



Report of the Director of Development

Executive Board

Date: 20 September 2006

Subject: CAR PARKING STRATEGY IN TOWN AND DISTRICT CENTRES

Electoral Wards Affected:

All

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community and Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In

Not Eligible for Call In

(Details contained in the report)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The planning principles that influence car parking policy in Leeds' town and district centres is set out in the Council's adopted Unitary Development Plan and the West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan.

At present the 28 individual centres identified in the UDP do not have specific local parking strategies. It is considered that a more integrated approach could provide a greater consistency when reviewing parking issues and considering developments in the future.

This report sets out proposals for a future approach to the development of local car parking strategies for town and district shopping centres in Leeds District, in particular:

1. the possibility of developing a general approach to car parking in towns and district centres based on interventions to control provision and short/long stay including on and off-street parking.
2. use of parking controls for the management and improvement of car parks
3. priorities for any more detailed consideration of particular centres.
4. sources of funding to allow the strategy work to be progressed, including appropriate use of the Town and District Centres fund.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 To outline proposals for a strategy approach to the future development of car parking strategies for town and district shopping centres in Leeds District.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 The planning principles that influence car parking policy in Leeds' town and district centres is set out in the Council's adopted Unitary Development Plan, key policies being:

- Policy S2 supports measures to enhance the vitality and viability of 28 identified town centres (Appendix 1).
- Policy S3 aims to secure improvements to parking, recognising the primary role of the centres for retailing.

- 2.2 These policies are operated alongside the strategic transport policies for parking set out in the West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan 2006-11.

- 2.3 Shoppers and visitors need good quality short-stay parking (typically 1-3 hours) and a secure, good quality central location is required.

- 2.4 Employees need long stay car parks. A peripheral location is satisfactory where central space is limited and utilised for short stay.

- 2.5 Much of the parking stock in towns - typically 50% - is privately owned and not available for public use.

- 2.6 Town centres often have a supply of car park spaces which are available for both short and long stay use. Long stay users can quickly fill up central spaces and sterilise them for short-stay use.

- 2.7 General objectives of Town Centre Parking (identified by the Institution of Highways and Transportation (IHT) in their "Parking Strategies & Management" 2005 guidelines) are as follows:

- To provide parking to support the local economy
- To manage parking to encourage short stay visits in the town centre – Choices need to be made as to whether long stay spaces for workers and traders in the town should be available at the expense of short stay spaces provided for those visiting the town.
- To charge for parking to ensure a reasonable balance between demand and supply of parking at all times – Controls on the length of stay will differentiate between long and short stay use. Charging is required to control the overall demand for parking and provide a source of revenue for the operation of the parking business. The current view is that it is generally preferable to charge a modest amount for short stay parking rather than attempting to provide a readily enforceable system that is free.
- To integrate any charges for parking with objectives for other modes of transport – Costs of car travel are only likely to be comparable with those for public transport if parking charges are levied. This objective reflects an integrated approach to the management of transport demand by all modes.
- To ensure that parking revenues cover parking costs – There is pressure from central government that parking enforcement should be self financing.
- To ensure that parking supply is consistent with good traffic and pedestrian access – Inadequate turnover of spaces can cause extensive traffic circulation,

resulting in congestion and a poor pedestrian environment. Adequate and well enforced short stay spaces which are close to core facilities are important in meeting this objective.

- To ensure parking supply does not sterilise positive land-use development that can assist the economy of the town

2.8 The general strategy for a town centre is seen as using parking management to influence the location of where people park, and their length of stay, as follows:

- Favour on and off-street central spaces for short-stay only
- Use parking controls to favour short stay parking and promote good compliance.
- Provide for long-stay use in peripheral areas, either on-street or off-street.
- Control, where necessary, the use of kerb-side parking space on residential streets.
- Separate parking where it is dedicated to park and ride use (i.e. rail stations), from parking available for general town centre use
- Recognise the role that alternative public transport modes (which might include park and ride for some suburban centres), and walking/cycling can play in reducing parking demand..

Any management of on-street spaces will of course need to consider other demands on the kerbspace of the highway, such as bus boarding and deliveries.

2.9 The total amount of parking for a town centre needs to be related to the size of retail and office (or employment) floorspace in use, and local characteristics. A general strategy will include a comparison of parking supply and floorspace figures across many towns to reveal those that are relatively well provided with parking, and those which are underprovided. This can also be combined with the available intelligence in terms of centre vitality and economic performance, although this information may well be sparse and have a very limited relationship to the parking supply.

2.10 All towns and district centres will have individual characteristics that will need to be assessed to refine this initial comparative view of the adequacy of provision. These characteristics will be the key determinant in formulating and tailoring future action plans to local circumstances.

2.11 Consultation is expected to form an integral part of determining both the priorities and also informing the proposed course of action. In terms of the local centre parking strategies it is envisaged that there would be close collaboration with the Area Management Teams. This will be especially important in understanding the needs of the local economy (where detailed data may not be available) and facilitating an effective dialogue with the local community.

2.12 Any actions to address a shortfall in car parking will require a sound policy basis, and mechanisms established to secure parking through capital expenditure or within new development. Regard will need to be given to the overall policy framework in terms of the Local Transport Plan and the aforementioned planning guidance.

3.0 Main Issues

- 3.1 At present individual S2 centres do not have specific local strategy statements, rather reliance is placed on the overarching policies provided within the Local Transport Plan and Unitary Development Plan when considering new development and changes in management. This approach can lead to seemingly ad hoc solutions which can sometimes appear different and inconsistent to those at other locations. The development of a more integrated strategy framework that could be applied across the District would have value as a guide to the use of parking controls and charges; to assist in realising improvements; and to inform decisions about new provision through public or private investment and development.
- 3.2 Based on the information under Section 2 above, it is proposed that the way forward with respect to developing parking strategies for the town centres should be to:-
- Agree the parking management principles as set out in para 2.8 above.
 - Commission the next stage of study work to develop assessment criteria and a framework that can be applied to the consideration of parking issues, then use these in conjunction with stakeholder consultation to prepare and agree an action list of town centres to inform priorities for the development of proposals..
 - Identify the funding sources needed to support further strategy development and implementation (noting that the preparation of detailed strategies and fully worked proposals with the associated surveys, research and consultation will involve the allocation of significant financial resources)
 - Develop action plans and scheme proposals for the priority town centres based on the agreed priority action list.
- 3.3 Appendix 2 outlines recent work in Otley which illustrates a case study of potential strategy application and implications. It is intended that future detailed work for priority centres will look in a similar way at:
- Parking spaces and availability both public and private
 - The needs of visitors, retailers and employers
 - Quantum of retail and employment uses
 - Present and forecast levels of new development
 - Measures of economic and community vitality
 - The role of other forms of transport including public transport
 - Associated highway matters including traffic congestion and road safety considerations.
- 3.4 This information will then be used to prepare a report and recommendations for action for the centres under study which will form the basis of parking strategy proposals.

- 3.5 Although the assessment framework will form the impartial basis for targeting key problems, in the first instance due regard will be given to existing work and discussions with the local area management teams to identify those major centres likely to benefit most from the early introduction of parking policy changes.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance

- 4.1 National, regional and local policy is supportive of promoting the vitality and viability of town centres. Provision of long-stay car parking essentially to be used by car commuters is not supported, particularly as town centres generally have a relatively high level of public transport accessibility and large walk-in catchment. Each town centre would, however, need to be considered separately as their situations vary considerably. The character of towns and district centres varies widely between the inner suburban centres such as Headingley and Beeston
- 4.2 Provision of car parking for long stay use in town centres can only be justified against a strategy which, through re-allocation of spaces, effectively delivers central short stay spaces to the benefit of the town's economic vitality.
- 4.3 In developing and applying parking strategies, full account must be taken of compatibility with Local Transport Plan objectives, concerned with accessibility, congestion, safety, air quality and asset management.
- 4.4 New development, especially in the larger towns, may provide opportunities to negotiate the provision of public car parking in private schemes. A firm strategy basis which is soundly rooted in policy will be required which can support such negotiations, and preferably retain such parking in Council control. Where such proposals are significant, a general strategy may need to be refined by in-depth local investigations to support the Council's case.

5.0 Legal And Resource Implications

- 5.1 This report does not have any specific legal implications. The development of appropriate strategies will require additional revenue resources in 2007/08 for which the Department does not have specific budget provision. The funding of these one off costs will be identified as a budget pressure in 2007/08, as part of the Department's overall budget submission. The initial work to develop assessment criteria and a framework can be funded from the Development Department's Transport Policy revenue budget.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 The lack of a defined car parking strategy, either at a general level or for specific town centres, is likely to lead to increasing dissatisfaction with parking. Whilst parking management and intervention may have some effects that may initially prove unwelcome, the overall consideration is to ensure that parking can contribute to the well-being of a town or centre. The preparation of effective strategies and measures will entail careful and well informed research which will be aided by effective consultation through the Area Management Teams.

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 Members of Executive Board are requested to:

- i. note the content of this report;
- ii. endorse the development of a general approach to car parking in towns and district centres based on the principles described in paragraph 2.8 of this report;
- iii. subject to the endorsement of recommendation (ii), give approval for the initial work to establish the appropriate parking assessment criteria and framework and to identify an action list of town centres, together with cost estimates for the strategy development work.

APPENDIX 1

UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN – SHOPPING POLICY S2 CENTRES

Policy S2: “The vitality and viability of the following town centres will be maintained and enhanced, in order to secure the best access for all sections of the community to a wide range of forms of retailing and other related services”:

1. Armley
2. Boston Spa
3. Bramley
4. Chapel Allerton
5. Cross Gates
6. Hunslet
7. Kippax
8. Kirkstall
9. Middleton (Ring Road)
10. Moor Allerton
11. Dewsbury Road
12. Farsley
13. Garforth
14. Guiseley (Otley Road)
15. Halton
16. Harehills Corner
17. Headingley
18. Holt Park
19. Horsforth (Town Street)
20. Meanwood
21. Morley
22. Oakwood
23. Otley
24. Pudsey
25. Rothwell
26. Seacroft
27. Wetherby
28. Yeadon

Note: This UDP based list does not differentiate between the different character and functions of these centres. But in parking policy terms the needs of the “suburban district centres” (e.g. Dewsbury Road) will be markedly different from the more established free standing town (e.g. Otley) and major retail centres (e.g. Cross Gates)

APPENDIX 2

EXAMPLE OF PARKING STRATEGY APPLICATION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR OTLEY

Using recent parking survey information in Otley and applying the principles identified in paras 2.7 and 2.8 of the report for Otley shows that:

- Overall parking supply is generally adequate but long stay use diminishes the number of central short stay spaces available. On Market Days, the only available parking is mainly on-street in peripheral, residential streets.
- The modest charges (now 40p per hour) at some Council car parks are effective in confining those car parks to short stay use.
- Imposing charges or time limits on other central on- and off-street car parking to inhibit long stay use would displace around 100 cars.
- The main effect would be for long stay parking to take place on peripheral residential streets. Whilst this is a resource generally available during the working day, it is likely to result in concern for residents and requests for residents permit parking.
- Alternatives are to:
 - seek provision of new off-street long-stay spaces in the periphery, through either public car parking in new development, or new Council-run sites.
 - maximise use of private non-residential spaces in the town centre through co-operative arrangement with site owners.
- Additional car park revenue from extending current charges to other Council car parks could be used to improve parking quality.
- Whilst Otley has a relatively high accessibility by public transport, it also has high car ownership which results in parking demand.
- There are several active development proposals on car park sites which raise issues of replacement car parking.