

STAFFORD BOROUGH

CAR PARK STRATEGY TO 2016



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Overview

Parking presents complex issues, which often require the right balance to be found rather than a single solution. Control over parking and the issues that lead to parking are not in the hands of one authority and a partnership approach is required. This Strategy has been developed by Members and Officers from the Borough and County Councils following widespread consultation with residents, businesses, interested organisations and individuals.

The development of this Parking Strategy was based on a comprehensive understanding of the parking, supply and demand position in Stafford Borough, as well as the perceptions of people who use parking facilities in the Borough.

The desired actions contained within this Car Park Strategy are subject to resources being available.

The availability of parking affects the level of car use and therefore the level of traffic congestion on our streets. The development of this Parking Strategy will take into account that many of the roads in the Borough, particularly in Stafford and Stone Town centres are subject to congestion, mainly during peak hours, but also increasingly at off-peak times.

Such high levels of traffic result in pollution and other adverse effects on the environment and economy. Since it is not possible to provide enough road space to accommodate all the private cars that seek to use the Borough's roads, ways have to be found to increase usage of alternatives to the car, including public transport, cycling and walking. This is particularly important with regard to commuter trips.

The level of provision for long stay parking spaces will have an impact on the level of car commuting.

Another important factor is the role of the council as a major provider of parking services and its obligation to ensure that its services are being delivered effectively. The proposed Parking Strategy will therefore comprise an important element of the delivery of the council's obligations with regard to the 2004 Traffic Management Act.

The strategy has been designed to run in conjunction with, and complement, the Staffordshire County Council review document "Parking Strategy for Stafford Town Centre" commissioned in March 2006.

The findings of this parking analysis report acknowledged that in Stafford, overall demand for public short and long stay space during the peak demand periods is in excess of 85%, suggesting that demand for publicly managed space is not being met at certain times of the day and has reached a critical level. However, this may not represent the true demand because there may be additional demand that is not present because of the lack of adequate parking.

As previously stated this review was commissioned in March 2006, therefore caution must be taken on reliance of any outcomes or recommendations. These may be flawed due to the time lapse and current financial pressures and influences on the economy. The work is currently being updated by the County Council to reflect current requirements.

This strategy has been composed and underpinned in accordance with the Local Transport Plan (LTP). The LTP has been formulated in line with the Government Parking Policy Guidance 13 Transport (PPG13 - objectives are to integrate planning and transport at the National, regional, strategic and local level and to promote more sustainable transport choices. It has also been developed in line with the "Local Development Framework 2006 – 2026" and Staffordshire County Council.

Strategy Objectives

The Parking Strategy outlines proposals to change parking provision and management to meet the future needs of the Borough up to 2016. As well as focusing on car parking, the strategy also covers parking by other modes, including cycles, powered two wheelers and lorry parking, together with special parking requirements for groups such as the mobility impaired.

The scope of the Parking Strategy is therefore wide ranging and covers the following:

- Review the provision of parking in Stafford Borough
- Review the perception that people have of parking provision in the Borough
- Review national, regional and local policy context
- Review how regeneration objectives and development proposals impact upon future parking provision and management
- Review access and congestion issues
- Review parking management and enforcement
- Review the council's role in providing and managing parking facilities
- Review special parking requirements (disabled, cyclists powered two wheelers, lorries and park and ride facilities)
- Encourage a reduction in work place parking
- Consider all options to retain or replace existing short-stay parking within the town centre, including the development of existing sites with extra levels above or below ground.

Safe, secure and accessible parking is vital to the attractiveness and viability of both Stafford and Stone town centre parking. The council works with private sector operators and its partners across the Borough to encourage a consistent approach to the supply and management of parking facilities.

The future viability and promotion of both town centres is key to the economic regeneration. There is an aspiration to transform extensive areas of the Borough. During the next decade, there is a determination to deliver ambitious proposals that will see the Stafford town centre revitalised.

This parking strategy will help support regeneration of Stafford and Stone town centres, as well as surrounding villages, while also encouraging the use of more sustainable transport choices and improving highway safety.

This Parking Strategy endeavours to address these issues and respond to the needs of motorists, other road and public transport users, and business within the wider context.

Whilst planning future parking provision and management, account must be taken not only of national and regional planning and transport policies but should also complement local land use and regeneration policies. Parking provision should reflect wider community objectives; facilities should be safe and secure with appropriate provision for people with disabilities.

- Achieve a reduction in overall traffic
- To promote use of more sustainable and healthy forms of travel
- To achieve a more effective and efficient transport system, whilst taking into account:
 - The economic vitality of the town centre
 - The parking needs of people with disabilities
 - The parking needs of local residents, shops and businesses

1 Parking Strategy Benefits

An effective parking Strategy will help to further a wide range of objectives such as:

- Economic vitality of Stafford and Stone Town centres
- Social (accessibility)
- Environmental (negative impact of traffic congestion)
- Pricing and availability of parking in the town centre is one of the few ways of managing or restraining car use
- Compared to major infrastructure changes, parking policies are relatively easy to introduce and cost effective methods of managing demand, which can be easily modified to reflect changing situations.

2 Parking Strategy Limitations

An essential aspect of this Strategy is to continue to develop future parking objectives. These are to be framed within a standard Local Travel Plan (LTP) performance management regime that identifies:

- Excess demand for short stay spaces
- Support Town Centre vitality through adequate supply of short stay spaces
- Recommendations for delivering more short / better short stay parking in centres
- Increase in short stay parking provision
- Improved access and attractiveness of the centre for short stay users

Although parking does not feature within mandatory LTP outcome indicators, the Department for Transport (DfT) has identified a number of optional outcome indicators that are relevant to the development of a Stafford Parking Strategy. These include:

- Total parking provision
- Proportion of short stay parking
- Price differential between long and short stay parking
- Percentage of planning permission exceeding parking standards
- Proportion of workforce covered by Travel Plans

These will be reviewed within the continuing development of the parking strategy while other outcome indicators that more directly relate to local parking policies have been identified with the aim of establishing clear objectives and targets based on the expected outcomes for the strategy.

- In this way, the strategy defines a transparent policy context whereby stakeholders and decision makers are able to appreciate the linkages from current problems, through to strategy development and the outcomes associated with particular strategy elements.
- Incomplete control of the parking stock can limit the ability to achieve desired objective
- Conflict between the objectives that parking policies are trying to serve e.g. regeneration, traffic restraint and revenue generation.

- A parking strategy is not a total solution in that other supporting measures will be required to achieve the objectives.
- Parking policy interventions can be ineffective without adequate enforcement.

3 Local Parking Strategy Objectives

- Ensure that the parking strategy aims and objectives are consistent with national, regional and local transport policies
- Prioritise the parking needs of disabled people, local residents, suppliers of goods and services, businesses and their customers
- Promote more sustainable travel choices through availability and pricing of town centre car parking
- Discourage the use of town centre parking spaces for long stay parking and seek to maximise the availability of short stay spaces in prime, central locations for use by shoppers and other short stay users
- Ensure that parking restrictions both on and off- street are effectively enforced and minimise the impact of town centre parking controls on surrounding residential areas

3.1 Charging Strategy

This Authority will in principle impose charges for parking at levels reflecting local pressures and needs. These may vary:

- Between Stafford and Stone Town Centres
- Between different zones within Stafford and Stone Town Centres

However the scale of charges should conform to a consistent pattern across the stay periods in areas. These should follow national guidelines. Thus the percentage increase in charge from one time period to the next should be consistent throughout all locations.

Car parks currently not having charges will be reviewed and the need for application for charges considered in the light of the criteria stated above. Any charges imposed will be designed to regulate use and improve availability as well as diverting long stay away from very central locations.

Income earned should cover operating and maintenance costs and allow necessary improvements to the usability, environment and security of a number of these sites.

- The Borough has a number of off street car parks for which there is no charge. It is intended that parking charges will be considered only on those sites for which a good case can be made under the above criteria.

3.2 Short Stay Parking

This Authority will give priority to and manage the provision of short stay parking in the town centre:

- Short stay visitors to the town centre are less likely to travel at peak periods i.e. reduce congestion; improve efficiency of the road network.
- Short stay parking generates a high turnover of spaces allowing more visitors to be accommodated per space.
- Availability of short stay spaces is essential to maintaining the commercial viability of the town centres.

3.3 Long Stay Parking

This Authority will manage the provision of long stay parking in the town centres through pricing to encourage the use of more sustainable transport. Also by a system of differential charging to promote the use of peripheral car parks where such parking is to be accommodated:

- Commuters travel at peak periods and are a major contribution to congestion of the road network.
- Commuter parking monopolises parking spaces for the entire working day.
- Transport objectives may be achieved more easily through parking policy interventions aimed at the commuter. It is more practicable for example for the commuter to change their travel patterns than it is to continually expand the road network and parking stock.
- Long stay parking provision in connection with bus or rail commuter travel is supported in order to reduce the level of dependency on the motorcar as a means of commuting to work.
- Contract parking: contracts will be made available on selected car parks for regular long stay customers, sold at competitive rates.
- Support the reallocation of long-stay parking either by redevelopment for other uses or reallocation to short or variable stay, where justified by provision of park and ride sites or improvements in public transport accessibility.

3.4 Disabled Parking Provision

This Authority will prioritise where appropriate the needs of those people who have no choice but to use the car to access essential services:

- Continue support of the shopmobility scheme within Stafford Town Centre.
- Improve the quality and provision of disabled parking in off street car parks in accordance with Disability Discrimination Act requirements. Local conditions and demand are also considered in determining the number and location of spaces to be provided.
- Continue to provide disabled parking on street in appropriate safe locations.

3.5 Parking Enforcement

This Authority will ensure parking policy interventions are operated effectively and contribute to the wider objectives of transport planning and economic development within the provisions of the relevant legislation.

Fundamental to any parking strategy is the need for efficient parking enforcement. This is to ensure that on-street parking supply is managed effectively, to prevent inappropriate parking that could cause congestion and increase dangers for other road users, and to ensure proper management of off-street car parks and time limited on-street parking.

- *Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984*
 - Provides powers under which Councils are able to provide and manage off street car parks. The use of the Council's car parks is regulated by orders permissible under the Act. It also provides powers for the Highway Authority to make traffic regulation orders for the control and regulation of traffic and parking on the highway.
- *Road Traffic Act 1991 (Decriminalised Parking Enforcement)*
 - Introduced to address the increase in illegal parking (growing car ownership and use) and fears that police resources would not be able to match the demand for enforcement.
- *Traffic Management Act 2004 (Civil Parking Enforcement)*
 - Imposes a Statutory duty on Local Authorities to reduce the cause of congestion and disruption by controlling parking and the road network as a whole.
 - Part 6 of the TMA provides a single framework to make regulations for the civil enforcement of parking and waiting restrictions, bus lanes and some moving traffic offences.

Stafford Borough Council provide both on and off street parking enforcement, cash collection and banking and ambassadorial roles. A small number Civil Enforcement Officers have also been trained in environmental crime enforcement and actively perform this function on an advanced planning basis.

This existing contract is due to terminate in March 2011; this strategy is fundamental to the development of the requirements of the subsequent contract.

Certain aspects of this operation are currently under review in terms of public perception, uniform and ambassadorial role.

The Civil Parking Enforcement contract with Staffordshire County Council and Stoke on Trent City Council have been reviewed in terms of remodeling the volumes of PCN's and fixed and variable cost to realign the budget with actual and predicted levels of enforcement.

The existing contracts with Staffordshire County Council and Stoke City Council are due for review in 2012.

This strategy is critical to the preparation of future budgetary requirements.

3.6 On-Street Parking

Staffordshire County Council as local highway authority is responsible for the control and regulation of on street parking.

This Authority will provide on street, limited waiting parking facilities where it is considered safe to do so without undue interference with moving traffic, residents, businesses and other urban objectives.

3.7 Residents Parking

This Authority will prioritise the parking needs of residents in areas, which are affected by non-residential parking, or are likely to be affected as a result of policy interventions in relation to long stay parking in the town centres.

The Borough will continue to work closely in partnership with Staffordshire County Council to develop and operate residents' on-street parking schemes to:

- Aim to balance the conflicting demands for kerb space.
- Manage the displacement of parking.
- Develop robust, fair policies as the available kerb space in many areas will not be sufficient to cater for all demands from residents and other legitimate users.

4 Improvements and Maintenance of Parking Infrastructure

A major determining factor in people's experience of visiting the boroughs commercial, tourism and leisure facilities is the quality of the parking infrastructure, which is important and should create a good first impression to those visitors.

The Authority is limited in what and how quickly it can achieve. It is important, however, that a good standard of parking is attained and maintained. The Council has identified a programme of works that will be implemented over the next 3 years totalling approximately £500,000.

Prior to implementing significant improvement or maintenance of any car park, a scheme will be designed in order to achieve the best possible efficient layout, landscaping and integration within its surrounding area.

5 Action / Delivery Plan

Implementation

Within the Strategy context established in the preceding sections, a number of short, medium and long-term proposals have been identified for implementation within set timescales.

The desired actions are subject to resources being available.

These timescales have been calculated to run in tandem with the final 12 months of the current enforcement contract and development and implementation of the requirements for the subsequent contract, predicted to commence April 2011.

Time has been built in to allow for: -

- Information gathering
- Consultation
- Feasibility studies
- Appraisal and evaluation

These timescales are as follows: -

- Short term
 - Present to April 2011
- Medium Term
 - April 2011 – April 2013
- Long Term
 - April 2013 – April 2016

5.1 Short Term

- Development of car park investment programme
- Improvements and Maintenance of Parking Infrastructure
 - Re-surface, re-line
 - Remedial work / patching
 - Repair and Reinstatement Drainage Gullies

- Replacement Programme for All Car Park Signage
- Replacement programme height restriction barriers
- Purchase and installation Environmental Waste bins
- Purchase / Replacement Cycle shelters
- Feasibility Study – Temporary Flood Defences Doxey Road
- Review and Develop Parking Contract
- Residents Parking
- Feasibility Study – Pay on Foot Sainsbury's
- Feasibility Study – On Street Charging
- New charged Car Parks
- Cashless Parking
- Variable Charging and Season Tickets in Stone
- Review All Concessionary Parking

5.2 Medium Term

- Develop "Park Mark" Standard Car Parks
- Develop associated policies
- Critical Maintenance and repairs
- Feasibility Study – New Charged Car Parks in Stafford
- Change to Pay on Foot Sainsbury's
- Actively Pursue All Advertising Opportunities

5.3 Long Term

- Review all Parking Contracts and Leases
- Review All Tariffs

- Feasibility Study – Sustainable Transport Policy
- Feasibility Study – Development of SBC land
- Feasibility Study – Land exchange
- Results of Consultation and Feasibility Studies

6 Monitoring and Review

The Stafford Car Park Strategy will not remain static but will evolve to keep pace with changes in Government policy and demand.

This strategy has a set of core Aims, Objectives and Policies from which the detailed proposals to be implemented will emerge.

As a result, there will be a need for ongoing monitoring and review, which can be carried out annually.

The surplus revenues from on and off-street parking charges are used to contribute to:

- The Councils budget
- Finance important improvements to existing car parks
- Initiatives like new park and ride sites