

THE SUFFOLK PARKING MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

1 Introduction

1.1 This document presents Suffolk's parking management strategy which forms an addendum to the Suffolk Local Transport Plan (LTP3) 2011-2031. It provides a high-level policy position on a range of key factors.

1.2 A parking strategy that deals with the supply and management of car parking can be one of the most useful tools available to local authorities in helping them achieve their economic, social and environmental objectives. In particular, a parking strategy can:

- Support the local economy (e.g. by making it easy for shoppers and tourists to visit Suffolk) and facilitate development growth;
- Meet residents' needs for car parking near their homes (e.g. by introducing controlled parking zones);
- Provide access to key services and facilities for special needs groups and people with impaired mobility;
- Improve journey time reliability for road users (e.g. by designing and managing on-street parking facilities to reduce traffic conflicts and delays).
- Encourage sustainable travel modes and help reduce reliance on the private car (e.g. by setting parking charges at appropriate levels);
- Enhance the built and natural environment (e.g. by making the most effective use of land required for parking and by improving the look of the streetscene by reducing sign clutter);
- Make Suffolk a safer place (e.g. by ensuring that car parks are 'safer by design' and improving road safety).

1.3 To achieve the most appropriate impact it is essential that the County Council works in partnership with district and borough councils, responding to policies for transport and economic growth. This strategy relies and builds upon the close working relationships that exist between the County Council, Suffolk Constabulary and district and borough councils.

2 Policy context

2.1 Within the Secretary of State's Statutory Guidance to Local Authorities on Civil Enforcement of Parking Contraventions it states,

"Local authorities should ensure that parking in town centres and other shopping areas is convenient, safe and secure, including appropriate provision for motorcycles and deliveries. Parking policies including enforcement should be proportionate and should not undermine the vitality of town centres.

Enforcement authorities should design their parking policies with particular regard to: -

- managing the traffic network to ensure expeditious movement of traffic, (including pedestrians and cyclists), as required under the TMA Network Management Duty;
- improving road safety;
- improving the local environment;
- improving the quality and accessibility of public transport;
- meeting the needs of disabled people, some of whom will be unable to use public transport systems and depend entirely on the use of a car; and
- managing and reconciling the competing demands for kerb space.”

2.2 The Suffolk Local Transport Plan (LTP3) 2011 to 2031 sets out the Council’s long-term transport strategy. The key focus of the Plan is to support future sustainable economic growth. The Plan supports the Council’s priorities of:

- Inclusive growth;
- Health, care and well-being;
- Efficient and effective public services.

2.3 The Local Transport Plan supports these priorities through a series of transport aims, the relevant ones for parking are:

- Improving accessibility;
- Supporting sustainable travel;
- Tackling congestion;
- Improving air quality;
- Improving road safety.

2.4 The remaining sections of this document explore a range of parking issues and develop specific policies which follow statutory guidance and seek to manage parking to support the aims of the Local Transport Plan.

3 Strategic Parking Management

3.1 There are three broad categories of car parking in Suffolk: -

1. On-street – this is parking within the adopted highway boundary that is regulated by the council acting as highway authority;
2. Public off-street – these are parking areas provided mainly by other councils or operators which are open for use by the public. These can be paid or unpaid, but typically, users are charged according to length of stay;
3. Private off-street – parking that is privately owned for use by residents, employers, retailers, etc.

3.2 Parking needs to be carefully managed to help achieve the Local Transport Plan aims as follows: -

Policy PMS1 - Strategic parking management.

- **The overall parking stock will be efficiently and effectively managed through the implementation of appropriate supply, maintenance, charging and enforcement measures to help achieve relevant transport aims, helping to balance growth and sustainable forms of travel.**
- **Local detailed parking strategies will be developed for our strategic towns in consultation with local stakeholders.**

3.3 The strategy requires Suffolk councils to: -

- effectively manage (on-street and local authority owned / managed off-street) public parking stock to ensure effective accessibility and reflect local circumstances;
- define the provision of private non-residential and residential parking associated with new developments and re-developments;
- enforce parking regulations effectively;
- effectively manage competing demands for on-street parking through the implementation of appropriate measures (e.g. waiting restrictions and controlled parking zones);
- encourage the provision of accessible, high quality and safe public parking facilities.

3.4 The policy for overall parking management is set within the context of wider demand management measures. Demand management broadly covers measures to modify behaviour through a wide range of activities to control and reduce the negative impact of travel. It is often specifically aimed at addressing the adverse effects of car journeys, especially those containing just one person. Demand management covers an extensive and wide-ranging assortment of measures and activities of which parking management is an integral part. The Council can directly influence on-street parking and will seek to work in partnership with others to influence public and private off-street parking.

4 Managing local authority parking stock

4.1 Most public off-street local authority car parks are owned and managed by the district and/or borough councils. The Council will continue to work closely with these authorities to manage both on- and off-street parking in a coordinated way to meet transport aims. The approach is to 'manage demand' by having a parking strategy which supports a prosperous and vibrant economy, but also seeks to promote more sustainable transport choices wherever possible.

4.2 National highway and parking policies are designed to limit congestion and promote modal shift to more sustainable transport alternatives. Within this context, sustainable travel is favoured over less efficient and more polluting modes of transport.

4.3 . Where parking is possible the strategy will: -

- support the principle of locating short-stay spaces in town centres and long-stay spaces more distant from the town centre;
- encourage the setting of parking charges which encourage a turnover of short-stay parking spaces (e.g. by shoppers) close to destinations and long-stay parking (e.g. by commuters) in parking areas more distant from the centre/destination;
- long stay commuter parking will be managed to encourage the use of sustainable transport where it is a viable alternative to private vehicles;
- encourage the management of the number of long-stay and short-stay spaces in line with the principles above.

4.4 The reason for facilitating and favouring short-stay parking is that parking spaces need to be readily available to support the vitality, vibrancy and resilience of town centres. Higher turnover of spaces allows more users to be accommodated per space and shoppers are more likely to travel during inter-peak periods when there is more likely to be spare capacity on the road network. Commuter parking typically occupies parking spaces for the whole of the working day with commuters mainly travelling at peak periods when the road network is most congested. Additionally, it is sometimes more practicable for commuters to use other transport modes (e.g. cycling, public transport and car sharing) since their journeys are typically to and from fixed locations, and form only a small part of the day.

4.5 Some long-stay parking is close to train stations and bus stations. This allows and encourages longer journeys to be made predominantly by sustainable transport. Where train or bus stations are in, or close to, congested areas it is accepted that long-stay parking will be available for train and bus passengers.

4.6 Park and Ride services provide long-stay parking away from the main destination with a regular bus service providing the link to and from the destination, thereby reducing the number of vehicles on the roads in congested areas. These services may operate year-round for town centres, or at particularly busy times to assist with visitors travelling to highly attractive events.

Policy PMS 2 - Managing local authority parking stock

The strategy encourages the management of parking stock in accordance with the following principles: -

Off-street public parking-

- **short-stay parking will be prioritised on sites within an acceptable walking distance of shopping and commercial centres to ensure adequate accessibility;**
- **longer-stay parking will be prioritised on sites further away from shopping and commercial centres;**
- **long stay commuter parking will be reduced where good sustainable transport alternatives exist;**
- **the mix, number and usage of off and on-street parking spaces will be periodically reviewed to ensure they continue to meet Local Transport Plan aims and reflect local circumstances.**

On-street parking-

- **short-stay parking will be given priority at on-street parking locations in or near shopping or commercial centres and other areas of high demand;**
- **adequate provision will be made for the delivery of goods and for public service and emergency vehicles;**
- **provision for Blue Badge holders will be made in line with recognised national standards;**
- **on residential roads, priority will be given to meeting residents' parking needs if certain criteria are met;**
- **the mix, number and usage of on-street parking spaces will be periodically reviewed to ensure they continue to meet Local Transport Plan aims and reflect local circumstances;**
- **long stay commuter parking will be managed to encourage the use of sustainable transport where it is a viable alternative to private vehicles.**

4.7 Parking charges are highly influential in the management of parking and driver behaviour. In Suffolk most off-street public parking is owned and managed by the district and borough councils whilst on street parking is the responsibility of the Council as the highway authority. All councils will aim to work together to ensure that parking charges are set in accordance with Policy PMS3.

Policy PMS3 - Parking charges

Recommended parking charges (on and off-street) will be set to take account of the following factors: -

- **the service role and strength of the local economy;**
- **effective utilisation of existing parking spaces;**
- **traffic conditions on the local highway network;**
- **the availability of sustainable transport modes;**
- **the need to avoid circulating traffic searching for free parking spaces;**
- **parking charges in neighbouring areas;**
- **the convenience and quality of parking locations;**
- **relevant transport aims;**
- **charges for on-street parking will be set at a premium (typically 10%) over the equivalent off-street parking charge;**
- **the actual parking charges will be set following consultation with stakeholders;**
- **charges will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they continue to support transport aims.**

5 Management of demands for on-street parking

5.1 Where on-street parking is desirable and possible there is a need for a hierarchy of parking need to manage and reconcile the competing demands for kerb space. In reviewing the mix, number and usage of parking spaces the Council priorities are based on transport aims and local circumstances. Generally parking will be prioritised within the following hierarchy of kerb space users: -

1. bus stop;
2. essential deliveries where there is no off-street provision;
3. taxis;
4. disabled parking;
5. car clubs;
6. residents' parking;
7. short stay parking (free or paid);
8. long stay parking (free or paid).

Parking bays need not be for the exclusive use of one group of users at all times; e.g. parking bays placed in residential areas near town centres shared by residents and short-term parking can be successful.

5.2 In the central area of towns and larger villages the demands for a range of parking uses can be considerable and when reviewing appropriate uses the Council will consult widely to fully understand user needs.

5.3 It has long been recognised that the pressure on the use of kerbside space in some of our built-up areas can mean that the availability of parking close to the

destination is difficult to find. This can cause major difficulties in terms of accessibility and convenience, but also concerns about personal safety. Where parking demand remains high during the normal working day, the introduction of well-designed prioritised parking schemes can benefit the local community. Consideration will be given of new or extensions to existing schemes designed to meet a hierarchy of parking need where there is evidence of significant parking demand and there is a likelihood of support for a scheme in the local community. Other issues to be considered can be the turnover of short stay parking spaces in shopping and business areas. All possible schemes would be subject to extensive consultation with stakeholders.

Policy PMS4 – Parking schemes

The introduction of further on-street parking schemes will be considered if the following criteria are met: -

- **it can be clearly shown that there is significant and persistent parking stress in the area;**
- **the majority of households in the area support the introduction of a scheme;**
- **that the scheme is financially viable and can be effectively managed and enforced by the local district or borough council.**

Where a request is progressed, a consultation exercise will be undertaken which will provide an opportunity for residents and businesses to state their level of support. The results of the consultation will help inform the decision on whether to implement a parking scheme. It is unlikely that a scheme will be progressed if a majority of respondents do not support the proposal.

5.4 It is expected that parking schemes will only be introduced where there is a majority support in favour of the measures and where a business case has been undertaken, taking into account the ability to adequately enforce and the implementation and running costs.

6 Parking in new developments

6.1 The County Council has developed the document 'Suffolk Guidance for Parking' which is a technical guidance document adopted in November 2014. In 2015 the document was updated to reflect new Government guidance. The guidance should be used for the planning of developments which are new, have changed use or have been extended.

6.2 The guidance is intended to: -

- assist the local planning authorities in determining appropriate parking standards for residential and non-residential developments in their areas;
- advise members of the public of these in a readily comprehensible manner;
- assist developers in preparing plans for the development of land.

The document can be viewed at -

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-waste-and-environment/planning-and-development-advice/parking-guidance/>

7 Enforcement of parking restrictions

7.1 Civil parking enforcement (CPE) has operated in Ipswich since 2005. The Council, police and district and borough councils are committed to introducing CPE across the whole of Suffolk from April 2019 (subject to approval by the Department of Transport).

7.2 The benefits of CPE are primarily: -

- to decriminalise most parking, waiting and loading restrictions and to transfer enforcement from the police to the local highway authority;
- enforcement of restrictions leads to a civil rather than a criminal offence through the issue of a penalty charge notice (PCN);
- motorists who receive a PCN are able to challenge the PCN at no cost and where applicable have access to a free and independent adjudication service;
- penalty charge payments are retained by the local authority and are used to help fund CPE;
- a co-ordinated and locally accountable parking enforcement service across the whole of the county with improved enforcement that will help deliver: -
 - the ability to keep roads clear of vehicles parked in contravention of a restriction, which create safety and obstruction issues. In doing so, this can reduce traffic delays, improve the reliability of bus services; enhance the safety and environment for pedestrians and cyclists, and provide easier access for emergency vehicles;
 - the increased turnover of short-stay spaces and encouragement for the appropriate use of long-stay spaces can result in less circulating traffic and help support the vitality and vibrancy of market town centres;
 - parking schemes can be introduced in the knowledge that they will be effectively enforced;
 - improved enforcement helps Blue Badge holders by ensuring that dedicated spaces are not used inappropriately;
 - more reliable access to designated loading bays and facilities for deliveries.

Policy PMS5 - Civil Parking Enforcement

The County Council will work with the police, district and borough councils to introduce and sustain civil parking enforcement across the whole of Suffolk to ensure that a consistent and effective level of enforcement of parking restrictions is achieved.

8 Maintain accessible, high quality and safe parking facilities

8.1 In order to make parking facilities as accessible as possible a range of measures needs to be considered. Good signage to off-street car parks is an effective tool in reducing unnecessary driving, thereby reducing congestion and improving air quality and safety. Signage, particularly interactive signage which can respond to changing circumstances, can also encourage or discourage the use of particular car parks and roads.

8.2 Clear and appropriate signs and lines on the highway and in car parks are essential to ensure motorists understand what they can and cannot do. Within available budgets the Council will ensure that signs and lines on the highway are appropriately maintained.

8.3 Suffolk councils will publish details or provide links on its website to provide motorists with parking information to assist their journey planning.

8.4 Facilities for Blue Badge holders both on- and off-street needs to be carefully considered in accordance with legislation and guidance. The Council will encourage district and borough councils and private providers of public parking to ensure that disabled parking is conveniently placed in line with recognised national guidance as a minimum.

8.5 On-street parking for disabled motorists will be provided in two forms: -

- formal bays usually in more central built up areas, where there are other parking restrictions, which are legally enforceable as they will have a traffic regulation order;
- in largely residential areas informal bays can be provided outside Blue Badge holders' homes where parking problems occur. Although they are not legally enforceable they are generally widely respected and of benefit to disabled residents. There are strict medical criteria which have to be met. More information is available on the Councils website at-

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/parking/parking-bays-for-people-with-disabilities/>

8.6 The County Council will seek to maintain all signs and lining for on-street parking to a good standard to assist motorists in understanding the nature of the parking and ensure that enforcement can be undertaken effectively.

8.7 To ensure car parks are as safe as possible we will encourage all operators of public car parks to achieve the Park Mark award which is for car parks that have achieved the standards of the Safer Parking Scheme

Policy PMS 6 – Accessible, high quality and safe parking

Suffolk councils will: –

- **ensure effective and enforceable signing and lining on the highway is maintained within available budgets;**
- **encourage providers of off-street public parking to provide good levels of information in a number of forms;**
- **make appropriate provisions for disabled parking on-street and encourage all off-street car park providers to make provision to recognised standards and to conveniently locate dedicated disabled parking;**
- **encourage providers of off-street public car park operators to achieve Park Mark award standards for their car parks.**