

Central Bedfordshire Council

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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Parking Strategy Overview

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This report relates to a Key decision

Purpose of this report

1. To highlight the need for a Parking Strategy
2. To seek the views of members of the proposed Vision, Aims and Policy areas.
3. To inform members of the proposed methodology and timescales.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

1. Members are asked to comment on the Vision, Aims, Policy and action areas of the proposed Strategy.

Background

4. Car parking is an important issue when considering transportation topics and one which is often overlooked. This is surprising as travel by car is the main mode of travel for most people and all those cars need to be parked - According to some estimates most cars spend 90% of their time parked.
5. A well planned and managed approach to parking can help us to achieve our economic, social and environmental objectives. The effective management of parking can have a positive impact by enabling more productive use of spaces making towns and local communities more attractive to visitors, thereby improving their economic viability.

6. Central Bedfordshire does not currently have an adopted Parking Strategy and there is no comprehensive approach to managing on and off street parking, provision, control and enforcement. This report sets out an overall introduction as to what is planned to be a comprehensive Parking Strategy for Central Bedfordshire and details the background and reasoning for having a Parking Strategy while proposing a Vision, Aims, Policies and proposed Actions devised upon current and future need.

Why produce a Strategy?

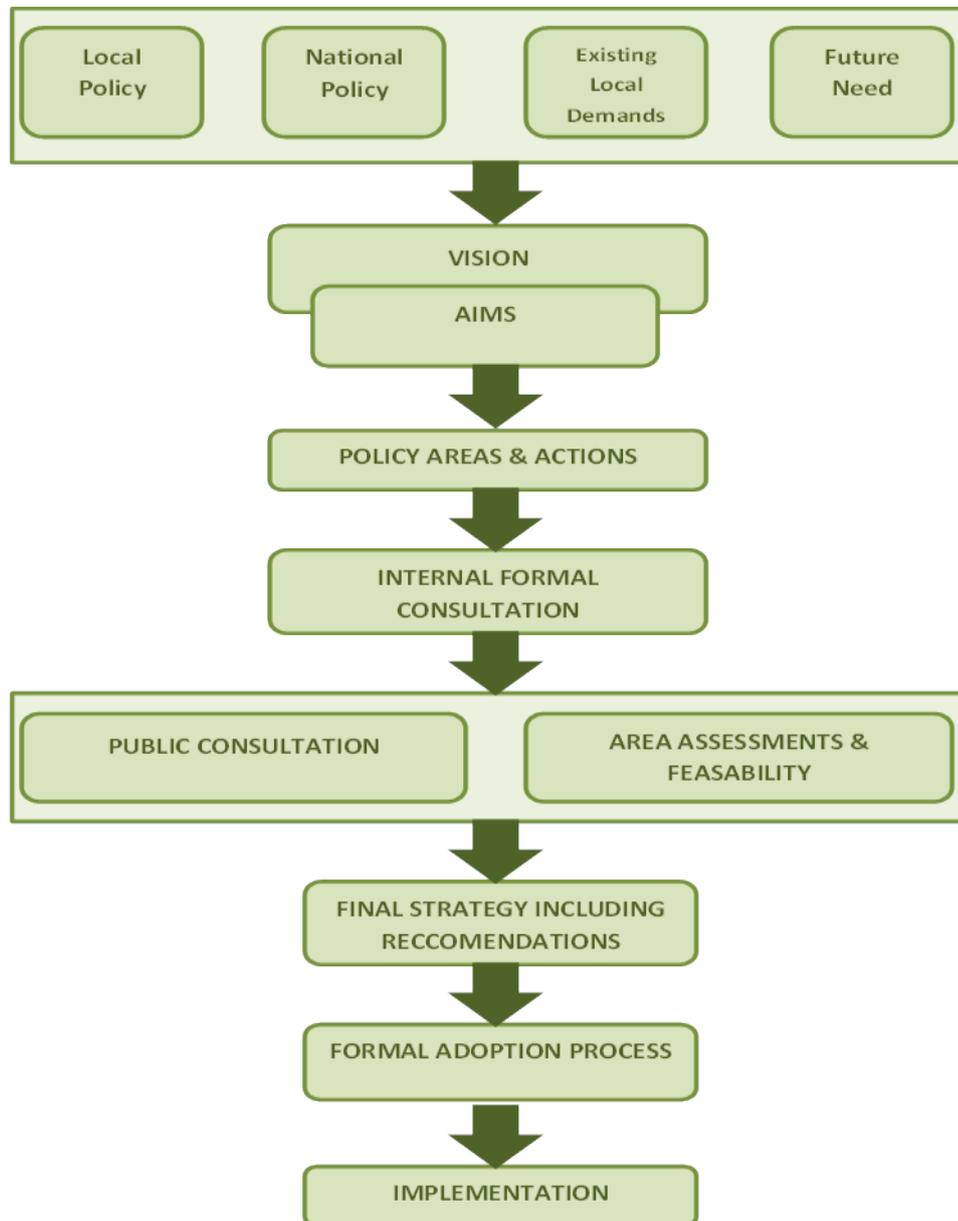
7. Parking is an issue of significant concern for local residents. Councilors and members of the public often raise issues about residents parking, inconsistency, obstructions and parking contraventions.
8. Unrestricted parking leads to congestion, obstructions, pollution and spaces being occupied by the wrong users at inappropriate times all of which is a concern for local businesses and the economic viability of the area.
9. Issues associated with parking are often inextricably linked and the remit of the Parking Strategy will be broad so as to acknowledge the complex and challenging connections between parking and environmental, economic and regeneration issues.
10. Management of parking can have a positive impact by enabling the more productive use of spaces making towns and district Centre's more attractive to visitors, thereby improving their economic viability. Furthermore, having a cohesive parking strategy can also ensure that parking in local areas can be dealt with in a fair and consistent way so improving the environment and safety for our residents.
11. Legislation requires that Parking should fall within the wider objectives of the authority for Transport, and consequently with the proposed development of the Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP) it is an ideal time to introduce a Parking Strategy - Table 1 below summaries the key reasons for why we need a Parking Strategy.

Table 1: Reasons

Reason	National	Local
Regulatory framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic Management Act (2004) • National Planning Policy Framework (2012) • The Equalities Act (2010) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a new Local Transport Plan for Central Bedfordshire.
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autumn Statement (November 2015) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LTP funding settlement announced (July 2014) • Emerging Community Infrastructure Levy
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Secretary of State’s Statutory Guidance to Local Authorities on the Civil Enforcement of Parking Contraventions’ (March 2015) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five Year Plan (2015) • Market Towns Strategy • CBC Design Guide.
Existing need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislative requirements to manage parking effectively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents parking provision – Residents parking permit schemes, local safety, schools. • Growing number of Verge/Footway parking issues. • Inappropriate or inadequate Town centre parking provision. • Operational capacity often unable to meet demand.
Future need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population growth • East West Rail and other major infrastructure projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the management and investment requirements as population increases. • Planning for the long term maintenance costs of our existing assets. • Providing innovative parking payment systems. • Supporting the economic ambitions of our town centres. • Net growth in Jobs • New Local Plan (2017/18)

Proposed approach & structure

12. The following chart summarises the proposed approach to delivering the final Parking Strategy and details the different elements required that will shape and develop a comprehensive parking strategy for Central Bedfordshire.



13. This process will form a sound and robust evidence base to justify investment, ensure value for money and provide effective schemes on the ground that will contribute towards the overarching objectives of the LTP and the priorities within the Five Year Plan.

Proposed Vision

14. Our draft Vision for the future of Parking in Central Bedfordshire is as follows:

‘The parking strategy aims to support the effective and safe operation of our roads as well as delivering solutions which enable our town and district centres to grow and helps residents and businesses access services’.

15. The Vision means creating a parking strategy that helps Central Bedfordshire deliver as far as is practicable what our current Highway Network needs in order to function plus what it needs in order to grow.
16. The Parking Strategy will contribute to the council’s vision to secure sustainable economic growth. Growing the local economy provides the resources for individuals and the authority as a whole to deliver those criteria which constitute a great places to live and work whilst the sustainability dimension ensures that it is not done so at the expense to future generations’ ability to meet the same needs and desires.

Proposed Aims

17. The overarching Vision can be broken down into nine Aims that have been chosen to guide the development of the Parking Strategy. These Aims have been created to reflect the issues which have been identified as locally important, while at the same time reflecting wider national and local policy context.
18. These Aims reflect the main impacts that transport can have on the wider community, rather than being linked to particular schemes or measures. They form the basis upon which the policies and programs contained in this document have been developed and are detailed in the following Table.

Table 2: Draft Aims of the Parking Strategy

	Aim
1	Make Central Bedfordshire and its Town Centres as accessible to residents, businesses and visitors as possible to ensure growth and prosperity.
2	Ensure that parking schemes for residents, businesses and visitors are well managed
3	Promote the safety of all road users
4	Ensure that there is sufficient and appropriate parking for new developments
5	Fulfil our statutory requirements for the parking we provide
6	Help ensure that our roads are well managed
7	Provide alternative travel choices that are sustainable
8	Provide effective enforcement of parking restrictions
9	Work in partnership with other off street providers so that we can provide the best service possible.

19. By having a focus of where we need to direct our attention we can develop robust policies for parking in Central Bedfordshire which are both informed and reactive to our residents needs as far as is practicable.

Proposed Policy Areas & Actions

20. The draft Policy areas and Actions (Appendix 1) detail proposals that show how we intend to deliver the Aims of the Parking Strategy. It is the intention to then assess the viability and impact of implementing specific policies and the outcomes will be detailed as part of the final document which will include recommendations based upon public consultation and detailed localised studies through Area Assessments.
21. There are three distinct areas of assessment which are:
- a. **QUANTITY** - How well does the supply of parking spaces relate to the level and type of demand in an area both at present and in the future.
 - b. **QUALITY** – relating to location, level of service and the design of parking facilities
 - c. **PARKING CONTROL & PRICING** – Mechanisms required for influencing who has access to parking spaces and when.

The draft Policy Areas we have highlighted have been established as a response to the work undertaken to date and will enable us to address some of the issues related to parking within Central Bedfordshire.

Consultation approach

22. A twelve week public consultation will begin in April which will ensure that the policy areas and associated actions can be assessed appropriately. The outcome of this consultation will help to guide the recommendations within the final strategy.

Area Assessments

23. A comprehensive parking assessment has recently been conducted in Biggleswade and is now being implemented. A similar study has been carried out in Leighton Buzzard. It is our intention to use these examples as best practice for other areas within Central Bedfordshire. The work carried out in these areas looked at the specific local issues related to parking and proposed detailed and financially costed options that would help to address the parking problems in those towns.
24. When undertaking the assessments the issues were considered on an 'Area wide' approach rather than in isolation, taking into account the different causes of parking problems which enabled measures to be developed that would alleviate the danger of one solution causing further issues elsewhere. The proposals were supported by detailed analysis of the impact financially and operationally which enabled all partners to make an informed decision about what measures would be most appropriate.
25. So that members can make an informed choice with regards to the impact of some of the proposed policy areas and actions it is the intention to conduct some further localised studies. Taking this into account the areas we intend to commission further assessments for are:
 - Dunstable
 - Flitwick
 - Sandy
26. As Train Stations are large trip generators there will also be smaller assessments made at the following locations:
 - Harlington
 - Arlesey (To a lesser extent so as to support work already being undertaken through the Highways Contract).
27. These assessments will enable an area wide approach to be taken to geographical areas where there are known issues with parking or that will be impacted by parking in the future.

28. It is intended the studies within each of these areas will assess the parking related issues associated with; town centres, train stations, schools, workplaces as appropriate to the particular town.
29. The assessments will produce detailed and evidenced recommendation's that will then inform a prescribed policy approach for each area and generate a long list of schemes and an implementation programme for members to consider in the Final Draft Strategy.

Timescales for Adoption

30. It is proposed that the Parking Strategy is in place by late 2016, this would enable the full consideration of the process by members, the public and other stakeholders alike. The timeframe is set out in Table 3 below

Table 3: Timetable for Adoption

Date	Milestone
March 2016	Approval of Vision, Aims, Policy Areas & Actions of the Proposed Parking Strategy.
April - July 2016	Public Consultation – Vision, Aims, Policy Areas & Actions
	Conduct Individual area assessments
July - Sept 2016	Prepare final document with recommendations based on consultation and area assessments
Sept 2016	Presentation of Final Strategy to OSC
Oct 2016	Executive
Nov 2016	Full Council
Dec 2016	Implementation

Options for consideration

31. Members are invited to comment on the proposed Vision, Aims and Policy Areas.

Council Priorities

32. The Parking Strategy is an important tool in helping to deliver the Council's priorities as illustrated in the above report. Either directly or indirectly it helps to facilitate:
- Enhancing Central Bedfordshire
 - Great resident services
 - Improving education and skills
 - Protecting the vulnerable; improving wellbeing
 - Creating stronger communities
 - A more efficient and responsive Council.

Legal Implications

33. No direct legal implications however we have a duty under the Traffic Management Act to manage parking effectively.

Financial and Risk Implications

34. At this stage there are no financial implications for the council, as specific proposals are developed the Finance Officer will be consulted as appropriate.

Equalities Implications

35. We have conducted an 'Equality Impact Assessment Relevance Test' as part of the initial approach to developing the Parking Strategy and this show there would be no negative impact upon vulnerable groups within our communities it is not thought that a full EIA is needed at this stage.
36. We will seek further advice from the Equalities Officer as the Strategy and any specific proposals are developed. However we do anticipate that the Parking Strategy will make a positive contribution towards the council's obligations to the Equalities Act.

Implications for Work Programming

37. Following further detailed assessments and public consultation a draft Parking Strategy will be presented to OSC in Sept 2016 for full consideration before being presented to Executive in October and Full Council in November.

Conclusion and next Steps

38. Work will commence on assessing the impact of the proposed policies and actions at a more detailed level which would then enable members to make an informed decision on the impact of the Parking Strategy and the proposals as detailed in this report.

39. The final report will detail the short medium and long term recommendations for parking within Central Bedfordshire that would support the council's objectives of providing the capacity for growth, ensuring fast and efficient connectivity to jobs and opportunities and assist in creating safe and attractive communities where people want to live and businesses want to invest in line with the emerging Local Transport Plan

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Policy Areas & Actions
- Appendix 2 – Verge & Footway Parking
- Appendix 3 – Residents Parking