



# **North Hertfordshire District Council**

Parking Strategy 2009 – 2019

**(Revised August 2012)**

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Parking Strategy 2009 – 2019

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# North Hertfordshire District Council

## Parking Strategy 2009 – 2019

### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 North Hertfordshire District Council's first parking strategy covered the period 2004-09. This review of that strategy follows several years' experience of managing on-street parking enforcement as well as demand for additional parking controls and pressure for changes in how town centre car parking is managed.
- 1.2 The Council's role with regard to on-street car parking remains one of managing and enforcement of all on-street parking restrictions in the district. This management and enforcement role extends into the off-street car parks the Council owns and/or manages mainly in town centres.
- 1.3 The Council's agreement with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC - i.e. the Highway Authority) does not include the implementation of other on-street parking controls (i.e. Traffic Regulation Orders – TROs) that are intended to address safety or public amenity issues. There are examples of safety and/or amenity concerns included in this strategy but the responsibility for implementing lies with HCC.
- 1.4 The Council's town centre car parks have 'Pay and Display' ticket machines. These machines have reached the end of their working lives and the Pay and Display system itself presents a number of challenges in terms of management and, importantly, ease of use for the customer. This Strategy identifies how the Council will look to improve its town centre car parks over the next five to ten years.
- 1.5 There are a number of other parking issues that this strategy will cover. For example, there is increasing demand for Disabled Badge Holder parking bays in residential areas and this strategy will set the policy and criteria for providing such bays. Demand for cycle parking in town centres and at other key destinations has grown and especially at Stations has proved to be very popular.

## **2.0 Planning in times of uncertainty**

- 2.1 The economic downturn clearly affects town centres and demand for parking generally. Pressure of non-residential parking in residential areas may, in some areas, ease but will be likely to return when economic circumstances improve. Similarly demand for town centre parking may reduce during less favourable economic times but there is an opportunity to plan for returning high levels of demand alongside the forecast growth in housing and jobs in and around the district.
- 2.2 In addition to the planned growth for the area, there are major development opportunities in Hitchin, Letchworth and Royston. In all cases new developments should improve the attractiveness of each town and therefore demand for parking. Much of the land identified for new developments includes land currently used for car parking so this strategy will need to consider how this affects town centre parking provision in the medium to longer term. The uncertainties about timing of these developments means that this strategy will need to be reviewed on a regular basis.
- 2.3 This Strategy is intended to cover the period 2009 to 2019. This ten year timescale reflects the lifetime of a new car park management system as well as an amount of time that could allow for many of the ongoing on street parking control issues to be addressed. It is acknowledged, however, that the Strategy should be kept under review during this period not least because of the implications of major development opportunities in Hitchin, Letchworth and Royston.

## **3.0 Background and Policy**

- 3.1 Parking availability of any type of vehicle is an important factor in determining how people travel. Parking availability also influences the vitality and viability of town centres and the attractiveness of residential areas. In some places on-street parking can act as a traffic calming measure, in others it is a problem for residents and businesses and can be a barrier to accessibility for pedestrians, cyclists, passenger transport, emergency and other service vehicles.
- 3.2 There is a balance to be struck between providing and restricting car parking. This strategy must be read alongside Urban Transport Plans for towns as well as the Town Centre Strategies, Community Strategy and the Local Development Framework to provide the full picture on how a balance

can be struck between environmental protection, economic growth, accessibility, health improvement and social inclusion.

- 3.3 Car ownership is predicted to continue to grow over next twenty or so years alongside growth from new housing in and adjacent to the District. The Strategy is flexible enough to respond to demand for parking and at the same time seek to influence car use. Experience with parking standards at new development indicates that policies on parking are best suited to influencing car use not ownership.
- 3.4 There is a range of national, regional and local policy that is relevant to parking, promoting the vitality and viability of town centres, assisting residents and businesses and seeking to minimise the impact on Climate Change. Some of the key aims and objectives are set out below.
- 3.5 At the national level the Government's Strategy is set out in 'Delivering a Sustainable Transport Strategy' which sets out the Government's five main goals as follows:

*"We want our transport system:*

- to support national economic competitiveness and growth, by delivering reliable and efficient transport networks;*
- to reduce transport's emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, with the desired outcome of tackling climate change;*
- to contribute to better safety, security and health and longer life expectancy by reducing the risk of death, injury or illness arising from transport, and by promoting travel modes that are beneficial to health;*
- to promote greater equality of opportunity for all citizens, with the desired outcome of achieving a fairer society; and*
- to improve quality of life for transport users and non-transport users, and to promote a healthy natural environment."*

- 3.6 Alongside planning policies contained in Planning Policy Statements and other advice on providing for parking (e.g. Blue Badge Holders, Motorcycles and Pedal Cycles) the Parking Strategy supports national objectives. There is a balance that needs to be struck between tackling climate change and providing for parking to support town centres. The Strategy will ensure that excessive amounts of parking are not provided and the Council's Town Centre Strategies are promoting greater pedestrian priority and less circulation of traffic. The Strategy also seeks to reduce long stay parking in many residential areas, thus promoting alternative modes of travel or car sharing by restricting parking.

- 3.7 Countywide policy on parking is set out in Hertfordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP) Long Term Strategy. The following summarises the LTP approach:

*“Car parking is one of the key elements in managing the highway network and encouraging alternatives to the car. The overall aims of the parking strategy are:*

- *to reduce dependence on the car, particularly in town centres*
- *to minimise the safety and congestion effects of on-street parking*
- *to help maintain the vitality of town centres and to discourage out-of-town developments*
- *to ensure that car parking provision and enforcement are broadly self-financing”*

- 3.8 The Parking Strategy sits alongside the existing Town Centre Strategies and will support existing and emerging Urban Transport Plans for our towns. The Strategy acknowledges the importance of parking in our town centres but seeks to strike a balance between providing for cars and other modes of transport. In addition the policy on charging supports alternative modes of travel, especially in the case of long stay and the Strategy provides the scope for considering on street charging which will help manage the impact of traffic in town centres.

The Council's own Corporate priorities are focused on promoting Town Centres, Green Issues and Sustainable Development.

- 3.9 Key features of the Strategy that support the above priorities are as follows:

- **Town Centres** – provision of a balance of on and off street, short and long stay parking with appropriate tariffs supports the retail and business functions of town centres. The Strategy does not seek to provide an excessive amount of car parking but, at its heart, is the need to promote the economic vitality and viability of town centres.
- **Green Issues** – the need to reduce Carbon Dioxide emissions is a key consideration and the Parking Strategy will contribute towards reducing long stay parking in residential areas by commuters and employees. This is one way of encouraging use of alternative modes of travel. In town centres the Strategy supports the Town Centre Strategies' insofar as it recognises the need to minimise circulating traffic by way of balancing on and off street parking provision. In addition the Strategy identifies the need to improve the ease of use of car parks, thus reducing circulating traffic and queuing traffic.

- **Sustainable development** – the Parking Strategy acknowledges as a key issues the need to support town centres as local facilities. This support will help ensure that towns in the district remain important retail and service destinations in their own right. The provision of new housing and employment in and around our existing towns will place additional pressures on parking facilities and the Strategy will enable the Council to find the best way for providing for and managing this demand. The Strategy also supports the provision of parking for Disabled Badge Holders, allowing improved accessibility and ensuring people with disabilities have access to local shops, services and their own homes.

#### **4.0 Management and resources**

- 4.1 The management of on and off street parking in the district falls into two broad categories. Firstly the enforcement of on and off street parking (i.e. the public ‘face’ of the service) and secondly, the back office management which assists the enforcement function as well as day to day management of issues such as Season Ticket and Residents Permit applications as well as customer queries.
- 4.2 Managing car park ticket machines (in terms of cash collection, planned and reactive maintenance) as well as monitoring the status of machines also falls within the day to day management function. In addition the Council allocates resources to physical maintenance of car parks, again on a planned and reactive basis.
- 4.3 With regard to on street parking the Council, in conjunction with Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Constabulary, prepares and implements new or amended Traffic Regulation Orders, principally for Controlled Parking Zones.
- 4.4 The entire daily management resource covers both town centres and elsewhere, both on and off street so changes to one aspect of the service as a result of this Strategy are likely to have implications for the whole service resource. The level of resources provided will dictate how the Strategy will be delivered and the service managed. As such the need to consider management and resource issues across the whole service is an appropriate place to start.

### Policy 1 - Management and Resources

In order to deliver this Parking Strategy the Council is committed to finding the most efficient and effective use of resources to implement improvements and manage the parking service on a day to day basis.

To do this the Council will consider the resource implications of:

- 1) The type of off street car park management system in use and demand for it to be managed
- 2) The amount of on street parking controls and demand for it to be managed, including changes in times of day or days of the week
- 3) The implications of a review of CPZs on the demand for managing on street parking
- 4) The potential impact of on street charging
- 5) The potential of future development sites in town centres
- 6) The possibility of partnering or other parking management options
- 7) Changes in legislation or financial issues
- 8) The potential to manage other third party car parking facilities

- 4.5 The Council is acutely aware of the limitations on its resources. As well as looking at more efficient and effective ways of working the Council will, therefore, seek to secure additional resources towards delivering this Strategy. For example developer contributions, Lottery funding, Growth Area Funding or matched funding with or from other organisations are potential sources of funding for parking, often as part of a package of measures.
- 4.6 In addition to Council owned and managed parking resources there are other privately owned and run car parks in town centres and especially at Railway Stations. Charging policies in private car parks can have significant implications for surrounding streets and car parks. The Council will maintain a dialogue with other car park providers in order to ensure that parking provision as a whole does not have unacceptable impact on other car parks or on street locations.

## **5.0 Town Centres**

- 5.1 The four towns of Hitchin, Letchworth, Baldock and Royston are different in terms of demand for parking, reflecting the different retail and servicing offer in each town as well as their physical characteristics. The economic downturn has affected each town centre alongside other longer term trends where out of centre retailing and growth in internet and other types of shopping have affected town centres for shopping purposes.
- 5.2 The availability of car parking supports the town centres and the level of demand for parking in each town reflects the variations between the amount of shops and services in each town. Currently off-street parking is charged during the daytime, Monday to Saturday whilst on-street parking is free of charge at all times. There are privately operated car parks in Hitchin and Letchworth that, combined with Council owned and operated car parks and off-street parking provide a varied amount of parking in terms of on and off-street, short and long stay, location and price.
- 5.3 The balance between short and long stay off-street parking broadly reflects current demand. The Pay and Display (P&D) system in operation does not offer suitable flexibility to manage tariffs to respond to changes or variations in demand. Differential tariffs were agreed for 2009 between car parks within towns and also between towns. This approach has been adopted to reflect the different demands for parking between and even within town centres.
- 5.4 Currently on-street parking within town centres is free of charge, as is off-street parking after 6pm and on Sundays. On-street parking in 'core' shopping streets as well as more peripheral areas provide a significant additional parking resource and is especially important for Blue Badge Holder access as well as for servicing and loading. The majority of this parking is short stay although some longer stay on-street parking conflicts with residents' parking in peripheral streets.
- 5.5 Hitchin is the busiest town in terms of parking demand. Parking survey work at the end of 2008 suggested that, on Saturdays there is almost 100% take up of parking on and off-street. With future plans for significant development in Hitchin town centre the availability of parking in Hitchin will need to be considered carefully so as to ensure the vitality and viability of the town is supported without seriously undermining its environment and running contrary to wider objectives to reduce carbon emissions.

- 5.6 Letchworth has similar development potential although currently has capacity off-street in car parks. Again there will be a need to balance the provision of parking to support the town centre economically without having an adverse effect on its environment. It is especially important that the significant volume of on-street parking does not act as a catalyst for promoting excessive circulating traffic to the detriment of the pedestrian environment.
- 5.7 Royston town centre is currently not realising its potential. Consequently parking supply outstrips demand quite considerably and the recent Town Centre Strategy identifies that potentially some parking could be lost to accommodate development sites to expand the town's retail offer. The availability of parking will need to be re-assessed as individual sites come forward for development.
- 5.8 Baldock town centre is different to the other towns insofar as, until recently, much of its on-street parking in the core area was taken by long stay parking. The recent Town Centre Enhancements will result in a shift to shorter stay parking in the town centre with an anticipated need to protect residents' parking in areas around the town centre. There are also existing rail commuter parking issues which often overlap with areas used as town centre long stay parking.
- 5.9 Whilst not a town centre, the centre of Knebworth has many of the same characteristics of a small town centre. There is demand for short stay parking for shoppers as well as long stay parking by rail commuters, employees and residents. Currently short stay parking is reduced by long stay usage which does not support local traders.
- 5.10 The Council will follow the following principles when providing for town centre parking:
1. To support the objectives of the Town Centre Strategies
  2. To ensure parking provision is considered within the context of all other policy considerations, in particular Urban Transport Plans and strategies to address Climate Change
  3. Improve the ease of use of all parking facilities i.e. the customer experience
  4. Increase the potential for on street parking to be self-financing
  5. Improve the management of parking by providing better information for users and decision makers

### 5.11 Off-street provision

In general there is sufficient capacity for all types of parking in town centres. There are some pressures as follows:

1. In Hitchin in market days there is very little capacity available both on and off-street.
2. Certain short stay car parks are more popular than others (e.g. Town Hall in Letchworth) and users will wait for spaces in these car parks rather than use other short stay alternatives.
3. Despite there being capacity in off-street car parks there is pressure on on-street parking both in town centres and adjacent streets.
4. Future developments planned via the Town Centre Strategies will place even more pressure on off-street parking provision.

#### Policy 2 - Off Street Car Park Capacity

The Council will investigate the need for additional capacity for car parking where it can be justified in supporting town centre economic vitality and viability without unacceptable environmental impact.

- 5.12 The quality and safety of off-street car parks is often a key consideration for car park users. This often falls into two basic categories – the quality, convenience and safety of the car park and the quality, safety and convenience of the route from the car park to town centre shops. Much of the latter will be dealt with via Town Centre Strategies and development proposals but there are some key issues for consideration with regard to enhancing the use of car parks.

#### Policy 3 - Physical Improvements to Car Parks

The Council will identify and keep under review a programme of physical improvements for its car parks. This will be done in conjunction with Area Committees, Town Centre Management, Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire Constabulary and via feedback from car park users.

5.13 Some of the key issues the Council will consider are:

1. The Letchworth multi-story car park has narrow parking spaces, poor lighting, décor and pedestrian circulation space. There are also problems with regard to water leaking between decks and general surfacing quality. The lifts are often in a poor condition or not working
2. The Lairage multi-story in Hitchin is accessed from the top and exited at the bottom. Car park users have no way of knowing whether spaces are available in lower levels so a system of advising users of space availability would address this problem.
3. There is an ongoing need for maintaining car park surfacing, lining, and signing.
4. In some places security and vandalism are a problem so there is a need to consider how to manage this and eradicate it.
5. In order to support the need for better traffic management and to direct users towards available parking, the potential for Variable Message Signing on approaches to car parks should be considered. This could be in the form of 'real time' information or just more basic signing advising on the direction to and capacity of each car park.

5.14 Off-street car park management system

Currently the Council provides coin only operated Pay and Display ticket machines in car parks it owns or operates. The equipment is now dated and the following issues have to be considered:

- The age of machines and the cost of maintaining them
- The appropriateness of Pay and Display for promoting town centre use (i.e. the user has to anticipate the length of stay before buying a ticket)
- The amount of non-payment of tariffs either due to users 'taking a chance' or not having the correct change
- The amount of transferring of tickets between users
- Meter feeding.
- The potential for users to pay for actual use rather than over-payment due to machines not issuing change
- Potential for cashless payment – in line with credit card or 'Chip & Pin' transactions either at the machine or via telephone
- The security of machines and cash handling issues
- The lack of data from machines on usage, management or faults
- The staff resources required to ensure compliance with car park tariffs and car park regulations as well as 'back office' management.

5.15 Modern Pay and Display machines can offer cashless payments and provide data for management and usage but many of the other key issues that affects the current system will still apply.

- 5.16 An alternative could be the introduction of a Pay on Foot system. In simple terms this involves barriered entry and exit with users paying at pay stations before returning to their vehicles. Whilst this system ensures all users pay for parking and only pay for the time they stay it is very expensive and will require a considerable change in approach to parking management.
- 5.17 More recently payment for parking by telephone has been introduced by other local authorities that operate a Pay and Display system. This has the potential to provide flexibility for people wishing to stay in town centres without having to be restricted by what ticket they have purchased at the outset.

#### Policy 4 – Car Park Management System

The Council will investigate the most appropriate car park management system for the district with a view to agreeing a programme for implementing a new system with a minimum ten year lifespan.

Options to consider will include:

1. Replace current machines with similar coin only Pay and Display machines
2. Replace current machines with coin and 'Chip & Pin' Pay and Display machines
3. Provide Pay by phone with either of the above two Pay and Display options, potentially on a trial basis initially
4. Replace the current machines with a 'Pay on Foot' system either in full or alongside Pay and Display machines in some car parks

The Council will have regard to the wider economic and development influences on town centres and the likely demand for parking in the medium to longer term.

The Council will also consider the implications of introducing a charging system for other 'free of charge' car parks.

- 5.18 More modern ticket machines with daily connectivity will provide accurate information on usage and management issues. Payment by telephone will also provide data on usage. Usage information will negate the need for expensive surveys of car parking and will also allow the Council to consider managing car parks and tariffs on a more flexible basis, possible even on a micro scale rather than district wide.

- 5.19 Accurate information from car parks also allows the Council to support initiatives at Christmas or for parking rebate schemes in partnership with traders.
- 5.20 Currently the Council reviews its town centre parking tariffs every three years, usually reflecting inflation per annum, equating to a minimum increase of 10p per tariff band. This largely reflects the limitations of the ticket machines in terms of coin types accepted and the very limited information available on car park usage from ticket machines and on-street usage.
- 5.21 In 2009 tariff increase considered the different demand for parking both within and between towns. As a result 'differential' tariffs now exist reflecting the higher demand for parking in Hitchin and Letchworth compared to Royston. In addition some 'prime' short stay car parks within Hitchin and Letchworth have higher tariffs than other short stay car parks in the same towns, reflecting observed demand from surveys of users.
- 5.22 Tariffs can also be used to manage parking demand, potentially directing users to less busy car parks. There is a fine line between using tariffs in this way and putting people off coming to town centres.

#### Policy 5 - Reviewing Tariffs and season tickets

The Council will review tariffs and season tickets every year starting from 2009. It will consider the following:

1. Usage and demand for car parks within towns as a whole
2. Differences in demand for parking within car parks
3. Differences in demand for parking between days and times of the day
4. Economic vitality and viability of town centres
5. Tariffs used in other private car parks within towns
6. Tariffs used in other nearby towns
7. Tariff rebate or discount schemes
8. Short stay tariffs should to reflect the key objectives of Town Centre Strategies with specific regard to supporting duration of stay.
9. Long stay tariffs should compare favourable with return local bus or rail fares in order to encourage alternative modes of travel to town centres.
10. The practicalities of implementing tariff increases depending on the types of ticket machines in operation.
11. Other issues such as the need to prevent unnecessary circulating traffic due to big tariff differences between car parks.
12. Other financial considerations such as the rate of inflation, cost of

managing the parking service and cost of implementing new tariffs.

- 5.23 Currently there is no charge for Sunday or evening parking in town centres. In recent years certain towns have increased activity on Sundays and during the evenings and car parks are used during these times. Charging for parking will place greater demands on management and enforcement resources as well as have implications for the economic viability of town centres during these times.

Policy 6 - Charging for Evenings and Sundays

The Council will consider charging for parking for evenings and Sundays when tariffs are reviewed and depending on what charging system may be in place in the future. The evening and Sunday charging review will be carried out in consultation with Area Committees and Town Centre Management and will consider the demand for Evening and Sunday parking, economic circumstances of town centres at the time and availability of alternatives as well as resource implications for managing car parks outside current charging hours.

- 5.24 In line with modern car park operations, there is potential for other services to be provided in off-street car parks in the district. Where appropriate some of these services may benefit car park users and the Council will consider opportunities on a case by case basis.

Policy 7 - Other Services in Council Car Parks

The Council will consider opportunities for providing other services to customers in its car parks. In some cases services may be provided by third parties and in all cases consideration will be given to the appropriateness of the service provided as well as the implications for use of the car park and town centre generally.

Services could include:

1. Advertising on tickets, ticket machines or elsewhere
2. Promotion or marketing initiatives
3. Other events associated with town centre promotion or activities
4. Other appropriate commercial activities

- 5.25 There is a considerable amount of on-street parking in town centres. Much of this parking is as close, if not closer, to main shopping areas than off-

street parking. This makes it popular and survey information indicates that turnover of spaces is significant.

5.26 On-street parking is currently free of charge and this, coupled with the short stay parking restrictions in place, means a significant amount of vehicles moving through town centres searching for on-street parking, often when there is spare capacity in off-street car parks. In some locations this puts circulating traffic in areas where pedestrian activity is busiest.

5.27 On-street parking generally falls into five categories:

1. Short stay (e.g. 20 minute or half hourly duration)
2. Medium stay (e.g. 1 – 3 hours duration)
3. Long stay (e.g. 3 hours plus)
4. Disabled Badge holder parking
5. Loading and servicing

5.28 The Council will review the provision of on-street parking, especially where Town Centre Strategies are progressing and the demand for or need for on-street parking may change over time. The principle of short stay in core area and medium/longer stay further away from shops is the preferred approach.

5.29 From time to time there may be a need to review provision of on-street parking in town centres where servicing, emergency vehicles and buses have difficulty accessing key destinations.

#### Policy 8 - On Street Parking Provision

In consultation with District Area Committees, Town Centre Management, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Constabulary the Council will review provision of on-street parking as and when circumstances change in town centres. Consideration will be given for retaining the overall quantum and balance in duration of stay of on-street parking spaces unless circumstances indicate that there will be limited detrimental impact to the town centre of removing on street parking or amending duration of parking.

The Council will continue to pursue a policy of short stay in core streets, medium stay in peripheral streets and medium to longer stay in streets further out from the centre, subject to provision not conflicting with other demands or giving rise to safety, access or amenity concerns

- 5.30 The Council manages the enforcement of on-street parking controls in town centres. This considerable cost is not off-set by users paying for service at source, as is the case in off-street car parks. In addition the Council is concerned about the implications for town centre vitality and viability of the volumes of traffic circulating in town centres. This problem will only become more acute when development sites in town centres come forward.
- 5.31 Town Centre Strategies identify the need for increased pedestrian priority measures as well as identifying the need for town centre users to use car parks on the edges of shopping areas and walk rather than circulate by car through core town centre streets.
- 5.32 In summary there is a balance between providing on-street parking in town centres, the cost of managing that provision and the implications for town centres as shopping environments of the volume of traffic it generates.
- 5.33 Charging for on-street parking is one way of managing these impacts and is in line with managing parking elsewhere in car parks and on-street parking in residential areas (i.e. via permit charges).

#### Policy 9 - On Street Charging

The Council will consider the case for on-street parking charges when off-street parking tariffs are reviewed. This will be carried out in consultation with Area Committees, Town Centre Management, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Constabulary.

Key issues to consider will be as follows:

1. The economic vitality and viability of town centres and the implications of introducing on street charging
2. The cost of implementing and managing on-street charging
3. Appropriate tariffs for on-street charging alongside off-street parking charges (see also the issues in 'Reviewing Tariffs')
4. Appropriate charging times and days for on-street parking

The following category of on street charging areas will be considered in conjunction with the above:

1. Core shopping streets with the lowest duration of stay and highest turnover of spaces.
2. Next to core shopping streets with short to medium stay duration

3. Longer stay on the edges of town centres, with specific regard to the potential for parking migrating to non-town centre areas.
4. Longer stay elsewhere e.g. for employee, commuter or education users

5.34 The Council has maintained a policy of providing on-street and off-street parking for Disabled Badge Holders in a variety of locations in town centres. This reflects the need for Disabled Badge Holders to park near their destination on grounds of reduced accessibility. There is, at times, great demand for prime Disabled Badge Holder spaces and the opportunity for increasing provision in key destinations is limited. There is also a considerable amount of abuse of Disabled Badge Holder parking bays by non-Disabled Badge Holders, especially on a short stay basis.

#### Policy 10 - Parking for Disabled Badge Holders

The Council will maintain its policy of providing free parking for disabled Badge Holders both on and off street in a variety of locations around town centres. Where circumstances change (for example associated with a new car park management system, development proposals or demand for more pedestrian priority) the views of stakeholders, the Area Committee, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Constabulary will be sought on future provision for Disabled Badge Holders.

Where demand arises the Council will also seek to identify and provide parking space for mobility scooters.

Pedestrian priority measures will be designed with the needs of Disabled Badge Holders' parking needs as a key consideration.

5.35 Another key issue for town centres is the availability of service access and loading bays for serving shops and businesses. Currently loading bays are provided in locations where demand for on-street parking is high, road space is often limited and specific provision is needed to assist business deliveries. The Town Centre Strategies identify potential demand for pedestrian priority measures and increased retail provision in town centres. Pressure for servicing and loading access will increase in town centres, potentially being directly at odds with the ability to carry out servicing and deliveries where pedestrian priority becomes more in-demand.

5.36 There is now restricted access to core shopping streets in Hitchin on Saturdays. This, along with experience from outside the district, suggests that there are ways of maintaining service access alongside demand for greater pedestrian priority.

#### Policy 11 - Servicing and Loading

The Council will seek to maintain servicing and delivery access for businesses and residents in town centres. As proposals from Town Centre Strategies come forward, the ability to maintain servicing and delivery access throughout the day in certain parts of town centres may be limited, therefore needing a more flexible or managed solution.

In consultation with Town Centre Management, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Constabulary the Council will review servicing and delivery access as and when circumstances require. The preference will be to serve properties from the rear where possible and, if not possible, from the street.

Pedestrian priority measures will be designed with the needs of servicing and delivery access as a key consideration.

- 5.37 Emergency access in town centres is a key consideration and many of the issues associated with it are similar to those affecting servicing and deliveries. The one key difference is the need to preserve human life overriding the need for any other access or parking requirements. The emergency services will park wherever needed in an emergency and the Council seeks to support their ability to get access into town centres and not be impeded by other parking. Much of this issue is a matter for the management and enforcement of town centre parking.

#### Policy 12 - Emergency Services' Access

The Council will work with Hertfordshire County Council and the Emergency Services to review town centre parking provision in order to ensure that there are no circumstances where parking is consistently impeding emergency service access.

Pedestrian priority measures will be designed with the needs of the Emergency Services as a key consideration.

- 5.38 Increased use of both modes of transport help reduce congestion in town centres and pressure on car parking. Increased bicycle use also helps reduce carbon emissions and the Council's Proposed Cycle Route Network alongside Urban Transport Plans for the towns will identify improvements to routes to and from town centres for bicycles.

- 5.39 Security and shelter are key issues for both types of two wheeled user. Both are able to park free of charge and bicycle parking stands are generally situated at various locations around town centres. Powered two wheelers are able to park in designated areas of off-street car parks, on street or in other informal locations, often sharing with bicycle parking.

**Policy 13 - Powered Two Wheeler and Bicycle Parking**

The Council will work with Town Centre Management, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Constabulary to seek to identify and provide additional parking facilities for powered two wheelers and bicycles. The most appropriate mechanism for delivering improvements is via Urban Transport Plans or Town Centre Strategies but the principle of small scale provision at a variety of locations in town centres is the start point.

For powered two wheelers the Council will work with Hertfordshire County Council to identify locations where specific provision can be made to park motorbikes and mopeds and lock them securely to a fixed object.

Provision for powered two wheelers will continue to be made in off-street car parks free of charge. Opportunities for increasing provision will be made where they can be identified.

- 5.40 Taxis provide an important service, especially for journeys to and from Town Centres and Railway Stations. As such the Council is keen to ensure a provision of taxi parking and waiting in accessible locations. Provision will reflect that demand for taxi parking often varies and can increase at peak times.

**Policy 14 – Taxi Parking**

The Council will work with Town Centre Management, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Constabulary to identify and provide parking for taxi operators at key destinations that balances the need for convenient access for operators and customers with the wider demands of town centres, railway stations and other areas where specific demand for taxi parking is identified.

- 5.41 Currently the Council provides Coach and Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) overnight parking in Woodside car park in Hitchin. The Council will consider provision for similar parking where demand arises.

Policy 15 - Bus, Coach, HGV and caravan/trailer Parking.

The Council will work with Local Councillors, Town Centre Management, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Constabulary to identify parking provision for Buses, Coaches, HGVs and caravans/trailers as and when demand is identified. This will include consideration of appropriate directional signing and information and, if relevant, charging if provision is made in Council controlled off-street car parks.

- 5.42 There are several locations within town centres where existing Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) are not as clear as they should be, leading to some confusion amongst users. As such this encourages parking in locations or for durations not intended. These outstanding issues need to be resolved to ensure that parking management in town centres can be effective

Policy 16 - Updating Traffic Regulation Orders

The Council will identify and take action on any Traffic Regulation Orders in town centres that need to be reviewed to improve clarity for users.

- 5.43 The Council acknowledges the benefits that a successful Park and Ride scheme can offer. To date no case has been made to demonstrate that a permanent or seasonal Park and Ride scheme can operate in the District. Experience from elsewhere suggests the District's towns are too small, do not have sufficient volume of traffic to key destinations and are too close to other towns for Park and Ride to be an option. As such the Council considers that Park and Ride potential should be considered via the various Urban Transport Plans for the District rather than through this Parking Strategy.

## **6.0 Residential and other non-Town Centre Areas**

- 6.1 The District Council has been managing on-street parking controls for five years and has considerable experience of the most appropriate way of addressing parking issues in residential areas. The agreement the Council has with Hertfordshire County Council permits the District Council to implement Traffic Regulation Orders that provide for parking, mainly in the form of Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs).
- 6.2 The Council now manages 12 Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) in residential areas of Hitchin, Letchworth and Royston. These zones have been successful in removing non-residential parking although the original intention was for CPZs to be self financing. This has not been the case and with demand for additional CPZs this Strategy will consider how to provide additional CPZs, whether there is potential for CPZs and other on street parking to be self financing and whether existing CPZs need to be reviewed in the light of the past few years' experiences.
- 6.3 Other TROs are implemented from time to time in the district that are mainly to do with preventing parking and/or promoting safety and public amenity. Whilst the District Council may enforce these types of parking restrictions they remain the responsibility of Hertfordshire County Council to implement.
- 6.4 The overall aim is to minimising the effects of street parking upon road safety, congestion and the environment. The approach of this Strategy is to consider an area wide approach rather than street by street. It is recognised that it is difficult to convince residents of currently unaffected areas to consider parking controls but this Strategy seeks to identify how an area wide approach may benefit wider residential areas. In reality, provision of measures to provide for parking on-street may involve a combination of CPZs and other TROs by the District Council.
- 6.5 The provision of CPZs has been focussed on removing non-residential car parking in residential areas, normally long stay and mainly associated with commuters, employees and town centre users. The CPZ's implemented to date have been successful in achieving the removal of non-residential parking but experience over the last few years has shown that:
1. Non-residential parking problems migrate, not always to the most likely areas
  2. Controlled Parking Zones are expensive and income from permits do not cover the cost of implementing and managing the zones.

3. There are other ways of dealing with non-residential parking that may be as effective in terms of removing non-residential parking but not being as costly to implement and manage as CPZs
- 6.6 Removing long stay, non-residential parking can help promote alternative modes of travel to town centres, employment areas and railway stations. There are important overlaps with the Urban Transport Plans in this respect as removing on-street parking may free up road space for other facilities such as cycle routes or pedestrian crossings.
  - 6.7 There may be instances where removing non-residents parking creates the circumstances for excessive speed for vehicles and therefore demands for traffic calming. In some cases retaining some on street parking, including long stay may serve to keep traffic speeds down.
  - 6.8 In considering parking control areas the Council will need to consider the wider implications of any parking restrictions for all road users. The Council will also identify whether there is any scope for delivering parking improvements in conjunction with other highways works being undertaken, for example, maintenance of safety engineering schemes.
  - 6.9 The Council recognises that there are still some areas of the District that suffer from excessive amounts of long stay parking that is a problem and has identified areas that will need attention over the course of this strategy. The following objectives summarise the Council's priorities in dealing with on-street parking problems:
    - ◆ where residents compete for road parking space in their own streets with other groups (local workers, commuters etc) new schemes will give greater priority to residents.
    - ◆ where local businesses compete for road parking space in their local industrial areas with other groups, (commuters etc) new schemes will give greater priority to local businesses.

6.10 A two stage process is required to assess the need for action and, if it is agreed that action is needed, what needs to be considered to identify the best solution. Stage 1 of the process is largely concerned with identifying problem areas that need further detailed investigation to determine the extent of any problems and possible solutions.

Policy 17 - Identifying On Street Parking Problem Areas

The Council will investigate and take action according to the following initial appraisal:

- ◆ Where residents, with no off street parking provision, are regularly prevented from parking in their streets or reasonable walking distance by commuters, local workers, students or other long-stay parkers.
- ◆ Where businesses are impeded in their daily activities, by parked vehicles associated with commuters, local workers, students or other long-stay parkers.
- ◆ Where the local Area Committee, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Police are agreed that action needs to be taken to reduce the risk of accidents.
- ◆ Where the Council, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Police are agreed that action needs to be taken to prevent regular significant queuing and congestion as a result of obstructive parking.
- ◆ Where the Council, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Police are agreed that pedestrian, cycle or passenger transport routes are regularly impeded by obstructively parked vehicles.

6.11 Where an initial appraisal has identified the need for action the Council will move to the second stage of appraisal required before detailed implementation. The second stage appraisal seeks to consider the specific characteristics of the area based on observations or information supplied to the Council.

Policy 18 - Identifying Solutions to On Street Parking Problems

In deciding the best approach to take to removing undesirable long-stay parking it will consider the following:

1. The possible amount of non-residential parking and the amount of residential or operational business parking competing for roadspace.
2. The likely availability of off-street parking.
3. Locations where long-stay parking is impeding private accesses and junctions
4. Locations where non-residents' parking is causing other concerns, such as verge parking, blocking pedestrian routes, causing highway safety concerns or preventing safe and convenient access especially for cyclists, buses, servicing and/or emergency vehicles
5. The extent to which other parking generators influence demand (e.g. local businesses, schools and other organisations)
6. The potential for other issues such as speeding to become more prominent when parking is removed.
7. Whether removing non-residential parking will lead to a clear and unacceptable worsening of parking conditions elsewhere.
8. If a CPZ is implemented what are the resource implications for the Council, including an estimate of permit take up by local residents/businesses.
9. The views of Local Councillors, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Constabulary on the above as well as initial views on the best method to addressing problems including whether a CPZ is appropriate.

- 6.12 In order to implement measures to support residents' or businesses parking, the Council will continue to seek their support before moving from second stage to implementation. In some locations it may be preferable to consult on a wider area if it is anticipated that an existing problem could be moved to an adjoining area where parking isn't currently a concern.

#### Policy 19 - Consultation

A full public consultation will be undertaken of all Local Councillors, residents and businesses in an affected area to ascertain the scale of any problems and to determine the number of residents with no off street parking provision.

With regard to specific proposals the Council will continue to seek the support of at least 50% of residents and/or affected businesses who respond to consultation on proposals before implementing any parking controls. The Council will aim to seek the support of a minimum of 50% of those with no off-street parking where this can be clearly identified.

Where a parking scheme is progressed in detail the formal process associated with advertising Traffic Regulation Orders allows for anyone affected to make representations to the Council during an advertised period of time. The Council will consider any representations made to a formal Order prior to finalising any parking scheme.

Where practical, consultation will include areas beyond those immediately affected where it can be demonstrated that parking problems may migrate.

- 6.13 This above policies set out the approach to implementing potential parking controls. The Council has identified areas that need attention, areas that need investigation at a later date and areas that will need to be monitored for future parking issues.
- 6.14 Hitchin, Letchworth and Royston have a number of CPZs in place. There are a still number of areas in these towns affected by non-residents parking largely as a result of problems migrating from other controlled areas but also as a result of other changes both in terms of employment uses and even timetable changes for rail services.
- 6.15 Baldock does not currently have any CPZs although issues that exist in certain areas suggest that CPZs may be appropriate. There are existing parking issues that are likely to be worsened by the introduction of shorter stay parking in the core town centre streets.

- 6.16 Certain areas of Knebworth have competition for parking spaces between residents and non-residents associated mainly with rail commuters. A CPZ may be appropriate alongside other safety related parking controls.

**Policy 20 - Future Parking Control Areas**

The Council will identify and keep under review a programme of parking controls for areas of the District in need of assistance. Areas identified fall within the following broad categories:

1. Area with an existing problem
2. Area requiring further investigation
3. Area to be monitored for potential future problems

The resources allocated to delivering solutions to those areas included within categories 1 and 2 above will dictate when and what solutions can be delivered. In identifying a programme the Council will give careful consideration to resources required to deliver and manage improvements.

- 6.17 There are a number of other smaller scale issues associated with providing or managing on-street parking that aren't area wide, for example where on-street parking may be preventing safe and convenient access to private properties on foot or by vehicle. The Council is aware of many of these but recognises that from time to time additional ones will be added and this list will need to be flexible enough to respond to changes.
- 6.18 In addition the Council is also aware of the environmental impact of on street parking in some areas (e.g. on verges or footways) and has undertaken works to mitigate this impact alongside use of byelaws where appropriate.

**Policy 21 - Smallscale Parking Improvements**

The Council will identify and keep under review a programme of implementation of smallscale parking improvements in locations where parking is having a detrimental environmental impact, is hindering service and emergency vehicle access or is not serving the needs of local people as required. In addition the Council will investigate whether other methods of enforcement than a Traffic Regulation Order are appropriate.

Parking issues that are largely safety related will be referred to Hertfordshire County Council to address.

- 6.19 Many of the smaller scale issues identified will need to be implemented by Hertfordshire County Council either in full or in partnership with the District Council. In some cases these issues may need to be addressed as part of the Urban Transport Plan delivery programme for each town. Agreement on a programme for these measures will be made with the County Council.
- 6.20 Existing CPZs have largely addressed the problem of long stay, non-residential in areas covered by the zones. The original plans for these CPZs envisaged a higher take up of residents permits and, therefore, lower cost to the Council of managing these areas. In light of the past experience of managing CPZs there is a need to review some of the existing zones. Reviews will consider how well they operate, whether a CPZ is the most appropriate way of addressing parking issues and whether a zone needs to be amended in any way.
- 6.21 Part of the review process will include the pricing of residents' permits and potential concessions on permits as well other issues such as whether to increase prices for multiple car owned properties or restrict the number of permits available per property as is standard practice in other Local Authorities.

Policy 22 - Review of Existing Controlled Parking Zones

The Council will review existing CPZs in order to determine whether they remain 'fit for purpose' in terms of their purpose and operation.

In consultation with Local Area Committees, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Constabulary, a programme for amending CPZs will be drawn up where it is considered appropriate to do so but without undermining the principle of supporting residents and/or local businesses in preference to longer stay non-residential or local business parking.

- 6.22 The Council receives regular requests for providing Disabled Badge Holder Parking bays adjacent to residential properties or community facilities. In order to provide Disabled Badge Holder bays the Council will develop a criteria based eligibility policy as well as a programme for implementing Disabled Badge Holder Bays. A clear process for applying for Disabled Badge holder parking bay(s) will also be developed.

### Policy 23 - Disabled Badge Holder Parking Bays

The Council will develop a policy for providing Disabled Badge Holder Parking and an annual programme for delivering parking spaces for Disabled Badge Holders. It will focus on eligibility criteria as well as site specific circumstances. Considerations will include but not be limited to the following:

1. The availability and distance from the applicant's destination of off and on street parking
2. The ability of the applicant to walk or otherwise manoeuvre to the nearest parking provision, possibly via confirmation from a medical professional
3. Whether a formal or informal parking bay is the most appropriate course of action
4. Site specific safety or amenity issues for other road users
5. The views of Local Councillors, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Constabulary

6.23 The Council has Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) guidance on the parking policy and standards to be applied to all new development. This will be regularly reviewed to reflect changing development pressures and demand for parking.

6.24 As the provision of CPZs and the number of brownfield sites developed within urban areas have increased, the pressure for parking space in CPZs from new developments<sup>1</sup> has intensified. The Council considers that all new development should, as far as possible, be self sufficient in providing for future occupiers' parking insofar as there should be no unacceptable residual demand for parking in CPZs from new development.

6.25 Some residual parking on existing streets may be acceptable but where it is considered to add pressure to existing residents' and businesses' parking provision, new development will be required to provide for its own parking and possibly provide a financial contribution towards protecting existing residents' and businesses' parking.

6.26 Where new roads are adopted and off-street parking is provided in new development, the Council will work with developers and Hertfordshire County Council to ensure that the detailed design of new development does not create unnecessary parking overspill onto existing streets, especially in areas where there is pressure for parking space. The Council will consider

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<sup>1</sup>New developments in this case are considered to be those developments that have been built after CPZs or other TROs were implemented on adjoining streets.

the availability of existing on and off street parking space in determining planning applications.

6.27 As a result of many 'brownfield' sites being redeveloped adjacent to CPZs the Council faces increasing pressure to issue permits to residents of new development. Each case will need to be considered on its merits and careful consideration will need to be given to the availability of parking space for residential areas that pre-dated the CPZ and have little or no off-street parking.

6.28 Increasingly new developments in urban areas have been provided with at least one allocated parking space although car ownership per household may be higher and there may be limited space for visitors so there is demand for on street parking.

**Policy 24 – Parking at new developments and existing Controlled Parking Zones**

The Council will adopt and regularly review a Supplementary Planning Document 'Parking Standards at New Development' on parking policy and standards for new development.

The Council will consider the need for including residents of new developments in existing CPZs on a case by case basis. As general guidance the following will be considered:

- 1) The amount of off-street parking provided formally or informally in the new development
- 2) The extent to which the parking standards used in the new development comply with 'Parking Standards at New Development' guidance
- 3) The availability of existing roadspace for additional residential parking
- 4) Any constraints on a development site that may have restricted the provision of parking (e.g. need to retain Listed Buildings)
- 5) The potential for imposing a limit on the amount of permits provided per household for new developments
- 6) Any other issues for example Planning Conditions or Legal Agreements that may prevent or restrict the issuing of permits.
- 7) Costs for amendments to traffic regulation orders, signs, lines and other set up work required to add eligible properties to CPZ's from new developments should be met in full by developers.

- 6.29 All CPZ's were designed to favour residents and exclude commuters or employees and, in his respect, have been successful. In several zones the take up of permits is low and the net effect is cost to the Council to run, lower than required income to cover costs and spare space in locations where demand for parking would be high if left unrestricted. Each zone is different and site specific circumstances also have an influence on spare space (i.e. number of dropped kerbs).
- 6.30 There is potential to sell permits to non-residents in each zone on a managed, limited basis. This will help cover costs and keep resident permit prices lower than might otherwise be the case.
- 6.31 A minor benefit may also be that some non-resident parking displaced to unrestricted areas could be absorbed into existing zones taking pressure of these areas.
- 6.32 Permit prices for non-residents should be set at levels competitive with rail and town centre season ticket parking. As an indicative price, £500 per annum could be charged which represents a saving on all station season tickets and does not undercut NHDC's season ticket price significantly (bearing in mind car parks are central and CPZs normally on the edges of town centres).
- 6.33 Residents in CPZs are likely to be concerned that non-residents could return en masse as a result of this proposal. Residents will be keen to avoid this happening given that they pay £76 per annum for the permit parking benefits. Income received from sale of permits to non-residents will help cover the cost of permits schemes and, therefore, help keep resident permit prices down.
- 6.34 Policy (25) is set out below that seeks to cover the whole district but clear enough that 'each case on its merits' will apply. The guiding principle is to promote residents' parking. It is intended that the policy applies to all existing and any future permit parking schemes:

## Policy 25 – Sale of permits to non-residents in Controlled Parking Zones

The Council will consider selling permits to non-residents in Controlled Parking Zones on a strictly limited basis. A decision on whether to sell permits to non-residents will be made in consultation with the Area Committee, Highway Authority and Police as part of the Area Parking reviews for each town/village. A decision as to whether to sell permits to non-residents in Zones will have regard to criteria 1 – 8 below. Having considered all the issues the number of permits available to non-residents will be made publicly available.

A decision on selling non-residential permits in CPZs will be based on consideration of:

- 1) The likely demand for non-residential parking in a Zone or part of a Zone
- 2) The level of permit take up and use by residents compared to number of properties eligible
- 3) The extent that permit take up varies between streets within the Zone and whether specific streets or lengths of streets can be identified as preferred locations for non-residents parking
- 4) The availability of space for non-resident parking based on daytime observation survey and especially at morning/evening peak demand times
- 5) The extent that spare space should be kept available for visitors/deliveries to residents
- 6) The extent that space is required for parking in accordance with any permitted limited waiting, disabled or loading space in some Zones.
- 7) The amount of dropped kerb and other site specific circumstances that may dictate the actual amount of space available
- 8) The price of competing long stay non-residential parking
- 9) All other highway user considerations

Non-resident permits will be sold on a first come, first served basis and a list of applicants will be retained by the Council as a live waiting list. Where initial applications and subsequent waiting lists exceed supply, priority will be given to sale of non-residential permits as follows:

- a) Employees of businesses within Zones
- b) Employees of businesses with a postal address within the same town/village the Zone is located in
- c) Commuters who wish to park in a Zone but do not work in the same town that the Zone is located in
- d) All other non residents

Non-residents that are sold permits eligible for CPZs will be required to comply with the terms and conditions of use. This requires strict observation of any requirement to park vehicles in specific named streets or part of streets.

- 6.35 The Council does not charge for replacement parking permits or car park season tickets where they have been lost, damaged or stolen. In recent years £10 was charged for a lost/damaged bus pass so it is recommended that the same approach is adopted to lost/stolen/damaged permits or season tickets as follows:

Policy 26 – Replacement parking permits and car park season tickets

The Council will charge for replacement lost, stolen or damaged parking permits, visitor ticket books or car park season tickets. The charge will be levied to cover administration costs only and will be set out in the appropriate Traffic Regulation Order(s). The level of charge will be reviewed alongside other parking charges.

For further information or If you would like to discuss this Parking Strategy in more detail please contact:

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More detailed information on car parks, tariffs and Controlled Parking Zones can be found at:

[www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/living/travel/car\\_parking\\_in\\_north\\_herts.htm](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/living/travel/car_parking_in_north_herts.htm)

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