

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET PLANNING AND PARKING PANEL – 4 MARCH 2021
REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

INTRODUCTION OF PARKING RESTRICTIONS, IN TOWN CENTRE CAR PARKS,
HATFIELD

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The new multi-storey car park (MSCP) is part of the Hatfield Renewal Partnership proposals - a partnership of key local authorities, landowners and educational institutions who came together to develop a shared vision and plan for the town's long-term regeneration. The build costs of the multi-storey are part-funded by a £4.8m contribution from the Local Enterprise Partnership, recognising the part it will play in wider regeneration. These wider plans will boost the local economy, helping us attract a better mix of new shops and businesses by making the town centre a busier, more vibrant place to spend time.
- 1.2 Once opened, the MSCP will be managed by Parking Services, in line with other car parks across the borough.
- 1.3 This report sets out the proposed parking restrictions for the new MSCP, Kennelwood Lane and Dog Kennel Lane Car Parks, including the outcome of the informal and statutory consultation.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That the Panel consider the case for the creation of the “The Borough of Welwyn Hatfield (Various Car Parks, Hatfield) Off-Street Parking Places) Order 2021” (the Order) and recommends that Cabinet agrees to proceed with the creation of the Order as advertised.
- 2.2 In making the above recommendation, the Panel consider the objections received as well as the issues raised in paragraph 15 of this report, relating to Equality and Diversity considerations.

3 Explanation

- 3.1 Hatfield Town Centre is currently undergoing a wide regeneration programme. Part of the programme included the building of the new MSCP in The Common which is on track to complete in mid-March 2021. The build costs were part-funded by a £4.8m contribution from the Local Enterprise Partnership, recognising the part it will play in wider regeneration. These wider plans will boost the local economy, helping us attract a better mix of new shops and businesses by making the town centre a busier, more vibrant place to spend time.

- 3.2 Over a third of the town centre is currently used for surface-level car parking. The MSCP, located on The Common car park, consolidates this parking in one place, freeing up sites elsewhere for new homes, shops, and leisure.
- 3.3 In line with the planning application approved by the Development Management Committee, there will be a total of 420 car park spaces, including 18 disabled bays and 8 electric vehicle (EV) charge points in the MSCP.
- 3.4 The current time limit restrictions prevent commuters parking in the town centre. However, businesses have previously asked for more flexible long stay options. Therefore, charging for a longer stay addresses businesses' concerns whilst preventing the misuse of the car park by those not visiting the town.
- 3.5 As part of the introduction of restrictions in the MSCP, to make parking easier to promote and ensure a consistent approach, changes to restrictions are proposed in Kennelwood Lane and Dog Kennel car parks to better support parking provision for businesses, residents and visitors.
- 3.6 The proposed restrictions including charges could start in the week commencing 17th May 2021. Between opening of the MSCP and 17th May, no restrictions would exist in the MSCP. This would enable the Order to be finalised, including relevant signage. It will also allow time for season tickets to be purchased/introduced. It is proposed that the new restrictions in Kennelwood Lane and Dog Kennel Lane would also come into effect on the same date. Parking will be monitored during this period.
- 3.7 Season tickets would only be available for purchase by local workers/residents upon proof provided. The boundary for eligibility would be defined as The Common/Lemsford Road/Queensway/Wellfield Road, including Gracemead House.
- 3.8 It is proposed that the car parks will be open 24 hours a day, 7 days per week and will be available for short stay, long stay and season tickets. Restrictions are proposed to apply Monday to Saturday 7am to 6pm in line with Welwyn Garden City car parks.
- 3.9 The charges are summarised in the Tables below and form part of the approved 2021/22 fees and charges subject to the creation of the Order. It should be noted that this tariff was supported by the majority of Members sitting on the Hatfield Town Centre Regeneration Board (the Board). Cabinet also received a report on 5th January 2021.

Table 1: MSCP Car Park Charges

Monday- Saturday 7am to 6pm	First 3 Hours Free 3-4 Hours: £3.50 Over 4 Hours: £6.50 (All Day)
Sunday and Bank Holiday	Free
Season Tickets (12 Months)	£200
Season Tickets (quarterly)	£50

Table 2: Other Car Park Arrangements

Kennelwood Lane car park	Charges apply as per Table 1.
Link Drive car park	Permit holders only.
Dog Kennel Lane car park	Season tickets only as per charges in Table 1.

- 3.10 Season tickets are set at £200 per year - which works out at approximately 70p-85p per day for local workers (depending on number of working days) to park in the town centre. The council is subsidising season tickets at this price. Season tickets can also be purchased on a quarterly basis at £50 to provide more flexibility.

Summary of Business Consultation Responses

- 3.11 In agreement with the Board, the Parking team carried out a consultation survey with all local businesses to gauge their views on their perceived parking challenges in the town centre. 109 business contacts were contacted via email, and 57 separate business responses were received.
- 3.12 This survey identified:
- 63% of responses said employees have a problem finding a parking space.
 - 85% said their customers rely upon car parks.
 - 17.5% said customers needed to park for more than 3 hours.
- 3.13 When asked if there should be a minimum free period of parking:
- 12% said 4 hours or more, with the rest saying 3 hours or less or no free period.
 - 95% said they would want to see free parking in the evenings and on Sundays.
- 3.14 The Board also received a copy of the business parking survey results at the December meeting when tariffs were discussed.
- 3.15 The statutory consultation period – where formal objections can be made - began on 13th January 2021 and ran until 5th February.
- 3.16 On 13th January 2021 a public Notice of Intent proposing “**The Borough of Welwyn Hatfield (Various Car Parks, Hatfield) Off-Street Parking Places) Order 2021**” was advertised in the Welwyn Hatfield Times. (**Appendix B**).
- 3.17 Notices were erected within Hatfield Town Centre and the car parks impacted and letters posted to 305 properties within the town. An email with a copy of the letter was also sent to traders within Hatfield also (**Appendix C**). QR codes were included for the first time on the public notice to enable those to scan the code to view the proposals on the dedicated webpage.
- 3.18 Plans illustrating the proposals for each car park are attached to this report. (**Appendix D**).

4 Objections

- 4.1 There are twenty-eight formal objections pertaining to the proposals throughout Hatfield Car Parks (**Appendix A**), of which:
 - 4.1.1 Eighteen relate solely to the price of the season tickets. the other objections also highlight season ticket prices along with other concerns.
 - 4.1.2 Eleven objections came from two estate agent businesses located within Market Place.
- 4.2 The following table summarises the objections and Council's responses to these objections.

	Objection	Council's response
1	"I would expect to see these sorts of charges heading towards Central London however not in Hatfield"	The £200 price is set at a subsidised rate and is significantly cheaper than other season tickets when compared to other local council. For example, the next cheapest is Hertsmere at £440 per year, followed by Aylesbury £583, North Herts at £697, St Albans £790 and Watford £1,200.
2	"that there will no longer be any free parking around the centre or surrounding areas... parking should be free for Hatfield residents or extremely discounted due to the poverty in the area."	<p>Three hours free parking will still be available under these proposals. In the business survey, businesses indicated that 82.5% of customers are likely to stay for under 3 hours.</p> <p>The option to pay for parking over 3 hours is to enable shoppers and visitors to the town to pay to park for longer making a small contribution to the upkeep of the parking facility.</p> <p>As highlighted above, the season tickets for local workers is already heavily discounted compared to the daily rate and comparable car parks in nearby towns.</p>
3	"Part time working? There should be the option to share a permit, or a way of choosing specific days to park. This works at Hunters Bridge car park"	<p>When ANPR was in operation in Hunters Bridge, it did provide an option to allow two vehicles under one permit. ANPR is no longer permitted by use of local councils and the new permit system does not allow multiple vehicles to share a permit as it links to one vehicle registration.</p> <p>It is worth noting that the annual season ticket price in Hatfield is the equivalent of just under 31 working/parking days per year before it becomes cheaper than the £6.50 daily charge. It is therefore cost effective even for someone who worked just two days per week.</p>
4	"Daily rate for all day parking? Far too high"	The daily rate is the same price as Welwyn Garden City, and £1.50 per day cheaper than Hatfield Railway Station. If all day parking was set too low it could lead to railway station commuters in the future parking in town centre car parks to avoid the current £8 per day at the railway station, reducing the number of spaces available for those who the spaces are meant for – local workers/residents and visitors. For comparison, the Galleria charge £8 for all day parking.

5	“can you confirm my B04 permit will remain valid for the year purchased November 2020-2021”	All existing B04 permits will have any remaining time transferred onto a new season ticket free of charge. Parking Services will contact each permit holder in April/May to confirm which car park they can park in. The team will endeavour to accommodate all existing permit holders in their chosen car park before putting season tickets on general sale.
6	“Haven’t been unable to purchase permits for all members of staff due to a waiting list”	<p>The current B04 permit scheme only includes 26 spaces in Dog Kennel Lane car park. When Link Drive was included in 2020, an additional 114 spaces were added. 175 permits were purchased to consider local workers who might work part time, along with the likelihood some of those would be on leave/holiday at any time. Throughout 2020, the Parking Team monitored demand in the car park which was reduced due to Covid-19 restrictions. This rose to a cap of 200 permits, some of which have since been cancelled or expired and now stands at 191. In the instance of this objector, it has been identified that the employees still awaiting a permit had not contacted us asking to be added to the waiting list, so we they were not contacted in 2021 to offer them the opportunity to purchase one.</p> <p>In the proposals, there would be an initial cap of 60 season tickets in Dog Kennel Lane, 25 Kennelwood Lane and 180 in the MSCP This would give an initial 265 available, an increase of 74 on current number of permits available.</p> <p>Demand for permits will be monitored after parking restrictions are introduced and once Covid-19 restrictions start to lift. The Parking Team will also identify where permits balance each other out e.g. due to use on different days etc. to enable further to be sold if demand is high.</p>
7	“Cannot see that the introduction of paying for parking will encourage anyone to spend time in the town centre. Customers... will be under time constraints now and will object to paying once three hours has expired”	<p>Currently, visitors are only able to park up to 3 hours and if they stay for longer than this receive a PCN for overstaying. Therefore, visitors can stay for longer under the new proposed arrangement.</p> <p>In addition, Hatfield will continue to be the only town in Hertfordshire to offer up to 3 hours free parking before any charges apply, which in turn makes the town centre offering more attractive.</p>

8	“Is there a resident plan proposed? Or will these come under season ticket holders. If so, I cannot see that there are enough spaces available for business workers and residents of the town centre if you nominate only one car park for your season ticket”	Eleven residents already hold permits to park under the current arrangement. Covid-19 aside, many residential properties are less likely to require parking during the daytime when the occupiers are out at work. Many residents may find the 3 hour free tickets will suffice to park in Kennelwood Lane or the MSCP if they were to arrive home after 3pm/leave home for work before 10am. Often within town centres residents are less likely to own a vehicle, as is the case with many flats within other town centres. The cap on season tickets in the related car parks would also manage number of spaces available.
9	“...Asda will no doubt make changes to their parking again”	The Council is not aware of Asda making any plans to change their parking provision of 3 hours parking, and it would still match our offering of 3 hours free albeit with a different way of managing the stay.
10	“Assurance that the demarcated bays permit parking bays in Kennelwood Lane car park (behind Queensway Health Centre) that is used by the NHS for the clinic will also be continued as per the current arrangement”	<p>These bays were introduced as a medium-term solution to allow Queensway Health Clinic to be able to buy visitor vouchers to allow patients, especially those with limited mobility to park close to the clinic. No vouchers have been purchased for over 4 years.</p> <p>By bringing these parking bays in line with the rest of the proposed parking restriction within the car park it will enable better use of ALL of the parking spaces, and will in fact benefit clinic staff who may hold a season ticket and all Kennelwood Lane season ticket holders in that they can choose to park in any available parking space within the car park (with the exception of disabled and EV bays unless eligible).</p>
11	“Costs of the parking permits... either be free or at the very least remain at the current price of £50 per year for the NHS Staff who operate at our Queensway Health Centre”	<p>There is also no current plan to offer a discount to local workers dependant on their career, the charge applies fairly to all local workers regardless of their job role or salary.</p> <p>The season tickets are already priced much lower than other areas as detailed above.</p>
12	“My suggestion is that books of scratch card style day tickets... be made available for	There is no option within these proposals for scratch card tickets and this would require a new Order to be advertised and consulted upon to bring in a new permit

	business like ours”	type.
13	“Could you please explain the way in which people will be buying their tickets please?”	<p>New parking payment options in Kennelwood Lane and the MSCP would be utilised in two ways. Parking machines will be in the car parks and residents and visitors can pay via card/cash at the machines or online and via phone.</p> <p>Residents and visitors will be required to pay on arrival and display their ticket in their vehicle. In addition, tickets will also be required to be displayed for those staying for up to 3 hours for free.</p> <p>Annual or quarterly season tickets would be available to purchase via the Council's permit system NSL Apply online, which is the same system used to manage resident parking permits and the current B04 business permits.</p>
14	“We feel a fairer solution...would be to have a block of “Surgery staff only” spaces allocated in the Multi Storey car park.”	<p>Although this option may seem fair to one organisation, it would not be fair to all other businesses and organisations within Hatfield who would not have their own reserved parking spaces.</p> <p>There would be times the surgery would not be open or have less staff, and the parking bays would then sit unused when they could be used by other users of the 420-space car park. In the case of Lister House Surgery, it is opposite the new Multi Storey car park.</p>
15	“How can that degree of increase be justified when the result is further restrictions, NOT improved service/facilities”	<p>There has been no increase to business parking permits since introduced in 2013 and has remained constant at £50 per year. Since that time, the number of spaces available has increased.</p> <p>The Multistorey car park does provide an improved service and more secure facility with better lighting, CCTV, and more parking available on one site closer to most businesses within the town.</p> <p>The Parking Team are also actively engaged in acquiring Park Mark award (safer parking status) for the car parks.</p>
16	“If you were, for instance, issuing a parking permit which covers all areas, including	Many residents are in favour of on-street permits and the introduction of restrictions on the basis that their roads are not overfilled with local workers and

	permitted street areas, than an increase to such a high amount could be justifiable”	<p>non-residents vehicles, therefore it is not considered feasible to introduce a TRO which applies to the car parks and on-street parking alike.</p> <p>In terms of estate agents and property maintenance companies, the Parking Team already offer the option to buy visitor vouchers for the zones that they manage and maintain properties in. The objector in question works for such an estate agent who already purchases visitor vouchers to maintain properties, which can then be given to whoever needs to access without it being limited to a vehicle registration.</p>
17	“What are the assurances you are giving us for safety walking to and from the multi storey car park or car park further away from our place of work?.”	<p>The new MSCP has CCTV installed, full lighting, as with many other public realm areas within the town. The Parking Team would also look to encourage businesses where possible to park in the car park either closest to work or the one they feel most comfortable with.</p> <p>The Parking Team are also actively engaged in acquiring Park Mark award (safer parking status) for the car parks.</p>
18	“When the new parking permits are allocated are Wrights staff going to be give the same carpark...so no one has to go to a car park on their own at night?”	When the Parking Team contact existing permit holders to change to season tickets, officers will ask for their preferred car park of choice. The Parking Team will look to place people in their car park of choice and also look to group as many from the same company in the same car park where possible.
19	“Deception by omission in constructing the multi-storey car park without publicly identifying how costs of operation be met”	Planning permission stage does not require costs and charges of the car park to be advertised at the time.
20	“Material conflict of interest in promoting the order”	<p>The Council must promote the Order in this instance. Any off-street Orders are solely dealt with at a borough level by parking services.</p> <p>Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) as the Highways Authority are aware of our promotion of the Order and have raised no concerns, and as the land is owned by the Council. Therefore, any other council including HCC would not have the initial powers to promote the Order.</p>
21	“No evidence is presented that this proposal will relieve or prevent traffic congestion. The	The purposes of promoting the Order would relieve or prevent traffic congestion.

	opposite is more likely, as congestion is likely to occur as traffic is concentrated on a single entrance and exit from the car park. Additionally, as there is no indication that there will be an occupancy/free spaces system traffic congestion may well occur with traffic queuing to enter the car park at busy times. the internal layout of the car park will also cause congestion and delays to season ticket holders on the upper floors held up by people parking on the lower floors.”	<p>This relates to the car park rather than the cost of parking there. If the car park was not built and the town centre was to have 420 less parking spaces, there would be a high possibility of congestion on nearby roads trying to seek parking.</p> <p>The layout of the MSCP is designed to be free flowing with separate up and down ramps and there is no evidence to suggest there would be congestion looking for a space in the lower levels, as drivers would simply drive along the car park including to the next floor looking for the available space.</p>
22	“resolved by deletion of Paragraphs 9-18 and Schedule 2 in its entirety”	Deleting “Paragraphs” known in the Order as Articles 9-18 and Schedule 2 would remove the rules regarding charging for season tickets and time limits/charges beyond 3 hours. The objector’s wishes for these to be deleted is based on the objector not wanting to see any provision for long term parking by local workers or visitors/shoppers. No time limit or deterrence could lead to commuters parking in the town centre car parks instead of parking at the railway station.
23	“A paragraph added to the order that states that the initial arrangements for parking in the Multi-Storey car park cannot be revised for 5 years from the opening”	Such a caveat is not usually added into parking Orders, they do not as such have an expiry or revision date, the only exception is an on street experimental Order for up to 18 months. For Parking Services to correctly assess the impact of the restrictions and make any necessary adjustments due to issues arising from unintended consequences as highlighted at 7.2 would not be possible if such an Article was added into the Order.
24	“For the first 7 (years) I parked in Link Drive which was always packed. Since parking permits were put into place last year the car park is now virtually empty”	Link Drive car park prior to 2020 did not have any time limits imposed. As resident permit schemes were introduced in Old Hatfield and French Horn Lane area, railway station commuters started a displacement process into Link Drive car park. The Parking Team received feedback including from Hatfield Traders Association highlighting all day parking by non-workers/shoppers. The permit scheme into the car park was a temporary extension to alleviate local workers who were struggling to park. The car park has been far under capacity, however that is due to Coronavirus impact where many local workers were either furloughed or working from home rather than due to permits. The number of combined permit spaces sit

		at 140 and 191 permits are currently active.
25	“If you chose Dog Kennel Lane or Kennelwood you may arrive to find there are no places left”	<p>There will be a cap on the number of season tickets sold per car park. By limiting season tickets to one car park would enable better management of the car park, where a multi access season ticket would lead to more drivers moving around car parks looking for a space if one was suddenly in high demand by local workers.</p> <p>It is proposed that Kennelwood Lane car park would have a cap of 25 season tickets (approx 40% of car park capacity), and the MSCP 180 (42% of capacity).</p> <p>Dog Kennel Lane would be the only car park where number of season tickets sold would be allowed to go over capacity – 60 season ticket limit over 56 spaces. This is to consider the likelihood of any part time workers, staff on annual leave and nearby residents potentially not being at home during the main part of the working day. The three main car parks in Welwyn Garden City also operate on the basis of one car park per season ticket, and the Parking Team are not aware of any issues in the last 4 years where season ticket holders could not be accommodated in their relevant car park.</p> <p>If there were any exceptional planned circumstances, such as a car park being closed for works, season tickets would be temporarily accepted in an alternative car park and this would be communicated.</p>
26	“My business is situated in Dog Kennel Lane off the car park. My customers will have no direct entrance into my shop and will have to park elsewhere. I cater for many elderly and disabled people”	<p>The business in question has a pedestrian access point via a passageway from Town Centre itself, and it is noted there is a sign in that location indicating the business. Dog Kennel Lane car park is proposed to retain its 4 designated disabled bays for the purpose of blue badge holders accessing retail premises next to Dog Kennel Lane. Kennelwood Lane and The Common car parks which will allow shoppers parking are less than a 3-5-minute walk to businesses that back onto Dog Kennel Lane car park. A loading bay is also in situ in Dog Kennel Lane car park adjacent to the business which will enable customers to stop their vehicle to load and unload items from the shop if required.</p>

5 Legal Implication(s)

- 5.1 Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) are created under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. Consultations follow a statutory legal process as set out in The Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996. No other legal implications are inherent in relation into the proposals in this report.
- 5.2 The Council can amend proposals once advertised if they make the scheme less restrictive. This can be done without having to re-advertise the Traffic Regulation Order.
- 5.3 Section 35C of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 permits the variation of charges in off-street council owned car parks, without the need for consultation. This will be applicable to future changes in fees and charges.

6 Financial Implication(s)

- 6.1 The cost of TRO works, signage, and relevant advertising of proposals recommended in this report will be funded through existing Parking Services revenue and capital budgets.
- 6.2 The running cost for the first year of the MSCP is estimated to be £190k the income generated from the car park is estimated to be £178k and therefore there is a net subsidy by the council of £12k during the first year of operation. The parking tariff for future years will be considered as part of budget setting process going forward.

7 Risk Management Implications

- 7.1 Changing the parking conditions in the above-mentioned car parks could generate negative publicity. However, it is recognised that the introduction of the first three hours free will be attractive to many residents and visitors to Hatfield Town centre. This will also ensure that not all parking spaces are not taken up by the same vehicles all day, such as local workers and commuters, which limits free available spaces for shoppers. Local workers will however be able to purchase a season ticket in whichever car park is closest to their workplace, spreading the demand between the car parks
- 7.2 It is standard procedure to monitor new parking restrictions for the first 6 months after any are implemented. During this period all reports of safety issues or parking displacement will be recorded. If any significant safety issues are discovered during the monitoring period, Parking Services will investigate and carry out the appropriate remedial action. Parking Services would also look at monitoring the restrictions for at least 6 months once Covid-19 regulations are relaxed to assess the full impact of parking.

8 Security & Terrorism Implications

- 8.1 There are no security & terrorism implications inherent in relation to the proposals in this report.

9 Human Resources

- 9.1 There are no known Human Resources implications in relation to the proposals in this report.

10 Communication and Engagement

- 10.1 When making any changes to parking restrictions there is a statutory consultation process set out in the Local Authority Traffic Orders (Procedures) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 (and amended by The Traffic Orders Procedure (Coronavirus) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020) which the Council needs to adhere to. This includes consulting directly with all affected parties and statutory consultees, such as the Police and Hertfordshire County Council.
- 10.2 In addition, Public Notices are required to be erected within all roads affected and advertised in the local newspaper, in this case the Welwyn Hatfield Times.
- 10.3 Ward and County Councillors, Hertfordshire Police and Hertfordshire County Council have been consulted and no objections have been received regarding these proposals.
- 10.4 This process has been carried out and there are no known implications in relation to the proposals in this report.

11 Health and Wellbeing

- 11.1 There are no known Health and Wellbeing implications in relation to the proposals in this report

12 Procurement Implications

- 12.1 There are no procurement implications inherent in relation to the proposals in this report.

13 Climate Change Implication(s)

- 13.1 The ground floor of the MSCP will contain 8 EV charging bays

14 Link to Corporate Priorities

- 14.1 The subject of this report is linked to the Council's Corporate Priority Protect and Enhance the Environment, and specifically to the achievement to Deliver Effective Parking Services
- Protect and enhance the environment and deliver effective parking services;
 - Help build a Strong Local Economy;
 - Engage with our communities and provide value for money

15 Equality and Diversity

- 15.1 I confirm that an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been carried out.
- 15.2 The EqIA found that there is potential for a positive impact on Disability because more disabled bays will be created close to the town centre access point. In consideration of this, it is proposed that each car park will contain disabled bays on accessible exits to provide dedicated parking close to the town centre for blue badge holders. Within the MSCP all disabled bays are located on the ground floor negating the need to use the stairs or lift. With the 77% of publicly available space contained on one site, it gives better opportunity to park close to most of the retail and services within the town centre thereby facilitating better access to these services by disabled users.

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Background papers to be listed (if applicable)