

East Herts Council Report

Executive

Date of meeting: 11 February 2025

Report by: Councillor Tim Hoskin, Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability

Report title: DRAFT Parking Strategy 2025

Ward(s) affected: All

Summary

This report presents to Executive members the draft version of the Parking Strategy for East Hertfordshire following public consultation and engagement.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE:

- a) Consider the comments put forward by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, listed in Appendix F, and endorse the resulting actions proposed by the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability as also detailed in Appendix F.**
- b) Endorse the draft Parking Strategy 2025 and recommend it to Council for approval.**
- c) Support the proposed changes to car parking tariffs as described in Appendix D from April 2025 and recommend them to the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability for approval and implementation.**

1.0 Background

- 1.1 In Feb 2024, Council approved a £1.75m income target for parking for financial years 25/26 – 27/28. This strategy sets the strategic context and principles by which changes may be approved to support the achievement of income and wider ambitions of the Council. In response to the climate emergency and in alignment with East Herts' new Corporate Plan, this Parking Strategy has been designed to ensure the Council effectively manages parking demand while addressing the challenges of population growth and high rates of car ownership. The Council aims to discourage inessential car journeys and promote more sustainable alternatives, particularly for short trips. This will be critical in reducing congestion, optimising parking space usage, and tackles issues related to air pollution, climate change, and road safety.
- 1.2 In August 2024, officers commissioned Citisense to support the development of the strategy. Following the adoption of the Listening Council principles, there was a strong focus on resident/business engagement early on in the process prior developing the strategy. Just over 1700 responses were received following our public engagement survey online and in person sessions in Autumn 2024, the consultation report can be found in Appendix A.
- 1.3 General themes coming out of the engagement sessions and online feedback were as follows:
 - 1.3.1 Respondents were concerned that emission-based charges/discounts for electric vehicles (EV) might negatively impact people that cannot afford an EV.
 - 1.3.2 Linked to this, respondents were concerned about the impact of a diesel surcharge for people who cannot afford to replace their diesel vehicles. There was appreciation for

lower emission vehicles being better for the environment.

1.3.3 There were mixed views on off-peak and on-peak charging. Concerns were raised about how this might impact businesses and local workers.

1.3.4 There was no significant opinion regarding a review of charging levels for different groups however respondents felt there needed to be more support for businesses.

1.3.5 Respondents were concerned that a review of the all-day charge could impact town centre employees but could support it if there was a concession for workers.

1.3.6 There was recognition that parking charges in the different types of towns should be different and that charges should be less complicated.

1.3.7 Regarding a workplace levy, respondents were concerned about the negative impact on employees.

1.3.8 Some respondents felt car sharing initiatives should be explored further.

1.4 A summary of the parking strategy is described in the following sections. A copy of the strategy can be found in Appendix B.

Strategic Aims

1.5 The three key strategic aims of the Parking Strategy are centred around sustainability, community wellbeing and economic prosperity which link back to the corporate plan and other associated strategies as listed in the strategy (page 6). In a number of areas pricing is used as a tool to motivate behaviour change.

Sustainability

Care for the environment by managing parking in a way that reduces transport-related air pollution and carbon emissions.

Community Wellbeing

Ensure parking management supports diverse transportation needs and facilitates access to services for all community members.

Economic Prosperity

Enhance town centre vitality by ensuring efficient use of parking spaces and reducing congestion, making East Herts attractive to businesses and visitors.

- 1.6 The strategic aims have guided the three key objectives which determine the actions for delivery: **Alternative, Balanced and Considerate**

Alternative

1. Support motorists to consider alternatives, whether that be the take-up of more environmentally friendly vehicles and sustainable alternatives to driving.

Balanced

2. Take a more balanced approach to parking by making changes to make it fairer, easier and more consistent across East Herts.

Considerate

3. Adopting a more environmentally considerate approach to managing parking services throughout East Herts.

- 1.7 To achieve these objectives, a set of 22 actions have been developed which will be explored in the short, medium, and long-term. These actions range from altering pricing structures to encourage behaviour change to abolishing the use of paper-based permits and procedures. This Strategy will function as an evolving

framework, allowing the Council to review and refine actions as needed and in response to ongoing monitoring.

- 1.8 The Strategy and consultation report can be found in Appendix A and B along with an Equalities Impact Assessment in Appendix C.
- 1.9 To be successful in delivering these actions the Council recognises that it cannot be a direct deliverer of change alone, we must work with partners to maximise our impact. To this end we will adopt a number of roles as follows:
- Be a direct **deliverer** for change
 - Act as a **facilitator** for change
 - Play a **lobbying** role for change

Below is a summary of actions extracted from the parking strategy.

Key actions – Parking Strategy

REF	Objective	Action	Strategic Aim	Role	Timescale	Lead
AA1	Alternative	Promote the use of cycling by improving cycling infrastructure and storage throughout East Herts.	Sustainability Community Well-being	Lobbying	Short term	Comms Planning Parking
AA2	Alternative	Work with the Hertfordshire County Council/Schools to engage and educate families on alternative modes of transport and enforcing where required.	Sustainability Community Well-being	Facilitator	Medium	Comms Parking
AA3	Alternative	Collaborate with partners to expand the provision of off-street and on-street EV charge point infrastructure	Sustainability	Deliverer (off street) Lobbying	Medium	Housing and Health
AA4	Alternative	Introduce time-based pricing for parking whereby there are higher tariffs during peak times and lower tariffs during off-peak times.	Economic prosperity	Deliverer	Medium	Parking
AA5	Alternative	Explore opportunities to implement an emissions-based charging structure to permit parking or car park charges.	Sustainability	Deliverer	Long	Parking
AA6	Alternative	Lobby Hertfordshire County Council and public transport providers to enhance public transportation infrastructure.	Sustainability	Lobbying	Long	Planning
BA1	Balanced	Review the all-day parking tariff option for some town centre car parks to better utilise car parking spaces for shoppers/users.	Sustainability Economic Prosperity	Deliverer	Short	Parking
BA2	Balanced	Review parking tariffs to maximise the use of under-utilised car parks and rationalise car parking where appropriate.	Sustainability	Deliverer	Short	Parking

BA3	Balanced	Benchmark parking charges against neighbouring or similar authorities.	Economic Prosperity	Deliverer	Short	Parking
BA4	Balanced	Review parking tariffs to increase dwell time and spending in high footfall areas.	Economic Prosperity	Deliverer	Medium	Parking
BA5	Balanced	Review all off street concession or free parking	Sustainability	Deliverer	Medium	Parking
BA6	Balanced	Review existing charges, including locations and hours. Work to make charges easier, fairer and more consistent while acknowledging the different characteristics of each town and village	Economic Prosperity	Deliverer	Short	Parking
BA7	Balanced	Review the current Resident Permit Zones (RPZs) and changes for new RPZs.	Community Well being	Deliverer	Short	Parking
BA8	Balanced	Exploring the introduction of business and resident permits for car parks.	Economic Prosperity	Deliverer	Medium	Parking
BA9	Balanced	Conduct a district-wide review of the functionality and operability of all pay and display machines.	Community Wellbeing	Deliverer	Medium	Parking
CA1	Considerate	Promote existing support for Carers to park throughout the district.	Community Wellbeing	Deliverer	Short	Comms
CA2	Considerate	Encourage the use of virtual permits over paper permits to facilitate a more environmentally conscious approach.	Sustainability	Deliverer	Medium	Parking
CA3	Considerate	Regularly review car park capacity	Sustainability	Deliverer	Medium	Parking
CA4	Considerate	Review charge levels for vehicles based on size, including motorcycles.	Sustainability Community Wellbeing	Deliverer	Medium	Parking
CA5	Considerate	Improve parking enforcement operations to ensure they actively contribute to environmental objectives.	Sustainability	Deliverer	Medium	Parking

CA6	Considerate	Explore opportunities to provide incentives for car-sharing/car-pooling	Sustainability	Facilitator	Long term	Housing and Health
CA7	Considerate	Explore the cessation of paper pay and display (P&D) tickets as part of wider considerations for asset replacement of P&D machines.	Sustainability	Deliverer	Long term	Parking

2. Proposals

- 2.1 The strategy provides a set of guiding actions and principles which will inform work packages for delivery. Significant changes in parking often require an Off Street Parking Places Order or a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) which could take up to 2yrs to deliver.
- 2.2 In order to progress elements of the strategy, there are a number of actions which can be progressed for April 2025 delivery. The first action being:
- *BA2 - Review existing charges, including locations and hours. Work to make charges easier, fairer and more consistent while acknowledging the different characteristics of each town and village.*
- 2.3 Previously the Council has agreed an annual uplift of parking charges at either 2.5% or in line with CPI. Following the feedback through the consultation and engagement sessions it was evident that access to services and facilities in different areas of the District varied. This is recognised within the strategy and a re-categorisation of car parks is proposed as follows for the purpose of pricing, making it fairer, easier and consistent dependant on the category. Please note this does not relate to the designation of the car parks.
- 2.4 **Destination Car Parks**
- a. These are car parks in areas with greater access to services and facilities including leisure, theatre, parks, shops, café/restaurants and public transport. Generally, there is a higher footfall in these areas by local people, businesses and visitors, as well as a greater number of commercial units. It is proposed that these car parks have standardised parking tariffs for consistency making it easier to understand. In these areas the 1hr rate increases to £1.20 and continues to increase in a linear manner by £1.20 per hour up to 5hrs. Car parks which are proposed to be categorised as destination car parks are listed below with a full listed of changes to April 2025 charges in Appendix D:

- b. In Bishop's Stortford
 - i. Crown Terrace A
 - ii. Jackson Square
 - iii. Link Road
- c. In Hertford
 - i. Gascoyne Way
 - ii. St Andrew Street
 - iii. Hartham Common
 - iv. Wallfields
 - v. Hartham Lane
 - vi. Port Vale
- d. In Ware
 - i. Kibes Lane North
 - ii. Library
 - iii. Baldock Street CP
 - iv. Priory Street CP

2.5 Long Stay Car Parks

These are usually long stay car parks which are set further away from services where long stay is preferred to free up short stay car parking spaces for shoppers/users of the town centres. The aim here is to encourage customer turnover, supporting local businesses and reducing idling. Standard long stay parking tariffs are applied in these car parks. These car parks include:

- Crown Terrace B (Bishop's Stortford)
- Kibes Lane South (Ware)
- Old London Road (Hertford)

2.6 Local Car Parks

These car parks are situated in areas with lower footfall than a destination car park. They are more likely to be used by local people than visitors. These include Bowling Green lane (Buntingford), Bell Street (Sawbridgeworth) and High Street (Stanstead Abbots). Given the recent introduction of charging at High Street car park in Stanstead Abbots and its use by local residents for overnight parking, the charging rates have been reviewed and will be reduced for April 25-March 26 to support residents and businesses through the changes. There will be an

uplift in the more established chargeable local car parks at Bowling green lane and Bell street car parks. A further review of all charges and hours of operations for local car parks is proposed through consultation via the Traffic Regulation Order process. The proposal will seek to streamline the tariffs in all 3 local car parks.

2.7 Explore Car Parks

These are car parks where we know changes need to be made to either increase usage or displace usage in line with objectives:

- *BA1 - Review parking tariffs to maximise the use of under-utilised car parks and rationalise car parking where appropriate and*
- *BA2 -Review the all-day parking tariff option for some town centre car parks to better utilise car parking spaces for shoppers/users.*

Car parks included in this category include:

- Northgate End (NGE)
- Grange Paddocks A
- Elm Road
- Basbow Lane
- Apton Road
- Amwell East CP
- Amwell West CP

2.8 Northgate End car park was a £24m investment to support the development of the town through the Old River Lane Project. The car park is heavily underutilised with almost 3 floors vacant. To encourage usage it is proposed that there is a freeze on pricing for 25/26. We know from Remembrance Sunday where the car park was free to use, that motorists did in fact use the car park which could suggest that the perception of the car park could be changing if pricing is pitched correctly. The underutilisation of NGE car park could suggest that there is an oversupply of car parking in the town. It may be difficult to fully understand to what extent until the development at ORL is complete and further information gathered to determine rationalisation. Additionally, to encourage displacement to Northgate End car park the all-day tariff for Apton Road and Basbow Lane are proposed to increase to £7.80 in line

with the differential charging principle that was agreed at Council in December 2023. Elm Road all day tariff will increase to £5.00, this is a reduction from £7.80 presented at Overview and Scrutiny. It has also been identified that there is pressure on the car parks at Grange Paddocks leisure centre B&C, a price freeze at NGE should support use of the car park as well as a price freeze on Car Park A (Mon-Sat) at Grange Paddocks for 25/26 whilst explorative work takes place to review the car parking at Grange Paddocks.

- 2.9 Additionally, areas that can progressed include the development of the parking enforcement contract specification ensuring there is a greater level of environmentally sustainable approaches to delivery. This would be in addition to the use of electric vehicles by staff, reducing paper and air quality monitors for civil enforcement officers. It is proposed that the contract is developed in this way.

Medium Term

- 2.10 There are a number of tariffs that could be explored further which would require public consultation to support decision making, it is therefore proposed that based on the objectives highlighted below the following proposals are put forward for consultation prior to a decision being taken:

- Objective CA4 - Review charge levels for vehicles based on size, including motorcycles.
 - ***Proposal – introduce a charging system based on vehicle size including motorcycles***
 - ***Proposal - Trial a vehicle size based Resident Parking Zone permit scheme for all new RPZ schemes.***
- Objective BA4 - Review parking tariffs to improve dwell time in high footfall areas
 - ***Proposal – Removal of the free 30mins parking (off-street)***
- Objective AA5 - Explore opportunities to implement an emissions-based charging structure to permit parking or car park charges.
 - ***Proposal - Trial an emissions based Resident Parking Zone permit scheme for all new RPZ schemes.***

- Objective BA5 - Review all off street concession and free parking
 - ***Proposal – Introduce a charge for blue badge bays***
 - ***Proposal – Introduce a charge to limited waiting bays (On–street) via pay phone only***

- Objective BA7 - Exploring the introduction of business and resident permits for car parks.
 - ***Proposal – Introduce a season ticket or permit for businesses and residents who use car parks on a regular basis, making payments easier.***

2.11 A summary of proposals requiring public consultation via TRO are summarised in the table below:

No.	Proposal
1	Streamline parking charges/tariffs and hours of operation at local car parks
2	Changes to parking charges/tariffs and hours of operation in Grange Paddocks.
3	Introduce a charging system based on vehicle size including motorcycles
4	Trial a vehicle size based Resident Parking Zone permit scheme for all new RPZ schemes.
5	Removal of the free 30mins parking (off-street)
6	Trial an emissions based Resident Parking Zone permit scheme for all new RPZ schemes.
7	Introduce a charge for blue badge bays
8	Introduce a charge to limited waiting bays (On–street) via pay phone only
9	Introduce a season ticket or permit for businesses and residents who use car parks on a regular basis and overnight, making payment transaction easier.

3.0 Reason(s)

- 3.1 The development of a new parking strategy is part of the Council’s corporate plan. Monitoring and evaluation of the strategy and its objectives and policies will occur annually via Overview and Scrutiny.

- 3.2 To remain relevant and responsive, this Strategy will function as an evolving framework, capable of adapting to emerging issues and challenges. A flexible approach will allow the Council to review and refine actions as needed and in response to ongoing monitoring, ensuring the actions continue to align with the Council's overarching aims of environmental sustainability, economic growth, and community well-being.
- 3.3 In order to measure the success of the strategy and its actions, officers (cross services) will develop measures to demonstrate the contribution of the parking strategy to (this is not an exhaustive list):
 - 1.3.1 Air quality and congestion
 - 1.3.2 Feedback from businesses /spend
 - 1.3.3 Car parking transaction data

4.0 Options

- 4.1 In the context of changing driving/parking behaviour to support environmental sustainability priorities a strategy that provides guiding principle for future developments will aid decision making. Additionally, the Council has already approved an income target of £1.75m for parking services, a strategy that carefully considers the wider strategic context ensuring tariff changes are justified and not simply increased will allow the Council to balance parking demand/needs whilst support the financial forecast and sustainability ambitions. Not having a strategy in place will make it difficult to rationalise changes to parking, this is not recommended.

5.0 Risks

- 5.1 There are risks associated with price increases and changes in terms of parking behaviour and potential displacement to parking on-street.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

- 6.1 Consultation and engagement took place prior to the development of the strategy as highlighted in the consultation report. Views of respondents have been taking into consideration. Further public consultation via

the TRO process would be required prior to a decision for implementation for proposal highlighted in section 2.11.

- 6.2 The strategy was presented at the Overview and Scrutiny (14 January 2025). There were a range of comments provided which are recorded in Appendix F. There are some concerns around affordability regarding an emissions-based parking scheme, officers will investigate what other authorities have already implemented in this area. Valid points were raised around the opening hours of Northgate End which could prevent some local businesses and workers to use it prior to 7am, this will be explored further as it may not support displacement to Northgate End. Feedback on the sale or commercialisation of car parks were also raised as well as detailed comments on parking tariffs. Overall, there was support for the concepts described in the parking strategy and an understanding that there are a number of initiatives that would require further consideration and public consultation before making any decisions for implementation. The review of the RPZ scheme was raised, the initial draft of this review can be found in Appendix G. Officers will work towards developing this further into a revised policy following feedback at Council.

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out for the items changes linked to Appendix D and proposals described in para 2.11.

Environmental Sustainability

A key strategic aim of this strategy is sustainability, over 60% of the actions relate to sustainability.

Financial

Assumptions have been made on parking behaviour based on changes to pricing. Northgate End projections are based on a 10% increase in

usage compared to 24/25 projections. Overall, it is anticipated that for 25/26 approximately 70% of the targeted income will be achieved with the remainder being achieved in future years.

Benchmarking data on tariffs can be found in Appendix E.

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

No

Human Rights

No

Legal

Parking polices form part of the council's Policy Framework at Section 3.2.1 of the Constitution, as such the decision to adopt the Parking Strategy is reserved to Council.

Changes to the tariffs described in paragraphs 2.2 – 2.8 of this report may be implemented by the advertising of a Notice of Variation at least 21 days prior to the date of implementation pursuant to section 35C of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (as amended) and regulation 25 of the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996. All proposals listed in paragraph 2.11 of this report will require a Traffic Regulation Order and be subject to public consultation.

Implementation of the actions in the Parking Strategy may be subject to further decision making in accordance with the Constitution, the legal implications of which will be considered further at that time.

Specific Wards

All

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

- Appendix A – Consultation and Engagement Report
- Appendix B – East Herts Parking Strategy

- Appendix C – Equalities Impact Assessment
- Appendix D – Proposed pricing changes to April 2025
- Appendix E – Benchmarking data on tariffs
- Appendix F – Feedback from Overview and Scrutiny
- Appendix G – Review of RPZ policy (draft)

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