



# **Wokingham Town Car Parks Strategy**

**Supporting Local Transport Plan  
2011 - 2026**

# Wokingham Town Centre Car Parks Strategy

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><b>Objective 1</b><br/>Ensure full development potential is achieved across the town and local area</p> | <p><b>Objective 2</b><br/>Ensure parking is adequate to help enable a strong local economy</p> | <p><b>Objective 3</b><br/>Ensure parking encourages effective use of the local road network</p> |  |
|---|--|--|---|--|

Wokingham has a thriving town centre and sufficient parking supply to satisfy demand

We will have succeeded if, by 2026:

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## 1. The Need for the Car Parks Strategy

1.1 The purpose of this parking strategy is to achieve the objectives set out below.

- Objective 1 – Ensure full development potential is achieved across the town and local area
- Objective 2 – Ensure parking is adequate to help enable a strong local economy
- Objective 3 – Ensure 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 strategy takes into account forecast changes in demand for car parking in 2017 and 2026.

## 2. Strategy Development

2.1 A detailed study of town centre off-street parking and the options for the future of the service has been undertaken. This strategy draws on the results of that study 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 (+) |
|---|-------------------------------|
| <b>Existing car parking provision removed</b> |                               |
| The Paddocks                                  | -282                          |
| Rose Street                                   | -43                           |
| Wellington House                              | -96                           |
| Shute End (partial)                           | -53 (of 209)                  |
| <b>Third Party additional provision</b>       |                               |
| New Elms Field Car Park                       | 352                           |
| <b>NET POSITION</b>                           | <b>-122</b>                   |

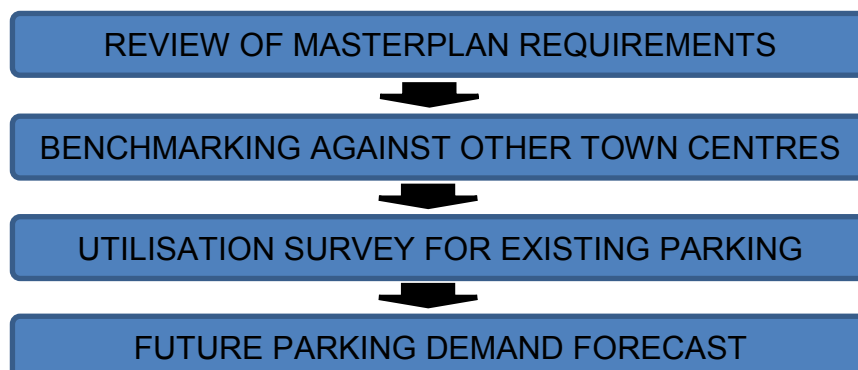
- 3.2 With the changes described in Table 1 there will be an overall reduction in the number of parking spaces available within the town from 1907 to 1785 on a weekday.
- 3.3 Changes to parking numbers at the station have not been included in the figures in the report. The station car park is not considered 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. The quantum of parking at the station is likely to remain unchanged in the medium term as any spaces lost during the construction of the new station and link road are due to be replaced.

## 4. Existing policy guiding the strategy

- 4.1 Arising from national, regional and local policy, this report confirms the following objectives which are included in the development of this strategy:
- 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 the strategy to be adopted.
- 4.2 Various policies and measures are developed in the study aimed at achieving these objectives.

## 5. Strategy 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:



PARKING OPTIONS APPRAISAL

IDENTIFIED PREFERRED OPTIONS

## 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 to raise additional revenue, which could contribute 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 Centre Car Parks Strategy 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 reviewed the existing parking provision based on beat surveys undertaken in April 2013 and reference is made to data collected in November and December 2011. Surveys have been undertaken at these times to inform an initial review of parking requirements and thereafter as part of an on-going monitoring programme of parking demand and supply. The information from 2013 has been used as the basis of this strategy, as summarised in Table 2 below together with data collected from 2011 as a comparison. It should be noted that this latter data was collected immediately prior to the start of free parking during the Christmas shopping period. Data collected therefore presents a robust position in terms of potential demand, demonstrating the levels of current occupancy as shown in the table 2 below.

**Table 2 – Existing parking demand and capacity**

| Survey Period | 2011 Demand | 2013 Demand | 2013 Supply | % Surplus – 2013 |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| Weekday       | 1126        | 1243        | 1907        | 35%              |
| Weekend       | 1011        | 1015        | 1898        | 47%              |

- 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.
  - There is a change in 2013 compared to the situation assessed in 2011 in part due to the reduction in the number of car parking spaces at the station car park, which currently accounts for 90 spaces.
  - In overall summary the level of peak usage across the all the car parks is significantly less than the current supply.

- 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.



## 9. 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 The car parks in the town centre have been allocated by type of car park i.e. short stay or mixed use (mixed use includes short stay and long stay car parking) and assessed by their location in the town centre. 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.

## 10. Forecast Parking Demand

- 10.1 The figures below in Table 3 show that car parks across the town are operating very close to capacity by 2017. Whilst there is spare car parking supply to match demand across the town centre in both 2017 and 2026 overall in effect car parks operating at 85% capacity and above will be perceived to be full by users. In particular short stay parking in the south of town comes under pressure. Table 3 illustrates

the relative level of occupancy across the town centre based on the net position information described earlier.

**Table 3 – Forecast parking surplus and deficit (Excess demand shown in red and contained within brackets, spare capacity in black)**

| Car Park Location / Duration of Stay |            | 2017  |     | 2026  |       |
|--------------------------------------|------------|-------|-----|-------|-------|
|                                      |            | Thu   | Sat | Thu   | Sat   |
| Southern Town Centre                 | Mixed Use  | 209   | 252 | 183   | 223   |
|                                      | Short Stay | (-43) | 0   | (-74) | (-35) |
| Southern Position                    |            | 166   | 252 | 109   | 188   |
| Northern Town Centre                 | Mixed Use  | 5     | 77  | (-26) | 39    |
|                                      | Short Stay | 50    | 49  | 49    | 48    |
| Northern Position                    |            | 55    | 126 | 23    | 87    |
| Short Stay Position                  |            | 7     | 49  | (-25) | 13    |
| Mixed Use Position                   |            | 214   | 329 | 157   | 262   |
| Net Position                         |            | 221   | 378 | 132   | 275   |

- 10.2 The following summary table demonstrates a level of spare capacity in 2017 across the town centre overall, although without any measures introduced there would be excess demand at some car park locations. Therefore these results have required the strategy to specify how current and committed parking stock will be managed to accommodate demand and what measures should be implemented to address the forecast shortfall to maintain efficient car park operation and the attractiveness of the town centre as a destination for work, leisure and retail trips.

**Table 4 – Overall parking demand and occupancy**

| Assessment Year | Peak Demand |         | Occupancy Level |         |
|-----------------|-------------|---------|-----------------|---------|
|                 | Weekday     | Weekend | Weekday         | Weekend |
| 2017            | 1564        | 1398    | 88%             | 79%     |
| 2026            | 1653        | 1501    | 93%             | 85%     |

## 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. This provides additional car park capacity of approximately 206 spaces.

## 12. Strategy Recommendations

- 12.1 An assessment of parking demand has been undertaken that demonstrates there is limited spare capacity across town centre car parks in each of the 2017 and 2026 assessment years.
- 12.2 To address future car parking provision and to provide sufficient spare capacity to make the town centre attractive to visitors the following 5 recommendations should be taken forward.

- Strategy 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. This may add to town centre congestion as drivers circulate to find spaces.

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

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.

- Strategy Recommendation 3: Review the allowed duration of parking at existing sites to ensure a balanced delivery of short and mixed use parking

The overall charging structure for parking should be competitive to support the commercial viability of the town centre

- Strategy Recommendation 4: Review parking charges across the town.

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.

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

