

Biggleswade Town Council

Proposed Parking Strategy adopted January 2014

INTRODUCTION

It is widely acknowledged that parking has been an issue in Biggleswade for many years. The available parking in the town needs to be better managed and the lack of sufficient parking needs to be addressed.

A Parking Strategy Task Group was set up by the Town Centre Management Committee to consider the Biggleswade Parking Strategy produced by Parsons Brinckerhoff for Central Bedfordshire Council. The Parking Strategy gave the results of the parking surveys carried out together with possible ways forward. The Task Group formulated a response and a strategic proposal for parking in Biggleswade for the medium term and this was adopted by Biggleswade Town Council in January 2014.

The Task Group felt that it was important to establish key principles when considering a parking strategy and also to consider the framework provided by the Biggleswade Town Centre Adopted Strategy and Masterplan (July 2011 Supplementary Planning Guidance).

Key Principles for the Proposed Parking Strategy

- **To attract shoppers into the Town.**
- **To support businesses & workers who work in the Town.**
- **To encourage commuters to park in the appropriate car parks.**
- **To protect residential streets and support safe parking for residents.**
- **To take forward the Town Centre Masterplan.**
- **To recognise the need to charge and to penalise non-compliance.**
- **To maximise support from Central Bedfordshire Council.**
- **To future-proof the work undertaken to produce the strategy.**
- **To improve existing car parks and increase parking capacity in the Town.**

The Task Group identified all the current off street parking capacity, the current controlled and other on street parking capacity, residential areas affected by commuter parking, possible new off street parking and possible additional on street parking.

A breakdown of the current capacity and restrictions on each of the identified parking areas was produced and consideration given to if and how the restrictions could be altered and capacity increased in order to implement a good overall parking strategy for Biggleswade.

The Task Group identified the existing areas for short term parking, medium term parking, long term parking and commuter parking. Off street parking not within the control of the Town Council or Central Bedfordshire Council was also identified because it does play a role in formulating a parking strategy.

Having looked closely at the current provision of parking in Biggleswade in terms of short, medium and long term, the figures for each were broken down to look at on street and off street parking to establish the available spaces for each category. (See Appendix A.)

It became apparent that the majority of the on street parking available to both residents and visitors of Biggleswade fell within the 1-hour short term category. The available medium and long term parking is provided off street with a relatively low number of available spaces.

The only identified on street disabled parking bays are located in the High Street and Market Square; with the exception of Aldi and Asda there are no marked off street disabled parking bays.

Within their proposals, the Task Group have tried, where possible and using all the current available spaces, to balance the number of short and medium term parking spaces, both off and on street.

Charges for parking will have to be considered but it is proposed that the aspiration for charging should be that it is only to cover costs and that the first hour in all spaces should be free. (See Appendix B.)

The Task Group considered commuter parking and the need to encourage commuters to park in the car parks provided by Network Rail.

Residential areas affected by commuter parking have been identified and other areas may become an issue when a parking strategy is implemented. Restrictions will need to be implemented in the identified areas to encourage commuters away from residential areas.

There is a proposal for a multi storey car park to be built in Bonds Lane, to give an additional 250 spaces. This future multi storey car park would help to balance the current lack of medium and longer term parking facilities in Biggleswade.

Areas identified in the proposed parking strategy as areas of uncertainty are Rose Lane, where the car park has not yet been secured by purchase or by lease, the EMR railway sidings car park, which is currently operating under a month-by-month short term licence and the Dan Albone car park where the lease is due for renewal in early 2014.

The Task Group mapped the short, medium and long stay areas along with the possible residential areas affected by commuter parking. The inner yellow ring identifies short term parking, the middle green ring identifies medium term parking, the outer ring identifies long term parking, the area marked in red identifies possible future mixed use parking and the area in blue identifies areas effected or likely to be effected by commuter parking, (See Appendix C.)

It is hoped that, working with Central Bedfordshire Council, the proposals from the Task Group report can be developed into a comprehensive parking strategy to address the current problems the town faces, both of parking capacity and inconsiderate, and sometimes dangerous, parking.

The Task Group met on 3rd December 2013, 10th December 2013 and 7th January 2014 and its members were Cllrs. Russell; Ramsay; Albone; Bond; North and Rix, supported by the Town Clerk.

BIGGLESWADE TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY and MASTERPLAN

The Biggleswade Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan identifies key priorities to improve parking in the Town Centre and supports the purchase of car parks by local authorities as appropriate. The Masterplan also highlights improvements to the various short, medium, long and extra stay parking as well as the need for additional town centre parking facilities. It includes a map showing the proposed types of car parking zones within the town centre. (See Appendix D.)

Masterplan - Key Priorities for Improved Parking

- To reduce commuter and long stay parking on residential streets and in spaces in central areas.
- To address the demand for unrestricted long stay (employee parking) in the town centre.
- To improve quality, safety and accessibility of long stay off street parking areas on the edge of central locations to ensure they are fit for use.
- To ensure adequate parking provision for residents at all times.
- To ensure provision and turnover of short / medium stay parking in the central core area.
- To safeguard existing levels of car parking provision.
- To encourage the provision of more car parking to improve the towns viability.
- To prioritise the use of innovative technologies in management and monitoring of car parking spaces and turnover.

Masterplan - Improvements to the Various Parking Regimes

Short Stay

An extension of resident-only areas to provide on-street car parking for residents of the town centre, using a permit basis to discourage informal use by commuters and office workers. In addition, residential streets will also provide short stay (2hrs) free parking for non-residents between 9am and 4pm on weekdays to provide additional shopper/ visitor spaces.

Continued use of double yellow lines to prevent parking and loading in restricted areas to ensure traffic circulation is not compromised. Greater enforcement of unauthorised car parking.

Medium Stay

Provision of medium-stay parking (up to 4 hrs.) near the town centre for longer visits. This parking could be free of charge initially but there could be a moderate charge for longer stays if considered appropriate. Improvement to car parking facilities adjacent to the River Ivel.

Long Stay

Improvements to informal long-stay parking in Rose Lane to provide parking for those working in the town centre, with moderate charges for stays over 2 hrs. Rose Lane car park could continue to provide free parking for residents/ shoppers/ leisure users in the evenings and at weekends. Length of stay (weekdays) restricted to 8.5 hrs. to deter use by commuters.

Extra Stay

Focus on the currently under-used Network Rail Car Park and removal of on-street parking opportunities in residential streets in the town centre through time restrictions and imposing penalties.

There is a long term opportunity to deck the existing railway car park to provide additional secure commuter and shopper parking and for a rationalisation of the station parking provision.

Additional Town Centre Car Parking Facilities

The provision of a significant new town centre car park (surface or decked) to support growth in the town centre. This provision will include new and improved car parking areas in the Bonds Lane and Foundry Lane Area, Hitchin Street and Franklins Recreation Ground area. The provision of car parking will be combined with other retail-led mixed use development.

No parking spaces should be removed without an equivalent replacement elsewhere in the town centre being made available.

Other Opportunities

Improvements to road signage to direct drivers to the most appropriate parking location.

TASK GROUP PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS TO THE VARIOUS PARKING REGIMES

It should be noted that all the following recommendations are on the basis that the restrictions would **not** apply between 6pm and 8am.

Identified Short Term - On Street Parking:

Biggleswade Market Square and Biggleswade High Street - currently there are 57 marked parking bays available, with time restrictions of 1 hour free parking.

The Task Group proposed that the time limit of 1 hour free parking should remain and that the bays can be managed with the introduction of parking bay sensors.

Hitchin Street – (Market Square to Mill Lane) currently has available 8 unmarked parking bays with time restrictions of 1 hour free parking.

The Task Group proposed that the time limit of 1 hour free parking should remain and that the bays can be managed with the introduction of parking bay sensors.

Station Road – (Market Square to Back Street) currently has available 8 unmarked parking bays, with a time limit of 1 hour free parking.

The Task Group proposed that these parking bays should remain at 1 hour free parking and be managed with the introduction of parking bay sensors.

Victoria Place - currently has available 7 unmarked parking bays with a limit of 2 hours free parking.

The Task Group proposed that parking bays in Victoria Place should be changed to 1 hour free parking and be managed with the introduction of parking bay sensors.

Back Street currently has available 14 unmarked parking bays with a limit of 2 hours free parking.

The Task Group proposed that the 2-hour limit should remain, with the introduction of residents' permits if needed.

Summary

If the proposals of the Task Group are implemented, the total number of short term on street parking spaces in the Town Centre with a 1 or 2-hour time limit would be 94. Current restrictions are no return within 1 hour.

The Task Group proposed that the 'no return within 1 hour' restriction continues to apply and that no restrictions apply between the hours of 6.00pm and 8.00am.

Parking bay sensors are currently in use in Biggleswade in the White Hart car park. These have been very successful and there is very little abuse of the time limit. Enforcement of the parking bay sensors has never been challenged in a UK court. Parking bay sensors limit the number of enforcement officers required to monitor parking infringements.

The possible need for a residents' permit scheme has been identified for Back Street where residents may need to park between the hours of 8am and 6pm. This would slightly reduce the number of spaces available for shoppers/visitors.

Work to be undertaken to implement these proposal includes modification of parking orders; marking out any unmarked parking bays; adequate signage informing of the restrictions; the installation of 80 parking bay sensors; introduction of a residents' permit scheme and enforcement of unauthorised car parking.

Identified Medium Term – On Street Parking:

Shortmead Street – currently has available 19 unmarked parking bays with a limit of 1 hour free parking.

The Task Group proposed that parking in Shortmead Street should have a limit of 3 hours, the first hour being free. This would be controlled through the introduction of a pay and display scheme.

Hitchin Street – (Mill Lane to Saffron Road junction) currently has available 18 unmarked parking bays. The 5 parking bays near Mill Lane have a 1-hour restriction; the remaining 13 parking bays have no restrictions.

The Task Group proposed the introduction of a 3-hour restriction for all 18 unmarked parking bays, the first hour being free. This would be controlled through the introduction of a pay and display scheme and with residents' permits if needed.

Station Road – (Back Street to Saffron Road) currently has available 19 unmarked parking bays, with a time limit of 1 hour free parking.

The Task Group proposed that these parking bays should have a limit of 3 hours, the first hour being free, with the introduction of a pay and display scheme and a possible residents' permit scheme.

London Road – (Baptist Church to Dells Lane) – on the west side only, there are some 22 unmarked parking bays with no parking restrictions.

The Task Group proposed the introduction of a 3-hour restriction for parking on this part of London Road, the first hour to be free. This would be controlled through a pay and display scheme with a residents' permit scheme if needed.

St Andrews Street – (near Mill Lane) currently has 5 unmarked parking bays with a limit of 1 hour free parking.

The Task Group proposed a 3-hour limit, first hour free, with the introduction of a pay and display scheme.

Church Street - there are currently no parking bays in Church Street.

The Task Group proposed that some parking bays be introduced towards the west end of the street on the south side. These bays should be properly marked with a 3-hour limit, first hour free and controlled through pay and display.

Parking bays existed on Church Street prior to the development of Asda and the Task Group feels that reintroducing some parking would not only increase the parking capacity for the town centre but would serve to slow traffic down. (Vehicles turning into Church Street from Shortmead Street tend to speed along to the Asda roundabout.).

Summary

If the proposals of the Task Group are implemented, the total number of medium term 3-hour on street parking spaces identified within the proximity of the town centre would be 86.

Current restrictions are no return within 1 hour. The Task Group proposed no return within 3 hours and that no restrictions apply between the hours of 6.00pm and 8.00am.

Identifying the number of bays that could be available on London Road and Church Street could add significantly to the number of on street medium term parking spaces. The need for a possible residents' permit scheme was identified for London Road for any houses without off-street parking.

Work to be undertaken to implement these proposal includes modification of parking orders; marking out any unmarked parking bays; identifying parking bay numbers in Church Street and London Road; adequate signage informing of the restrictions; installation of a pay and display scheme; introducing a residents' permit scheme and enforcement of unauthorised car parking.

Identified Short Term – Off Street Parking:

White Hart – currently has available 14 marked car parking bays with a 2hr limit; no disabled parking bays

The Task Group proposed that, in line with the on street parking in the centre of town, the White Hart car park restrictions should be changed to a 1-hour maximum stay. The White Hart car park is currently monitored with parking bay sensors.

Back Street - currently has available 8 marked parking bays with a limit of 2 hours free parking.

The Task Group proposed that the 2-hour limit remains, with the first hour free, and the introduction of pay and display.

Aldi and Asda – Aldi has 146 marked parking bays with a 1.5 -hour limit, 48 bays are for shop use only and the remainder are for the public as well as Aldi customers. Asda has 298 marked parking bays with a 2.5 -hour limit.

Aldi and Asda are privately managed car parks which provide a significant number of short term parking spaces in the proximity of the town centre.

Summary

The total number of short term council-owned off street parking spaces identified in the town centre, with a 1 or 2-hour time limit is 22. Current restrictions are no return within 1 hour.

The Task Group proposed that the 'no return within 1 hour' continues to apply and no restrictions apply between the hours of 6.00pm and 8.00am.

The total number of privately managed short term, off street parking spaces identified in the town centre with a 1.5 -hour to 2.5 -hour time limit is 444.

The number of public spaces is 22 and, therefore, the total number of short term off street parking spaces available is 466.

Work to be undertaken to implement these proposals includes modification of parking orders; introduction of disabled bays; adequate signage informing of the restrictions; installation of a pay and display scheme and enforcement of unauthorised car parking.

Identified Medium Term – Off Street Parking:

Mill Lane – currently has available 21 marked parking bays with a limit of 3 hours free parking; not disabled parking bays.

The Task Group proposed that a 4-hour parking limit is implemented, with the first hour free, and the introduction of a pay and display scheme.

St Andrews Street – currently has available 39 unmarked parking bays with a limit of 3 hours free parking; no disabled parking bays.

The Task Group proposed that a 4-hour parking limit is implemented, with the first hour free, and the introduction of a pay and display scheme.

Chestnut Avenue – currently has available 37 marked parking bays with a limit of 3 hours free parking; no disabled parking bays.

The Task Group proposed that a 4-hour parking limit is implemented, with the first hour free, and the introduction of a pay and display scheme.

Summary

The total number of medium term off street parking spaces available is 97. They are all owned by the Town Council and have a 3-hour time limit with a restriction of no return within 3 hours.

The Task Group proposed that a 4-hour limit with a restriction of no return within 4 hours should now apply, with no restrictions between the hours of 6.00pm and 8.00am.

This change is to help offset the 4-hour free parking which will be available at the LXB London Road retail site.

Work to be undertaken to implement these proposal includes modification of parking orders; introduction of disabled parking bays; marking out any unmarked parking bays; adequate signage informing of the restrictions; installation of a pay and display scheme; introducing a residents' permit scheme and enforcement of unauthorised car parking.

Identified Long Term – Off Street Parking:

EMR Railway Sidings – EMR currently has available 52 unmarked parking bays with no limit on length of stay; no disabled parking bays.

The Task Group noted that the car park is currently operating under a short term licence and that it would not be financially justified to implement any control measures over the car park. It therefore proposed that no action be taken unless a longer licence/ lease can be obtained.

Rose Lane – currently has available 136 unmarked parking bays with no limit on length of stay; no disabled parking bays.

The Task Group noted that the future of this car park is not yet certain but made the following proposals should the Town Council secure the car park for the long term.

The Task Group proposed various parking regimes for Rose Lane to include permits for workers, residents' permits and a charging regime, with the first hour free, which will require the introduction of pay and display.

There would be a charge for a workers' permit and the application would have to be endorsed by the owner or manager of the business employing the person. Residents' permits would also have a charge attached.

The possibility of designating a workers'/residents' area of the car park and a general area for the charging regime was discussed and should be explored further.

To achieve the maximum number of spaces, there would have to be adequate drainage and the car park would have to be resurfaced and bays marked out.

Dan Albone – currently has available 130 unmarked parking bays with no limit on length of stay; no disabled parking bays.

The Task Group proposed that this parking should remain free. It will provide an alternative free car park for workers in the town as well as leisure parking.

Enforcement will be needed to prevent the current abuse of the car park. It is currently used by a local business to store accident-damaged vehicles and is used to dispose of waste from the business premises.

Network Rail – currently has available 175 marked parking bays, managed by a varying charging regime.

The car park is managed privately and provides substantial long stay spaces.

Proposal for Bonds Lane – the plans currently show 250 marked parking bays.

The Town Council has offered to take a lease on these parking spaces if terms can be agreed.

The Task Group proposed that there should be a charging regime, preferably with the first hour free, and that, as for Rose Lane above, permits for workers in the town would be issued. The car park would be closed overnight.

Summary

The total number of long stay off street parking spaces available, managed by the Town Council, is 318. There are currently no limits and no restrictions for any of these spaces.

The Task Group proposed the introduction of a mixed scheme for Rose Lane, as detailed above, but with no restriction between the hours of 6.00pm and 8.00am.

Bonds Lane – proposed development, would have a charging regime, with provision for workers, and would be closed overnight.

The total number of privately managed long stay parking spaces available is 175. Current restrictions are managed by a pay and display regime.

All the current long stay parking spaces managed by the Town Council are vulnerable.

- EMR railway sidings car park is operating under a short term licence and could be taken back by the owners on one month's notice.
- Although an offer to purchase Rose Lane car park has been made, the deal has not been finalised; the lease for the car park runs out in early 2014.
- Dan Albone car park, situated furthest from the Town Centre, has a lease that runs out in early 2014.

If the long stay off street parking is not secured there is a potential to lose all 318 spaces.

The possible Bonds Lane car park would replace some of the potentially lost long stay parking but with a maximum reduction in the overall number of long-term parking spaces of around 68 in the worst case. There are other permutations depending on which car parks are secured.

Work to be undertaken to implement the proposals includes securing the current parking; encouraging and assisting in the building of a multi storey car park; modification of parking orders; resurfacing; marking out of parking bays and introduction of disabled bays, including rear access, where possible; introducing a pay and display scheme; introducing a residents' permit scheme; introducing a workers' permit scheme; adequate signage informing of the restrictions and enforcement of unauthorised car parking.

Overall Summary

Appendix A clearly shows the number of parking spaces currently available in the proximity of the town centre of Biggleswade, broken down into short, medium and long stay categories.

The total number of available spaces under each category is:

Short term	610	Mix of on and off street
Medium term	97	All off street
Long term	493	All off street

Appendix B shows the proposed number of parking spaces that could be available, broken down into the varying short, medium and long stay categories. The Task Group would like to see 1-hour free parking under each of the medium and long stay categories.

The total number of proposed spaces under each category:

Short term	560	Reduction of 50 spaces
Medium term	180	Increase of 83 spaces, with possible additional bays in Church St
Long term	507	Increase of 14 spaces (not including the proposed Bonds Lane Development).

Residential Areas Identified for the Introduction of Parking Restrictions

The Task Group identified residential areas that are affected by commuter and other long stay parking; the areas identified are areas that would benefit from the introduction of parking restrictions. (See Appendix C.)

There may be other residential areas that should fall within the category for restrictions. However, there are some issues that may be addressed more appropriately by the sensitive introduction of yellow lines.

Market Issues

42 premium short stay parking spaces in the Market Square are lost on a Saturday to the market, along with the loss of 12 bays to the Tuesday market.

Consideration should be given to moving part of the market from the Square on a Saturday. This could happen either when the new transport interchange allows the closure of the bus exit lane or if the north end of Hitchin Street is pedestrianised. This would allow 24 premium short stay spaces to become available.

Consideration also needs to be given as to where market traders' vehicles should be parked on both a Saturday and a Tuesday. Currently traders use St. Andrews Street on a Saturday but leave their

vehicles on the Square on a Tuesday. If Rose Lane is secured, this may be an alternative. Any decision on this will have to take into account the relative losses and gains of short and medium term parking.

Signage

In considering the parking strategy the Task group felt that to simplify the identified short, medium and long stay parking areas, a colour-coded map could be produced identifying clearly the categories.

This map could be published in local publications such as the Bulletin and Town Guide and posted on notice boards and web sites. Any future signage identifying the parking restrictions could have a coloured circle on the sign in order that motorists could identify quickly the restrictions that apply. Appendix C shows the Task Group's proposed parking areas and Appendix D shows the Masterplan proposals, (they are not dissimilar).

Costs

Further work will need to be carried out to establish the cost of implementing any proposed changes to the current parking regime.

Costs to consider include:

- resurfacing,
- drainage,
- marking out parking bays,
- introducing parking sensors,
- pay and display technology, permit schemes,
- parking orders,
- restrictions in residential areas,
- yellow lining,
- signage
- ownership of enforcement.

Charging

The levels of charging will have to be proposed when all the above costs are known.

Parking in the town is currently supported financially by the Town Council in the sum of £47,000 and the Council has already agreed to bear the cost of the purchase of Rose Lane, including the loan repayments.

The Council will have to decide whether to continue to subsidise parking by this amount or what the future balance should be between council subsidy and user charging.

Any charging policy would have to be co-ordinated with Central Bedfordshire Council (who control all the on-street parking).

APPENDIX A – Current Position

	<u>Current Spaces</u>	<u>Length of Stay</u>	<u>Category</u>
<u>Current On Street - Short Stay Parking</u>			
Market Square & High Street	57	1hr	Short
Hitchin Street	26	1hr	Short
Station Road	27	1hr	Short
St Andrews Street	5	1hr	Short
Mill Lane			
Shortmead Street	19	1hr	Short
Victoria Place	7	2hr	Short
Back Street	14	2hr	Short
<u>Total short stay on street parking</u>	<u>155</u>		
<u>Current Off Street - Short Stay Parking</u>			
Back Street	8	2hr	Short
Aldi	146	1.5hr	Short
Asda	298	2hr	Short
<u>Total short stay off street parking</u>	<u>452</u>		
<u>Current on Street Medium Stay Parking</u>			
<u>Total on street medium stay parking</u>	<u>0</u>		
<u>Current Off Street Medium Stay Parking</u>			
Mill Lane	21	3hr	Medium
St Andrews Street	39	3hr	Medium
Chestnut Avenue	37	3hr	Medium
<u>Total medium Stay off street parking</u>	<u>97</u>		
<u>Current On Street Long Stay Parking</u>			
<u>Total on street long stay parking</u>	<u>0</u>		

	<u>Current Spaces</u>	<u>Length of Stay</u>	<u>Category</u>
<u>Current Off Street Long Stay Parking</u>			
Rose Lane	136	None	Long
Dan Albone	130	None	Long
EMR Railway Car Park	52	None	Long
Railway Station Parking	175	Pay and Display	Long
<u>Total off street long stay parking</u>	<u>493</u>		

APPENDIX B – Proposed Position

	<u>Proposed Spaces</u>	<u>Length of Stay</u>	<u>Category</u>
<u>Proposed On Street Short Stay Parking</u>			
Market Square & High Street	57	1hr	short
Hitchin Street	8	1hr	short
Station Road	8	1hr	short
Victoria Place	7	1hr	short
Back Street	14	2hr	short
<u>Total Proposed short stay on street parking</u>	<u>94</u>	Reduction of 64	

Proposed Off Street Short Stay Parking

White Hart	14	1hr	short
Back Street	8	2hr	short
Aldi	146	1.5hr	short
Asda	298	2hr	short
<u>Total Proposed short stay off street parking</u>	<u>466</u>	Increase of 14	

Proposed On Street Medium Stay Parking

First 1hr Free

Shortmead Street	19	3hr	Medium
Hitchin Street	18	3hr	Medium
Station Road	19	3hr	Medium
London Road	22	3hr	Medium
St Andrews Street	5	3hr	Medium
Mill Lane			
Church Street	unidentified	3hr	Medium
<u>Total Proposed medium stay on street parking</u>	<u>83</u>	increase of 83	

Proposed Off Street Medium Stay Parking

First 1hr Free

Mill Lane	21	4hr	Medium
St Andrews Street	39	4hr	Medium
Chestnut Avenue	37	4hr	Medium
<u>Total proposed medium stay off street parking</u>	<u>97</u>	No change	

	<u>Proposed Spaces</u>	<u>Length of Stay</u>	<u>Category</u>
<u>Proposed Long Stay & Mixed Use Parking</u>		<u>First 1hr Free</u>	
Rose Lane	136	Varying	Mixed
Dan Albone	130	Varying	Long
Back Street	14	Varying	Mixed
Railway Station Parking	175	Varying	Mixed
EMR Railway Car Park	52	Nil	Long
Total proposed long stay parking	507	increase of 14	
Proposed development of Bonds Lane car park	250	Varying	Long
Total if development goes ahead	250	Increase of 250	