

County-wide Car Parking Strategy

INTRODUCTION

Herefordshire Council want to manage both on and off street parking to maximise the benefits to the people of Herefordshire. This means balancing competing needs of shoppers and visitors against the needs of those who rely on a car to get to work and need all day parking. Charges help to manage the use of the available space to balance these demands

The strategy is integrated with the objectives of strategic plans (The Herefordshire Plan and the Local Transport Plan) and recognises how important the car is for travel in this rural county.

Many worthwhile transport improvements have been identified in the council's Local Transport Plan and government have allocated money to construct some of these. Many, such as Community Transport and "Park & Ride" however, require ongoing revenue funding to make them work and increased income from car parks could help with this.

LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN

Proposals for parking policy across the county are contained in the Local Transport Plan (LTP Section 4.8). The LTP confirms that the supply of off-street parking is considered to be adequate to meet the needs of the Market Towns during Plan period. Within Hereford there is just enough parking supply to meet existing demand, although car parks within the Inner Ring Road are effectively full during the week and on market day car parks north of the Inner Ring Road are also effectively full. However, a particular deficiency has been identified on the south side of the City Centre which results in longer journeys for vehicles searching for a parking space.

For off-street parking the LTP proposals include:

- A. Revised charging structures for Council controlled car parks in Hereford.
- B. Consideration of an extension of charging in public car parks to cover all five Market Towns.
- C. A review of existing charges in the Market Towns.
- D. A new Concessionary Parking Scheme based on 'Home Town' Zones.

Progress has been achieved with items A and C. A new Concessionary Parking Scheme for the whole County (item D) was introduced in 2001.

For on-street parking, the proposals include:

- E. The establishment of a Decriminalised Parking Service.
- F. The introduction of some on-street parking charges in Hereford to support Park and Ride Services.
- G. The introduction of Residents Parking Schemes in residential areas close to the centre of Hereford to deter commuter and shopper parking.
- H. The use of limited waiting restrictions within the centres of Market Towns.

A County-wide Decriminalised Parking Service was introduced on 5 November 2001 (item E) and Schemes in accordance with items G and H continue to be actioned.

POLICY LINKAGES

Car parking policy should help achieve Transportation and other policy aims of the council. These linkages are summarised in the following table:

POLICY LINKAGES

Broad Objective	Herefordshire Plan Ambitions	Implications for Car parks	Comments
Economic vitality	Support business growth & create more & better paid work in Herefordshire	Sufficient capacity	TPI report indicates generally sufficient capacity but new car park needed in Hereford.
		Encourage visitors / shoppers	Zonal charging policy aimed at “reserving” best locations for visitors & shoppers
		Acceptable cost (comparable with competition)	Include comparison with competition within charging policy
Safety	Reduce crime & disorder & make Herefordshire safer	“Secure car parks” scheme	
Access	Develop Herefordshire as an active, vibrant & enjoyable place to be.	Well signed	Town by town reviews being carried out.
		Develop an integrated transport system for Herefordshire.	
			Easy to use
		Right locations	
Environment	Protect & improve Herefordshire’s distinctive environment	Encourage sustainable travel modes	Ration commuter parking either by absolute number or by price. (But note public views on this). Residents parking schemes can contribute to this.
	Improve the health & well-being of Herefordshire people	Discourage trips easily substituted by more environmentally friendly mode	
		Discourage congested trips	
Council finances	Support business growth & create more & better paid work in Herefordshire		At present Car parking provides a revenue contribution to council’s general fund. Property services hold £80,000 pa transferred from Car parking to cover maintenance. No specific provisions are made for development

STRATEGY ELEMENTS

1. Supply & Quality

- 1.1 There must be sufficient parking capacity and turnover of spaces to meet the economic vitality safety and access objectives set out above for the county. A sample of council car parks are surveyed quarterly to establish occupancy levels and this information will be used to determine the need for additional spaces.
- 1.2 Residents should generally be able to park in residential streets. Residents parking schemes will be introduced to achieve this (See para. 4 below).
- 1.3 Car parks need to be well signed, attractive, easy to use and well maintained. Quality is largely determined by available budget and under the council's Asset Management Plan, a recommended maintenance programme has been identified for treatment of surfaces, signs and lines. The current recommended programme is as follows:

	First Year	Second Year	Fifth Year*	Five Year Total
Hereford	£26,045	£235,635	£389,805	£651,485
Ross-on-Wye	£4,265	£49,125	£92,845	£146,235
Leominster	£7,550	£21,500	£25,945	£54,995
Ledbury	£3,665	£8,285	£5,590	£17,540
Bromyard	£4,605	£37,020	£27,580	£69,205
Kington	£400	£9,490	£15,320	£25,210
County Totals	£46,530	£361,055	£557,085	£964,670

* Items in this column are recommended to be carried out within the five year period but timing is not critical (i.e. they could be carried out in years 3, 4 or 5).

In addition to the programme set out above some £20,000 p.a. is allocated for emergency works.

In setting charges, consideration will be given to increasing these sums in order to improve the quality of the car parks.

2. Transport Policy

- 2.1 The overall parking policy should encourage use of alternative forms of transport to the private car.
- 2.2 Income from Car Parking should assist in the provision of sustainable transport projects (such as Community transport, public transport, cycling and walking) and for achieving the wider ambitions set out in the Herefordshire Plan. Income from car parking should be more closely linked to policy objectives for improving sustainable travel modes such as Community transport.

3. Charging

- 3.1 Some free parking is required, either on or off street, with more being required where alternatives to the car are less readily available.
- 3.2 A "Zonal" policy with short stay charging for inner car parks to help visitors and shoppers find spaces convenient to town centres is appropriate for Hereford.
- 3.3 Any charges must be reasonable in comparison with neighbouring towns.
- 3.4 Any charges must be in simple multiples of common coin denominations.

3.5 Charges should be reviewed (but not necessarily increased) on an annual basis.

Applying these elements to individual towns, results in the following specific proposals:

HEREFORD

Hereford is the county town, attracting large numbers of workers, shoppers and business trips and also a significant number of tourists. The need here is primarily to manage the available spaces. It is recommended that Hereford should have:

- ⇒ Three charging zones (central, middle and outer).
- ⇒ Realistic charges but generally below those in Worcester and Gloucester.
- ⇒ Season tickets available in the outer and middle zones only with costs based on a 25% discount compared to parking daily five days a week fifty weeks a year.
- ⇒ On street charges in central Hereford only if and when the additional revenue is needed to fund Park & Ride or other sustainable transport improvements.
- ⇒ Further residents parking as needed. The cost of Permits to be maintained in real terms at or close to the equivalent of the 2001 charge.

ROSS-ON-WYE

Ross combines the functions of a market town with those of a tourist attraction and a “gateway” to other places. Parking was reviewed in 1994 and the current arrangements fit well with the general proposals for the county.

- ⇒ No changes are proposed for Ross.
- ⇒ Residents permit charges to be equal to those of Hereford, with parity to be achieved through incremental increases over a three-year period.

LEDBURY

Ledbury is a thriving market town with a significant tourist draw. It is important to manage the parking to ensure that visitors are well catered for. It is recommended that:

- ⇒ Charges on St Katherine’s and Bye Street car parks are set to encourage short stay use
- ⇒ All charges are kept below those in Malvern
- ⇒ Bridge Street Car park remain free
- ⇒ Consideration be given to introducing charges on Lawnside Road (swimming pool) car park if needed to ensure a turnover of users.
- ⇒ Any residents parking schemes introduced have a permit cost equal to that in Hereford.

BROMYARD

Bromyard serves mainly its local population and people from the surrounding rural areas. The current regime ensures spaces are usually available near the centre whilst keeping enough free parking spaces for those not wishing to pay but willing to walk a little further.

- ⇒ No changes are proposed for Bromyard
- ⇒ Residents permit charges to be equal to those of Hereford, with parity to be achieved through incremental increases over a three-year period.

LEOMINSTER

Leominster serves as a commercial and administrative centre for north Herefordshire in addition to providing several tourist destinations. The town is well provided with conveniently located car parks but a reasonable turnover of spaces particularly for shoppers and visitors is needed. Some income would help pay for the upkeep of the car parks. It is recommended that:

- ⇒ Charges be introduced on the Central (Burgess street) car park to help visitors looking for short stay parking.
- ⇒ The charges be set below those in Ludlow.
- ⇒ Consideration be given to extending charges to Etnam Street car park after assessing the effects on the central car park.
- ⇒ Other car parks remain free
- ⇒ Any residents parking schemes introduced have a permit cost equal to that in Hereford.

KINGTON

Kington is the smallest of Herefordshire's Market Towns with council car parks and also perhaps has the most fragile economy. It is important here to ensure an adequate supply of parking, including both on and off street spaces. It is recommended that:

- ⇒ No charges be imposed in Kington at present
- ⇒ The situation be reviewed when the effects of increased on street parking enforcement resulting from Herefordshire Council taking over that role in November 2001 become clear (say one year later).
- ⇒ Any residents parking schemes introduced have a permit cost equal to that in Hereford

4. Residents Parking

Near town centres and employment areas it is not always possible for residents to find a parking space due to use of limited on street space by workers, shoppers, etc. This impedes achievement of the access and environment objectives set out above.

To address this Residents parking schemes will be introduced, restricting use of spaces to resident permit holders only.

It is, however, necessary to allow for visitors, deliveries, carers, etc. in addition to residents. The simplest way of achieving this is restrict waiting to a short duration (such as 30 minutes) with an exemption to the time limit for resident permit holders. This will be the normal form of residents parking scheme within Herefordshire.

In some locations pressure on space is so great that this arrangement does not “reserve” sufficient space for the residents and in these circumstances consideration will be given to making a more prescriptive order, reserving specific marked bays for use by resident permit holders only.

The general approach to granting residents permits will be to issue permits to car owners registered as residential council tax payers at an address within the relevant area. Where space allows, two permits will be available, one marked for the resident’s vehicle and one for visitors. Where houses are in multiple occupation, only one permit per council taxpayer will be issued in order to reduce pressure on kerbside space.

In no case will the issue of a permit guarantee the availability of a parking space.

Permits will be charged for. The charge should cover the administrative costs of issuing the permit plus a contribution to the costs of enforcement.

5. Concessions

Parking concessions are currently available to the following:

- Disabled (by means of the national blue / orange badge scheme)
- VIP’s including councillors and senior council officers
- Council Staff
- Pensioners

Additionally certain periods of free parking are traditionally allowed at Christmas in Hereford and Ross-on-Wye to encourage use of local shops for Christmas shopping and, unlike other towns in the County, there are no free public car parks. Also use of car parks for non profit making events is permitted subject to sufficient parking continuing to be available elsewhere for the general public.

Concessions for the disabled on street are set nationally, exempting those displaying a blue badge from the time limits otherwise applying and allowing a stop of up to three hours on double yellow lines providing it does not cause danger to other road users. To minimise the use of the latter concession and encourage parking off street, all council car parks allow three hours free parking for blue badge holders.

Concessions for pensioners were the subject of considerable debate and consultation in 1999 and 2000 and a countywide system was introduced in January 2001. This allows a pensioner to buy a permit allowing two hours free parking in the town closest to their home. This provides some support for local businesses and encourages shorter trips in line with transport policies. In light of recent European rulings it is intended that the age of eligibility for men and women will be equalised in the near future. The age will be the subject of a separate report to cabinet member for environment. The cost of the current scheme is estimated to be about £100,000 per year.

Concessions for VIP’s and council staff consist of discs allowing free parking of unlimited duration in defined car parks to enable them to fulfill their duties. VIP’s & senior staff are allowed to use a wider range of car parks than general staff. The concessions are estimated to cost the council about £80,000 per year. It is recommended that these concessions be reviewed as part of the Green Travel initiative which has now started.