

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: CABINET	REPORT NUMBER: MCa/22/21
FROM: Cabinet Member for Environment Jessica Fleming	DATE OF MEETING: 3 October 2022
OFFICER: Fiona Duhamel, Director – Economic Growth and Climate Change	KEY DECISION REF NO. CAB350

BABERGH AND MID SUFFOLKS PARKING STRATEGY 2022-2042

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 Developing a parking strategy is the next logical step and builds upon the Joint Area Parking Management Plan (JAPMP) and the councils' climate emergency declaration. Both of which have highlighted the increasing need to develop a parking strategy for the medium to long term.
- 1.2 Following approval by Cabinet in August 2021, the council commissioned 2020 Consultancy, experts in highways and transportation, to develop a joint parking strategy. This is essential in enabling the council to deliver on its ambition to make Mid Suffolk a great community, with a bright and healthy future that everyone is proud to call home.
- 1.3 This report outlines the work undertaken to date and highlights the recommendations that will form an integral part of the councils' parking strategy for the district for the next 20 years.

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 To continue without a parking strategy – this option was not taken up due to the previous Cabinet decision in August 2021 to pursue a clear and joined-up parking strategy that looks at all elements of parking which is everything from on-street and off-street, through to the economic, environmental, and community impacts.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Note the background evidence reports provided to support the new parking strategy.
- 3.2 Approve the new parking strategy for Mid Suffolk and its proposed recommendations, accepting that some recommendations may require full business cases to be approved by Cabinet at a later date.
- 3.3 Agree delegated authority for the Director of Economic Growth and Climate Change in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment to deliver proposed recommendations through the creation of a focused implementation plan, subject to any business case approvals required as part of 3.2 above

REASON FOR DECISION

To set out the councils' ambitions for parking for the short, medium and long term, by helping to shape the future growth of the district, enhance the quality of the local environment, and provide a prospectus for investment.

4. KEY INFORMATION

- 4.1 The strategy at a high level needs to reflect national policy guidance as it applies to both the future of town and village centres, sustainable travel, and transport as well as patterns of demand. The parking strategy must also align with the councils' Strategic Priorities, the United Nations Sustainability Goals and the goals of Central Government e.g ten-point plan for a green industrial revolution, to ensure consistency.
- 4.2 To achieve the councils' parking ambitions, it is important to introduce measures that:
- ensure everyone has access to sufficient, good quality, safe and welcoming parking opportunities
 - will make a real difference to the way we plan for the future
 - supports economic growth aspirations
 - reduces the impact of our activities on the environment
- 4.3 Developing the parking strategy to this point has taken 14 months and involved various stages which are outlined in sections 4.4 to 4.20 of this report.

INVESTIGATION AND DATA COLLECTION

- 4.4 **Benchmarking** - an exercise was undertaken to determine how Mid Suffolk's parking offer compares to neighbouring authorities and locations that share similar characteristics such as type of town offering, size, population, and provide key trip generators at a district level.
- 4.5 **Car park condition surveys** - each car park was assessed against a list of criteria which would help inform recommendations for inclusion in the parking strategy.
- 4.6 **Vehicle occupancy surveys** were undertaken across all council operated car parks on different days of the week (including Saturday), and at different times of the day to understand parking behaviours and demand.
- 4.7 Both surveys took place during August 2021 when the impact of Covid-19 was still present. Full details are located in Appendix C of this report.
- 4.8 **Forecasting and the future of car parking** – using the parking survey data collected from council owned car parks as the baseline, it is possible to determine the growth in car parks over a 20-year period.
- 4.9 The Department for Transport has developed a programme, called TEMPro, that supports the forecasting of future transport growth. The programme is designed to estimate growth in traffic and is based on predictions which include future housing, population, car ownership, trip rates and employment levels. The software produces growth factors based on a specified baseline and future years. Further details on the TEMPro model and forecasting growth are located in Appendix C of this report.

- 4.10 **Stage one engagement** - the first phase of engagement was a fact-finding opportunity, allowing anyone with an interest in parking to comment on the councils' existing parking arrangements through an online questionnaire. The questionnaire was open for seven weeks from 31 August to 15 October 2021 and received a total of 1,248 responses.
- 4.11 In addition to the online questionnaire, key stakeholders which included district, town and parish councillors, transport and business groups, education establishments, leisure providers etc. were invited to attend virtual workshops to share their thoughts on what parking issues are important to them.

CREATION OF THE STRATEGY

- 4.12 **Stage two engagement** – outputs from the investigation and research as well as the engagement work has enabled a series of potential recommendations to be developed for inclusion in the final version of the parking strategy.
- 4.13 The recommendations, described in detail in Appendix B of this report, cover both off-street and on-street parking, can bring about real change to how we travel and how we support the wider ambition for our communities and places. The council has sought feedback on the recommendations as part of our commitment to engage at each key milestone.
- 4.14 During April and May 2022, officers from the parking service and 2020 Consultancy delivered detailed briefings to members and town and parish councils which covered the work undertaken to date as well as to seek feedback on the potential recommendations for inclusion in the parking strategy
- 4.15 A second online questionnaire, open from 13 June to 31 July 2022 aimed to establish the level of support or opposition for each recommendation. 2,004 people completed the questionnaire meaning that across both stages of engagement, 3,252 questionnaires were completed.
- 4.16 To maximise engagement and promote the second questionnaire, there were a series of in-person roadshow events held in June 2022 which 175 people attended. Analysis from both online questionnaires and the roadshow events can be found in Appendices D and E of this report.
- 4.17 The final version of the parking strategy (Appendix A) is intended to be concise, user-friendly and easily understood. This document is supported by a second more detailed parking strategy report (Appendix B) as well as a number of comprehensive research documents (Appendices C to E).
- 4.18 The parking strategy document itself will not deliver the action required to meet the councils' parking ambitions. Delivery of the proposed recommendations will require support through a comprehensive, robust and focused implementation plan as referred to in recommendation 3.3 of the report.
- 4.19 On 30 September 2022, the Overview and Scrutiny committee will review the process of developing the parking strategy. A verbal update will be provided to Cabinet on 3 October 2022.

4.20 Whilst the parking strategy covers the 20-year period, 2022 to 2042, there will be a need to review in 3–5-years dependent on local economic and global factors, technological advancements etc.

5. LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

5.1 The Joint Corporate Plan identifies six strategic priorities as set out in the visual below. The parking service has several links to the councils' Joint Corporate Plan, namely:

- Community capacity building and engagement,
- maximising the use of our assets,
- engage with and support businesses to thrive,
- further develop the local economy and our market towns to thrive,
- to value enhance and protect our environment,
- local transport,
- community-led solutions to deliver services and manage assets
- financially sustainable councils.



6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 In bringing forward the parking strategy, the costs incurred to date include officer time, consultancy expertise (£41,000), venue hire for the roadshow events (£940) and costs associated with promotional materials e.g posters, social media etc (£550). A total of £42,490 which is shared equally with Babergh District Council.

6.2 There will be financial implications in respect of delivering the recommendations included within the parking strategy. The need for a comprehensive, robust and focused implementation plan is crucial to the parking strategy's success. Where there are significant cost implications, a detailed business case will be required, and approval sought through the councils' governance process.

6.3 Approval of the parking strategy will provide the evidence framework needed to advocate for funding opportunities, whether that be internally through the councils' own budget setting and medium-term financial planning (MTFP) process or funding opportunities such as external and national grants, community infrastructure levy bids etc.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no expected legal implications linked to delivery of the parking strategy document. There are, however, recommendations in the parking strategy where it will be necessary to amend or create new Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs).

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

8.1 This report is most closely linked with the councils' Significant Risks: No. 8 - Decline in our key towns impacts upon economic prosperity of the districts; No. 13 - We may be unable to react in a timely and effective way to financial demands; Risk No. 14 -

The council may be perceived to be untrustworthy and have a poor reputation; and Risk No. 18 - The council will not be carbon neutral by 2030.

8.2 Key risks are set out below:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
Imbalance in policy, paying for parking, town centre vitality, leisure, etc. impacting on visiting footfall in our towns and the economy.	1 - Highly unlikely	3 - Serious	Research has found that availability of parking, rather than charging, tends to impact town centre vitality and viability.
Inability to understand and prepare for future growth needs regarding parking provision e.g. impact of additional housing, businesses etc	1 - Highly unlikely	4 - Disaster	Work with colleagues across the organisation i.e., planning to ensure that any housing and business growth is fed into future plans for parking provision.
Insufficient engagement and leadership could have a negative impact on delivering the strategy.	2 - Unlikely	2 - Noticeable	Ensure that there is ample opportunity for engagement using various methods and that we are fair and consistent in our approach
Lack of financial support to deliver recommendations that provide meaningful improvements across the district	3 - Probable	3 - Serious	Ensure that the parking strategy is supported by a robust and comprehensive implementation plan that considers priority, timescales, costs and funding.
Unable to influence motorist behaviour into more environmentally friendly methods of transport resulting in traffic congestion and poor air quality – threatening the councils' climate emergency declaration and its aim to become carbon neutral by 2030.	1 - Highly unlikely	2 - Noticeable	Ensure that the council has a wide range of education and engagement tools and materials in place.

9. CONSULTATIONS

9.1 There were a number of consultation exercises undertaken as part of developing the parking strategy. Full details are located in Appendices D and E of the report.

10. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

10.1 An EQIA was undertaken in August 2021 as part of the work required to seek Cabinet approval for development a parking strategy. This has since been reviewed and updated to reflect any necessary changes.

10.2 All opportunities to mitigate any adverse impact or further promote positive impact will be taken forward as part of the detailed implementation plan. For example, those with a disability (including children with additional needs) – a review of parking space

allocation i.e. spaces are of an appropriate size, ensure adequate provision of disabled parking, consider accessibility as part of any planned improvements (e.g., surfaces, removing steps, improved signage considering all users).

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 could make large improvements in air quality, reductions in congestion and CO₂ emissions.

11.2 To encourage drivers to consider other more environmentally friendly methods of transport, wherever possible, the council needs 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 tariffs 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.
- 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.

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

MCa/18/63 Joint Area Parking Management Plan – 4 February 2019

MCa/21/15 The creation of a parking strategy for Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils’ – 2 August 2021

13. APPENDICES

Title	Description	Location
APPENDIX A	Parking Strategy Summary	Attached
APPENDIX B	Parking Strategy Report 2022-2042	Attached
APPENDIX C	Parking Study Report	Attached
APPENDIX D	Phase 1 consultation feedback report	Attached
APPENDIX E	Phase 2 consultation feedback report	Attached
APPENDIX F	Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)	Attached