



Parking Topic Paper

June 2009

**Wycombe Development Framework
Delivery and Site Allocations Development Plan
Document**

Evidence Base for Update Consultation

Topic Paper: High Wycombe Town Centre Parking Strategy including Park and Ride

Context

High Wycombe is set to grow significantly in the next 20 years, however this growth is to be accommodated as far as possible through intensification and regeneration of existing land uses within the boundary of the town, rather than significant expansion of the urban area. Some Greenfield sites may be needed after the initial 10 years of the LDF however, to meet housing requirements. This growth will generate demand for movement, both for people resident in the town wanting to travel within and beyond it, as well as visitors and commuters travelling to it.

Given this growth in travel demand will largely have to be accommodated within the existing footprint of the town, there will be tremendous pressure on the towns transport infrastructure, particularly its highway network. Significant additional highway capacity is neither likely to attract funding nor be desirable in terms of its impact on future traffic levels and associated vehicle emissions. Without significant modal shift from private vehicles onto sustainable modes (walking, cycling and passenger transport) the highway network in the town will become even more congested, fail to function adequately and discourage growth and investment.

Significant improvements can be made to sustainable mode provision within the town to encourage mode shift among the resident population, however high levels of car ownership and the limitations of public transport options outside the town inhibit modal shift. It is vital for the economic vitality of the town centre that there is good access by all modes, so a balanced approach is therefore required that maintains good car access, especially for shoppers and visitors alongside improved transport alternatives, including park and ride that can cater for those who may otherwise not be well catered for by public transport.

Park and Ride is an established approach to maintaining high levels of accessibility to town centres, whilst at the same time reducing traffic flows into them. Providing the services are frequent, attractive (i.e. fast, high quality and direct, with priority routing) and competitively priced they can be an attractive alternative to travelling along congested routes and having to find and then pay for more expensive town centre car parks.

The success and commercial viability of park and ride services requires a complementary town centre parking strategy to ensure that park and ride services compare favourably to long stay parking provision and tariffs in the town centre, as well as high frequency services and bus priority over general traffic to make them appealing.

Park and ride is particularly suited to long stay car park users (commuters) who make less efficient use of car parks which should be reflected in the price they pay for these and provision made for them in town centres where demand for space is at a premium. The perceived additional effort and delay of a park and ride will also be less readily felt by long stay visitors than short stay. From an economic perspective it is important that short stay visitors are not discouraged in any way from visiting the town, and should feel they have the choice of using either park and ride or driving into town.

This paper draws on the following sources of information to outline the options and preferred approach to managing parking in High Wycombe:

- The draft version and evidence base for 'Towards 2026 High Wycombe Transport Strategy' (April 2009).
- The High Wycombe Town Centre Parking and Access Strategy(2003)

These papers themselves draw on number of previous studies and local transport and planning policy and primary data which has been collected. Between them these sources establish the following:

With regards to parking...

- Transport improvements and the increased parking provision made in preparation for Eden opening have been a success, in that previously stated concerns about parking and traffic have not materialised.
- Overall there is currently more than sufficient public parking to serve the town centre, with more planned following completion of the Sainsbury's redevelopment, and proposals at the rail station. Details are included in the Appendix.
- There needs to be a review of on-street waiting restrictions and charges in the town centre to avoid displacement of parking from off-street to on-street.

With regards to park and ride...

Due to the costs associated with implementing and operating a long term dedicated park and ride site, both BCC and WDC have agreed that the best way to provide such facilities is in association with a major development. In the absence of a major development area in close proximity to a desirable park and ride site, interim low cost park and ride options can be considered, which make use of existing bus services and possibly even existing car parks. These interim options could eventually develop into dedicated long term sites if an MDA comes forward nearby.

a) in the South:

- Southern Park & Ride services at Cressex Island are to be relocated to the planned High Wycombe Coachway in 2012 providing good local

access and intercepting traffic. Longer term this may also link to the Abbey Barn development.

b) in the North:

- To the north of town there are opportunities to provide park and ride with associated benefits. The implementation of a northern park and ride site could also offer a cross town service linking to the southern P&R site, offering significant accessibility benefits and economies of operation. Potential sites identified are in Terriers and Hazlemere.
- BCC favours the Terriers site for a long term dedicated park and ride site, for a number of reasons, these being; there is high potential that it can be incorporated into the public transport provision for a future major development, it is not constrained by green belt or AONB designations, there is a good chance it will intercept users of both the A404 and A4128 and so have more patronage, it could be more easily and more cost effectively served by a dedicated bus service.
- Where opportunities are present, and a potential market exists to support them, further park and ride services should be implemented in addition to the established southern park and ride, so that a comprehensive park and ride network is formed.
- The links between a Northern and Southern Park and Ride could effectively serve both the station redevelopment and the Coachway as well as the town centre. It remains to be seen whether demand would be sufficient to enable a dedicated service or whether it would be more viable to reroute an existing local bus service.
- Given that the Terriers development is likely to be some years off it is worth considering whether there are opportunities for a more limited low cost park and ride facility using existing bus services and ideally an existing car park site, that could have benefits in the short term. Any site selected would need to be well located for existing bus services and be conveniently situated close to a main access road.

c) in the West:

- Chiltern Rail has advised it is not possible to increase the number of trains stopping at Saunderton station, which eliminates the potential for a frequent western rail based park and ride from here. To date it has not been possible to identify suitable sites for bus based park and ride to the west.
- Long term there would be value in implementing a bus based park and ride site in the west, however this would have to be subject to a viable business case being developed and a suitable site being found.

d) in the East

- To the east of town there is potential to operate a park & ride service using the surplus parking capacity at Kingsmead depot/car park; with possible upgrade in the longer term linked to major developments, either at Abbey Barn or Gomm Valley. This interim park and ride could utilise existing frequent A40 bus services.
- In addition innovative approaches to park and walk and park and cycle based at existing car parks are to be considered for the eastern corridor – with a link to the health and obesity agenda.

Options to resolve

With proposals for the northern park and ride fairly clear, the options to resolve rest on P&R to the west and east, with a decision on these informing the town centre parking strategy. Overtime the strategy has been to give more priority to short stay parking at central car parks and to increase the costs of long stay spaces above the rate of inflation, to help the shift from long to short stay parking in town centre sites, whilst at the same time improving alternative travel options. As alternatives to long stay parking are put in place, there may be opportunities to further shift from long to short stay park in the town centre.

Option	Detail	Pros	Cons	
1	No additional P & R's other than North and South, with current long stay parking provision for east and west needs.	Long stay parking provision maintained in east and west of town, at reasonable rates.	Reduced costs if only operating 2 park and ride sites, and no disruption to any existing bus services.	Undermines P&R strategy, as presence of long stay parking supply at affordable costs will reduce patronage on North/South routes. Furthermore could result in more congestion in town centre as cars circulate for parking in east or west. May limit opportunities to develop in the town centre.
2	Operate a low cost interim park and ride east of town from Kingsmead Car Park, alongside North and South service.	Utilising services currently passing the site. Depending on the success of this, future consideration to be given to enlarging the car park or a dedicated P&R site provision. Car parking	Complements North and South P&R and permits reduced long stay car parking in eastern area. Uses existing infrastructure and bus priority measures,	Potentially constrained supply for existing car park users. Possible abstraction of existing longer distance bus passengers. Absence of a western P&R would mean long stay needs catered for west of the town centre, which would require careful parking management to avoid undermining P&R and

		provision in the town centre would still need to cater for people travelling from the west (adequate provision and reasonably priced)	saving costs. In short term there will be limited costs associated with setting up the service. Overtime maybe upgraded in assoc with major dev	drawing car drivers into remaining long stay town centre car parks.
3	East and West Park and Ride sites implemented allowing significant removal of most long stay parking provision in the town centre	Significant reduction in total long stay parking (say 90%), with remaining supply very expensive. A western P&R site would need to be purchased, most likely isolated from any major development to support the service.	Would provide a fully comprehensive park and ride service, catering for travel in all directions. Ability to increase the process and reduce supply of all long stay parks would strongly support the P&R strategy. May increase opportunities to develop in the town centre.	Very expensive to buy the land and fund the new western P&R site. No likely funding opportunities and additional patronage from any associated MDA in the west.

Deliverability

Given the above issues Buckinghamshire County Council would show a preference for Option 2 having due consideration of the following:

Delivery Issues	Risk Treatment
Formal northern P&R dependent on private developers	Sites being allocated in the DSA
Revenue implications of subsidising P&R bus services	Early days of any service will likely require this whilst the customer base grows and until complementary town centre parking strategies are implemented. By using interim P&R sites using existing bus services, a customer base can be developed before

	a dedicated formal P&R site & service is implemented. By linking with an MDA there is scope to increase fare income that supports long term viability of service
Competition issues with existing bus services	P&R proposals need to be integrated with the town wide bus strategy.
Capital implications of funding P&R sites and bus priority measures.	Developer contributions can be sought and some capital funding could come from BCC
Political, public, business anxiety regarding reduced town centre parking supply.	Need to inform and reassure the public and business community that adequate town centre parking supply remains, alongside improved alternative travel choices.
Uncertainty of patronage (pricing sensitivities, variability of how relatively attractive P&R is to other mode users).	The business case for the P&R needs to be strong with a plan to make the services sustainable over time.
Private car park owners (Employers, Eden, NCP) may undermine P&R strategy.	Planning controls apply to Eden and Dovecot car park. Limited opportunities with other business car parks. If these prove to undermine park and ride in the long term other options could be considered to remedy this.
Need to ensure additional rail station car park is not significantly used for general long stay parking, which could undermine the park and ride strategy.	Monitor situation, and maintain dialogue with Chiltern Railways.
Revenue implications for reducing long stay car parking supply in the town centre, as well as the operation of the park and ride and Civil Enforcement Area.	Members from both District and County Council's will need to sign up to the principles of the parking strategy, and how it should be implemented and managed

Recommendations

- Northern Park and Ride at Terriers should be identified as a requirement of major development in the draft Site Allocations Development Plan Document. Timing of implementation will depend on when an associated major development commences at Terriers.
- A low cost interim park and ride service for the northern corridor should be considered with a view to early implementation. Work should proceed to implement bus priority measures for both the interim and long term option, and both should be integrated into the town wide bus strategy.
- Following relocation of the southern park and ride any accessibility deficiency that arises in the Cressex area as a result of this will need to be considered. Any integration of southern park and ride services with buses serving Abbey Barn/ Daws Hill area via a direct bus only link should be progressed as a requirement of major development proposals.
- The scope for a low cost interim Eastern Park and Ride from Kingsmead car park to be investigated with a view to early implementation if feasible.
- With parking demand increasing over time, there should be a continued emphasis on short stay parking in the town and development of park and ride options further out from the town centre.
- As alternative parking options are implemented, the council's approach to parking management, including tariffs, should encourage long stay parking especially to take advantage of these other options, including park and ride. Town centre long stay parking should be reduced over time. The approach to this needs to be explored further but could include the following measures:
 - In the absence of any western park and ride, the retention of sufficient west of town centre (Desborough area or Dovecote) long stay parking supply to meet the needs of people travelling from this direction, and those accessing destinations in the immediate vicinity.
 - Long-stay car park users in the rest of the town centre discouraged through a gradual reduction in supply, and increase in costs relative to park and ride. Long stay parking needs of rail users to be catered for whilst promoting the option of park and ride.
 - Any park and ride/coach network should provide fast, direct access between the train station and coachway. The route should be supported by priority measures where necessary.
 - Short-stay car parking provision to be monitored to prevent over supply, and unused surplus to be considered for alternative uses.

Recommendations

- Subject to development of satisfactory alternatives for the eastern corridor, the majority of retained long-stay car parking should eventually be focussed in the west of town and near the rail station (targeted at rail users only). Management and location of the western parking should encourage its use by people entering town from the west only. As such it should be on the outer edge of the town centre for people to walk into town. The car parking could also be mostly limited to permit holders (regularly using the car park, and having to provide their post code when applying). Post code data could then be used to monitor that the car park is being used only by people from the west, and potentially even used to limit who permits are granted to.

Appendix

High Wycombe Town Public Parking Supply and Survey of observed demand November 2008 and projections for November 2026

		Nov 2008 Capacity	Nov 2008 Demand
Eastern	Railway Place	168	138
	Duke Street	167	146
	Totteridge Road	27	16
	Sum	362	300
Western (Desborough Area)	George Street	140	66
	Baker Street	96	13
	Richardson Street	51	23
	Desborough Road	57	54
	Desborough Avenue	110	74
	Sum	454	230
Central	Castle Street	98	96
	Easton Street	486	480
	Wycombe Swan	310	239
	Sum	894	815
Dovecot	Dovecot	624	304
Eden	Newland	1640	1158
Bellfield	Bellfield Parking	200	26
P&R		356	190
Total		4530	3023

Projections for November 2026

The 2003 Parking and Access Study aimed to ensure that car parking capacity was available to meet demand in the shoulder of the Christmas peak period without overall parking occupancy exceeding 90% (individual car parks may well exceed this even at non peak times – parking management, including different tariffs to guide demand and variable message signs will continue to play an important role). To ensure consistency the latest 2008 surveys have been carried out at a comparable time i.e. November.

By 2026 it is foreseeable that some parking demand will displace between car parks, including into new railway station parking (not included in this table), and onto park and ride.

Additional demand as a result of new Sainsbury's store will be up to 100 (more at w/e peak times). The new Dovecote car park will increase capacity from around 624 to 1000.

This table does not include additional demand attributable to the BNU development. Nor does it include parking capacity that may be made available, or promoted along the northern or eastern corridor. The additional capacity at Dovecote will also add a further margin of comfort.

2026 estimated demand includes 5% background growth in parking demand to reflect population growth and to allow that owing to current economic conditions overall parking demand is approximately 10% below what would otherwise be expected. Hence a 15% uplift has been applied compared to 2008 demand.

90% of 2008 capacity (4530) equates to 4077. Adjusted 2026 demand equates to $3023 + 100 \times 115\% = 3591$.

On this basis there is reasonable confidence to consider that there is scope for allowing redevelopment of some several hundred surface parking spaces, around 10% of the current town centre stock. The pattern of demand and the temporary nature of some parking to the west of the town centre in the Desborough area and at Bellfield indicate that these may be candidates for redevelopment.

In considering any proposals for reuse of any surface car parking levels of parking demand should be kept under review together with progress in bringing forward additional parking serving the town centre.