

Executive Summary from Chichester Roadspace Audit

1.1.1 As with many towns and cities across the UK Chichester faces a number of challenges, it must accommodate significant new development, both residential and commercial, whilst preserving its historic character. Parking is particularly problematic, with high demand and constraints in meeting supply in the areas of greatest demand. West Sussex County Council (WSSCC) and Chichester District Council (CDC) have sought to embark on a progressive approach to meeting these challenges, which looks beyond parking measures alone in order to meet current and future demands on the road network, the outcome being a strategic blueprint for the city of Chichester that defines how parking, sustainable transport infrastructure and future development can be integrated.

1.1.2 Roadspace reallocation is one of the great challenges of our time for contemporary transport planning. The role of high street is changing rapidly; people no longer have to make as many trips into the city centre for essential items or services with the growth of home delivery, internet and out-of town shopping centres, supermarkets and click and collect. So it is becoming increasingly important for towns and cities to be places people want to visit for their quality and character.

1.1.3 Our transport inheritance is typically highway dominated, built for and around car use. But it is increasingly recognised that this is not always the optimal approach: neither in transport terms, where in more urban areas public transport, walking and cycling are becoming increasingly critical for a place to thrive.

1.1.4 Significant growth is planned in Chichester District, much of which is focused in and around the City itself - 32% increase to City households and 31% increase in population. The Chichester Transport Study 2013 indicated that even without additional new development, there is likely to be just over 20% growth in trips by 2031 compared to the 2009 base. Proposed improvements to transport infrastructure, coupled with the measures to control travel demand and promote sustainable modes of travel, are considered sufficient to accommodate the levels of development proposed in the Local Plan.

1.1.5 However it is evident from the model findings that the smarter choices package plays a significant part in mitigating the effects of the new development. These changes in mode share are achievable, but this kind of step change requires a bold new approach to transport provision within the city. There is always the possibility that measures which reduce traffic congestion have the potential to enable traffic to move faster, and therefore can induce more traffic, which will reduce the benefits. As such it is generally accepted that complementary measures designed to 'lock in' the benefits, such as a reallocation and reduction of road capacity, must be implemented in concert with those measures that reduce traffic.

OPTIONS DEVELOPMENT

1.1.6 Based on the findings of the roadspace audit and desktop research of planned future development, a range of conceptual tools were firstly identified to take to stakeholders for their consideration. The conceptual tools for reallocating roadspace can be broadly grouped under the following core themes:

1. Tackling parking issues (on-street)
2. Parking supply and traffic management
3. Reallocating roadspace: improved places and sustainable transport corridors
4. Reallocating roadspace: “to, not through”

TACKLING PARKING ISSUES (ON-STREET)

1.1.7 The city of Chichester relies on a significant in-commute from other towns to provide the labour and expertise for many of its services; the hospital is a regional employer sourcing staff from across the wider hinterland, and so is reliant on car-borne staff commuting from neighbouring lower cost towns. Thus the strategy for on-street parking treats commuter parking as something that is not only necessary, but should be welcomed. Where commuter parking is seen as a problem is where it is un-managed; policy responses are typically reactive and thus compound this impression of action being a response to a problem. For this reason we propose that a Residential Parking Scheme covering the city Chichester, equivalent to the study area delimited by the red boundary shown in Figure 4, is defined and prepared for implementation.

1.1.8 The evidence has indicated that many residential streets carry surplus capacity at all times. Sections of kerb that are not relied on by residents may offer a number of parking spots suitable to be allocated for daytime use by commuters. This approach establishes a city-wide solution.

1.1.9 On-street parking is valued, and should typically be priced higher than off street parking. A desirable occupancy rate is typically around 85-90% for on-street parking. Performance Pricing is based on adjusting the tariff paid to park based on demand to achieve the 85-90% occupancy at all times. At times and locations that demand is high, the price to park is increased and where there is high availability the price is reduced. With performance pricing established, the need to control duration of stay using time limits should diminish.

PARKING SUPPLY AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

1.1.10 Parking demand forecasts have included population and socio-demographic trends to car use and parking demand, and the assessment of off street parking within Chichester indicates that there is limited scope for growth to accommodate parking demand based on existing city capacity. Occupancy was 78% overall. This includes significant spare capacity in the Avenue de Chartres and Leisure Centre car parks. This level of occupancy is high for a city average and this view is

supported by the city centre car parks showing levels at or close to 100%.

1.1.11 The closure and redevelopment of surface car parks at the heart of the city centre would remove around 2,000 vehicle trips per day in and out of the city. The strategic approach suggested is for further short stay capacity to be provided in the current cornerstone car parks of Northgate, Cattle Market and Avenue de Chartres by reducing the space given over in these locations to long stay permit use.

1.1.12 Additional parking long stay capacity should be sought, over time and based on opportunity, either through the proposals to accommodate commuter and visitor parking within an extended RPS and/or in off street locations further out from the city centre but still within reasonable walking distance. Long stay parking displaced from the cornerstone car parks would allow those to accommodate and become the principal short stay locations serving the city.

ROADSPACE REALLOCATION

1.1.13 The third core concept builds on the previous two, and reallocates some of the roadspace, promoting improvements to the urban realm and greater travel by sustainable modes. The approach to roadspace allocation promoted within this study is underpinned by an improved understanding of the competing needs of street users, based on the principles of “Link” and “Place”. Each part the cities network of streets has a different role to play, including a differing balance between its Link and Place status functions.

1.1.14 As well as improving the urban realm, roadspace reallocation can serve as a crucial tool in providing a more conducive and appealing environment for walking, cycling and travelling by public transport. In combination with the parking measures and smarter choices package proposed as part of the Local Plan transport strategy, it is essential to ‘lock in’ the benefits of car based trip reductions.

1.1.15 In our view Chichester is potentially ideally configured towards promoting sustainable transport. Ultimately reallocating roadspace to create better walk, cycle, urban realm and public transport, whilst simultaneously removing or relocating provision for car based travel can create a virtuous circle, where more people chose to walk and cycle because there is less traffic on a particular route, which justifies further measures, further reducing demand for travel by car. A step change from seeking to continually invite more vehicle traffic into the city centre and cater for it by increasing highway capacities at the expense of the other roles streets play and the contrary to the overarching vision and objectives for the city.

TO, NOT THROUGH

1.1.16 The fourth concept builds on the previous ones and looks to then go a step further, by thinking about how in the longer term traffic might be progressively and proactively managed away from the city centres core areas to enable a greater

emphasis on key place functions (visitor attractions, shopping, restaurants, bars etc.). The strategy is therefore to reduce the attraction of using the inner ring road as a way to pass through the city. This is a bold proposal but what is becoming increasingly accepted within the transport planning fraternity, is that in combination with measures to make travel by sustainable modes more appealing, it is necessary to introduce some restraints to vehicular access.

1.1.17 For those within the urban form the reduced access and volume of vehicular traffic creates greater permeability for cycling and walking, making walking and cycling the natural choice for residents travelling within Chichester. This culture and choice need not be borne of significant cycle infrastructure engineering, but by a progressive and clear reduction in vehicular traffic on the roads within the city core and the provision of obvious routes in those areas away from the core.

1.1.18 For motor vehicles, the strategy is based on creating clarity that any trip into the core must return by the same route that it entered, and Chichester is not a through route for motor traffic. This, along with a progressive reduction in more central parking destinations will significantly reduce the traffic demand and open up clear opportunities beyond the initial years to reallocate roadspace used for wider highways just outside the city walls.

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

1.1.19 The overall results of feedback were encouraging, with stakeholders confirming that they feel the vision and objectives for the City would be more achievable in the longer term by following the approaches explored within this study.

1.1.20 57% of technical stakeholders and 82% of community stakeholders supported the concept of introducing a city wide Residents Parking Scheme (RPS) with managed visitor parking provision. 64% of technical stakeholders and 57% of community stakeholders supported the concept of reducing very central city centre parking and promoting the use of Northgate, Cattlemarket and Avenue De Chartres for short-stay car parking. 78% of technical stakeholders and 65% of community stakeholders supported the concept of reallocating roadspace to promote improved urban realm and sustainable transport. 72% of technical stakeholders and 50% of community stakeholders supported the concept of introducing a city wide RPS with managed visitor parking provision.

1.1.21 Reallocating roadspace was the preferred concept, both amongst the technical and stakeholder groups. The concept of relocating off-street parking supply was the 2nd priority amongst technical stakeholders, whilst community stakeholders were evenly split between several options for both their second and third priorities.

OUTLINE RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1.22 These recommendations were distilled into a package of specific solutions that make up an outline programme of short, medium and long term actions.

1.1.23 Demand for city centre parking is close to capacity. There is some capacity in car parks outside and on the periphery of the city centre. It is likely that with further growth in demand a strategy and plan to implement changes to improve parking availability will be required. A number of off street car parks are within the core historical area of the city. These locations have high turnover generating a large number of vehicular trips into the city throughout the day. Many of the larger car parks on the edge of the city centre accommodate a significant number of long stay parking. There is scope for these users to be displaced in order to generate sufficient capacity for short stay car parks in the central area to have a reduced role and allow for demand growth and urban improvements.

1.1.24 A number of areas where place function should take priority over traffic access/parking were identified, which in our view give undue priority to traffic over their importance as places. High traffic volumes, highway dominated environments and vehicle speeds create visual intrusion, noise, emissions and severance, impacting on place quality. Elsewhere streets are underselling the local attractions through poor urban realm or narrow footways.

1.1.25 We recommend that a policy of delivering improved urban realm in areas with high place functions, with the emphasis on improving the quality of the street as a destination in own right, prioritising pedestrians. The degree to which these priorities should be compromised by the streets role as a link should be governed by its Link status. In some places it may be that a link status can or should be downgraded from a primary traffic route.

1.1.26 We would suggest that Chichester can afford to be bold. It is ideally configured for sustainable transport; by virtue of its compact scale walk/cycle times cover most of the urban area. It has the makings of a good cycle network, and proposals for significant number of additional routes. Equally the constrained historic city streets in many places are more suited to the human scale. Importantly it is sufficiently attractive appealing destination that in our view it can and should strive to be a quality destination, with an emphasis on the experience rather than competing on how close to the shops visitors can park – this will never be Chichester's competitive edge, its unique character and charm is. The feedback from stakeholders largely echoed these sentiments.

1.1.27 Following on from the recommendations for parking supply, we propose a bold approach be considered whereby the longer term objective is for traffic to be intercepted at the proposed principle car parks (Northgate, Avenue De Chartres, Cattle Market), which may then enable part of the ring road to be downgraded. The strategy being to reduce the attraction of using the inner ring road as a route through

the city, whilst still providing access to trips that are destined for the city centre. This would require extensive optioneering, conceptual design, feasibility assessments and traffic modelling to determine its viability, and how best it might be implemented. But we would advocate that the concept be explored further, as it could contribute significantly towards realising the vision and objectives for the city.

EVALUATION OF APPROACH

1.1.28 Throughout the duration of the study we have maintained a log to inform how the approach might be adapted and refined for future application.