

East Herts Parking Strategy

January 2025



Executive Summary

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.

The Strategy is guided by three key objectives:

- 1. Support the take-up of more environmentally friendly vehicles and sustainable alternatives to driving.**
- 2. Making changes to parking to make it fairer, easier, and more consistent across East Herts.**
- 3. Adopting a more considerate approach to managing parking services throughout East Herts.**

To achieve these objectives, a set of 22 actions have been developed which will be explored by East Herts in the short, medium, and long-term. These actions range from expanding electric vehicle charging infrastructure to reviewing the all-day parking tariff option in Council car parks, among others. This Strategy will function as an evolving framework, allowing the Council to review and refine actions as needed and in response to ongoing monitoring.

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Introduction

We are a listening council, working together with our communities to deliver fair services.

In 2021, 88% of East Herts households owned at least one car or van, with 14% of households owning three or more vehicles. At the same time, the population of East Herts grew by 9% from 2011 to 2021, which is higher than the average growth rate for England (2021 Census). While East Herts Council recognises that the car may be the most practical transport option for some, it is important that the Council effectively manages the demand for parking to balance the existing parking supply with the challenges posed by population growth and high rates of car ownership. Where possible, the Council seeks to discourage inessential journeys by cars and encourage the use of more sustainable alternatives in place of car journeys, especially for short trips. This will be essential in reducing congestion, managing the use of parking space efficiently and addressing issues of air pollution, climate change, and road safety.

Aligned with the values outlined in our new Corporate Plan—being open and transparent; environmentally focused; community-driven; and fair and inclusive—this updated Parking Strategy aims to develop a framework for managing parking in the district. The strategy sets out the objectives and related policies for improving parking. In doing so, this strategy seeks to translate regional and county wide policy into local action, while recognising the unique nature of our towns, villages and rural communities and their diverse parking requirements.

The strategy is deeply informed by feedback received from residents, businesses and other community members. In September and October 2024, we engaged with the community who told us how they felt about current parking operations and provided feedback on a set of proposal ideas to improve parking.



Strategic Aims

The three key strategic aims of the Parking Strategy are centred around sustainability, community wellbeing and economic prosperity.

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.

Strategic and Policy Context

The following local and regional strategies are relevant to this Parking Strategy.

Local

[East Herts Climate Change Strategy](#) - In 2023, East Herts Council declared a climate emergency and recognised the Council's role in inspiring residents and businesses to protect the community against the impacts of climate change. In developing the Climate Change Strategy, the East Herts communities told us that one of their key priorities was active, greener transport, including public transportation, walking, cycling and promotion of low emission and e-vehicles.

[East Herts District Plan 2018](#) – This plan, covering the period 2011-2033, sets out the planning framework for the district and aims to ensure that new development is directed to locations that firstly, reduce the need to travel and secondly, reduce the distance of any necessary trips. The Supplementary Planning Document 'Vehicle Parking Provision at New Development, 2008' sets out the amount of parking that should be provided with developments.

[Cycling and Walking Plan \(draft\)](#) – East Herts is currently developing a Cycling and Walking Plan to make it easier, safer, and more enjoyable to walk, wheel and cycle for everyday journeys and leisure.

[Air Quality Action Plan](#) – Three areas in East Herts have been declared Air Quality Management Areas as they exceed the annual limit for nitrogen dioxides. The draft Air Quality Action Plan recognises the key role that transport has in the air quality of an area. Two of the four priorities identified in the draft plan are to reduce the impact of traffic levels and congestion on air quality and support residents' in making active travel choices.

Regional

[Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan \(2018 – 2031\)](#) and **[Supporting Strategies](#)** – HCC's Local Transport Plan sets out how the Council can provide safe and efficient travel while recognising the link between transport and economic growth, housing, public health and the environment. The plan recognises that travel behaviour change is in part influenced by parking charges and supply. Furthermore, it adopts a hierarchy of transport users which gives priority to more sustainable modes like walking, cycling, and public transport.



Parking Service Overview

East Herts Council is the Parking Authority for the district and since 2005, has enforced most on-street parking restrictions on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council (the Highway Authority). East Herts Council manages parking in the following ways:

- Type of parking available at car parks
- Pricing of parking
- Length of stay
- Enforcement

Current parking provision in East Herts

25 council-operated car parks

On-street parking spaces

15 Resident Parking Schemes zones

3,337 total off-street spaces

Includes a mixture of parking bays, such as loading bays, disabled parking, taxi bays and timed free parking.

Bishop's Stortford (8 zones)
Ware (3 zones)
Hertford (4 zones)

Charging pricing and structure vary by car park

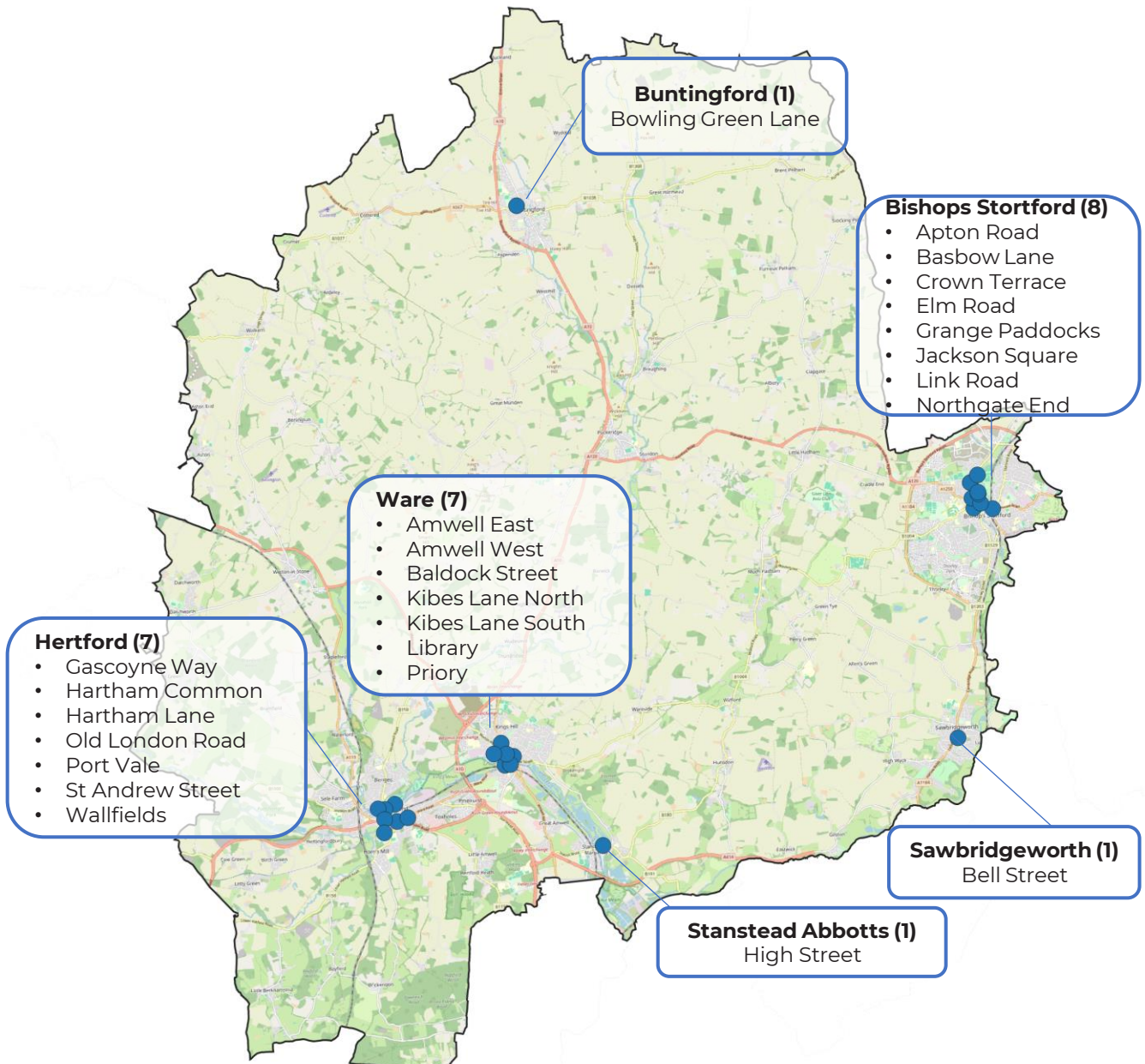
Types of Permits
Resident Permit
Visitor Voucher
Shared Use Permit
Business Carer Permit
Blue Badge Holder
Motorcycle permit
Contractor permit

All East Herts car parks achieved the Park Mark award by meeting standards for safety, including surveillance, lighting, signage and cleanliness.



Parking Service Overview

The location and number of public car parks throughout East Herts is shown below.



Objectives and Actions

The following section sets out the three key objectives of the Parking Strategy.



Alternative

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

Balanced

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

Considerate

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

The objectives are aligned with the three key strategic aims outlined earlier, which focus on the environment, community well-being and economic prosperity.

Under each of the three objectives, this strategy puts forth a set of supporting actions that will be considered by the Council to achieve each objective. The Council recognises that they must take on a number of roles to succeed in delivering the above outcomes. These include **being a direct deliverer** of change, playing a **lobbying role for change**, and **acting as a facilitator** for change.

Prior to implementation, individual actions will go through appropriate engagement and consultation, in alignment with East Herts' [Listening Council principles](#). The Council will also adhere to the necessary approval processes, such as securing political approval, ensuring public support, and complying with legal requirements. Significant changes to parking may necessitate the introduction of a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO).

Each action falls under three broad timescales:

Short-term	Medium-term	Long-term
1 – 2 years	3 – 5 years	5 or more years

Objective 1: Alternative

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

Short-term

Action 1: Promote the use of cycling by improving cycling infrastructure throughout East Herts.

Working in close alignment with the East Herts Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, this action will aim to increase the number of trips made by cycling instead of private vehicle. As part of this, East Herts will review locations in car parks that would benefit from the addition of new or more secure cycle storage and promoting these.

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Objective 1

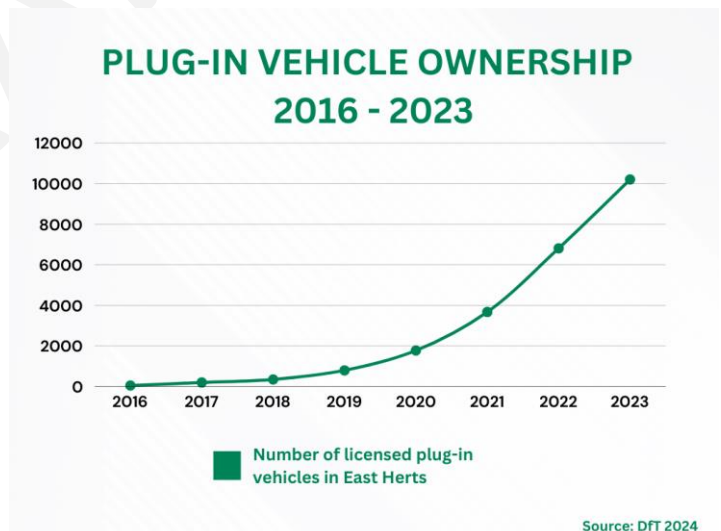
Medium-term

Action 2: Work with the HCC/Schools to engage and educate families on alternative modes of transport.

Parking and traffic congestion because of school runs is an issue that affects schools throughout East Herts and can often lead to increased road danger. In order to address these issues, East Herts will work with its parking enforcement contractor to implement a programme that balances engagement, education and enforcement around school drop off and pick up.

Action 3: Collaborate with partners to expand the provision of off-street and on-street EV chargepoint infrastructure.

Plug-in vehicle ownership in East Herts has been steadily increasing in the last 6 years, with over 10,000 licensed plug-in vehicles in 2023. Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) predicts there will be an uptake of 240,800 electric vehicles by 2030, which will require 6,769 publicly available charging socket ([HCC EV Strategy](#)). As of July 2024, there were 1,207 public chargepoints in Hertfordshire, with 106 of those in East Herts ([DfT](#)).



In order to continue to meet the demand for growing electric vehicle ownership, East Herts will explore how developer agreements under Section 106 could contribute to managing the demand for electric vehicle charging points. Grant funding and partnerships with private EV chargepoint providers will also be considered as a means to provide charging, particularly on-street charging.

Objective 1

Medium-term

Action 4: Introduce time-based pricing for parking whereby there are higher tariffs during peak times and lower tariffs during off-peak times.

To better manage parking demand and balance the needs of commuters, residents and visitors to town centres and villages, East Herts will explore and trial the introduction of time-based pricing. Higher tariffs during peak times can help encourage alternative modes of travel and smooth out demand for parking spaces across the day, encouraging more consistent usage rather than concentrated demand during busy times. Existing usage data of car parks can help define 'off-peak' and 'on-peak' times.

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Objective 1

Long-term

Action 5: Explore opportunities to implement an emissions-based charging structure to permit parking or car park charges.

East Herts will explore the viability of an emissions-based charging structure, whereby higher-emissions vehicles pay more to park. This will help promote the use of more sustainable modes of travel and in the long-term, encourage residents to purchase low-emission vehicles. As part of this, East Herts will consider the introduction of a diesel surcharge, either on all diesel vehicles or on older or more polluting diesel vehicles. East Herts recognises that affordability was a key concern for some parts of the community and therefore a phased approach or trial will be investigated initially.

Action 6: Lobby Hertfordshire County Council and public transport providers to enhance public transportation infrastructure.

Providing reliable and accessible public transportation is key to decreasing reliability on private vehicles and to enable access to services for all, especially those who do not own a car. East Herts will continue to work closely with HCC to support the expansion of public transport offerings, including the HertsLynx and other bus services.

Objective 2: Balanced

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

Short-term

Action 1: Review the all-day parking tariff option for some town centre car parks.

While East Herts recognises that all-day parking is necessary in some cases, the availability of all-day parking in some town centre car parks can lead to prolonged use of spaces. This reduces parking turnover and limits opportunities to support economic activity in the town. In certain towns, all-day parking by commuters may also restrict the availability of spaces for visitors to the town. To address these challenges, East Herts will remove the all-day parking tariff option in town centre car parks where these issues are present and replace it with extended hourly payment options in line with current hourly charges. Additionally, East Herts will explore ways to encourage the use of car parks located further from town centres, especially for long-stay parking or for towns where the car parks within the town centre face high parking demand.

Action 2: Review parking tariffs to maximise the use of under-utilised car parks and rationalise car parking where appropriate.

East Herts has identified several car parks where changes need to be made to increase usage, such as Northgate End, Apton Road, and Grange Paddocks A car parks. In these under-utilised car parks, East Herts will review the parking tariffs to identify opportunities to encourage usage, such as a price freeze to the current tariff levels.

Action 3: Benchmark parking charges against neighbouring or similar authorities

To ensure East Herts' parking charges are fair, the Council will review its parking charge levels against those of neighbouring or similar local authorities. This benchmarking will help inform the charge levels set in East Herts.

Objective 2: Balanced

Short-term

Action 4: Review parking tariffs to increase dwell time in high footfall areas

To ensure car park parking tariffs support the district's economic prosperity, the Council will review the parking tariff structure to identify opportunities to increase dwell time in high footfall areas. This may include removing the free 30-minute parking in high-demand or long-stay car parks.

Action 5: Review all off-street concession parking or free parking

East Herts provides parking concessions for specific groups, such as Blue Badge holders. The Council plans to review these concessions to ensure parking fees remain fair, support the mobility and accessibility needs of these users, and align with the broader objectives of this strategy.

Action 6: 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.

East Herts recognises the district is made up of a blend of rural and urban locations, with different areas having their own unique characteristics and offerings such as access to services and transport. As such, the Council understands the importance of setting parking charges in a way that reflects this diversity. However, where appropriate, the Council aims to make charges fairer and more consistent across the district. The Council will conduct a review of the services of the towns and villages throughout the District and where sensible, standardise parking charges.

Objective 2: Balanced

Short-term

Action 7: Review the current Resident Permit Zones (RPZs) and the need for new RPZs.

Regular RPZ reviews help ensure that parking controls are sufficient in meeting the needs of residents and local communities. Reviews of existing RPZs can identify any changes necessary to: controls, hours of operation, signs, marking, and charges. Meanwhile, reviewing areas where new RPZs could be introduced helps address ongoing or anticipated parking pressure concerns. RPZs are also important in creating less traffic in the area and discouraging multiple car ownership, which contributes to a cleaner and more sustainable East Herts. East Herts will also update its [Resident Permit Parking Policy](#) on RPZ adoption and operation. Changes to East Herts' approach to RPZs will consider the need to regulate parking whilst aiming for permit schemes to be self-financing. East Herts will continue to recruit and deploy Civil Enforcement Officers to enforce parking regulations as needed and depending on the results of the review.

Objective 2

Medium-term

Action 8: Exploring the introduction of business and resident permits for car parks

Some residents and businesses may regularly use the car parks, such as for work or overnight parking, especially when residents do not have on-street parking near their home. To address this, East Herts will consider providing permits to residents and businesses for regular use of the car park.

Action 9: Conduct a district-wide review of the functionality and operability of all pay and display machines

East Herts will conduct an investigation of all pay and display in the district to review all issues with their functionality and operation. The results of this investigation will be utilised to understand the next steps and best practices once the current machines are at the end of their useful life and need to be replaced.

Objective 3: Considerate

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

Short-term

Action 1: Promote existing support for Carers to park throughout the District.

Currently, East Herts provides discounted permits for Carers to support their ability to travel throughout the district in a timely manner and deliver essential care to vulnerable residents. East Herts is committed to maintaining this discount for Carer Permits. The council has observed that the availability of this discounted permit may not be widely known and will enhance its communications efforts to increase awareness of this offer.

Objective 3

Medium-term

Action 2: Encourage the use of virtual permits over paper permits to facilitate a more environmentally conscious approach.

The use of virtual permits for RPZs enables simpler and more efficient enforcement of controlled parking, which can reduce the use of paper. East Herts will explore ways to encourage residents and businesses to opt for virtual permits instead of paper permits to support its environmental sustainability ambitions. As part of this, the Council will also transition away from using paper pay and display tickets.

Action 3: Regularly review car park capacity.

To understand the demand for off-street parking, East Herts commits to regularly reviewing usage at council-operated car parks. This review will look at the average duration of stay and usage across the day and week. In doing so, the Council can ensure the car park capacity is sufficient to support the economic vitality of the area while not encouraging unnecessary car use. As part of this, East Herts will also review the provision of spaces for different groups, including Parent and Child spaces and Blue Badge holders to ensure there is adequate provision for existing needs.

Objective 3

Medium-term

Action 4: Review charge levels for vehicles based on size, including motorcycles.

Based on feedback received during public engagement, East Herts will consider adjusting parking charges to reflect the size of vehicles and the amount of space they occupy, with larger vehicles potentially paying more. The council will also review the need to provide larger parking spaces to accommodate such vehicles. As part of this action, East Herts will evaluate the current charging structure for motorcycles. As of July 2024, there were 3,300 licensed motorcycles in East Herts, representing approximately 3.3% of all registered vehicles in the district. While this proportion may seem small, motorcycles still occupy road space and contribute to air pollution and carbon emissions.

Currently, most car parks charge motorcycles to park; however, some do not, presenting an opportunity to improve consistency across parking facilities. East Herts will review motorcycle parking charges across all car parks and Resident Permit Zones. For instances where motorcycles occupy a full parking space, it may be appropriate to charge the standard parking fee or consider implementing more dedicated motorcycle parking. Conversely, where motorcycles use less space than cars, the council will assess whether a reduced charge is more appropriate.

Action 5: Improve parking enforcement operations to ensure they actively contribute to environmental objectives.

East Herts will explore transitioning the fleet used by civil enforcement officers to electric vehicles, reducing emissions and supporting the district's commitment to sustainability. Additionally, East Herts review opportunities for civil enforcement officers to conduct air quality monitoring as part of their routine activities, leveraging their presence across the district to collect valuable data that informs environmental policies and promotes healthier communities.

Objective 3

Long-term

Action 6: Explore opportunities to provide incentives for car-sharing/car-pooling

East Herts will review options for providing incentives for those who car-share/car-pool, including to workplaces, schools or car parks. Part of this action will involve reviewing best practices used by other local authorities, such as the use of commercial lift sharing platforms like Liftshare in Surrey, and exploring the practicalities of implementing an incentive, including a cost-benefit analysis.

Action 7: Explore the cessation of paper pay and display (P&D) tickets as part of wider considerations for asset replacement of P&D machines.

East Herts will review options for reducing paper tickets as and when the useful life of pay and display machines come to an end. Northgate End car park is an example of a car park with minimal pay and display machines.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of the strategy and its objectives and policies will occur annually.

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.

The review of the strategy and its objectives will also consider:

- Other local plans and policies
- The performance of existing parking controls in terms of compliance and impact
- The cost of operations
- Innovations in parking control technology
- Changing supply and demand for parking spaces
- The impact of any policies delivered as part of this Strategy
- Results of public consultation, as appropriate

Appendix A: Summary of Actions

REF	Objective	Action	Strategic Aim	Role	Timescale	Lead
AA1	Alternative	Promote the use of cycling by improving cycling infrastructure throughout East Herts.	Sustainability Community Well-being	Lobbying	Short	Comms Planning Parking
AA2	Alternative	Work with the Hertfordshire County Council/Schools to engage and educate families on alternative modes of transport.	Sustainability Community Well-being	Facilitator	Medium	Comms Parking
AA3	Alternative	Collaborate with partners to expand the provision of off-street and on-street EV chargepoint 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 in high footfall areas	Economic Prosperity	Deliverer	Short	Parking
BA5	Balanced	Review all off street concession or free parking	Economic Prosperity	Deliverer	Short	Parking



Appendix A: Summary of Actions

REF	Objective	Action	Strategic Aim	Role	Timescale	Lead
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 the need 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	Long term	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