STEVENAGE PARKING STRATEGY
(Full Version)

Supporting Document to the
STEVENAGE TRANSPORT STRATEGY

(First Issue 2004)

Stevenage
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Foreword

Five years ago, the Stevenage Transport Forum, in partnership with both the Stevenage Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council developed the Stevenage Transport Strategy and since then there has been significant progress in relation to some of the actions listed in the strategy. This is reflected in the 2nd Edition of the Transport Strategy issued in 2002.

Other local strategies are being developed to support the Stevenage Transport Strategy. In 2002 the Stevenage Cycling Strategy was launched. It is anticipated that a Stevenage Walking Strategy and a Stevenage Passenger Transport Strategy will be developed over the next few years.

The Stevenage Town Centre Regeneration Strategy and Supplementary Planning Guidance outline the need for an integrated parking and land use strategy in the Town Centre.

Although, Stevenage has an excellent road infrastructure, good rail services and a reasonable bus service, we cannot afford to be complacent. Already we are beginning to see much more congestion at peak times, particularly around the town centre. If the parking issues in the Town Centre are not properly addressed, then the Aims and Objectives of the Town Centre Regeneration Strategy could be undermined.

The railway station, built in the 60's, does not reflect the town's status as a major railhead for both commuter and long distance rail travel. If our aspirations for the future role of Stevenage station in rail travel are to be realised, then we have to ensure that parking problems at the station are addressed.

Parking problems are not confined to the Town Centre. Many of our residential streets suffer chronic parking congestion causing safety hazards and environmental damage to verges. Although the Council has already spent over £1 million trying to solve these parking problems, this level of investment cannot be sustained and we will need to find more innovative methods of dealing with the problem.

The High Street in the Old Town is an attractive feature of Stevenage with its unique blend of 'specialist' retail outlets, service industries, light industrial units, public houses, restaurants, food take-away establishments and residential units. However, this is in danger of being devalued due to parking problems and conflicts that currently occur.

The objectives of this Parking Strategy and the strategies put forward provide a framework not only for tackling the existing parking problems facing the town but also to help deal with future parking pressures. Many of the actions proposed in the strategy can be implemented fairly quickly whilst others will require extensive planning, development and further consultation with those directly affected.

July 2004

1.   GENERAL

1.1   PARKING IN STEVENAGE

1.1.1   INTRODUCTION

Stevenage is a freestanding new town with a population of around 76,000. It is located on two major strategic transport routes – the East Coast main railway line and A1(M) motorway – about 30 miles north of London. Stevenage interacts with neighbouring towns, especially Letchworth, Hitchin and Welwyn Garden City for shopping, leisure and employment purposes, as a result of its good communication links. The New Town was designed to be self-contained in the provision of services, facilities and employment opportunities. Even today most facilities required by residents can be found in Stevenage. **61% of the economically active population both live and work in Stevenage. This means that less than 40% of people commute out of the town to work, a much lower figure than most other towns in Hertfordshire.**

1.1.2   ROADS AND CAR PARKING

As a new town, Stevenage has an excellent road infrastructure, with dual carriageways forming many of the primary routes around the town. This means that there is less congestion in Stevenage, even at peak hours, compared with other towns in Hertfordshire. Road congestion in the town is currently generally limited to the roads leading to junctions 7 and 8 of the A1(M) at peak hours and the A1(M) itself. Traffic flows in these areas are between 62,000 and 72,000 per 16-hour annual weekday flow.

Car parking is critical in influencing use. Studies have shown that levels of car parking are more important in deciding mode of travel than the provision of public transport – even where public transport provision is high. A review of car parking policy is central to meeting the Objectives of reducing car use. There are over 3,500 car-parking spaces in and around the Town Centre, providing both short and long-term parking for those using the Town Centre facilities and the railway station.

The parking problems in residential areas have largely been inherited as a result of poor road design, an inadequate supply of off-street spaces or a combination of the two. It is widely known that off-street parking provision in parts of the town was designed on the basis of 1 car being owned for every 8 households

The situation is worsening in terms of parking congestion and environmental damage due to the continued growth in car ownership. The level of investment required to resolve the problems using conventional engineering means is not sustainable and hence the need for a comprehensive Stevenage Parking Strategy which will form the basis for investigating other more innovative ways of tackling the problem in residential areas.

Car ownership is now far in excess of this and shows no sign of slowing down. Hertfordshire now has the third highest car ownership in Britain (0.5 cars per person).

Fig. 1 (Data taken from Hertfordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan)

Cars per person

| Wiltshire | Hertfordshire | Surrey | West Sussex | Hereford & Worcester | Somerset |
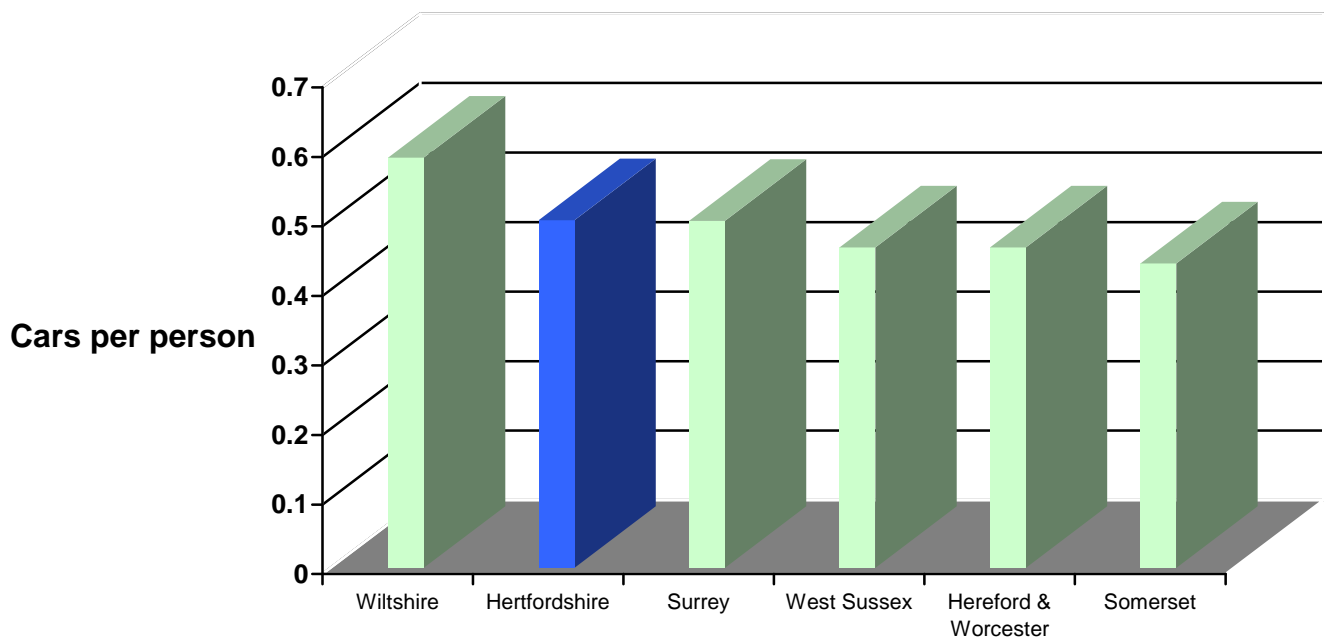
The scarcity of off-street spaces has not deterred residents from buying cars. There is a generally acceptance that the vehicle, once purchased, will be accommodated on the road in the street where they live. The numbers of vehicles has increased to such a level that indiscriminate parking is now rife in many locations. It is commonplace to find vehicles parked around junctions, causing visibility problems; parked on footways, across driveways and garage accesses, causing obstruction; and parked on verges and ornamental grassed areas causing damage and nuisance.

Fig. 2: Households in Hertfordshire with Regular use of a Car (Data taken from HCC's Local Transport Plan)

22%

43%

7%

28%

☐ 1 car ☐ 2 cars ■ 3 or more cars ☐ No Car
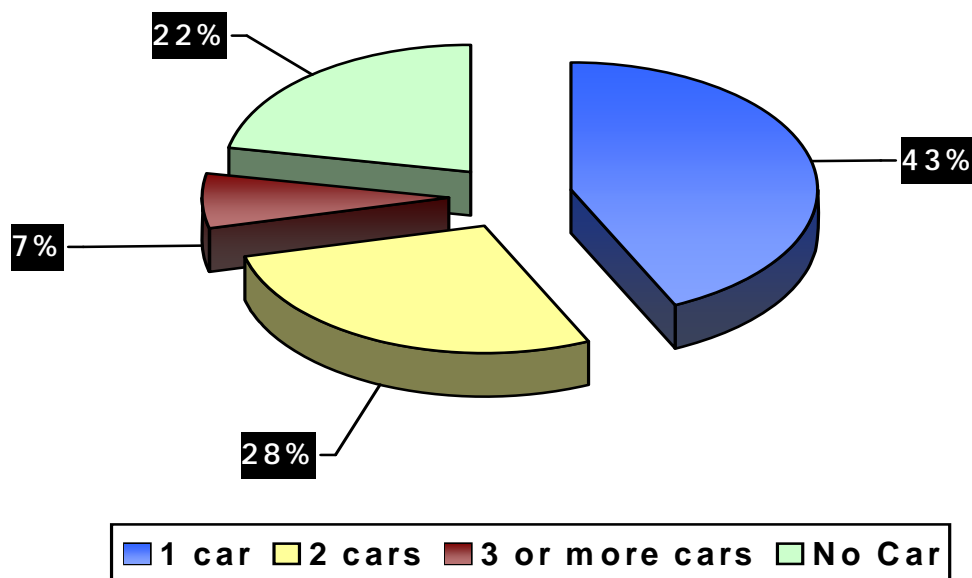
Verge parking has become so common that the "green" concept on which many residential areas have been designed is being eroded. It is now commonplace in most residential roads for the streetscape to be dominated by the car. The Bye-Law introduced to prevent verge parking is in urgent need of review and many verges and ornamental areas have been, and still are being, removed to increase the number of off-street spaces. This increases the stock and thus reduces the parking problems in those streets that are treated. However, this approach can only be applied to those streets where there are grassed areas that can be removed. Many streets do not fall into this category and it would, therefore, be inappropriate to rely exclusively on this strategy in the long term.

A new approach, that could either supplement or replace the existing one, is required and is likely to involve more radical and innovative measures in order to provide solutions to the widespread parking problems.

1.1.3 RAIL

Stevenage is currently served by both Great North Eastern Railways (GNER) and West Anglia Great Northern (WAGN), providing local services to nearby towns, destinations on the east coast line, such as York and Scotland, and services to London and the rest of the country.

The railway station is located next to the Town Centre, within walking distance for most people from the bus station, and close to the shopping areas and leisure attractions, such as, the Arts and Leisure Centre, Gordon Craig Theatre, Leisure Park, Museum and Swimming Pool.

In view of the above Stevenage is considered to be a major railhead for both commuter and long-distance rail services. However, the station itself is in urgent need of major improvements befitting of a major railhead. There is also a threat to the provision of long-distance rail services from Stevenage due to long-term proposals by the train operating company to locate a major 'parkway' station at the intersection of the A1(M) and the M25. Both train operating companies operating from Stevenage cite parking for rail commuters as a hindrance to improved rail services and have made representations to the Council for increased provision.

1.1.4 BUS

Generally, daytime bus services in Stevenage, particularly during peak periods, are relatively frequent and well used. However, the majority of users at these times are those people who do not, in any case, have access to a car.

Most of the long-stay car parks in the Town Centre are used by rail commuters (railway station car parks) and Town Centre workers (other long-stay car parks). These car parks are almost full every weekday. There is increasing pressure for the provision of more short-stay car parks and, in the short term, this could be achieved by re-designating some of the long-stay parking spaces as short-stay spaces. However, in the longer term such an approach would be partly reliant on a substantial number of town centre workers, in particular, transferring to other modes of transport for work travel. Buses can play a vital role in achieving this transfer from the car provided the frequency and quality of bus services are improved.

1.2 POLICY CONTEXT

1.2.1 GOVERNMENT TRANSPORTATION POLICY

Current Government policy towards Town Centre parking provision is set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 (PPG13): Transport (March 2001). The guidance on parking provision in PPG13 is intended to complement the Government's wider objective of promoting sustainable transport choices and reducing reliance on the car for work and other journeys. In developing the *Stevenage Parking Strategy*, the relevant advice on parking provision in PPG13 has been taken into account. The key elements of PPG13 can be summarised as follows:

- **Reducing parking in new developments is considered to be essential for contributing towards promoting sustainable travel choices;**

- **Developers should not be required to provide more parking spaces than they wish; Development plans should set maximum standards of parking provision for different types of development**

- **Shared use parking e.g. leisure and office uses should be encouraged in Town Centres;**

- **Local authorities should be cautious in prescribing different levels of parking between town centres and peripheral locations unless they are confident that the Town Centre will remain a favoured location for developers;**

- **A balance has to be struck between providing adequate levels of parking in Town Centres and potentially increasing traffic congestion caused by too many cars;**

- **Car parking charges and controls should be used to encourages the use of alternative modes of transport**

This approach to parking provision has been reflected in the emerging Stevenage District Plan Second Review. Supplementary Planning Guidance on Vehicle Parking Provision in New Developments to support the policies of the District Plan will be prepared for public consultation later in 2002.

1.2.2 HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL TRANSPORT POLICY

Since 1993, Hertfordshire County Council has moved towards promoting a more non-car based transport system in Hertfordshire, in particular through *the Local Transport Plan* process and in leading the way nationally on initiatives such as the "TravelWise" campaign. The Structure Plan Review to 2011 introduced features of the planning system into this framework, by setting a sustainable basis to land use policy and introducing mechanisms whereby planning can help to meet transport objectives.

The key strategic transport objectives of the County Council, as set out in the 2001-2006 Local Transport Plan are:

- To improve safety for all by giving the highest priority to minimising the number of collisions and injuries occurring as a result of the transport system.

- To reduce the need for the movement of people and goods through integrated land use planning, the promotion of sustainable distribution and the use of telecommunications.

- To obtain best use of existing network through effective design, maintenance and management.

- To provide a transport system, which provides access to employment, shopping, education, leisure and health facilities for all, especially those without a car and those with impaired mobility.

- To minimise any adverse effect of the transport system on personal health and the built and natural environment.

- To ensure that the transport system contributes towards improving the efficiency of commerce and industry and the provision of sustainable economic development in appropriate locations.

- To work in partnership with transport providers and users to achieve an efficient, affordable and enhanced transport system, which is attractive, reliable, integrated and makes best use of resources.

- To raise awareness and encourage the use of alternative modes of transport through effective promotion, publicity and information.

Transport policy at the national level has shaped the types of transport related developments that are funded at the local level. The development of comprehensive *package* bids provides the main capital for implementing improvements to the transport system in a local area. These package bids must seek to improve transport, increasingly moving the focus away from car borne traffic.

The Structure Plan Review provides further key guidance on developing more sustainable transport patterns. Underpinned by the principles of sustainable development, it is seeking to promote the Government's objectives in terms of transport policy, as outlined above. Key areas of Structure Plan policy, which seek to meet these objectives, include those for sustainable development and car parking.

1.2.3 STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL POLICES

i. Stevenage District Plan

The Local Transport Plan process, as outlined above and led by the County Council, helps shape much of the transport policy in Stevenage. The Stevenage District Plan is being reviewed for the period up to 2011, in line with the Structure Plan. Preliminary changes to the Stevenage District Plan Second Review were published for consultation in March 2002. The plan includes policies on transport, which support, complement and integrate with the County Council's *Local Transport Plan*. The current draft earmarks land adjacent to the existing rail station for use as a Bus/Rail Interchange.

In the context of 'parking' some of the key objectives of the draft District Plan include:

- **Maintaining and improving the strategic road network.**

- **Continuing the development of the neighbourhood principles in major residential developments in providing facilities to meet everyday needs.**

- **Ensuring that developments meet their car parking needs.**

- **Encouraging rail and bus providers to maintain and improve services.**

- **Improving the environmental quality of residential areas, through traffic calming and residential parking schemes.**

- **Revised car parking standards for new developments**

- **Ensuring that opportunities to integrate land use and transport are taken up to reduce the need to travel.**

- **Ensuring that all solutions are considered in alleviating traffic problems and maintaining strategic transport routes.**

ii. Town Centre Regeneration Policy - Framework

In 2001, Stevenage Borough Council adopted in principle the *Stevenage Town Centre Regeneration Strategy* and Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance for public consultation was agreed in 2002. The Regeneration Strategy and Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance outline the need for an integrated parking and land use strategy. In particular:

- **The town centre has a substantial amount of surface level car parking and this land represents the principle opportunity for new, higher density development;**

- **Fundamental elements of the regeneration strategy, including the retail scheme and the new transport interchange, rely on being able to develop on surface level car park sites and re-provide car parking in multi-storey fashion;**

- **The Guidance outlines that the Council will seek to ensure that new multi-storey car parking is of a high quality – AA Gold Star Accreditation standard is the preferred target level;**

- **The strategy identifies the need for more short-stay shopper parking within the ring road and more long-stay commuter parking north and south of the train station as part of an integrated multi-modal transport interchange.**

iii. Stevenage Transport Strategy

The **Stevenage Transport Strategy** was first produced in 1998 (updated in 2002). The Stevenage Transport Forum was instrumental in developing that strategy. The main Objectives of the **Stevenage Transport Strategy** are as follows: -

AIM 1: TO REDUCE THE NEED TO TRAVEL

Objectives
(i) To bring local planning policy in line with current Government policy guidance and the principles of sustainable development, to secure the effective integration of land use planning and transport.
(ii) To influence land use patterns through the planning and development process to ensure employment and everyday facilities are more locally accessible.
(iii) To review the transport requirements of industry and commerce in conjunction with local businesses, to identify ways of reducing their need for travel.

AIM 2: TO PROMOTE AND SUPPORT THE USE OF TRAVEL METHODS OTHER THAN THE PRIVATE CAR

Objectives
(i) To influence the modal split of journeys by promoting and supporting improvements in provision for public transport, walking and cycling, and encouraging initiatives which reduce journeys by private car.
(ii) To seek more effective co-ordination of bus and rail services and their better integration with cycling and walking facilities, to enable multi-modal journeys, which do not require private car use.
(iii) To review the provision and need for car parking in the Town Centre, Old Town and employment locations.
(iv) To encourage local businesses to consider the alternatives to car and lorry transport for both employee and operational needs.

AIM 3: TO PROMOTE A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE TOWN THROUGH TRANSPORT INITIATIVES

Objectives
(i) To continue to reduce the impact of road traffic on residential areas through traffic management and residential parking schemes within the Borough
(ii) To improve lighting and personal safety features on pedestrian and cycle routes.
(iii) To improve road safety and minimise the number of accidents and injuries occurring on the transport system.
(iv) To monitor and improve environmental quality using indicators such as air quality and noise
(v) To promote initiatives, which enable the mobility impaired and other disadvantaged groups to gain equal access to the transport system

In relation to parking provision specifically, the *Stevenage Transport Strategy* identifies the following action points:

- **To review the provision and need for car parking in the Town Centre, Old Town and employment locations.**
- **Review car parking provision with a view to reducing the amount of long-term commuter and employee parking and bringing surplus space into more productive uses.**
- **Review car parking standards for new development with a view to decreasing requirements in line with Government policy using commuted payments for the provision of alternatives to the car.**
- **Design and implement schemes to resolve car parking problems in residential areas, in order to enhance the local environment and promote road safety.**
- **Investigate the options for a 'parkway' station in Stevenage, integrating all forms of transport.**

The objectives of the *Stevenage Parking Strategy* are integrated with the objectives of the *Stevenage Transport Strategy* in order to ensure that both strategies can be successfully implemented.

iv. Residential Parking Schemes – Policy Framework

In 1989 surveys were carried out with residents in six neighbourhoods of the town in order to gather information about car ownership and parking allocation. The results were used to develop a basic Residential Parking Strategy, which was agreed at the former Environment and Development Committee on the 4th April 1990.

The strategy contained the following recommendations:

- **Utilise existing surfaces for parking by means of:**
  - ► **Area traffic management schemes to improve the use of the existing highway area**
- **Provide additional paved surfaces in areas where no other solution is possible**
- **Encourage tenants and owner occupiers to fund vehicle crossings and on site hardstandings, where appropriate**
- **Seek funding from Hertfordshire County Council in all appropriate cases**
- **Review verge parking bye-law and enforcement policy**
- **Use appropriate publicity to facilitate objectives**

At the time of adopting the above strategy, approximately 50 streets were contained on a list of sites where parking problems were known to exist. This list

has been updated periodically, with additional streets added, and used to select sites for which residential parking schemes have been implemented.

Since the introduction of the Joint Local Committee structure, the list of sites has been broken down into each of the six areas. In addition, a minor refinement was initiated during 1999, whereby each scheme was assessed by on site observation to determine a ranking. Each site was given a rating from A to D, where A represented a site where there was greatest "need" to address the parking problems and D the least "need".

In April 2001, following a report to Stevenage Borough Council's Executive Committee, Members agreed to a hierarchical approach to the allocation of residential parking funds. This was adopted to ensure that schemes designed to tackle the busiest roads, the local distributors, were given the largest share of the budget.

Over the past 7/8 years the Council has spent in excess of £1m dealing with residential parking problems by providing a substantial number of additional off-street parking spaces in the worst affected areas. Despite this, the list of streets suffering parking problems continues to grow at a faster rate than the number of schemes being implemented. Assuming it was possible to develop schemes in accordance with the current strategy for all the outstanding roads where problems exist it is estimated (based on 90 streets at an average cost of £30,000 each) that the sum of £2.7m would be required.

However, the practicality of this is extremely doubtful. The current strategy fails to acknowledge that there is not unlimited space for the provision of future schemes. Whilst schemes during the last ten years have largely concentrated on replacing verges or ornamental grass with parking bays, and ignored roads where such facilities do not exist, it has to be recognised that the parking problems in the town, as a whole, cannot be solved using this method alone. There is, therefore, the need for a new and more detailed strategy that reviews current procedures, but at the same time examines new, and perhaps much more radical, approaches to the solution of residential parking problems.

1.3   SCOPE OF THE STRATEGY

1.3.1   TOWN CENTRE

- Parking Demand & Short Stay/Long Stay Parking Provision split
- Method of Car Park Control;
- Commercial Opportunities (Parking Incentives)
- Parking Charges;
- Provision for Disabled People;
- Passenger Transport;
- Impact on the Existing Highway Network;
- Prioritising Car Parking Investment;
- Parking provision for meeting the needs of new commercial development in the Town Centre.
- Development resulting in the loss of existing parking provision;
- Car parking associated with new residential developments in the Town Centre.

1.3.2   RESIDENTIAL AREAS

- Overview of parking problems in residential areas
- Verge damage - *protection*
- Safety hazards & obstruction
- Role of carriage crossings
- Role of garage compounds
- Verge parking bye-law
- Controlled parking zones
- Parking enforcement – *decriminalisation*
- Home Zones – *retrofit*
- 20 mph zones – *including traffic calming*
- Parking restrictions
- Provision for disabled people – '*blue badge' holder parking spaces*
- Problems on streets in close proximity to the Town Centre/High Street
- Overnight/weekend lorry ban
- Works vans
- Abandoned vehicles

1.3.3 HIGH STREET, OLD TOWN

- Existing Parking Facilities

- Parking Demand: Level of Provision

- Parking Demand: Split between Short and Long Stay Provision

- Introduction of Parking Charges: On and Off Street

- Method of Car Park Control

- Commercial Opportunities

- Lorry Park

- Controlled Parking Zone – *parking permits etc*

- Parking enforcement – *decriminalisation*

- Provision for Disabled People – '*blue badge' holder parking spaces*

- Problems on residential streets in close proximity to the High Street

- Impact on Existing Highway Network

- Development and Regeneration (Commercial)

- Development (Residential)

1.3.4 NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES

- Existing Parking Facilities

- Parking Demand: Level of Provision

- Level of Use

- Service areas

- Status of parking areas (highway or Council owned non-highway?)

- Impact on residential streets in close proximity to the Neighbourhood Centres

- Commercial Opportunities

- Parking enforcement

- Provision for Disabled People – '*blue badge' holder parking spaces*

- Development Potential

- Development and Regeneration (Commercial)

- Development (Residential)

1.3.5 EMPLOYMENT AREAS

- Existing Parking Facilities
- Parking Demand: Level of Provision
- Parking Problems
- Green Transport Plans
- Alternative Modes of Transport to reduce parking requirements
- Passenger Transport
- Walking
- Cycling
- Impact on Existing Highway Network
- HGV Parking (link to Old Town Lorry Park)
- Problems on residential streets in close proximity to Employment Areas
- Development and Regeneration (Commercial)

2. TOWN CENTRE

2.1 Existing Parking Facilities (2002)

2.1.1 Short-Stay Facilities

Location	No. of Spaces	Method of Control
SBC OWNED/CONTROLLED		
The Forum	310	*Ticket operation - Pay-on-foot*
Westgate	388	*Ticket operation - Pay-at-exit*
Marshgate (Marks & Spencer)	169	*Ticket operation - Pay-at-exit*
Total SBC owned/controlled	**867**	
NON-SBC OWNED/CONTROLLED		
Tesco	850	*Free to customers only – 2 hrs max*
Kwik-save	80	*Free to customers only – 2 hrs max*
Asda (Operational early 2003)	750	*Free to customers only – 2 hrs max*
Total non - SBC owned	**1680**	
Total	**2547**	

Figure 1: Split between Council Owned and Non-Council owned short-stay parking provision

SBC Controlled 34%

Non-SBC Controlled 66%
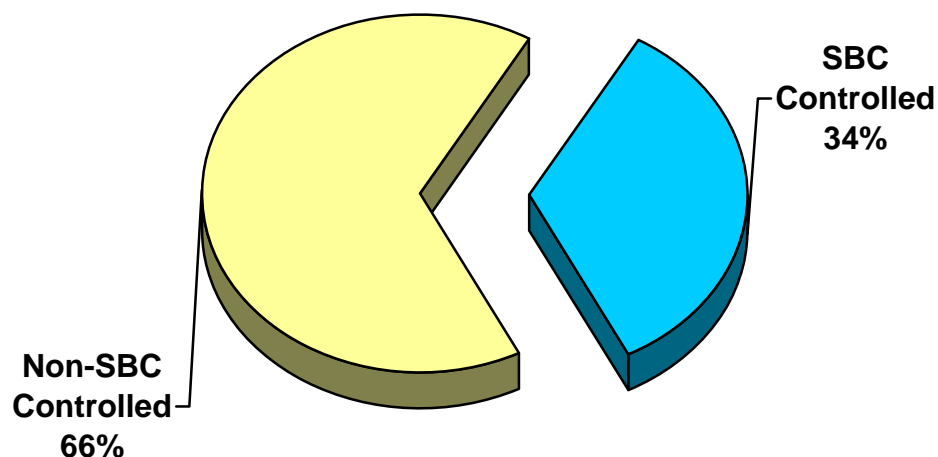
2.1.2 Long-Stay Facilities

Location	No. of Spaces	Method of Control
SBC OWNED/CONTROLLED		
St.Georges MSCP	1023	*No Ticket - Pay-at-exit*
Southgate	196	*No Ticket - Pay-at-exit*
Danesgate	76	*No Ticket - Pay-at-entry*
Daneshill	83	*No Ticket - Pay-at-entry*
Swingate	86	*No Ticket - Pay-at-entry*
"Fun Centre" site	80	*To be provided 2002*
Leisure Centre	100	*No Ticket - Pay-at-exit*
Fairlands Way	200	*No Ticket - Pay-at-exit*
Other Long-Stay - Sub Total	**1844**	
Railway North	314	*No Ticket - Pay-at-exit*
Railway South	210	*No Ticket - Pay-at-exit*
Rail commuters - Sub Total	**524**	
Total SBC owned/controlled	**2368**	
NON-SBC OWNED/CONTROLLED		
Leisure Park (approx)	1350	*Limited to users of Leisure Park*
Total non - SBC owned	**1350**	
Total	**3718**	

Figure 2: % Split between Council owned rail commuter and other long-stay parking provision and Non-Council owned parking provision.

SBC Railway Parking 14%

SBC Other long-stay 50%

Non-SBC Owned Parking 36%
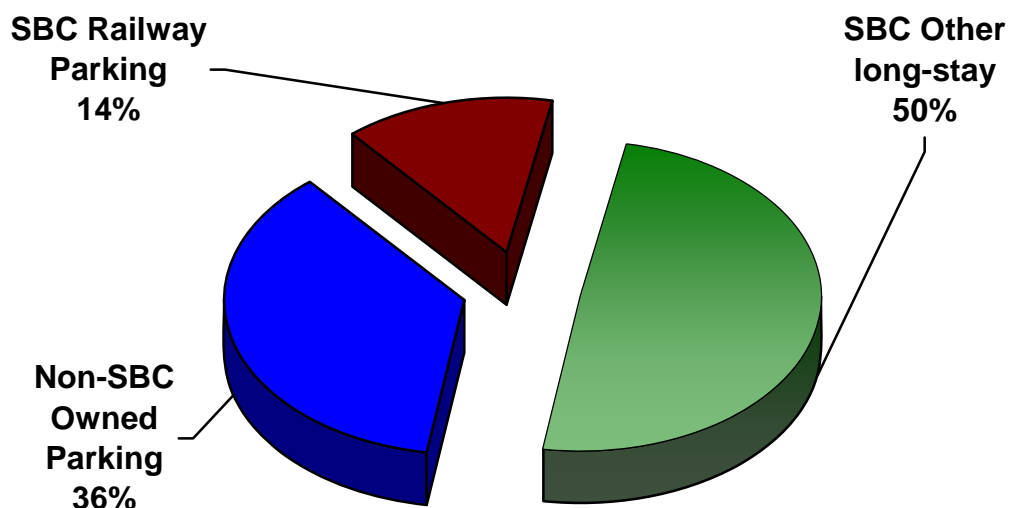
2.2 Parking Demand & Split between Long and Short-stay Parking Provision

2.2.1 Objective 1

To ensure that the total parking stock in the Town Centre is sufficient to meet the needs of the town and to constantly review the split between long-stay and short-stay parking provision ensuring that a balance is struck that provides a disincentive to car borne work trips, yet maintains a sufficient number of spaces to cater for future growth in shoppers and rail commuter requirements.

2.2.2 General Growth in Car Park Usage

Figure 3: No. of annual visits to SBC owned car parks between 1997 - 2002

YEAR	VISITS
1997/98	1,575,520
1998/99	1,706,708
1999/00	1,706,708
2000/01	1,782,179
2001/02	1,853,466

2.2.3 Short-Stay Car Parks - *Existing Capacity 897 spaces*
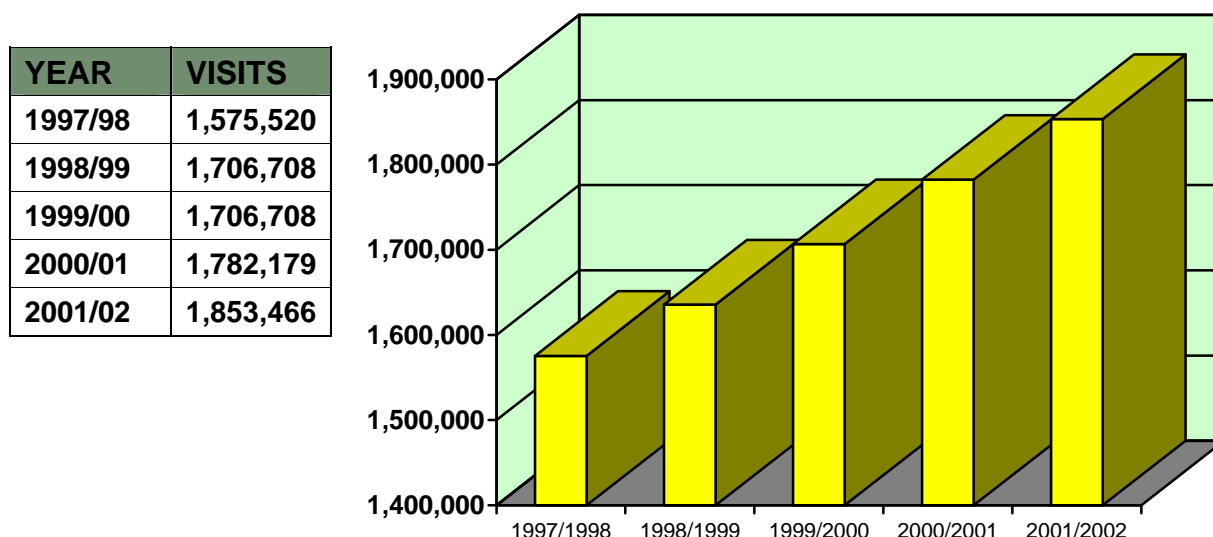
Despite the presence of the non-SBC owned car parks at Tesco and KwikSave, there has been a steady growth in the number of visits by shoppers to Stevenage Town Centre in the last five years. To some extent, the two non-SBC owned car parks, particularly the Tesco car park, have assisted in meeting part of this increased demand but this has not materially reduced the pressure on the Council-owned car parks. The rate of increase in the SBC-owned short-stay car parks fluctuates, but averages 5% per annum. All the shoppers' car parks (short-stay) including Tesco/Kwik Save reach capacity or near capacity on every Saturday and Wednesday each week and on every day in the six week run up to Christmas.

The new **Asda development,** (due for opening at the end of 2003), will provide an additional **750** spaces (approximately), which will be free for Asda customers for the first two hours. Thereafter, charges equivalent to Stevenage Borough Council's charging structure will apply. The Asda car park is not particularly convenient for the Town Centre but it is possible that some customers will use the opportunity to also

visit the Town Centre at the same time but they will be wary of the two-hour time limit. It is likely that the Asda Development will attract existing Asda customers 9from out-of-town) and/or existing Tesco/Sainsbury customers and will, therefore, have little impact on 'shoppers' parking demand in the heart of the Town Centre.

2.2.4 Railway Car Parks - *Existing capacity 524 spaces*

The Railway Station is a major railhead for both commuter and long distance rail travel. There has also been substantial growth in the rail commuter parking demand over the same period estimated at about 10% per annum. Both car parks are generally full by about 9 a.m. each weekday morning. Survey work commissioned jointly by Stevenage Borough Council and the Train Operating Companies in 1998 indicated that over 50% of rail commuters were unable to find a parking space in the railway car parks on at least one occasion per week. A significant 7% could not find parking adjacent to the Railway Station on every other day or more often. Those commuters unable to find a space were displaced to other 'less convenient' long-stay car parks. The survey concluded that if Stevenage was to remain a major railhead for rail travel and, indeed, if demand for rail travel continues to grow as predicted, the problems with rail commuter parking at Stevenage will need to be addressed.

Both Train Operating Companies have complained that the existing parking provision is below the standard required for meeting existing and future demand in rail travel from Stevenage. Further demand exists as GNER (the current operator of long distance rail travel on the East Coast Main Line) have requested a block of 'premier' parking spaces to be reserved for use by GNER customers only. If Stevenage is to maintain its status as a major railhead and also attract additional long-distance trains to stop at Stevenage, then the deficiency in rail commuter parking provision will need to be addressed.

The Leisure Park adjacent to the railway station includes 2000 parking spaces for the sole use of users of the park's leisure facilities. A Section 106 Planning Agreement controls this and it is incumbent on owners of the Leisure Park to put in place controls which prevents non-users from using the car park. On those occasions when the owners of the Leisure Park fail to comply with their obligations, rail commuters do migrate over to the Leisure Park to take advantage of the "free" parking. During these times, however, the Council owned railway car parks continue to be under pressure each weekday indicating that there appears to be a pent-up demand for more rail-user parking provision.

2.2.5 Other Long-Stay Car Parks: *Existing capacity 1764 spaces*

Customers using these long stay car parks (which includes the 80-space car park to be provided on the site of the existing "Fun Centre") tend to be *'town centre workers'*. Growth in this category has been at a much slower and more sustainable rate although it fluctuates with the rate of office 'lets' within the Town Centre. It is at these long-stay car parks that some spare capacity currently exists which could be re-

designated to meet the growth demands of the other categories of users (shoppers and rail commuters). The surface long-stay car parks are generally full on each weekday. However, the St. George's Way MSCP is under capacity with 600 spare spaces generally available per weekday.

2.2.6 Meeting the Need

The total number of parking spaces in the Town Centre is **3,235** (SBC controlled, including proposed spaces on the "Fun Centre" site) and **3,930** (non-SBC controlled, including the proposed Asda development) making **7,165** in total. This total is considered to be the **current minimum requirement** to cater for the **total parking demand** in Stevenage Town Centre. However, the two categories where growth in business is already outstripping parking provision are '*shoppers*' and '*rail commuters*'.

2.2.7 Short/Medium Term (up to 5 years)

In order to address the immediate problem, an adjustment in the split between the categories is required. There is spare 'long-stay' capacity in the St. Georges Way MSCP that would allow other 'surface' long-stay car parks to be converted to 'short-stay'. In order to provide new capacity for both '*rail commuters'* and '*shoppers*' in the short term, the Council intends to:

i)   Re-designate the Swingate and Daneshill car parks, as well as the new car park to be built on the adjoining 'Fun Centre' site, as one short stay car park

ii) Re-designate the remaining two car parks, 'P' and 'H' (adjacent to the Leisure Centre and Danesgate respectively), as Rail Commuter Car Parks."

The supply of additional short stay spaces at this location will encourage use of the Leisure Centre and will alleviate congestion in the other short-stay car parks. There is sufficient spare capacity at the St George's MSCP to accommodate customers displaced as a result of re-designating the above car parks.

The number of customers displaced from the Swingate, Daneshill, 'P' and 'H' (Leisure Centre and Danesgate respectively) car parks would be about **344** who would transfer to the St. Georges Way MSCP. At current usage, the spare capacity at the MSCP would then reduce to about 250. However, if development takes place on the former Manulife House site and Southgate House is fully let, the 250 spare spaces in the MSCP would be taken up. **At that point all long-stay car parks will be full to capacity with no scope for achieving a further reduction in 'long-stay' provision for conversion to 'short-stay' without the creation of additional car parks complemented by a transfer to other modes of transport.**

2.2.8 Long Term (5-10 years)

The ***Town Centre Re-generation Strategy*** indicates that in order to maintain/enhance the economic vitality of the Town Centre, it will be necessary to allow some surface car parks to be re-developed for retail activity. However, in the **longer term,** it is anticipated that growth in demand for '*shoppers*' and '*rail commuters*' parking will continue, possibly at a faster rate particularly as a result of existing development at Great Ashby and possible further major development at Stevenage West. In order to achieve the Objectives of the ***Town Centre Re-generation Strategy,*** this longer-term growth in parking demand will need to be catered for by ensuring that any parking spaces lost through development are replaced and that

additional spaces be provided to allow for growth brought about by the development itself.

The **Town Centre Re-generation Strategy** also concludes that a Bus/Rail Interchange should be located adjacent to the existing railway station and the County Council supports this. If such a facility is provided, the Council expects those involved in the rail industry to significantly improve the station itself and the rail services provided. In conjunction with the provision of a Bus/Rail Interchange; significant improvements to the station itself; and improved rail services, the Council will, in partnership with other organisations, seek to provide additional rail commuter parking. Neither Stevenage Borough Council nor the Hertfordshire County Council support GNER's long-term proposal to build a **parkway** station near the M25 (as this could result in the diminution of rail services from Stevenage). On that basis, the Council will aspire to ensure that in the longer term parking provision for rail commuters at Stevenage is equivalent to "**Parkway Station**" standards (approximately 2,000 spaces). Such a parking facility could be provided in the form of multi-storey structures on the existing railway commuter car parks and managed in such a way as to encourage an increase in long-distance rail travel. There is also a more strategic advantage in increasing rail use at Stevenage because it could increase the modal split of rail journeys to London and result in fewer car trips on the A1 (M).

The 'decking' of surface car parks will provide additional parking but in the longer term such measures will have to be complemented by demand management tools so as to reduce demand for long-stay parking provision.

2.2.9 Green Travel Plans

The Council is currently developing a **Green Travel Plan** for its own staff, which, if successfully implemented, might assist in reducing *car borne work trips* amongst staff. At present, over 500 season tickets are issued to staff. In order to release some parking spaces in the Town Centre, the Council, through its Green Travel Plan, will seek to encourage staff to use other forms of transport for work travel. In partnership with the County Council, Stevenage Borough Council will also encourage other organisations/groups of retailers in the Town Centre to adopt a similar approach.

2.2.10 Parking Provision - Targets

Having identified the approach for meeting future parking needs, the Council considers that targets should be set for 'public' parking provision (including the split between '*shoppers*', '*rail commuters'* and '*town centre workers*') in the short, medium and long term. These targets are based on 5% growth in demand in shoppers parking and the aspiration to develop Stevenage Railway Station to parkway type standards. Although the targets show a proposed increase in the total parking stock, the proposed percentage of long-stay parking spaces (other than rail commuter parking) reduces proportionally from 45% (current) to 29% over a 10-year period.

a) Fig. 4 - _Current Parking Split_
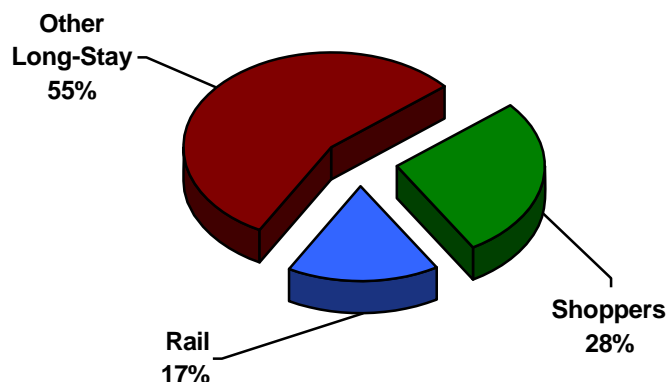
CATEGORY	No.	%
Shoppers	867	28%
Rail	524	17%
Other Long-Stay	1760	55%
TOTAL	**3151**	**100%**

b) Fig. 5 - _Short-term Target_
(within 1 or 2 years)
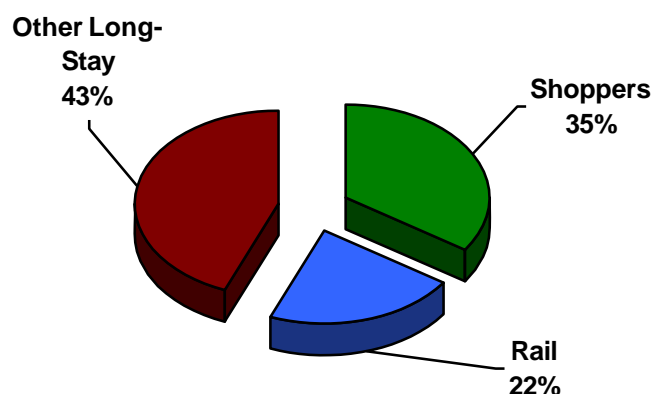
CATEGORY	No.	%
Shoppers	1116	35%
Rail	700	22%
Other Long-Stay	1418	43%
TOTAL	**3234**	**100%**

c) Fig. 6 - _Medium Term Target_
(5-Year)
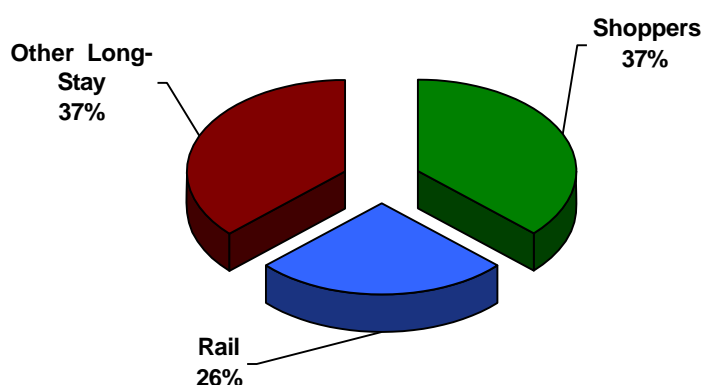
CATEGORY	No.	%
Shoppers	1400	37%
Rail	1000	26%
Other Long-Stay	1418	37%
TOTAL	3818	100%

d) Fig. 7 - _Long Term Target_
(10-year)
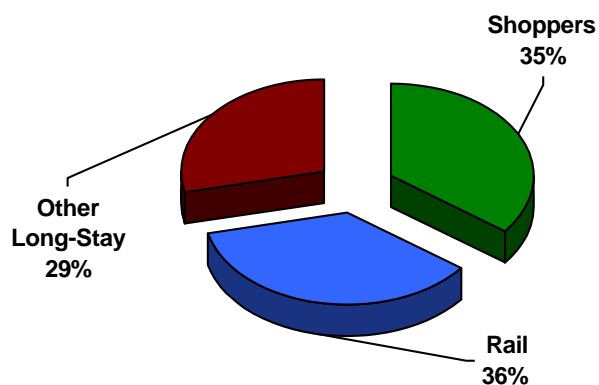
CATEGORY	No.	%
Shoppers	1750	35%
Rail	1800	36%
Other Long-Stay	1418	29%
TOTAL	4968	100%

2.2.11   Conclusion

In conclusion, it is considered that the existing **total** parking stock in the Town Centre is the minimum requirement. There is an immediate need to cater for the growth in demand for '*shoppers*' and '*rail commuters*' parking. Re-designating some of the long-stay car parks as 'shoppers' and 'rail commuters' car parks can accommodate this immediate need.

However, the growth in demand for '*shoppers*' and '*rail commuters*' parking is likely to continue growing at a rate of 5% per annum at least. Even if some town centre workers are encouraged to transfer from the car to an alternative form of transport, this is unlikely to provide sufficient spare capacity in the long-stay car parks for it to be re-designated for short stay use. Furthermore, the aspiration to provide 2000 rail commuter parking spaces in the longer term can only be achieved by '*decking over'* the existing railway car parks.

2.2.12   Parking Demands - Achieving Objective 1

1. **The Council's strategy for meeting the existing shortfall in the provision of 'shoppers' and 'rail commuter' parking will be to consider: -**

   i) **Re-designating the Swingate and Daneshill car parks, as well as the new car park on the adjoining 'Fun Centre' site, as one short stay car park.**

   ii) **Re-designating the remaining two car parks, 'P' and 'H' (adjacent to the Leisure Centre and Danesgate respectively), as "Rail Commuter Car Parks" but with a dual tariff to allow evening/weekend use by non-rail commuters.**

2. **The Council will seek to meet the targets set out in this strategy for future parking provision whilst at the same time reducing the proportion of non-rail commuter long-term parking provision in the context of the overall parking provision.**

3. **The Council's longer term strategy for meeting any future growth in demand for 'shoppers' and 'rail commuter' parking will be to: -**

   i) **Ensure that any development on existing car parks replaces the parking spaces lost as well as providing for any increase in trade likely to arise from growth brought about by the development itself;**

   ii) **Consider 'decking over' the existing railway car parks in order to embrace the Council's vision for a Bus/Rail Interchange on the site of and adjacent to the existing rail station subject to being able to identify an appropriate source of funding for such work.**

   iii) **Encourage customers using long-stay car parks to use alternative modes of transport by the use of parking demand management tools and to consider converting any spare capacity achieved to 'short-stay' parking.**

4. **The Council, through its own Green Travel Plan, will seek to encourage its own employees to use alternative forms of transport to the car for work travel purposes by exploring the possibility of offering a bus/rail season ticket in lieu of a car park season ticket possibly linked to a discount package with retailers/leisure centre/rail operators..**

5. **That in view of the Council's intention to reduce the proportion of non-rail commuter long-term parking provision in the context of the overall parking provision the feasibility of introducing a *commuter* 'park-and-ride' facility within the town will be investigated.**

2.3 Method of Car Park Control

2.3.1 Objective 2

To ensure that the equipment used to control the Council's Town Centre Car Parks is easy and convenient to use by customers whilst minimising any 'parking fee abuse' and any detrimental impact on the surrounding highway network caused by queuing.

2.3.2 Car Park Control Equipment

There are four main methods of controlling 'paying' car parks, all of which have advantages and disadvantages. The type of control employed is dependent on local circumstances. A mix of systems can sometimes be effective.

a) PAY-ON-FOOT

Advantages:
- Rapid payment
- No queuing at entry/exit
- Less stressful for customers
- Can leave the car to find change
- Can find ticket before driving to exit

Disadvantages:
- More expensive to buy & maintain
- Additional machines required in multi-storey car parks
- Tickets required
- Need 'escape' lay-by at exit

b) PAYMENT ON ENTRY

Advantages:
- Payment is at the point of entry
- Exit is faster & less stressful
- Tickets not necessary
- Can be used to influence parking patterns through tariff variations (e.g. discourage rail commuters)

Disadvantages:
- Moderately expensive to buy
- Entry is slow
- Causes queuing onto the highway
- Only suitable for long-stay
- Money only transactions (no ticket)
- Limited flexibility in the tariff structure

c) PAY ON EXIT:

Advantages:
- Payment is at the point of exit
- Entry is faster & less stressful
- Suitable for both short & long-stay
- Generally, less queuing on the highway

Disadvantages:
- Moderately expensive to buy
- Causes customer stress at exit
- Cannot leave the car to find change
- Exit is slow
- Causes queuing within the car park
- Tickets required for short-stay

d) PAY AND DISPLAY:

Advantages:
- Less expensive to buy
- Less queuing
- Ticket/money transactions easy
- Can leave car park without having to pay if no space
- Lower maintenance costs

Disadvantages:
- Expensive to enforce
- Constant patrolling needed
- Customers have to guess stay length
- Fines if a customer stays too long
- Loss of income usually 8%
- Ticket abuse

The Council's car parks are barrier controlled with payment mainly at exit although some car parks operate as 'pay on entry' and one car park operates as 'pay-on-foot'. The existing equipment is approaching 10 years old and replacement parts are expensive and are becoming more difficult to source. The Council has identified a need to commence a replacement programme with *new generation* control equipment to ensure that the parking experience continues to meet or exceed customers' expectations. There are several types of control equipment with advantages/disadvantages as indicated above.

Although 'Pay and display' equipment is cheaper to buy and service, any initial savings achieved and subsequent savings in maintenance costs would be more than offset by the cost of enforcement and income loss through abuse. Customers find busy 'pay and display' car parks frustrating because of having to wait for a space to become available and then having to guess their proposed length of stay with the possibility of a fine for overstaying.

The type of equipment required to continue with the existing 'pay on exit/entry' equipment is generally not available and it is probable that 'pay on foot' equipment would have to be adapted to accommodate 'pay on exit/entry' methods of control. This adaptation work is likely to be relatively expensive.

Although 'pay on foot' equipment is relatively more expensive to purchase at the outset and the older generation machines attracted higher maintenance costs, it has clear advantages over the other methods of control particularly in relation to customer 'parking experience'. The advances made in the new generation machines indicate that maintenance costs will be significantly reduced.

2.3.3   Car Park Controls - Achieving Objective 2

In view of the age of the existing control equipment in the Town Centre Car Parks, there needs to be a programme of equipment replacement. Stevenage Borough Council believes that the 'pay-on-foot' method of control is particularly suited to Town Centre car parks.

1.   **The Council will consider replacing the existing control equipment with 'pay on foot' equipment as an on-going programme with priority being given to short-stay car parks subject to the necessary funding being available.**

2.   **That in the event of new parking facilities being provided as a result of any development on existing car parks, the developer will be required to install 'pay on foot' control equipment compatible with the Council's equipment.**

2.4   Commercial Opportunities

2.4.1   Objective 3

> **To continue taking advantage of the potential for generating other income associated with the Town Centre Car Parks through commercial opportunities and parking incentives.**

2.4.2   Non-Core (Other Commercial) Activities

The need to generate additional income by taking advantage of other commercial opportunities should not detract from the **core business** associated with the Car Park service. However, it is essential that such initiatives be, at least, considered. In many instances such initiatives can increase activity within and use of the town centre and car parks and can improve perceptions of the town making the parking experience user-friendlier.

The Council will continue to investigate commercial initiatives such as advertising and commercial development. In particular, valeting, which is operational at some car parks, will be expanded to other car parks where such an operation is viable.

The Council already sells blocks of parking tickets to various organisations that then pass them onto their customers at a discounted rate. This has the effect of not only increasing their trade but also use of adjacent car parks (particularly at off-peak times) and, hence, car park income. The Council will seek to expand this activity with other leisure and retail businesses in the Town Centre, particularly during off-peak times when spare capacity exists.

2.4.3   Commercial Opportunities - Achieving Objective 3

> 1. **The Council's strategy is to encompass all revenue generating initiatives, which not only enhances the income generated but also improves customer perceptions of the service provided.**

> 2. **The Council will consider introducing other commercial activities within car parks provided such activities generate additional income and customer goodwill and have the potential for increasing the use of the car parks without adversely impinging on the core business.**

> 3. **The Council will continue to encourage retail/leisure businesses within the Town Centre to provide incentives for their customers through discounted car park tickets.**

2.5 Parking Charges

2.5.1 Objective 4

To ensure that parking charges at the Town Centre car parks generate sufficient profit for supporting other services provided by the Council and for re-investment in the service itself whilst at the same time reflecting a balanced approach between supply and demand; the need to ensure the economic well-being of the town centre and encouragement of future growth; and parking restraints to achieve a modal shift from the car to alternative modes of travel.

2.5.2 Car Park Charges - Factors

The income generated from Town Centre car parks contributes towards the cost of maintaining the Town Centre. It is, therefore, vital that charges continue to be applied. When considering charges there are several factors that require consideration

Income generation	-	car parks to be operated as a commercial business
Competitiveness	-	comparable with pricing in neighbouring towns
Government Policy	-	Transport/Planning Guidance/Legislation
Demographics	-	Population growth/shift; economic groups etc
Transport planning	-	Local transport policies; modal shifts etc

These issues all need to be considered and weighted in the context of local circumstances, town centre viability and the economic situation nationally. In setting car park charges the Council will include all these variable and conflicting issues to allow a balanced approach between supply and demand; income generation; the need to ensure the economic well-being of the town centre and encouragement of future growth; and parking restraints to achieve a modal shift from the car to alternative forms of travel.

2.5.3 Car Park Charges - Achieving Objective 4

1. **The Council's strategy in relation to pricing structures at Town Centre car parks will be to undertake pricing reviews at least once a year in the context of local circumstances, the viability of the Town Centre as a retail centre and the national economy.**

2. **In reviewing its car parks charging structure, the Council will adopt a balanced approach between supply and demand; income generation; the need to ensure the economic well being of the town centre and encouragement of future growth; and parking restraints to achieve a modal shift from the car to alternative forms of transport.**

3. **The Council will develop a formal Business Plan for its Parking Services to include any park-and-ride and parking enforcement operation that might be developed in due course.**

2.6   Parking Provision for Disabled People

2.6.1   Objective 5

To seek to improve the parking service in the Town Centre by ensuring that the service is accessible to all and to ensure that sufficient parking spaces, both on-street and off-street, are provided for use by "orange/blue badge" holders.

2.6.2   Current Situation

The Disability Discrimination Act places responsibilities on all service providers to ensure that access to their service is available to all. All accesses to/from the car parks must be accessible to disabled customers and such access must not be unreasonably difficult. Auxiliary aids should be provided where necessary and physical barriers can be overcome by providing new or alternate access points. The strategy should include a rolling programme of improvements over 2/3 years to ensure compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act.

a) Off-Street (Car Parks):

Most of the car parks in the Town Centre are easily accessed, with both multi-storey car parks providing lift access. However, improvement work is required which will include the provision of dropped kerbs at certain points and the removal of bollards to provide wider pedestrian access.

The total number of parking spaces marked for specific use by 'blue badge' holders in the Town Centre car parks is as indicated in Table 1 with total provision being **54.** Stevenage residents who are in possession of a 'blue badge' can apply for a Car Park Season Ticket at a current concessionary price of £6.00 per quarter.

Table 1: Blue Badge Spaces

CAR PARK	NO. OF BLUE BADGE SPACES
St Georges MSCP	24
Westgate	10
Leisure	10
Forum	10
TOTAL	**54**

However, this concession is not available to blue badge holders who reside outside Stevenage. They are either required to pay the normal parking charge or use the 'free' on-street parking spaces if available. This does not compare favourably with some other towns where a concessionary charge or free off-street parking applies to all 'blue badge' holders.

Representations have been received about the removal of the charge for the concessionary Car Park Season Ticket. However, this would introduce inequalities, as the current concessionary bus pass scheme requires passes, entitling free travel, to be paid for. It would also increase the level of abuse associated with the season tickets. The Council is, therefore, not minded to remove the annual charge for concessionary Car Park Season Tickets. The use of the orange/blue badge spaces provided in the car parks is being constantly monitored.

Where car parks are controlled with a barrier system, which includes an electronic counting device, it is almost impossible to control the use of the orange/blue badge spaces situated therein. The full sign only activates when **ALL** spaces are filled. If the orange/blue badge spaces are the only spaces left, then a motorist who is not disabled is either "forced" to "illegally" park in those spaces or pay to leave the car park without the benefit of being able to park. In view of this, the Council does not believe that increasing the number of orange/blue badge spaces in the car parks will necessarily benefit the orange/blue badge holders. However, the Council will continue to monitor use of existing spaces and the demand for additional spaces.

Provision of a dedicated "stand-alone" car park for orange/blue badge holders could be considered but this raises the question of location. Part of an existing car park would have to be given up and the associated income forfeited for this use and it is questionable whether this is sustainable in light of the increasing pressure for more short-stay and rail commuter parking. In any event comments from orange/blue badge holders indicate that there is a preference for spaces to be spread around the Town Centre and not concentrated at one point.

b) On-street:

The opportunities for providing on-street blue/orange badge holder parking spaces are limited because the Town Centre is pedestrianised with service roads located at the rear of the retail units. Indiscriminate parking on the service roads causes safety hazards because of the conflicts between delivery lorries, 'blue badge' holders' and, to a lesser extent, pedestrians. For that reason, the Council undertook a review of parking on the service roads in order to introduce measures to significantly reduce the conflicts between users. Following the review, the Council introduced specific areas for 'blue badge' holder parking and other sections for loading/unloading bays. For safety reasons, the remaining sections neither permit 'blue badge' holder parking or loading/unloading. In effect this reduced the number of spaces available for orange/blue badge' holders and this has generated high levels of complaint. There is, therefore, a much greater demand for on-street parking provision for 'orange/blue badge' holders.

Since the review, additional 'orange/blue badge' holder parking spaces have been provided where possible in conjunction with other engineering/improvement schemes. The total number of spaces marked out on the service roads for use by orange/blue badge holders is currently **41**. Although the measures introduced have proved effective in reducing the conflicts, they continue to be unpopular with 'orange/blue badge' holders because not all the spaces are convenient for the shops. Other spaces are difficult to use, particularly by wheelchair users, because the available road space is limited. Complaints also centre on there not being a sufficient number of convenient on-street spaces.

There is a greater demand for more on-street 'orange/blue badge' parking spaces. However, road space within the Town Centre is limited and providing additional on-street spaces will be difficult. The Council will consider providing additional on-street spaces by making use of spaces within surface level car parks, but providing access directly from the service roads, i.e. turn the spaces inside out. This would only be feasible at surface car parks but is considered the best way of increasing the number of on-street 'orange/blue badge' parking spaces. However, initially, the Council will monitor the use of the existing road space (in particular, loading/unloading bays) in the service roads to see if there is further scope for increasing the number of spaces. In particular, through the **Stevenage Freight Quality Partnership,** the Council will

explore how best to co-ordinate town centre deliveries by possibly controlling the number and timing of goods vehicles entering the centre and providing reliable "windows" for distribution companies. This may release some road space for shared use between goods vehicles and orange/blue badge holders.

2.6.3 Achieving Objective 5 - Meeting the Parking Needs of Disabled People

1. **The Council will continually monitor the use of existing road space on the service roads within the Town Centre and, where such road space is not required for or not being used for loading/unloading purposes, will consider re-designating those spaces as 'orange/blue badge' parking spaces provided it is safe to do so from a highways safety point of view.**

2. **Through the Stevenage Freight Quality Partnership, the Council will explore how best to co-ordinate the number and timing of goods vehicle deliveries in the town centre with a view to possibly releasing some road space for shared use between goods vehicles and orange/blue badge holders.**

3. **The Council will consider providing additional 'orange/blue badge' parking spaces along the service roads by making use of spaces within an adjoining surface level car parks, if feasible, and making them accessible directly from the service roads subject to funding being made available through the Council's Forward Plan process.**

4. **The Council will consider extending the concessionary car park season ticket scheme to applicants living outside the town boundary provided they are 'blue badge" holders and are not in receipt of a concessionary bus pass.**

5. **That, where there is a requirement on a developer to replace any parking spaces lost through development on an existing car park, the developer will also be required to provide, as part of the replaced spaces, a number of 'orange/blue badge' parking spaces either on-street, if possible, or off-street.**

2.7 Role of Passenger Transport

2.7.1 Objective 6

> **To encourage those people who work in and around the Town Centre or commute by rail from Stevenage to use buses for work travel or travel to the railway station rather than the private car.**

2.7.2 Use of Buses

Generally, daytime bus services in Stevenage, particularly during peak periods, are relatively frequent and well used. However, it is likely that the majority of users at these times are those people who do not, in any case, have access to a car. If non-users who currently use their cars to travel to work are to be encouraged to use buses instead, then further improvements in frequency and quality is required. At present parking charges for long-stay parking are such that there is little incentive for commuters to leave their cars at home. With bus operators running a commercial business (and the Council, therefore, having little control over fares) the only way the Council can redress the balance is to raise car park charges to be comparable with the average return bus fare.

Parking charges for rail commuters are already significantly higher than other long-stay car parks and are higher than the equivalent return bus fare. The level of charges at the railway car parks does not appear to discourage car-borne trips to the station. It might be tempting to reduce the availability of rail commuter parking in order to "*force*" a modal shift to other forms of transport. However, in reality, the lack of rail commuter parking in Stevenage is more likely to lead to: -

- More traffic transferring onto the A1(M);

- Rail commuters transferring to other stations with better parking facilities;

- A diminution of rail services at Stevenage;

- The loss/reduction of long distance train stops

2.7.3 Enhancing the Role of Buses

The Hertfordshire County Council has recently completed consultation on its proposed Bus and Intalink Strategies and they are likely to be launched in June 2002 as *'daughter documents'* to the County's Local Transport Plan. Over time, both strategies should help promote better quality buses, improved bus services throughout the county and new initiatives relating to through bus/rail ticketing. The Council will work in partnership with the County Council and bus/rail

operators to help implement the above strategies to secure *improved/better quality bus services* (possibly through Bus Quality Partnerships) as well as innovative "*through bus/rail ticketing*" schemes in Stevenage.

In conjunction with the above the Council will consider aligning long-stay parking charges with the equivalent return bus fare as an incentive to achieve the desired modal shift from car to bus.

Both these measures will enhance the role of buses in Stevenage encouraging Town Centre workers as well as rail commuters to consider travelling to work/the railway station by bus rather than the car thereby helping to reduce the demand for more long-stay parking to be provided in the Town Centre.

2.7.4　Achieving Objective 6 – Role of Passenger Transport

1. **In order to encourage a modal shift from the car to buses for 'work travel to/from the Town Centre' and 'travel to/from the railway station', the Council will continue working in partnership with the Hertfordshire County Council to implement their Bus and Intalink Strategies with particular emphasis on: -**

   ● **Seeking improvements in quality and frequency of bus services in Stevenage**

   ● **Introducing and expanding 'through bus/rail ticketing' schemes in Stevenage.**

2. **In order to mitigate the potential impact that congestion might have on bus services, the Council will seek to develop a Quality Bus Partnership in conjunction with Hertfordshire County Council and bus operators, with particular emphasis on investigating the need for bus priority measures around the Town Centre and other congestion black spots.**

3. **When setting its parking charges for long-stay parking (non-rail commuters), the Council will take into account the cost of the equivalent return bus fare in Stevenage so that the level of parking charge encourages a modal shift from the car to buses for 'work travel.**

4. **The Council will undertake discussions with the public transport providers on parking provision generally and public transport users in order to crystallise the link between parking & transport strategies and particularly as a means of monitoring the impact of the parking strategy on public transport use.**

2.8 Impact on Existing Highway Network

2.8.1 Objective 7

To ensure that the highway network in and around the Town Centre is as free-flowing as possible in order to maintain easy access to shops and leisure facilities and to minimise the nuisance caused by 'shopper and commuter' parking in residential areas in close proximity to the Town Centre.

2.8.2 Streets near the Town Centre

A problem/nuisance is caused by '*shopper/commuter*' parking in the residential streets that are in close proximity to the Town Centre. The use of parking restrictions in the form of yellow lines can sometimes be effective in resolving this type of problem but such measures also adversely affect people who reside in such streets. A better solution could be to designate a cordoned area around the Town Centre, to include the vulnerable residential streets, as a *controlled parking zone* with a *permit parking* system. This issue as well *as decriminalisation of parking enforcement* is covered in more detail within the **strategies** for the **High Street, Old Town** and **Residential areas**.

2.8.3 Congestion on Town Centre Roads
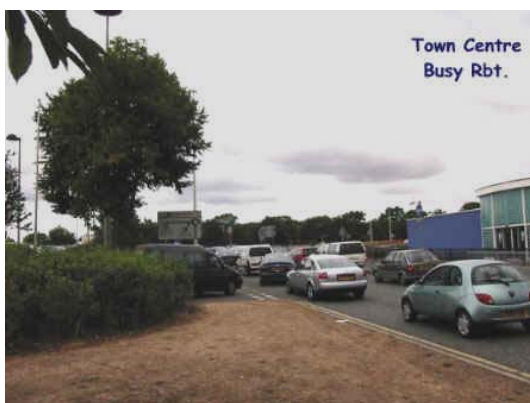
Generally, the 'highway' ring of roads around the Town Centre is relatively free flowing except during peak periods and the weeks leading up to Christmas. Access to the Town Centre is easier than in many other similarly sized towns. However, this situation is precarious as is demonstrated whenever any restrictions are in force to facilitate highway maintenance work particularly at any of the four roundabouts surrounding the centre.

The A602 currently runs along Lytton Way and, therefore, attracts some east-west 'through' traffic. Congestion on the A1(M) also encourages north-south 'through' traffic to by-pass this congestion by coming through Stevenage. This 'through' traffic is likely to increase, contributing to increased congestion in the Town Centre.

If, through re-generation and/or other major developments, more shoppers are attracted to the Town Centre, the surrounding highways will become increasingly congested.

2.8.4 Reducing the Potential Congestion

There is little scope for increasing the capacity of the surrounding highway network. The proposals to increase the availability of short-stay parking places; ensure that entry to car parks is quick without resulting in queuing; and encourage Town Centre workers to use alternative modes of transport to the car should all help to reduce

congestion on the highway surrounding the Town Centre. However, a further reduction in potential congestion might be achieved by encouraging 'through' traffic to use other routes. Beyond that, demand management techniques *(congestion charging etc)* would have to be considered.

Widening the A1(M) to 3-lanes will not only benefit the town generally but may also discourage north-south 'through' traffic in the Town Centre.

However, re-designating Gunnelswood Road instead of Lytton Way as the A602 is unlikely to significantly reduce east-west through traffic as Gunnelswood Road already tends to become congested during peak times. In any event although Gunnelswood Road is not designated as the A 602 it is already signposted Hertford and Hitchin respectively.

A more radical approach would be to develop a **Stevenage Ring Road** using Gunnelswood Road; Broadhall Way; Gresley Way and Martins Way. **A Stevenage Ring Road** does not necessarily have to be a dual carriageway although improvements to increase the capacity at some points along the route, particularly Gresley Way, might be required to achieve this objective.

2.8.5 <u>Achieving Objective 7 – Reducing the Impact on Surrounding Highway Network</u>

The Council will: -

● **Make representations to the Hertfordshire County Council to develop a Stevenage Ring Road to make better use of any spare capacity on Gunnelswood Road, Broadhall Way, Gresley Way and Martins Way and to include such a project in its 5-year Local Transport Plan;**

● **Continue to support the inclusion of the A1(M) widening in the Government's major road improvement programme.**

2.9 Prioritising Car Park Investment

2.9.1 Objective 8

To target capital investment in car parks at essential maintenance of the fabric of the car parks and achieving the *Objectives* and *Strategies* for Town Centre parking as set out in the overall Stevenage Parking Strategy.

2.9.2 Investment for Delivering the Strategy

The Council will continue with its annual programme of essential work required to maintain the fabric of the car parks, as identified in the Council's Forward Plan programme. Other investment will be required to implement the proposals in this strategy.

2.9.3 Achieving Objective 8 – Investment in Car Parks

That, subject to inclusion in the Council's Forward Plan, the Council's investment programme for Town Centre parking will be focused on achieving the objectives set out in the Stevenage Parking Strategy with priority being given initially to: -

- **Re-designating Swingate/Daneshill/"Fun Centre" car parks, as one short stay car park.**

- **Re-designating car parks, 'P' and 'H' (adjacent to the Leisure Centre and Danesgate respectively), as Rail Commuter Car Parks."**

- **Replacing the existing CCTV system in the St. Georges Way MSCP with a new system linked to the Town Centre CCTV system.**

- **Improving the car park service to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act and ensuring that the service is accessible to all users;**

- **Increasing the number of 'orange/blue badge' parking spaces within the Town Centre service roads;**

- **Replacing the existing control equipment with 'pay on foot' equipment as an on-going rolling programme;**

- **In partnership with other organisations involved in the bus and rail industries, consider 'decking over' the existing railway car parks in order to embrace the Council's vision for a Bus/Rail Interchange on the site of and adjacent to the existing rail station.**

2.10   Commercial Development– Parking Demands

2.10.1   Objective 9

1.   To ensure that where new parking provision is made in connection with new commercial development it:

●   **Does not adversely impact on parking needs**

●   **Is efficient in terms of land take;**

●   **Is conveniently located to facilities which generate the demand for parking;**

●   **Maximises opportunities for shared use parking**

●   **Does not impose a constraint on the regeneration of the town centre.**

2.   **To ensure that where existing public parking spaces are lost through development, the overall supply of public parking spaces is maintained and the parking needs of the new development are also met.**

2.10.2   Parking Demand – General Developments (non-residential)

Previously, development proposals for retail, leisure, office and community uses in the Town Centre have required their own parking provision to meet the needs of their customers and/or employees and have generally been provided within the development itself. It is anticipated that a range of development schemes will come forward which will generate parking demand, and this *Parking Strategy* sets out Stevenage Borough Council's approach to how that demand should be met.

The *Town Centre Regeneration Strategy* proposes that major regeneration schemes such as new retail developments should provide on-site multi-storey car parks to meet the needs of the new development and to replace any public car parking spaces that are lost. The Council considers this to be appropriate because the large amount of parking generated by such schemes, together with the need to replace a large number of existing parking places would justify on-site provision. Allowing the developer to make financial contributions towards alternative off-site parking provision instead of providing parking on-site is not considered to be appropriate for these major developments.

However, the Council considers that it would be justifiable to seek financial contributions from smaller scale developments, which will incrementally increase demand for parking in the Town Centre, rather than require on-site parking provision. Therefore, a *criterion based* but *flexible* policy for parking provision for different scale/size of new development will be developed by the Council as a supplementary guidance to this *Parking Strategy*.

In order to reduce land-take all new car parks provided on-site as part of a major development should generally be of a multi-storey type with particular attention given to access from the existing highway network to ensure convenience and

safety. Furthermore, the developer will be expected to provide security measures comparable with those provided by the Council in its own car parks.

New car parks provided on-site as part of a major Town Centre development will be required to have **management/control measures/charging regimes** comparable with the Council's own car parks. Developers will be encouraged to enter into agreements, which would allow the Council to manage such car parks on behalf of the developer.

2.10.3 Parking Demand – Developments on Existing Public Car Parks

The **Town Centre Regeneration Strategy** identifies the need to redevelop Danesgate, Daneshill, Leisure Centre, Swingate and Southgate public car parks (all surface car parks) to facilitate new developments. The Regeneration Strategy considers that new multi-storey parking provision should be provided to meet the parking needs of regeneration schemes on these sites and to replace existing parking spaces that are lost. However, new development may also be proposed on other public and private car parks in the Town Centre, which have not been specifically identified in the Regeneration Strategy. This Strategy sets out clear guidance on how schemes which result in the loss of existing public parking spaces will be addressed in circumstances where there is a need to replace the parking spaces.

The total number of parking spaces in the Town Centre is **3,235** (SBC controlled, including proposed spaces on the "Fun Centre" site) and **3,930** (non-SBC controlled, including the proposed Asda development) making **7,165** in total. In Section 2.2 of this strategy it has been demonstrated that the existing total parking stock in Stevenage Town Centre is considered to be the **current minimum requirement** to cater for the **total parking demand** in Stevenage Town Centre. The parking stock is essentially made up of four categories ie. 'shoppers' parking (short-stay); rail commuter parking; other long-stay parking; and non-Council owned parking. Although there is some limited spare capacity in the '*other long-stay car parks*' category, growth in business is already outstripping parking provision in the '*shoppers*' and '*rail commuters*' categories. The provision of non-Council owned car parks associated with previous major developments in and around the Town Centre has not affected the growth in demand for more 'shoppers' and 'rail commuter' parking.

This **Parking Strategy** for the Town Centre sets out how that growth in demand will be addressed in the short, medium and long term. The strategy depends entirely on not only being able to maintain the current parking stock but also on being able to increase the provision over the next ten years in accordance with targets set out therein. Therefore, it is essential for the success of the Parking Strategy that any major developments on existing car parks replaces any public parking spaces lost within new car parks provided as part of the redevelopment. As indicated under Section 2.11.2: Parking Demand – General Developments (non-residential) some flexibility will apply insofar as smaller developments are concerned as set out in the Supplementary Guidance to this *Parking Strategy* which sets out the policy for parking provision for different scale/size of new development.

Where new public car parks are provided in conjunction with development on existing Council owned/controlled car parks, the developer will generally be required

to provide and install control equipment specified by the Council integrated with and linked to the Council's existing car park control system. Similarly, security measures will include the provision of CCTV integrated with and linked to the Council's existing CCTV system. Furthermore, the management and control of the new public car park will transfer to the Council on terms and conditions to be agreed with the Council.

In all cases of major developments resulting in the temporary loss of public car parks, the developer will be required to provide alternative (temporary) parking provision (e.g. 'park' and 'ride' facilities) during the construction stage except as otherwise agreed by the Council.

2.10.4 Achieving Objective 9 – Parking Associated with New Developments

New Town Centre Developments (All Developments)

1. Generally, the Council will require major regeneration schemes in the Town Centre such as new retail developments to provide on-site multi-storey car parks to meet the needs of both the new development and to replace any public car parking spaces that are lost.

2. Generally, the Council will require smaller development schemes in the Town Centre, which will incrementally increase demand for parking, to make financial contributions towards alternative off-site parking provision or a park-and-ride scheme.

3. Guidance on whether developers are expected to provide on-site parking or make financial contributions towards alternative off-site parking provision and/or a park-and-ride scheme will be issued as '*supplementary guidance'* to this Parking Strategy.

4. It will be a requirement that any car parks provided as a result of any new development for use by the public will have security measures comparable with those provided by the Council in its own car parks.

5. The Council will require new car parks provided on-site as part of a major Town Centre development for use by the public to have management/control measures/charging regimes comparable with the Council's own car parks.

6. The Council will encourage developers of new on-site car parks on land not owned/controlled by the Council to enter into an agreement, which would allow the Council to manage such car parks on behalf of the developer.

7. The Council will, as far as is practicable, adopt a flexible approach where new parking provision is made in connection with new commercial development in order to ensure that:

   ● It maximises opportunities for shared use parking

   ● It does not impose a constraint on the regeneration of the town centre.

New Town Centre Developments (On Existing Public Car

1. The Council will require that new public car parks provided on-site as part of a major development on an existing public car park be fitted with control equipment specified by the Council and integrated with and linked to the Council's existing control system.

2. The Council will require that new public car parks provided on-site as part of a major development on an existing public car park be fitted with appropriate security measures including a CCTV system integrated with and linked to the Council's existing CCTV system.

3. The Council will require the management/control of new public car parks provided in association with major developments on Council owned/controlled car parks to transfer to the Council in accordance with terms and conditions to be agreed.

4. The Council will require that, in all cases of major developments resulting in the temporary loss of public car parks, alternative (temporary) parking provision such as 'park' and 'ride' facilities is provided during the construction stage except as otherwise agreed by the Council.

2.11 New Town Centre Residential Developments - Parking Provision

2.11.1 Objective 10

To ensure that car parking associated with residential development in the Town Centre minimises land take, maximises opportunities for car-free developments and, where appropriate for shared parking provision, avoids overspill/congestion in nearby residential areas whilst not constraining the implementation of new residential development in the Town Centre.

2.11.2 Town Centre Residential Development

At present, there is limited residential accommodation in the Town Centre. Any car parking provided with flats in the Town Centre is currently provided on site. The regeneration strategy seeks to enhance the 'offer' of the town centre as a residential location and proposes that Town Centre South should become a high-density residential focused quarter to add to the attractiveness and interest of the centre. As an increase in residential accommodation will potentially increase the demand for parking provision, this Parking Strategy provides guidance on how new residential parking should be accommodated.

2.11.3 Meeting the Parking Need

Due to the Town Centre being the location where the majority of Stevenage's facilities and services are located as well as passenger transport interchanges, Town Centre residents are expected to have a lower demand for car use. Maximum parking standards for new developments are therefore expected to be lower in the Town Centre than anywhere else in Stevenage. However, even if car use by residents of Town Centre development is less than elsewhere, many residents may still wish to own a car that will need to be parked somewhere.

In view of the above, the Council considers that the approach for meeting parking needs associated with residential development in the Town Centre should be to seek shared use of public car parks to minimise the need for on-site provision wherever possible, but also to allow on-site provision up to the maximum standard. However, the approach will be flexible enough to permit a car-free development should a developer bring forward such a proposal.

This approach would allow some residential schemes to provide for their parking needs in public car parks whilst others can provide parking spaces on-site. This would facilitate a range of residential schemes with different parking options.

Parking spaces on-site will be limited to residents only with visitors expected to use adjacent public car parks. The use of public car parks for shared use by residents within any new housing provided will only be permitted if the risk of an environmental nuisance being caused (e.g. abandoned vehicles, litter, oil spillage etc) is minimal. This risk will be assessed for each specific proposal submitted.

2.11.4   Achieving Objective 10 - Town Centre Residential Developments - Parking

1. Although the provision of on-site parking up to the maximum standard will be permitted, the Council will, as a preference, encourage car-free residential development with the provision of "car clubs" replacing the need for individuals to own cars.

2. The Council will also consider proposals for meeting parking needs associated with residential development in the Town Centre through shared use of public car parks but only where such use would not give rise to conflicts between residents' and non-residents' use of those car parks.

3.   RESIDENTIAL AREAS

3.1   A New Approach to solving Parking Problems

3.1.1   In Section 1.1.2, it was stated that the scarcity of off-street spaces has not deterred residents from buying cars. The numbers of vehicles has increased to such a level that it is commonplace to find vehicles parked around junctions; parked on footways, across driveways and garage accesses, causing obstruction; and parked on verges and ornamental grassed areas causing damage and nuisance.

3.1.2   The "green" concept on which many residential areas have been designed is being eroded due to indiscriminate verge parking. The car dominates the streetscape in residential roads. The Bye-Law introduced to prevent verge parking is in urgent need of review and many verges and ornamental areas have been, and still are being, removed to increase the number of off-street spaces. This increases the stock and thus reduces the parking problems in those streets that are treated. However, this approach can only be applied to those streets where there are grassed areas that can be removed. Many streets do not fall into this category and it would, therefore, be inappropriate to rely exclusively on this strategy in the long term.

3.1.3   A new approach, that could either supplement or replace the existing one, is required and is likely to involve more radical and innovative measures in order to provide solutions to the widespread parking problems.

3.1.4   The strategy concentrates on two issues:

> **1. How to deal with indiscriminate parking?**

> **2. How to meet the parking needs of residents and visitors both in existing residential areas and new residential developments?**

SECTION 3A: *"Dealing With Indiscriminate Parking"*

A1:   SHORT TERM STRATEGIES

3.2   Indiscriminate Parking

3.2.1   Objective 1

To ensure that vehicles parked in residential streets do not compromise safety, access for pedestrians, access for the emergency services and the environment.

For the purpose of developing a new strategy that addresses indiscriminate parking the current concerns of residents and Members are examined and possible solutions explored.

3.2.2   Indiscriminate Parking (General)

The scarcity of off-street parking spaces has not deterred residents from buying cars. Whilst the average car ownership across the town, in 2001, has been estimated at 1.12 per household, it is not uncommon for households to own 2, 3 or sometimes more cars. With, very often, no off-street allocated parking space available, their owners park these vehicles in the street and attempt to get them as close to the house as physically possible. In the majority of streets this leads to more vehicles trying to be parked than the street can safely accommodate.

It is, therefore, not uncommon for vehicles to be parked on pavements, grass verges, ornamental green spaces, around radii at junctions and across other residents' driveways or garage accesses. There seems to be no limits to the numbers of cars residents try to cram into a street to the detriment of the overall environment. In the past, apart from build more spaces, little recognition in terms positive action, has been given to addressing this overcrowding problem. Indiscriminate parking of vehicles is probably the single most frequent traffic related cause of complaint amongst residents.

3.2.3   Indiscriminate Parking - Strategy for Achieving Objective 1

1.   To undertake surveys of each individual residential street in order to determine the maximum level of parking that can be accommodated without detriment to safety.

2.   To utilise such measures as are currently deemed appropriate to ensure that visibility requirements at junctions are met; access for pedestrians and access for the emergency services is maintained; and that verges and ornamental grassed areas are adequately protected.

3.3   Loss Of Verge For Off-Street Parking Spaces

3.3.1   Objective 2

To achieve a balance between providing additional off-street car parking spaces and retaining sufficient verges and ornamental grassed areas so as to maintain sufficient "green areas" for the amenity of residents whilst recognising that in some areas of the town the originally designed level of car ownership has been considerably exceeded leading to the environmental problems and indiscriminate parking identified as issues in this strategy.

3.3.2   Maintaining the Town's 'Green' Areas & Verges

The majority of residential parking schemes that have been built have, to a greater or lesser extent, involved the replacement of verge or grassed area with parking bays. There is no doubt that this method of increasing the supply of off-street parking places is the easiest to implement and is probably the most cost effective. It can alleviate congestion in the short term and it would, therefore, be easy to continue along these lines until all the available verges and grassed areas have been exhausted and only then consider what the next approach should be.

However, this could be considered shortsighted and many residents would view the loss of most of the green areas as environmentally unacceptable. Stevenage was developed on the basis of a wealth of green space and residents recognise and value this. To many, it is one of the main reasons that they enjoy living in the town.

Evidence of this is the large number of complaints the Council receives relating to verge damage and the lack of adequate maintenance. The parking problem has become so acute in many streets that the verge is habitually parked on, so much so that there is increasing pressure to implement preventative measures. An unofficial policy of erecting posts is operated in instances where parking takes place on verges adjacent to junctions and thus obstructs visibility or where grassed areas are used as a short cut between two roads. Verge protection is also usually undertaken for grassed areas that remain after a new parking scheme, that has utilised some of the verge, has been implemented.

3.3.3   Loss of Verge - Strategy for Achieving Objective 2

1.   **The Council will view conversion of grassed areas to parking as just one of a range of initiatives for increasing the number of off-street spaces and not the automatic choice.**

2.   **That where a scheme is based on converting a verge or grassed areas to parking, high quality design standards will be developed by a combination of landscape architecture and spatial design principles with the requirements of highway safety and the use of high quality materials and soft landscaping..**

3.   **Seek to mitigate the conflict between the requirement for additional parking and the requirement for maintaining the amenity of the area by applying a high standard of design as part of any scheme.**

3.4 Verge Parking Bye-Law

3.4.1 Objective 3

To ensure that verges and grassed ornamental areas are free of parking.

3.4.2 Protecting Verges

The current Verge Parking Bye-Law was introduced in 1972 and relates specifically to verges and ornamental grassed areas within the town. However, the Bye-Law is generally ineffective mainly due to there being insufficient resources to undertake enforcement. Furthermore, it requires bye-law signs to be erected to enable enforcement to take place and the legal interpretation of the wording suggests that to bring about a successful prosecution **the act of driving** a vehicle **onto** a verge would have to be witnessed. Further investigation is required to determine whether or not the current Bye-law needs to be amended to make enforcement more effective.

Whilst it is inevitable that verges and ornamental grassed areas will continue to be utilised for parking schemes it is the intention to retain as much green space as possible. There will, therefore, be the need to carry out protective measures and in association with these schemes it is likely that posts or bollards would be erected. However, unless there is a major injection of funds, many streets will remain untreated for some considerable time and it would not be practical (and not viable financially) to erect bollards to protect every piece of grass in every street not treated.

It is important, therefore, to have an effective system for dealing with vehicles that do park on verges and ornamental grassed areas.

At the end of 1997 the Council introduced a new initiative in co-operation with the Police in the Shephall Area. It was agreed that Bye-Law signs would be erected close to junctions and that the Police would carry out enforcement. Any vehicle found to be parked on a verge close to a junction, where signing existed, was issued with a warning notice. It was agreed that the Council would prosecute any person found to be offending a second time. As yet the Council have not had to take action, as the compliance level once issued with a notice is good.

A similar scheme could be extended town-wide, but the Police's policy is that they would only agree to carry out enforcement on safety grounds and thus would not undertake general enforcement of verge parking, where this constitutes an environmental problem. If the scheme were extended, enforcement would fall on the Council.

Regardless of the mechanism then, enforcement of the prohibition of parking on verges and ornamental grassed areas will fall on the Council. In order to identify the most effective enforcement mechanism, consideration will be given to a pilot project of enforcement in a selected area of the town first to measure the impact in terms of effectiveness, vehicle displacement and public reaction.

Clearly the means to enforce is urgently required, but prevention is obviously much more effective. It would be physically impossible to protect every verge or grassed

area with posts, so the protection of verges is going to be largely reliant on enforcement. However, it is suggested that where parking on a verge habitually takes place at a junction to the detriment of safety and where grassed areas are regularly used as a cut through, posts be erected.

3.4.2 Protecting Verges - Strategy for Achieving Objective 3

1. **To introduce an effective mechanism that permits enforcement to be carried out to deal with parking on grassed areas and to use it to deal with general verge parking and parking on ornamental areas where such parking cannot be justified.**

2. **In terms of erecting posts to protect grassed areas, the existing unofficial approach of using them only to prevent parking on a verge adjacent to a junction or where a grassed area is being used as a short cut between two roads becomes official policy.**

3.5   Safety Hazards and Obstruction – Publicity

3.5.1 Objective 4

To educate and inform residents of the problems caused by indiscriminate parking and to encourage them to park in a manner that allows access and does not cause unnecessary obstructions.

3.5.2 Encouraging More Considerate Parking

The lack of sufficient off-street parking spaces, combined with the insistence on the part of the residents to park as near to their homes as possible, means that most residential streets, especially in the evenings and at weekends, are crammed full of vehicles. The situation has become so bad that access by the emergency services could be prejudiced and private driveways and garage accesses are often obstructed.

Whilst complaints of this nature are directed to the Police, as they, and not the Council, have the powers to remove vehicles that are causing an obstruction, in reality very little is done as this is not seen as a high priority. This leaves residents frustrated and angry and prompts frequent neighbour disputes.

It seems that rather than being able rely on residents to park sensibly steps will have to be taken to ensure that parking is restricted to those locations that do not cause safety problems or obstruction. Part of the process involves undertaking a publicity campaign to inform residents of the problems caused by indiscriminate parking and to suggest how these problems can be partly overcome if everybody parks considerately.

3.5.2 Considerate Parking - Strategies for Achieving Objective 4

1.   As part of the street by street surveys, identify those streets where indiscriminate parking causes access or obstruction problems, particularly for the Emergency Services.

2   Either as a result of being identified by survey or following a complaint by a resident, or where there is insufficient space to increase parking provision, the Council will launch a publicity campaign to encourage residents to park as considerately as possible and to carefully consider the impact of acquiring additional cars within the household.

3.6 Commercial Vans

3.6.1 Objective 5

To reduce the number of commercial vehicles parking in residential streets and thus limit the adverse effect on residents.

3.6.2 Growth in Parking Demands

The high number of small commercial vehicles that are now taken home and parked in the street compounds parking problems in residential streets. They not only look unsightly, but also take up valuable space. These vehicles are usually in addition to a person's own private vehicle which can lead to double the parking demand. In addition, where an off-street parking scheme has been provided, commercial vehicles are frequently too big to occupy a single space and thereby reduce the effectiveness of the scheme by taking up 2 spaces. The number of commercial vehicles being taken home appears to be growing and it has been suggested that this may be due to the closure of company depots. A study is required to gain a better understanding of the reasons behind the growth of commercial vehicles in residential streets.

3.6.3 Control

At present there is a town-wide parking ban on commercial vehicles over 5 tonnes in weight and vehicles able to carry 12 or more persons, which operates weekdays between 8.00pm and 7.00am and at weekends and applies to all residential streets. This has been in operation since 1995 and is designed to prevent the prescribed vehicles from parking in residential streets. The ban is enforced weekly by Council Officers. Vehicles contravening the order are generally reported by residents. Officers, having gathered details and traced the owner, then issue a warning letter. Generally, once warned drivers do not repeat the offence. The enforcement of the ban is, therefore, reasonably effective. In terms of general adherence to the ban the level of compliance is reasonably good. Typically 5 or 6 complaints from residents are received each week. However, at least half of these relate to vehicles that are not covered by the order. Upon investigation most turn out to be large transit or box vans, which are less than the 5 tonnes specified. Whilst it may prove to be inappropriate to ban all commercial vehicles, the threshold weight needs to be lowered from the present 5 tonnes to enable enforcement action to be taken against the smaller vehicles not presently covered by the ban.

3.6.2 Commercial Vans - Strategies for Achieving Objective 5

1. **To carry out a study to ascertain the reasons for the growth of commercial vehicles parking in residential streets.**

2. **In the event that a blanket ban on all commercial vehicles is not feasible, to determine a suitable threshold weight, possibly linked to taxation class, over which all commercial vehicles will be prohibited from parking in residential streets.**

3.7   Illegally Parked Vehicles

3.7.1   Objective 6

To reduce the number of illegally parked vehicles both on the highway and in designated parking areas.

3.7.2   Dealing with Abandoned Vehicles

The problem with abandoned vehicles has become more acute as the value of scrap metal has plummeted. Instead of trading old vehicles in for the scrap value, owners merely abandon them around the town. The onus then falls on the Council to remove them. The cost of dealing with abandoned vehicles is escalating.

The Council deals with vehicles suspected of being abandoned by placing notices thereon after which efforts are made to trace the owner. If this is unsuccessful or the owner does not come forward as a result of the notice being placed then the vehicle is removed and scrapped. If an owner does come forward and claims a vehicle, then that normally is the end of the matter as far as the powers available to the Council for dealing with abandoned vehicles are concerned.

3.7.3   Other Illegally Parked Vehicles

Problems also centre on the type of vehicle covered under the Abandoned Vehicles legislation. Complaints are often received regarding vehicles that are considered to be abandoned by residents (normally on the basis that they have not been moved for long periods and they are occupying valuable parking space). However, once the notice is placed on the vehicle the owner claims it. Little can be done to overcome this type of problem unless it is clearly demonstrable that the vehicle is causing a significant obstruction on the highway. Where such vehicles are untaxed, it up to the DVLA to investigate and take the appropriate action. The Council will pass details of any untaxed vehicles to the DVLA.

Many complaints are received about caravans and vehicles for sale taking up parking spaces. Although the powers for dealing with such nuisances are limited, the Council will, nevertheless, ensure that those limited powers, particularly under the Highways Act 1980, are fully utilised.

3.7.4   Illegally Parked Vehicles - Strategy for Achieving Objective 6

To use the complete range of powers available to the Council to ensure that abandoned, untaxed and other illegally parked vehicles are removed as quickly as possible.

3.8   Commuter Parking

3.8.1 Objective 7

To ensure that residential streets are free of commuter parking.

3.8.2 Migration of Commuter Parking to Residential Streets

Some residential streets close to the Town Centre, Railway Station, Old Town High Street and, to some extent, Lister Hospital suffer from overflow long-term parking. In the case of the Town Centre and Railway Station drivers arrive early and stay late to avoid paying car park charges. This has been on going in some areas for many years, but has recently spread to other roads. The residential roads surrounding the High Street suffer from similar migration of parking.

In all such cases, residents are disadvantaged and frequent complaints are, therefore, received for action to be taken. A common request is made for the installation of a residents' only parking scheme.

Commuter parking will be influenced by the changes to the overall Town Centre and Old Town Parking Strategies. For instance, with the split between long-stay and short-stay being reviewed to ensure that a balance is struck that provides a disincentive to car borne work trips, it may result in fewer long-stay spaces being available. This will inevitably put an additional burden on adjacent residential roads. In terms of commuter parking the strategies are irrevocably interlinked and the effect of altering one strategy will have a knock on effect on another.

The Council intends to investigate the range of measures available to prevent long-term parking migrating to surrounding residential streets and to implement the most appropriate measures.

3.8.2 Commuter Parking - Strategy for Achieving Objective 7

The Council will put in place appropriate measures to prevent long-term parking migrating from the Town Centre, Old Town and/or other centres such as Lister Hospital to surrounding residential streets.

3.9   Provision for Orange/Blue Badge Holders

3.9.1   Objective 8

To continue to offer the facility for disabled drivers to apply for a parking space on the highway outside their house.

3.9.2   Current Procedures

At present a procedure is operated whereby a disabled person, holding an orange or blue badge, can apply for a parking space to be designated on the highway close to their house. Criteria have been adopted that ensures that the applicant has a genuine need for the space, with checks being made with the Social Services and the applicant's GP.

If the application satisfies the qualifying criteria and is approved, a Road Traffic Regulation Order is then made to enable the space to be enforced to ensure that non-disabled persons do not use it. The Police currently carry out this enforcement, albeit it has to be recognised that with most spaces being in residential areas remote from the Town Centre and Old Town it is likely that such enforcement is fairly spasmodic. However, once spaces are introduced there seems to be a reasonably high level of compliance and few complaints relating to abuse are received. The present system seems to be effective and should therefore continue to operate. The only change that would have to be made relates to enforcement, which would result if the Borough Council took on those powers under decriminalisation (covered elsewhere in this document).

3.9.3   On-street Parking Provision for Orange/Blue Badge Holders - Strategy for Achieving Objective 8

The Council will continue to operate the present system of assessing applications for disabled parking spaces on the highway in residential areas and will review the criteria as the need arises.

3.10   Determining Priorities

3.10.1   Objective 9

To introduce a system of ranking parking problems in residential streets that is both fair and equitable to enable priorities to be determined.

3.10.2   Ranking Parking Problems (Street by Street)

At present streets are coarsely ranked between A to D according the observed severity of the parking problem, with A being the most severe. This is a very subjective judgement on the part of officers and could be open to question if contested. A formal procedure is required that is both transparent and easy to understand.

It is suggested that the most appropriate way of doing this is to compare the level of parking provision available with the number of dwellings, on a street by street basis. This means that for each street the level of both on-street and off-street spaces available will be gathered and each will be divided by the number of dwellings in the street to provide a coefficient. These coefficients can be mathematically adjusted to provide an eventual score. The higher the score the higher the ranking. Thus streets where parking provision is poor, both in terms of on-street and off-street spaces, will score more highly than comparable streets with similar numbers of houses that have access to a greater number of parking spaces.

3.10.2   Determining Priorities - Strategy for Achieving Objective 9

1.   The Council will devise a system of ranking parking problems in residential areas that compares the level of parking provision available with the number of associated dwellings, on a street by street basis.

2.   The Council will use the new ranking system to generate a new priority list for the introduction of residential parking schemes.

A2: LONG TERM STRATEGIES

3.11 Parking Restrictions - Enforcement

3.11.1 Objective 10

To ensure that any parking restrictions introduced are effectively enforced.

3.11.2 Parking Restrictions

It has already been stated that indiscriminate parking is the biggest cause of complaint amongst residents and measures are required to deal with it. In paragraph 3.2.3, it is stated that the Council's strategy for dealing with indiscriminate parking is to utilise such measures as are currently deemed appropriate to ensure that: -

● Visibility requirements at junctions are met;

● Access for pedestrians is maintained;

● Access for the emergency services is maintained;

● Verges and ornamental grassed areas are adequately protected;

It is not possible to achieve this objective by physical prevention alone and it is considered that the most appropriate tool would be the introduction of parking restrictions.

In the past, these have not been widely used in residential areas because they tend to disadvantage residents and have, therefore, only tended to be used to treat stretches of road where considerable road safety issues arise.

However, car ownership and the extent of parking congestion occurring within residential streets has reached a stage where intervention is required to identify areas and guide residents on where it is safe and acceptable for them to park.

3.11.3 Enforcement

At the time of drafting this strategy, the enforcement of parking restrictions was the responsibility of Hertfordshire Constabulary and the Council had little control over the resources that were dedicated to it. The traffic wardens employed by the Police to patrol the whole of Stevenage concentrated primarily on the Town Centre and the Old Town. Existing parking restrictions in residential areas received little if any priority.

The introduction of extensive new lengths of restrictions would impose an unrealistic burden on the traffic wardens and would, therefore, be likely to remain unenforced for long periods. To be effective restrictions need to be enforced on a regular basis. It is likely, therefore, that under the current arrangements any new restrictions in

residential roads would be infrequently enforced, would fall into disrepute and be totally ineffective.

Under the Road Traffic Act 1991 Local Authorities are given the power to take on enforcement of parking restrictions under decriminalisation. This means that the Council could designate Stevenage as a Special Parking Area (SPA) and take on the 'wardening' duties thus relieving the police of that duty. The Local Authorities that have already assumed these powers have done so primarily to enable them to increase the level of enforcement of existing restrictions and thus reduce the numbers of drivers that violate them. The fines from any fixed penalty tickets issued can be used to offset the cost of enforcement. These Local Authorities have embarked upon decriminalisation from a starting point of having severe on-street parking problems and a high level of abuse of restrictions.

It has never previously been envisaged that the Council would opt to pursue enforcement powers under decriminalisation unless forced to by legislation. The total length of existing on-street restrictions across the town is fairly modest compared to other towns and violation does not occur to the same degree. Therefore, the need to take on these powers has not arisen in the past.

However in view of the Police's decision to withdraw the Traffic Warden Service in Hertfordshire together with the increasing need to introduce parking restrictions in residential streets to control indiscriminate parking, the Borough Council will have to consider taking on the enforcement role by assuming the powers under the 1991 Road Traffic Act.

At the time of drafting this strategy a detailed feasibility study was undertaken to determine whether or not the Council should apply for the powers available under the 1991 Road Traffic Act for designating Stevenage a Special Parking Area (SPA) and assuming responsibility for the enforcement of parking restrictions. Following the study the Council applied for and successfully obtained the necessary powers. The enforcement of on-street 'blue badge' holder parking spaces is to be included in the overall system of enforcement.

3.11.2 Enforcement of Parking Restrictions - Strategy for Achieving Objective 10

1. **Following a detailed feasibility study the Council has adopted the powers available under the 1991 Road Traffic Act for designating Stevenage a Special Parking Area (SPA) and has assumed responsibility for the enforcement of parking restrictions.**

2. **The Council will consider introducing a rolling programme of parking restrictions in order to allow on-street indiscriminate parking to be dealt with.**

3. **The Council will include enforcement of on-street 'blue badge' holder parking spaces in the overall system of enforcement following the adoption of enforcement powers under the 1991 Road Traffic Act.**

3.12   Controlled Parking Zones

3.12.1   Objective 11

To ensure that any measures put in place to prevent long-term parking migrating from the Town Centre, Old Town and/or other centres such as Lister Hospital, to surrounding residential streets are effective and can be effectively enforced.

3.12.2   Defining a Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ)

A Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) is a self contained area containing a number of streets inside which parking restrictions are used to define where vehicles can be parked and where they can not. They are commonly used in association with residential permit parking schemes.

Lengths of street are designated as parking areas with parking restrictions identifying those lengths where parking is prohibited. Permits are usually issued and displayed in vehicles that are permitted to park within the zone. Often a CPZ allows non-designated vehicles to be parked within the zone at certain times of the day, either with an associated fee or free of charge. Facilities can be made available for business use, loading and unloading and visitors parking. However, no sections of any street are left uncontrolled. Markings and signs are used to clearly define where vehicles are permitted to park and where they are not.

3.12.3   Controlled Parking Zones - Controlling Commuter Parking

CPZs are often associated with areas that suffer problems of commuter parking. They are, therefore, used around urban centres or railway stations to prevent long-term parking that would otherwise disadvantage residents. The Police can enforce them or, where used in conjunction with a Special Parking Area (SPA), the Local Authority can manage the enforcement. A CPZ incorporating areas around the High Street, Railway Station and Town Centre would tend to eliminate long term parking in neighbouring roads. This could be introduced in association with a Special Parking Area (SPA) or in isolation and in advance of decriminalisation powers being sought.

The Council intends to identify those residential streets close to the High Street, Railway Station, Town Centre and any other centres where long term parking occurs on a regular basis causing inconvenience to residents and at the earliest opportunity will incorporate those streets into a Controlled Parking Zone.

3.12.4   Controlled Parking Zones - Dealing with General Parking Demand.

In addition to the problem of commuter parking, there is a need to address the problem of parking demand for parking spaces in most streets outweighing supply. Either more spaces must be provided or the number of vehicles reduced or a combination of both. The current strategy of replacing grassed areas with parking spaces has attempted to keep up with demand, but it would be short sighted to imagine that this could continue indefinitely. Continuing with the current strategy

would mean that, eventually, every useable piece of grass would have been removed.

The strategies included in this document address the issues of both heavy and light commercial vehicles, abandoned and unlicensed vehicles, commuter parking and caravans and, if implemented, will free up space for residents' cars. Therefore, in the short term, the combination of providing new spaces and freeing up existing spaces is likely to result in supply continuing to keep pace with demand.

However, eventually there may come a time when no more cars can be accommodated on-street using these strategies. If car ownership continues to grow beyond this point then new strategies will be required that seek to either provide more spaces in non-highway areas or apply a restriction on the number of vehicles that are permitted to park. Detailed investigation would be required before determining a preferred approach.

3.12.2 Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) - Strategy for Achieving Objective 11

1. **The Council will identify those roads close to the High Street, Railway Station, Town Centre and any other centres where long term parking occurs on a regular basis and at the earliest opportunity will incorporate those streets into a Controlled Parking Zone.**

2. **The Council will consider the implications relating to the enforcement of a CPZ and determine whether to introduce it in isolation or as part of an overall Special Parking Area (SPA).**

3. **That, if after implementation of the strategies contained in this document parking demand in residential areas still exceeds parking supply, the Council will undertake a detailed investigation of what additional measures need to be implemented to deal with the imbalance.**

3.13 Extending the Overnight/Weekend Lorry Parking Ban

3.13.1 Objective 12

To ensure that, in the event of the weight limit specified in the current 'Overnight/Weekend Lorry Parking Ban' being lowered, alternative parking facilities exist for those commercial vehicles captured by the lower weight limit.

3.13.2 Reducing Commercial Vehicle Parking In Residential Areas

In paragraph 3.7, the need to reduce the number of commercial vehicles parking in residential streets is recognised and that this could be achieved by determining a suitable threshold weight over which all commercial vehicles will be prohibited from parking in residential streets thus limiting the adverse effect on residents. It may ultimately be necessary to identify suitable locations on a neighbourhood basis, where the smaller commercial vehicles, captured by the lowering of the weight limit, could be left. Ideally, these 'parking areas' would not be within the street itself, but in separate off-street areas such as existing garage compounds where garages have not been built and which are currently vastly under utilised.

These areas could accommodate the large transit or box van that is typically the subject of many complaints. Effectively, residential streets and associated on-street parking areas would only be available to cars and small vans. Measures would be taken to prevent larger vehicles (e.g. HGVs) from being able to use the "commercial" parking areas to avoid them being drawn into residential streets. This strategy would need to embrace and link into any future strategy on the most effective use of garage compounds in the town.

3.13.2 Strategy for Achieving Objective 12

1. **The Council will specify an upper limit of vehicle that can be left in a residential street and will attempt to identify suitable locations, on a neighbourhood basis, that can be designated as parking areas for light commercial vehicles captured by any changes to the lowering of the weight limit.**

2. **If suitable locations can be identified for the parking of lighter commercial vehicles, the Council will consider carrying out any necessary improvements to make these designated areas safe and secure.**

3. **The Council determine an upper weight limit for these parking areas so as to avoid heavy goods vehicles using them and thus being brought into residential areas.**

4. **The Council will include the enforcement of any new Lorry Ban Order in the overall enforcement regime should decriminalisation be adopted.**

3.14 Parking Management

3.14.1 Objective 13

To provide better parking management in residential areas by the introduction of speed reducing measures.

3.14.2 20mph zones

The introduction of 20mph zones does relatively little to improve parking directly. However, the reduction in speed, usually brought about by physical measures, can allow normal design criteria to be relaxed and thus parking can be permitted in areas that might otherwise be kept clear.

Whilst 20mph zones are not as expensive as Home Zones, due to the need to introduce speed reducing features at regular intervals to acquire the speed reduction, they tend to be schemes that are introduced to address accidents or at least deal with road safety issues. It is extremely unlikely that 20mph zones would be implemented solely as a Residential Parking Scheme.

However, where parking schemes are implemented and associated speed reducing features included, consideration will be given to establishing a 20mph zone.

3.14.3 Home Zones (retrofit)

Home Zones are continental concepts that have been adopted in the UK. They are based on the concept of reducing traffic speeds in residential streets to less than 10mph by using a combination of different paving materials and traffic calming, which is effected by using conventional speed reducing features, landscaping, designated parking bays and even judiciously placed play equipment. The aim is to produce an environment where drivers not only are not capable of driving at more than 10mph, but where they would feel that speeds higher than 10mph would be totally inappropriate.

Home Zones require the reallocation of highway space and have been likened to giving streets back to the residents, as they tend to produce spaces where people can meet and chat. Home Zones can also provide the means to manage parking

Home Zones are an admirable concept and a number of pilot schemes are in operation in the UK with the Government having awarded further funding for more Home Zones to be introduced countrywide. Almost without exception all the schemes that have been put forward for Home Zone status are based on treating existing residential streets (retrofit). With schemes requiring much more in the way repaving and new features the cost of retrofit home zones is generally very high. This means that in reality unless massive amounts of money are made available only a few streets will benefit. It is difficult to see how Home Zones based on retrofit can be sustained and there is, therefore, the danger of raising expectations to unrealistic levels.

3.14.2 Parking Management - Strategy for Achieving Objective 13

1. The Council will consider the use of speed reducing features in future parking schemes, if appropriate.

2. The Council will include sufficient features in the design to reduce speeds so as to qualify for 20mph-zone status where speed-reducing features are an integral part of a residential parking scheme.

3. The Council will monitor the effectiveness of "Home Zones" introduced in the UK.

4. The Council will maintain a register of "Home Zones" introduced across the UK and to identify best practice in terms of effective design.

5. The Council will delay the introduction of Home Zones on a retrofit basis until such a time as there is a degree of certainty that funds will be made available year on year to enable the process of implementation to be a continuous one.

"Meeting the parking needs of residents and visitors both in existing residential areas and new residential developments."

3.15   Residential Parking Schemes

3.15.1   Objective 14

> **To continue the Council's programme of residential parking schemes in those streets where there is acute parking congestion and where the provision of additional spaces will result in better management of the parking situation.**

3.15.2   Programme of Residential Parking Schemes

It has been stated that it is never going to be possible in the long term to provide enough spaces to accommodate all the vehicles that residents would wish to park in residential areas. Eventually, the number of vehicles permitted to park is going to have to be limited by the number of spaces that can be provided.

In the short term, however, the provision of additional spaces can make the difference between a street being totally congested and a situation that is more manageable. There are, therefore, many benefits in continuing the annual capital allocation for the time being to allow residential parking schemes to be constructed.

As part of this strategy, an objective ranking system will be adopted to assess the degree of the parking problems in each street. The ranking system will be used to prioritise schemes and generate a new list, which would supersede the current A to D ranking list. It is envisaged that this could take up to 12 months to develop.

3.15.2   Residential Parking Schemes - Strategy for Achieving Objective 14

> 1. **For the time being the Council will continue to give consideration to the provision of funding through the annual capital allocation to allow residential parking schemes to be constructed.**

> 2. **The Council will develop a new ranking system that will be used to generate a new priority list for the introduction of residential parking schemes.**

3.16 Existing Communal Parking Areas

3.16.1 Objective 15

> **To ensure that the current level of 'communal' parking area is maintained.**

3.16.2 Council's Land Sales Policy

The Council's Land Sales Policy is to consider applications from householders to buy small areas of council land adjacent to their properties. Generally, favourable consideration is given to such applications although this has to be balanced, against the priority of preserving amenity land throughout Stevenage, and the needs of other residents.

On occasions the Council receives applications to purchase parking hardstands on which the householder wishes to build a garage. Previously, many such applications have been approved. However, in view of the increasing parking problems in residential areas it is important that the existing supply of communal parking hardstands is maintained.

The Council's current Land Sales Policy is, therefore, to be amended so that applications for the purchase of Council-owned non-highway parking hardstands in residential areas are to be refused unless the loss can be compensated for by the construction of an equivalent number of additional communal parking spaces funded by the applicant.

3.16.3 Existing Communal Parking - Strategy for Achieving Objective 15

> **Applications for the purchase of Council-owned non-highway parking hardstands in residential areas will be refused unless the loss can be compensated for by the construction of an equivalent number of additional communal parking spaces funded by the applicant.**

3.17   Role of Carriage Crossings

3.17.1   Objective 15

To improve the on-street parking situation by encouraging as many residents as possible to apply for carriage crossings where appropriate.

3.17.2   Increasing Off-Road Parking

Carriage crossings are the means of gaining access from the carriageway, across footways/verges to an on-plot parking space. Construction is arranged by the Council as the work takes place on the highway, but paid for by the resident. As car ownership has grown over recent years and the on-street parking situation worsened the number of applications for carriage crossings has increased. The cost of construction work, and hence the price a resident pays, is kept as competitive as possible. Despite this, it is not uncommon for residents to decide not to proceed due to the relatively high cost of construction.

As the on-street parking situation continues to deteriorate it would be beneficial to get as many cars as possible off the road and into gardens. However, it should always be borne in mind that the construction of a carriage crossing to serve an on-plot space results in the loss of one (more if a double crossing is provided) kerbside parking place. Where this type of parking is at a premium the construction of one or two carriage crossings can considerably worsen the situation for those residents that either cannot, or choose not to, have on-plot spaces. Despite this, legislation states that every person has a right to apply for vehicular access from his or her garden to the highway and only in exceptional circumstances can this be refused.

Notwithstanding the above, in certain circumstances it may be appropriate to actively encourage residents to apply for carriage crossings. In roads where conventional methods of increasing the number of parking spaces are not possible, it may even be appropriate for a scheme to consist solely of providing residents with crossings, at no cost to themselves, to facilitate access to their gardens.

In respect of subsidies, applying a reduction across the board to carriage crossings could increase the take-up substantially. A portion of any annual allocation for residential parking schemes could be set aside and used to offset the cost.

3.17.3   Carriage Crossings - Strategy for Achieving Objective 15

1. **In roads where conventional methods of increasing the number of parking spaces are not possible, schemes that consist solely of providing residents with crossings, at no cost to themselves, to facilitate access to their gardens will be considered by the Council.**

2. **Consideration will be given to setting aside a proportion of any annual residential parking allocation to enable appropriate subsidies to be offered to residents, across the board, to encourage more people to apply for carriage crossings.**

3. **Any new initiatives will be actively promoted so that residents are aware, in advance, of the new arrangements regarding the provision of carriage crossings.**

3.18   Role of Garage Compounds

3.18.1   Objective 16

To make better use of garage compounds and to encourage greater usage where appropriate.

3.18.2   Making Better Use of Garage Compounds

Garage compounds include both those enclosed spaces that incorporate groups of garages and those off road areas originally set aside for garages, but where none have been constructed or a combination of the two.

In terms of garages, the take up is generally good. Being in a compound, and thus usually remote from the property they serve, there is perhaps more likelihood that they are properly used as a garage. On the other hand, garages attached to a property are often seen as additional storage space and, very often, are not used for the parking of a vehicle. Although there is no evidence to suggest that garage compounds are not well used, complaints regarding lack of maintenance are sometimes levelled. If they continue to be well kept, well lit and readily accessible they provide a much-needed source of secure off-street parking.

By comparison, those sites where a concrete hardstanding has been laid, but no garages built, are vastly under utilised. Being remote, dark and lacking adequate security the threat to vehicles of theft or vandalism is a real deterrent. As they stand they are a wasted resource. With increased security and lighting they could represent valuable off road parking areas that would relieve pressure on residential streets.

A separate strategy needs to be developed on the future use of garage compounds (without garages) in order to determine whether or not it would be feasible to use them for the parking of light commercial vehicles or other alternative off-road parking.

3.18.3   Garage Compounds - Strategy for Achieving Objective 16

1. **The Council will consider improving maintenance, lighting and where possible accessibility of those compounds that incorporate garages.**

2. **That, subject to the development of a strategy on the future use of garage compounds that do not currently incorporate garages, the Council will consider improving the lighting and security at those compounds and investigate the feasibility of using them for the parking of light commercial vehicles or other alternative off-road parking.**

3.19   New Residential Developments – Parking Standards

3.19.1   Objective 17

To introduce maximum residential parking standards for new developments which will be consistent with the objectives of the Parking Strategy, whilst according with Government policy.

3.19.2   Parking Standards

In the Stevenage District Plan (1994), the Council's approach towards parking provision in new residential developments was to seek minimum standards of provision to ensure that demand for parking provision was accommodated on site. However, Government policy on residential parking provision has significantly changed following the publication of Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 (PPG3): Housing in March 2001. PPG3 seeks to reduce on-site parking provision, particularly in town centres and where housing is for groups where demand for parking will be lower than for family housing. PPG3 considers that parking standards which result, on average, with more than 1.5 spaces per dwelling are considered to be unsustainable and should not be adopted. It should also be noted that the Government's Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 (PPG13): Transport (March 2001) introduced maximum parking standards to be applied to developments in general.

The County Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance on Car Parking Provision at New Development (December 2000) sets maximum residential standards ranging from 1.5 parking spaces per bed-sit to 3.75 spaces for a 4 bedroom dwelling. However, the County Council and the Hertfordshire districts are reviewing this approach, as it is now inconsistent with PPG13. The Council has used the same approach towards residential parking provision and adopted its own Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on parking standards in 2003. In summary, this involves a two-tier set of parking standards for new housing in Stevenage, which will vary by location and will have the objective of achieving an average of 1.5 spaces per new dwellings across the Borough. In the Town Centre and its immediate surroundings, reduced maximum standards will apply to new housing as shared use parking will be encouraged to maximise housing density and minimise land occupied by parking. Standards in the Town Centre and its surroundings will therefore range from 0.75 spaces for a 1 bedroom dwelling to 2 spaces for a 4-bedroom dwelling. Elsewhere in Stevenage, maximum parking standards ranging from 1 space for 1-bedroom dwellings to 2.5 spaces for 4 bedroom dwellings will apply.

The Council's SPG also provides guidance on car free residential developments, mixed-use developments, and how new developments should avoid exacerbating parking problems in existing residential areas. The draft SPG has been co-ordinated with the Parking Strategy in order to provide for a consistent approach towards addressing residential parking issues.

3.19.3   Parking Standards in New Developments - Strategy for Achieving Objective 17

The Council will use its Supplementary Planning Guidance. published in 2003. for determining parking provision at new developments.

3.20   New Residential Developments – Home Zones

3.20.1   Objective 18

To introduce Home Zone principles in as many new residential schemes as possible.

3.20.2   Home Zones

As has been stated the majority of Home Zones so far considered have been retrofit schemes, i.e. incorporated into existing residential streets. The Council is not convinced that 'retrofit' schemes are cost effective and, therefore, sustainable.

The Council believes that the future of Home Zones lies in their ability to create a better environment for residents, particularly when on foot or bicycle, when used as a basis for new residential development. Whilst the County Council Design Guide covers the adoption of Home Zone principles and allows the developer to adopt them if he so chooses, there are no positive statements that encourage Developers to go down this route.

It is suggested that in all pre-planning application meetings regarding new residential schemes, Developers are made aware that the Council fully supports Home Zone principles and will encourage Developers to adopt them wherever possible.

3.20.3   Home Zones - Strategy for Achieving Objective 18

Developers will be made aware that the Council fully supports Home Zone principles and will encourage Developers to adopt them whereever possible.

3.21 New Residential Developments – Car Free & Car Share Developments

3.21.1 Objective 19

> **To support car free and car share developments.**

3.21.2 Car Free/Car Share Developments

It is recognised that Developments based on residents not owning cars or at least subscribing to a much-reduced standard cannot be forced upon Developers. However, in certain circumstances a Developer may come forward with such a proposal, particularly if the site is very well served in terms passenger transport facilities. The Council will support and encourage Developers to introduce car free or car share residential developments in appropriate locations.

3.21.3 Strategy for Achieving Objective 19

> **The Council will support and encourage Developers to introduce car free or car share residential developments in appropriate locations.**

4. HIGH STREET & ADJOINING OLD TOWN AREAS

4.1 Parking Issues

4.1.1 The existing parking issues in the Old Town are:

- **Safety hazards** caused by the parking layouts along the High Street

- **Competition for space** in the High Street itself, particularly at the southern end;

- **Lack of short-stay parking facilities** which discourages growth in retail activity;

- **Free parking** which does not encourage Old Town workers to seek alternative transport modes for work travel; is inconsistent with Town Centre parking and does not generate any income to reinvest in the parking service itself;

- Lorry Park: **Visual impact and parking conflicts**;

- **Parking overspill** from the commercial/retail centres into the surrounding residential streets;

- **Migration of commuter parking** (rail users & Town Centre workers) to the southern section of the High Street, the Lorry Park and partly to residential areas.

4.1.2 Approximately two thirds of the on-street parking provision in the High Street is unrestricted and free. It generally fills up early in the morning, being taken up primarily by workers in the High Street and to a lesser extent at the southern end by commuters. Few of the unrestricted spaces are, therefore, available for short stay shoppers parking later in the day.

4.1.3 Shoppers are better provided for north of Albert Street, where in conjunction with a recent Local Safety Scheme (completed in the late nineties) a 2-hour parking limit was introduced in those areas outside Elmes Arcade, outside Cromwell Hotel and outside Wetherspoons. This increases the turnover and, whilst reliant on adequate Police enforcement, ensures that spaces are generally available.

4.1.4 The long stay parking on both sides of the High Street, in that section south of Albert Street, makes it difficult to accommodate servicing requirements for the shops, adequate bus stop facilities/shelters and spaces for orange/blue badge holders. Few shops have rear servicing and deliveries are generally taken from the High Street itself. The parking situation means that delivery vehicles have to park on the carriageway, which often causes congestion. The bus stop facilities in this section of the High Street are poor, being accommodated on narrow nibs between parked cars and there are no spaces designated for orange/blue badge holders.

4.1.5 Whilst it is clear that the demand for long stay parking exists this will need to be managed if improved facilities for shoppers, servicing and the disabled are to be provided. This will be addressed through the strategies set out in Section 3.6, paragraph 3.6.3, which considers the combination of both on and off-street spaces.

4.2 Existing Parking Facilities – General

4.2.1 Parking Facilities – Primett Road & Church Lane

Location	Fee	No. of Spaces	Method of Control
Primett Road • 'Waitrose'	Free	82	**3-hour** parking restriction – random enforcement by SBC *
• Middle Car Park	Free	84	None
• Lorry Park (Daytime)	Free	78	None
Church Lane • 1	Free	30	None
• 2	Free	18	None
Total		**292**	

4.2.2 Parking Facilities – High Street

Location	Fee	No. of Spaces	Method of Control
O/S Elmes Aracde	Free	**21**	**2-hour** parking restriction – random enforcement by Police through Traffic Wardens
O/S Cromwell Hotel	Free	**11**	**2-hour** parking restriction – random enforcement by Police through Traffic Wardens
O/S Wetherspoons	Free	**15**	**2-hour** parking restriction – random enforcement by Police through Traffic Wardens
High Street - non-restricted parking	Free	**97**	**None**
Total		**144**	

4.3 Parking Demand & Split between Long and Short-stay Parking Provision

4.3.1 Objective 1:

> **To review the split between long-stay and short-stay parking provision in the High Street and surrounding areas of the Old Town to ensure that a balance is struck that provides a disincentive to car borne work trips, yet maintains a sufficient number of spaces to help generate increased retail activity in this part of the Old Town.**

4.3.2 Current Provision

The total number of parking spaces in the High Street and surrounding area is 436 (292 off-street – Primett Road/Church Lane and 144 on-street – High Street). These parking spaces are well used with the Primett Road/Church Lane car parks being almost full every day and the parking along the High Street also generally full. It is considered that the current total parking provision is sufficient to meet parking demand in the High Street and surrounding areas and should not be reduced in total. Furthermore, it is not considered necessary, in the short term, to increase public parking provision.

4.3.3 Long-Stay/Short-Stay Split

Most of the parking in this area is *long-term parking (307 spaces)* with only the Waitrose car park and small areas along the High Street offering some form of *short-stay parking (129 spaces)* through a time restriction.

Long-Stay 71%

Short Stay 29%
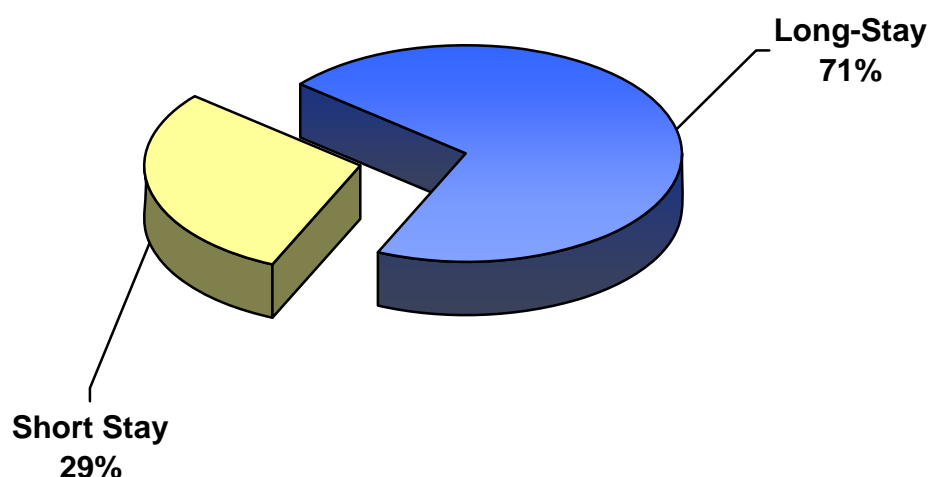
All parking is free. It is known that many rail commuters and Town Centre workers prefer to park for free in the Old Town and then walk to their destination. Normally, it is extremely difficult finding a parking space in the Old Town particularly along the High Street because the spaces have been taken up for long-term parking. Furthermore, there is increasing evidence that some parking is migrating to the residential areas surrounding the High Street causing a parking nuisance.

4.3.4 Addressing the Problem

Although it is considered that the existing **total** parking stock in the High Street and surrounding area of the Old Town is probably sufficient to meet current needs, the split between long-term and short-term parking provision is heavily weighted in favour of long-term parking and this needs to be addressed. It is considered that the 'Waitrose' car park should remain short-stay to meet current shoppers' demands and that the parking provision along the High Street should be designated short-stay. The other off-street car parks in Primett Road/Church Lane should be designated long-stay.

In addition, the Council will consider using demand management tools (parking restrictions and/or charging) in the Old Town. This will help reduce the demand for long-stay parking provision thereby releasing more spaces for short stay parking and helping to curb migration of parking into adjacent residential areas.

4.3.6 Parking Demand & Split between Long and Short-stay Parking Provision - Achieving Objective 1 (Statement of Intent)

1. **In order to achieve a balanced split between short-stay and long-stay parking provision the Council will maintain the 'Waitrose' car park as a short-stay car park and will consider the introduction of measures to re-designate the parking provision along the High Street as short stay parking whilst catering for long-term parking in the other car parks in Primett Road/Church Lane.**

2. **In order to provide a disincentive to car borne work trips, the Council will, through the use of parking demand management tools, seek to reduce the demand for long-stay parking in the High Street and surrounding areas by encouraging people to use alternative modes of transport.**

3. **In the event of a park-and-ride facility being provided in the town, consideration will be given to extending the service to cover the Old Town as well as the Town Centre.**

4.4   Off-Street Parking

4.4.1 Objective 2

To ensure that the management of car parks in the Old Town is consistent with the management of the Town Centre Car Parks and to achieve a modal shift from the car to alternative modes of travel through the use of parking demand management tools.

4.4.2 On-Going Maintenance/Improvement Costs

The Primett Road and Church Lane car parks are currently free to users even though a considerable amount of the Council's capital and revenue budgets continues to be spent carrying out improvements and maintenance to the car parks. There will continue to be further demands on the Council's budgets in future years for improvements and costly maintenance works and a means of generating additional income to fund these future financial demands needs to be identified.

4.4.3 Town Centre Parking Strategy

There is also inconsistency between the Town Centre (where parking charges apply) and the High Street and surrounding Old Town areas (where parking is currently free). Many Town Centre workers are disadvantaged by this inconsistency.

The strategy for setting charges in the Town Centre Car Parks is based on the following: -

Income generation   -   *operate car parks as a commercial business*

Competitiveness   -   *comparable with pricing in neighbouring towns*

Government Policy   -   *Transport/Planning Guidance/Legislation*

Demographics   -   *Population growth/shift; economic groups etc*

Transport planning   -   *Local transport policies; modal shifts etc.*

4.4.4 Introduction of Parking Charges in the Old Town

In order to be consistent with the strategy for Town Centre car parks, the Council will investigate the feasibility of introducing charges for long-term parking in the Primett Road and Church Lane car parks. If as a result of such a feasibility study, it is decided to introduce parking charges in the Old Town, then the issues highlighted in paragraph 4.4.3 above will all need to be considered and weighted in the context of local circumstances. This will allow a balanced approach to be taken between supply and demand; income generation; the need to ensure the economic well-being of the High Street and encouragement of future growth; and the need for parking restraints to achieve a modal shift from the car to alternative forms of travel.

If as a result of the feasibility study it is decided to introduce parking charges, the method of control would be consistent with that stated in the Town Centre strategy.

4.4.5 Impact of Parking Charges

The implementation of parking charges in the Primett Road Car Parks, if introduced, would have a significant impact on on-street parking in the High Street as well as within the residential areas surrounding the High Street. For that reason the introduction of other measures to prevent long term parking from migrating onto the High Street and surrounding residential areas would need to be introduced at the **same time** as the introduction of any off-street parking charges. These issues are discussed in more detail in **Section 4.5: On-Street Parking Issues**.

4.4.6 Influencing Parking Demand

The income generated from any charging in the Primett Road car parks could make a significant contribution towards the annual maintenance costs already being incurred by the Council (e.g. cleansing, maintenance, improvements etc). However, the prime objective of introducing charging would be to encourage a modal shift from the car to alternative modes of travel as a means of travelling to/from work thereby reducing parking congestion and releasing parking spaces for casual short-stay parking.

The income generated might also also help fund an enforcement regime to manage/control on-street parking (within a Controlled Parking Zone) in order to reduce safety hazards/parking congestion along the High Street and in the adjoining residential areas.

4.4.7 Commercial Opportunities

The strategy in relation to commercial activities at the Old Town Car Parks will be the same as those already stated for the Town Centre Car Parks.

4.4.7 Off-Street Parking - Achieving Objective 2

> 1. **The Council will investigate the feasibility of introducing charges for long-term parking in the Primett Road and Church Lane car parks so as to be consistent with the strategy for Town Centre car parks.**

> 2. **In undertaking the above investigation, the Council will take into account the need to achieve a balance between supply and demand; the need to ensure the economic well-being of the Old Town (High Street) whilst encouraging future growth; and the need for parking restraints to achieve a modal shift from the car to alternative forms of transport.**

4.5   Lorry Park

4.5.1   Objective 3.

To reduce or remove the detrimental visual impact that a lorry park has on this part of the Old Town and to consider how best to remove the parking conflicts that occur between cars and lorries due to its dual use as a car and lorry park.

4.5.2   Function of the Lorry Park

The Lorry Park was developed to support the introduction of the overnight/weekend (HGVs) lorry-parking ban on the basis that it would help reduce the incidence of lorries parking in residential areas. On that basis it has been reasonably successful. However, the Lorry Park is not very heavily used, attracting about 10-12 lorries on average per night.

The Lorry Park is currently dual use in that it operates as a daytime car park and an evening/overnight lorry park. The demand for lorry parking starts at about 5 p.m. but cars, generally, do not start to leave until about 5.30 p.m. or later. This causes conflicts within and outside the Lorry Park. It is not uncommon for 2/3 lorries to be queuing along Primett Road waiting for a space to become available within the parking area. This causes an obstruction and could compromise **highway safety**.

Parking charges apply to lorries parking in the Lorry Park (daytime car parking is currently free). In any future reviews of Lorry Parking Charges, the Council will be mindful of the fact that previous increases have led to a significant reduction in use with an equivalent increase in HGV parking in residential areas.

4.5.3   Resolving the Parking Conflicts

One option for resolving the parking conflicts in the Lorry Park would be to limit its use to **lorry parking only at all times**. However, given the current demand for car parking in this part of the Old Town, such a change would merely increase on-street parking congestion in the High Street and in surrounding residential areas. Another option would be to permit car parking until 5 p.m. only. However, this option would require rigorous enforcement each evening and is not likely to serve any useful purpose as the car park is mostly used by people working in the Old Town (and some rail commuters) most of whom do not finish work until about 5.30 to 6 p.m. There are no practical and/or workable measures that can be introduced to reduce the conflicts referred to above. Therefore, the best option is to remove the Lorry Park from its Old Town location. This would have the added benefit of enhancing this area of the Old Town.

4.5.4   Visual Impact of the Lorry Park

The Council is mindful of the fact that the existing site is not particularly suitable for lorry parking, being close to the High Street (a conservation area) on one side and within close proximity of residential areas on the other side. Furthermore, there is added pressure to identify suitable sites for residential development in this part of the Old Town, planning permission having recently been given to a residential development on the former *Ralph Game Garage* site with access from Primett Road.

There is the potential for further applications for residential development in this area being received. This adds weight to the need to resolve the parking conflicts associated with the Lorry Park as soon as possible. However, this can only be achieved by relocating the Lorry Park to a more suitable site.

4.5.5 Relocating the Lorry Park

The relocation of the Lorry Park to a more suitable site has been a Council objective for many years. However, there are no readily available suitable sites elsewhere and it is unlikely that new sites will emerge in the foreseeable future. Although there is no statutory duty on the Council to provide overnight/weekend lorry parking facilities, it believes that the total removal of the Lorry Park without providing an alternative site would significantly increase the incidence of lorries parking in residential areas.

The Council believes that the Lorry Park provides an important facility not only for Stevenage in supporting the overnight/weekend lorry-parking ban in residential areas but also for North Hertfordshire in general. It is an important element in ensuring the effective/efficient movement of goods within Hertfordshire. For that reason, the Council believes that the Hertfordshire County Council, as Transport Authority, also have an interest in maintaining a Lorry Park in this part of the county. The Council will ask the County Council to recognise the importance of the Lorry Park to Hertfordshire in transportation terms and to include a bid in their 2006-2011 Local Transport Plan for funding to relocate the Lorry Park (including the provision of toilet/rest facilities) to a more suitable site either in Stevenage or close by in North Hertfordshire.

4.5.6 Future Use of the Existing Lorry Park

The Stevenage District Plan Second Review makes provision for retaining the Primett Road car parks, including the lorry park, for public parking provision unless the parking spaces are replaced within any new development. Therefore, if the Lorry Park were relocated, redevelopment of the current site for other uses (without replacement provision) would only be considered if the parking supply exceeded parking demand in this area of the Old Town.

4.5.7 Lorry Park – Strategies for Achieving Objective 3

1   **The Council will continue its search for an alternative and more suitable site for the lorry park but relocation will only occur after a suitable alternative site has been found, either with appropriate facilities or after such facilities have been developed and the site is ready for occupation.**

1.   **The Council will ask the County Council to: -**

● **Recognise the contribution the Lorry Park makes to transportation within Hertfordshire and**

● **Include a bid in their 2006-2011 Local Transport Plan for funding to relocate the Lorry Park (including the provision of toilet/rest facilities) to a more suitable site either in Stevenage or in North Hertfordshire.**

2.   **In the event of the Lorry Park being relocated, and subject to the demand for car parking in the Old Town not reducing from its current level, the parking area in Primett Road, currently being used for lorry parking, will remain as a public parking facility.**

4.6 Off-Street (Car Parks) Parking Provision for Disabled People

4.6.1 Objective 4

To seek to improve the parking service in the Primett Road car parks by ensuring that the service is accessible to all and to ensure that sufficient parking spaces are provided for use by "orange/blue badge" holders.

4.6.2 Current Situation

The Disability Discrimination Act places responsibilities on all service providers to ensure that access to their service is available to all. All accesses to/from the car parks must be accessible to disabled customers and such access must not be unreasonably difficult. Auxiliary aids should be provided where necessary and physical barriers can be overcome by providing new or alternate access points. The car parks in the Old Town are easily accessed and, generally, comply with the Disability Discrimination Act.

The total number of parking spaces marked for specific use by 'blue badge' holders in the Primett Road/Church Lane car parks is 5, made up as follows: -

Waitrose	5	out of 80 spaces
Middle Car Park	0	out of 80 spaces
Car/Lorry Park	0	out of 80 spaces
Church Lane	0	out of 50 spaces

4.6.3 Meeting the Need

The provision of parking spaces marked for specific use by 'blue badge' holders in the Waitrose car park is above the current national recommendation (4 blue badge holder spaces per 100 spaces). However, if national guidelines are to be followed, at least 3 'blue badge' holder spaces need to be incorporated in the 'middle' Primett Road car park and two in the Church Lane car parks. Although the Lorry Park is also used as a *daytime* car park, it is not recommended that any 'blue badge' holder spaces be created in this parking area because of its dual role and the potential for parking conflicts between cars and lorries.

The 5 No. spaces that already exist in the 'Waitrose' car park will be maintained and the Council will assess the need for blue badge holder spaces in the 'middle' Primett Road car parks and the smaller car parks off Church Lane. Furthermore, if it is decided that 'blue badge' holder spaces should be provided in the Church Lane car parks, the Council will undertake improvements to the accesses to these smaller car parks.

If it is decided that parking charges should apply in the Primett Road and/or Church Lane car parks, any person in possession of a 'blue badge' will qualify for a Car Park Season Ticket at the applicable concessionary price.

4.6.4 Off-Street (Car Parks) Parking Provision for Disabled People - Strategies for Achieving Objective 4

1. **The Council will assess the need to provide additional "orange/blue badge" holder parking spaces in the Primett Road and Church Lane car parks and will constantly monitor the off-street parking service to ensure that it is accessible to all users.**

2. **If as a result of that assessment, it is decided that 'blue badge' holder spaces should be provided in the Church Lane car parks, the Council will improve the access to/from these smaller car parks.**

3. **If parking charges are introduced at the Primett Road and Church Lane Car Parks, the Council will extend the existing Town Centre 'concessionary' car park season ticket scheme to these car parks.**

4.7   Commuter & Overspill Parking in Residential Streets

4.7.1 Objective 5

To reduce the parking nuisance caused by migration of both long-term and short-term parking to residential streets adjacent to the High Street, Old Town.

4.7.2 Measures for Dealing with the Problem

At present some on-street parking takes place in residential streets adjacent to the High Street. This is a combination of both short and long stay and occurs largely because the spaces in the High Street and surrounding car parks are generally fully occupied. Even though this may not be true all of the time there is probably a general perception that spaces will be difficult to find and it will be easier and quicker to park in the neighbouring streets. The strategies suggested in this document are unlikely to reduce this pressure entirely. The move towards more short stay spaces at the expense of long stay and the possible introduction of charges in off-street car parks will, if no measures are taken to prevent it, increase parking in residential streets.

The residential element of this parking strategy sets out the measures that the Council may implement to deal with overspill parking from the High Street, Railway Station and Town Centre. In particular, those streets prone to long stay parking migration may be incorporated into a Controlled Parking Zone.

4.7.3 Commuter & Overspill Parking in Old Town Residential Streets – Strategy for Achieving Objective 5

The Council will use the same strategies developed for Residential Areas for ensuring that residential streets in close proximity to the High Street are free of commuter and other overspill parking.

4.8   Parking Restrictions - Enforcement

4.8.1   Objective 6

To ensure that any parking restrictions within a Controlled Parking Zone introduced in the Old Town are effectively enforced.

4.7.3   Enforcement

The Police's decision to withdraw the Traffic Warden Service from April 2004 could undermine efforts to keep streets within the Old Town free of parking obstructions. The residential element of this parking strategy (*Clause 3.11.3, page 51*) stated that in view of the Police's decision to withdraw the Traffic Warden Service in Hertfordshire together with the increasing need to introduce parking restrictions in residential streets to control indiscriminate parking, the Borough Council would have to consider taking on the enforcement role by assuming the powers under the 1991 Road Traffic Act.

At the time of drafting this strategy a detailed feasibility study was undertaken to determine whether or not the Council should apply for the above powers and assume responsibility for the enforcement of parking restrictions. Following the study the Council applied for and successfully obtained the necessary powers.

Previously, the Police could have enforced a Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ). However, having now become the parking enforcement authority, it would be for the Council to consider the introduction of any Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs).

The enforcement of any existing or proposed parking restrictions in the Old Town is now the responsibility of the Council.

4.7.4   Enforcement – Strategy for Achieving Objective 6

In view of the fact that the Council has assumed responsibility for parking enforcement, the enforcement of any parking restrictions in the Old Town will be incorporated into a Town-wide enforcement regime.

4.9 On-street Parking Provision for Disabled People

4.9.1 Objective 7

To seek to improve the provision of on-street parking facilities in the High Street for "orange/blue badge" holders.

4.9.2 Current Situation

There are currently no designated spaces for orange/blue badge holders in the High Street. In the past this type of parking has been accommodated on the main carriageway at the kerbside. However the introduction of a combined parking and loading ban in much of the High Street has removed this facility.

In those areas where the two-hour limit applies orange/blue badge holders can park for periods longer than the limit permits. However, this is reliant on a space being available. In the southern part of the High Street the chance of an orange/blue badge holder finding any space for parking is much less likely.

4.9.3 Meeting the Need

In those areas where the two-hour limit applies, the Council intends to designate a proportion of the spaces "disabled bays" thus increasing the chance of a space being free.

If parking controls are introduced on the unrestricted section of parking along the High Street, sufficient "disabled bays" will be incorporated into the scheme.

4.9.4 On-street Parking Provision for Disabled People – Strategy for Achieving Objective 7

The Council will ensure that sufficient parking spaces are provided in the High Street for use by "orange/blue badge" holders and will constantly monitor the parking facilities to ensure that they are accessible to all users.

4.10 High Street (North of James Way)

4.10.1 Objective 8

To reduce the detrimental impact of the James Way/Lytton Way gyratory system on the north section of the High Street.

4.10.2 Removal of the Gyratory System

The considerations relating to on-street parking have thus far concentrated on the High Street south of James Way. However, that section of the High Street comprising part of the one-way gyratory system, north of James Way, is an integral part of the Old Town and also accommodates some on-street parking. This parking is difficult to access due to the volume of traffic using the road and has the potential to cause safety problems (although the present accident record is relatively good) due to conflict with the relatively free flowing traffic.

Old Town Gyratory

It has been a wish of this Council for many years to see the through traffic removed from this northern section of High Street. Whilst it has been recognised by the County Council as being desirable (a scheme was included on the reserve list of the County Council's former Transport Policies and Programme), funds were never allocated. Nevertheless, the Council still believes that the removal of the gyratory system from the Bowling Green area of the High Street will provide significant highway safety and environmental improvements to this area. Consequently, the Council will continue to promote the removal of the gyratory system and will ask the County Council to include a bid in their 2006-2011 Local Transport Plan for the required funding to implement an appropriate scheme.

If successful this should enable an effective reallocation of highway space to be carried out, which will enable improvements to the on-street parking provision to be implemented.

4.10.3 High Street (North of James Way) – Strategies for Achieving Objective 8

The Council will ask the County Council to include a bid in their 2006-2011 Local Transport Plan for funding to implement a highway improvement scheme that removes the existing 'gyratory' system from the north end of the High Street.

4.11   High Street (South of James Way)

4.11.1   Objective 9

To retain vehicular access to the High Street and provide a properly managed parking regime, yet at the same time improve highway safety and create an improved environment for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users.

4.11.2   Function of the High Street

That part of the High Street, south of James Way fulfils many functions. It is an important commercial centre and is served by complementary parking. However, many people, including traders, see it as an essential thoroughfare. In the early to mid-nineties the High Street was put forward as a candidate for funding from the County Council's former Town Centre Improvement budget. As part of this process detailed consultation was carried out relating to the scale and nature of any future scheme. It was clear that the vast majority were of the opinion that any on-street improvements should be in keeping the general appearance of the street. Pedestrianisation was rejected and it was clear that any proposals to introduce conventional forms of traffic calming would have been met by resistance.

4.11.3   Highway Safety

The High Street is at present dominated by the car both in terms of parking provision and traffic usage. In particular, the end-on parking alongside the carriageway poses safety concerns with conflicts between reversing vehicles and through traffic. In addition many of the parking spaces are very steep and there is a lack of conformity in depth. This means that some vehicles with a large overhang risk grounding due to the gradient. Other vehicles are parked parallel to the kerb causing further parking confusion and hazards.

4.11.4   Improving The Current Situation

Whilst it is not the intention of the Council to promote any scheme that prejudices access to the High Street there is a need for changes that not only significantly improve highway safety but also improves the environment for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport.

The parking situation along the High Street is a significant factor in compromising highway safety and, therefore, the Council believes that there is merit in introducing a revised parking control regime at the same time as implementing appropriate highway improvements.

A comprehensive scheme that achieves this and recognises the unique qualities of the High Street is required that at the same time provides up to date and properly managed parking controls.

4.11.5 High Street – Strategies for Achieving Objective 9

1. **The Council will promote a comprehensive scheme in the High Street that balances the need for vehicular access and parking provision with the necessary improvements to encourage walking, cycling and public transport patronage**

2. **The Council will seek to identify appropriate sources of funding for implementing the above scheme and will also ask the County Council to include a bid in their 2006-2011 Local Transport Plan on the basis that the scheme will remove the existing highway safety hazards that exist along the High Street.**

4.12 Development and Regeneration (Commercial)

4.12.1 Objective 10

To ensure that the High Street remains a thriving commercial centre, providing local shopping facilities and employment opportunities both for the immediate residential area and the town as a whole, and to preserve and enhance the quality of the environment of the High Street area (objectives taken from the Stevenage District Plan Second Review)

4.12.2 Parking Split

The parking strategy for the High Street and surrounding Old Town area is consistent with and complements these objectives. A review of the split between long and short-stay parking provision with the aim of providing more short-stay parking for shoppers and visitors will help maintain the viability of the shops, pubs and restaurants. The strategy will also ensure that some long stay parking is retained to ensure that the Old Town remains attractive to office occupiers.

4.12.3 Developments

There are no major development sites identified for commercial development in the Old Town. However, new development will arise from re-developments and changes of use of existing buildings. The level of parking provision permitted with any new developments is expected to be less than that which would have been permitted in the past due to the move from minimum to maximum parking standards as required by Government policy. The Council's draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on vehicle parking provision has identified most of the Old Town Area as being in a zone where a range between 25-50% of the maximum parking standards will be sought. This is because of the accessibility of the Old Town by non-car modes and because of the need to preserve the historic environment. Reduced parking provision in new developments may result in additional pressures on the existing public car parks. The retention of the existing level of public parking provision and the Council's intention under this parking strategy to review the split between short and long stay parking will complement the change in approach towards parking provision in new developments.

Where developments provide parking that can be used by the public, the shared use of this parking will be sought to allow public parking spaces to be used more efficiently. This is particularly relevant in the Old Town where there is a mix of daytime and evening activities that would facilitate the shared use of parking. Any new public car parks provided through new developments will need to have management/control measures/charging regimes, which are comparable with the Council's own car parks to ensure that the Council's parking strategy is not compromised. This is consistent with the approach taken in the Town Centre.

4.12.4 Strategies for Achieving Objective 10

The Council will use the same strategies developed for the Town Centre to meet the objectives relating to Commercial Development and Regeneration in the High Street.

4.13 Development (Residential)

4.13.1 Objective 11

> **To introduce maximum residential parking standards for new developments in the High Street and surrounding Old Town area which will be consistent with the objectives of the Parking Strategy, whilst according with Government policy**

4.13.2 Developments

Residential development may increase in the Old Town High Street area as a result of conversions of the upper floors of commercial premises or through re-developments of sites outside the main commercial area. As the Old Town High Street area is close to where the majority of Stevenage's facilities and services are located as well as passenger transport facilities, residents are expected to have a lower demand for car use than most other areas of Stevenage. Consequently, the Council's draft SPG has identified the High Street area as an area where reduced parking provision for residential development will be sought. The approach taken towards residential parking in the High Street area will, therefore, be similar to that taken in the Town Centre i.e. seeking the shared use of public car parks and permitting car free residential developments where appropriate, but still allowing full on-site provision up to the relevant parking standard. (*Cross-reference to Town Centre residential parking strategy – section2.12*).

4.13.3 The Stevenage District Plan Second Review

The Stevenage District Plan Second Review has allocated several large housing sites in the Old Town residential area as new housing allocations i.e. Fairview Road Playing Fields, Fairview Road Allotments and Walkern Road allotments. The approach taken to parking provision in these developments will be the same as that set out in the *residential* element of this parking strategy and in the Council's SPG on parking provision as there is not considered to be a justification for a different approach in the Old Town.

### 4.13.4 Strategy for Achieving Objective 11

> **The Council will: -**
> - **Use the same strategies developed for the Town Centre for determining parking standards associated with residential development in the High Street (or close proximity).**
> - **Use the same strategies developed for residential areas for determining parking standards associated with residential development in other areas of the Old Town.**

5. NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES

5.1 General

5.1.1 Local residents value neighbourhood centres highly for their convenience and accessibility and this factor is particularly important for those whose mobility is restricted, either physically, socially or economically. They also regard centres as an essential focus for community activity.

5.1.2 In general, the centres are provided with ample car parking, but in some cases this appears to be under-utilised suggesting that there may be over-provision of parking facilities.

5.1.3 There have been significant changes at some centres. Community uses have increased, especially in areas that have recently benefited from regeneration. Security measures, including CCTV, have helped reduce crime and nuisance where implemented and landscaping has helped to soften the otherwise harsh environment. Further improvements in security have resulted from the "neighbourhood warden" scheme.

5.1.4 The principles to which the new town planners appear to have worked are still central to contemporary urban planning. The Urban Design Compendium, published in 2000, sets out advice on facilitating movement in urban areas and, in particular the distribution of neighbourhood facilities to ensure they are accessible:

- *'Local facilities bring residents together, reinforce community and discourage car use. So the first component of a movement framework should be the walking distances from facilities. The quality of the routes is important, especially where there are obstructions, such as busy roads or railway lines. To give walking priority means putting everyday experience of the street first on the agenda.*

- *People should be able to walk in 2-3 minutes (250 metres) to the post box or telephone box: the newsagents should be within 5 minutes (400 metres). There should be local shops, the bus stop, the health centre … within a walking distance of (say) 10 minutes (800 metres).'*

5.1.5 A recently completed MORI survey of Stevenage Residents indicated that 25% of those questioned used the centres daily, 27% weekly, with the remainder less often.

Figure 1: % Usage of Neighbourhood Centres

Daily Shopping 25%

Weekly Shopping 27%

Less frequent Shopping 48%
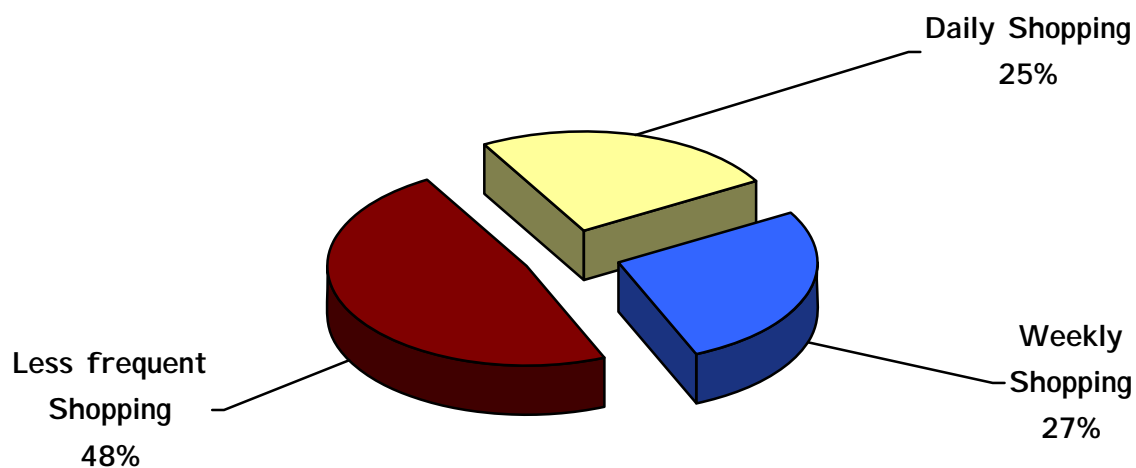
5.1.6 When asked what would encourage residents to use the centres more often, 40% cited a wider range of shops and 28% better quality shops and 3% mentioned more convenient routes to walk or cycle. 7% mentioned better bus connections. The number of residents citing 'parking' or 'improved parking' as an issue was insignificant.

5.1.7 In 1998, as part of the District Plan review a series of Focus Groups were undertaken. One of the key observations made at the focus groups was that if neighbourhood centres are to mean anything in future, they have to be more than shopping centres. They also need to be social centres where people meet and interact, by investment in community centres and other social and health facilities. Again, the Focus Groups do not appear to have considered parking at the centres to be a significant issue.

5.1.8 On the other hand, a consultation with shop traders in 2001 indicated that parking provision had a major influence on their long-term plan to continue trading within the parade. 175 traders were consulted and a 40% return was achieved. The traders were asked to place six items in priority order. One of the items was '*parking provision'* and 31% of respondents put car parking as their second priority whilst 18% nominated it as the most important influence on their decision to continue trading. One trader in Marymead considered that parking provision at that location was inadequate.

5.1.9 On the basis of the above, it appears that the vitality and commercial viability of the neighbourhood centres is perhaps less to do with parking provision and more to do with convenience, range of facilities including the provision of integrated community facilities and accessibility from nearby residential areas. However, many traders perceive parking to be a major factor in influencing them to continue trading.

5.2 Parking Issues

5.2.1 There are fewer parking problems in the Neighbourhood Centres than in the Town Centre, High Street and residential areas. The parking strategy for the Neighbourhood Centres, therefore, concentrates on the following parking issues: -

- Matching parking provision to parking needs taking into account the facilities provided at each centre.

- Establishing whether any parking areas or parts thereof can be considered as surplus to requirements to enable them to be released for alternative uses.

- Controlling any misuse within the car parks.

- Ensuring that 'servicing' provision matches 'servicing' needs

- Dealing with any future development - parking standards

5.3 Parking Provision/Needs

5.3.1 Objective 1

To provide a disincentive to car borne trips to the neighbourhood centres and to ensure that any future re-generation/redevelopment of these centres can be facilitated.

5.3.2 Current Parking Provision

Most centres are located at the heart of residential areas and have good pedestrian/cycle links from adjacent residential areas. This helps to encourage residents to walk/cycle to their nearest neighbourhood centre instead of using their cars. In terms of public parking facilities, there may be over provision at some of the larger neighbourhood centres, which tends to encourage car use for relatively short distances although it is recognised that many people visit the centres when using their cars for other purposes. To some extent this contributes to local congestion/conflicts on the adjacent highways. It is likely that other centres only have adequate public parking or even an under-provision in some cases. Where such situations exist, the Council is unlikely to increase the current parking provision.

Generally, the level of public parking facilities provided at most of the neighbourhood centres coupled with the fact that a high proportion of the parking is 'short-stay' in nature means that parking problems in nearby residential streets is not a significant issue that needs to be addressed through this strategy.

5.3.3 Servicing & Garage Areas

Many of the neighbourhood centres have servicing areas for operational needs as well as parking provision for staff. Again, this may be over-provided at some centres and further investigative work is required to see if this provision can be rationalised. The possibility of a voluntary agreement to restrict delivery/servicing times may also be investigated.

Other centres (e.g. The Oval, The Glebe) have garage courts attached. A reduction in the provision of garages or even replacement may be needed to facilitate any future regeneration in the neighbourhood centres. Their occupancy levels and their suitability for retention will need to be investigated as part of this strategy.

5.3.4 Addressing the Issues

The Council has been relatively successful in reducing the number of void units at the neighbourhood centres and generating additional income from lettings, both of which have helped to improve their viability. Clearly, the traders perceive parking provision as a major influence on them continuing to trade and, therefore, a reduction in the parking spaces provided could affect the future viability of some centres.

A reduction in parking provision may well achieve the aim of reducing car borne trips to the centres but this could also result in a significant increase in the number of void units making the centres even less attractive to customers and, perhaps, more importantly to traders. If on the other hand there is a need to rationalise the parking

provision at each centre for the purpose of releasing land for centre re-generation then this is likely to have less of an impact on the future viability of shops within a re-vamped centre.

Therefore, in determining the maximum parking facilities that should be provided at each of the major neighbourhood centres (consistent with the parking standards that would currently apply to new developments of a similar scale) a balanced approach will be taken so that any changes to parking provision does not prejudice the future viability of the centre. In determining the appropriate parking requirements, each centre will be looked at individually and a flexible approach adopted. In particular, requirements for staff parking will be allowed for in the criteria for determining the required parking facilities.

5.3.5 Parking Provision/Needs - Achieving Objective 1 (Statement of Intent)

1. **The Council will determine the maximum parking facilities that should be provided at each of the major neighbourhood centres consistent with the parking standards that would currently apply to new developments of a similar scale whilst bearing in mind the need to ensure the economic well-being, future viability and attractiveness of each centre.**

2. **In determining the appropriate parking facilities that should be provided, the requirements for staff parking as well as the parking demand generated by any community and/or other non-retail facilities provided at the centre will be taken into account.**

3. **The Council may consider removing any parking areas or part of a parking area, identified as surplus to requirements from the above exercise in order to make such areas available for the future re-generation/re-development of the neighbourhood centres.**

4. **The parking provision at any centres, identified through the above exercise as being inadequate is unlikely to be increased but the Council may, instead, examine ways of improving throughputs and parking layouts.**

5. **Where garage courts form part of the Neighbourhood Centre, their occupancy levels and suitability for retention will be investigated in order to determine whether they can be replaced or the level of provision reduced to facilitate any future re-generation/re-development in the neighbourhood centres.**

6. **The Council will examine the areas currently set aside for servicing to determine the scope for rationalisation so that any future re-generation/re-development in the neighbourhood centres can be facilitated.**

5.4   Parking Provision for People with Disabilities

5.4.1 Objective 2:

> **To seek to improve the parking service provided at Neighbourhood Centres by ensuring that the service is accessible to all and that sufficient parking spaces are provided for use by "orange/blue badge" holders.**

5.4.2 Current Provision

The Disability Discrimination Act places responsibilities on all service providers to ensure that access to their service is available to all. All accesses to/from the car parks must be accessible to disabled customers and such access must not be unreasonably difficult. Auxiliary aids should be provided where necessary and physical barriers can be overcome by providing new or alternate access points.

Most of the car parks adjacent to neighbourhood centres are easily accessed and, generally, comply with the Disability Discrimination Act.

5.4.3 Meeting the Need

The current national recommendation for the provision of parking spaces marked for specific use by 'blue badge' holders is for 4 blue badge holder spaces per 100 spaces. Although some of the major neighbourhood centres do have 'blue badge' holder spaces, it is felt that the national recommended standard should apply at all the centres subject to a minimum provision of 1.

The remoteness of the neighbourhood centres relative to the Town Centre and the fact that some of the parking areas are not adopted as highway means that enforcement of the blue badge holder spaces is either minimal or non-existent. However, general observance of these parking spaces, where marked out is reasonable, and the enforcement issue will not deter the Council from making such provision.

The strategy for residential areas suggests that a detailed feasibility study into adopting the powers available under the 1991 Road Traffic Act should be undertaken. These powers would allow the Council to take on enforcement of parking restrictions under decriminalisation. If the feasibility study indicates that this Council should apply for those powers and the application is successful, enforcement of the blue badge holder spaces at the neighbourhood centres could be included in any enforcement regime set up irrespective of whether or not the parking areas are designated as highway.

The Council will also undertake a survey of the routes between the parking areas and centre facilities and, if necessary, will implement a programme of improvements such as ramps, dropped kerbs, hand-railing, tactile paving etc to ensure that access for people with disabilities is not unreasonably difficult.

5.4.4 Parking Provision for People with Disabilities: Achieving Objective 2

1. The Council will ensure that the number of "orange/blue badge" holder parking spaces at the Neighbourhood Centres complies with current national recommendations subject to a minimum of 1.

2. The Council will undertake a survey of the routes between the parking areas and centre facilities and, if necessary, will implement a programme of improvements such as ramps, dropped kerbs, hand-railing, tactile paving etc to ensure that access for people with disabilities is not unreasonably difficult.

5.5   Status of Neighbourhood Centre car parks

5.5.1   Objective 3

To rationalise the status of the Neighbourhood Centre car parks in order to create a single and consistent 'management' and 'enforcement' regime.

5.5.2   Current Status

Some of the car parks associated with the neighbourhood centres are designated as highway and, as such, are the responsibility of the highway authority, namely Hertfordshire County Council, to manage and maintain. The other car parks are non-highway, either privately owned (e.g. Emperor's Head) or owned by the Council and managed by the Council's Estates Division.

The status of the car parks at the Neighbourhood Centres is as follows: -

Area	Centre	Car Park Location	Status		
			Highway	**SBC Owned**	**Private**
Pin Green	Oval	Front		■	
		Side		■	
		Rear		■	
	Archer Road	Main (front)		■	
	Lonsdale Road	Side of PH		■	
		Main	■		
St. Nicholas	Canterbury Way	Front	■		
		Rear (1)		■	
		Rear (2)	■		
Chells	Glebe	Front	■		
		South Side	■		
		North Side	■		
		Rear		■	
	Austen Paths	Main (front)		■	
	Mobbsbury Way	Main (front)	■		
Broadwater	Oaks Cross	Main		■	
	Roebuck	Side	1/2	1/2	
	Marymead	Main (front)	■		
	Kenilworth Cl	Main (front)		■	
Shephall	The Hyde	Main (front)	■		
		Oxleys Rd*			■
	Peartree	Main (front)		■	
	Burwell Rd	Main	■		
Bedwell	Bedwell Cres	Main	■		
Symonds Grn	Filey Close	Front		■	
		Rear		■	
Poplars	Sainsbury's	Main			■
	(Comm Ctre)	Side		■	
Chells Manor	Emperor's Head	Rear			■

The Oxleys Rd car park is situated behind the Hyde Shops and although it is owned by English Partnerships it is mainly used by SBC staff (The Hyde Office).

- Lay-bys alongside the carriageway provide the parking for the small sub-centres at Rockingham Way and Popple Way. Both areas form part of the highway.

- The service areas associated with each centre are not shown in the above table. Where the Council owns the car parks, the service areas are also Council owned non-highways.

5.5.3 Rationalisation of Status

Clearly, it is desirable to rationalise the status of the majority of Neighbourhood Centre car parks in order to create a single 'management' regime. The highway status of those car parks currently designated as 'highway' could be removed, subject to the agreement of Hertfordshire County Council, by making an application to the Magistrate's Court under the Highways Act 1980. If such applications were successful, the management and control of the car parks would revert to the Council as freehold owners. The removal of highway status would mean that maintenance liability (surfacing, lighting and boundary walls) would transfer from the highway authority (HCC) to the Council. In return for taking on this liability, the Council would expect the County Council to adopt equivalent areas of public 'non-highway' thoroughfares currently maintained by the Council. The anticipated maintenance costs involved would be carefully analysed to ensure that the Council would not be disadvantaged by this arrangement.

There is no certainty that any application to a Magistrates Court for a stopping up order on any neighbourhood centre car park would be successful. The removal of the highway status from a neighbourhood centre car park could also have rating implications (i.e. rates may be payable in respect of car parks which are not part of the public highway).

In view of the above, the Council intends to undertake further investigation work to determine the likely financial implications for the Council of the removal of highway status from those Neighbourhood Centre car parks currently designated as highway.

Thereafter, provided it is appropriate to do so practicably and financially, the Council will, in conjunction with the highway authority (Hertfordshire County Council), investigate the feasibility of removing the highway status from those neighbourhood centre car parks currently designated as public highway. This would allow the management and maintenance responsibility to be brought under the control of one authority, namely the Council.

The removal of the highway status from the car parks would help facilitate the future redevelopment of a neighbourhood centre. However, should an application for such removal at Magistrate's Court fail or not be considered feasible, any stopping up of highways forming part of the neighbourhood centres could also be progressed through planning legislation at the same time as any centre was being re-developed.

5.5.4 Control/Enforcement

Where the parking areas are designated as highway, they are effectively covered by the Highways Act 1980 and the appropriate Road Traffic Acts. This dictates how and by whom any necessary enforcement action can be taken. For example, enforcement of 'blue badge' holder parking spaces in car parks, designated as highway, would currently be the responsibility of the Police. Furthermore, the introduction of any other

restrictions is limited by the powers available under the Highways Act 1980 and the Road Traffic Act (usually by way of Traffic Regulation Orders). This makes it difficult to deal with misuse of the car parks, for example 'cars for sale' parked long-term or overnight in the car parks, illegal parking in designated 'blue badge' holder spaces.

The advantage of bringing most of the neighbourhood centre car parks under the control of the Council (by removing the highway status where required) is that the Council, as owner, could then consider the introduction of 'Conditions of Use', which could involve 'wheel clamping' for any breach of those conditions. This type of control is more *'instant'* than controls available through the Highways Act and Road Traffic Acts.

In the event that the Council does not consider it appropriate to apply for the highway status to be removed from the 'highway' car parks, it will, in conjunction with the Hertfordshire County Council and the Police, use all the powers available under the Highways and Road Traffic Regulation Acts to introduce appropriate parking controls (such as limited waiting). Such controls will either be enforceable by the Police or by the Council if it decides to apply and is successful in acquiring enforcement powers under parking decriminalisation.

5.5.5 Status of Neighbourhood Centre Car Parks: Achieving Objective 3

1. **Provided it is appropriate to do so, practicably and financially, the Council will, in conjunction with Hertfordshire County Council, investigate the feasibility of removing the highway status from those neighbourhood centre car parks currently designated as public highway in order to bring management and maintenance responsibility under the control of one authority, namely the Council.**

2. **If the highway status of the above car parks is successfully removed, the Council will expect Hertfordshire County Council to adopt as highway an equivalent area of non-highway thoroughfares currently under the control of the Council.**

3. **If, through investigations, it is determined that the removal of the highway status from those neighbourhood centre car parks currently designated as highway is not practicable or possible, the Council will, in conjunction with other appropriate authorities, consider the implementation of controls, permissible under either the Road Traffic Regulation or the Highways Acts, to prevent the car parks from being misused.**

4. **Where the car parks are not designated as highway and/or where the highways status is successfully removed, the Council will develop 'Conditions of Use' as a means of controlling use of the car parks and, in particular, to prevent them from being misused.**

5.6   Development and Regeneration

5.6.1 Objective 4

To ensure that a mix of uses is promoted at the Neighbourhood Centres in order to maintain and enhance their use and attractiveness.

5.6.2 District Plan

The Stevenage District Plan Second Review considers that neighbourhood centres have an important role to play because they enable people to meet a number of their daily needs within walking distance. The primary role of neighbourhood centres is considered to be provision of local convenience shopping facilities, but it is considered important that a mix of uses is promoted in order to maintain and enhance the use of the centres. The plan also acknowledges that a review of the neighbourhood centres should be undertaken with a view to refocusing their role to underpin future viability.

The District Plan policies can be summarised as follows:

- Large and small neighbourhood centres perform different roles and therefore need a different policy approach

- Large centres will cater for a range of shopping and local service needs within which convenience shopping will predominate

- Small centres have been affected more by changes in shopping behaviour and are under greater threat. Other uses will be considered where it can be shown that convenience shopping is no longer viable

- Redevelopment of neighbourhood centres may present the best way of making more efficient use of the land, however this will only be acceptable if shopping, other services and community centres are retained

- Redevelopment should provide local facilities rather than town-wide facilities

An internal report (July 2002) has been prepared which provides a position statement on the Neighbourhood Centres, from physical, environmental, social and economic perspectives in order to identify the scope for rationalisation and renewal. This will form the basis of a draft strategy for the regeneration of the Neighbourhood Centres, which is consistent with the objectives set out in the Stevenage District Plan Second Review and this Parking Strategy.

5.6.3 Draft Strategy For Neighbourhood Centre Regeneration

A draft strategy for the regeneration of the Neighbourhood Centres may put forward a case for comprehensive redevelopment of certain centres - either to provide an entirely new neighbourhood centre or to provide an alternative use, such as housing, on the same site. In the former case, this would be where refurbishment could not be carried out successfully because of fundamental deficiencies in design and layout. Redevelopment would provide an opportunity to redesign the centre according to modern urban design principles and adjust the mix of uses to reflect predicted future market trends and social requirements. This would almost certainly involve a reduction in the number of retail units perhaps releasing land to achieve other Council objectives, such as the unlocking of capacity for new housing on previously developed land.

Parking provision at the Neighbourhood Centres is likely to have a significant role to play in any regeneration/redevelopment proposals that may emerge in the future in that any surplus parking provision identified could be a significant source of development land for regeneration. In any event, where a new development arises and/or changes of use of existing buildings occurs as a result of such regeneration, the level of parking provision provided is expected to be less than that which would have been permitted in the past.

Providing a disincentive to car borne trips to the neighbourhood centres will complement the change in approach towards parking provision in any new developments that occurs as a result of implementing a Neighbourhood Centre Regeneration Strategy.

The Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance will be used to determine parking standards for any development that may be provided at any existing neighbourhood centre through a Neighbourhood Centre Regeneration Strategy.

5.6.4 Development and Regeneration: Achieving Objective 4

The Council will develop a draft strategy for the regeneration of the Neighbourhood Centres, which is consistent with the objectives set out in the Stevenage District Plan Second Review and the Stevenage Parking Strategy.

6. EMPLOYMENT AREAS

6.1 General

6.1.1 The two main employment areas are adjacent to Gunnelswood Road and Wedgewood Way, Pin Green – these are known as the Gunnelswood Employment Area and the Pin Green Employment Area in the District Plan. Although the Town Centre and parts of the Old Town might also be considered as important employment areas, these two areas are already covered in the Town Centre and High Street (Old Town) Draft Parking Strategies.

6.1.2 There are excellent road links to the two employment areas and, generally, very few parking problems occur. Parking restrictions protect most of the streets within each area, which significantly reduces the potential for on-street parking obstructions. It is important for these roads to be kept relatively clear of parked vehicles in order to ensure the efficient movement of goods and equipment.

6.1.3 The employment areas are reasonably well planned in that they are accessed direct off the principal road network without the necessity for vehicles to travel along or park in nearby residential roads. Most of the companies based in the two employment areas have sufficient on-site parking for employees, visitors/customers and any goods vehicles used as a part of their business. Therefore, there are no significant overspill parking problems in nearby residential areas that need to be addressed through this section of the Parking Strategy.

6.1.4 The draft parking strategy for Employment Areas, therefore, focuses on: -

- Enforcement of existing/future parking restrictions in light of the Hertfordshire Constabulary's intention to withdraw the Traffic Warden Service from April 2004.
- Seeking to reduce car borne work trips and, hence, parking requirements.
- Dealing with any future development - parking standards.

6.2 Parking Issues

6.2.1 There are fewer parking problems in the Employment Areas than in the Town Centre, High Street and residential areas. The parking strategy for the Neighbourhood Centres, therefore, concentrates on the following parking issues: -

- Ensuring that roads are kept relatively clear of parked vehicles for the efficient movement of goods and equipment
- Seeking to reduce car borne work trips and, hence, existing parking requirements/conflicts and peak-hour congestion.
- Dealing with any future development - parking standards.

6.3 HGV Parking

6.3.1 Generally, HGV vehicles, associated with any businesses in the two main employment areas, park on-site and not in the Old Town Lorry Park. Therefore, there are no current issues relating to HGV parking in the Employment Areas that need to be addressed through this section of the strategy.

6.4   Enforcement of Parking Restrictions

6.4.1 Objective 5

> **To ensure that access to and the efficient movement of goods within the two employment areas is not unduly impeded.**

6.4.2 Parking Restrictions – Enforcement

The Police's decision to withdraw the Traffic Warden Service from April 2004 could undermine efforts to keep streets within the employment areas free of parking obstructions. A significant increase in indiscriminate on-street parking and, hence, congestion could impede the efficient movement of goods and, as a result, the Council's efforts to encourage existing employers to remain in Stevenage and/or attract new investment in both areas could be undermined.

The residential element of this parking strategy (*Clause 3.11.3, page 51*) stated that in view of the Police's decision to withdraw the Traffic Warden Service in Hertfordshire, the Borough Council would have to consider taking on the enforcement role by applying for and assuming the powers under the 1991 Road Traffic Act.

At the time of drafting this strategy a detailed feasibility study was undertaken to determine whether or not the Council should apply for the above powers and assume responsibility for the enforcement of parking restrictions. Following the study the Council applied for and successfully obtained the necessary powers.

This will allow enforcement of parking restrictions in the Employment Areas to be carried out by the Council.

6.4.3 Enforcement of Parking Restrictions: Achieving Objective 5

> **In view of the fact that the Council has assumed responsibility for parking enforcement, the enforcement of any parking restrictions on the main streets within the employment areas will be incorporated in any town-wide enforcement regime.**

6.5   Green Transport Plans

6.5.1 Objective 6

To seek to reduce car borne work trips and, hence, existing parking requirements/conflicts as well as peak-hour congestion in the Employment Areas.

6.5.2 Green Transport Plans

Many of the major employers are currently developing their own 'green' transport plans in order to not only reduce the demand for on-site parking for their employees but also to help reduce road congestion during the rush-hour periods.

Generally, green travel plans promote greater use of walking, cycling, car-share and/or car-pooling schemes and passenger transport. In order for such travel plans to be successful, employers need to provide incentives for their employees in the form of free or subsidised travel permits for use on passenger transport, secure cycle storage and showering facilities as well as efficient management/co-ordination of any car sharing/pooling scheme.

6.5.3 Alternative Modes of Travel

Unlike the Town Centre where the Council sets the parking charge, the Council does not have the same ability to implement measures in the largely private parking facilities within the Employment Areas that could be used as parking management tools. However, the Council will use its influence, in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council, to ensure that the cycling/walking routes to and within the employment areas are safe and well maintained. Perhaps the most important incentive to discourage the use of the car for travel to/from work is the provision of a high quality and frequent bus service as an alternative. Although reasonable bus services are provided in Stevenage, these tend to concentrate on routes to/from the Town Centre. The level of bus services to the employment areas has reduced significantly in the last 20 years or so.

In 2002, the Hertfordshire County Council launched its Bus and Intalink Strategies. Over time, both strategies should help promote better quality buses, improved bus services throughout the county and new initiatives relating to through bus/rail ticketing. The Council will work in partnership with the County Council and bus/rail operators to help implement the above strategies to secure *improved/better quality bus services* with particular emphasis on improving services to/from the Employment Areas.

6.5.4 Major Developments

The District Plan policies provide for seeking financial contributions from new developments in the Employment Areas towards improvements to bus services/facilities and that developers will be expected to submit green travel plans and demonstrate how they will be implemented. The Stevenage West development, should it proceed, will provide the opportunity to improve bus services from the Town Centre to the Gunnelswood Employment Area in terms of routes and frequency of

services because bus services between the Town Centre and the development will need to pass through the Employment Area.

6.5.5 Green Transport Plans – Strategy for Achieving Objective 6

In order to encourage a modal shift from the car to alternative forms of transport for 'work travel' to/from the Employment Areas, the Council will: -

● Through the Stevenage Transport Forum and other such partnership forums, encourage employers to develop and implement 'green' travel plans.

● Encourage employers to form local partnerships with bus operators in order to provide employee incentives for using buses for work travel.

● Continue working in partnership with the Hertfordshire County Council to implement their Bus and *Intalink* Strategies with particular emphasis on seeking improvements in the quality and frequency of bus services to/from the Employment Areas.

● Through joint working with Hertfordshire County Council, seek to ensure that those pedestrian/cycleway routes to and within the employment areas are well lit, well maintained and safe.

● Will, in the event of a park-and-ride facility being provided in the town, discuss with major employers the feasibility of extending the service to also cover the Employment Areas.

● Work with Hertfordshire County Council and bus operators to identify how bus services to the Gunnelswood Employment Area could be improved if the Stevenage West development proceeds.

● Seek contributions from new developments towards improving bus services in the Employment Areas where appropriate.

6.6 Development & Regeneration (Industrial & Commercial)

6.6.1 Objective 7

To determine the parking standards that should apply to any development in the two main employment areas consistent with meeting the employment objectives of the District Plan.

6.6.2 District Plan - Employment Objectives.

(a) To ensure sufficient land and premises are available in Stevenage for meeting development needs that will facilitate economic growth in accordance with the County Economic Development Strategy, provide job opportunities for the local workforce and maintain and strengthen Stevenage's sub-regional employment role;

(b) To encourage the continued diversification of the local economy through broadening the range of employment opportunities provided and reducing dependency on a small number of large firms;

(c) To contribute towards achieving a broad balance between the skills required by companies in Stevenage and the skills of the local workforce;

(d) To ensure that employment development takes place in accordance with sustainable development principles.

These objectives are reflected in the policies that apply to development in the Employment Areas, which can be summarised as follows:

- Maintaining the Employment Areas principally for industrial and office uses;

- Identifying two strategic employment sites within the Gunnelswood Employment Area for meeting county-wide employment needs i.e. business parks, high tech premises; West of Gunnelswood Road (Arlington and MBDA sites combined) and South of Broadhall Way (GlaxoSmithKline vacant land);

- Identifying four local employment sites within the Gunnelswood Employment Area for meeting Stevenage's employment floor-space needs; Former Kodak site, Caxton Way/Six Hills Way junction, land adjoining Stevenage Leisure Park and the former ABB site;

- Permitting small-scale retail and leisure uses which would provide facilities for companies and their employees;

- Requiring major speculative developments to provide small business units.

6.6.3 Supplementary Planning Guidance on parking provision

The Borough Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance on parking provision will be used to determine parking standards for any industrial/commercial development in the Employment Areas. The level of parking provision provided in new developments in the Employment Areas is anticipated to be less than permitted provision in the past. This is due to the move from minimum to maximum parking standards as required by Government policy. However, in exceptional circumstances provision does exist for permitting more parking provision than maximum standards where it can be demonstrated that this is essential for avoiding parking problems such as overspill into residential areas and congestion caused by on-street parking.

6.6.4   Development & Regeneration: Strategy for Achieving Objective 6

1. **The Council will determine parking standards for any industrial/commercial development in the Employment Areas by using its Supplementary Planning Guidance on parking provision.**

2. **In exceptional circumstances, parking provision more than maximum standards may be permitted where it can be demonstrated that this is essential for avoiding parking problems such as overspill into residential areas and congestion caused by on-street parking.**

7. MONITORING & REVIEW

7.1 Action Plan

Once the Council has formally adopted this strategy, an action plan for implementing the strategies will be developed. Thereafter, a monitoring and review process will be undertaken on a regular basis.

7.2 Input to Northern Herts Area Plan

The Action Plan could form the basis for input to the Northern Herts Area Plan, the development of which is currently in progress (2003/2004) as part of the County Council's Local Transport Plan programme.

7.3 Monitoring

Over a longer time period monitoring of statistics, such as parking demand/provision, modal split, use of public transport, use of pedestrian paths and cycleways, Town Centre traffic congestion and parking conflicts can be used to assess the impact of actions as they are implemented.

DfT: **Department for Transport**

GNER: **Great North Eastern Railways**

HCC: **Hertfordshire County Council**

PPGs: **Planning Policy Guidance Notes**

SPG: **Supplementary Planning Guidance**

SBC   **Stevenage Borough Council**

WAGN: **West Anglia Great Northern Railway**

LTP: **Local Transport Plan (Issued by Hertfordshire County Council)**