



High Level Parking Strategy Cheshire East

2017

High Level Parking Strategy for Cheshire East

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1. Introduction

Cheshire East has one of the most successful economies in the country and is consistently recognised as offering an excellent quality of life, including being recently recognised as the happiest place in England¹.

The existing car parking strategy was published in 2010, bringing together the parking strategies of the three former borough Councils of Macclesfield, Congleton, and Crewe and Nantwich. This strategy is intended to further develop and harmonise the parking offer focusing on the Cheshire East principal towns and key service centres.

There are two broad categories of car parking in Cheshire East:

- i. On-street – this is parking within the adopted highway boundary that is regulated by the Council acting as highway authority. Enforcement of on-street parking regulations is undertaken by the Council.
- i. Public off-street – these are parking areas provided by the Council which are open for use by the general public. Some car parks are charged for according to length of stay.

In developing this strategy, issues of demand and supply will be considered, together with establishing when the Council may consider changes in supply.

Further work on future requirements for parking will come through the Local Plan Documents, the Local Transport Plan, the On-Street parking policy, and the individual Town Parking Studies.

2. Need for a High Level Strategy

Effective management of both on and off street parking can have a significant effect on the capacity and flow of traffic on the road network. Well managed parking can have a positive environmental effect, making our towns attractive with the resultant impact on local economic viability.

The Council must continue to manage on and off street parking whilst encouraging more sustainable travel patterns including walking, cycling and public transport where these effective alternatives are viable.

A Parking Strategy can assist in encouraging balanced transport choices, working with other policies, strategies and plans to develop the required approach.

¹ Office for National Statistics (2016) *Personal wellbeing in the UK: local authority update*

It is important to ensure that the economic viability and vitality of our town centres is preserved, the provision of well planned and managed parking, both on and off street plays a key role in achieving this. Whilst it is not always possible to increase parking space within urban areas without high costs, controls can be put in place to manage demand.

It is recognised that there is a need to cater for a number of users including residents, shoppers, tourists, workers and commuters. The balance of need depends on individual locations, however in general:

- ❖ Shoppers require short stay convenient parking. In some locations tourists are likely to spend the whole day where 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 Cheshire East'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.

The provision of off-street parking can be very costly, both in terms of land requirements and maintenance costs. The Council charges for parking in order to recover these costs from service users, although it is recognised that there is currently a disparity between those areas of the borough where parking charges apply and those where they do not.

Cheshire East Council is also responsible for the making of Traffic Regulation Orders concerning on street parking control and is responsible for the enforcement of those Traffic Regulation Orders including the management of off street car parks within their ownership.

An appropriate Parking Strategy can support regeneration of town centres while also encouraging people to think more about when and how to travel, perhaps choosing public transport, and contributing to road safety.

In order to establish a consistent approach across the Borough, it is proposed that each town be looked at individually with regards to parking quality, choice and value, thus facilitating necessary unique pricing tariffs based on patterns of parking demand, size of town and its draw

in terms of the type of shops, catchment area and whether it is predominantly a local service centre or includes tourists.

The proposed town parking studies will include:

- ❖ Alsager
- ❖ Congleton
- ❖ Crewe
- ❖ Handforth
- ❖ Knutsford
- ❖ Macclesfield
- ❖ Middlewich
- ❖ Nantwich
- ❖ Poynton
- ❖ Sandbach
- ❖ Wilmslow

3. Aim and Objectives

The overall aim of this High Level Parking Strategy is that it will seek to balance long-term economic, social and environmental well-being underpinned by the following objectives:

- ❖ Manage traffic to improve transport network efficiency
- ❖ Encourage the use of more sustainable and healthy forms of travel, including walking, cycling and public transport
- ❖ Sustain and enhance the vitality of our town centres
- ❖ Provide for the parking needs of people with disabilities & parents/carers with young children
- ❖ Balance the parking demands of local residents, shops and businesses and visitors, shoppers, workers and commuters

The strategy looks at all forms of parking requirements, not just for cars i.e. Ultra Low Emission Vehicles, motorcycles, and Heavy Goods Vehicles.

The strategy includes some guiding principles based on national and more local recommendations, linking closely with other transport initiatives within the borough:

http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/public_transport/local_transport_plan/local_transport_plan.aspx

http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/highways_and_roads/cycling_in_cheshire_east/cycling_in_cheshire_east.aspx

http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/public_transport/transport_strategies.aspx

The strategy's aim is to manage the existing parking stock, with particular emphasis on our principal towns and key service centres. Any changes to provision, including park & ride, would be considered in line with the Local Transport Plan framework.

The strategy will not set parking charges (Tariffs) but rather establish the general principles which should be taken into consideration for charging. Charges/tariffs are set at annual budget rounds and are to be considered on a town by town basis.

Overall, it is the intended aim that the High Level Parking Strategy should work in conjunction with proposals in the emerging town centre regeneration programmes which Cheshire East Council is developing and delivering. These are to be reflected in the proposed programmes of work.

4. Cheshire East Councils ambition for Parking - Quality Choice Value

Quality

Safe, secure and accessible parking is vital to the attractiveness of our towns and assists in the promotion of our principal towns and key service centres, boosting the economic regeneration of the borough.

Parking is often the first contact that a visitor has with a town and can thus provide the first and lasting impression. Security, cleanliness and availability of facilities contribute to this impression and play an important role in the successful of our towns.

The Community Safety Strategy identifies reduction of vehicle crime and the fear of crime as key priorities.

Examples of facilities considered important include:

- ❖ Clear directional signage to car parks
- ❖ Clear signage within the car parks including bay lining
- ❖ Designating appropriate spaces for disabled motorists, motorcycles and electric vehicles
- ❖ CCTV
- ❖ Clean and well maintained car parks
- ❖ Active uniformed patrols

Improvements and measures have been implemented to work towards enhanced safety and security on car parks. CCTV has been re-introduced on Spring Street Multi Storey Car Park (Wilmslow) and Jordangate Multi Storey Car Park (Macclesfield).

The Council's car parks are regularly inspected and any actionable maintenance issues such as defective lighting, faded lines, and surface maintenance will be addressed. It is important that Cheshire East Council continues to:

- ❖ Continues to pursue high standards of safety, security and cleanliness on its off street car parks
- ❖ Support increased provision for electric vehicle charging infrastructure

Choice

Parking provision and management within Cheshire East will take into account national and regional planning and transport policies, complement local land use and regeneration policies, and relate to the size and function of the principal towns and key service centres. Parking provision will reflect wider community objectives with facilities being safe and secure.

The Council will consider maximising the availability of short stay spaces in prime, central locations for use by shoppers and other short stay users. Short stay parking generates a high turnover of spaces allowing more visitors to be accommodated per space. ***The Council will therefore review the designations of each car park to ensure the right spaces are in the right places – looking at whether the provision should be short or long stay or a mixture of both.***

Disabled parking and the Blue Badge scheme will comply with the national guidelines, although a review does need to be undertaken with regards to the location of disabled spaces in car parks. Whilst our aim is to meet the needs of our towns, historical underuse of disabled parking in some highly utilised car parks can exacerbate the availability issues of general spaces.

The Council's work on climate change and green travel promotes better use of the car and healthier more environmentally friendly alternatives, such as walking, cycling, motorcycles and public transport. Travel Plans are also seen as a key element in reducing car usage by tackling different aspects of businesses transport.

Parking impacts on traffic flow and on street parking can reduce the capacity of the road network. Provision of adequate, safely accessible off street parking can reduce this impact. In addition, parking guidance and information can reduce unnecessary traffic movements and thereby congestion in and around main centres.

The Traffic Management Act 2004 places a network management duty on local authorities to keep traffic flowing, and to co-operate with other authorities to the same end. Local authorities have to exercise all of their functions which may affect traffic in a more coordinated way.

Parking Provision, management and enforcement must contribute to the delivery of the overall statutory network management duty. Providing for either too few or too many vehicles in a town can affect its environment and its viability. Whilst it is not possible to increase parking space within urban areas without high costs and abstracting prime urban land from the limited supply, controls can be put in place to manage demand.

Value

Charging is an effective tool in managing the demand for parking spaces, however because each of our towns are unique, it is not appropriate, fair or realistic to introduce a uniform borough-wide tariff model. The approach would be to set appropriate tariffs on a town by town basis following each town parking study.

It requires the recovery of full cost from service users. Any pricing mechanism adopted should be appropriate for the following purposes:

- ❖ Managing demand, required to promote the use of town centre short stay spaces for shoppers and visitors
- ❖ Ensuring that direct users pay for the service, e.g. charging appropriately in car parks close to train stations that are predominantly used by Commuters.
- ❖ Providing finance to support other strategic transport aims

Cheshire East Council would in principle impose charges for parking based on supply and demand, reflecting local pressure and needs including any consequences for on-street parking. The key measure for assessing the demand, pressure and need will be the utilisation of the car parks, measured through either ticket sales or by observing the numbers of cars parked at particular points in time.

Those towns where average car park utilisation during peak hours is high would be considered for increased charges to manage demand. The provision of additional parking could also be considered providing the charges were sufficient to recover the investment cost required to deliver the additional parking requirement. A business case would be required to demonstrate a return on investment to ensure residents and businesses would not be required to fund any shortfall.

Those towns where average car park utilisation during peak hours is low could be considered for reduced charges to support the towns economic viability. A reduction in parking provision could also be considered, potentially releasing land for redevelopment and regeneration. Any reduction in charges would still be expected to cover to cost of operating and managing the town's car parking.

It is expected that an appropriate town by town charging level, combined with appropriate enforcement action, will help the Council to make the best use of the car park assets which in turn is likely to make parking easier and more attractive.

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

Following completion of each town parking study, the Council will review the parking charges annually, in accordance with the Council's Fees and Charges policy, at least recovering the cost of the car park service.

5. Enforcement Action

Fundamental to any Parking Strategy is the need for efficient parking enforcement, 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.

The enforcement approach will be geared to effectively manage the supply of off street and unauthorised parking; effective parking enforcement is also required on street short stay parking.

Cheshire East Council is responsible for enforcing parking, loading and waiting restrictions on the streets and in the car parks throughout Cheshire East, with the exception of most major trunk roads. This is carried out under the terms of the Traffic Management Act 2004 and is a civil matter rather than criminal. Civil Enforcement Officers will issue Penalty Charge Notices to any vehicle parking in contravention and will enforce on-street contraventions as well as in car parks. The Civil Enforcement Officers are paid an annual salary only and there is no bonus, commission or incentive scheme or target for issuing Penalty Charge Notices.

Enforcement practice will follow the Guidelines detailed in the Traffic Management Act 2004; it will focus on key areas where compliance needs to improve and will follow the principle that the purpose of enforcement is to induce motorists to comply with the regulations.

The Councils Civil Enforcement Officers will operate under the following principles:

- ❖ Enforcing parking and waiting restrictions to ensure maximum space availability for customers and business visitors.
- ❖ Taking action where unlawful or inconsiderate parking stops traffic (or the free flowing movement of traffic)

- ❖ Taking action where cars parked on pavements block the walk way for pedestrians who then have to go into the road to pass the cars (particularly in school keep clear areas)
- ❖ Taking action where the unlawful or inconsiderate parking is dangerous
- ❖ Taking action where emergency vehicles are prevented from travelling along a road
- ❖ Taking action where spaces are taken up which should be used for disabled people
- ❖ Allowing for exceptional events and circumstances and engaging with the community at key events

A key partner in control is Cheshire Police who continue to be responsible for enforcement of certain traffic offences; Cheshire East residents and businesses rightly expect that we act as true partners in tackling bad and dangerous parking, utilising our respective powers promptly, efficiently and in concert.

6. On-Street Parking

On street parking is essential to local residents and businesses, but can also be detrimental. Clear signs and road markings are essential for effective on street parking provision. The Council will review the provision of on street parking, as part of the individual town parking studies, to assess if the current restrictions meet the requirements of our principal towns and key town centres.

Further detail relating to on-street parking is available through the Council's On-Street Parking Guidance.

7. Local Plan Parking Standards

The adopted Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy 2010-2030 details the parking standards applied to new developments. It is considered that the town parking studies will support the evidence base for use in determining the parking requirements of new development, allowing the Council to depart from the standards where appropriate to improve the management of the road network.

8. Ultra Low Emission Vehicles

The Council will promote and support the use of ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEVs), including electric vehicles, due to their reduced impact on air quality. Electric vehicles have the potential to help reduce kerbside emissions if they become more widely used in Cheshire East, although current technology means that they are likely to be a more attractive choice in urban areas due to the limited availability of charging points in the rural areas. To date, take-up of electric

vehicles has remained low, however all predicted forecasts are for significant growth moving forward.

The potential exists to install public on-street charging points. Since any bays would have to be reserved for electric vehicles only, the Council will take into account future demand and the loss of general public parking before considering whether to install any on-street bays.

9. Heavy Goods Vehicle and Coach Parking

The provision of HGV and coach parking is a necessary amenity across the authority; the provision of lorry parking is required to ensure that drivers have suitable places for rest breaks and encourages appropriately parking. At present HGV parking is underutilised, and has capacity to fulfil future growth detailed in the 2011 Department for Transport Lorry Parking Study. Cheshire East will assess the provision of HGV parking in line with future growth and associated demand; this should include assessing the location of existing facilities and assessing if the locations are suitable for future demand.

The Freight Transport Association indicated that demand for overnight lorry parking facilities would rise as a result of the 1998 EU Working Directive leading to increased need for driver stops. The Council will continue to review the needs in specific areas to determine whether existing facilities are adequate and appropriately located.

Additionally, successful tourist attractions require adequate off street coach parks to prevent road safety problems and to protect the environment. To deter access via residential streets and other environmentally areas, it is intended that off street coach and overnight lorry parks will be located, where required, with good links to the road network and regard to the impact on the local environment.

10. Motorcycle Parking

Motorcycles and mopeds offer the same potential for personal mobility as private cars whilst contributing less congestion, pollution and damage to roads. They are lighter, generally more fuel efficient and take up less space, whether parking or moving.

The safety of users of motorcycles and mopeds and the need for secure parking must be taken into account both in new and existing developments and at public transport interchange sites.

11. Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles

Taxis and private hire vehicles are important in meeting the travel needs of many sections of the population, especially people with disabilities and for those whose journeys cannot be made on foot, cycle, bus or train.

Taxi parking should be visibly provided at key locations, such as shopping areas and public transport interchanges. Ranks should be marked out to avoid random parking. Accessibility to the parking location is a priority and a road safety audit should be carried out to ensure taxi movement will not conflict with other users. The level of taxi parking will be assessed on a case by case basis.

12. Residential Parking

The Council aims to improve the quality of life for residents through parking management, provision and relief of traffic congestion generated by parking demand. Residential areas around town centres can suffer from commuter on street parking and in some cases controlled parking zones are implemented to meet the needs of residents and local businesses.

The Council will review on street parking provision for residents as travel demands grow, and assess if the need exists for the introduction of further controlled parking zones. The Council should review the on street demand at each of the principal towns and key service centres and assess the impact to residents, reviewing existing Traffic Regulation Orders.

13. Parking Initiatives

Parking at Rail Stations

The provision of adequate car parking at railway stations can help to reduce the length of car journeys by attracting people onto rail for the major part of their journey. In addition, it can help avoid or alleviate 'overspill' parking around stations.

In reviewing parking issues at railway stations, the Council will need to consider a number of factors to seek to gain a better understanding of the local context:

- ❖ the quantity and usage of parking presently available at a station and in the surrounding area
- ❖ the level of charges for those parking spaces, if any are in place, and charges at other nearby stations serving the same destinations
- ❖ the number of stopping train services
- ❖ the origin (catchment area) and journey mode of station users;
- ❖ the impacts of station traffic and parking on the local road network and community

- ❖ the length and type of rail journeys
- ❖ the availability of sustainable transport modes to and from the station.

If appropriate, the Council will then work with Network Rail, station and public transport operators, passenger and cyclist groups and others to evaluate the situation further and investigate possible solutions that take account of the needs of both rail users and the local community. In line with LTP objectives, the Council will ensure that any solutions also promote modal shift by encouraging the use of walking, cycling and public transport. These issues and the factors above should be considered as part of a station travel plan.

Increased parking provision at railway stations will only be considered if it is included as part of a station travel plan or linked to improved infrastructure such as the new Hub Station in Crewe.

Sunday Parking Requirements

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.

The Council should consider proposals to maintain / introduce standard tariff seven day charges for off-street car parks where charges are applied.

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. However it is considered that the benefits to be gained from introducing Sunday charging do outweigh the cost of Sunday on-street parking enforcement.

Night Time Economy Parking Requirements

The Council should consider that in towns/areas where the night time economy is prevalent, that consistent time bands for charges are applied as follows:

- ❖ For off-street car parks 8am to 10pm Monday to Sunday.

Shopper/Retailer subsidy

Although there are 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 these be made available where requested.

Contract permits – off street car parks

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

Waivers

A list of special permits and conditions appropriate for issuing them should be established.

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 will be set out, which need to be backed up by clear issuing procedures for staff.

Charging Mechanisms

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, may be popular elsewhere 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 car parks, and only MSCP's be considered for Pay Stations permitting pay on exit.

Disabled Parking

The use of disabled spaces is governed by the blue badge parking scheme. This is a European scheme for people with limited mobility and allows disabled people accessible parking in locations that enable access to shops and services.

The badge is allocated to individuals and not to vehicles. It can only be used when the named holder is either the motorist or travelling with a carer.

People displaying a blue badge may park on double yellow lines for a limited period where their vehicle does not obstruct traffic or other road users. However, such parking is prohibited where there are additional yellow road markings that restrict parking or where local parking restrictions apply such as outside schools. The blue badge scheme also governs use of disabled spaces on car parks.

The Council adheres to the national policy on concessions for Blue Badge Holders. There are on-street designated disabled bays. These are free and have no time restrictions for blue badge holders. For disabled bays in off-street car parks, blue badge holders can currently park without charge for as long as they want to, even if this is only a short stay car park.

In 2015/16 8125 Blue Badges were issued contributing to the circa 20,000 blue badges held by the Boroughs individual residents and organisations.

- ❖ This strategy recommends that national disabled parking standards for car parks and all new developments are applied across the borough.
- ❖ The strategy recommends that the quantity and locations of disabled bays are reviewed and where necessary, changed to meet the needs of users in each urban centre. Ideally, disabled bays should be close to amenities and spread out around town centres rather than all together.
- ❖ It is recommended that charges for disabled parking are considered for implementation alongside charging for standard spaces. This will generate revenue which can be used for raising the quality of parking.

Parent and Child Parking

There is no specific national or local policy on the provision of parent and child spaces. Supply of these in Cheshire East is almost entirely within privately owned, retail-related car parks. Occupancy of these spaces is generally high. Whilst it is legally unenforceable and does not yield additional revenue, it is felt that consideration should be given to the provision of parent and child spaces. This could be done in conjunction with the review of disabled spaces, Snow Hill car park in Nantwich is currently the only one facilitating these spaces.