Walsall Council
Parking Strategy

Walsall Council

April 2008

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1 Introduction

The Parking Strategy outlines proposals to change parking provision and management to meet the future needs of the Borough up to 2020. As well as focusing on car parking, the strategy also covers parking by other modes, including cycles, powered two wheelers and lorry parking, together with special parking requirements for groups such as the mobility impaired.

The scope of the Parking Strategy is therefore wide ranging and has involved the following:

- Review the provision of parking in Walsall town centre, district centres and rail stations;
- Review the perception that people have of parking provision in the Borough;
- Review national, regional and local policy context;
- Review how regeneration objectives and development proposals impact upon future parking provision and management;
- Review access and congestion issues;
- Review parking management and enforcement;
- Review the council's role in providing and managing parking facilities;
- Review special parking requirements (disabled, cyclists powered two wheelers, lorries and park and ride facilities)

Safe, secure and accessible parking is vital to the attractiveness and viability of town centres and the council works with private sector operators and its partners across the West Midlands to encourage a consistent approach to the supply and management of parking within centres. The future viability and promotion of main centres is key to the economic regeneration of the West Midlands. Within Walsall there is an aspiration to transform extensive areas of the Borough. Over the next decade, ambitious proposals will be delivered that will see the town centre revitalised, canal-side areas reborn and acres of derelict land rejuvenated.

An appropriate parking strategy will help support regeneration of Walsall town centre and the district centres while also encouraging the use of more sustainable transport choices and improving highway safety. In preparing this Parking Strategy, the Council has endeavoured to address these issues and respond to the needs of motorists, other road and public transport users, and business within the wider policy context.

Future parking provision and management within Walsall must take into account national and regional planning and transport policies but should also complement local land use and regeneration policies, and relate to the size and function of centres. Parking provision should reflect wider community objectives; facilities should be safe and secure with appropriate provision for people with disabilities.

The development of this Parking Strategy has been based on a comprehensive understanding of the parking supply and demand position in Walsall town centre and the district centres.

Another important factor in the development of this Parking Strategy has been the perceptions of people who use parking facilities in Walsall town centre and the district centres.

The availability of parking affects the level of car use and therefore the level of traffic congestion on our streets. The development of this Parking Strategy has taken into account that many of the roads in the Borough are subject to congestion, mainly during peak hours, but also increasingly at off-peak times. Such high levels of traffic result in pollution and other adverse effects on the environment and economy. Since it is not possible to provide enough road space to accommodate all the private cars that seek to use the Borough's roads, particularly in the main centres, ways have to be found to increase usage of alternatives to the car, including public transport, cycling and walking. This is particularly important with regard to commuter trips. The level of provision for long stay parking spaces will have an impact on the level of car commuting. The proposed Parking Strategy will therefore comprise an important element of the delivery of the council's obligations with regard to the 2004 Traffic Management Act.

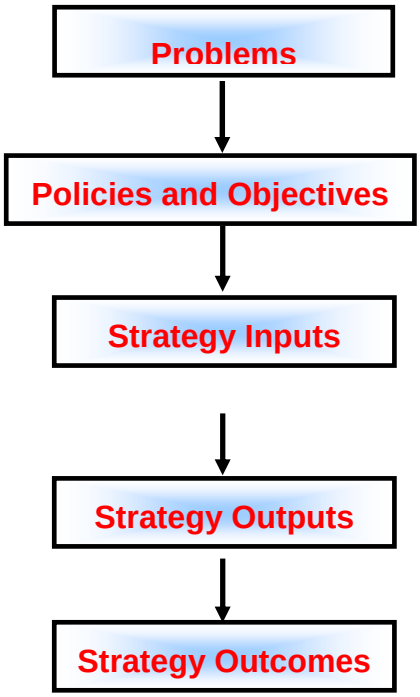
Fundamental to any parking strategy is the need for efficient parking enforcement, to ensure that on-street parking supply is managed effectively, to prevent inappropriate parking that could cause congestion and increase dangers for other road users, and to ensure proper management of off-street car parks and time limited on-street parking. All Highway Authorities must adopt Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE). This already operates in Birmingham Sandwell, Solihull and Wolverhampton and will be implemented in Walsall and Dudley during 2008. CPE involves transferring on-street parking enforcement from the Police to the local authority and will deliver more consistent enforcement of parking regulations within the Borough. Revenue raised through the operation of CPE can be used to pay for enforcement activities with any surplus being used for other highway authority activities.

Another important factor in this Parking Strategy is the role of the council as a major provider of parking services and its obligation to ensure that its services are being delivered effectively.

As part of the Parking Strategy a number of recommendations are made and these have been incorporated into a proposed Action Plan in ***Section 11*** of this report

1 Methodology

An essential aspect of developing a Parking Strategy is to establish parking strategy objectives. These should be framed within a standard LTP performance management regime that identifies:



e.g. excess demand for short stay spaces

e.g. support Town Centre vitality through adequate supply of short stay spaces

e.g. recommendations for delivering more short / better short stay parking in centres

e.g. increase in short stay parking provision

e.g. Improved access and attractiveness of the centre for short stay users

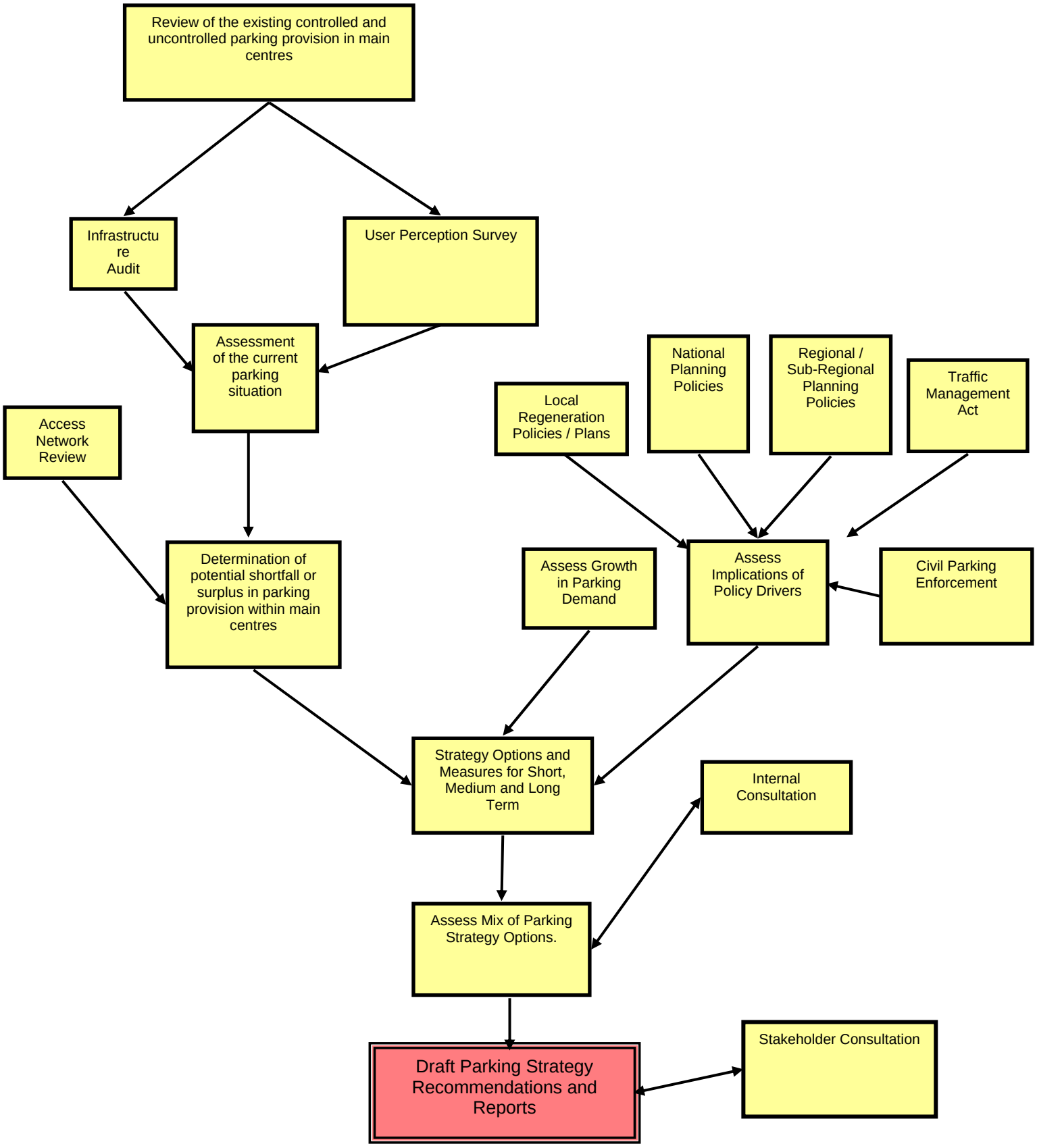
Although parking does not feature within mandatory LTP outcome indicators, the DfT has identified a number of optional outcome indicators that are relevant to the development of a Walsall Parking Strategy. These include:

- total parking provision;
- proportion of short stay parking;
- price differential between long and short stay parking;
- percentage of planning permission exceeding parking standards;
- proportion of workforce covered by Travel Plans.

These have been reviewed within the development of the parking strategy while other outcome indicators that more directly relate to local parking policies have been identified with the aim of establishing clear objectives and targets based on the expected outcomes for the strategy.

In this way, the strategy defines a transparent policy context whereby stakeholders and decision makers are able to appreciate the linkages from current problems, through to strategy development and the outcomes associated with particular strategy elements.

Figure 2.1 Methodology for the development of the Walsall Parking Strategy.



2 Policy Framework

2.1 National Policy Framework

The national policy framework for the development of a Parking Strategy embraces the government's Ten Year Transport Plan and Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG 3 Housing, PPG 6 Town Centres and PPG13 Transport). All of these documents recognise the need to move away from the current dependence upon the car and the importance of promoting alternative modes of travel, particularly walking, cycling and public transport. Parking management is recognised as an important mechanism for achieving these broader objectives.

'National Planning Policy Guidance Note 6: Town Centres' recommends local authorities 'produce a comprehensive strategy and set of policies for the provision and management of parking designed to reinforce the attractiveness and competitiveness of the town centre and to support the location policies in PPG13'.

This proposed Parking Strategy, like PPG13, recognises that car parking has a major influence on people's choice of transport mode and sets out a strategy and action plan that aims to

'use parking policies, alongside other planning and transport measures, to promote sustainable transport choices and reduce reliance on the car for work and other journeys'

while properly taking into account the regeneration objectives of the council.

These national policies provide the principles and standards for the Parking Strategy. Parking standards and policies are set out in PPG13 and PPG3. PPG13 sets out maximum allowable parking provision and states that there should be no minimum parking requirements.

National guidance has also been produced by the DfT in relation to other aspects of parking, including parking for the mobility impaired and parking for cycles and powered two wheelers. In developing policies and standards for disabled parking, reference has been made to the DfT report entitled 'Inclusive Mobility' published in 2002 and to FBS 8300-2001.

The TfL 'Cycle Parking Standards Proposed Guidelines' document and the DTLR Traffic Advisory Leaflet 2/02 (March 2002) have been taken into account in developing policies and standards for cycle parking and parking for powered two wheelers, respectively.

2.2 Traffic Management Act 2004

Parking impacts on traffic flow and on-street parking can reduce the capacity of a typical two lane road by 20%. Provision of off-street parking can reduce this impact if there is adequate access and egress. In addition, parking guidance and information systems can reduce unnecessary traffic movements and thereby congestion in and around main centres.

The Traffic Management Act 2004 places a network management duty on local authorities to keep traffic flowing, and to co-operate with other authorities to the same end. Local authorities have to exercise all of their functions that have an impact on traffic in a more co-ordinated way. The Act places a strong emphasis on the local authority taking responsibility for parking enforcement through the development and implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement.

In accordance with the Traffic Management Act, the council will be expected to exercise it's new parking enforcement powers in a fair and reasonable manner to ensure that parking restrictions and enforcement protect the operation of the highway network and bus routes from indiscriminate parking.

Parking provision, management and enforcement must contribute to the delivery of the statutory Network Management Duty and be reported for effectiveness through Local Transport Plans.

2.3 West Midlands Regional and Sub-regional Context

The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), formally Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands RPG11, sets out a series of strategic objectives to underpin and provide a context for the documents' policies. The main purpose of RPG is to guide the preparation of local authority development plans and planning policies so that they can deliver to a coherent framework for regional development.

The RSS aims to achieve the rejuvenation of city, town, and local centres to serve communities with high quality services, to promote identity and social cohesion, and to drive economic change through the creation of more attractive and sustainable urban and suburban communities. Urban renaissance will require an integrated approach to improving the urban environment, housing choice, access to jobs, transport efficiency, the distinctiveness of centres, and service delivery.

The RSS sets out an approach to car parking management as follows:

Local authorities, working together, should manage their car parking to reduce congestion and encourage more sustainable forms of travel by:

i) Managing the supply, location and price of parking in town and city centres to limit the provision of long stay spaces, where this is necessary to reduce congestion;

ii) Co-operating with each other to avoid using car parking charges as a tool for competition between centres;

iii) Using additional income to support the development of more sustainable forms of travel;

iv) Securing an adequate supply of car parking at railway stations and other transport interchanges;

v) Securing local Park & Ride sites as an alternative to town centre parking; and

vi) Developing a network of strategic Park & Ride sites, generally at railway stations, to meet the needs of the Region (T6).

Local authorities should work with private sector operators to encourage a consistent approach within centres. Where car parking is provided it should be safe and secure with appropriate provision for people with disabilities. Local authorities should also consider the adoption of Civil Parking Enforcement powers in order to secure more effective management of car parking and demand management measures.

The Parking Strategy responds to the policies set out in the RSS. However, regional parking policy is regularly review and the council will need to take into account any new and developing regional and national guidance on parking that is published over time.

A Regional Freight Strategy is being developed through the Local Government Association. As part of this, a West Midlands Freight Study has been conducted and this has been used to inform the Parking Strategy with regards to lorry parking.

The transport strategy for the West Midlands conurbation set out in the 2005 Provisional West Midlands Local Transport Plan (WMLTP) also provides a context for establishing parking standards for Walsall. The strategy includes a greater focus on managing travel demand e.g. by controlling and managing parking provision, in accordance with the agreed joint policy framework, national guidance and local needs.

The Metropolitan Authorities joint policy framework recognises the need to co-operate on parking policies and is set out below.

'The seven District Councils are committed to working together on their transport strategy, developing policies and programmes that embrace the principles established in Regional Planning Guidance to enhance the Metropolitan Area. This will contribute to regeneration of the economy, attention to the environment and take into account the interaction between transport and land use. An important part of Regional Guidance is recognised as the need to co-operate on parking policies, encouraging use of public transport, while enhancing the viability of existing centres. Although the ability of parking policy to influence the total demand, the modal share of trips and the attractiveness of the centre will be different for each of our varied centres (due to the presence of private non-residential parking and private sector run parking), the following policies are jointly agreed:

- We will continue to restrict long stay public spaces to encourage the use of public transport where it is, or can be made, attractive.
- We will continue to maintain sufficient short stay spaces to ensure that each centre remains attractive to shoppers, businesses and visitors.
- We will continue to price all council operational spaces accordingly, ensuring that no one centre is significantly disadvantaged by such pricing mechanisms.
- We will provide, within resource allocations, for improved quality through security, ease of pedestrian access and user-friendly payment mechanisms to meet customer demand.
- We will continue to make use of Park & Ride opportunities on the public transport system where it can make a positive contribution to reducing the need for scarce central area space.

As these controls come into place, we will continue to look to Government to ensure that it provides councils with sufficient powers and resources to be able to control parking supply, especially private parking, and to be able to fund, with the private sector, improvements to such facilities.'

The WMLTP also acknowledges the importance of parking enforcement as part of the congestion strategy and that strict controls on parking and stopping will be introduced on key urban roads as part of the implementation of Red Routes. The WMLTP also indicates that parking standards will need to be reviewed so that they support the demand management measures proposed in the transport strategy and to ensure consistency of approach across the region.

2.4 Walsall Unitary Development Plan

The Walsall Unitary Development Plan (UDP) sets out the local context for the Walsall Parking Strategy and specific policy in relation to parking as follows:

Policy T7 - Car Parking

(a) The council will give priority to maintaining, enhancing and, where appropriate, increasing the provision of short stay parking for shoppers and visitors to the town, district and local centres. Long stay car parking for commuters will be strictly controlled or reduced, particularly in Walsall town centre and the district centres.

(b) All development should satisfy the car parking standards set out in Policy T13. This will involve providing an adequate level of car parking to meet operational needs whilst not exceeding any maximum parking standards that are specified. Appropriate provision of parking for people with special needs must be included, as set out in Policy T13.

(c) Conditions relating to the operation of parking areas will be imposed as appropriate to ensure their continued use and management for the intended purpose. Except where there is an accepted need for secure dedicated provision, car parking within or on the edge of centres should be generally available to serve the needs of the centre as a whole, and be subject to a charging and management regime agreed with the council.

(d) Subject to the findings of a Transport Assessment, it may be appropriate for developments in the town and district centres to make commuted payments towards a general fund which will be used to support a package of transport related improvements for the centre as a whole - this might include the enhancement and improvement of existing car parks or the promotion of public transport, walking and cycling.

(e) All parking provision should be well designed and sensitively integrated into the townscape or landscape, respecting the character of the local area, and with appropriate use of materials and landscape treatment.

In terms of parking provision in Walsall town centre, the UDP sets out the following policy:

Policy WA18: Provision of Car Parking

(a) Priority will be given to maintaining, enhancing and increasing provision of short stay parking for shoppers and visitors, including suitable dedicated parking for disabled people. Long stay parking for commuters will be strictly controlled or reduced.

(b) New car parks will generally be located where they have good access from the roads which encircle the town centre. The council will also seek to ensure that car parks are well distributed around the town centre. Any development proposals which would remove existing public parking provision will be considered in the context of the overall parking strategy for the centre, and any benefits that might arise from the development.

(c) Parking provision in the town centre should also be consistent with the principles set out in Policy T7 in Chapter 7.

Policies for each of the district centres are also included in the UDP and refer to the provision and standards of parking for shoppers and visitors in each of the local centres:

ALDRIDGE
Policy AL9: Car Parking
The provision of additional surface-level car parking for shoppers and visitors will be encouraged and existing provision enhanced, wherever possible. Parking provision in the centre should be in accordance with the principles in Policy T7.

BLOXWICH
Policy BX13: Car Parking
The provision of additional, preferably surface-level, car parking for shoppers and visitors will be encouraged. Where opportunities arise, additional parking capacity should be concentrated to the north and east of the primary shopping area, provided this would not result in increased traffic congestion. In addition, existing parking provision should be enhanced, wherever possible. Parking provision in the centre should be in accordance with the principles in Policy T7.

BROWNHILLS
Policy BR15: Car Parking Provision
(a) Whilst reviewing the traffic system within the centre, the council will examine the provision of shoppers and visitors car parking, with particular regard to its accessibility, quality and management. The council will seek to undertake appropriate improvements to its car parks at:-
I. Church Road.
II. Short Street.

(b) Car parking provision in the centre should be in accordance with the principles in Policy T7 in Chapter 7.

DARLASTON
Policy DA9: Car Parking
(a) The council will seek to improve car parking provision for shoppers and visitors to the centre, in terms of both the numbers of spaces provided and the quality and security of these. Such improvements may be achieved through:-
I. Investment in existing facilities.
II. New developments, which may provide additional parking and / or contribute to enhancement works.

(b) Parking provision in the centre should be consistent with the principles in Policy T7 in Chapter 7.

WILLENHALL
Policy WH10: Parking
The provision of additional surface-level car parking for shoppers and visitors will be encouraged and existing provision enhanced, wherever possible. Parking provision in the centre should be in accordance with the principles in Policy T7 in Chapter 7.

2.5 Walsall Transport Strategy

The Walsall Transport Strategy recognises the council's need to provide good quality short stay parking facilities to discourage a decentralisation of facilities and to enable Walsall to compete with other centres in the West Midlands conurbation. Increasing levels of car use has led to an increase in demand for car parking facilities at town and district centres. The council's previous Parking Strategy included proposals to increase the provision of short stay spaces whilst discouraging long stay parking in line with the WMLTP objective of reducing long stay spaces of 3% per year.

The council also proposed to continue its work towards Civil Parking Enforcement thereby securing the responsibility of parking enforcement across the Borough.

The Strategy suggested that the demand for long stay parking could possibly be met through the provision of park and ride facilities for commuters at sites outside of the town centre.

Dependent on funding, the council proposed to improve the appearance and security of at least one town centre car park per year, including improving fencing, lighting and introducing CCTV.

2.6 Regeneration Context

The regeneration of Walsall is a key objective of the council and its public and private sector partners. Over the next decade, ambitious proposals are planned that will see the town centre revitalised, canal-side areas reborn and acres of derelict land rejuvenated. The Walsall Regeneration Company (WRC) was formed in 2004 to spearhead regeneration within an extensive area of the Borough comprising 780 hectares, which includes the town centre. It is backed by a powerful partnership comprising Advantage West Midlands, English Partnerships and Walsall Council.

A number of major transformational projects are proposed for the WRC area, some of which are already underway. These include:

Business and Learning Campus – This involves the creation of a new Tesco store on the present WALCAT site and the development of a new college campus on the north side of the ring road.

Office Corridor – A new mixed use business area is proposed for the Littleton Street / Blue Lane corridor.

Town Centre Transport Package – Comprising an improvement of the ring road between Bridgeman Street and the Arboretum junction.

Waterfront – This key flagship project to create a 'Waterside Quarter' with new offices, leisure uses and residential apartments, alongside the canal at Town Wharf.

St. Mathew's Quarter – This includes a new Asda store, residential apartments and niche shopping.

Darlaston – High quality logistics operations and distribution centres on a large strategic site adjacent to the M6.

3 Challenges and Issues

3.1 The Wider Context – Traffic Congestion and Accessibility

Traffic congestion, as evidenced by morning peak period speeds is heaviest around Walsall town centre. All radial routes are severely affected by congestion on the approaches to the town centre, particularly the A461, A34 and A454. Significant congestion, although on a lesser scale, also occurs in the Bloxwich and Brownhills areas and there is localised congestion around Darlaston and Willenhall (see ***Figure 4.1***).

Traffic congestion around Walsall town centre is a product of the capacity and radial nature of the highway network in the area and the demand for travel by car at peak times.

Traffic congestion in and around the district centres is often related to key junctions and, in some cases, radial routes passing directly through main shopping streets and being impacted on by heavily used pedestrian crossings and by on-street parking.

In relation to Walsall town centre, the impact of commuter traffic is more significant placing a greater demand on long stay parking provision. However, there is a need to maintain an appropriate balance of long and short stay parking provision complimentary with the aims of congestion management whilst continuing to support the local economy

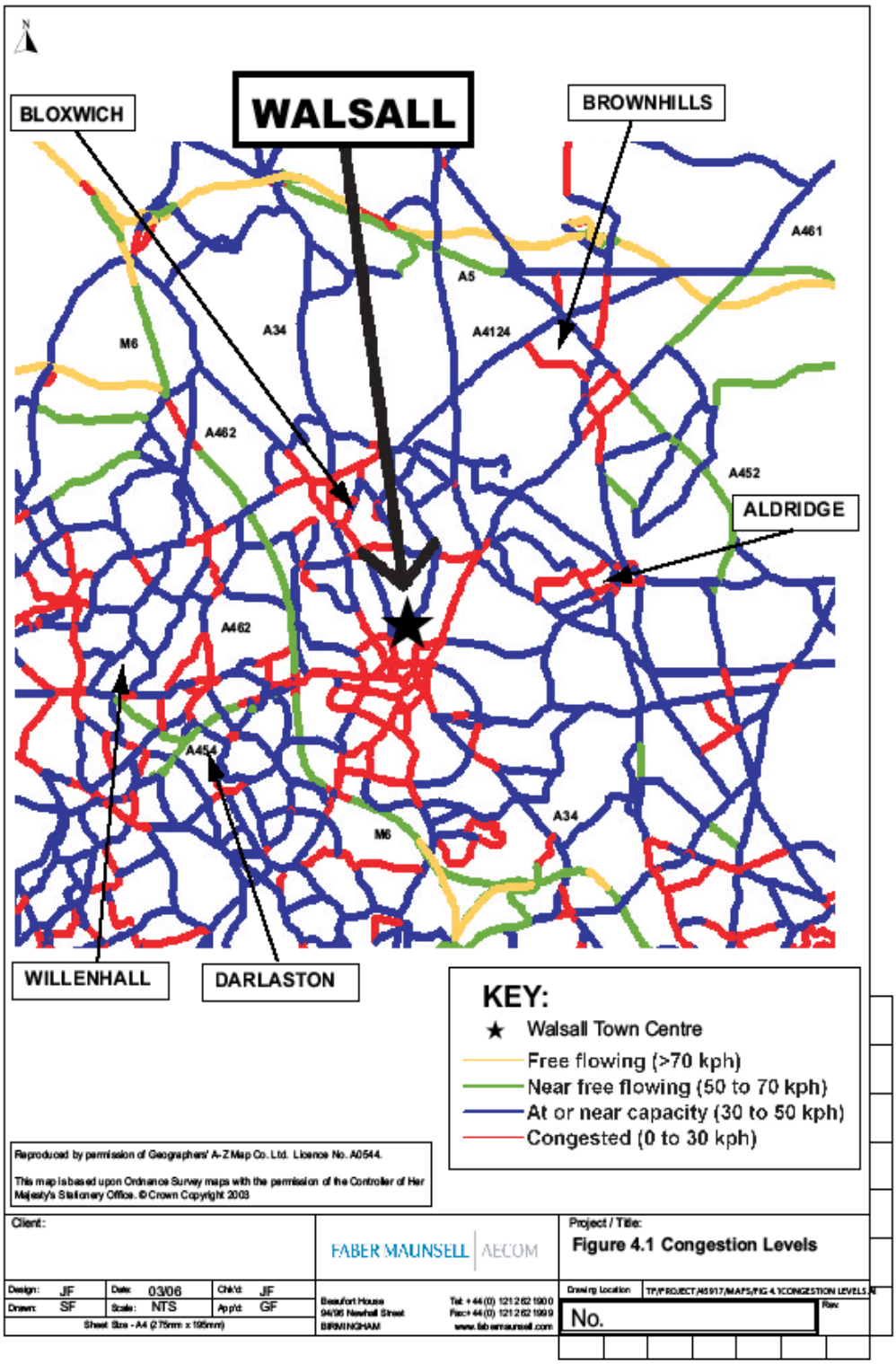
Careful management of the provision of long stay spaces in the town centre is consistent with the WMLTP as part of the strategy to reduce congestion. However, care needs to be taken in setting any future parking standards for new employment uses in the town centre to avoid them being so restrictive as to act as a deterrent to future development

The level of car trips to a centre and the demand for car parking is mainly related to the size of the centre but is also influenced by the accessibility of the centre by non-car modes, particularly public transport. Walsall is highly accessible to public transport, being at the centre of a radial network of bus services and also served by the Birmingham – Walsall – Cannock railway line and a direct rail service to Wolverhampton. The level of accessibility of Walsall town centre is illustrated on ***Figure 4.2*** which shows much of the Borough being within 30 minutes journey time by bus. The relative accessibility of the town centre and district centres is also indicated by the numbers of buses that arrive at the centre in the morning peak as shown on ***Table 4.1***.

Table 4.1: Bus Accessibility

Centre	Buses Arriving in Peak Hour
Walsall Town Centre	153
Aldridge	29
Bloxwich	76
Brownhills	28
Darlaston	34
Willenhall	50

Figure 4.1


WALSALL
BLOXWICH
BROWNHILLS
ALDRIDGE
WILLENHALL
DARLASTON
A461
A5
A34
A4124
M6
A462
A452
A462
A454
A34
M6
KEY:
Walsall Town Centre
Free flowing (>70 kph)
Near free flowing (50 to 70 kph)
At or near capacity (30 to 50 kph)
Congested (0 to 30 kph)
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Project / Title:
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Drawn: SF
Date: 03/06
Scale: NTS
Chk'd: JF
App'd: GF
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94/96 Newhall Street
BIRMINGHAM
Tel: +44 (0) 121 262 1900
Fax: +44 (0) 121 262 1999
www.fabermaunsell.com
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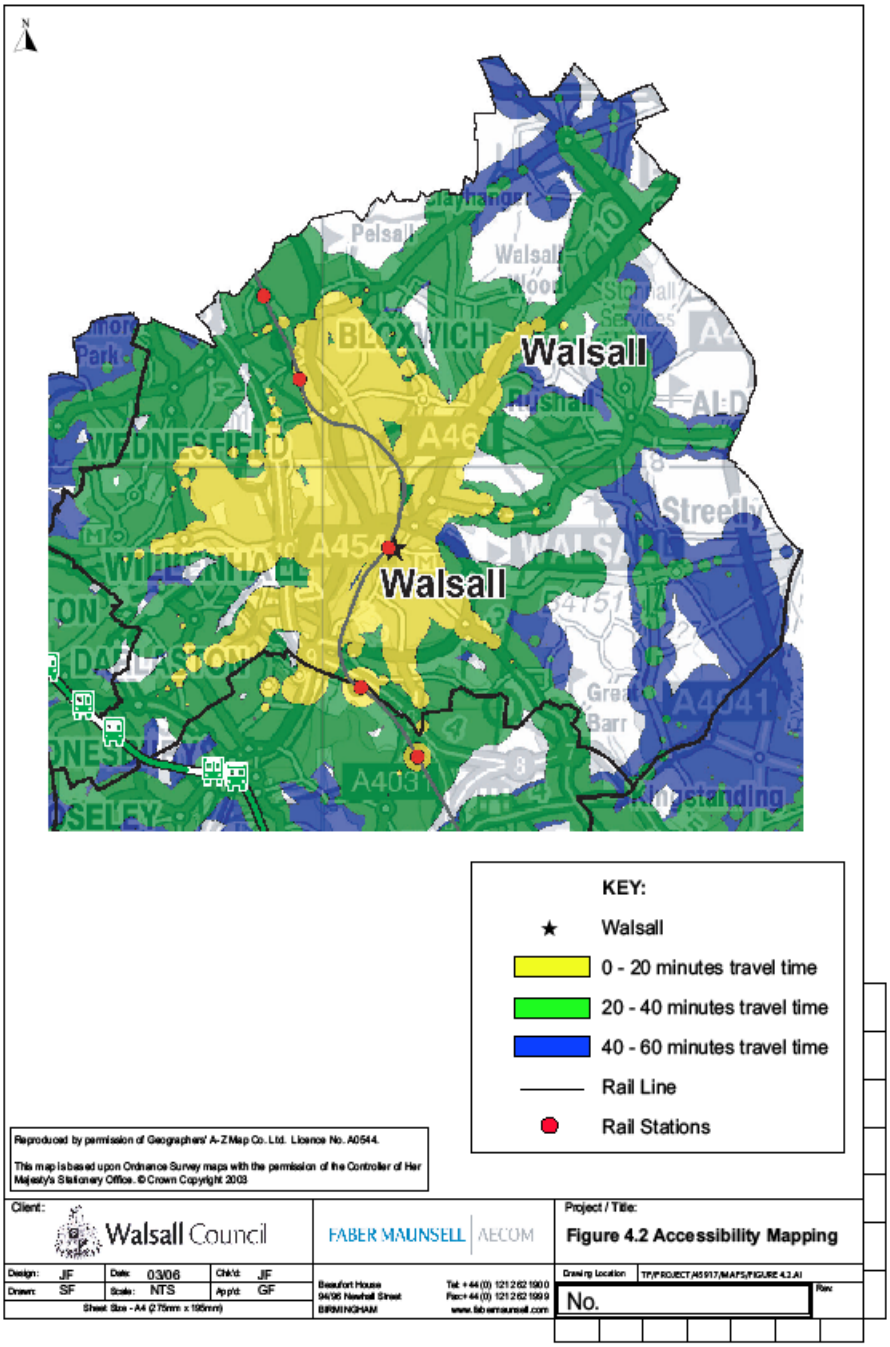
Figure 4.2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0 - 20 minutes travel time
20 - 40 minutes travel time
40 - 60 minutes travel time
Rail Line
Rail Stations
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Project / Title:
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Design: JF
Date: 03/06
Chk'd: JF
Drawn: SF
Scale: NTS
App'd: GF
Sheet Size - A4 (275mm x 195mm)
Beaufort House
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Fax: +44 (0) 121 262 1999
www.fabermaunsell.com
Drawing Location
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The accessibility of a location is therefore a factor when considering the opportunity to encourage a modal change from car to non-car modes for commuter trips and in considering the level of long stay parking provision. Although accessibility by non-car modes should be encouraged, in the case of visitor trips, a balanced approach is required to ensure that access by all modes is good, in order to maximise the attractiveness of the town centre for all visitors.

3.2 Audits of Parking Facilities

A detailed audit of significant car parks within the UDP defined boundaries of Walsall town centre and the district centres of Aldridge, Bloxwich, Brownhills, Darlaston and Willenhall has been undertaken. All council-owned car parks, publicly available private car parks and council employee car parks were included in the audit. Thirty-five car parks were audited in Walsall with a further 36 surveyed in the districts giving a total of 71 car park sites.

The surveys involved collection of a range of information on the following:

- Length of stay;
- Status (Public / Private);
- Access and signage to the car park (for pedestrians and motorists);
- Car park layout;
- Ticketing information;
- Restrictions;
- Security; and
- Lighting.

3.3 Car Parking Facilities in Walsall

A total of 4772 publicly available off-street parking spaces are provided in Walsall town centre as shown on ***Table 4.2*** and illustrated on ***Figure 4.3***. There are also a further 478 spaces available on-street in and around the town centre.

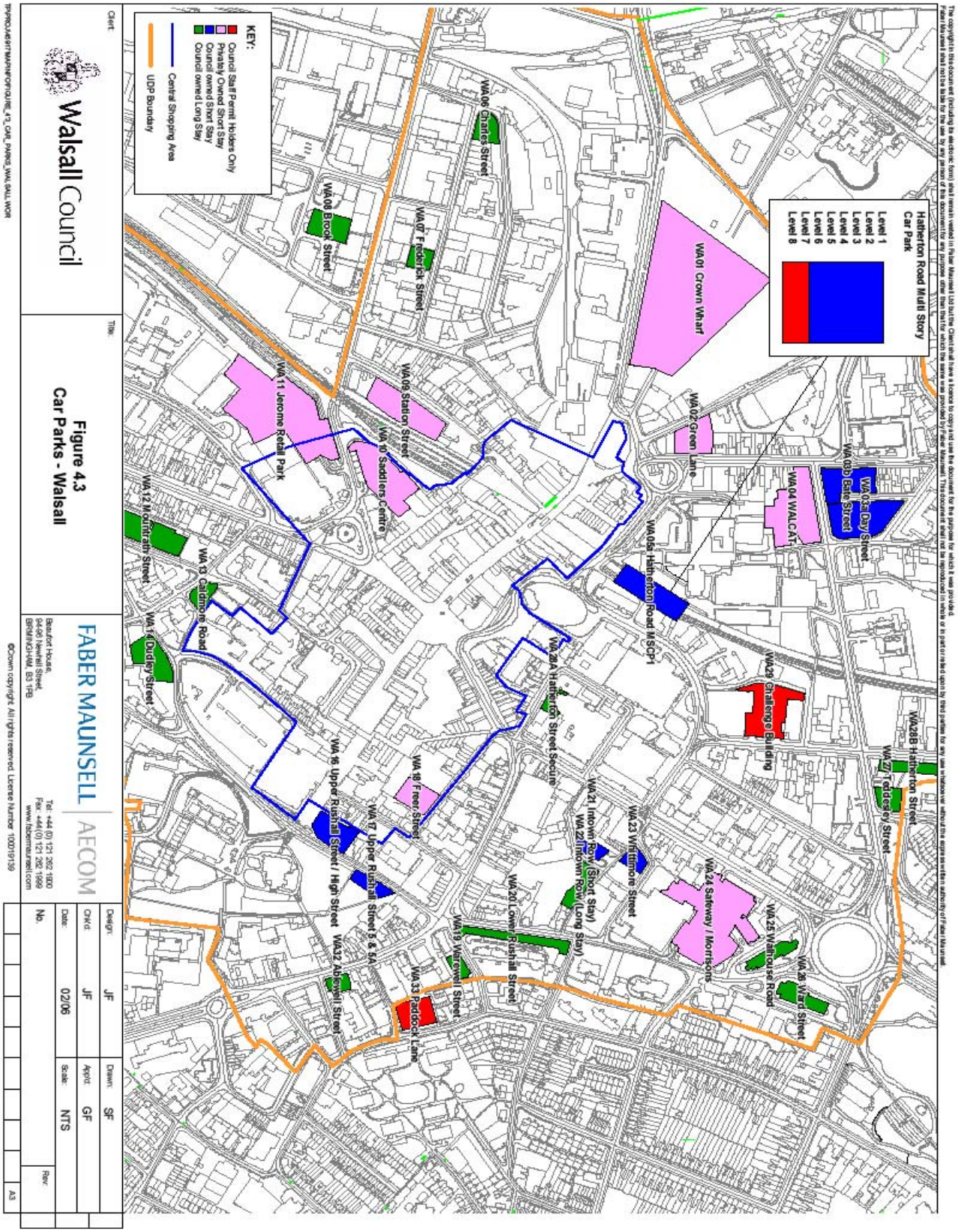
Table 4.2: Publicly Available and Private Parking in Walsall Town Centre

Type of Car Park	Number of Car Parks	Number of Spaces
Publicly Available Car Parking		
Council Operated Short Stay	7	512
Privately Operated Short Stay*	8	3218
Total Short Stay Car Parking	**15**	**3730**
Council Long Stay	14	564
On-street	-	478
Total Public Car Parking		**4772**
Private Car Parking		
Council staff only parking	6	546
Private non-residential parking**	-	2,313
Total Private Parking		**2,859**

* Privately operated car parks charge in excess of £5 for parking all day and are therefore not considered to be long stay car parks.

** Only includes cars parked on the larger private parking areas in the town centre area.

Figure 4.3: Car Parks in Walsall Town Centre



It is apparent from ***Table 4.2*** above that the privately operated car parks are generally larger than the council owned car parks. With the exception of the Hatherton Road and Paddock Lane multi-storey car parks, the council car parks tend to be 'opportunity' car parks, on relatively small sites, and occupying land owned by the council but not necessarily intended for long term car parking use. Indeed, several long stay council car parks have closed in recent years as a result of regeneration and development of the town centre.

3.4 Car Parking Facilities in the District Centres

The individual district centres in Walsall have much less car parking than Walsall town centre, as they serve a smaller catchment and have less retailing and business activity. The car parking supply also differs from Walsall in that car parking is free but restricted by length of stay. Around 800 to 1000 spaces are provided in each of the districts with the exception of Darlaston which only has around 500 parking spaces (see ***Table 4.4***).

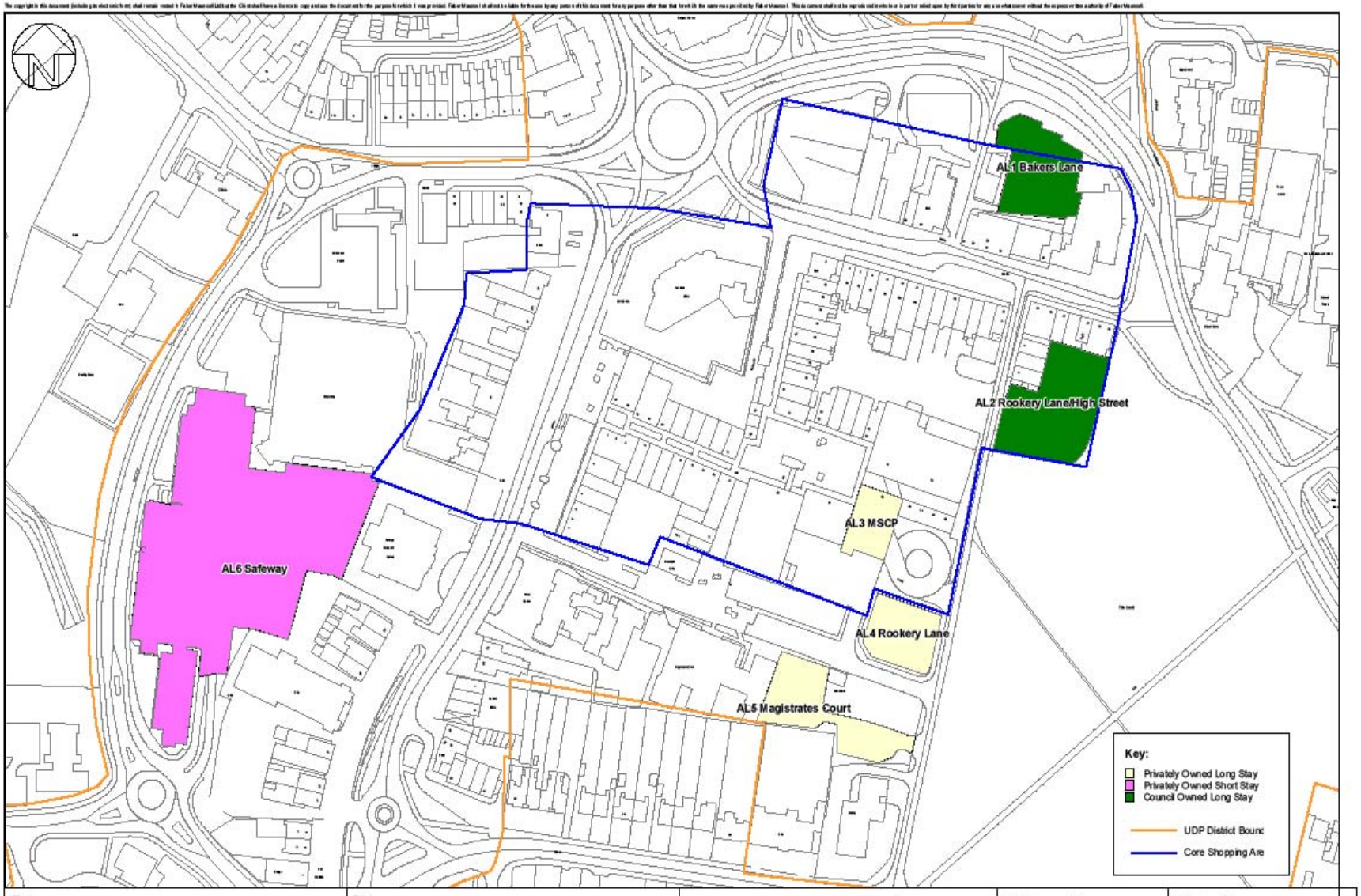
Table 4.4: Parking Facilities in District Centres*

Location	Length of Stay	Publicly Available		Private Non-Residential	On-Street	TOTAL
		Council	Private			
ALDRIDGE	**Short**	0	292	53**	150	802
	Long	73	234			
BLOXWICH	**Short**	0	0	not surveyed	220	865
	Long	221	424			
BROWNHILLS	**Short**	31	489	not surveyed	108	1,012
	Long	172	212			
DARLASTON	**Short**	18	297	not surveyed	80	507
	Long	9	103			
WILLENHALL	**Short**	142	133	not surveyed	172	992
	Long	507	38			

* Some parking occurs on 'informal' parking areas on private land (e.g. In Aldridge) that is not included in the above figures which only include 'formal' car parks

** Magistrates Court Private car park not included in total

The location of car parks in each of the district centres is illustrated on ***Figures 4.4*** to ***4.8*** on the following pages.



Client: Walsall Council

Title: **Figure 4.4 Aldridge Car Parks**

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TP/PROJ/459 17/MAP/INFO/FIGURE 4.4 ALDRIDGE CAR PARKS.WOR

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Figure 4.4: Aldridge

Figure 4.5: Bloxwich

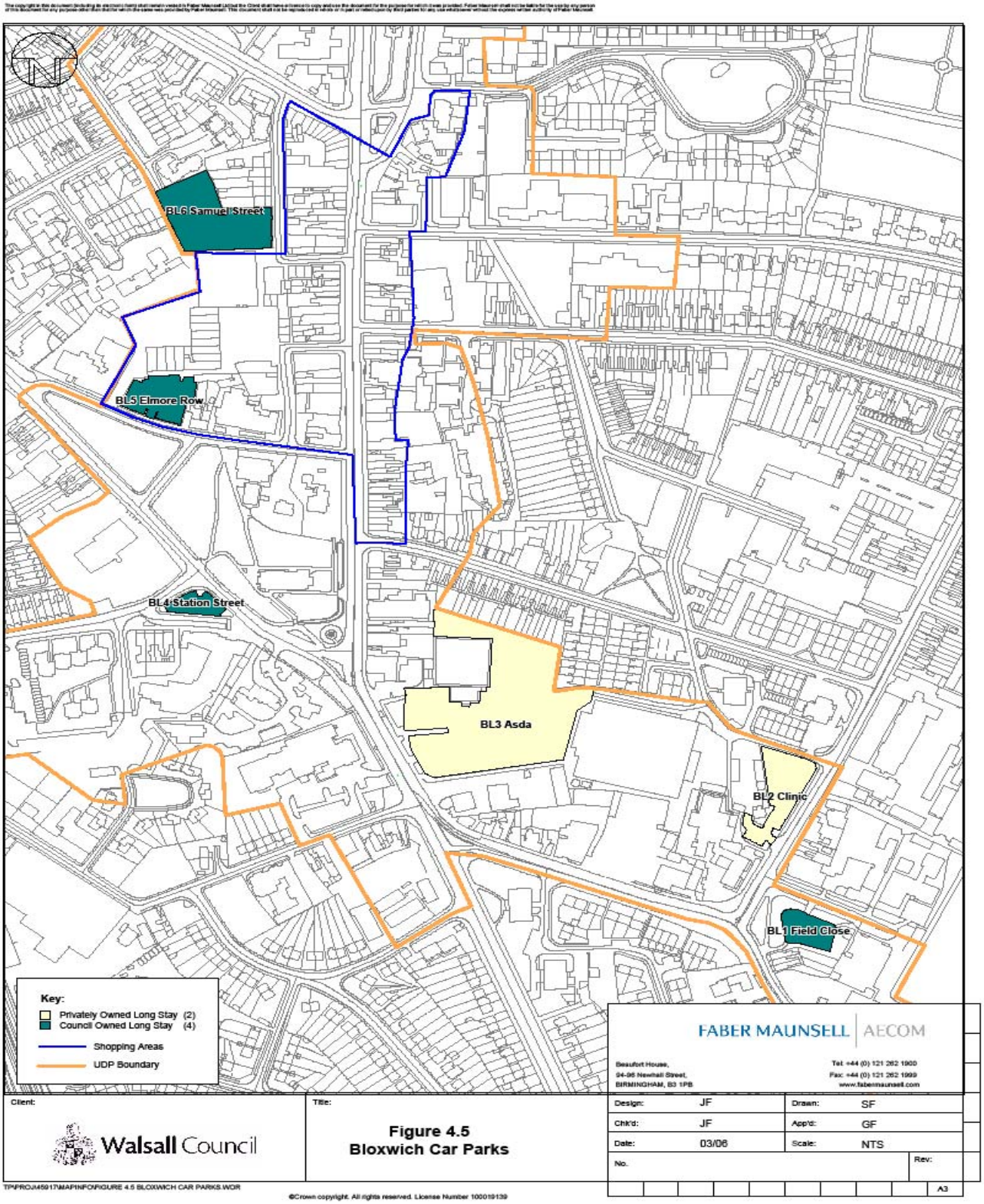

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Figure 4.6: Brownhills

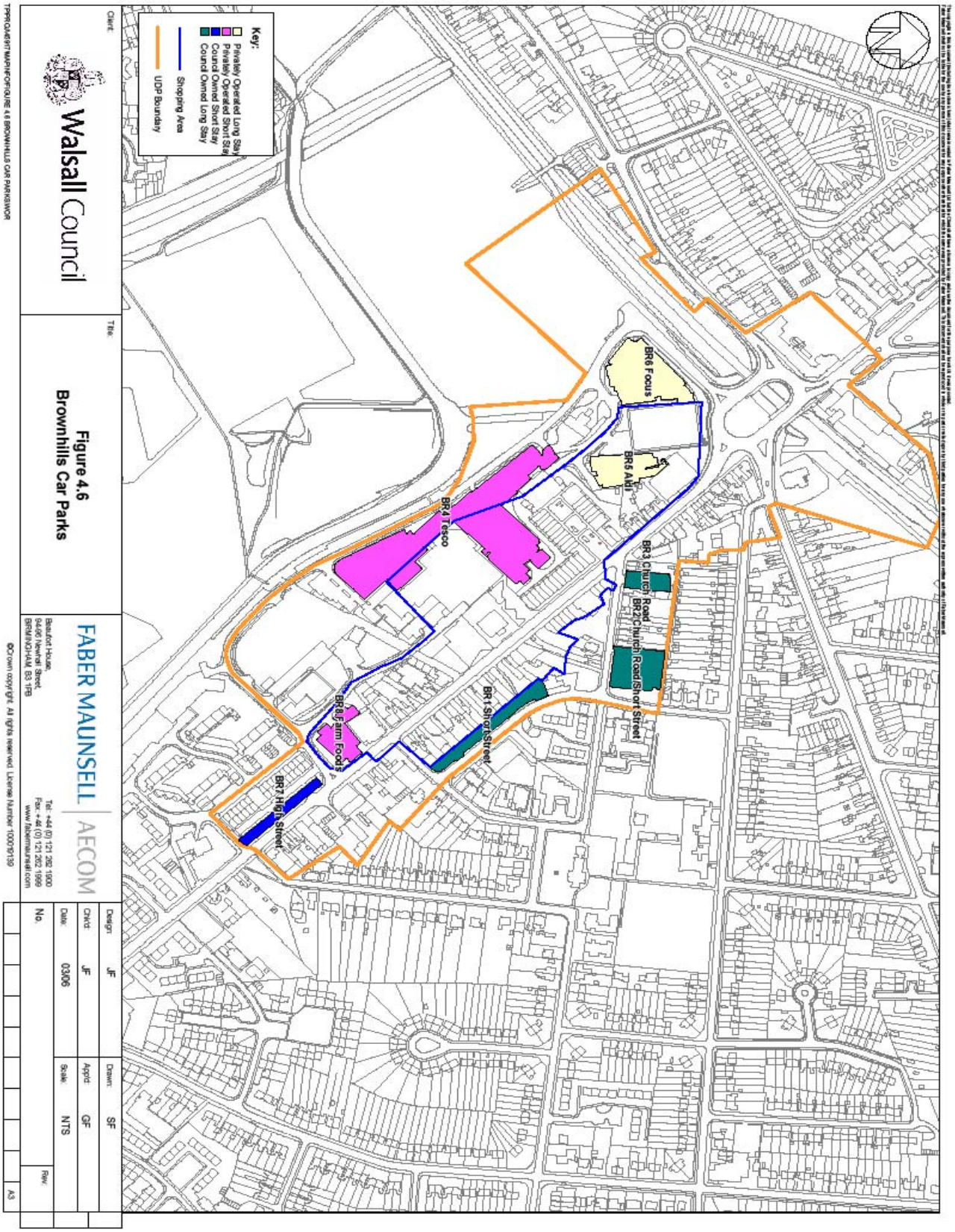

Figure 4.7: Darlaston

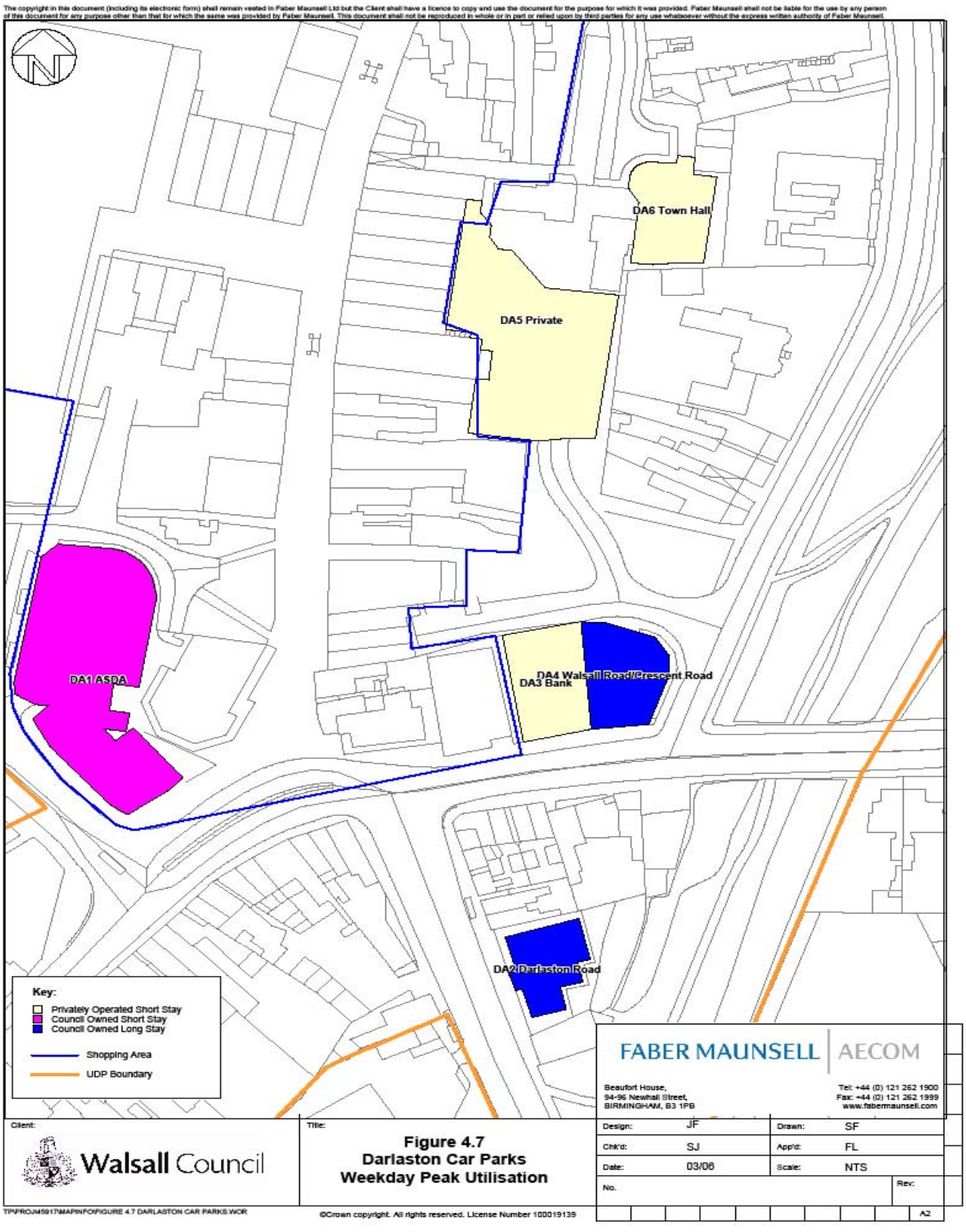

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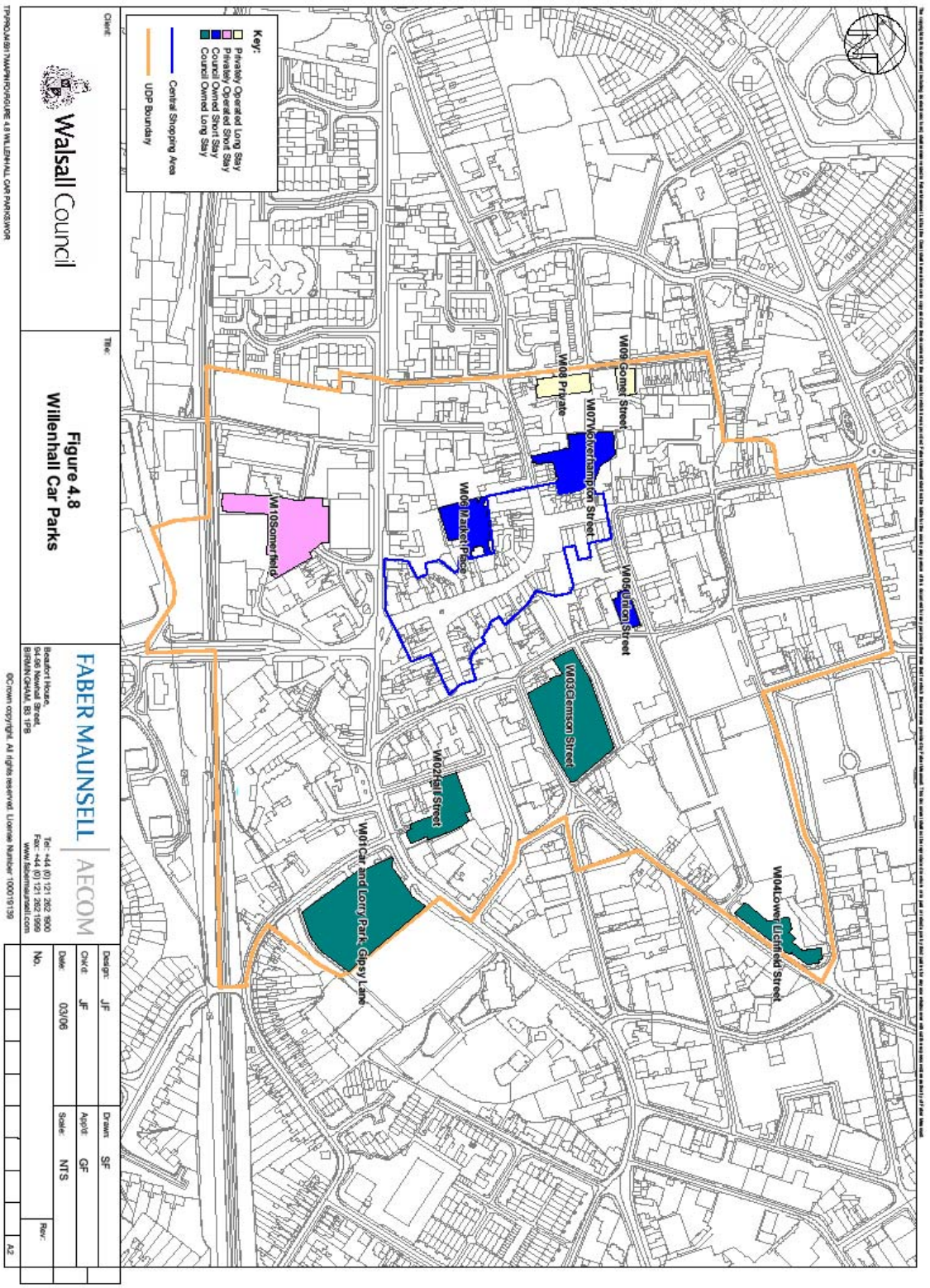
Figure 4.8: Willenhall



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3.5 Standard of Car Parking Facilities

As well as identifying the number of car parking spaces provided in Walsall town centre and the district centres, the car park audits also involved the collection of other information about the car parks. This focused on security issues and the facilities available for users. Information from this assessment is shown in ***Tables 4.5*** and ***4.6***.

Table 4.5: Facilities Provided at Car Parks in Relation to Security

Key: (x/y) x = Number of car parks with trait y = Total number of car parks within area	**Barrier Operated**	**Entrance / Exit Manned**	**CCTV**	**Lighting**	**No Graffiti**	**No Abandoned Vehicles**
Walsall	8/38	4/38	7/38	18/38	38/38	38/38
Aldridge	1/6	0/6	0/6	2/6	6/6	6/6
Bloxwich	1/6	0/6	3/6	3/6	6/6	6/6
Brownhills	0/6	0/6	4/6	6/6	6/6	6/6
Darlaston	0/6	0/6	3/6	2/6	5/6	4/6
Willenhall	0/10	0/10	3/10	9/10	10/10	10/10

Table 4.6: Facilities Provided at Car Parks in Relation to Access and Use

Key: (x/y) x = Number of car parks with trait y = Total number of car parks within area	**Car Parking Spaces Provided For…**			**Segregated Pedestrian Access**	**Tarmac Surfacing**
	Disabled	**Parent & Child**	**Motorcycle**		
Walsall	15/38	3/38	3/38	24/38	29/38
Aldridge	3/6	1/6	0/6	4/6	5/6
Bloxwich	5/6	2/6	0/6	5/6	5/6
Brownhills	3/6	2/6	0/6	5/6	6/6
Darlaston	2/6	1/6	1/6	4/6	6/6
Willenhall	7/10	2/10	1/10	7/10	9/10

The results of the audit suggest that while many of the publicly available car parks provided in Walsall are of a reasonable standard, there are a number of improvements that could be made in terms of the physical infrastructure.

Overall the privately operated car parks associated with retail facilities are of a good standard. Car parks serving retail developments such as Crown Wharf, the Saddlers Centre and Jerome Retail Park all have good quality lighting and some form of secure entry system. They also provide spaces for disabled users and generally have a good quality surface making them suitable for the mobility impaired.

The council operated car parks are generally of a lower standard than those operated in conjunction with retail parks and supermarkets in the town centre. The majority of car parks do not have any form of security features such as barrier entry / exit or CCTV coverage. As a result, the level of surveillance is limited. There is also a variation in the provision of lighting in these car parks.

The poorest quality car parks tend to be those operating as long stay located on the outskirts of the town centre. Whilst graffiti or abandoned vehicles are not evident at any of these locations, a significant number of them do not have any form of security measures. Furthermore, the surfacing of many non-central car parks is of poor quality making them unsuitable for use by wheelchair users.

Fewer than half of the town centre car parks provide parking spaces for the disabled and where they are provided, some do not meet current design standards. In total some 136 disabled spaces are provided within town centre car parks and a further 36 disabled spaces are provided on-street.

'Parent and child' spaces are generally only available on supermarket car parks and Multi storey car parks. Only three car parks have parking for powered two wheelers (Whittimere Street, Saddlers Centre and the Hatherton Road multi-storey car park.

With the exception of Crown Wharf, Hatherton Road MSCP, the Saddlers Centre, Freer Street and a few smaller car parks, the majority of car parks in Walsall are open all day everyday. Despite this, just 13 of the 31 publicly available town centre car parks have good quality lighting installed.

The short stay car parks are generally located close to the core shopping area with council long stay car parks situated towards the edge of the centre. Short stay car parks are reasonably evenly distributed around the town centre with the largest concentrations in the Bradford Place / Bridgeman Street area, Crown Wharf / St. Paul's area and Upper Rushall Street / Freer Street area. In terms of corridors, the Lichfield Road and Birmingham Road corridors are least well served with high quality parking facilities.

The absence of a good traffic circulation route around the town centre makes access to car parking relatively difficult, with the Crown Wharf car park, which is easy to access, being the exception. Access to the car parks in the Bradford Place area is fairly difficult, as is access to Hatherton Road car park and the Freer Street car park. The latter does provide direct access to the core shopping area as does the Saddlers Centre car park while other key car parks are accessed via pedestrian controlled crossings.

The legibility of the town centre is poor in that it is difficult for people to picture car parking provision in relation to the core shopping area, particularly given the large number of relatively small car parks. This also makes good direction signage difficult to achieve. Car park signage is therefore not particularly explicit or easy to follow. This places more emphasis on good public information on car park availability at car parks, at key locations in the town centre and on the council's website. All these aspects could be improved significantly.

3.6 Other Parking Facilities

Four railway stations lie within the Walsall Metropolitan Area: Walsall, Bloxwich, Bloxwich North and Bescot Stadium. Bloxwich North and Bescot Stadium both have car parking facilities provided at the stations. At Walsall there is car parking available close to the station but parking charges make it unattractive for regular park and ride use.

The car park at Bloxwich North is significantly underused even though much higher levels of parking occur at other stations on the line (Landywood and Cannock). The low level of parking appears to be the result of security concerns and a limited amount of rail related parking takes place on and adjacent to Broad Lane rather than in the station car park. Bescot Station has a slightly higher parking usage but is still relatively underused due to more infrequent rail service than the nearby and more attractive Tame Bridge station and poor pedestrian access. ***Table 4.7*** below indicates the number of car parking spaces provided at each of the stations, including Tame Bridge.

Table 4.7: Number of spaces provided at Station car parks

Station	Number of Parking Spaces	Number of Vehicles Observed
Walsall	0	-
Bloxwich	0	-
Bloxwich North	26	3
Bescot Stadium	162	10
Tame Bridge (outside the Borough)	225	215

Two lorry parks exist within the Walsall Metropolitan Area. All of the lorry parks are available for freight parking and as a long stay car park for other vehicles. The Wakes Ground Car and Lorry Park on Gipsy Lane in Willenhall is located near to a large industrial area comprising several separate estates.

The lorry park is easily accessible to the A454 Black Country route which connects with the M6 motorway.

The Beechtree Road Lorry Park is located in Walsall Wood adjacent to the A461.

The number of lorries typically using these sites is shown on ***Table 4.8***. Two of the three lorry parks are likely to close in the near future and this will be a loss to the freight industry and is likely to increase the existing problem of lorries parking on the highway.

Table 4.8: Number of Lorries Using Lorry Parks in Walsall

Site	Capacity	Number of Vehicles Using Park	Comments
Wakes Ground, Willenhall	28	25	
Beechtree Road, Walsall Wood	12	10	Lorry Park likely to be closed within next three years

Many of the strategic routes in the borough are covered by peak period urban clearway orders in order to ensure that parking does not seriously affect the operation of the highway and cause traffic congestion. These measures should be adequate to safeguard the highway network from the adverse effects of parking, but there is limited enforcement and parking does cause problems at some locations, for example, sections of Stafford Street and Bloxwich Lane.

There are also areas where loading and unloading can cause traffic congestion, for example, where traffic routes pass through shopping streets and the presence of parked cars may cause delivery vehicles to double park.

Parked vehicles can also cause obstructions. This can happen anywhere in the Borough but is particularly a problem in mixed land use areas where large vehicles may have to negotiate narrow streets fronted by terraced properties with no off-street parking.

There are problems in Walsall town centre in relation to the existing facility for holiday coaches in Hatherton Road. Coaches waiting at the current facility can obstruct access to premises and cause problems for nearby residential properties.

3.7 Management of Parking Spaces in Walsall Town Centre

The management of publicly available parking in the town centre varies according to the operator. The council car parks are designated as either short or long stay car parks and there is a charging regime for both types of car parks that is applied across the town centre. The privately operated public car parks have varying charging regimes; although they tend to be broadly similar to charges on council car parks with the exception of NCP operated car parks (see ***Table 4.9***).

Parking charges in Walsall town centre have also been benchmarked with those applying in other centres. The comparison with charges in other similar centres is shown in ***Table 4.10***. It can be seen that the charge for short stay parking in Walsall is broadly comparable to charges elsewhere. The charges for long stay parking are more variable and, although charges in Walsall may be similar to some charges operating in other centres, the long stay charge on council operated car parks is significantly lower than that applying for long stay parking on privately operated car parks within the centre.

Whereas, the council generally charges £3.60 per day for long stay parking, private sector operators commonly charge in excess of £5 per day. In addition, the council also issues discounts for monthly, three monthly and annual permits. The annual season ticket brings the daily charge for long stay parking down to around £2 per day.

The council also provides subsidised parking permits for some of its own staff based in the town centre. Charges to staff are lower than the daily charges for long stay spaces in recognition of the need to provide and use a vehicle on council business.

Table 4.9: Pricing Structure for Town Centre Car Parks

		Up to 1 Hour	1 – 2 Hours	2 – 3 Hours	3 – 4 Hours	All Day
Council Owned Short Stay		*70p*	*£1.40*	*£2.20*	*£2.90*	-
Council Owned Long Stay		*70p*	*£1.40*	*£2.20*	*£2.90*	*£3.60*
Privately Operated	**Crown Wharf**	*Free*	*£1.20*	*£2.00*	*£3.00*	*£8.00*
	Green Lane	*60p*	*£1.20*	*£1.80*	*£2.40*	*£4.00*
	WALCAT	*70p*	*£1.40*	*£2.20*	*£2.90*	-
	Station Street (NCP)	*£1.50*	*£2.70*	*£3.90*	*£5.10*	*£5.20*
	Saddlers Centre	-	*£1.10*	*£1.60*	*£2.20*	*£6.60*
	Jerome Retail Park	*50p*	*£1.00*	*£2.00*	*£5.00*	*£5.00*
	Freer Street (NCP)	*£1.75*	*£3.15*	*£4.55*	*£5.90*	*£6.50*
	Asda	*Free*	*Free*	*£1.80*	*£3.00*	-

Table 4.10: Benchmarking of Parking Charges with Comparable Centres

CENTRE	Off-Street Charges		On-Street Charges	Disabled Spaces
	Short Stay Charge (2 hours)	Long Stay Charge (All Day)	One Hour Charge (if any)	Two Hour Charge (if any)
Walsall	£1.40	£3.60 - £5.00	Free	Free
Dudley / Stourbridge / Halesowen / Brierley Hill	£1.00	£2.30	Free	
Merry Hill Shopping Centre	Free (under review)	Free	Free	Free
West Bromwich	£0.80	£2.00	£0.50	Free
Wolverhampton	£1.30	£10.00	£1.20	
Solihull	£1.90	£8.00 - £10.00		Free
Birmingham	£1.90	£5.80 - £7.20	£2.40 Inner Zone; £0.40 Outer Zone	Free

3.8 Utilisation of Car Parking in Walsall Town Centre

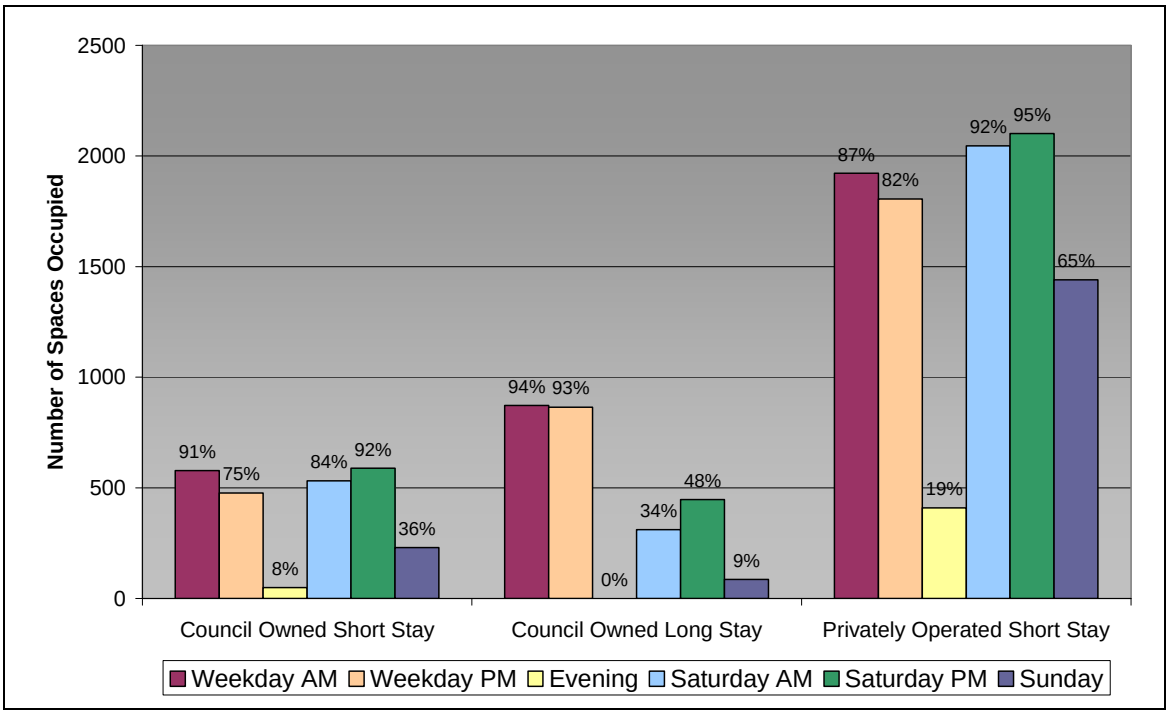
In addition to the car park audits, utilisation surveys were carried out to assess the demand for and use of car parks in Walsall town centre. Surveys were carried out in the morning and afternoon of a weekday and a Saturday at each car park with additional surveys being done on a weekday evening and once on a Sunday. On-street utilisation surveys were also carried for Walsall using aerial photographs.

The results of these surveys are included in a report entitled ***Parking Audit and Utilisation Surveys***. The key findings are summarised below.

Demand for car parking inevitably fluctuates throughout the week as people have different access requirements on weekdays compared to the weekend. There is also a differential in demand between long stay and short stay. During the week commuters require long stay parking for employment purposes whereas at the weekends there is high demand for short stay parking for people carrying out shopping and leisure trips.

Figure 4.9 shows the relative demand for car parking in Walsall throughout the week by car park type. The overall demand for car parking spaces, including long stay use, is higher during the week than at the weekend, with the highest demand occurring during a typical weekday morning. Demand across a typical weekday is relatively consistent though the day but more vacant spaces were observed in the afternoon. Demand for parking in the evening is significantly lower. Fewer than 500 spaces were occupied on a Friday evening.

Figure 4.9: Demand for Car Parking in Walsall across the Week by Car Park Type



Whereas overall demand for parking is lower on a Saturday than a weekday, utilisation of short stay spaces is significantly higher on a Saturday, being around 80 - 90%. In particular, privately operated car parks are better utilised at the weekend than during the week. On the other hand, long stay car parks are significantly underused on a Saturday.

The demand for parking on a Sunday is approximately half that of a Saturday and a quarter of that observed during the week. Unsurprisingly, short stay spaces are the best utilised on a Sunday, with most people occupying spaces in privately operated car parks closely linked to shopping facilities.

Surprisingly, the demand for short stay parking on a Saturday is only some 25% higher than a busy weekday. This demonstrates that, at least in the run up to Christmas, there is a reasonably even demand for parking across the week. By contrast, the demand for long stay parking varies significantly across the week. These car parks are relatively well used by commuters during the week but are significantly underutilised at the weekend.

In overall terms, there is a reasonable balance between the supply and demand for parking at a peak time of year (late November). However, this is only because there are spaces available at the edge of the centre.

Many of the short stay car parks adjacent to the core shopping area are virtually full at peak times on a Saturday. This suggests that if the town centre is to expand and remain attractive to visitors, there needs to be an increase in the amount and quality of short stay parking easily accessible from the highway network and easily accessible to the core shopping area.

Similarly, many of the long stay car parks are full during the week, causing some people to circulate around the town centre to find a space, and resulting in short stay spaces being used for long stay parking.

3.9 Utilisation of Car Parking in the District Centres

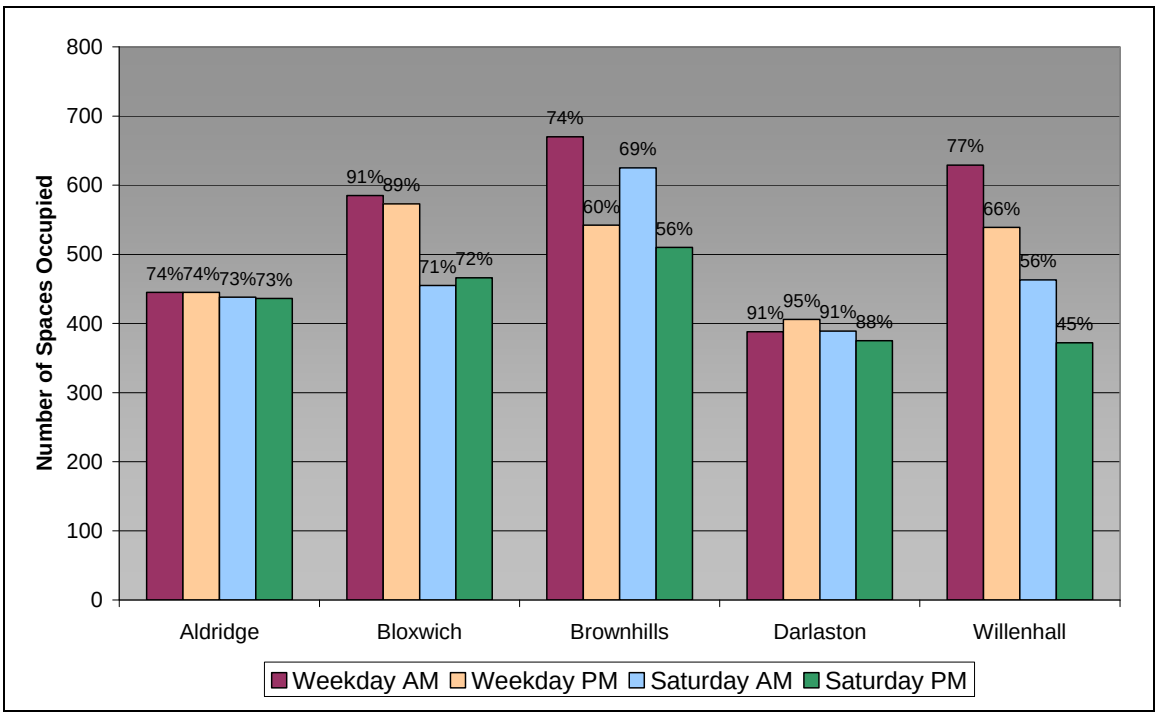
The district centres tend to have similar levels of car parking provision. Darlaston has the lowest number of spaces while Brownhills and Willenhall have the highest provision. On-street parking also plays a more important role in the district centres than is the case in Walsall. Whereas Aldridge, Brownhills and Darlaston have fairly good provision of off-street car parking close to the main shopping area, this is less the case in Bloxwich and Willenhall.

The utilisation of car parks in the district centres is shown in ***Figure 4.10***. In all of the districts the overall weekday utilisation of off-street car parking was higher than the corresponding Saturday situation. In Aldridge, Bloxwich and Darlaston the weekday utilisation remained relatively constant throughout the day. By contrast, demand for parking in Willenhall and Brownhills was significantly higher during the weekday morning peak than in the afternoon.

A similar situation was observed at the weekend in the centres of Aldridge, Bloxwich and Darlaston. As was the case during the week, demand in these districts remained relatively constant during the whole of Saturday. In Brownhills and Willenhall, demand was significantly higher in the morning than afternoon.

In Darlaston, at peak times, virtually no spare capacity exists. Car parks in Bloxwich are also almost fully utilised during the week, though around 25% of spaces are available at the weekend. The problem may be worse during the week, when it would appear that some parking spaces are used for commuter parking.

Figure 4.10: Demand for Car Parking Spaces in District Centres across the Week



The parking stock provided in the other district centres is meeting overall demand at present, particularly at the weekend when demand is generally lower. In the centre of Aldridge there always appears to be spaces available, although the Rookery Lane car park was regularly full. In Brownhills and Willenhall there is around 20% spare capacity at peak times. However, in Brownhills, the Short Street, Tesco and Aldi car parks are virtually full at peak times, while in Willenhall, the Woverhampton Street, Somerfield, Union Street and Market place car parks are also fairly full at peak times.

3.10 User Perception Surveys

In order to assist with the development of the Parking Strategy, user perception surveys were conducted with members of the public to understand perceptions of parking availability, cost, access and security across Walsall. The market research exercise was successful with 425 face-to-face interviews conducted across Walsall town centre and the five district centres. The surveys were undertaken between 9am and 6pm on weekdays and a Saturday and the respondents were a good representation of the Walsall area in terms of age and gender being in line with the Census 2001 data and all quotas were met.

The surveys collected data on:

- Location;
- Frequency of use;
- Length of stay;
- Trip purpose;

- Payment;
- Permit Holders;
- Attitude towards current standard of car parks; and
- Preferred future improvements.

Since the surveys were carried out during the working day, the majority of respondents were visitors to the town centre and had therefore parked on short stay car parks and their views would have reflected this. Nevertheless around 15-20% of respondents had visited the centres for work purposes and used long stay parking facilities. In addition, information on council staff perceptions of long stay parking was also available from a survey carried out by the council.

In addition to the user perception surveys, a workshop event was organised by Faber Maunsell and Walsall Council, to discuss the problems of parking in Walsall and surrounding districts and solutions to these problems.

All centres were regularly used by the majority of respondents; therefore, they were familiar with parking in the area. Car parks were more popular with respondents than parking on-street. With the exception of Willenhall and Bloxwich, at least 70% of respondents parked in a car park. In Willenhall and Bloxwich over a third of respondents parked on-street. On-street parking is limited in Aldridge with only six percent of respondents parking there.

The most popular car parks used by respondents in each area are as follows:

- Walsall – Crown Wharf, Saddlers Centre and Safeway / Morrison's;
- Aldridge – Multi-Storey car park;
- Bloxwich – Elmore Road car park and ASDA;
- Brownhills – Tesco car park;
- Darlaston – ASDA car park; and
- Willenhall - Market Place car park.

With the exception of Brownhills, over 50% of respondents were staying in the district centres for less than one hour and over 70% of respondents were staying in any of the district centres for less than two hours. Very few respondents (6%) were intending long stays (over four hours) in Aldridge and Bloxwich. Long stay parking requirements are greater in the remaining district centres but nowhere account for more than a fifth of parking durations. This is likely to be due to the low number of people at work in the area who park. Parking durations are longer in Walsall although over half (58%) intend to stay less than two hours.

Table 4.11 overleaf shows the mean score when comparing respondents' views on the importance of car park attributes with how car parks within the study at each centre meet these attributes. The closer the mean value to zero, the greater the correlation between importance and effectiveness. Mean scores fall within a fixed range of between -5 and +5.

A positive mean score suggests that the car parks provide the attribute more effectively than is perceived important to people. A negative mean score suggests that the car parks are not effectively providing these attributes.

Table 4.11: Gap Analysis

Objective	Walsall	Aldridge	Bloxwich	Brownhills	Darlaston	Willenhall
Availability of general spaces	**-2.11**	-0.84	**-2.36**	**-1.19**	**-2.46**	**-1.9**
Availability of disabled spaces	**-0.13**	0.92	**-1.66**	**1.56**	-0.92	**1.36**
Availability of mother and baby spaces	**0.02**	**1.1**	**-1.62**	**1.96**	**0.09**	**1.86**
Ease of finding a space	**-1.93**	-0.86	**-2.5**	-0.73	**-2.43**	**-2.02**
Cost	**-1.19**	**-0.12**	-0.46	0.5	**0.34**	**0.16**
Ease of access	**-1.59**	**-0.32**	**-1.56**	**-1.07**	**-1.02**	**-1.1**
Long stay parking availability	**-1.09**	**1.7**	**0.38**	**-0.1**	-0.75	0.62
Short stay parking availability	**-1.25**	**-0.48**	-0.54	**-0.23**	**-1.3**	**-1.3**
Lighting	**-1.09**	**0.06**	-0.5	**-1.58**	**-0.47**	**-1**
Security	**-1.6**	-0.52	**-1.46**	**-1.81**	**-1.59**	**-2.98**
Pleasant environment/ well maintained	**-1.01**	-0.58	**0.18**	**-0.21**	-0.7	**-1.76**
Closeness to where you want to be	**-1.04**	**-0.44**	**-0.16**	**-0.46**	**-0.43**	-0.5

Colour Key:

- **Mean score very close to zero** (greater correlation between importance and effectiveness)
- Mean score between 0.5 – 1 or -0.5 – -1 (close to zero, therefore, good correlation between importance and effectiveness)
- **Mean score between -1 and -2** (importance of objective met to a certain extent)
- **Mean score less than -2** (expectations of car park objectives not effectively met)
- **Mean score over 1** (objectives more effectively met than deemed important)

None of the attributes match importance and effectiveness in any of the areas. However, the following all have a mean score not far from zero, between 1 and -1, suggesting provision is not too far from expectation.

- Cost (District centres – only where parking is currently free);
- Closeness to where you want to be (District centres only); and
- Pleasant environment / well maintained (excluding Walsall and Willenhall).

Attributes receiving a high negative mean score across all areas, suggesting that the provision of the attribute is ineffective include the following:

- Availability of general spaces (except Aldridge);
- Ease of finding a space (except Aldridge and Brownhills); and
- Security (except Aldridge).

These three elements are issues in all areas with the exception of Aldridge. Mean scores for Aldridge suggests that respondents are generally happy with parking in the district centre as there is a good correlation between importance and effectiveness for all attributes. Two statements in Aldridge received a high positive mean score suggesting over provision. These include ‘availability of mother and baby spaces’ and ‘long stay parking availability’.

The ‘availability of disabled spaces’ and the ‘availability of mother and baby spaces’ received a high positive mean score suggesting they are more effectively met than deemed important. However, this is due to these attributes not applying to all, as only a small percentage of respondents are eligible to use such spaces. These attributes were very important to all those eligible to use them and were deemed to be not effectively met by car parks in the district centres or Walsall town centre.

The parking situation in Walsall is perceived to be in greater need of improvement than the districts as a whole as all attributes in Walsall, with the exception of the availability of ‘parent and child’ spaces and disabled spaces, received high negative scores.

Bloxwich fares badly in terms of availability of general spaces and ease of finding a space. However, the location and condition of the car parks is considered to be satisfactory.

Parking provision in Brownhills is deemed reasonably acceptable, although the main concerns are availability of spaces, ease of access, lighting and security.

Darlaston fares badly for availability of general spaces and ease of finding a space. Whilst security is an area in need of improvement, lighting appears to be acceptable.

Ease of finding a space and security are the worst performing attributes in Willenhall. Only the attribute of free parking meets expectations in this area.

Respondents were asked to state their first, second and third choice improvements from a list of statements. ***Table 4.12*** below shows the first choice improvement selected by the majority of respondents. 'More spaces / greater availability' was the first choice improvement for Walsall, Bloxwich and Darlaston. 'More CCTV' was the first choice improvement for Brownhills and 'better lighting' was the first choice improvement for Willenhall. The respondents in Aldridge did not have a first choice improvement as they were happy with the car parks as they are.

Table 4.12: First choice improvement

Statement	Walsall	Aldridge	Bloxwich	B/Hills	Darlaston	Willenhall
Better lighting						✓
Better signage						
More spaces / greater availability	✓		✓		✓	
Improved access						
Improved car park surface						
Improved appearance/ maintenance						
More car park staff/ attendants						
More CCTV				✓		
More public toilets						
Cheaper Parking						
More ticket machines						
Pay on exit rather than arrival						
Pay on foot before leaving						
Other						
Don't Know						
None, I'm happy as they are		✓				

Respondents were asked whether they would still like to see their first choice improvement made, if parking charges had to be increased to pay for it. With the exception of Aldridge and Bloxwich, only a third of respondents are willing to pay more in parking charges to see their first choice improvement made.

3.11 Parking Strategy Workshop

As part of the development of the Parking Strategy key stakeholder workshops were held to obtain the views of local users. The workshop event started with a 45 minute presentation providing a background to the project and findings of the study to date. Following the presentation delegates took part in three workshop groups. The aim of the workshops was to identify problems and solutions of parking in Walsall town centre and the district centres. The workshop highlighted the need for the following at car parks.

- Build more car parks in more suitable locations;
- Improve public transport links;
- Utilise derelict and brownfield sites;
- Introduce information boards showing how many spaces are available and at which locations; and
- Improve signage.

3.12 Summary of Problems and Issues

From the car parking audit, utilisation surveys and the workshop, a number of parking problems and issues emerged. These problems and issues need to be addressed through the parking strategy for the Borough. The key problems and issues in relation to parking in the Borough have been identified as follows:

Walsall Town Centre - Short Stay Parking Problems

- Limited spare capacity at peak times;
- Few modern, well designed and attractive car parks;
- Some parts of the town centre are not well served by car parks;
- Accessibility of some car parks to the highway network is poor;
- Accessibility of some car parks to the core shopping area is poor;
- Security is a concern;
- High demand for on-street spaces is causing circulating traffic;
- Provision for disabled could be better;
- Poor car park directional signage;
- Lack of information on available parking spaces.

Walsall Town Centre - Long Stay Parking Problems

- Limited spare capacity (weekdays) – many car parks are full;
- Loss of spaces due to regeneration developments;
- Peak period traffic congestion on the strategic highway network serving the town centre;
- High number of council staff using public long stay car parks;
- Commuter parking causing problems in some residential streets close to the town centre;
- Security is an issue, although some secure car parks have been provided;
- Lack of good lighting.

District Centres - Parking Problems

- Not enough designated short stay car parks;
- Lack of enforcement
- Most off-street car parks in the district centres are operating at capacity at peak times;
- Security is a concern;
- Many car parks are not well maintained or attractive to use;
- Access to car parks and the layout of car parks could be better;
- Visitor parking causes problems in some residential streets.

Other Parking Problems and Issues

- No attractive rail park and ride facility in the Borough;
- On-street parking causing traffic congestion on some strategic routes;
- On-street parking regularly causing obstruction in some streets;
- Lack of good information on car parking location and availability of spaces;
- Inadequate facility for holiday coaches in Hatherton Road is causing problems for local residents and business;
- Inappropriate lorry parking in residential areas.

4 Objectives

4.1 Key Aims of the Parking Strategy

The objectives of the Walsall Parking Strategy should be consistent with national and regional guidance, support the delivery of the WMLTP, the council's own Transport Strategy and its wider vision and overall community strategy for the Borough. It is also essential that the Strategy responds to the regeneration objectives of the WRC and the Council itself.

The overall aim of the Parking Strategy is to integrate transport policies, land use policies and business practices to establish a coordinated and consistent approach to parking within the Borough. This will be achieved through the mechanisms outlined below.

4.1.1 Parking Provision

A better balance needs to be achieved between the supply and demand for parking. A key element of managing parking supply and parking charges is to ensure that spaces are provided in a manner that maximises the potential for achieving transport, social, economic regeneration and environmental goals. The council should work with the private sector to provide new parking facilities which encourage short stay shopper and visitor trips. The approach to the provision of long stay spaces needs to be suitable to support the local economy and encourage regeneration whilst responding to the WMLTP objective of discouraging long stay commuter trips through the promotion of more sustainable modes of transport. Park and ride facilities could provide an opportunity to meet long stay demand whilst still meeting WMLTP objectives.

4.1.2 Parking Enforcement

The Police and the council currently share responsibility for parking enforcement. A key requirement of the Parking Strategy (as well as the Traffic Management Act 2004) is the need to improve parking enforcement through the implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement in Walsall, which should commence during 2008. Civil Parking Enforcement will transfer the powers required for on-street parking enforcement from the Police to the council, who will then be responsible for the enforcement of all non-private parking. The introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement is essential to the delivery of the Parking Strategy.

4.1.3 Parking Quality

The Borough's parking stock needs to be improved to ensure personal and property security, accessibility by all users, better road safety and traffic management and that the physical impact of parking areas and buildings is minimised. The provision of new parking facilities by the private sector provides an opportunity to improve the quality of parking facilities but raising the standard of council car parks will require greater investment and a commitment by the council to a long term improvement plan for its parking service.

4.2 Key Principles for the Walsall Parking Strategy

There are a number of key principles that flow from the overall context for the Walsall Parking Strategy described in the previous sections. These are as follows:

1. Parking should be managed in a way that contributes to the economic vitality of main centres and local centres.
2. Parking charges should be set at levels to reflect the role and economic strength of centres and respond to integrated transport and sustainability objectives.
3. Civil Parking Enforcement will be required to effectively manage the supply of off-street and unauthorised parking; effective parking enforcement is also required on public on-street short stay and long stay parking.
4. The provision of public parking facilities by the council should be governed by a clear business plan that responds to community and service objectives, and which includes effective asset management.
5. The provision by the council of car parking spaces for its own employees should be managed within the context of wider transport and Travel Plan objectives.
6. Although there is no "right" to park on the highway fronting a property, the facility of local residents to park close to their homes should be supported where appropriate and practicable.
7. In town centres, large commercial, retail and leisure developments should provide parking that is available to short term visitors to the centre as a whole and managed in accordance with the objectives of the statutory network management duty.
8. Priority should be given to provision of short stay spaces and where long stay parking is provided it should be appropriately located to support the economic regeneration and network management needs of the borough
9. The location, supply and pricing of long stay parking for centres should be designed to encourage commuting by public transport or other modes.

10 Provision should be made for on-street loading and unloading where this is required and cannot be accommodated off-street, and access to commercial premises by large vehicles should be kept clear of obstructions.

4.3 Objectives

1. Public car park objectives:

1a To promote the attractiveness of main centres and local centres by encouraging the provision of an adequate off-street parking supply for short stay visitors.

1b To establish a coherent management regime that supports the role and economic strength of the town and district centres whilst delivering the councils statutory network management duty responsibilities to reduce traffic congestion.

2. Council Parking Service objectives:-

2a To deliver the parking service to clear standards of cost and quality by the most economic, efficient and effective means available.

2b To manage the operation of council long stay and staff car parks within the wider context of a Staff Travel Plan.

3. Special parking provision objective:

To ensure that appropriate parking provision is made for all users to maximise access, mobility and transport choice.

4. Parking in new developments objective:

To apply appropriate controls on parking at all new and expanded developments in accordance with local planning policies

5. Parking design and access objective:

To ensure high quality design and maintenance of car parks with regard to surface, layout, drainage, access for vehicles and pedestrians, internal signage and landscaping / boundaries;

6. Parking security objective:

To ensure that car parks provide a secure environment for people and property.

7. Information objective:-

To ensure car parks are well signed and that information on parking provision and availability is easily available;

8. On-street parking management objective:

8a To ensure that on-street car parking does not create congestion or danger for other road users.

8b To provide a well managed and appropriate level of on-street parking and where possible, protect residents' ability to park near their properties.

9. Enforcement objective:

To provide parking enforcement to reduce the level of parking infringement, to ensure that traffic flow on important routes is not impeded, and to achieve a parking supply that responds to agreed priorities.

10. Monitor and review objective:

To monitor and evaluate all elements of the Parking Strategy to gauge effectiveness against targets and to provide input to future reviews.

5 Walsall Town Centre

5.1 Wider Context

Walsall town centre is an important sub-regional shopping centre and, as such, is the premier shopping centre in the borough and a significant focus of commercial, public service, leisure and community activity. The council is determined to ensure a prosperous and attractive town centre, which will help stimulate confidence in the wider area, present a positive impression to visitors, and provide an improved and wider range of facilities for local people.

Safe, secure and accessible parking is vital to the attractiveness and viability of the town centre and the council works with private sector parking providers and partners to deliver improved parking facilities. The council also works with partners across the West Midlands to encourage a consistent approach to the supply and management of parking within centres. The future viability and promotion of main centres is recognised as key to the economic regeneration of the West Midlands and within Walsall there is an aspiration to transform extensive areas of the Borough, including Walsall town centre. Over the next decade, ambitious proposals will be delivered that will see the town centre revitalised, canal-side areas reborn and acres of derelict land rejuvenated.

Although the town centre is highly accessible by public transport, walking and cycling, the council recognises in its UDP that good car parking provision for shoppers and visitors is essential if the town centre is to successfully compete with nearby out-of-centre developments where car parking is freely available. It therefore proposes that parking provision for shoppers and visitors will be given priority. However, in recognition of the imperative to reduce traffic congestion, it also proposes that long stay parking for commuters will be strictly controlled or reduced to encourage a shift to more sustainable forms of transport.

The UDP also indicates that any new car parks will need to be conveniently located to serve the various sectors of the town centre and be well related to the main access roads. Where a car park fulfils an essential role in the council's strategy for town centre parking, there will be a strong argument for retaining provision in that location. Equally, there may be existing car parks which do not fulfil a key role and which could be usefully developed for other purposes.

The Parking Strategy for the town centre responds to this local policy context as well as the wider national and sub-regional policy guidance. It also responds to the problems and issues identified through the surveys of parking that have been carried out and the workshop with key stakeholders. As referred to above, an overriding consideration is the regeneration strategy for the town centre, including current proposals for new land uses and car parking provision. These are referred to below and illustrated on ***Figure 6.1***.

5.2 Proposed Developments in the Town Centre

5.2.1 Business and Learning Campus

This involves the creation of a new Tesco store on the present WALCAT site and the development of a new college campus on the north side of the ring road. It is anticipated that the new Tesco store will include provision of around 600 short stay parking places. New parking is also anticipated on the new college campus to serve the needs of the campus.

5.2.2 Office Corridor

A new mixed use business area is proposed for the Littleton Street / Blue Lane corridor, including land next to the proposed college campus. Further concentrations of offices are proposed in the Hatherton Street and Stafford Street areas, linking to the existing civic quarter.

5.2.3 Town Centre Transport Package

This project involves an improvement of the ring road between Bridgeman Street and the Arboretum junction to dual carriageway standard with substantially improved at grade junctions. New town centre access loops will be implemented as part of the project which is expected to commence in 2006. The scheme will provide the opportunity to improve access and signage to parking in the town centre.

5.2.4 Waterfront

This key flagship project will see some 17 acres of currently vacant and derelict land around Town Wharf and the canal arm transformed into a 'Waterside Quarter'. There will be new offices, leisure uses that could generate around 700 new jobs, and also some 650 residential apartments. It is anticipated that the development will include a new multi-storey car park accommodating spaces for businesses and residents on the site and which may also include around 150 short stay spaces for visitors.

5.2.5 St. Mathew's Quarter

This includes the new Asda store, re-modeling of the Old Square Shopping Centre and improved highway links. A new multi-story car park with 1000 spaces bringing a net increase of around 800 spaces.

Figure 6.1: Walsall Town Centre Regeneration Proposals

Source: Walsall Regeneration Company: Walsall Regeneration Proposals

The overall impact of these developments on parking provision in the town centre is summarized in ***Table 6.1***. It can be seen that the two major retail developments (Asda and Tesco) will significantly increase the short stay parking stock in the town centre. This increase is associated with an increased retailing offer, but still represents a significant increase in quality and quantity of short stay spaces in the town centre.

Table 6.1: Estimated Changes in Public Parking Provision Over the Next Five Years*

Development	Parking Gained	Parking Lost	Net Change in Parking	
			Short Stay	Long Stay
Office Corridor	**TBD**	**TBD**	**TBD**	**TBD**
Asda	1000 Short Stay	55 short stay 133 long stay	+ 945	- 133
Tesco	600 short stay	156 short stay (Saturday only)	+ 444	
TCTP	Nil	159 Long Stay		- 159
Waterfront	TBD		TBD	TBD
Total Change			**+1389**	**- 292**

The proposed strategy for Walsall town centre is outlined below under headings linked to the problems and issues identified in ***Section 4***.

5.3 Short Stay Parking in Walsall Town Centre

At peak times many of the short stay car parks in the town centre are operating at capacity and this could restrict the economic development of the centre. Major new developments that increase the offer and level of attractiveness of the town centre therefore need to include new parking facilities. This has happened in the recent past with the successful Crown Wharf development on the north-west side of the town centre and the ASDA development to the south East. Similarly it is anticipated that a second major new parking facility will be provided on the north side of the town centre in 2009 as part of the proposed Tesco development.

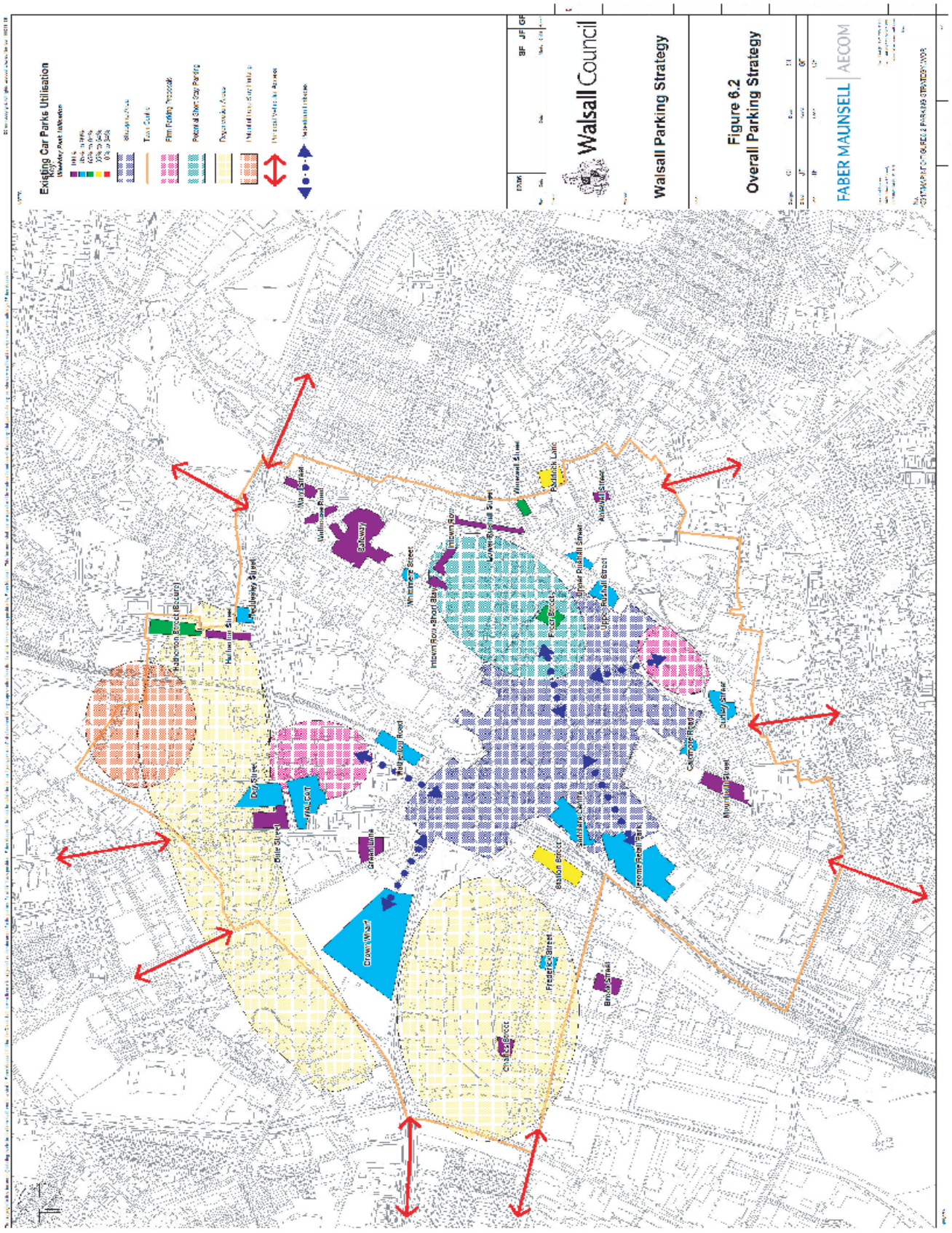
The council operated short stay car parks make an important contribution to the overall parking stock in the town centre but are generally small and not purpose designed. With the possible exception of the Hatherton Road multi-story car park, none of the existing council operated car parks represents a medium / long term, quality parking facility. Each car park represents a potential development site, possibly as part of a larger car park facility or an alternative use. It is therefore proposed that consideration of the future use of these sites should take place within the context of a partnership approach between the council and the private sector through which high quality short stay parking facilities are provided as part of comprehensive development schemes.

The aim should be to provide a range of high quality parking facilities easily accessible to circulation routes around the town centre and also accessible to the core shopping area.

Following the completion of the Tesco development, there will be high quality parking facilities in most sectors of the town centre with the exception of the north-eastern edge of the shopping area. This sector is currently served by the Freer Street car park and the small Intown Row car parks. The Safeway / Morrisons car park is also in this sector but is not well located to serve the core shopping area.

It is proposed that the council will work to identify options for improving short stay parking facility in the Upper Bridge Street area. This is likely to be a medium term prospect and if not progressed within the next five years, its development should be informed by future reviews of peak short stay parking utilisation. The overall Strategy for parking in Walsall town centre is illustrated in ***Figure 6.2***.

Figure 6.2: Parking Strategy for Walsall Town Centre



New parking facilities need to be of a high quality and have good access by car and also by foot to the core shopping area. The new facilities at ASDA and

Tesco will incorporate measures to achieve this. There are existing major parking facilities which are deficient in one aspect or another and where measures can be introduced to improve the situation. In particular, the pedestrian link between the Jerome Retail Park car park and the town centre could be improved as part of a wider regeneration scheme for the area.

Similarly, there are proposals for a New Gallery Square which will significantly improve the quality of the pedestrian link between the parking facilities at Crown Wharf and the core shopping area. This project will also improve pedestrian linkage to the proposed Waterfront development, which could include further short stay parking spaces to serve the town centre.

The private sector will therefore have a key role in providing new parking facilities in the town centre and the council will need to ensure that this process is managed effectively. In particular, the council will continue to ensure that new publicly available car parks provided through private sector development should:

- be available for use by visitors to the town centre as a whole;
- have a charging regime broadly similar to that operating in the rest of the town centre;
- be designed to a high standard in terms of appearance, layout and access.

These objectives will continue to be secured through the mechanism of planning agreements.

5.4 Strategy for On-Street Spaces in Walsall Town Centre

There are some 500 on-street spaces in and around Walsall town centre, some of which have restricted waiting as shown in ***Table 6.2***. There are a number of issues in relation to the management of these spaces and the cost of providing enforcement. Where spaces are not subject to limited waiting, they become a target for commuter parking for the town centre as a whole. This often causes problems for adjacent properties (residents and businesses) in that spaces may be used by town centre commuters thereby making it difficult for occupiers of adjacent properties to find convenient parking spaces.

The use of the on-street parking resources needs to be carefully considered and managed to meet specific priorities.

Table 6.2: On-street Parking Provision in the Town centre by Waiting Restriction

Under 30 minutes	Up to One Hour	Up to 2 Hours	Unrestricted	Total
3	156	5	292	456

There is a high demand for on-street parking in and around the town centre which gives rise to considerable circulating traffic. Many spaces are subject to waiting restrictions but these need to be well enforced to ensure that spaces are used effectively. However, there is a high cost associated with enforcement

of such spaces as this can be achieved only through numerous parking beats and recording of car registrations. The council will become responsible for the enforcement of on-street parking regulations through the implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement. This will mean that enforcement of council car parks and on-street parking spaces will be carried out in a coordinated and comprehensive manner for the first time. In delivering this new service, the council will need to ensure that it is delivered efficiently and is cost effective. In view of this, there will be a need to keep under review the need to introduce on street pay and display charges.

It is also proposed that consideration will be given to having a number of on-street spaces close to the core shopping area designated as disabled spaces. These should be located at various sites around the core shopping area on a needs basis.

In some parts of the town centre Civil Parking Enforcement could provide an opportunity to enable the issuing of permits for on-street parking. The main objective will be to ensure sufficient parking for visitors in each locality and for provision to be made to meet the on-street parking needs of any local residents

5.5 Strategy for Long Stay Parking Provision in the Town Centre

There are approximately 550 spaces provided on council long stay car parks, mainly on the periphery of the town centre. These have a charge of £3.60 per day for the general public, although season tickets are available at a discount. The council is by far the largest employer in the town centre and therefore a number of council staff also use these long stay car parks as normal pay and display customers. Long stay parking is also permitted on some privately operated car parks but the daily charge exceeds £5 per day and therefore these spaces are not regarded as being ‘available’ for long stay use, although, some spaces on these car parks may be purchased by local businesses for some of their staff.

There is also a considerable amount of Private Non Residential (PNR) parking provided in the town centre within business premises that is used for long stay parking. There are at least 3,170 PNR spaces available in larger business premises with slightly more spaces available on a number of small privately operated sites throughout the town centre.

The surveys of council long stay car parks indicated that they are heavily used on weekdays with many car parks being full.

The council controls the use of car parking facilities by its staff through the issuing of parking passes for staff delivering council services out in the community.

The strategy for long stay parking in the town centre needs to take account of three key factors:

- Transport and Land Use Policy;
- Charging Regime;
- The approach to parking for council staff.

5.5.1 Transport and Land Use Policy

The WMLTP and the Walsall UDP both call for a reduction and control of long stay spaces in town centres as part of the strategy to reduce congestion and car dependency. However, the town centre is a location where new employment uses are being encouraged. Controls on long stay parking should therefore not be so onerous as to discourage new development.

5.5.2 Charges for Long Stay Parking

The cost of long stay parking in Walsall appears to be broadly similar with charges applying in comparable centres. However, within Walsall town centre long stay charges on council operated car parks are significantly below charges applicable on privately operated car parks. This creates a localised imbalance in supply and demand of parking facilities and creates unnecessary additional traffic movements with associated increased levels of traffic congestion.

Therefore it is proposed that long stay charges on council car parks should be reviewed. Future charges should be set and maintained at a level that takes account of charges applicable on publicly available private car parking facilities whilst promoting the use of sustainable travel choices that reduce the reliance on a car for work and other journeys.

5.5.3 The Approach to Parking for Council Staff

Staff parking arrangements will be managed to encourage all staff to consider using more sustainable forms of transport. Dedicated parking facilities will only be provided for staff with a need to provide and use a private vehicle in the delivery of council services throughout the borough.

In support of the overall approach to long stay parking referred to above, the council will continue working with its partners to improve public transport services serving the town centre. This will include improvements to both infrastructure and bus services to deliver more attractive and reliable services, including Bus Showcase, Midland Metro and Bus Rapid Transit. Where a step change in public transport is to be provided on routes serving the town centre, associated park and ride facilities also need to be considered. Such facilities

will form part of the longer term solution to improving the accessibility of the town centre and meeting the needs of car commuters.

Likewise, the council will investigate through the Staff Travel Plan gaps in provision for pedestrian and cycle access to the town centre and look to provide improved facilities through the Local Transport Plan.

5.6 Strategy for Signage and Information

The provision of high quality information on parking facilities in centres contributes to the attractiveness of the centre and, by reducing car park search time, can reduce traffic congestion and air pollution around centres. This can be done in a number of ways. At the basic level, good direction signage is necessary. Signage in relation to car parks can be improved considerably and this is already planned through the implementation of the Town Centre Transport Package (TCTP) and associated town centre access loops. This project will involve new signage along a significant section of the ring road around the west and north of the town centre. It is proposed that in association with this project, signage for the town centre will be reviewed on all radial routes crossing the ring road.

It is proposed that technology systems, information and marketing techniques will be developed and deployed to improve access and make better use of the parking stock in the town centre in particular, but also in the district centres.

Some information on public car parks is already available on the council's website and this will be reviewed and enhanced on a regular basis. Information provided for the town centre and for district centres will include locations and type of all publicly available car parks, number of spaces and charges. Information on parking will also be provided on town centre map displays at town centre car parks and in information leaflets.

The introduction of a Parking Guidance System (PGS), using Variable Message Signing (VMS), providing information on available spaces at key public car parks for drivers approaching Walsall town centre could provide a significant contribution to improving the quality of information provided to visitors and reduce unnecessary traffic circulation and congestion. It is proposed that the council will introduce PGS for the town centre.

5.7 Strategy for Provision of Disabled Parking Spaces in the Town Centre

The proposed overall approach to the provision of special parking needs for the mobility impaired, powered two wheelers and cyclists is discussed in ***Section 9***. This section considers specific town centre issues with regard to disabled parking spaces.

Fewer than half of the town centre car parks provide disabled parking places and, where they are provided, some do not meet current design standards. In total some 136 disabled spaces are provided within town centre and a further 36 disabled spaces are provided on street

On council car parks without any provision for disabled spaces, the council intends to allocate 2% of spaces as disabled spaces. However, this may not reflect the needs of blue badge holders. Further surveys will be conducted into the needs of blue badge holders to determine how best to allocate disabled spaces in the future.

Ideally at least 5% of publicly available on street parking spaces in the town centre should be marked as disabled spaces. It is proposed that these should be provided at a range of locations across the town centre subject to a needs based assessment.

Rather than meeting the shortfall in the provision of disabled spaces within off-street car parks, consideration needs to be given to having greater provision of disabled spaces at suitable on-street locations. Currently there are 36 disabled spaces on-street and it is proposed that consultations will take place with representatives of the mobility impaired to investigate a more appropriate level of on-street provision of disabled spaces and potential locations around the core shopping area.

Once on-street provision is determined, the balance of the current shortfall in disabled spaces will be provided for at the most suitable off-street car parks.

It is recommended that at least 5% of spaces on car parks associated with retail facilities should be marked as disabled spaces. ***Table 6.3*** shows the provision of disabled spaces on town centre car parks. It can be seen that the majority of privately operated car parks meet this standard. New disabled parking provision has recently been provided at the Saddlers Centre in conjunction with a Shopmobility Scheme. Twenty blue badge spaces have been provided of which eight may be reserved for Shopmobility use.

The Shopmobility Scheme will be a service for the mobility restricted residents of, or visitors to, the borough. Primarily the service will be for disabled and elderly people, and their carers if appropriate, enabling them to continue using the town centre's facilities. A Shopmobility Management Board has been formed, which includes representatives of the council, the Independent Living Centre, Walsall Ring and Ride, the Disability Forum and the mobile Walsall Shopmobility, to drive the development of the scheme.

There is very little provision of disabled parking spaces elsewhere on council operated car parks. It is proposed that the appropriateness of providing disabled spaces on these car parks be investigated on a case by case basis to identify where spaces are most needed.

Table 6.3: Availability of Disabled Parking Spaces in the Town Centre

Use	Car Park Name	Number of Disabled Parking Spaces
Retail	Jerome Retail Park	14
	Saddlers Centre	20
	Crown Wharf	43
	Freer Street NCP	7
	Safeway (Morrisons)	17
Other	Hatherton Road MSCP	15
	WALCAT	4
	Upper Rushall Street (Short Stay)	2
	Day Street	4
	Bate Street	2
	Green Lane	2
	Lower Rushall Street	2
	Warewell Street	2
	Hatherton Street	2
	On-Street	36
	Total Disabled Spaces	172

5.8 Strategy for Provision of Coach Parking

Provision of parking for holiday coaches has been a problem in the town centre for some time. Holiday coaches tend to pick up customers several times a week in the town centre, generally in the morning. They may return at any time, often during the night. The specification for a coach parking facility includes the following preferred requirements:

- Space for two coaches to park;
- Space for people to be dropped off and collected by car;
- Provision for personal safety and security;
- Close to a bus station;
- Close to public conveniences;
- Easily accessible from the ring road; and
- The site should not obstruct the highway or access to properties or be close to residential properties.

There is an existing facility in Hatherton Road, which includes a single bus shelter. However, it experiences operational problems, including the tendency for coaches to obstruct access to business properties and for some disturbance to be caused to nearby residents. Further evaluation needs to be undertaken to identify and develop a more appropriate location.

5.9 Scope for Park and Ride

Park and ride can be successful where there is a significant parking problem at a major destination in relation to the availability or cost of parking spaces and where a park and ride facility can offer an attractive alternative. To be attractive a park and ride facility should offer a secure and easily accessible parking area and a frequent, reliable and fast link to the desired destination, all at a competitive cost.

A Christmas Park and Ride scheme has previously been provided for the town centre by the council but, even though it was free to use, did not attract substantial usage and was therefore discontinued. Given this experience, the short stay car parking availability position in the town centre and the cost of parking, this proposed that park and ride for short stay visitor trips is not viable or appropriate.

There is a problem in relation to long stay parking availability in the town centre and park and ride could be beneficial in relation to commuter trips as it could assist in reducing congestion on radial routes around the town centre. However, the criteria for a successful park and ride operation still apply. Commuter trips to the town centre are not concentrated in one corridor but are spread across some eight routes. Therefore, to access a single park and ride site could involve people having to actually drive further. Therefore, although the changes in trips may lead to some reduction in congestion on some parts of the network, they could add to congestion on other parts.

A further problem is the ability to serve a park and ride site with a high quality bus service offering fast, frequent and reliable services to the town centre. At the present time virtually all bus services to the town centre are impacted by the same traffic congestion faced by car drivers. The additional travel time likely to be involved in using park and ride is therefore likely to be significant compared to the trip by car.

The provision of a park and ride site can also be very costly. Land values can be high and construction costs will also be significant. From experience gained by Centro, an overall cost of £7,000 per space represents an average cost for provision of a park and ride site. The provision of a park and ride site through LTP funding would need to pass a value for money test. Given the factors already mentioned, it is difficult to envisage a situation where a park and ride site would offer good value for money in transport terms in that there would be no time saving for the people using it and very little impact on congestion.

The only viable approach to encouraging park and ride is through partnership with Centro. Through this approach it may be possible to encourage greater use of existing and upgraded rail park and ride facilities for accessing the town centre, such as Tame Bridge, Bescot and Bloxwich North. It is therefore proposed that this be investigated further and that there should also be investigations into implementing small scale bus park and ride pilot projects, possibly utilising shared use parking facilities, close to existing high frequency bus routes serving the town centre, particularly the following existing / proposed bus showcase routes:

- A454 Wolverhampton Road
- A461 Lichfield Road
- A34 Birmingham Road
- Stafford Street / Bloxwich Road

In the medium / longer term, it is proposed that the council will continue working with its partners to investigate the development of park and ride schemes in association with potential major public transport projects. The provision of such park and ride facilities should form an increasing part of the longer term solution to improving the accessibility of the town centre and meeting the needs of car commuters.

Walsall Town Centre - Key Recommendations:

- Continue to encourage the provision of high quality short stay parking facilities in conjunction with the proposed Tesco superstore and Waterfront developments;
- Work with the private sector to deliver high quality short stay parking facilities in the Upper Bridge Street area;
- Set and maintain long stay car parking charges at a level that takes account of charges applicable on publicly available private car parking facilities whilst promoting the use of sustainable travel choices that reduce the reliance on a car for work and other journeys.
- Work towards developing a comprehensive Travel Plan for council staff as a leading example to other businesses in the town
- Continue to encourage car sharing by council staff and provide priority spaces for car sharers at discount rates;
- Improve car park direction signage on all radial routes into the town centre in conjunction with the TCTP project;
- Introduce a Parking Guidance System (PGS) for Walsall town centre using a Variable Message System (VMS) on main radial routes to provide information on the availability of spaces on main town centre car parks;
- Provide up to date information on the council's website, at car parks and on town centre display maps regarding the location of publicly available car parks, number of spaces, permitted length of stay and parking charges;
- Allocate at least 5% of publicly available on street spaces in Walsall town centre as disabled spaces and undertake consultation to better allocate an increased number of disabled parking spaces at a range of locations close to the core shopping area and other appropriate locations across the town centre;
- Where, visitors and commuters to district centres park in residential streets, introduce residents parking schemes where necessary to safeguard the amenities of local residents;
- Ensure new publicly available car parks are available for use by visitors to the centre as a whole and managed in accordance with the aims of the the statutory network management duty;
- Investigate options for improved holiday coach parking facility;
- Investigate the introduction of small pilot park and ride facilities as part of bus showcase schemes;
- Investigate the possibility of providing a park and ride facility in partnership with Centro and in association with major public transport projects such as Midland Metro and Bus Rapid Transit; and
- Continue working with partners to improve public transport services serving the town centre.

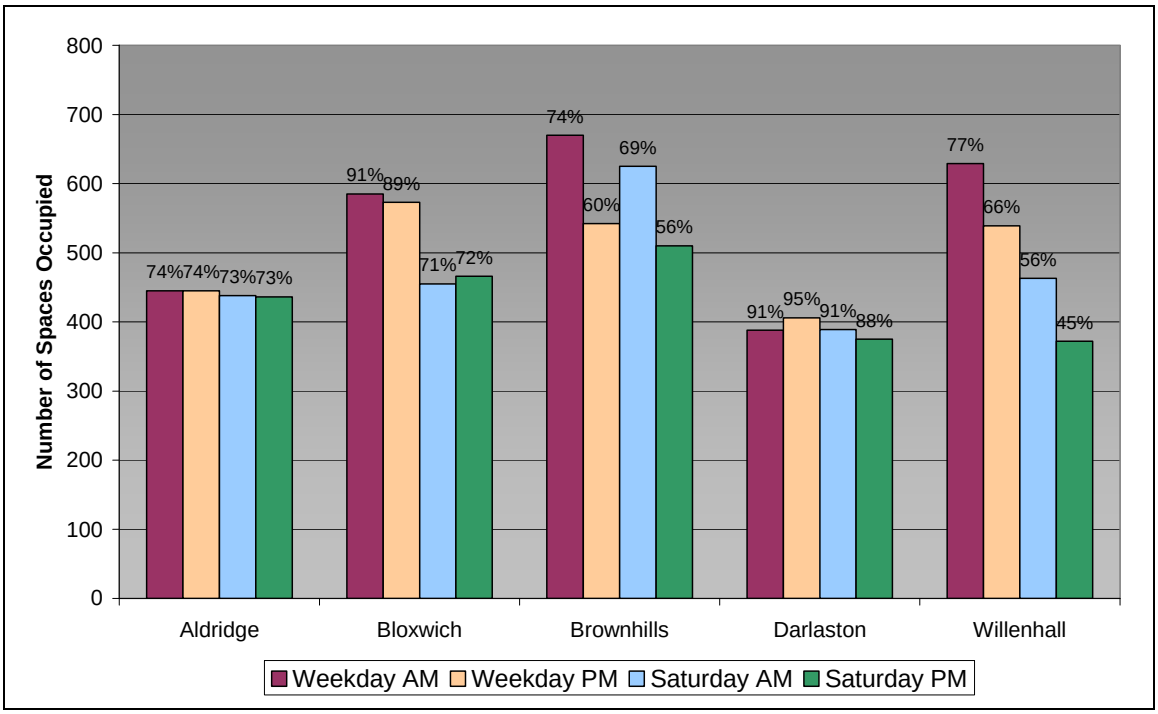
6 District Centres

6.1 Existing Position

The supply and demand for car parking in the district centres is described in ***Section 4.9*** in ***Figure 7.1***, below.

The car park utilisation on weekdays is relatively high in all the centres. In Darlaston it appears that at peak times, no spare capacity exists, while in Bloxwich car parks are also almost fully utilised during the week, though around 25% of spaces are available at the weekend. The high level of parking demand on weekdays would appear to be caused partly by people using parking spaces for commuter parking.

Figure 7.1: Overall Demand for Car Parking in the Districts across the Week



Even though the parking stock provided in the other district centres (Aldridge, Brownhills and Willenhall) appears to be meeting demand at present, particularly at the weekend when demand is generally lower, there are certain car parks that are regularly full. The Short Street, Tesco and Aldi car parks in Brownhills and the Woverhampton Street, Somerfield, Union Street and Market place car parks in Willenhall can be fairly full, although there appears to be around 20% spare capacity at peak times overall. On-street spaces in the centres are also generally well utilised.

6.2 Parking Strategy for District Centres

The council's policy towards parking in the district centres is to generally encourage provision of new spaces and to enhance existing spaces. However, the mechanisms to achieve this is somewhat ad hoc. The council does not have the resources to invest in new car parks and does not have a specific programme to either enhance its own car parks. The main mechanism to improve parking has been through the planning system and dialogue with developers. However, this process is often constrained by the restricted nature of the land holdings of prospective developers and the council. In addition, most of the district centres are surrounded by residential and commercial development and there is limited opportunity to provide new parking sites. Nevertheless, it is proposed that this approach should continue to be pursued and that the council will be more proactive in encouraging development in the district centres.

The constraints on the provision of new parking facilities means that, in addition to working with developers, the emphasis should be on making the best use of existing parking facilities by giving priority to short stay visitor trips on car parks most accessible to the core shopping areas. This can be achieved by controls on maximum length of stay or by an appropriate charging regime.

Although council car parks in district centres have restrictions on length of stay many are not currently enforced. To be effective these restrictions will need to be enforced on a regular basis and this will be costly. It is therefore appropriate to enforce these restrictions only as part of the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement in 2008. It is further proposed that the impact of these waiting restrictions will be reviewed after twelve months to evaluate the need for any further change.

The introduction of enforcement on length of stay could lead to the displacement of some long stay parking to in appropriate on-street locations. It will be important to ensure that these locations are safeguarded by the application of appropriate parking management systems that prevent any adverse impact upon local residents and support the needs of the local economy.

Given the urgent need to provide additional parking in many of the district centres, it is proposed that the council will work with landowners and owners of private car parks to bring about joint use of car parks (for town centre use during the day and private use at other times). This will be particularly important in Bloxwich and Darlaston where there are major constraints on the provision of new car parks.

As in the case of Walsall town centre, it is proposed that the council will continue to ensure that new publicly available car parks in the district centres are available for use by visitors to the centre as a whole and have a charging regime broadly similar to that operating in the rest of the town centre. This will be achieved through planning agreements linked to the granting of planning approval for new developments. Consultations with private operators of car parks will also take place regarding the council providing car park management services as part of achieving a consistent approach across each district.

Other opportunities that could be pursued to improve parking in each of the district centres are summarised below.

Aldridge – Work with developers to improve the overall quality of car parks serving the shopping precinct and to improve the local environment of the Rookery Lane area.

Brownhills – Work with Tesco to improve quality of this main car park in the town centre and improve signage to car parks. Improve quality of council operated car parks.

Bloxwich – Work with Asda to improve the attractiveness and accessibility of the Asda car park for users of the town centre as a whole. Increase overall level of parking, particularly by endeavouring to achieve joint use of car parks / sites. Better manage use of on-street parking, including use of residents parking schemes to safeguard the amenities of local residents.

Willenhall – Work with developers to retain and improve the quality and accessibility of parking facilities closest to the core shopping area. Given the relatively good car parking supply position, consideration will be given to the redevelopment of more peripheral car parks as and when improved parking is provided closer to the core shopping area.

Darlaston – Increase overall level of parking, particularly by endeavouring to achieve joint use of car parks / sites and by maximising opportunities to provide short stay on-street parking spaces.

District Centres - Key Recommendations:

- Become more proactive in encouraging the provision of high quality short stay parking through new developments;
- Enforce existing time restrictions on council car parks in conjunction with the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement;
- Maximise opportunities to provide short stay on street parking, particularly in Darlaston and Bloxwich;
- Provide appropriate enforcement of limited waiting restrictions in district centres in conjunction with the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement;
- Review impact of enforcing time restrictions and costs of enforcement twelve months after introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement;
- Work with landowners and operators of private car parks to bring about shared use parking;
- Allocate at least 5% of publicly available on street spaces as disabled spaces and undertake consultation to better allocate disabled parking spaces at a range of locations close to the core shopping areas;
- Where, visitors and commuters to district centres park in residential streets, consider the need to introduce residents parking schemes where necessary to safeguard the amenities of local residents;
- Ensure new publicly available car parks are available for use by visitors to the centre as a whole and managed in accordance with the objectives of the statutory network management duty.

- Provide up to date information on the council's website, at car parks and on town centre display maps regarding the location of publicly available car parks, number of spaces and permitted length of stay at car parks.

7 Walsall Council Parking Services

7.1 Car Park Assets

Walsall MBC currently manage almost 3000 car parking spaces across 48 car parks in the centres of Walsall, Aldridge, Bloxwich, Brownhills, Darlaston and Willenhall. Within Walsall town centre seven operate on a short stay basis while the remainder are provided for restricted access and general long stay parking. The council operate just approximately 500 short stay spaces, representing just a small % of the total short stay parking stock in Walsall town centre. By contrast, the council is the only provider of relatively cheap long stay parking in Walsall (based on charges less than £5 per day)

The number and type of council operated car parks in the Borough are shown on ***Table 8.1*** below.

Table 8.1: Council operated Car Parks

Location	Type	Number of Car Parks	Number of Spaces
Walsall Town Centre	Council Owned Short Stay	7	512
	Council Owned Long Stay	14	564
	Council Staff Only Car Park	6	546
Aldridge	Free	2	73
Bloxwich	Free	2	221
Brownhills	Free	4	203
Darlaston	Free	3	27
Willenhall	Free	8	649
Total			2795

The Parking Service at Walsall is responsible for ‘managing, maintaining and repairing car parks, providing parking enforcement for off-street and residential parking areas in accordance with the Parking Orders and providing security cover for additional security car parks’. As part of this, the council pledges that car parks will be cleaned on a regular basis; signs and lines will be maintained; regular inspections and security checks will be carried out on all car parks; technicians will be informed immediately of reports of faults with ticket machines for repair; orders for the removal of fly tipping and graffiti will be placed within 24 hours of receipt of information.

7.2 Financial Position of the Parking Service

The overall budget provision for delivering the Council's parking service does not include an appropriate figure in relation to the whole life cost of providing the parking assets. However, the cost of improving and maintaining car parks to a high standard would result in service costs increasing significantly and this is something that the Council will need to address over the implementation timescale for this strategy.

The council operates a range of charges for its car parks as indicated on ***Table 8.2***. The charge for short stay parking appears consistent with other similar centres in the West Midlands area. The charge for long stay parking at £3.60 per day is low in comparison to charges for long stay parking that apply on privately operated car parks in Walsall town centre, which are generally in excess of £5 per day.

Table 8.2: Council Operated Parking Charges in Walsall Town Centre

Type of Ticket	**Charge**	**Daily Charge (or equivalent*)**
Short Stay	£1.40 (for up to 2 hours)	N/A
Long Stay Charge	£3.60	£3.60
Monthly Long Stay Charge	£60	£2.90
3 Months Long Stay Charge	£180	£2.88
Annual Long Stay Charge	£650	£2.60

* Based on 250 days per year pro rata

7.3 Provision of Spaces

In Walsall town centre the council provides both short stay spaces and long stay spaces at a number of generally small surface sites. Although providing an important resource they do not, in the main, offer high quality facilities or contribute positively to the appearance of the town centre. Therefore, none of these car parks individually represent a strategic parking asset that should be retained. However, collectively they make an important contribution to the stock of both short stay and long stay parking serving the town centre.

Given the shortage of short stay spaces in the town centre and the importance of improving the accessibility and attractiveness of the centre for visitors arriving by car, there is a strong case for the number of spaces provided by the council to be retained unless the private sector are in a position to provide additional high quality spaces.

Any significant loss of short stay spaces could have a serious impact on its overall parking budget and would make it more difficult to deliver parking services elsewhere in the town centre and the district centres without introducing new / higher charges. It is therefore proposed that where any potential disposal of short stay spaces is being considered in the future that the impact on the financial position of the parking service be considered carefully as part of the overall evaluation process.

Within this context, it is proposed that the council will look to both:

- Investigate selling off some car park assets to provide a capital receipt to enable the council to provide new high quality parking facilities in more strategic locations.
- Work to incorporate its existing car park site assets into comprehensive development projects promoted by the private sector that include new high quality short stay parking facilities.

The previous Crown Wharf development and the current ASDA development are both good examples of what can be achieved working with the private sector. There will be further opportunities for the council to be proactive in seeking private sector partners to undertake development on sites involving council car parks in order to deliver high quality new facilities for the town centre.

In the case of long stay spaces, there is a need to develop a clear asset management plans detailing the way in which they meet the strategic needs of the town centre. Revisions to the existing staff parking system have already been undertaken to ensure future staff parking is focused on supporting service delivery and more accurately reflecting the cost of providing and maintaining long stay parking facilities. This approach will continue to be applied.

7.4 Charging Regime

The council operates a pay and display charging system at its short stay and long stay car parks in the town centre. From benchmarking referred to in ***Section 4.7***, it is clear that the council charges for short stay parking in the town centre are broadly consistent with charging in other centres and charging at privately operated car in the town centre. It is not therefore proposed that these charges should be significantly increased, other than in accordance with inflation, but they will be reviewed against benchmark information and the cost of providing the service on a regular basis.

Charges for long stay parking are more variable across centres with a range of charges applying. Council charges for long stay spaces in Walsall town centre are significantly lower than the private sector. It is therefore proposed that long stay charges in Walsall town centre will be set and maintained at a level that takes account of charges applicable on publicly available private car parking facilities whilst promoting the use of sustainable travel choices that reduce the reliance on a car for work and other journeys.

There are currently no charges for on-street spaces in Walsall town centre and consequently there is a high demand for these spaces. Although they are, in the main, subject to restrictions on the length of stay, this is not well enforced and even when Civil Parking Enforcement is introduced, proper enforcement will be expensive while income from penalty charges could be limited. This stance will need to be routinely reviewed in light of the cost of providing the service and the need to encourage the use of off street parking facilities in preference to on street parking facilities.

The council does not apply any charges for parking in the district centres, given the challenges that these centres are having in maintaining their viability, and their importance in serving local needs. The district centres do exhibit different characteristics, in that in several there are problems of parking supply being insufficient to meet demand. This is particularly the case in Darlaston, Bloxwich and Brownhills. This may be partly caused by commuters taking some of the limited spaces available. There is therefore a strong case to consider the introduction of parking charges and to enforce the length of stay restrictions already in place. However, as referred to previously there are significant cost associated effective enforcement.

In order to address this, there may be a case for charging on the most heavily used council car parks in district centres. It is therefore proposed that the introduction of charging on council car parks in the district centres will be reviewed once the impact and costs of operating controls on length of stay have been assessed as part of Civil Parking Enforcement operation.

If charging was introduced in the district centres (even at low rates), the income would help fund wider enforcement of other parking spaces in the district centres that have restrictions on length of stay, and would overcome the possible situation where not having any charging in the district centres would effectively mean that the parking enforcement would be limited and ineffective.

7.5 Benchmarking

It is proposed that a series of indicators and a process of benchmarking be formally adopted for the service. It is proposed that consideration be given as a matter of urgency to the adoption of the indicators listed in ***Table 8.2*** below and that they be the subject of consultation with Walsall's benchmarking club and with other authorities within the West Midlands to achieve a coherent approach that will assist in delivering high performance.

Table 8.2: Proposed Indicators for the Parking Service and Benchmarking

	Walsall	Benchmarking Club	West Midlands	Upper Quartile
Location assessment (P&D – Grade C and above				85.6%
% marked spaces for disabled drivers				N/A
Crimes per 1000 ticket sales (surface)				0.026
Crimes per 1000 ticket sales (MSCP)				0.043
% of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) paid				79.4%
Recovery index for all charged spaces				1.57
Revenue per charged off street space				£506
Revenue per charged on street space				£1062
PCN income per charged space				£51.61
PCN Recovery (income / cost)				61%
Numbers of spaces per attendant				N/A
% of users of all CPs satisfied with cleanliness				N/A
Operating cost per space				N/A
Short Stay Charge –main centre				N/A
Long Stay Charge – main centre				N/A
On-Street Charge – main centre				N/A
% of car parks compliant with Safer Parking Scheme				N/A

7.6 Standard of Parking Facilities

Overall the standard of council operated car parks is mixed and generally significantly lower than the standard of car parks provided by the private sector. It is important for the council to develop a programme of improvement for its car parks which should be capable of being funded through the income derived from the car park service. From the perception surveys that have been undertaken and the car park surveys that have been carried out, it is evident that safety and security are key issues that need to be addressed.

The criteria for assessing whether car parks provide a secure environment for people and property are set out in the 'Safer Parking Scheme'. The surveys of Walsall car parks did not specifically assess the extent to which car parks in Walsall meet the requirements of the 'Safer Parking Scheme'. However, the surveys did indicate that many of the council operated car parks did not offer any enhanced levels of security and this was reinforced by the results of the perception surveys. It is proposed that the council will work to improve safety and security at its car parks with regard to the following factors.

7.6.1 Boundary Treatment

Boundaries to car parks should be well defined and well maintained. Boundaries that are in poor condition or non-existent can give the impression that car parks are poorly maintained and that the threat of crime is high. Where possible, the council should endeavour to provide an appropriate boundary treatment in order to reinforce the fact that the car park is a private area, to restrict the number of pedestrian access points and also to prevent the easy removal of vehicles.

7.6.2 Lighting

At night, poor car park lighting acts as a significant deterrent to potential car park users, since darkness brings with it a much greater potential for crime against people and property. The use of high standard lighting can bring considerable improvements in security, helping to significantly reduce the threat of crime. Of the council car parks surveyed, most were considered to be poorly lit. It is proposed that the council will undertake detailed lighting surveys at all its car parks to determine which car parks require improvement in order to achieve a standard of at least 40 lux.

7.6.3 Cleanliness

If a car park is clean and well kept, it will provide a reassuring environment for car park users. To help deliver a high level of cleanliness at car parks, it is proposed that the council will provide improved signage at the entrance to all car parks or at pay and display machines with the contact details of Walsall staff responsible for the maintenance of the car parks. It is also proposed that the council will establish a standard for the level of cleanliness that should be delivered on car parks, undertake regular inspections of car parks, and have a more responsive cleaning regime to addressing problems identified.

7.6.4 Car Park Usage

The Safer Parking Scheme recognises that where a car park's size is out of proportion to its usage, consideration should be given to reducing the parking area either permanently or temporarily. From the surveys of car park utilisation, it is demonstrated that there not any council car parks that are not reasonably well used. The least used car parks being Lower Lichfield Street in Willenhall and Field Close in Bloxwich. The council will therefore review the need to retain these car parks in their present form.

7.6.5 Surveillance

It is desirable that CCTV surveillance be available at car parks where vehicles are likely to remain for any long period of time. It is proposed that the council will review the current CCTV coverage at council car parks with a view to improving facilities where deficiencies are identified. It is also proposed that the council will regularly review the existing CCTV system to identify opportunities for more effective and efficient surveillance of car parks, and encourage private car park operators to regularly review car park security.

7.6.6 Pedestrian Access

The Safer Parking Scheme requires that pedestrian accesses to a facility be minimised, with controlled, designated routes. It is proposed that the council will review access points to all car parks and modify and upgrade facilities as appropriate.

7.6.7 Vehicular Access

Vehicular access to car parks should also be minimised and controlled where possible. However, barrier control is not appropriate with pay and display charging systems. It is proposed that the council will regularly review whether alternative payment systems may offer value for money in relation to car park security and overall car park management.

The cost of properly maintaining the council's car parks to an appropriate standard will represent an additional cost as this is not adequately funded within the existing budgets for the service. However, it should be possible to fund this from existing income generated by the service or from the additional revenue likely to be generated in the medium term from the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement.

Walsall Parking Service Key Recommendations:

- Develop a Service Level Agreement for the new parking and enforcement service;
- Where the potential disposal of short stay spaces is being considered, identify and address the financial position of the parking service;
- Adopt a comprehensive Travel Plan for council staff as a leading example to other businesses in the town.
- Set and maintain long stay car parking charges at a level that takes account of charges applicable on publicly available private car parking facilities whilst promoting the use of sustainable travel choices that reduce the reliance on a car for work and other journeys.
- Enforce restrictions on length of stay on council operated car parks close to the shopping areas of district centres and review charging for car parks in district centres once the costs of operating an appropriate parking enforcement regime in the district centres is known;
- Investigate the need to improve safety and security at all of the council owned car parks with regard to boundary treatment, lighting, cleanliness, usage, surveillance, and pedestrian and vehicular access and signage;
- Undertake a detailed lighting survey to determine which car parks needs improving in order to achieve a standard of 40 lux or better;
- Develop an improved Asset Management Plan for car parks and put in place a properly funded car park maintenance regime that reflects the whole life care of the assets and ensures a high level of serviceability on an on-going basis with regard to lining, signing, lighting and cleanliness;
- Identify priorities for improving car park security and access (for all users) and develop a properly funded investment programme to improve the quality of car parks;
- Provide improved information on the location and charging regime of car parks on the council website, at car parks;
- Provide information on the car park service standards and contacts at car parks;
- Regularly assess whether alternative payment systems offer value for money in relation to car park security and management;
- Review parking levels on all council car parks and consider the need to retain car parks if their size is out of proportion to usage; and
- Formally adopt a series of indicators to enable benchmarking of the parking service.

8 Other Parking Needs

8.1 Provision of Disabled Parking Spaces

Disabled parking spaces should be designed to appropriate standards and in appropriate locations for people to access buildings, services, workplaces and social activities. They should also be located at suitably convenient points, e.g. close to lifts or ramps. It is proposed that the council will establish a programme to ensure that its car parks provide appropriate disabled parking spaces based on the above and have facilities that are accessible to the mobility impaired.

In preparing this action programme, the council will investigate the need to undertake the following measures:

- Re-marking of parking spaces to include additional spaces for the disabled where consistent with the overall needs of the centre;
- Relocation of ticket machines nearer to accesses and at accessible heights;
- Provision of segregated pedestrian access to the car parks;
- Ideally provide advisory routes (segregated where possible) and crossing points for pedestrians;
- Provide dropped crossings and tactile surfacing for pedestrians at crossing locations and also on the approaches to the car park;
- Improve signage;

The use of disabled spaces is governed by the blue badge parking scheme. This is a European scheme for people with limited mobility and allows disabled people accessible parking in locations that enable access to shops and services. The badge is allocated to individuals and not to vehicles. It can only be used when the named badge holder is either the motorist or travelling with a carer. People displaying a blue badge are allowed to park on double yellow lines for a limited period where their vehicle does not obstruct traffic or other road users. However, such parking is prohibited where there are additional yellow road markings that restrict parking or where local parking restrictions apply such as outside schools. The blue badge scheme also governs use of disabled spaces on car parks.

Blue badge holders may experience difficulty in parking outside their residence. It is proposed that provision of on-street accessible parking spaces outside individuals' homes should be continued, but only implemented where there are no accessible off-street parking facilities and no potential to construct a driveway at the property, in addition to the applicant being in receipt of certain defined mobility related benefits.

8.2 Provision for Taxi Parking

Taxi parking should be visibly located at key locations, such as shopping areas and public transport interchanges. Ranks should be marked out and appropriately enforced to avoid random parking. Accessibility to the parking location is a priority and a road safety audit should be carried out to ensure taxi movement will not conflict with other users. The level of taxi parking will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

8.3 Parking for Powered Two Wheelers

On-street parking should be considered at suitable, secure locations around Walsall town centre and the district centres in positions which allow the rider to park, dismount and park without road safety and security being compromised. Powered two wheelers should be exempted from town centre parking charges except where designated facilities are provided. Specific provision should be the subject of consultation with users of powered two wheelers. Where possible, motorcycle parking should be covered, well lit and include extra security such as CCTV or sited at locations where security is high.

For new developments the requirements for powered two wheeler parking should be in accordance with the Walsall UDP

8.4 Cycle Parking

The council will actively encourage the provision of cycle parking in the town centre, district centres, local centres, public transport interchanges, schools, business and other key destinations.

It is proposed that the council investigate the possibility of contributing to the cost of existing businesses providing cycle parking facilities and associated facilities such as a shower using LTP and other funding sources. As with motorcycle parking, cycle parking should, wherever possible, be covered, well lit and include extra security such as CCTV or be sited at locations where security is high.

For new developments the provision of cycle parking should be in accordance with the Walsall UDP

8.5 Servicing and Freight

It is proposed that parking and loading spaces for delivery vehicles should be allocated at all commercial and other developments and will be managed through the planning process. Key considerations in providing for servicing and freight deliveries are access, movement, visibility and safety of other road users. On-street loading facilities should be designated where there exists a conflict in demand for on-street parking spaces between goods vehicles servicing commercial establishments and other road users, and where there is no provision for off-street loading facilities. In some 'sensitive' cases there will be time restrictions applied for delivery. In pedestrianised areas, for example, access may be restricted to certain times during the day or evening. Similarly, on Red Routes, loading and unloading may also be restricted to specific times and locations.

8.6 Lorry parking

A Regional Freight Strategy is in preparation through the West Midlands Local Government Association, involving all the Metropolitan Unitary and Shire authorities. Discussions as part of Freight Quality Partnership meetings across the region and the campaign agendas of HGV driver's representative groups have all highlighted a perceived shortage of suitable lorry parking facilities within the West Midlands. In order to assist the preparation of the Regional Freight Strategy, a West Midlands Regional Freight Study has been carried out that has examined the issue and suggested that there were significant gaps in parking provision.

Recommendations in the Regional Freight Study include an action plan that anticipates key industry changes, legislation and market forces. It covers all modes and range of stakeholders and will help guide future LTPs. The study suggested a number of ways in which provision could be enhanced.

Local authorities do have powers under Section 115 of the Highways Act 1980 to provide lorry parking off the highway. However the Act does not impose any obligation on local authorities to provide parking facilities, it merely gives them the power to do so. A combination of funding, political and planning issues means that to date within the West Midlands these powers have rarely been used. In contrast, the Department of Transport and the Highways Agency have long held a clear strategic planning policy in relation to parking in general, resulting in a network of Motorway Service Areas (MSAs).

The need to park lorries while away from home depots or not undertaking deliveries / collections clearly implies a requirement for some form of 'parking space' where vehicles can be parked. Given a deficit across the region of suitable lorry parking facilities, drivers needing to park vehicles, could potentially be forced to use locations which are inappropriate. The environmental consequences of this include:

- Parking on the side of a highway and as a result impeding traffic flow, possibly causing congestion;
- Parking at locations which are incompatible with the noise pollution (running engines, refrigeration units) emitted by lorries e.g. residential area; and
- Parking vehicles at locations which is not suited to the visual intrusiveness of lorries.

In addition, security issues cannot be ignored. Organised criminals have in the past targeted HGVs, or to be more exact the contents of vehicles, as a source of goods from which to make money. The provision of lorry parks with some form of security measures in place can thus be seen as a major weapon in the fight against lorry crime.

Less obvious consequences of a deficit of parking facilities concerns the general working environment of goods vehicle drivers. For most employees based at one permanent work location, access to toilet, food and drink refreshment facilities is taken for granted. However, for goods vehicle drivers, the availability of such basic amenities is more problematic. In addition, not being able to access food or drink refreshments could potentially impact on a driver's ability to drive his / her vehicle in a safe manner. This situation is obviously not conducive to a safe and healthy working environment or road safety.

Taking the above into account, the aim will be to provide lorry parking in accordance with the following criteria:

- Located adjacent to the strategic highway network used by lorries, thus ensuring that any 'diversion' a goods vehicles will take to reach such a parking facility is minimised; or
- Located close to or within a major freight generating location e.g. industrial estate or distribution centre, thus ensuring that goods vehicles are within a few minutes drive of their final delivery destinations; and
- Provide amenity facilities, as a minimum toilets and at some locations security, food, drinks, showers and entertainment facilities; and
- Located away from unsuitable land uses, such as a residential area.

The issue of providing adequate lorry parking for existing development is difficult to resolve. The council has no statutory requirement to provide lorry parks and no resources for this purpose. Nevertheless, it has provided some basic lorry parking facilities on the basis of shared use, generally in association with car parking facilities. However, the opportunities to expand (or even maintain) this approach are very limited. It is therefore proposed that the council will work with its partners to have the issue addressed at a regional level, with a view to establishing a strategic lorry parking network. This would involve identifying the potential location of strategic lorry parks, which serve a national and regional purpose, at a regional level as part of the RSS. Such proposals could then be brought forward at the local level through the WMLTPs with resources potentially allocated at the regional level.

8.7 Park and Ride

In ***Section 6.9***, the potential role of park and ride is considered in relation to meeting the access needs of Walsall town centre. It was concluded that park and ride does not appear to be a viable mode in relation to visitor trips. However, it could play an increasing part in serving the needs of commuters.

The only viable approach to encouraging park and ride is through partnership with Centro. Through this approach it may be possible to encourage greater use of existing and upgraded rail park and ride facilities for accessing the town centre, such as Tame Bridge, Bescot and Bloxwich North. It is therefore proposed that this be investigated further and that there should also be investigations into implementing small scale bus park and ride pilot projects possibly, utilising shared use parking facilities close to existing high frequency bus routes serving the town centre, particularly the following existing / proposed bus showcase routes:

- A454 Wolverhampton Road
- A461 Lichfield Road
- A34 Birmingham Road
- Stafford Street / Bloxwich Road

In the medium / longer term, it is proposed that the council will continue working with its partners to investigate the development of park and ride schemes in association with potential major public transport projects including Midland Metro and Bus Rapid Transit. The provision of such park and ride facilities should form an increasing part of the longer term solution to improving the accessibility of the town centre and meeting the needs of car commuters.

8.8 Parking in Residential Streets and Industrial Areas

There is a large stock of on-street car parking in the borough, particularly in residential, mixed use and industrial areas. On-street parking includes several groups of users – residents, visitors and commuters. In residential areas, local residents' ability to park close to their homes should be supported wherever possible. Parking schemes will need to take into consideration the needs of each user and ensure that schemes make the best possible use of the on-street parking stock. In mixed development areas there can be competition for parking space. This is often the case where residential areas are adjacent to town / district centres, major employment sites and major leisure sites. These conflicts are generally managed through residents' parking schemes and the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement should make it easier both in financial and operational terms to deliver such schemes in the future.

Where indiscriminate parking currently causes road safety dangers, obstructs access by emergency vehicles and causes excessive damage to verges, formal on-street parking bays and / or deterrents to inappropriate parking will be considered. Such parking problems may also be addressed through the provision of parking lay-bys or off-street car parks or through the introduction of 'home zones'. A 'home zone' is a street or group of streets designed primarily to meet the interests of pedestrians and cyclists rather than motorists, opening up the street for social use. Parking is one of a number of issues addressed by such schemes with features often include traffic calming, shared surfaces, trees and planters, benches and play areas.

However, unless justified on safety grounds, such investment principally contributes to amenity, and is likely to be a low priority for use of transport funds. Such schemes may also have a low priority in terms of the council's other capital budgets. Nevertheless, there are a number of funding programmes that address the regeneration and enhancement of residential and commercial areas and there may be opportunities to improve parking in such areas either wholly or partly from these resources. It is therefore proposed that these funding sources be investigated with a view to identifying opportunities to improve parking facilities in residential and commercial areas as part of wider regeneration and enhancement schemes.

Other Parking Needs - Key Recommendations:

- Consult with groups with special parking requirements (mobility impaired, cyclists, motor-cyclists, etc.) to identify measures to meet those needs;
- Establish a programme to ensure that an appropriate number of disabled parking spaces are provided at suitable locations;
- Identify accessible on-street parking spaces for blue badge holders outside their residence where there is no other suitable parking available;
- Provide secure parking for powered two wheelers in Walsall town centre and the district centres;
- Investigate the possibility of the council contributing to the cost of existing businesses providing cycle parking and associated facilities, using the LTP and other funding sources;
- Work with its partners to have the issue of lorry parking addressed at a regional level, with a view to establishing a strategic lorry parking network;
- Examine the prospect of implementing a small scale park and ride pilot project that utilises shared parking facilities close to high frequency bus routes to the town centre;
- Continue to work with partners to investigate the development of park and ride schemes in association with potential major public transport proposals, such as Midland Metro and Bus Rapid Transit;
- Introduce deterrents to parking that causes obstructions to access;
- Investigate funding streams for regeneration and enhancement to identify possible opportunities to improve parking facilities in residential and commercial areas.

9 Parking Enforcement

9.1 Delivering Effective Parking Enforcement

At present, responsibility for parking enforcement is shared between the Police and the council, although it is the latter's responsibility to enforce off-street parking. The Police are responsible for Fixed Penalty Notices, cautioning or directing drivers, and the removal of illegally parked vehicles or those causing an obstruction. These penalties are applied to on-street parking, vehicles obstructing the public highway (including footways), parking on double yellow lines, parking on pedestrian crossings and zig-zags outside schools. The council is responsible for enforcement at council operated off-street car parks. Penalty Charge Notices are issued instead of Fixed Penalty Notices and are enforceable under civil law.

Consistent and regular parking enforcement is essential to ensure proper management of the parking supply. Illegal parking causes many problems for other road users. It can lead to congestion, low turnover of parking spaces (especially short stay), lead to a reduced parking supply and increase in traffic movements as drivers circulate to find available spaces. Illegal parking near junctions, on footways or near pedestrian crossings, and at bus stops are just some examples of where parked vehicles can be a serious road safety hazard for other road and footway users.

Walsall Council, like other Metropolitan Districts in the West Midlands, is pursuing the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement. This is one of the powers seen by the council, and its partner highway authorities in the West Midlands, to be a more effective way of managing parking enforcement across the Borough. Civil Parking Enforcement will also enable better co-ordination of on- and off-street enforcement to better manage parking demand and supply. In addition, any surplus income generated can be returned to the community in the form of parking and transport improvements.

It is anticipated that Civil Parking Enforcement will be operational in Walsall in mid 2008 and will apply across the borough so that waiting and parking controls can be enforced wherever there is a problem. Revenue from Penalty Charge Notices will be available, in addition to car park charges, to fund the operation of parking enforcement and management services. However, even with this increased revenue, it will be necessary to prioritise enforcement activity. Priorities for enforcing parking regulations are set out in ***Table 10.1*** and reflect the requirements of the Traffic Management Act and LTP requirements.

Table 10.1: Priorities for Parking Enforcement

High Priority

- Safety issues;
- Obstruction of the highway – for emergency and goods vehicle access;
- Congestion – particularly on the Red Route network; and
- Parking in bus lanes.
- School gate parking

Lower priority

- Limited waiting (on-street and off-street);
- Residents Parking Zones; and
- Parking on footways / verges.

The cost of enforcement should be covered by the revenue from parking charges and fines. The cost of undertaking enforcement of on-street parking controls where no charge applies to the use of the parking space and where there is limited revenue from penalty charges will need to be subsidised from other parts of the enforcement service. Where there is a need to have controls on the length of stay consideration will need to be given to the introduction of charges to assist the efficiency of the enforcement process and to provide a regular revenue stream to fund the cost of enforcement. This will need to be explored in detail through the development of Civil Parking enforcement and should also be subject to annual review at which time the level of enforcement and scale of standard charges should be reviewed.

It will be necessary to ensure that the public and business understand the level of service that they will receive from the council's new parking and enforcement service. It is therefore proposed that this will be managed through the Civil Parking Enforcement implementation process leading to the publication of a Service Level Agreement for the service. This will then be reviewed on a regular basis and republished as and when service levels significantly change.

Key Recommendations:

- As part of the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement, it will be necessary to prioritise enforcement activity to reflect the requirements of the Traffic Management Act, LTP and management of off-street car park management;
- The council will adopt management and operational systems for its parking enforcement and management service that respond to the requirements of the local community;
- A Service Level Agreement should be produced for the new parking and enforcement service;
- The Service Level Agreement for the parking and enforcement service should be reviewed on an annual basis.

10 Action Plan and Targets

10.1 Delivering the Parking Strategy

This proposed Parking Strategy sets out objectives that the strategy should deliver and includes a number of proposed actions. This section summarises the proposed actions that should be undertaken to deliver the parking strategy and suggests a broad time frame for their completion.

It is proposed that the Parking Strategy will be reviewed annually in conjunction with a yearly report of the Parking Management Service. The review will report on the extent to which targets are being achieved, problems are being overcome, new problems are emerging and new actions required. These annual reviews will provide the context for the next main review of the strategy that will be undertaken to reflect changes to national, regional and local transportation and land use policy.

The objectives and targets for the Parking Strategy are listed in ***Table 12.1*** on the following pages.

Table 12 1: Parking Strategy Action Plan

Recommended Action	**Objectives Addressed by the Recommended Action**												
Short Term Actions 0 – 2 Years	**1a**	**1b**	**2a**	**2b**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8a**	**8b**	**9**	**10**
Continue to encourage the provision of high quality short stay parking facilities in conjunction with new town and district centre retail and leisure developments	✓		✓			✓	✓						
Set and maintain long stay car parking charges at a level that takes account of charges applicable on publicly available private car parking facilities whilst promoting the use of sustainable travel choices that reduce the reliance on a car for work and other journeys		✓		✓									
Work towards developing a comprehensive Travel Plan for council staff as a leading example to other businesses		✓		✓		✓							
Improve car park direction signage on all radial routes into the town centre			✓						✓				
Introduce a Parking Guidance System (PGS) for Walsall town centre using a Variable Message System (VMS) on main radial routes to provide information on the availability of spaces on main town centre car parks			✓						✓				
Provide up to date information on the council's website, at car parks and on town centre display maps regarding the location of publicly available car parks, number of spaces, permitted length of stay and parking charges			✓						✓			✓	
Keep under review the need to introduce charges for on street parking		✓		✓									

Short Term Actions 0 – 2 Years	1a	1b	2a	2b	3	4	5	6	7	8a	8b	9	10
Investigate the possibility of providing a park and ride facility in partnership with Centro and in association with major public transport projects		✓	✓	✓									
In conjunction with the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement, enforce the maximum stay limit on district centre car parks and keep under review the need to introduce parking charges	✓												
Maximise opportunities to provide short stay on-street parking, particularly in Darlaston and Bloxwich										✓	✓		
Provide appropriate enforcement of limited waiting restrictions across the borough												✓	
Work with landowners and operators of private car parks to bring about shared use parking, particularly in Bloxwich and Darlaston			✓			✓							
Ensure new publicly available car parks are available for use by visitors to the centre as a whole and have a management regime that is consistent with the aims of the statutory network management duty	✓				✓	✓							
Develop a Service Level Agreement for the new parking and enforcement service.			✓									✓	
Develop an improved Asset Management Plan for council operated car parks			✓										
Where the potential disposal of under utilised or poorly located car parks is being considered, identify and address the financial position of the parking service			✓										

Short Term Actions 0 – 2 Years	1a	1b	2a	2b	3	4	5	6	7	8a	8b	9	10
Identify priorities for improving car park security and access (for all users) and develop a properly funded investment programme to improve the quality of car parks: ▪ Investigate the need to improve safety and security at all of the council owned car parks with regard to boundary treatment, lighting, cleanliness, usage, surveillance, and pedestrian and vehicular access and signage ▪ Undertake a detailed lighting survey to determine which car parks needs improving in order to achieve a standard of 40 lux or better			✓				✓	✓					
Provide improved information on the location and charging regime of car parks on the council website, at car parks and within main centres									✓				
Provide information on the car park service standards and contacts at car parks			✓										
Regularly assess whether alternative payment systems offer value for money in relation to car park security and management			✓										
Formally adopt a series of indicators to enable benchmarking of the parking service			✓										✓
Consult with groups with special parking requirements (mobility impaired, cyclists, motor-cyclists, etc.) to identify measures to meet those needs					✓								
Establish a programme to ensure that an appropriate number of disabled parking spaces are provided at suitable locations in Walsall town centre, district centres and local centres					✓								
Identify accessible on-street parking spaces for blue badge holders outside their residence where there is no other suitable parking available					✓								
Provide secure parking for powered two wheelers in Walsall town centre and the district centres					✓								

Short Term Actions 0 – 2 Years	1a	1b	2a	2b	3	4	5	6	7	8a	8b	9	10
Introduce deterrents to inappropriate parking that causes obstructions to access										✓	✓		
Work with key partners to ensure the issue of lorry parking is addressed at a regional level, with a view to establishing a strategic lorry parking network					✓	✓							
Examine the prospect of implementing a small scale park and ride pilot project that utilises shared parking facilities close to high frequency bus routes to the town centre			✓			✓							
Investigate suitable locations to establishing a holiday coach facility within Walsall town centre					✓					✓			
Investigate the possible introduction of small pilot park and ride facilities as part of bus showcase schemes		✓	✓	✓									

Short Term Actions 0 – 2 Years	**1a**	**1b**	**2a**	**2b**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8a**	**8b**	**9**	**10**
Investigate funding streams for regeneration and enhancement to identify possible opportunities to improve parking facilities in residential and commercial areas			✓					✓					
Parking for the mobility impaired, parents with young children, bicycles and motorcycles should be provided at suitable levels and standards that encourage, promote and provide accessibility for all					✓								
Maintain and make accessible information on parking standards and design specifications for car parking, cycle parking and parking for powered two wheelers, including access, security and charging mechanisms					✓			✓					

Medium Term Actions 2- 5 Years	1a	1b	2a	2b	3	4	5	6	7	8a	8b	9	10
Allocate at least 5% of publicly available on street spaces in town and district centres as disabled spaces and undertake consultation to better allocate disabled parking spaces at a range of locations close to the core shopping areas					✓								
Where, visitors and commuters to the town and district centres park in residential streets, consider the need to introduce residents parking schemes to safeguard the amenities of local residents		✓	✓										
Adopt a properly funded car park maintenance regime that reflects the whole life care of the assets and ensures a high level of serviceability on an on-going basis with regard to lining, signing, lighting and cleanliness							✓						✓
Review parking levels on all council car parks and consider the need to retain car parks if their size is out of proportion to usage	✓			✓									
Investigate the possibility of the council contributing to the cost of existing businesses providing cycle parking and associated facilities, using the LTP and other funding sources					✓								

Medium Term Actions 2- 5 Years	1a	1b	2a	2b	3	4	5	6	7	8a	8b	9	10
Work with the private sector to deliver new high quality short stay parking facilities in the Upper Bridge Street/ Intown Row area	✓		✓										
Continue to encourage car sharing by council staff and consider providing priority spaces for car sharers at discount rates				✓									
Continue working with partners to improve public transport services serving the town centre, particularly gaps in service provision that may be identified through the Staff Travel Plan		✓											
Keep under review the need to introduce charges for on street parking		✓		✓									

11 Glossary

Publicly Available Car Park: Car park available to the public. May be operated by the council or the private sector and may be free to use or charged.

Short Stay Car Park: Not used for all day parking owing to the application of penalties or charges exceeding £5 per day.

Long Stay Car Park: A car park available for all day use, with a charge of less than £5.

Private Non-Residential Car Park: Employee parking or parking for patrons of a facility, provided on private sites and not for public use.

Council Staff Permit Car Park: Reserved for staff employed by the council holding a valid permit.

On-Street Car Parking Spaces: Parking provided on the public highway, may be time limited or unrestricted.

Powered Two Wheeler Parking: Parking for motorcycles and mopeds.

DfT: Department for Transport

CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT: Decriminalised Parking Enforcement

PPG: Planning Policy Guidance

RPG: Regional Planning Guidance

RSS: Regional Spatial Strategy

TA: Transport Appraisal

UDP: Unitary Development Plan

WMLTP: West Midlands Local Transport Plan

WRC: Walsall Regeneration Company