

**TITLE OF REPORT: BALDOCK AREA PARKING REVIEW**

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE MANAGER FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING &amp; ENTERPRISE

**1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The NHDC Parking Strategy identifies that parking management issues will be dealt with on an area wide basis. Policies 17-23 are the most relevant part of the Parking Strategy and are reproduced at Appendix 1. The Parking Strategy Action Plan identifies Baldock as the town to be considered in 2010/11 along with Knebworth.
- 1.2 At its meeting June, the Baldock Area Committee received a broad overview of the potential scope and timescale for delivering parking improvements. This report adds more detail, further refines the scope and summarises some of the information gathered to date.
- 1.3 As part of the Baldock Town Centre enhancement review process, the Committee has raised concerns regarding the scope and enforcement of the existing five tonne overnight lorry parking ban that covers Baldock. This report advises on how this ban operates and other potential options.

**2. FORWARD PLAN**

- 2.1 This Report contains a key recommendation that was first notified to the public in the forward Plan on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2007 in terms of the Baldock Town Centre Strategy and on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2009 for the NHDC Car Parking Strategy Review.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Baldock is the only town in the district that does not have parking management in residential streets adjacent to the town centre and station (i.e. traditionally areas that suffer most from the competition for on street parking space between residents and non-residents).
- 3.2 In recent years officers have received a number of comments and complaints from residents of Baldock regarding parking issues in residential areas adjoining the town centre and railway station. Since the completion of the Town Centre Enhancements in 2009 there is increasing evidence that conflict between residential and non-residential parking (especially long stay) has worsened.

- 3.3 Officers have carried out observation survey work of those areas of Baldock that have been reported to have the greatest pressure for residents' parking, especially where on-street parking is the main form of supply. The Committee's support for agreeing the scope of the project and undertaking further survey work is now sought.
- 3.4 The 2009/10 Corporate Business and Financial Planning process allocated £65k revenue funding to deliver on-street parking management improvements in Baldock and Knebworth as well as £30k capital funding to introduce Pay and Display parking management in the Twitchell off-street car park. The recommendations in this report reflect the budget available.
- 3.5 There is an existing five tonne overnight lorry waiting ban in place for Baldock. It prevents vehicles above this weight parking on street in Baldock at any time on Saturday and Sunday and between the hours of 8pm and midnight and midnight and 7am Monday to Friday.

#### **4. ISSUES**

- 4.1 The report to the June Area Committee meeting identified several 'zones' of Baldock that either currently or potentially have parking related problems associated with non-residential parking. Appendix 2 sets out these zones.
- 4.2 Officers have undertaken observation surveys of zones 1-4 in some detail and general observation of zones 5-7. Observation surveys included location and number of vehicles parked on street, private accesses, estimates of off-street parking space available per property, number of garages (NB garages have *not* been assumed to be an off-street parking space<sup>1</sup>) and any other relevant information such as parking across dropped kerbs, within 10 metres of a junction, on footways or yellow lines.
- 4.3 Number plate surveys have also been carried out in the busiest parts of zones 1 and 2 to ascertain the volume of vehicles that arrive during the morning and leave during the late afternoon/early evening. This work is still being analysed but initial conclusions are that significant long stay parking occurs that is either town centre employees or rail commuters. The survey work also identifies how flexible residents have to be i.e. parking cars on or off street as circumstances allow, parking some way along the street from their property, parking in adjoining streets as spaces allow or parking across their own accesses until a space becomes available.
- 4.4 Having taken into consideration the survey information gathered to date and comments from local people, is recommended that parking management proposals are progressed for the following zones:

##### Zone 1 – The Twitchell, Simpsons Drive, Thurnall Close

Reason – There is clearly a lot of competition for on and off street parking space and many residents do not have a significant amount of off street parking other than garages (see footnote). This results in off street car parks being full all day and on street space being taken to the extent that vehicles park very close to junctions and dropped kerbs. Non-residential parking in this area does seem to be mainly associated with town centre employees and visitors arriving between 8 and 9am. There are also short stay peaks associated with school traffic. There is a particular need to consider

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<sup>1</sup> Government research indicates that less than one third of households use garages for parking  
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the users of the Community Centre and its car park as part of the overall on and off street parking management of this area.

Zone 2 – Church Street, Orchard Road, Jackson Street, Football Close, Meeting House Lane, Pond Lane, Farriers Close, Brewery Lane, The Gardens, Icknield Way (from its junction with Old North Road to its junction with Norton Road) and Icknield Way East

Reason – This is an area where many properties do not have access to off-street parking. Basic survey work shows that the majority of on street parking space is taken all day with vehicles parking close to junctions and dropped kerbs a regular occurrence. In many places road widths are quite narrow meaning parking is often only possible on one kerb. Parking in narrow streets also makes access to off-street parking difficult in some places. There is a mix of long stay non-residential parking by rail commuters (arriving in the period 6am to 8am) and town centre employees (arriving in the period 8am to 9am). There is an element of short stay usage associated with town centre and residential visitors and business employees and customers (i.e. at the north end of Church Street). Some roads in this zone do not suffer particular problems at the moment but their proximity to streets that do means migration is a clear possibility.

- 4.5 Zone 3 has some evidence of non-residential parking (i.e. vehicles parking close to junctions in Bygrave Road and Salisbury Road). More on street parking was expected in Larkins Close than has been observed given its proximity to the Station. There is, however, potential for migration of rail commuter parking to this area if zone 2 was controlled.
- 4.6 Mansfield Road in zone 4 has probably seen on street parking displaced from the town centre to its eastern end. The whole length of Mansfield Road is quite narrow and there is a shortage of off-street parking for residents so opportunities for long stay non-residential parking are probably limited.
- 4.7 None of the other zones Identified in Appendix 2 appear, at the moment, to have significant non-residential parking problems.
- 4.8 It is recommended that questionnaires are issued to individual households and businesses in zones 1 and 2 to begin to get a fuller picture of parking needs and issues. Policy 18 of the Parking Strategy sets out the need for gathering as much data as possible. Surveying residents and businesses would clearly add value to information already gathered. The Committee's views on any issues within the zones 1-3 would also be welcomed.
- 4.9 Current resources are unlikely to permit implementation of parking management in any zones other than 1 and 2. As such it is not recommended that further survey work is undertaken outside of zones 1 and 2 at this stage other than general monitoring. Zones other than 1 or 2 could be prioritised for a potential future 'phase 2'.
- 4.10 At this stage an estimated £40k will be needed to implement parking management in zones 1 and 2. If the Committee wishes to add any additional zones then additional resources will need to be identified and/or significant amendments made to the scope of zones 1 and 2. An additional £20k will be required to include zone 3 in the programme.

- 4.11 Once detailed survey work has been undertaken and analysed then parking management options can be prepared for consultation. The Committee's attention is drawn to Policy 19 of the Parking Strategy. Whilst it is too early to be suggesting solutions, Policy 19 sets out the Council's commitment to consultation and need "*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*".
- 4.12 The anticipated timescale for the Baldock Parking Review was set out in the report to the Committee's June meeting. In essence there is no significant change to the programme other than a slight delay in starting the survey of properties due to the need to seek the Committee's endorsement for the scope of the work. It is anticipated that the survey work will run into mid August.
- 4.13 The Committee will no doubt be aware that additional parking management in Baldock will require additional enforcement resource. Additional Civil Enforcement Officer (CEO) resource is currently being recruited to assist with current demand for enforcement in Baldock and Knebworth. Future enforcement requirements will need to be considered in September as part of the decision making process on parking management options.
- 4.14 With regard to the Twitchell car park the survey work undertaken to date shows that it is very well used by long stay users i.e. mainly town centre employees. Given the pressure for parking in adjoining streets, it is clear that introducing Pay and Display should be done in parallel with on street management.
- 4.15 Given that there is a significant amount of free parking on street for up to 1 and 2 hours in the town centre it would be unlikely that there is much demand for similar duration parking in the Twitchell. It is recommended that there is a tariff for up to 3 hours to offer a mid stay option for those who wish to stay slightly longer than 2 hours.
- 4.16 The Twitchell currently operates as a long stay car park. In order to avoid all of the long stay parking displacing to other streets by limiting the maximum stay permitted, it is recommended that there is an all day tariff for the Twitchell.
- 4.17 With regard to charges there is no comparable chargeable parking in Baldock other than the railway station. Bearing in mind the recent move to rounded tariffs elsewhere in the district (i.e. to the nearest 50p or £1) plus the need to introduce tariffs that could be considered as reasonably priced, it is recommended that tariffs of 50p for up to 3 hours and £1 for over 3 hours be introduced at the Twitchell. These tariffs would need to be reviewed along with all other tariffs as part of the Corporate Business Planning process. Usage will be monitored on an ongoing basis.
- 4.18 In addition to Pay and Display, the Council offers a Pay by Phone service in all of its chargeable car parks. It is assumed that the Twitchell is added to the Pay by Phone service allowing cashless payment and remote payment/top up.
- 4.19 Estimates for likely income from the above tariffs are difficult to be precise about because of the current uncharged, unlimited use of the car park. There are 41 spaces in the car park and it is assumed that some of the spaces will be used all day and some will be used more than once. An estimated income of £10k has been calculated although it is worth noting that this is comparable with the lowest income car parks in the district.

- 4.20 The Community Centre has reported that long stay parking occurs in its car park by non-users. Informal discussion has been held with the Community Centre manager and officers will be considering the best way to manage this car park for users.
- 4.21 With regard to the five tonne overnight lorry parking ban, this is a form of Controlled Parking Zone that covers the whole of the town. Current regulations restrict the weight element of the restriction to either five or seven and a half tonnes. Any other weight category would need special permission from the Department for Transport (DfT). Enforcement is the responsibility of NHDC but resources to enforce nighttime parking restrictions need to be considered carefully.
- 4.22 The zone is identified by entry and exit plates on the roads into/out of the town. A quick survey by officers confirms signs are in place but this has not been a detailed audit against the regulations.
- 4.23 Vehicles over three and a half tonnes require a goods vehicle operators licence which may set out where the vehicle should be kept. Certain vehicles are exempt from this requirement, however. Vehicles suspected of being three and a half tonnes or more and parked on the highway could be reported to VOSA to check their status regarding operators licence. Enforcement is not a matter for NHDC.
- 4.24 During daytime hours, for vehicles not in contravention of a goods vehicle operators licence, it may be possible to restrict use of on street parking places by vehicles of more than a stated weight. Officers are seeking clarification on this point from the DfT. The cost of any TRO plus new/amended signing will need to be considered as well as the potential to displace vehicles to other streets.
- 4.25 At this stage it is recommended that enforcement of the overnight weight restriction be considered and VOSA be consulted on whether any vehicles are in contravention of their operator's licence. Further advice will be reported to the Committee on TRO options once it has been received from DfT.

## **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The terms of reference of the Area Committee state that the Area Committee may make a decision by resolution to allocate discretionary budgets within the terms determined by the Council (page 50 of the Council's current constitution).
- 5.2 The existing overnight five tonne waiting restriction Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) and associated signs will need to be checked in detail before any enforcement may take place. In the case of any Traffic Regulation Orders needed for the parking review, the TROs must be drafted, considered and published in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) Regulations 1996 and other relevant legislation.

## **6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The costs of implementing parking management for zones 1 and 2 are estimated to be £40k, and the works to the Twitchell car park in the region of £30k. Budget provision for the costs has been made in the revenue and capital budgets for 2010/11.
- 6.2 The estimated income for the Twitchell car park is £10k per annum. There is a risk that the full income target will not be achieved.

## **7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The background survey work and analysis plus drafting TROs and plans are all planned to be carried out from existing staff resources. Any external assistance with TROs and plans will be funded from the estimated project costs.
- 7.2 The enforcement requirements for any new parking management is difficult to estimate at this stage. A clearer understanding of enforcement resource will be possible as the project develops throughout the year.
- 7.3 Enforcement of the nighttime five tonne waiting restriction will be from existing resources. A careful judgement will need to be made of the cost of enforcement versus the scale of the enforcement issue.

## **8. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS**

- 8.1 The Baldock Area Committee Chairman has been briefed on progress to date with this project. NHDC's Cabinet Member for Planning and Transport has been briefed on this report.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 That the Area Committee agrees to progress with parking management work in zones 1 and 2 and endorses the commencement of consultation with a view to preparing draft parking management options for the Area Committee to consider at its September meeting.
- 9.2 That the Area Committee confirms whether it wishes to identify additional resources to allow zone 3 to be included in the programme or, instead, to be monitored for inclusion in a potential phase 2.
- 9.3 That the Area Committee supports the enforcement of the five tonne overnight waiting restriction as resources allow and that VOSA is consulted regarding the goods vehicle operators licence requirements of identified vehicles.

## **10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 10.1 To enable officers to progress parking management proposals for Baldock.
- 10.2 To confirm the full scope of the parking management proposals and that sufficient resources are available to deliver them.
- 10.3 To use current enforcement avenues regarding goods vehicle parking before committing resources to any additional measures.

**11. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 11.1 The inclusion of zone 3 in this project subject to identifying additional resources has been considered.

**12. APPENDICES**

- 12.1 Appendix 1 – Extract from NHDC Parking Strategy  
Appendix 2 – Indicative Baldock Parking Management Zones

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**14. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

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