Shropshire Parking Strategy

December 2010

Purpose of Strategy

1. The Parking Strategy is designed to adopt a consistent approach across the county and has involved a review all parking activity in Shropshire.

2. The strategy recognises the impact of car parks outside of the control of Shropshire Council and the Council will need to influence and seek cooperation from other parties to achieve a fully coordinated strategy.

Parking supply, demand and management principles

3. It is broadly recognised that parking provision is essential part of a balanced transport network meeting accessibility needs. Car parking often competes for space on and off street with competing demands, such as retail space, office space, on-street loading, pedestrians, bus stops and bus lanes. Therefore it is necessary to manage parking within a strategy of balancing needs.

Parking strategy objectives

4. The draft Local Development Framework sets out a number of objectives which this strategy supports overall, in particular:

   - Promote the economic vitality and viability of Shrewsbury and the Market Towns by addressing issues of transport integration, accessibility and parking;
   - Promote a reduction in transport emissions by reducing the need to travel and promoting the use of public transport, cycling and walking in order to reduce car dependency and by managing development within air quality management areas;

5. The proposed objectives for this Parking Strategy are as follows:

   - Enhance and support local economies in all of the market towns;
   - Manage the car park stock, prioritising by price the prime spaces;
   - Provide an income to allow the car parks to be operated without additional requirement on Council Tax; and

- In areas where alternatives are available, such as bus and park and ride, this can be encouraged and supported by the pricing structure of parking for that town.

6. Overall it is the intended aim that the Parking Strategy should work in conjunction with proposals in the emerging Market Towns Revitalisation Programme, which Shropshire Council is developing and will be reported to Cabinet in due course.

Parking provision and principles

7. In most towns it is recognised that there is a need to cater for a number of users, residents, shoppers, tourists, workers and 'mobile' tradesmen. The balance of need depends on individual locations, however in general it can be assumed that:

   - Shoppers generally require short stay convenient parking. In some locations tourists are likely to spend the whole day, and Park & Ride could be a convenient option.
   - Commuters/workers require long stay and can be encouraged to walk further to their destination and are more likely to use Park & Ride/rail facilities or local bus services.
   - Residents (where off-street private parking is not available) require on-street parking as close to home as possible. In some locations they may be given preference over shoppers/or given shared use provision.
   - Visitors and tourists may require either short or long stay parking depending upon the tourist offering and this will need to be considered in each location.
   - For some of Shropshire's towns the night time economy is important, and people are likely to make different choices therefore the pricing strategy needs to take account of this, as fewer public transport choices are available at night and there are personal security concerns for some.

Car parking supply and demand

8. Whilst in developing this strategy issues of demand and supply will be considered, changes in supply are outside of the immediate scope of this strategy with the aim being to manage the current supply effectively and where possible to encourage people to switch to more sustainable modes. Further work on future requirements for car parking will come through each town Local Development Plan Documents, and the Local Transport Plan.

Monitoring of use

9. Data is being collected to monitor levels of use at all charged car parks on a regular basis. This will inform any changes to the Strategy and requirements in specific locations.

Market Town Hierarchy

10. In order to establish a consistent approach across the county it is proposed that each town will be grouped with others that are a similar size, and have similar patterns of parking demand.

11. The aim of the strategy has been to reconcile the different approaches that have been inherited from each of the former borough/district councils.

12. The size of the town is a factor but also its draw in terms of the type of shops, catchment area and whether it is predominantly a local service centre or includes tourists. The table below shows the proposed groupings and Appendixes to this report shows town size and current parking arrangements.

Group 1	2a	Group 2b	Group 3	Group 4
Shrewsbury	Oswestry	Bridgnorth	Shifnal	Broseley
	Ludlow	Market Drayton	Wem	Cleobury Mortimer
		Whitchurch	Ellesmere	Craven Arms
			Church Stretton	Bishops Castle
			Much Wenlock	Prees
off-street and on-street	off-street and on-street*	off-street		no charge

Tariffs

13. The same parking tariff in similar car parks in all towns in each group. These would then be classified:

a. On-street premium space (as proposed in Groups 1 & 2 only*);

b. Short-term, town centre premium car parks;

c. Peripheral car parks;

d. Edge of town / all day parking.

e. Park & Ride car parks

In some towns some of the categories may not apply depending what car parks exist and where they are located.

14. For Group 2 towns, on-street charging will mean that prime short stay (1/2/3 hour) will be charged in central streets. In most towns there is still likely to be some edge of town on-street parking that remains free. Currently only Ludlow and Shrewsbury have on-street charges.

15. For Groups 3 and 4 towns it is not proposed to charge for on-street parking. These short term convenience parking spaces are seen as valuable for access to some of the shops in these locations and vital to the economic vitality of these smaller towns.

16. Formal consultation will be required to introduce new charges as part of the agreed Council procedures.

17. To encourage the use of public transport, i.e. local bus services where they exist, the relationship between parking tariffs, local bus fares and Park & Ride tariffs is important. Local bus service fares should be lower than the Park & Ride tariff in order to encourage people to use the bus service (where available) rather than driving to a cheaper Park & Ride, in turn Park and Ride should be cheaper than long stay car parking in the town centre. When setting charges they will be considered in this context.

Time band to charge

18. The issue with different charging bands raises the question whether charges should apply at night and on a Sunday. Although there is still a demand and a need to manage night time parking, there are fewer choices of alternatives, of Park & Ride or bus services. On a Sunday many towns now see a normal shopping or visitor day, therefore there is a need to manage Sunday parking to serve shoppers and visitors. Overall there is also a benefit in simplifying and providing a consistent approach.

19. It is proposed to maintain / introduce standard tariff seven day charges for off-street car parks where charges are applied. It is not proposed to introduce on street Sunday charges. While charging in off street car parks whilst maintaining free on street parking on a Sunday does create the effect of people seeking to park on street it is considered that the cost of on street enforcement outweighs the benefits to be gained.

20. It is recommended that consistent time bands for charges are applied across Shropshire and it is proposed that where made, charges are standardised as follows:

- For off-street car parks 8am to 6pm Monday to Sunday.
- For on street parking 8am to 6pm Monday to Saturday no Sunday charges.

21. However it should be noted that at night time the choice of alternative transport in some locations is more limited e.g. bus services and thus providing lower cost or free parking may have a bigger impact on encouraging people into the market towns in the evening. Due to this lack of alternative transport and enforcement challenges it is not proposed to introduce late evening/ night time charges.

On-street parking charges

22. For Group 2a towns, on-street charging will mean that prime short stay (1/2/3 hour) will be charged in central streets. This will only apply to Ludlow and Shrewsbury as at present. Consideration will be given to charging in Oswestry, if a park and ride service is considered viable and appropriate.

23. Group 2b towns, will retain free on-street parking. In most locations it is intended to be limited to 45 minutes in the prime shopping streets.

24. For Groups 3 and 4 towns it is not proposed to charge for on-street parking. These short term convenience parking spaces are seen as valuable for access to some of the shops in these locations and vital to the economic vitality of these smaller towns.

Third party owned car parks

25. There are a number of public car parks not in the ownership of Shropshire Council. Where appropriate it is intended that a consistent approach to managing car parking is achieved therefore it is the intention where possible to reach agreement with other providers (e.g. car parks owned by Town Councils, NCP) to position these car parks in line with the overall Strategy.

Town Council subsidy

26. Two Town Councils currently subsidise parking in their town by payment of an annual fee to Shropshire Council to cover the income that would have been received through Pay & Display. In order to provide some local choices, it is recommended that this option is available.

27. If this option is taken up it is recommended that the annual charge be calculated on 200 day occupancy with a suggested discount of 25%. The exact income and forecasts are being assessed and therefore some adjustment to the discount may be appropriate to protect income levels. Any agreements would be subject to annual review.

28. If Town Councils wish to subsidise car parking it is important that they are aware that the withdrawal of payment by the customer can have negative effects in reducing turnover of spaces, and to reduce incentives for people to choose alternative modes of transport potentially impacting upon the longer term viability of public transport.

Shopper/Retailer subsidy

29. Currently in Shrewsbury, the Market Hall traders offer their customers a refund of the parking charge on presentation of the parking ticket. Ticket machines are programmed to issue a duplicate ticket which enables this.

30. Again although there are similar issues about drivers thinking about alternative methods of travel where possible, this does allow for local loyalty incentives to shoppers when supporting local shops and is recommended to be made available where requested.

Park and Ride provision

31. Shrewsbury and Ludlow already have park and ride services. Within this strategy there are no changes recommended in these towns. Expanded Park & Ride provision for Shrewsbury is being considered for the longer term through the next Local Transport Plan.

32. Park & Ride will remain in Shrewsbury and Ludlow. Further consideration will be given to providing Park & Ride in Oswestry in the future. The groupings in the hierarchy set out that for Groups 1 and 2a Park & Ride is part of the strategy, Group 2b does not include Park & Ride as part of the strategy for those towns.

Charging Mechanisms

33. In general where charges in a car park or on-street are applied, Pay & Display machines are used. Whilst pay on foot machines/pay on exit Pay Stations that give change, such as in Shrewsbury Raven Meadows car park, are popular with users, these are expensive to install and maintain. The Pay Station costs in the region of £16,000 added to the cost of a barrier and ticket reader required at the exit at £10,000, plus on-going maintenance requirement. Pay & Display ticket machines cost in the region of £4,000. In many cases the level of income is not sufficient to warrant the higher investment or operating costs of Pay Stations relative to Pay and Display and this will need to be a consideration. Barriers require maintenance, and if a car park is not staffed any mechanical failures can cause problems. It is recommended therefore that Pay & Display be retained in smaller car parks, and only car parks above 500 spaces be considered for Pay Stations permitting pay on exit.

34. In the future consideration will be given to upgrading Pay & Display machines to give more options for payment, such as by mobile phone, credit card etc.

Season Tickets – off street car parks

35. It is proposed that season tickets will be car park specific (currently some are for more than one car park) and will be registration specific, with up to two vehicles registrations per permit. It is recommended that no season tickets should be issued for short stay car parks as this parking is designed to be available for short stay trips.

36. One exception to the requirement for limiting season tickets to two registration numbers is to issue B&Bs and Hotels, with business registered season tickets. The justification for exempting these businesses is that they do not know in advance the registration numbers of customers. All other business users should be able to operate on standard (two registrations) season tickets and there is no limit on how many season tickets anyone can buy.

Residents Parking Zones

37. The draft Residents Parking Zone Policy is set out in the Appendix 1, Residents Parking Zone Policy. Some amendments have been made to the RPZ policy having been through Scrutiny Committee and other informal consultation, in 2009. These are identified in the same document, and specifically include a change to allow all households within a RPZ up to 2 permits. It is proposed that these principles be applied to any other RPZs in existence or which are implemented in the future and form part of the new Parking Strategy.

38. In general RPZ space is protected for residents, but there are some shared use Pay & Display bays which can operate well in the right location.

39. It is recommended that businesses are excluded from having permits in RPZ as they should be able to use season tickets in public car parks. Should they require parking outside their premises while loading or unloading business vehicles the regulations allow for this in most cases, although it may be time restricted?

40. Residents in RPZs are able to purchase books of day/half day tickets, which can be used by anyone visiting them.

Waivers

41. A list of waivers and conditions appropriate for issuing them has been established, this is set out in Appendix - Waivers Policy (for on-street parking). This provides for carers, meals on wheels, essential trades, such as plumbers, etc. These usually allow for parking, where essential, in Residents Parking Zones or Pay & Display, or in certain cases on double yellow lines. Clear principles are set out, which need to be backed up by clear issuing procedures for staff. These are being drafted.

Private non-residential parking

42. The Council will work where possible with third parties, private employers, to produce travel plans which address levels of parking within their sites, to aim for compatibility with the Council's transport and parking policies. Parking Standards and Travel Plans for new buildings are part of the development management function of the council. These are currently being reviewed in the new Local Development Framework and Town Development Plan Documents which addresses Planning policy across the county.

Disabled parking provision. Blue Badge Holders.

43. It is current practice to provide on-street disabled parking spaces at locations of greatest need. Blue Badge holders are able to park on double yellow lines anywhere providing they are not causing an obstruction. On-street Blue badge spaces will remain free. Charges for Blue Badge holders will be applied in line with standard charges.

Enforcement

44. The introduction of charges in areas where they do not currently apply has implications for the policy and resources available for enforcement. It is accepted that parking enforcement should be cost neutral when considering both the income from penalty charge notices and a proportion of parking income of approximately 5%.

45. Further consideration is being given to the enforcement regimes following the outcome of considerations on this paper and the council's approach to environmental enforcement. This may include alternative cost effective

methods such as camera enforcement, although this will be subject to further cabinet report and decisions, should any new methods be recommended.

46. The management of car parking including enforcement and cash collection is a service that Shropshire Council could provide for town councils and could be considered as part of the market towns discussion.

47. Enforcement levels are balanced across the county to achieve the intended use of the car park, or on-street parking arrangements. The protocols for issuing PCNs Penalty Charge Notices are set out in Shropshire Council Standard Operational Procedures for the Parking Enforcement Officers. This includes instructions on ‘length’ of observation, of an infringement before a PCN is issued.

Signage

48. It is proposed to review all parking signage as part of the introduction of changes through the Parking Strategy. In principle it will be assumed that signage will meet minimum legal requirements, whilst reducing street clutter.

Income

49. Income initially needs to cover the cost of operating a parking service for Shropshire. This should include:

- Car park maintenance.
- Ticket machine maintenance.
- Operational staff costs.
- Enforcement staff costs.

50. Beyond meeting these costs, the income can be used to support other transport functions and facilities the council seeks to provide, such as Park & Ride.

Appendices.

Appendix A1. Residents Parking Policy

Appendix A2. Waiver Policy

Appendix A3. Events and Concessions

Appendix A4. Proposed Parking Charge Structure