

## CHICHESTER ROAD SPACE AUDIT - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



### Introduction

West Sussex County Council has recently reviewed how it develops parking schemes across the county and a pilot study has been undertaken in Chichester. This more progressive approach towards parking management, known as a Road Space Audit (RSA) has tried to determine if there are other ways for the County Council and its partners to consider existing and future parking demands.

The pilot RSA looks beyond parking measures alone in order to meet current and future demands on the road network. In order to ensure that local parking policies take into account the whole place both now and in the future, the RSA aims to be a strategic blueprint that defines how parking, various alternative travel solutions (bus, rail, cycle, walk), infrastructure improvements, safety considerations and future development (e.g. housing) can be integrated across Chichester so that the road network is used and managed in the most efficient way possible. This blueprint will allow the County Council and its partners such as Chichester District Council to understand what resources and funding is required to carry out sustainable transport related improvements (not just parking) in the city.

The pilot RSA provides essential technical data and enables officers to identify and assess the current demands upon the road network and parking supply in Chichester (i.e. how it is currently being used), whether these demands are actually being met by the existing infrastructure as well as how users actually feel about that road network. Furthermore, by identifying potential future demands/pressures on the road network and parking supply and making recommendations for improvement, the audit hopes to enable officers to assess what measures and resources might be required in order to meet these challenges, adjust supply and ultimately optimise the efficiency of the road network and parking supply.

The pilot RSA is designed to be advisory and an enabling document that complements existing statutory plans and emerging studies in respect of transport infrastructure, parking policy and spatial planning. It does feed into studies such as the District Council's 'A Vision for Chichester' but it should be stressed that it does not lead or have primacy over them. Indeed, some of the suggestions within the RSA may seem at odds with some raised in other studies but not all of these suggestions need be enacted

The RSA should not be seen as a panacea to all of Chichester's parking and transport problems. Whilst it may seek to identify an approach for remedying such problems at a strategic level, it must be recognised that it may not be equipped to deal with localised parking and transport issues. Localised issues, such as changes to individual parking bays or yellow lines, new cycle lanes or pedestrian crossings will continue to be implemented through 'business as usual' functions at the County Council and would require more detailed consideration, conceptual design, feasibility assessment and modelling etc. The aim of the pilot RSA is to achieve improvements that wouldn't be achieved through 'business as usual'.

## **Background**

As with many towns and cities across the UK, Chichester faces a number of challenges, including the need to accommodate significant new development, both residential and commercial, whilst still preserving its historic character. Parking is particularly problematic, with increasing demand for both on and off-street parking and constraints in meeting supply in the areas of greatest demand.

The role of the high street is also changing rapidly, with people no longer having to make as many trips into the city centre for essential items or services with the growth of out of town shopping centres and supermarkets, internet shopping, home delivery and click and collect. It is therefore becoming increasingly important for Chichester to be a place people want to visit for its quality and character.

Our transport inheritance is typically highway dominated, built for and around car use. But it is increasingly recognised that this is not always the best approach, especially in cities such as Chichester where public transport, walking and cycling are becoming increasingly critical for it to thrive.

Significant growth is planned in Chichester District, much of which is focused in and around the city itself with a 32% increase to city households and a 31% increase in population by 2029. The Chichester Transport Study (2013) indicated that even without additional new development, there is likely to be just over a 20% growth in trips by 2031. Proposed improvements to the transport infrastructure, coupled with measures to control travel demand are currently considered sufficient to accommodate the levels of development being proposed.

However, it is clear that promotion of more sustainable means of travel (i.e. the 'Smarter Choices' package) will also play a significant part in mitigating the effects of the new development. A switch to other forms of transport is achievable, but this kind of step change will require 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, some complementary measures designed to 'lock in' the benefits, such as a reallocation and reduction of road capacity may also be necessary.

### **Work Undertaken To Date**

In the summer of 2015, the County Council appointed transport consultants WSP/Parsons Brinkerhoff to take forward the pilot Chichester RSA.

The first task undertaken was a series of parking surveys across the city in order to determine specific types of on and off-street parking demands and durations, both during the summer holiday period as well as later in the year during term time. Alongside this, a desktop research study enabled the consultants to identify and assess the existing transport network across the city, planned and anticipated development scenarios, the parking and transport related priorities of the County Council and its partners as well as any underlying demographic changes expected over the next 15 years.

In early 2016 two workshops were held, the aim of which was to bring together a number of 'technical' interests (e.g. transport providers, officers, emergency services, major employers) as well as various community groups (e.g. resident associations, local interest groups, parish councils) in order to discuss various issues, aspirations and options relating to parking and the wider use of the road space in Chichester.

Based on the findings of this early work, a range of concepts, in support of integrating sustainable transport infrastructure and future development in Chichester, have been identified and can be broadly be grouped under the following core themes:

- **Tackling Parking Issues (On-Street)**
- **Parking Supply and Traffic Management**
- **Reallocating Road Space: Improved Places and Sustainable Transport Corridors**
- **Reallocating Road Space: “To, Not Through”**

The four themes are outlined below in more detail and also include examples of some suggested measures and indicative timescales and costs. Such measures are preliminary and subject to further scrutiny, consultation, funding and decision making.

### **Tackling Parking Issues (On-Street)**

Chichester relies on a significant in-commute from other towns to provide the labour and expertise for many of its services. For example, the hospital is a regional employer sourcing staff from across the region and so is reliant on car-borne staff that travel in from neighbouring towns. Thus the first theme relating to on-street parking treats commuter parking as something that is not only necessary, but should be welcomed provided it is managed properly.

Where commuter parking is often seen as a problem is where it is un-managed. Policy responses such as the introduction of yellow lines are typically reactive and thus compound this impression of action being a response to a problem. Such responses can also lead to commuter parking being moved from place to place. For this reason the first theme proposes that a parking management plan, covering the whole urban area of Chichester, is defined and prepared for implementation. Such a city wide plan could also limit commuter displacement.

The evidence from the parking surveys indicates that many residential streets across the city carry surplus capacity, particularly during the daytime. Sections of road that are not relied on by residents may therefore offer a number of parking areas suitable for daytime use by commuters and other visitors.

This theme also considers the potential for using different pricing mechanisms in order to maximise the use of on-street parking areas. For example, ‘Performance Pricing’ is based on adjusting the tariff paid to park based on demand, so 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.

**SUGGESTED APPROACH** – To trial a parking scheme in one area with commuter parking facilities (short term delivery with indicative costs of £100,000); city wide parking management plan (medium term delivery with indicative cost of £250K to £1million), introduction of performance pricing whereby roads in heavy demand are priced accordingly to ensure even distribution of parking (included in city wide parking management plan).

## **Parking Supply and Traffic Management**

An assessment of off-street parking within Chichester indicates that there is limited scope to cope with the growth in demand given existing capacity. Occupancy in the car parks is around 78% which is high for a city average and this view is supported by some of the city centre car parks showing levels at or close to 100%.

Within the second theme, which builds upon the first, it is suggested that the potential closure and redevelopment of some car parks in the heart of the city centre could remove around 2,000 vehicle trips per day in and out of the city. To compensate for this loss of this parking space, further short stay capacity could be provided in the current gateway car parks of Northgate, Cattle Market and Avenue de Chartres by reducing the space given over in these locations to long stay permit use.

As outlined in the first theme, additional long stay parking capacity could be sought, over time and based on opportunity, in on-street locations further out from the city centre but still within reasonable walking distance. Long stay parking displaced from the gateway car parks would allow those to accommodate and become the principal short stay locations serving the city.

**SUGGESTED APPROACH** - Closure of some city centre car parks but with retained provision for Blue Badge holders (medium term delivery timescale with low indicative cost of up to £250K), re-classification of gateway car parks to short stay only (medium term delivery timescale with high indicative cost of £1million+)

## **Reallocating Road Space: Improved Places and Sustainable Transport Corridors**

The third theme builds on the previous two, and reallocates some of the road space and promotes improvements to the urban realm and greater travel by sustainable modes.

As well as improving the urban realm, road space 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.

Ultimately reallocating road space 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, whereby 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. Seeking to continually invite more vehicle traffic into the city centre and cater for it by increasing highway capacity, at the expense of the other roles streets play, is seen as contrary to the overarching vision and objectives for the city.

*SUGGESTED APPROACH – Possible conversion of traffic lane on Avenue de Chartres to a slow lane with on-street parking bays, improved cycle provision and safe crossing points (short term delivery timescale with low indicative cost of up to £250K), the Hornet footway widening and lane removal (long term delivery timescale with high indicative cost of £1million+).*

### **Reallocating Road Space: “To, Not Through”**

The fourth theme 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 centre to enable a greater emphasis on key place functions (visitor attractions, shopping, restaurants, bars etc.). In many respects, this provides the closest link to those issues already identified in the District Council's 'Vision for Chichester'.

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.

For those within the city the reduced access and volume of vehicular traffic creates greater permeability for cycling and walking, making these modes 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.

For motor vehicles, the theme is based on creating clarity that any trip into the city centre 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 could significantly reduce the traffic demand and open up clear opportunities beyond the initial years to reallocate road space used for wider highways just outside the city walls.

*SUGGESTED APPROACH – Redesign the Southgate gyratory to sever through route with a Bus gate (long term delivery timescale with high indicative cost of £1million+).*

## **The Next Steps**

The pilot RSA, incorporating the four conceptual themes, has been shared with the County Council's partners and key stakeholders and County Councillors are now keen that it be considered by members of the public. In particular, County Councillors are keen to ascertain whether members of the public are in support of the broad concepts/themes raised within the RSA and if these fit in with their aspirations on what they would like Chichester, the place, to be in the future.

Depending on the feedback received, one possible outcome is that design work for the 1<sup>st</sup> theme (Tackling Parking Issues, incorporating a trial parking scheme with commuter parking facilities) takes place over the summer with further public consultation on initial proposals taking place later in the year or in early 2018. Beyond that, no decisions have yet been made as it is accepted that the additional themes for Chichester might not be achievable without the implementation of a city wide parking management plan.

At a wider level, the results of the pilot RSA have recently been considered by a County Council Task and Finish Group and it has been decided that RSAs should be made available as an approach to parking/traffic management across the rest of West Sussex and that a priority programme for funding and resource allocation be adopted according to the County Council's Economic Growth Strategy. RSAs are seen as integral to the development of this growth programme as they could identify an approach for remedying parking/transport problems at a strategic level.

## **Chichester RSA Summary Points**

- Demand for city centre parking is close to capacity. There is some capacity in car parks and in residential roads on the periphery of the city centre. It is likely that with further growth in demand a broader 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 amount 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.

- A number of areas where place function should take priority over traffic access/parking have been identified, which could 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.
- A policy of delivering improved urban realm in areas with high place functions could improve the quality of the street as a destination in its own right.
- It could be suggested that Chichester is ideally configured for sustainable transport, by virtue of its compact scale and the fact that walk/cycle times cover most of the urban area. It has the makings of a good cycle network, and proposals for a significant number of additional routes. Equally the constrained historic city streets in many places are more suited to the human scale. Importantly it is already an attractive and appealing destination that could 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 whereas its unique character and charm is.
- The pilot RSA proposes that a bold approach be considered whereby the longer term objective is for traffic to be intercepted at the re-purposed principle car parks (Northgate, Avenue De Chartres, Cattle Market), which may then enable part of the inner road network to be downgraded. This would reduce the attraction of using these roads as routes 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 the RSA advocates that the concept be explored further, as it could contribute significantly towards realising the vision and objectives for the city.