

EAST HERTS DISTRICT COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE

DATE: TUESDAY, 13 JANUARY 2026

**REPORT BY: COUNCILLOR TIM HOSKIN - EXECUTIVE MEMBER
FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

**REPORT TITLE: PROPOSED CHANGES TO CAR PARK
OPERATIONAL HOURS, TARIFFS AND MAXIMUM STAY PERIODS**

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

1. PURPOSE/SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for targeted amendments to East Hertfordshire District Council's (EHDC) off-street parking arrangements, following public consultation on proposed changes to car park operational hours, tariffs, and maximum stay periods across Council's car parks.
- 1.2 The consultation was open from 9 October 2025 to 6 November 2025, allowing residents, businesses, and visitors to provide feedback on the draft proposals. As a result of the consultation and following analysis of feedback, some of the original proposals have been amended and these are outlined in section (5).
- 1.3 The proposed amendments are intended to improve the availability and efficient use of parking spaces within East Herts Council's car parks by increasing capacity through better space turnover. They also support the introduction of standardised operational hours and a consistent charging approach across rural car parks, in line with the objectives of the East Herts Parking Strategy, which was adopted by Council in February 2025.
- 1.4 The changes ensure a fair and equitable contribution from users towards the ongoing maintenance, management, and upkeep of parking facilities, including during periods that are currently provided

free of charge, such as weekends. Establishing consistent charging arrangements across sites promotes clarity for users, improves compliance, and supports the long-term financial sustainability of the parking estate.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE

That Executive:

- (A) Approve the extension of operational hours at Bowling Green Lane, Buntingford, to 7:30 am - 6:30 pm and the introduction of weekend charging, subject to the following mitigation:
- Retention of the proposed Monday to Friday tariffs with no inflationary increase over the existing structure currently applied in Stanstead Abbots.
 - Introduction of Saturday charging at the same tariff levels as Monday to Friday, to ensure consistency across rural car parks.
 - Introduction of a flat £1.50 all-day charge on Sundays and Public Holidays.
- (B) Approve the introduction of weekend charging at Bell Street, Sawbridgeworth, aligned with existing weekday tariff levels, subject to the following mitigations:
- Retention of existing Monday to Friday tariffs with no inflationary increase.
 - Introduction of Saturday charging at the same tariff levels as Monday to Friday, to ensure consistency across rural car parks.
 - Introduction of a flat £1.50 all-day charge on Sundays and Public Holidays.
- (C) Approve the introduction of a maximum stay of 3 hours for all customers at Gascoyne Way Level A, Hertford.
- (D) Approve amendments at Old London Road, Hertford, to provide both short-stay and long-stay parking.
- (E) Approve the introduction of a 2.5-hour parking charge at Grange Paddocks A, Bishop's Stortford.

- (F) Approve the extension of operational hours to 8:00 pm at Grange Paddocks B and C, Bishop's Stortford.
- (G) Approve the merger of Kibes Lane North and Kibes Lane South, Ware, into a single car park, operating as short-stay parking Monday to Saturday and long-stay parking on Sundays and public holidays.
- (H) Approve the renaming of the Library Car Park, Ware, to Burgage Lane, and the reduction of the maximum stay to three hours.
- (I) Approve the merger of Amwell End East and Amwell End West, Ware, into a single Amwell End Car Park.
- (J) Approve the conversion of several under-utilised disabled bays to Parent and Child bays at Northgate End, Bishop's Stortford.
- (K) Approve corrections to administrative and operational arrangements at Link Road and Jackson Square, Bishop's Stortford, including car club bays and operational hours.
- (L) Approve the introduction of a maximum free parking period of 3 hours for Blue Badge holders across all Council-managed car parks in disabled and regular bays, and allow vehicles to remain in excess of the 3 free hours, during chargeable periods, with payment made.

Note that the Order also provides for tariff increases from April 2026, in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI), as previously agreed by the Council. Following feedback from the consultation, it is proposed that car parks in Buntingford, Sawbridgeworth, and Stanstead Abbots are not subject to inflationary increases in the existing applicable tariffs for 2026/27

3. PROPOSALS AND RATIONALE

3.1. The changes proposed in the consultation regarding the rural car parks were:

Bowling Green Lane, Buntingford

- Current Policy: Bowling Green Lane is the only East Herts Council managed car park in Buntingford, providing 104 spaces, including two Blue Badge bays, with a mix of short- and long-stay parking. It currently operates from 9:00am to 3:00pm, offers 1.5 hours' free

parking, and charges £2.10 for up to three hours or £4.20 for all-day parking. Parking is free at weekends.

- Proposed Change: Extend the car park's operational hours to 7:30am–6:30pm and introduce parking charges on weekends, matching Stanstead Abbots Rural car park's hours (7:30am – 6:30pm). On weekdays and Saturday, there would be a 30-minute free period, and charges would start at 75p for an hour. On Sunday, the £2.10 all day charge would apply.
- Rationale: The proposed changes have been put forward to create standard operational hours and a consistent way of charging across the 'rural' car parks.

Bell Street, Sawbridgeworth

- Current Policy: Bell Street Car Park is the only East Herts Council managed car park in Sawbridgeworth, offering 143 spaces, including 10 Blue Badge bays and 4 nursery permit bays. Parking is currently free at weekends. On weekdays, the tariff ranges from 50p for one hour up to £5.30 for all-day parking.
- Proposed Change: Introduce weekend charges, applying the same tariff as weekdays. On weekdays and Saturday there would be a 30-minute free period and charges would start at 75p for an hour. On Sunday, the £2.10 all day charge would apply.
- Rationale: The proposed changes have been put forward to create standard operational hours and a consistent way of charging across the 'rural' car parks.

3.2. The changes proposed in the consultation in the in urban car parks were:

Gascoyne Way Level A, Hertford.

- Current Policy: Gascoyne Way Level A in Hertford is open 24/7. From Monday to Saturday, charging operates between 7:30am and 8:00pm, with a 30-minute free period and tariffs ranging from £1.20 for one hour up to £6.00 for five hours. On Sundays, bank holidays, and public holidays, there is a flat all-day charge of £2.00.
- Proposed Change: Reduce the maximum stay at Gascoyne Way Level A to 3 hours.

- Rationale: The proposed changes have been put forward to provide additional capacity and promote the better use of space in our car parks.

Old London Road, Hertford

- Current Policy: Old London Road Car Park has 77 spaces, including six Blue Badge bays. It operates 24/7 and is free on Christmas Day. The first 30 minutes are free. From Monday to Saturday, charges apply between 7:30am and 8:00pm, with tariffs of £6.00 for up to five hours and £7.20 for all-day parking. On Sundays and bank holidays, an all-day charge of £2.00 applies.
- Proposed Change: Amend the car park to offer both long-stay and short-stay parking options.
- Rationale: The proposed changes have been put forward to provide additional capacity and promote the better use of space in our car parks.

Grange Paddocks A

- Current Policy: Grange Paddocks A is open 24/7 and provides 80 parking spaces. Operational hours run Monday to Saturday from 9:00am to 8:00pm, with an all-day charge of £3.50. On Sundays, parking is charged at £2.00 for all day.
- Proposed Change: Introduce a new 2.5-hour parking charge at Grange Paddocks A, Bishop's Stortford.
- Rationale: The proposed changes have been put forward to provide additional capacity and promote the better use of space in our car parks.

Grange Paddocks B & C

- Current Policy: Grange Paddocks B & C provide 150 parking spaces. Operational hours run Monday to Saturday from 9:00am to 5:00pm, offering 2.5 hours' free parking. Charges apply thereafter, including £3.50 for up to five hours. On Sundays and public holidays, there is a flat £2.00 all-day charge.
- Proposed Change: Extend the operational hours at Grange Paddocks B & C, Bishop's Stortford, to 8:00pm.

- Rationale: The proposed changes have been put forward to provide additional capacity and promote the better use of space in our car parks.

Kibes Lane North & Kibes Lane South (Ware)

- Current Policy:
 - Kibes Lane North: Open 24/7 with 59 spaces, including 2 parent-and-child spaces, for short-term parking. Operational hours are Monday to Saturday, 7:30am to 8:00pm, with the first 30 minutes free. Charges range from £1.20 for 1 hour to £6.00 for 5 hours. On Sundays and public holidays, there is a flat all-day charge of £2.00.
 - Kibes Lane South: Open 24/7 with 56 spaces, including 6 Blue Badge bays, designated for long-term parking. Operational hours are Monday to Saturday, 7:30am to 8:00pm, with the first 30 minutes free. Charges are £6.00 for up to 5 hours and £7.20 for all-day parking. On Sundays and public holidays, the all-day charge is £2.00.
- Proposed Change: Merge Kibes Lane North & Kibes Lane South (Ware) into one car park, with short-stay Mon–Sat and long-stay on Sundays/public holidays.
- Rationale: The proposed changes have been put forward to provide additional capacity and promote the better use of space in our car parks.

Library Car Park (Ware)

- Current Policy: Open 24/7 with 76 spaces, including 3 blue-badge bays, for short stay parking, with 5-hour maximum stay. Operational hours are Monday to Saturday, 7:30am to 8:00pm, with the first 30 minutes free. Charges range from £1.20 for 1 hour to £6.00 for 5 hours. On Sundays and public holidays, there is a flat all-day charge of £2.00.
- Proposed Change: Rename the Library car park (Ware) to “Burgage Lane” and reduce maximum stay to 3 hours.
- Rationale: The proposed changes have been put forward to provide additional capacity and promote the better use of space in our car parks.

- Rationale: The proposed changes have been put forward to provide additional capacity and promote the better use of space in our car parks.

Amwell End East and Amwell End West

- Current Policy:
 - Amwell East Car Park - Open 24/7 with 25 spaces, including 2 blue-badge bays, for long and short stay parking. Operational hours are Monday to Saturday, 7:30am to 8:00pm, with the first 30 minutes free. Charges range from £1.20 for 1 hour to £7.80 for all-day. On Sundays and public holidays, there is a flat all-day charge of £2.00.
 - Amwell West Car Park - Open 24/7 with 56 spaces, including 2 blue-badge bays, for long and short stay parking. Operational hours are Monday to Saturday, 7:30am to 8:00pm, with the first 30 minutes free. Charges range from £1.20 for 1 hour to £7.80 for all-day. On Sundays and public holidays, there is a flat all-day charge of £2.00.
- Proposed Change: Combine Amwell End East and Amwell End West into a single Amwell End car park.
- Rationale: The proposed changes have been put forward to provide additional capacity and promote the better use of space in our car parks.

Northgate End (Bishop's Stortford)

- Current Policy: The car park operates from 7:00am to 11:00pm and provides 573 spaces, including 54 electric vehicle charging bays and 31 disabled bays. Charging hours run Monday to Saturday from 7:30am to 8:00pm, with tariffs ranging from £1.00 for one hour up to £4.20 for all-day parking. On Sundays and public holidays, a flat all-day charge of £1.60 applies.
- Proposed Change: Convert eleven underused disabled bays on the ground floor at Northgate End (Bishop's Stortford) to Parent & Child bays.
- Rationale: The proposed changes have been put forward to provide additional capacity for parents with children and promote the better use of space in our car parks.

Link Road and Jackson Square

- **Current Policy:**
 - Link Road - Open 24/7 with 100 spaces, including 2 blue-badge bays, for long and short stay parking. Operational hours are Monday to Saturday, 7:30am to 8:00pm. Charges range from £1.20 for 1 hour to £6.00 for all-day. On Sundays and public holidays, there is a flat all-day charge of £2.00.
 - Jackson Square- The car park has 708 spaces, including 36 blue-badge bays, for short stay parking of maximum 5 hours. Operational hours are Monday to Saturday, 7:30am to 6:30pm. Charges range from £1.20 for 1 hour to £6.00 for 5 hours. On Sundays and public holidays, there is a flat all-day charge of £2.00.
- **Proposed Change:** Correct administrative issues in Link Road and Jackson Square, Bishop's Stortford relating to car club bays and operational hours.
- **Rationale:** The proposed changes have been put forward to correct administrative issues.

3.3. The changes proposed in the consultation for all car parks were:

Blue Badge Parking across all Council Car Parks

- **Current Policy:** Blue Badge holders can park in any Council car park free of charge but should display their blue badge at all times. They are encouraged to use designated blue badge spaces as a priority where these are available.
- **Proposed Change:** Introduce a 3-hour limit on free parking for Blue Badge holders across all Council car parks, with no return within the same chargeable period.
- **Rationale:** The proposed changes for introducing a 3-hour limit for free Blue Badge parking in all East Herts Council car parks, are intended to improve turnover and availability of accessible spaces while supporting consistent and effective parking management across the district.

3.4. The order will also raise charges in all car parks from April 2026 in line with the Consumer Price Index.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 East Hertfordshire District Council currently operates 25 off-street car parks across the district. Following a comprehensive review of its Off-Street Parking Places, the Council is proposing amendments to the 2014 Off-Street Parking Places Orders to improve the efficiency, consistency, and management of parking provision across both urban and rural locations.

4.2 In October 2025, the Council undertook a district-wide [public consultation](#) on a series of proposed changes to council-managed car parks. The consultation ran from 9 October 2025 to 6 November 2025 sought views on proposed changes to operational hours, tariffs, maximum stay periods, and parking arrangements for specific user groups.

4.3 The proposals were developed in line with the East Herts Parking Strategy and relevant County Transport Plans and were subject to statutory consultation with Hertfordshire County Council, as well as consultation with the Police and Fire and Rescue Service.

4.4 The consultation also clarified that separate tariff increases, previously agreed and aligned with Consumer Price Index (CPI) adjustments from April 2026, were not part of this consultation but remain scheduled for future implementation.

4.5 A total of 636 responses were received via the online consultation survey. In addition, formal written objections were submitted by the Chair of Buntingford Chamber of Commerce and Buntingford Town Council. All responses and objections have been reviewed and analysed by officers.

4.6 The following section summarises the key themes arising from the consultation responses and objections, together with officer responses.

5. CONSULTATION RESPONSE

5.1 A total of 636 responses were received via the online consultation survey. In addition, formal written objections were submitted by the Chair of Buntingford Chamber of Commerce, Hertford Town Council, and Buntingford Town Council. All responses and objections have been reviewed and analysed by officers.

5.2 The table below sets out the total number of responses received through the online consultation survey, together with the objections submitted.

Proposal	Total no of responses	No of objections
Extend operational hours at Bowling Green Lane, Buntingford to 7:30am–6:30pm and introduce weekend charging.	182	181
Introduce weekend charges at Bell Street, Sawbridgeworth, aligned with weekday tariffs.	243	241
Introduce a 3-hour maximum stay for all customers at Gascoyne Way Level A, Hertford.	44	44
Amend Old London Road, Hertford to include both long-stay and short-stay options.	5	4
Introduce a 2.5-hour parking charge at Grange Paddocks A, Bishop's Stortford.	91	75
Extend operational hours at Grange Paddocks B & C, Bishop's Stortford to 8:00pm.	37	29
Merge Kibes Lane North & Kibes Lane South (Ware) into one car park, with short-stay Mon–Sat and long-stay on Sundays/public holidays.	80	68
Rename the Library car park (Ware) to	54	43

“Burbage Lane” and reduce maximum stay to 3 hours.		
Combine Amwell End East and Amwell End West into a single Amwell End car park.	23	9
Convert underused disabled bays at Northgate End (Bishop’s Stortford) to parent & child bays.	26	14
Correct administrative issues in Link Road and Jackson Square, Bishop’s Stortford relating to car club bays and operational hours.	13	4
Introduce a 3-hour limit on free parking for Blue Badge holders across all Council car parks.	111	102

5.3 Section 6 summarises the key themes arising from the consultation responses and objections, together with officer responses.

6. OVERALL THEMES

6.1. The main themes from the consultation responses for the rural car parks are as follows:

Consultation response theme	Officer response
Negative economic impact on local businesses/facilities/schools	The East Herts Parking Strategy seeks to support town and local centres by ensuring the efficient use and turnover of parking spaces, particularly in locations experiencing prolonged stays. Introducing weekend and evening charging aligns with the Strategy’s objective to create a consistent and fair charging structure across operational days. In response to consultation concerns regarding affordability and potential impacts on rural communities, officers recommend that objections to the introduction of weekend charging in Buntingford, Sawbridgeworth, and Stanstead Abbots Rural car

	<p>parks be overruled. However, after carefully considering the points made and with a view to softening the impact on users of rural car parks the following mitigations be applied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monday to Friday tariffs will remain unchanged across all three rural car parks, instead of applying an inflationary increase - Saturday charging will be introduced in Buntingford and Sawbridgeworth, aligned with existing weekday rates. - A flat all-day Sunday charge of £1.50 will apply across all three rural car parks, including Bowling Green Lane (Buntingford), Bell Street (Sawbridgeworth), and Stanstead Abbots Rural car park, instead of the original £2.10 originally consulted upon. <p>Officers consider that these measures strike an appropriate balance between ensuring consistency in parking management, supporting turnover, and recognising the unique characteristics of rural car parks. This approach mitigates financial impacts on local residents and businesses, while remaining consistent with the wider Parking Strategy.</p>
<p>This scheme will displace those seeking free parking on the high street to nearby residential streets</p>	<p>The Parking Strategy recognises the potential for displacement following changes to charging arrangements and requires a network-wide approach to parking management. Weekend and evening charging is intended to manage demand within council-operated car parks rather than displace it. Officers consider the risk of significant displacement to be limited; however, post-implementation monitoring will be undertaken. Should displacement issues arise, the Strategy provides scope for further review and mitigation measures.</p>
<p>Financial burden on residents</p>	<p>The objection is acknowledged, and mitigations have been applied. To reduce financial impact on</p>

<p>resulting from higher tariffs or longer charging hours</p>	<p>residents, weekday tariffs will not increase, and Saturday charging will match weekday rates. The introduction of a £1.50 all-day Sunday charge provides a low-cost option for longer stays. Officers consider this approach fair, proportionate, and consistent with the Parking Strategy's requirement that users contribute reasonably to the upkeep of parking facilities.</p>
<p>30 minutes free parking is not enough.</p>	<p>The provision of a 30-minute free parking period is intended to support short visits while discouraging longer stays that reduce space availability. This approach is consistent with the Parking Strategy's emphasis on turnover and accessibility. Longer visits remain possible through paid parking at reasonable tariff levels.</p>
<p>Adverse impact on health, wellbeing, and community participation (e.g. gym visits, walks, sports activities, short community trips)</p>	<p>While the Council recognises the importance of access to leisure, health, and community activities, the Parking Strategy also promotes sustainable travel choices and efficient parking management, particularly for short, local trips. The introduction of weekend charging is not considered likely to materially deter participation, given the continued availability of short free stays and low-cost parking options. The proposal supports broader objectives to manage demand and reduce congestion during busy periods.</p>
<p>Low Usage / Lack of Justification for Extended Operational Hours</p>	<p>The Parking Strategy requires decisions to be evidence-led and consistent across the parking estate. Operational hours and tariffs are reviewed using occupancy surveys, turnover, demand modelling, and financial assessments. Extended hours are only proposed where data shows pressure on availability, misuse, or a need to manage assets consistently across the district. Additional evidence requested by respondents will be incorporated into the final decision process.</p>
<p>Medical</p>	<p>The objection is acknowledged. The extension of</p>

appointments & School pick up after 3pm	<p>charging hours to 6:30 pm in Buntingford is intended to introduce consistent parking management during periods of continued demand, including weekday afternoons. While it is recognised that some users rely on parking for medical appointments or school pick-ups, the proposals retain a free short-stay parking period, which is considered sufficient for many drop-off and collection activities.</p> <p>Longer stays remain available through paid parking at modest tariff levels, ensuring continued access while improving space availability for a wider range of users. The Council considers the extension of charging hours to be proportionate and consistent with the objectives of the East Herts Parking Strategy to promote fair use, turnover, and effective management of parking facilities.</p>
--	--

6.2. The main themes from the consultation responses for the urban car parks are as follows:

Consultation response theme	Officer response
Insufficient time for shopping, leisure use, or completing visits due to reduced maximum stay periods	<p>The comment is noted. The Parking Strategy - December 2024 recognises that all-day is necessary in some cases, perhaps the availability of all-day parking in some town car parks lead to prolonged use of spaces. parking requires that short-stay car parks provide efficient turnover to maintain access to shops, leisure and essential services. Occupancy surveys demonstrate that the sites proposed for shorter maximum stays consistently operate above the 85% utilisation benchmark cited in the Strategy as requiring intervention. Reducing maximum stay duration is therefore consistent with the Strategy’s approach to managing constrained assets and improving</p>

	availability.
Potential negative economic impact on local businesses and community facilities due to higher tariffs or extended charging hours	The Parking Strategy aims to balance economic vitality with sound management of parking assets. It is not anticipated that moderate evening charges will significantly reduce footfall when implemented alongside clear signage and suitable payment options. The Council will continue to monitor business impact through periodic reviews.
Financial burden on residents resulting from higher tariffs or longer charging hours	The comment is noted. The Parking Strategy requires that parking charges are fair, proportionate, and reflective of the cost of managing and maintaining parking facilities. Concessions or exemptions (where already in policy) are maintained, and the Strategy emphasises consistency, charges are adjusted to reflect demand patterns, not to create undue burden.
Low current usage or insufficient evidence to justify extended operational hours or increased charges	Operational hours and tariffs are reviewed using occupancy surveys, turnover, demand modelling, and financial assessments. Extended hours are proposed where data shows pressure on availability, misuse, or a need to manage assets consistently across the district.
Adverse impact on health,	While the Council recognises the importance of access to leisure, health, and community activities, the Parking Strategy also promotes sustainable

<p>wellbeing, and community participation (e.g., gym visits, walks, sports activities, short community trips)</p>	<p>travel choices and efficient parking management, particularly for short, local trips. The introduction of evening charging is not considered likely to materially deter participation, given the continued availability of short free stays and low-cost parking options. The proposal supports broader objectives to manage demand and reduce congestion during busy periods.</p>
<p>Accessibility and inclusion concerns for disabled users, elderly people, carers, and families</p>	<p>Equality and accessibility considerations are a core requirement of the Parking Strategy. Blue Badge holders can park free for 3 hours. Officer assessment will ensure that any operational change does not disproportionately disadvantage protected groups. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) informs final recommendations.</p>
<p>Potential displacement of vehicles into surrounding residential roads</p>	<p>Displacement risk is assessed as part of the Parking Strategy's network-wide impact evaluation. Where modelling indicates likely overspill, mitigation may include reviewing Resident Permit Zones, monitoring post-implementation conditions, or adjusting proposals. The Council aims to prevent adverse effects on residential areas.</p>
<p>Impact on workers, commuters, and town visitors due to limited alternative long-stay parking options</p>	<p>The objection is acknowledged but recommended to be overruled. This proposal aligns with the Council's standard operating model, which prioritises short-stay parking closer to town centres while locating long-stay parking on the periphery to support turnover and efficient use of parking spaces.</p> <p>The Parking Strategy differentiates between short-stay (town-centre support) and long-stay (commuter/worker) needs. Where long-stay capacity is limited, proposals aim to align demand</p>

	<p>with available supply and encourage alternative modes where feasible. Further review of long-stay provision may be undertaken if sustained unmet demand is evidenced.</p> <p>Baldock Street car park, situated approximately five minutes' walk from Kibes Lane, operates as a mixed-use facility on the edge of Ware and is currently under-utilised, providing an accessible alternative for longer-stay users. Customers may also be encouraged to consider sustainable travel options for short trips to the town centre, supporting the Council's wider objectives to reduce reliance on private vehicles.</p> <p>Officers therefore consider the conversion to be proportionate, justified, and consistent with the Parking Strategy, balancing effective parking management with accessibility for commuters and town visitors.</p>
<p>Lack of alternative long-stay parking to offset reductions caused by conversion to short-stay or reduced maximum stay limits</p>	<p>This comment is noted. Converting some sites to short-stay supports town-centre turnover and reduces congestion caused by long-stay occupation of prime spaces. However, the Parking Strategy requires that long-stay need be considered district-wide. If analysis shows an overall deficit, the Council may review capacity distribution, signage to existing long-stay options, or future provision planning.</p> <p>Please also see the response above for more information relating to this theme.</p>

6.3. The main themes from the consultation responses for the changes to blue badge holders are as follows:

<p>Consultation response theme</p>	<p>Officer response</p>
---	--------------------------------

<p>3 hours is insufficient time for disabled users</p>	<p>The Council recognises the significant concerns raised regarding the adequacy of a 3-hour free parking limit for Blue Badge holders. The Department for Transport’s The Blue Badge scheme: rights and responsibilities in England permits local authorities to apply time limits in off-street car parks, provided such restrictions are clearly advertised and implemented in accordance with equality duties.</p> <p>Having carefully considered consultation responses, officers recommend that objections to the proposed 3-hour free parking limit be overruled, subject to a modification to the original proposal. The Traffic Regulation Order will permit Blue Badge holders to remain parked beyond the initial 3-hour free period within the same chargeable period, provided the applicable parking tariff is paid for the additional duration.</p> <p>This modification represents a lessening of the proposal’s potential impact while retaining the Parking Strategy objective of managing demand and ensuring space availability. From mid-January, the introduction of the National Parking Platform (NPP) across all Council car parks will provide flexible and accessible payment options, enabling Blue Badge holders to extend their stay where required, including for medical appointments, care visits, or social activities.</p> <p>This approach aligns with East Herts’ Parking Strategy 2024, which states that car park management must balance turnover, space availability and accessibility for priority users. It has also informed the Equality Impact Assessment and is considered to represent a proportionate balance between accessibility for disabled users and the effective management of limited parking capacity.</p>
<p>Impact on Wellbeing, Social</p>	<p>The Council recognises that parking availability and duration can influence the ability of disabled residents to access services, amenities and community activities.</p>

<p>Participation & Independence</p>	<p>However, parking controls form part of a wider Parking Strategy designed to support town-centre accessibility for all users, including disabled people. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Council is required to consider potential impacts on participation and independence when implementing such measures. These matters will be assessed through the Equality Impact Assessment to ensure that any impacts on wellbeing and social participation have been properly considered within the overall policy framework.</p>
<p>Fairness, Equality & Discrimination Concerns</p>	<p>The Council notes concerns that the proposal may disproportionately affect disabled users and has carefully considered these issues in line with its duties under the Equality Act 2010. The Act permits differential treatment where it is objectively justified and proportionate, provided reasonable adjustments are considered and implemented.</p> <p>While objections to the introduction of a 3-hour free parking limit for Blue Badge holders are acknowledged, officers recommend that they be overruled, subject to the modification that Blue Badge holders may remain parked beyond the free period within the same chargeable period on payment of the applicable tariff. This adjustment ensures that disabled users are not prevented from completing longer visits while supporting turnover and availability of priority parking spaces.</p> <p>The proposal applies only to off-street car parks and does not remove or reduce the provision of designated disabled bays. The introduction of the National Parking Platform will further support accessibility by enabling flexible payment arrangements across all Council car parks.</p> <p>Consultation responses and the modified proposal have been assessed through the Equality Impact Assessment to ensure compliance with the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty and to avoid placing disabled users at a substantial disadvantage while supporting effective</p>

	parking management.
Medical, Care & Appointment Demands	The Council acknowledges that some Blue Badge holders use car parks to access medical appointments, care services and day-centre activities, which may vary in duration. The Council's parking policies seek to facilitate access to essential services while also managing demand for limited parking capacity. In line with statutory equality duties, the Equality Impact Assessment will consider the potential impacts of the proposed time limit on those accessing health and care services, ensuring that the Council has had due regard to these factors when implementing the Traffic Regulation Order.

7. IMPLICATIONS/CONSULTATIONS

7.1. Community Safety

- There are no community safety implications arising from this report.

7.2. Data Protection

- There are no data protection implications arising from this report.

7.3. Equalities

- An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) has been prepared to assess the proposals in detail and to ensure that any potential impacts on protected groups are fully considered and, where necessary, appropriately mitigated in accordance with the Council's statutory duties (as attached at Appendix A).
- In particular, the modification to the 3-hour free parking limit for Blue Badge holders (allowing payment for extended stays within the same chargeable period) has been incorporated to reduce potential adverse impacts on disabled users while maintaining turnover and space availability.

7.4. Environmental Sustainability

- The proposals support the Council's environmental sustainability objectives by promoting the efficient use of existing parking assets and discouraging unnecessary or prolonged car use during periods of high demand. Extending operational hours and improving consistency of parking controls helps to reduce circulation and congestion associated with drivers searching for free parking, particularly at weekends.

By encouraging appropriate parking duration and supporting turnover, the proposals contribute to improved traffic management and can help reduce vehicle emissions associated with congestion. The proposals make use of existing infrastructure and therefore do not require physical expansion of parking provision, minimising environmental impact.

7.5. Financial

- The proposals are principally designed to align tariff structures with the Parking Strategy objectives; however, officers expect there to be some additional income as a result. This will be captured in the 2026/27 budget setting process through Executive and Council. This income will contribute towards the ongoing management, maintenance, and enforcement of the Council's off-street parking facilities.
- Any additional revenue generated is intended to support the financial sustainability of the Council to help offset operational and maintenance costs. The proposals do not require significant capital investment, as they make use of existing parking infrastructure and systems.

7.6. Health and Safety

- There are no health and safety implications arising from this report.

7.7. Human Resources

- There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

7.8. Human Rights

- There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

7.9. Legal

- The proposals are made under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. All statutory consultation requirements have been met, and the Council is satisfied that the proposed amendments to the Off-Street Parking Places Orders are lawful and can be implemented in accordance with the relevant legislation.

7.10. Specific Wards

- Hertford
- Bishop's Stortford
- Buntingford
- Sawbridgeworth
- Ware
- All wards - Blue Badge parking

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS, APPENDICES AND OTHER RELEVANT MATERIAL

- East Herts Parking Strategy 2024 - [Parking Strategy](#)
- DfT Guidance on 'The Blue Badge scheme: rights and responsibilities in England' - [The Blue Badge scheme: rights and responsibilities in England - DfT](#)
- Appendix A - Equality Impact Assessment
- Appendix B - Hertfordshire Local Authorities - Blue Badge (Off Street) Car Parking Conditions
- Appendix C - Current Car Park Charges and Traffic Regulation Order Proposed Charges

Contact Member: Councillor Tim Hoskin - Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability
Tim.Hoskin@eastherts.gov.uk

Contact Officer: Benjamin Wood - Director of Regeneration, Customer and Commercial Services
Contact Tel No 07519 293733

Benjamin.Wood@eastherts.gov.uk

Report Author:

Dominique Kingsbury - Parking Services Manager

Contact Tel No 01279 502036

Dominique.Kingsbury@eastherts.gov.uk