

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: Cabinet	REPORT NUMBER: BCa/20/24
FROM: Councillor Elisabeth Malvisi - Cabinet Member for Environment	DATE OF MEETING: 7 January 2021
OFFICER: Cassandra Clements – Assistant Director for Environment & Commercial Partnerships	KEY DECISION REF NO. CAB245

TOWN CENTRE PARKING IN BABERGH DISTRICT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 Following a study of parking, and taking into consideration the future vision for the different towns, the report explores a number of emerging themes which have an impact on parking provision in the District's town centres, and recommends a more planned and balanced approach in future, having considered all of the options.
- 1.2 It is for the Council to decide, based on the details in this paper, the future direction of parking provision and controls for each centre, by taking a view of parking needs in the car parks across the District, the different development and regeneration pressures in each place, and how intervention relates to the economic sustainability and a destination offer related to the wider vision for each town.
- 1.3 It is for the Council to consider all parking management techniques and when or whether they would be applicable – at the present time or in future – again related to the wider vision, uniquely, for each town, and how to structure its future strategy. Importantly, this links to the Council's aspiration to become carbon neutral by 2030.

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 A number of options have been considered, including no change (which must be discounted as there are some known actions (see Appendix D) which will impact parking provision), different levels of controls, increased management of parking, including the implementation of a form of charging or additional charging at some, or all locations.
- 2.2 Data has been collected based on a study carried out during February 2020 and is therefore both before the emergency measures were imposed, but also one of the quieter months of more normal years – representing a best-case scenario.
- 2.3 Informal observations have also been carried out in order to test the application of the data throughout the year, in particular to the impact of leisure/tourism in popular locations.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

- 3.1 That a comprehensive parking strategy review be undertaken for the whole District, which will commence in quarter two 2021/22 and that delegation be given to the Assistant Director for Environment & Commercial Partnerships in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment.
- 3.2 That the parking management principles and interventions detailed in **Appendix A** be implemented with effect from 01 July 2021.
- 3.3 That additional parking controls or tariffs be applied to District car parks in accordance with Option 2, table 3, paragraph 6.3 of this report, subject to the Statutory Order Process and requirements for consultation, in order to achieve availability and occupancy priorities outlined below.
- 3.4 That residential parking permits be implemented in Mill Lane Car Par, Sudbury for overnight stays, subject to the Statutory Order Process and requirements for consultation.
- 3.5 That a proportion of income generated from chargeable parking will be allocated to the delivery of the sustainable travel agenda.
- 3.6 To resolve to delegate the decision to make changes to the parking orders in order to bring in the agreed changes to the AD for Environment and Commercial Partnerships so that appropriate actions can be undertaken in a timely manner.

REASON FOR DECISION

To make appropriate interventions on parking management and maintenance which changes behaviour to balance traffic management and environmental impacts with the need to provide parking for local residents, visitors and workers. To support the Vision and Invest programmes in the key towns and enhance investment opportunities for developing the town centres, ensuring future vibrancy and sustainability, and to maintain parking stock and assets in good condition.

4. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 4.1 With a population of over 92,000 and projected to reach 98,000 by 2036, Babergh is a predominantly rural area where much of the population lives in villages or small market towns. Babergh also shares a common boundary with Essex along much of the River Stour with neighbouring Braintree District and Colchester Borough Council areas.
- 4.2 The district has a strong visitor economy offer given its historic and natural assets, and its main towns are well connected to the wider region, London (with Sudbury connecting to the Great Eastern Main Line via Marks Tey) and the Continent.

Each of the towns has its own unique character

- 4.3 Each town has its own particular qualities and challenges – and provisions for parking need to be made accordingly. We need to consider the needs of shoppers, tourists & visitors, residents, workers and commuters and balance these needs both between their own sometimes conflicting demands, and the various environmental, socio-demographic, geographic and economic factors.

Visioning for our towns

- 4.4 Vision and Invest programmes will continue to communicate the long-term goals and future projects will work towards this, helping the towns achieve each community's individual ambitions. As the programmes evolve, they will be supported by a set of key messages and a narrative which sets out a unified voice and a strong partnership approach to addressing key challenges and seeking key opportunities to support the economic growth and future wellbeing of the place.

Car Parking and links to Visioning

- 4.5 Our strategy matches parking policy to the plans we have for our towns and the visioning timeline. Not every car park across Babergh needs the same controls, but we need to introduce changes at some car parks now; we also need to consider what provision places will need in future. We want to become an environmental influencer against congestion, increasing traffic and associated air quality issues, and make the best use of the parking space we have.
- 4.6 Ensuring the level of car parking facilities, and the right controls for their use, supports regeneration and enables development in and around the District's town centres. Good quality accessible car parking with a clear purpose and welcome is important to visitors and residents alike.
- 4.7 Appropriate controls can help manage the environmental impacts of travel, such as air quality by helping to reduce congestion. But we aim to balance this against the commercial vitality of the town, encouraging greater footfall and improving the public realm and streetscape.

Policy and Principles

- 4.8 Our study shows that *average* stay length in even the largest town in the District is 64 minutes. We also have areas where parking is in more demand than supply, where interventions are required. Other studies show that motorists value proximity of parking to their destination as much as cost; also that limitless free parking does not have a positive impact on the dwell time of the average shopper.
- 4.9 We want to make best use of the space we have available, turning over spaces in the town centre, encouraging more shopping trips and stays during the day time. We want to encourage not using a car at all for some trips and use of alternative parking for longer stays. We will need to introducing charging at some locations to effect these controls and any income will help to cover the cost at the point of use.
- 4.10 Current car park costs of £444k p.a. are shown in Table 4A include resurfacing, grounds maintenance, gritting, sweeping, litter collection, business rates, signage, machine consumables, administrative functions and patrols and all need to be funded. The currently 'free' parking service is subsidised £185k p.a. by all taxpayers – whether motorists or not. Any income raised (current budget £259k p.a.) helps to cover costs, but the service still requires a £185k subsidy. Future changes will help to cover operational costs, with a proportion of income funding sustainable schemes.
- 4.11 A study of parking was carried out with data collected in February 2020, as a best-case pre-Covid-19 snapshot. Following this a number of alternative strategies have been discussed and we have focussed on the most practical solutions for this report.
- 4.12 We will consult on implementing the changes in Appendix A, including overnight resident parking, parking controls and the introduction of tariffs to encourage behavioural change and sustainable transport choices.

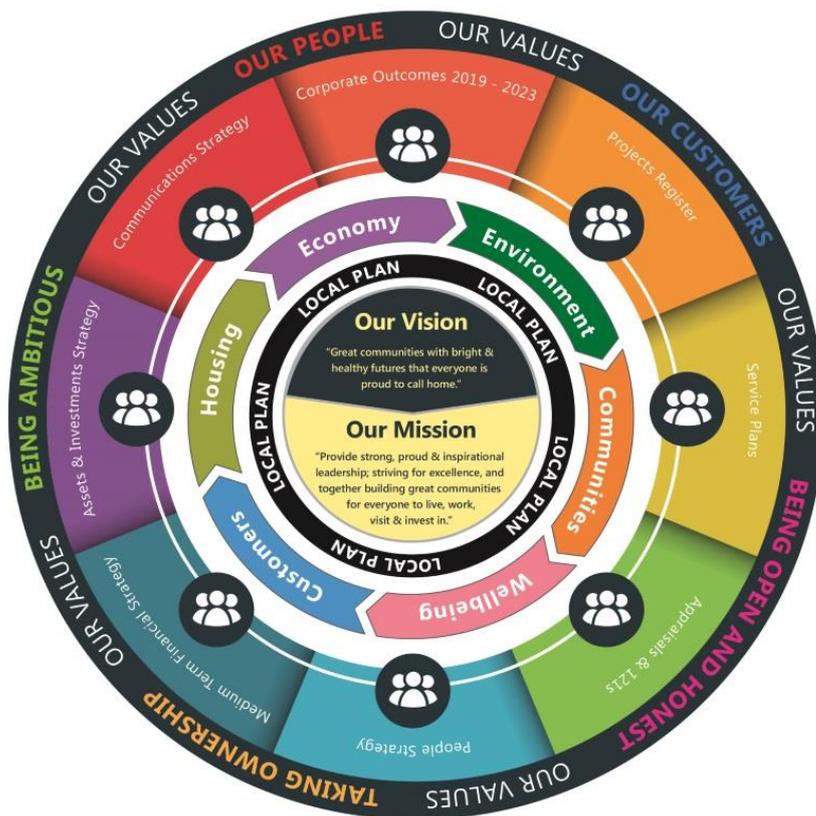
Themes in this report

4.13 A number of themes run through this paper, including: –

- **A study of the stay durations, capacity, turnover and occupancy** of town car parks – the data shows a need to support a future strategy that provides the right level of parking in the right places for the right reasons;
- **Impacts on other areas** – the way parking is managed has an impact on:
 - **the economy** – ensuring spaces turn over to support the town centres and their vitality vs. provision for workers and commuters;
 - **development and regeneration** – supporting delivery of key town centre projects eg Sudbury Market Hill improvements, Hamilton Road Quarter, Active Travel cross-town links and future health care provision development in Sudbury – all of which alter parking provision or impact demand;
 - **local transport and support for District and County policy** – providing parking in each town to balance the needs of all road users, environmentally sustainable measures including Electric Vehicles, public transport, cycling, and walking alternatives to the private car, support for county Local Transport Plan priorities (including junction improvements) and Pinch Point and Active Travel funding;
 - **the environment** – environmental impacts such as traffic congestion which leads to air quality issues, provision of Electric Vehicle (including cycles as well as cars) charging points, in all of which parking management can play a part in reducing the impact of motor travel.

5. LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

- 5.1 The Joint Corporate Plan (2019-27) is designed to address the challenges and seize the opportunities facing the districts and their organisations for the foreseeable future. The Councils' vision is to have 'great communities with bright & healthy futures that everyone is proud to call home.'
- 5.2 The Joint Corporate Plan identifies six strategic priorities as set out in the visual below. Environment and Economy are two of those six, and the success of the Councils' ambition on climate change and the visioning programmes is intrinsically interlinked with the strategies that underpin the other four priority areas of Housing, Communities, Well-Being, and Customers. The response to Climate Change is not just the business of Environment but of every part of the Councils' strategic framework. Conversely, Environment plays a key part in every priority within the Corporate Plan.



6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Benchmarking Operations in other areas:

TABLE 1: Benchmarking National Comparative charging in similar towns

Charges up to:	Nantwich, Cheshire	Bridport, Dorset	Oakham, Rutland	Helmsley, Ryedale
20 mins	£ 0.70	£ 0.20	£ 1.00	£1.60
1 hour		£ 0.40		
2 hours	£ 1.10	£ 0.80	£ 2.50	£2.50
3 hours	£ 2.20	£ 1.70		£3.00
4 hours		£ 4.00	£ 4.30	£5.00
5 hours	£ 2.70	£ 8.00		
6 hours/day	N/A	£ 12.00	Free	Charges + extra time
Blue Badge Holders	Free	Charges as above		

Financial illustration of different tariff choices

6.2 A range of options is set out below to illustrate different tariff controls – with the inclusion of longer controlled hours to improve turnover on Saturday lunchtime/afternoons and encourage alternative use of Gt Eastern Road/Station Road car parks as an alternative for non-shopping trips.

6.3 A yield for all of the car parks, if charging were introduced is predicted (at the levels in the data surveyed) would be between £160k and £580k p.a. net of vat (VAT is charged at 20% for off street parking and is accounted for), and net income will vary depending upon collection method.

TABLE 2 - Illustration of different options for controls					
Location	Car parks	Type	Option 1	Option 2 - preferred	Option 3
Sudbury	North Street, Girling Street	Shoppers short stay Max. 3 hrs	30 minfree 3 hours .£1.00	30 min.....free 1 hour£0.50 2 hours...£1.00 3 hours...£2.00	1 hour..... .free 3 hours... £1.00
	Great Eastern Road	Short stay	30 minfree 3 hours .£1.00 All day £4.00	30 min.....free 1 hour£0.50 2 hours...£1.00 3 hours...£2.00 All day.....£4.00	1 hour..... .free 3 hours .. £1.00 All day..... £4.00
	Station Road, Stour Street	Short and long stay	30 minfree 3 hours £1.00 All day ... £4.00	30 min.....free 1 hour£0.50 2 hours...£1.00 3 hours...£1.50 All day.....£4.00	1 hour..... .free 3 hours . £1.00 All day..... £4.00
	The Station	Long Stay	All day £4.00	2 hours....£1.00 4 hours....£2.00 6 hours....£3.00 All day.....£4.00	All day..... £4.00
	Mill Lane	Change to be available for Residents Only			
Hadleigh	Magdalen Road	Long Stay	All day £4.00		
	Stonehouse Road, & Magdalen Road (long)	Short and long stay	30 minfree 3 hours .. £1.00 All day ... £4.00 (Long stay area for Magdalen Road)		
	Magdalen Road (short stay area), High Street, Toppesfield Hall	Short stay	30 minfree 3 hours .. £1.00 (Magdalen Road is split into long and short stay – long stay is not allowed in the front section of the car park).		
	Railway Walk	Short stay Max. 3 hrs	Changed to maximum stay for local use 3 hoursfree		
Chelmondiston Pin Mill	Local parking	Changed to 50p per hour			
Lavenham car parks	All car parks	No changes to existing. To research further in future as part of Strategy work.			
All other car parks	All car parks	No changes to any existing including any not shown above.			

TABLE 3 - Modelled budget introducing charges (£ net of VAT)			
Estimate	Low	High	Notes
Option 1	-£ 326k	-£ 399k	Free 30min, then £1; £4 all day – higher risk / elasticity + Hadleigh + Pin Mill
Option 2	-£ 325k	-£ 391k	Free 30min, ramped inner/outer tariff; £4 all day + Hadleigh + Pin Mill – recommended
Option 3	-£ 130k	-£ 140k	Free first hour, ave stay 64 mins, highest risk + Hadleigh + Pin Mill

- 6.4 Existing operation is provided as a service against the current costs (explained in paragraph 4.10 above).
- 6.5 The current budget shows that the service costs the council money to operate and currently requires a subsidy of £185k p.a. as shown in Table 4A below. Table 4B takes that figure and projects the effect of pending decisions and changes to long stay. Table 5 shows the impact of the controls on short stay.

TABLE 4A Current Budget for Service (£ net of VAT)	budget 2020/21
Total expenditure	£ 444k
Income from all parking sources (season tickets, car parking ticket sales, enforcing)	-£ 259k
Current net cost of service – subsidy	£ 185k

TABLE 4B Revenue Budget – Existing (£ net of VAT)	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Current budget for parking – budget costs at 2020 prices	£ 185k	£ 190k	£ 195k
Included current parking income from current ticket sales only – budget illustration	-£ 80k	-£ 144k	-£ 144k
Parking income budgeted with suggested adjustment to existing long stay charges	-£ 80k	-£ 155k	-£ 185k
Budget net change	-	-£ 11k	-£ 41k

- 6.6 The effects of the recommendations, if implemented using Option 2, from Table 2, are shown in Table 5, below:-

TABLE 5 Proposed Budget + Controls (£ net of VAT)	2020/21	2021/22 part year	2022/23 full year
New additional income budgeted from short stay charging <i>estimate</i>	-	-£ 244k	-£ 325k
Implementation and ongoing costs linked to charging (see Appendix A)	-	£ 30k	£ 30k
Other: signage, wayfinding, maintenance, improved cycle parking and EVs (Appendix A)	-	£ 39k	£ 102k
Net expenditure - net effect	-	-£ 175k	-£ 193k

- 6.7 Calculations in the modelling included estimates representing the effects of the changes, including resistance, economic conditions, weather / seasonality, a contingency, and other prevailing conditions (maintenance, unforeseen closures, etc). Blue Badge bays are not included in parking fee changes (see Appendix E).
- 6.8 A prudent estimate has been illustrated. In making changes from July 2021, calculations have included part of the year at old prices, and part at new prices plus a part year after the short stay introduction.
- 6.9 Tables 4B and 5 above do not include costs or income from patrols and enforcement, nor costs or income from unchanged season tickets/permits.

Where costs may be capitalised in Appendix A, these have not been shown in Table 5, for example £70k investment in machine upgrades.

- 6.10 There is a recommendation that a commitment that, no matter what the level of new income shown in Table 5, that the Cabinet pledge to put a percentage towards the Sustainable Travel agenda.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 For any changes to be made to the provisions governing parking, a change to the Parking Orders will be needed. There is a legislated process to follow in order to make changes, provided the correct governance in line with the Council's Standing Orders has been completed – usually a Cabinet or Council Decision, which may be delegated.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 This report is most closely linked with the Council's following Significant Risks: No. 6 - Decline in our key towns impacts upon economic prosperity of the districts; No. 11 - We may be unable to react in a timely and effective way to financial demands; Risk No. 12 - The Council may be perceived to be untrustworthy and have a poor reputation; and Risk No. 16 - The Council will not be carbon neutral by 2030.

- 8.2 Further risks are set out below:

TABLE 6 Risks and Mitigation Measures			
Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
Unable to influence motorist behaviour into more environmentally friendly methods of transport resulting in traffic congestion and poor air quality – threatening Council's Climate Emergency declaration and its aim to become carbon neutral by 2030.	1	2	Communications, move to other options to be discussed in future Strategy, or bring forward planned phases of plan.
Imbalance in policy, charging, town centre vitality, leisure, etc. impacting on visiting footfall in our towns and the economy.	1	3	Research implies that availability of parking, rather than charging, tends to impact town centre vitality.
Introduction of car park charging resulting in displacement parking to residential or other kerbside in the vicinity of the car parks.	2	2	Kerbside is already regulated within walking distance, and Resident Parking planned for other locations

9. CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 Any changes to the Parking Orders will require the legislated consultation period of 21 days.

10. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

A full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) has been carried out as attached at Appendix E

11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Following its Climate Emergency declaration, the Council must look at ways to influence motorist behaviour. A small but simple change in motorists' behaviour could make large improvements in air quality, reductions in congestion and CO₂ emissions. Small changes can reap rewards in terms of congestion and air quality management.
- 11.2 To encourage drivers to consider other more environmentally friendly methods of transport, wherever possible, we need to take into consideration the following points:
- Traffic congestion, air quality and the availability of other modes of travel as key considerations in setting the quantities of parking available, the location, the restrictions or controls applied, and parking tariff employed.
 - Support for low-car and car-free developments, cycleway improvements, support for other Active Travel initiatives and lower provision of car parking in appropriate areas.
- 11.3 Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points in shoppers and residential car parks encourage alternatives to internal combustion engine car travel, reducing air pollution at the point of use.
- 11.4 Several recommendations have been proposed which, if implemented, will assist in managing the issues above, whilst ensuring the availability of appropriate parking continuing to support the economic vitality of our town centres, in these very challenging times.

12. APPENDICES

TABLE 7 - Appendices	Location
(a) Principles and Interventions	Attached
(b) Timeline	Attached
(c) Case Studies	Attached
(d) Parking Study detail by town	Attached
(e) EQIA	Attached

13. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 13.1 **ATCM** report on Parking in Towns <https://squidex.mkmaps.com/api/assets/ipm/ojay-mcdonald-re-think-car-parking-on-the-high-street.pdf>
- 13.2 **British Parking Association** – Parking, What Works? https://www.britishparking.co.uk/write/Documents/Library/Reports%20and%20research/What_Works.pdf
- 13.3 The **Babergh Area Parking Plan** <https://baberghmidsuffolk.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s17868/JAPMP%20-%20December%2019%20Final.pdf>
- 13.4 Suffolk County Council **Parking Management Strategy** <https://committeeminutes.suffolk.gov.uk/Committee.aspx?Refinablestring10=The%20Cabinet>

The **Sudbury Vision** includes the redevelopment of parts of the town centre including the Hamilton Road Quarter. A more pedestrian-friendly, events and flexible space use of the Market Hill is also under consultation. See <https://www.babergh.gov.uk/business/economic-development/town-centre-development/sudbury-steering-group/> for more details.