management and highway issues;
 - road safety.
- On-street and off-street parking must be managed as one. The fact that different bodies (County and District Councils) may be responsible for them is of no interest to customers.
- The parking policy must be supported by the planning process.

a failure to manage the asset and a failure to provide good customer service and will adversely affect economic performance.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARKING AND ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE IS WEAK, BUT GENERALLY POSITIVE

- Many people fear that making changes to parking will adversely affect the town's economy. The evidence that exists suggests that the opposite is actually the case.
- In fact, the primary factor affecting a town's competitiveness is the town's offer. Therefore, a town with a good retail offer will continue to attract customers despite poor parking facilities. Meanwhile a town with very good parking facilities but a limited retail offer will struggle to attract customers.
- The primary responses to the introduction of restrictions, charging or enforcement tend to be:
 - an acceptance of the new arrangements/behaviour broadly unchanged;
 - a change in parking location (e.g. park further away to avoid paying a charge); or
 - in some cases, a shorter duration of stay.
- There is little evidence of substitution of destination or change of transport mode - as long as there is sensitivity to local needs.

Applications for new housing, commercial and retail developments should be scrutinised to ensure the volume and nature of car parking fits the parking and broader policies. The Planning Authority has the opportunity to place conditions on how parking is used and managed in new developments, to support broader strategy.

PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION IS A GOOD THING!

Evidence shows that public acceptability grows following implementation.

- Parking is always a controversial issue and many people hold strident opinions. Those concerned about the welfare of their business or local environmental conditions are often most concerned.
- Public/stakeholder concerns are often based on anecdote. Use this research and market research to support strategy and allay public fears. Evidence shows that public acceptability grows following implementation and the benefits become clear.
- Engage early with stakeholders, so that all relevant concerns and worries are out in the open and it becomes possible to understand what needs to be done to assuage these concerns. Often, detailed design of the management regime can overcome many of the concerns.
- Effective consultation early in the development of a strategy ultimately reduces delivery and implementation time as it reduces the number of formal objections to detailed proposals and stakeholders may even assist in delivery.

**BETTER MANAGEMENT OF
PARKING CAN ENABLE MORE
PRODUCTIVE USE OF
(SOMETIMES VERY LIMITED)
PUBLIC SPACE WITHIN
TOWNS**

- Provided it is done sensitively and appropriately, management of parking can have a positive impact on economic viability by enabling 'better' (more productive) use to be made of the public space within towns. It is not uncommon for the most attractive parts of towns (historic market squares etc) to be hidden under a sea of parked cars.
- Where towns have appropriate sites on the approach routes to the town, there is an opportunity to utilise them as 'gateway' parking areas. This can free up space within more sensitive central areas for other uses, and help to keep moving traffic out of these areas too.
- Central areas can then be given over to activities which themselves provide an important 'draw' for visitors such as markets, outdoor seating areas for café's and restaurants, locations for outdoor performances etc.
- However, such gateway parking needs to be complemented by other features – particularly good signposting to the car park on approach roads, as well as from the car park to the town centre itself – to be effective.

APPENDIX C

*“A Manifesto for Town Centres and High Streets”
Association of Town Centre Managers - 2011*

Does Out-of-Town have an unfair advantage?

We want to see a ‘level playing field’ over car parking. There is no such thing as ‘free’ parking. There is always a cost to someone, somewhere. The provision of totally free town centre parking for shoppers is impossible. Not only that, but local authorities depend on the money from municipal parking. At the same time councils need to recognise the fundamental requirement for safe and free (or at the very least affordable) parking to encourage people back into shops and other town centre facilities by using Park Mark® and the Safer Parking Schemes etc. If there are charges, income should be ring-fenced to benefit town users and businesses.

Getting to the town centre to take advantage of the services offered (civic as well as economic, social and cultural) is easier because they are the natural hubs for all modes of transport; walking, cycling and all forms of public transport, not just for car owners. Contrast this with out-of-town retail and business parks, where, without a car, you are effectively disenfranchised.

We think that full business rates should be applied to car parking spaces available for customers use. A perverse business rating system is one that makes it significantly cheaper to do business out of town by giving customers free car parking, thus encouraging a less sustainable transport regime. The Business Rates system as it stands favours out-of-town development. Out-of-town car parks are not subject to business rates so long as they remain free for consumer use. As these locations will compete with the town centre it appears that we have financial incentives the wrong way round. We should consider raising revenue through business rates on out-of-town developments and investing that money on town centre regeneration schemes (e.g. a BIDs support fund/public realm/small business support etc.) to promote sustainable growth. Ending the unfair exemption enjoyed by out-of-town and other major business that offer plentiful, free car parking would, at a stroke, achieve that effect giving a major boost to the amount local authorities have to reinvest in town centre renewal.

We will work with partners to better understand the role of parking and prosperity. The relationship between affordable parking and town centres is not well understood and must be fully explored. And also the relative balance between day & night parking cost.

We will lobby local councils to consider car parking promotions and incentives to make town centres attractive to shoppers.

“Remember that car parks are for people. The more you do to make parking attractive to the people you do want in them, the less attractive they are to the people you don’t want in them. Safer Parking attracts customers.”

Kelvin Reynolds

Dir. of Operations and Technical Services, BPA

If you do one thing....

Have a car parking strategy for both public and private provision. This is a very important economic lever and far too important to be developed without taking into consideration the whole economic situation.

APPENDIX D

Case study on the introduction of community transport in Sawbridgeworth Richard Bowran – Town Clerk, Sawbridgeworth Town Council



SPECIAL FEATURE

Community Transport in Sawbridgeworth

As concern about rural transport grows across the country, Richard Bowran, Town Clerk, Sawbridgeworth Town Council, Hertfordshire, explains some of the processes undertaken to introduce a community bus scheme in his town.

Imagine the scene, if you will: The bright new year of 2009 dawned, all was well in the council office: the budget had been approved, precept demand submitted and the Town Council had both expanded its activities and kept the precept at the same level as for the previous year.

Then the bombshell – a deputation from the District Council arrived in January to advise us that after careful review they had decided to withdraw the subsidy for the town bus service from the beginning of that April which no longer represented good value for money.

Well! You can imagine the outcry – How dare the Town Council take away our bus service! – We pay our Council Tax so you must give us a bus service! – What about the old people's life line!

Gulp! Here was a real local need, here was a broken link to all our outlying communities, here was a potential decrease in footfall to the town centre retailers, and we were right in the middle of the consultation stage of writing our Town Action Plan.

The Town Council met the challenge by publicly declaring that it would provide some sort of substitute service. What had we got going for us? The District Council said they would give us a discretionary grant, amounting to about 50% of the subsidy they had given the commercial operator.

That sounded like a challenge for the Clerk! I received lots of invaluable advice from the County Integrated Transport Partnership Manager who recognised a growing need for local communities to provide rural transport solutions. Buying

commercial operator services was way too expensive.

We set up a user group with representatives of County, District and Town Council plus parishioners who were users of the existing service. The first half of the first year's District Council grant funded an extension of the existing commercial service to give us some breathing and planning space. An on-bus survey showed where and when a service was wanted. A Community Voice session to sound out wider opinion.

A community bus scheme seemed to offer an answer. A conversation with the Town Clerk in the neighbouring town led to us renting one of their minibuses.

The initial solution was to employ two part time drivers and design a service that mimicked the one that had been withdrawn. County advice said we could operate a scheme with a section 19 permit under the Road Traffic Act 1985 for the less able members of the community as long as it wasn't a timetabled service. We could, however, give people an indication of where the mini-bus was likely to be at any time!

Available funding meant we operated three routes between 09.00 and 15.30 on Mondays, Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Better than nothing, but not good enough!

We were already running into a neighbouring parish in one direction and even a neighbouring county in another. With sponsorship from local organisations we extended the service to six days a week. The neighbouring county has also agreed, via the parish being served, to sponsor that element of one of the routes.

The Town Council now provides 21,000 passenger journeys a year at three quarters of the cost of the previous service. The net cost to the town precept payers is zero. And the District Council can show the same level of service is being provided at half the subsidy..

The outcomes and lessons learned in doing this project are many.

- Whatever the underlying logic, please don't pull the funding plug without giving us time to try and fill the gap.
- Do not devolve responsibility without consultation.
- There are lots of people with good advice and experience out there if you ask the right questions
- A bit of creative thinking can get round obstacles. We may be pushing at the margins of the possible.
- We now have two great drivers who provide a social lifeline as well as drive the mini-bus.
- We have lots of happy passengers who really appreciate what their Town Council has done for them.

I know, because I lived with the project from the start and occasionally take a driving shift, mainly to save paying overtime, but also to work the routes and talk to the passengers myself. I learnt a lot about one part of our community and what a great set of people they are.



FACT FILE

Sawbridgeworth Town Council	
Population	10,500
Budget 2011/12	£181,029
Band D Precept	£40.75
Community Bus Cost	£36,150
Income	£100
Grants/ sponsorship	£36,050
Net cost to Council	NIL

