

TITLE	Wokingham Town Centre Car Parks Management Plan
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Corporate Services O&S Committee on the 27 January 2015

Background

The Wokingham Town Centre Off Street Parking Study was commissioned to accompany development proposals contained in the Wokingham Town Centre Masterplan and in response to growth associated with Strategic Development Locations within Wokingham Borough up to forecast years of 2017 and 2026. The study contains the details associated with the recommendations contained within the parking strategy.

The main purpose of the parking management plan is to rationalise the existing town centre parking arrangements based on the future changes to provision. These changes will result in new car parks and the removal of some existing supply. Development across the Borough will also result in additional demand for parking brought about by the increased retail and residential development.

The proposed changes to existing parking provision based on our current understanding of the emerging proposals for the town centre are shown in the table below. This outlines the number of spaces gained or lost to show the baseline parking supply prior to review of forecast demand.

Car Park Location	Change in number of spaces
The Paddocks	-282
Rose street	-43
Wellington House	-81
Shute end	-53
New Provision on Elms Rd	+148
Net Change	-311

Consultation responses to the original document (2013)

The original draft document was the subject of a 6 week consultation running between 6th November 2013 and 12th December 2013. Eight representations were received from; two members of the public, one Councillor, Winnersh Parish Council, The Wokingham Society, Wokingham Town Council and the Lib Dem Group.

The following is a short summary of the main issues raised. The full summary of the comments and our responses to each is set out in the Consultation Responses document which is attached as annex 1.

There was concern that the document infers that parking charges in the town will be increased and that would in turn reduce the footfall and have a negative impact on the town centre economy. The document identifies a need to maintain the competitiveness of Wokingham Town Centre as a regional centre for retail and employment activities but also that sufficient car parking capacity must be provided to satisfy future demand. Also for the town centre to be a place people wish to visit there is a need to cut the number of circulatory trips made within the town in order to reduce unnecessary journeys and congestion of the local network. Implementing a pricing strategy to encourage users to

use particular cars parks or influence their time spent parking is one way to manage vehicle movements. Any proposals to changes to car park charges would need to be considered in relation to the impact (both positive and negative) on the objectives of the plan. The issues are complicated and there may be a need to make compromises to achieve the overall goals. Any proposed changes would only be implemented follow consultation and agreement with the executive.

Some of the representations commented that the plan within the document seems to be to reduce the amount of long stay parking in town which is in conflict with the development of the town centre which will increase the number of town centre jobs. Moving long stay parking to strategic gateway car parks would also deter business users and will deter people from coming to town rather than encouraging them to come. The overall strategy for future parking supply in the town would require that some parking (primarily long stay/commuter parking) be relocated to strategic gateway car parks. This then provides additional capacity for short stay visitor parking within the town centre thus supporting economic growth. It is not the intention of the plan to deter business users from using town centre public car parks.

It was also said the it appears that the document has been prepared in order to justify a predetermined conclusion, that there is no detail of the assessments and that there is no evidence to support the conclusions drawn. The council has undertaken a detailed study of all the town centre off-street parking and the options for the future of the service has been assessed and evidenced in that study report. This document draws on the results of that study. The study is referenced in the plan and is available for review. The conclusions and recommendations contained in the plan are based on a robust assessment using latest advice and industry best practice.

As a result of comments received as part of the consultation a number of amendments have been identified to the document and have been included within the management plan.

The Wokingham Town Centre Car Parks Management Plan (2014)

This current document has been prepared as a result of changes to the emerging proposals for the Town Centre Regeneration and takes account of the recent car park usage surveys undertaken in June 2014. It also includes changes as a result of the consultation.

The updated car park usage surveys show that there has been a negligible change in demand from 2013 to 2014. Headline results are:-;

- Overall peak weekday demand has increased in 2014 from 1243 spaces (65% of capacity) to 1274 spaces (68% of capacity)
- Overall peak weekend demand has decreased slightly in 2014 from 1015 spaces (53% of capacity) to 987 spaces (52% of capacity).

Analysis of the parking demand as a result of the current known proposal for the town centre regeneration is contained within the supporting report titled 'Wokingham Town Centre Off-Street Parking Study Update'. This report shows that the recommendations as established in the previous document are still valid, therefore the recommendations for the Wokingham Town Centre Car Parks Management Plan are

Recommendation 1 - To ensure sufficient capacity is provided in the town centre it is recommended that a decked car park at Carnival Pool is built, predominantly providing

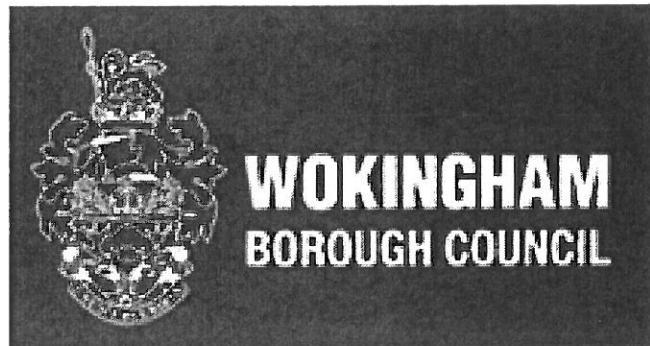
short stay spaces with a deck for mixed use parking.

Recommendation 2 – Install smart Variable Message Signs at key locations to better manage access to car parks and thereby the town centre itself.

Recommendation 3: To investigate options for providing improve or direct access to car parks from the main highway to reduce the need for travel into and around the town centre and surrounding neighborhoods.

Recommendation 4 – review the allowed duration of parking at existing sites to ensure a balanced delivery of short and mixed use parking

Recommendation 5 – monitor parking demand at regular intervals to help future decision making about parking demand management.



Wokingham Town Car Parks Management Plan

**Supporting Local Transport Plan
2011 - 2026**

Wokingham Town Centre Car Parks Management Plan

To rationalise the existing town centre parking arrangements based on the future changes to provision and ensure sufficient spare capacity to make the town centre attractive to visitors and support the regeneration of the town centre.

<p>Over the life of the plan we will:</p>	<p>Objective 1 Ensure suitable and sufficient car parks are provided to facilitate the achievement of the full development potential across the town and local area</p>	<p>Objective 2 Ensure off-street parking is adequate to help enable a strong local economy</p>	<p>Objective 3 Ensure off-street parking encourages effective use of the local road network</p>	
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<p>We will have succeeded if, by 2026:</p>	<p>Wokingham has a thriving town centre and sufficient parking supply to satisfy demand</p>
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1. The Need for a Car Parks Management Plan
 - 1.1 The purpose of this document is to achieve the objectives set out below.
 - Objective 1 – Ensure suitable and sufficient car parks are provided to facilitate the achievement of the full development potential across the town and local area
 - Objective 2 – Ensure off-street parking is adequate to help enable a strong local economy
 - Objective 3 – Ensure off-street parking encourages effective use of the local road network
 - 1.2 These objectives need to be achieved taking into account the known proposed changes to provision across the town. In addition the management plan takes into account forecast changes in demand for car parking in 2017 and 2026.
 - 1.3 This document is based on the findings of a study of all car parks in Wokingham and not just council-run car parks however it does not include on-street parking or residential parking.
2. Management Plan Development
 - 2.1 A detailed study of town centre off-street parking and the options for the future of the service was initially undertaken in 2013. This study included a comprehensive survey of the usage of all existing car parks within Wokingham Town Centre. The car park surveys have since been repeated in 2014. The Wokingham Town Car Parks Management Plan draws on the results of that study and the updated parking surveys and makes several recommendations for action.
3. Proposed Changes to Provision
 - 3.1 The proposed changes to existing parking provision within Wokingham Town are shown in Table 1 below. This table outlines the number of spaces gained or lost over the period of the strategy to show the baseline parking supply prior to review of forecast demand.

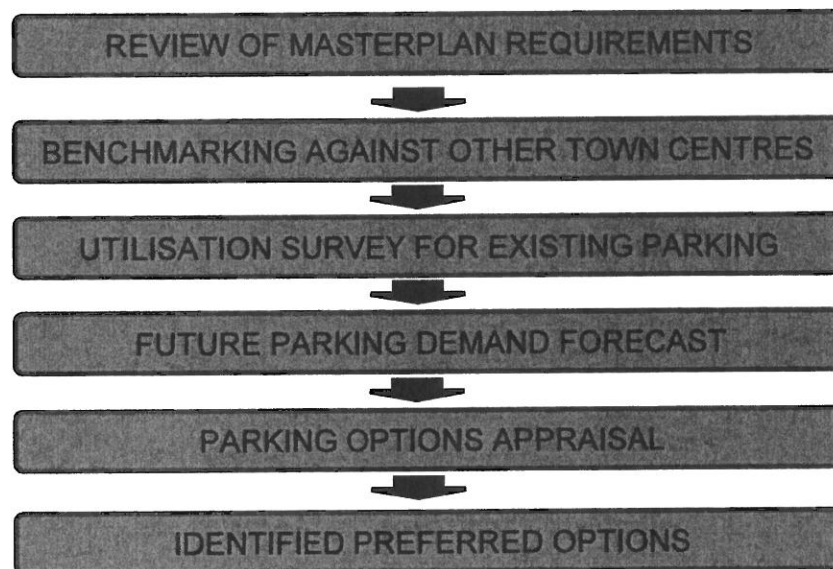
Table 1 – Proposed Changes to Town Centre Parking Provision

Location	Spaces lost (-) or gained (+)
Existing car parking provision removed	
The Paddocks	-282
Rose Street	-43
Wellington House	-81
Shute End (partial)	-53 (of 209)
Third Party additional provision	
New Parking Provision relating to the Town Centre re-development plans	148
NET POSITION	-311

- 3.2 With the changes described in Table 1 there will be an overall reduction in the number of parking spaces available within the town from 1886 to 1575 on a weekday.
- 3.3 Changes to parking numbers at the station have not been included in the figures in the report. The station car park is not considered a town centre car park as the majority of the parking in it is related to rail travel and it is not in a particularly convenient place for visitors to the town.
4. Existing policy guiding the management plan
- 4.1 Arising from national, regional and local policy, this report confirms the following objectives which are included in the development of this management plan:
- The need to maintain the competitiveness of Wokingham Town Centre as a regional centre for retail and employment activities;
 - Consistent on-street and off-street provision;
 - Conversion of central mixed use stay spaces to short stay spaces;
 - Consolidation of car parking to the town centre periphery;
 - Increased enforcement is required including the introduction of decriminalised parking areas; and
 - The need for on-going review of town centre parking provision and the flexibility in this document to be adopted.
- 4.2 Various policies and measures are developed in the study aimed at achieving these objectives.

5. Study Development

- 5.1 A study of existing parking, future demand and options for meeting demand has been undertaken. The adopted approach for the study was based on existing demand and forecast changes in land use both in the town centre and across Wokingham Borough, rather than a direct application of local parking standards. This demand led assessment has been undertaken in line with the stages summarised in the following flowchart:



6. Wokingham Town Centre Regeneration Masterplan

- 6.1 The Masterplan outlines the key issues relating to car parking within the proposed town centre. It recognises that in order to manage demand for parking during peak periods, a reduction of long stay car parking in and around the town centre core is required. To support this approach, sufficient parking should be provided at strategic gateway car parks around the town centre to avoid the need for travel by car to into the town centre core.
- 6.2 It is recognised that there is a need to cut the number of circulatory trips made within the town centre in order to reduce unnecessary journeys and congestion of the local highway network. The provision of car parking information systems and Urban Traffic Management Control (UTMC) which communicate real time space availability will help to reduce distance travelled while seeking parking.
- 6.3 Also highlighted in the Masterplan is the need for future town centre developments to actively seek to reduce car parking provision and commit to enhancing the sustainable transport offer. A way of achieving this could be by way of increasing car parking charges. Any surplus

income that may arise as a result of these changes could be applied towards improving the quality and frequency of the bus services.

- 6.4 The overall vision for Wokingham Town Centre parking provision has been outlined with the Masterplan, including its key objectives to comprise a parking strategy which supports the view to encourage people to visit and spend time in the town centre.

7. Similar Town Centre Parking Case Studies

- 7.1 A review of similar case studies aims to highlight measures which have been adopted in other recently regenerated town centres and those that have been successful. A summary of measures which have been explored as part of the Wokingham Town Car Parks Management Plan is as follows:

- Implementation of Variable Message Signs (VMS) in order to remove unnecessary circulation of traffic in the town centre and to provide more efficient use of town centre car parks;
- Assessment of existing and future parking demand to determine whether additional parking associated with new development is necessary, or whether additional demand can be accommodated by car parks with surplus provision;
- Revised pricing structure aimed at deterring long stay/commuter parking in the town centre and increasing charges for short stay parking to levels which are competitive with neighbouring town centres; and
- Consolidation of existing parking stock, with car parks located on key routes into the town centre to intercept visitors and thereby reducing town centre circulation.

8. Review of Existing Car Park Utilisation

- 8.1 The study in 2013 reviewed the existing parking provision based on beat surveys undertaken between 7am and 7pm on Thursday 25th and Saturday 27th April 2013 at all off-street car parks within Wokingham Town Centre and also makes reference to data collected in November and December 2011. As noted in paragraph 2.1 the car park surveys have been repeated in 2014 as part of an on-going monitoring programme of parking demand and supply. The 2014 surveys were undertaken on Thursday 5th and Saturday 7th June 2014 between 7am and 7pm. Table 2 summarises the survey results for 2014 together with data collected from both 2013 as a comparison.

Table 2 – Existing parking demand and capacity

Survey Period	2013 Demand	2014 Demand	2013 Supply	% Surplus – 2013
Weekday	1243	1274	1886	32%
Weekend	1015	987	1886	48%

8.2 From the assessment of the current situation the following conclusions were drawn:

- During the week, there is over 30% spare capacity at peak demand for mixed use parking.
- At weekends, the mixed use stay car parks are less than 50% occupied at peak demand. However both car parks at Shute End, which is free, and Cockpit Path, which is closest to the town centre, are at, or near to full capacity.
- In overall summary the level of peak usage across all the car parks is significantly less than the current supply.
- Overall peak weekday demand has increased in 2014 from 1243 spaces (65% of capacity) to 1274 spaces (68% of capacity)
- Overall peak weekend demand has decreased slightly in 2014 from 1015 spaces (53% of capacity) to 987 spaces (52% of capacity).
- There has been a negligible change in demand.

8.3 It is concluded that drivers are opting to park as close to the town centre as possible, despite the fact that in most cases, this would result in an overall longer journey time circulating the town centre.

Assessment of Future Parking Demand

9.1 The study undertook an assessment to compare the future parking demand with the proposed level of parking provision included within the Wokingham Town Centre Masterplan. This has been derived using the Wokingham Strategic Transport Model (WSTM) which provides the predicted parking demand during the AM peak hour for each car park in 2017 and 2026. The WSTM includes assumptions for growth in existing trips and allowance for new trips associated with development proposals in Wokingham Borough. Within the borough direct account has been taken of committed development, including the Strategic Development Locations and town centre redevelopment proposals as specified in the Local Development Framework. The impact of these proposals has been assessed using a set of trip rates representative of typical development in the borough. In addition to these rates, allowance has been made for changes in trip making behaviour associated with programmed Local Transport Plan measures and changes in travel behaviour.

9.2 For the town centre redevelopment itself, the following typical elements of retail associated trip making have not been taken into account:

- Allowance for pass-by trips;
- Linked trip assessment; and
- Increased duration of stay associated with an improved retail offer in the town centre.

9.3 These factors may impact on the out-turn trip rates for town centre retail, however their omission results in a robust assessment of parking accumulation for the town centre. The demand for trips to car parks in the town centre is based on the peak hour of parking demand for the busiest hour in the day.

9.4 This assessment has excluded the rail station car park as it is a dedicated facility that is assumed will be close to capacity to accommodate rail based car parking. Details are provided on the overall forecast level of demand by these categories without a re-allocation of demand by car parking location that is included in detail in the study.

9.5 Since the completion of the initial study in 2013 the proposals for the town centre redevelopment has been reconsidered, particularly the element of the redevelopment around Elms Road. Additional work has therefore been undertaken on the modelling work in order to determine if the level of forecast car parking provision is affected.

9.6 The results of these tests have shown that the predictions previously made do not change significantly and the recommendations arising from the previous study remain valid.

10. Forecast Parking Demand

10.1 Based on the assessment of the revised Masterplan, the following table shows the expected car parking demand for both 2017 and 2026 and the level of occupancy,

Table 4 – Overall parking demand and occupancy

Assessment Year	Peak Demand		Occupancy Level	
	Weekday	Weekend	Weekday	Weekend
2017	1480	1409	94%	89%
2026	1560	1500	99%	95%

10.2 For a car park to operate efficiently it is desirable to have some spare capacity so as to enable visitors to find a space if required without having to spend significant time circulation the car park or potentially

having to go to a different car park, which could also be full. It is proposed that the town centre car parks should operate at an 80-85% occupancy level. Given the peak occupancy level of demand at 1560 spaces identified above an additional 260 – 375 parking spaces are required to ensure this objective is met.

11. Potential Additional car parking locations

- 11.1 To accommodate the identified parking deficit, consideration has been given to the expansion of existing Wokingham Town Centre car parks and provision of new car parks on brownfield and greenfield sites.
- 11.2 To ensure each potential car park option could be comparatively assessed in a transparent and consistent way, a scoring mechanism has been devised and is presented in the study report.
- 11.3 Additionally, to reflect the relative importance of each assessment parameter a weighting system has been applied to ensure the information is assigned an appropriate influence in the overall scoring. This is because it is considered that there are certain elements of the assessment criteria that are more influential in determining the overall likelihood of where to locate the additional parking requirement.
- 11.4 The outcome of the appraisal assessment highlights Carnival Pool as preferable for the provision of additional car parking.

12. Recommendations

- 12.1 An assessment of parking demand has been undertaken that demonstrates there is likely to be no spare capacity across town centre car parks in each of the 2017 and 2026 assessment years during the week with limited spare capacity in the weekend.
- 12.2 To address future car parking provision, to maximise the use of existing car parks and to provide sufficient spare capacity to make the town centre attractive to visitors the following 5 recommendations should be taken forward.
 - Recommendation 1: To ensure sufficient capacity is provided in the town centre it is recommended that a decked car park at Carnival Pool is built, predominantly providing short stay spaces with a deck for mixed use parking.

The overall parking offer across the town is split and currently there is poor signing to help drivers locate spaces and for some locations an indirect route of access. This may add to town centre congestion as drivers circulate to find spaces.

- Recommendation 2: Install smart Variable Message Signs at key locations to better manage access to car parks and thereby the town centre itself.
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- Recommendation 3: To investigate options for providing improve or direct access to car parks from the main highway to reduce the need for travel into and around the town centre and surrounding neighbourhoods.

The balance of short stay and mixed use parking across the town needs to reflect the changing nature of the offer of the town centre.

- Recommendation 4: Review the allowed duration of parking at existing sites to ensure a balanced delivery of short and mixed use parking

There is some uncertainty about the impact of development across the Borough on future parking demand and the rate at which that development will come forward.

- Recommendation 5: Monitor parking demand at regular intervals to help future decision making about parking demand management.

12.3 If significant changes are made to on street parking through the regeneration, through implementing alternative on street control measures or through decriminalisation then the car park strategy would need to be reviewed.