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South Kesteven car parking strategy



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Foreword

The provision and good management of public car parking can be a very proactive and positive mechanism to support and underpin the day-to-day activities and economic vibrancy of our communities. Well used public car parks are positive local economic assets but underutilised, poorer performing car parks are a wasted community resource.

Therefore South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) will look to provide and manage its car parks, across all of our market towns and larger villages in ways that will contribute to the economic, environmental and social vitality of all of those communities. However public car parking needs to be appropriately managed to effectively control demand, ensure the ready turn-over of available spaces and to be able to respond to differing local circumstances.

The application of public car parking charges needs to encourage appropriate levels of usage and ensure the effective turnover of available spaces whilst providing suitable access for users. Users of public car parks expect parking charges to be proportionate and the income to fund both the general day-to-day running costs of the parking service and future maintenance and investment.

If public car parks are not serving their intended purpose then, in light of the current commercial imperatives, SKDC will need to consider suitable alternative uses.

SKDC's current car parking strategy has been very effective in terms of striking the balance between viability and the appropriate provision

of enough dedicated spaces to help meet the diverse needs of South Kesteven's communities. Accordingly the intention underpinning this update has been to refine SKDC's currently adopted approach in light of both known and emerging local issues.

The demand for town centre parking provision can, and will, fluctuate in the short and medium term as South Kesteven continues to grow, both in terms of its population and its economic footprint. There is also an opportunity to plan for the longer term alongside forecast growth in housing and jobs in and around South Kesteven. This is particularly the case for the further enhancement of Grantham as a key sub-regional destination.

In addition to the planned growth of the whole area, there are major distinct development opportunities emerging in Grantham and Stamford, and to a lesser extent in Bourne and the Deepings. SKDC's policy position is that such new developments should look to enhance the vitality and viability of each of the towns and other communities in our district and, because of the predominantly rural character of South Kesteven, the provision of appropriate associated car parking is an important factor that needs to be considered as part of the planning and development process.

This updated strategy is SKDC's current perspective on this important local issue. It is acknowledged, however, that this strategy is a living document that needs to be kept under review not least because of the implications of the major growth and development opportunities that are emerging in and around our towns.

Policy context

National Planning Policy Framework

There is an extensive range of national, regional and local policy that is relevant to the provision and management of public car parking, initiatives promoting the vitality and viability of town centres, and schemes aimed at assisting residents and businesses and those seeking to minimise the impact on the environment.

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the following express guidance when considering the strategic planning issues in relation to provision of public car parking. Section 1 expressly encourages local authorities to build strong, competitive economies; section 2 then goes on to set out policy in relation to ensuring the vitality of town centres; and section 3 outlines the need to support a prosperous rural economy. Section 4 promotes sustainable transport with paragraph 40 stating that; “Local authorities should seek to improve the quality of parking in town centres so that it is convenient, safe and secure, including appropriate provision for motorcycles. They should set appropriate parking charges that do not undermine the vitality of town centres. Parking enforcement should be proportionate.”

Paragraph 41 goes on to state that local planning authorities should identify and protect, where there is robust evidence, sites and routes which could be critical in developing infrastructure to widen transport choice.

SKDC Local Plan and Economic Development Strategy

As well as that national policy, appropriate reference should also be made to SKDC’s local policy statements and in particular the emerging new Local Plan and the updated Economic Development Strategy when considering any proposals for the reuse of car parks to support

new economic activity or development and indeed also in relation to schemes that look to promote the creation of new car parks.

SKDC priorities

Open For Business – SKDC will provide opportunities for growth by facilitating the development of a wide range of homes that people need and encouraging businesses to locate and expand in South Kesteven.

Commercially Focused – SKDC will end its reliance on annual government grants and make it easier for people to do business with the council.

In line with these corporate priorities SKDC will look to positively utilise both its existing assets and its local policies in order to support the development and vibrancy of our local economies. It will also look to take forward specific initiatives that support the delivery of these key corporate priorities.

Strategy objectives

The core objectives of the South Kesteven Car Park Strategy are:

1. Ensure South Kesteven has an appropriate supply of public parking in the right locations across the district.
2. Ensure SKDC’s public car parks are attractive, safe and accessible for all users by having appropriate charging and management regimes in place.
3. Ensure SKDC’s public car parks are assets that support the economic vitality and vibrancy of South Kesteven’s town centres.

Objective 1: Ensure South Kesteven has an appropriate supply of public parking in the right locations across South Kesteven

The need for public car parks

The availability of reasonably priced and readily accessible public car parking is an important factor in determining commercial viability and how people, in predominantly rural areas like South Kesteven, may choose to travel. Potential parking availability can also influence the vitality and viability of our town centres and the attractiveness of residential areas. In some places on-street parking can also act as an effective traffic calming

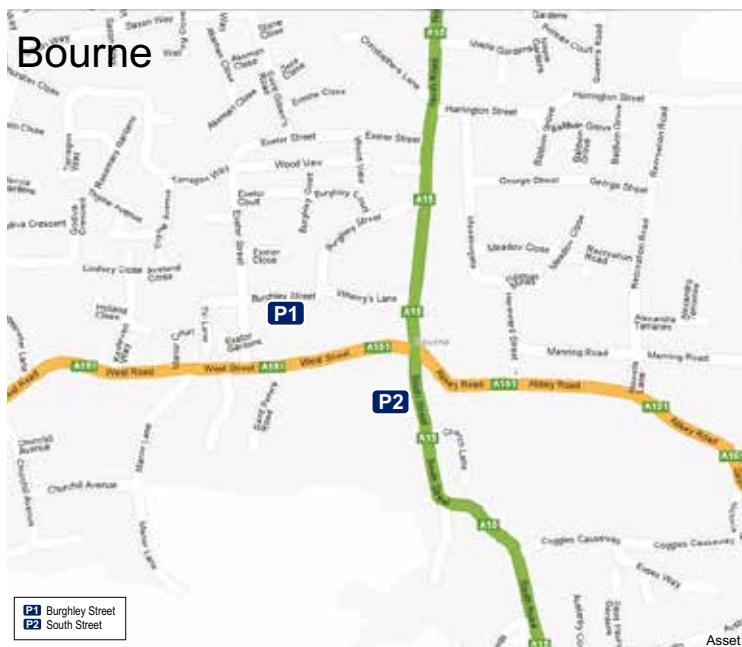
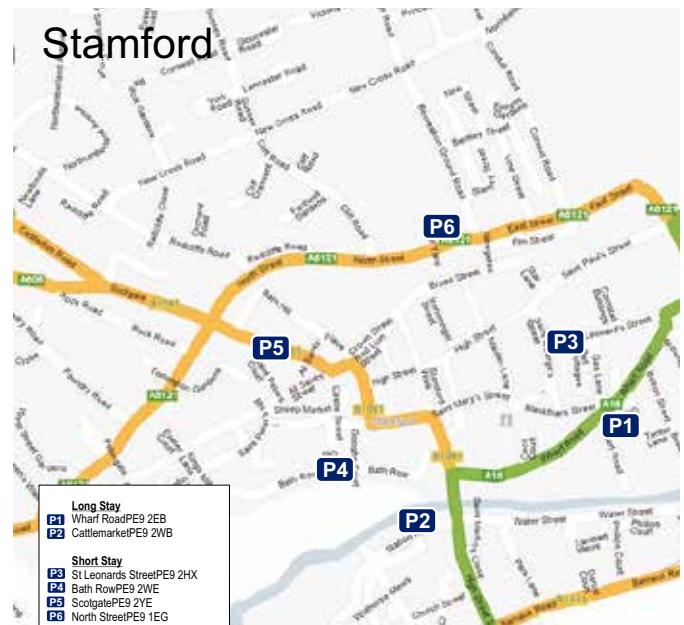
measure, whilst in others it can be perceived as being a problem for residents and/or businesses.

Therefore it is recognised that there is an essential balance to be struck between providing and necessarily restricting car parking. This strategy must therefore be read alongside the emerging new Local Plan for South Kesteven and the updated Economic Development Strategy in order to provide the full picture on how a balance has to be, and can be, struck between the intertwined environmental, economic and social factors.

Car ownership is still predicted to continue to grow nationally and locally. SKDC's overall response therefore needs to be flexible enough in order to be able to respond to demands for parking and at the same time seek to appropriately influence car usage.



Current provision of public car parks in South Kesteven



In general it is considered that there is normally sufficient capacity for all types of car parking in town centres. However there are some defined acknowledged operational and local pressures as follows:

In Stamford, on market and festival days, there are very high levels of general usage and as such normally little spare capacity available both on and off-street.

Some of our short stay car parks are more popular with users than others (e.g. Greenwood's Row, Grantham and St Leonard's Street, Stamford) and users will tend to wait for spaces in these car parks rather than seek out or use other short or long stay alternatives.

Despite there normally being capacity in long stay off-street car parks in Stamford there is still pressure for on-street parking both in the town centre and on adjacent streets.

Parking types

There are three broad categories of current car parking provision in South Kesteven:

On-street – this is car parking within the adopted public highway boundary which is managed and regulated by Lincolnshire County Council (acting as the local highway authority). Enforcement of on-street parking regulations had historically been carried out by Lincolnshire Police but following the introduction of civil parking enforcement (CPE) in December 2012 this has also been the responsibility of the county council.

Public off-street – these are car parking areas accessible to all users as provided by the local authority and which are open for use, within prescribed times and other limitations, by the general public. Typically car park users are charged according to their location and length of their stay.

Private off-street – this is parking that is privately owned and for private use by shoppers, residents, employers and retailers.

Objective 2: Ensure SKDC's public car parks are attractive, safe and accessible for all users by having appropriate charging and management regimes in place

Management of public car parks

The management of off-street parking in South Kesteven falls into two broad service delivery categories. Firstly these are the operational measures required to support the enforcement of off-street parking (i.e. the public 'face' of the service) and secondly, in relation to the associated back office management systems which assists the enforcement function as well as the day-to-day management of issues regarding the users of the service. These include the issuing of season tickets and residents' permit applications as well as other customer queries.

From December 2012 the enforcement function of South Kesteven's off-street car parks has been carried out by contractors, APCOA, under a jointly procured four year contract with Lincolnshire County Council. Off-Street penalty charge notice (PCN) processing has been carried out by a service level agreement with Nottinghamshire County Council again under a four year agreement procured through LCC. The current management contract is in place until 31 October 2016. This has largely been viewed as a success in terms of its effectiveness and it has also

generated an increase in related revenue over the contracted period. Options for renewal are currently being considered and include extending the existing contract and an associated review of current partnership arrangements.

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 remit of the day-to-day management function. In addition SKDC allocates resources to the physical maintenance of car parks, again both on a planned and reactive basis.

Typically SKDC has set our parking charges at levels which positively encourage targeted short-stay parking (e.g. for shoppers) and look to discourage inappropriate long-stay parking (e.g. that for workers and commuters in those vital town centre locations).

Therefore SKDC considers that it should in general be promoting future growth and redevelopment options that look to locate the majority of short-stay parking spaces predominantly within the centres of our market towns and seek to locate our long-stay spaces at the edges of our town centres in order to actively promote and encourage practical 'park and walk' options for workers and commuters.

The primary reasons for facilitating and encouraging short-stay parking are because:

- Public car parking spaces need to be readily available to stimulate and continue to support the vitality and viability of our town centres
- The managed turnover of all our available parking spaces allows more users to be practically accommodated per space provided

Quality and safety

The quality and safety of off-street car parks is often a key consideration for car park users. This consideration 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 the town centre.

SKDC will identify and keep under review a programme of physical improvements for its car parks and their environs. This is proposed to be done in consultation with the various town centre stakeholders in all locations e.g. business clubs and or Chamber of Commerce, LCC, Lincolnshire Police and via feedback from car park users.

There is an on-going need for maintaining car park surfacing, lining, and signing. In some places security and vandalism are a problem so there is a need to consider the on-going effective management of these issues.

Off-street car park payment methods

Currently SKDC provides coin only operated Pay and Display ticket machines in car parks it owns or operates. The equipment is now somewhat dated and the following issues have been considered as part of any replacement strategy:

- 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
- 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 and 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 resources required to ensure compliance with car park tariffs and car park regulations as well as 'back office' management

Previous exploratory work has established that a pay-on-foot system would be cost prohibitive and also difficult to establish on some sites. Another potential alternative could be the introduction of automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) cameras. However the potentially high cost of implementing these compared to the potential marginal efficiency gains makes them unviable at the present time.

There is already a method of cashless car parking universally available in the SKDC managed car parks in Grantham and Stamford. This 'Phone and Pay' service enables motorists to pay for parking via their mobile phone. This system is user friendly in that it sends users a text to remind them when their parking is due to expire and allows an extension of the pre-purchased car parking time if required without having to return to the car park. The system can be accessed by the following methods:

- Phone call – automated system

- SMS/text message
- App – apple and android
- Online

The introduction of the pay-by-mobile phone system has grown in popularity since its inception, with notable month-on-month increases demonstrated through income figures. However, it is felt that a further targeted marketing campaign could further increase the usage and related revenue from this payment method.

SKDC will also 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:

- Advertising on tickets, ticket machines or elsewhere
- Promotion or marketing initiatives
- Other events associated with town centre promotion or activities
- Other appropriate commercial activities

Parking charges in public car parks in South Kesteven

Recommended parking charges in SKDC operated public car parks will be set for each location taking account of the current applicable social, environmental and economic factors.

The actual parking charges will be set by SKDC following consultation with the public and other stakeholders.

SKDC also offers the option of purchasing appropriate permits and season tickets for many of its car parks, the terms and conditions of which are to be kept under review.

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 provides a significant additional parking resource and is especially important for disabled motorists as well as for servicing and loading. To encourage accessibility, Blue Badge holder's currently benefit from two hours free car parking.

SKDC may also promote targeted localised parking initiatives which support economic growth and vitality within South Kesteven.

Objective 3: Ensure SKDC's public car parks are assets that support the economic vitality of our town centres

Promotion of town centre retail

Short-stay parking will be prioritised on sites within an acceptable walking distance of our shopping and commercial centres in order to ensure adequate local accessibility to those key economic and community facilities.

Longer-stay parking will be prioritised on sites slightly further away from our defined shopping and commercial centres in order to meet those differing demands. Such locations need to be readily accessible to our key destinations in order to encourage users to park and walk.

The four towns of Grantham, Stamford, Bourne and The Deepings are recognised as being discernibly different in terms of their localised demands for public car parking, and much of that demand can be linked to and reflected in the different retail, employment and servicing offers available in each of those towns.

Asset and development options

Grantham

Consideration could be given to the possible inclusion of additional car parking on the potential Greyfriars edge of town centre development/redevelopment site, providing the site or overall development is made largely accessible from Sankt Augustine Way. This initiative would potentially help to intercept local traffic before it seeks to access further into the heart of the town centre.

There may also be an opportunity to explore enhanced car parking provision as part of any redevelopment of land within and around the wider station area. Additional capacity around the station could both support its continued growth as a key sub-regional transport hub and be linked to potential new residential and other developments in this highly sustainable location.

There is potential to consider introducing additional dedicated short stay shopper car parking and encourage positive development on other land at and along Wharf Road by appropriately rationalising the use of the existing bus station and, to ensure that local buses can still operate effectively, by introducing more dedicated 'stop and drop' points throughout the town.

Watergate car park is important in that it currently offers public car parking to the north of the town centre and in conjunction with the increasing usage of St Wulfram's Church as a community facility and destination. However it also potentially presents an opportunity to repair the street scene on a key gateway into the town through very sympathetic and sensitive infill development. Any such redevelopment proposals will need to strike a careful balance between enhancing the character of the area and continuing to meet defined operational needs.

The impact of losing the St Catherine's Road car park as part of the wider St Peter's Hill development will need to be fully understood and appreciated as those proposals come to fruition. The current operating times of the Welham Street car park will need to be reviewed and expanded upon in order to ensure they are still appropriate in terms of this strategic enhancement to the evening and night time offer within Grantham.

Stamford

All short stay car parks operate at close to capacity between 10:00am and 5:00pm. However there is generally some capacity at Cattle Market (section adjacent to footpath link across the Meadows) and Wharf Road car parks on most days apart from on Fridays (market day). However, there is limited availability of on-street parking opportunities due to the historic nature of the town layout.

The Cattle Market has some further use and/or development possibilities due to the potential to utilise, subject overcoming potential covenant issues, part or all of the redundant land which adjoins the car park.



Bourne

At present there is little turnover of spaces in any of the publically owned and operated car parks as no parking orders or charging regimes exists (to encourage the effective turn-over of spaces). SKDC should therefore recognise that we may need to review the need for the introduction of some form of parking orders in order to limit the duration of stay initially with a view to possibly introducing charges at a future date.

Other car parks

SKDC has a number of other small car parks including those at Halfleet, Market Deeping and Billingborough. There are also car parks that serve parks, open spaces and sports facilities. These car parks whilst not of the same strategic importance as town centre sites will be kept under review in terms of their function, condition and suitability.

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