

# **Walsall Town Centre Car Parking Strategy – May 2017**

## **1. Introduction**

Car parking is important for town centres. Provision of sufficient parking that is well-located and attractive encourages shoppers and visitors, thereby promoting further investment. A strategic approach to car parking is necessary because:

1. It will help to determine where the private sector, both developers/investors and end users, may wish to invest and create job opportunities;
2. It will help the Council to control the use and operation of the strategic highway network; and
3. It will help the Council to implement sustainable transport policies.

The Council has an objective of delivering all three outcomes, and will need to find a fine balance between them to achieve a prosperous and successful town centre, and this is explained in greater detail in section 2.

Sections 3 and 4 outline why parking policies and management approaches are necessary, and the standards that will be sought in the delivery of new parking provision, whilst section 5 sets out the wider context of transport and planning strategy.

The remainder of this paper, in sections 6-8, seeks to quantify the potential demand for additional parking provision in Walsall town centre, and provide some guidance on where this parking should be located. It also explores the potential delivery models available to the Council. The figures used to quantify potential future demand have been drawn from the work undertaken by consultancy DTZ (now known as Cushman & Wakefield), which has advised the Council on market demand and assessing the deliverability of development sites in the Walsall Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP).

Earlier versions of this draft report have also been assessed by DTZ's appointed transportation consultancy, Fore Consulting Ltd, which has commented on the Council's approach in sections 6-8, and some of Fore Consulting Ltd's conclusions have been incorporated into this final version of the report. The work by DTZ and Fore Consulting has been published: [Walsall Town Centre - Demand Study & Development Sites Assessment](#).

This strategy has been prepared in parallel with work on the Town Centre AAP, with its analysis and conclusions reflected in the plan. The strategy is therefore an important part of the evidence base for the AAP.

## **2. Regeneration, Highways and Sustainability**

### **2.1 Parking as a regeneration tool**

Provision of car parking in Walsall town centre is an important part of the Council's overall approach to town centre regeneration. In order for Walsall to be a competitive location for office, retail and leisure investment, it needs to reassure the market that there is a plan to provide sufficient additional parking in the town centre. The quality, location and price of parking will continue to be a determining factor for those considering whether Walsall town centre is a place in which they want to invest.

Developers and investors want certainty that their occupiers have sufficient parking to meet their requirements, whilst the occupiers themselves need to be able to access their premises easily and safely. Modern parking provision would complement the recent and proposed investment in retail, leisure and business activity in the town centre.

The Council only controls approximately a quarter of all off-road parking provision in the town centre and it is recognised that much of this provision is poorly located and of low quality, and may in some circumstances be a deterrent to investment and job creation. The private sector controls 75% of town centre car parking, and it will be necessary to engage with those operators in implementing a future strategy.

The private sector's approach to maintaining the quantity and enhancing the quality of existing provision will be important to the delivery of any strategy. For the Council to help facilitate investment and job creation, it is considered that there needs to be a step-change in the quality of existing provision to create the conditions for growth.

Some of the Council's car parks are in prime town centre locations which, either as stand-alone development opportunities or as a part of more comprehensive proposals, have the potential for investment and development. Therefore it may be prudent to actively pursue the disposal of particular Council car parks to assist in the regeneration of the town centre and to plan for providing alternative parking solutions.

## **2.2 Parking to control the highway network**

The location of the Council's car parks will help to control some of the routes taken by car users in approaching and travelling through the town centre. From a highway management perspective, car parks should be located within easy access of the strategic highway network and ring road so that traffic movement can be controlled effectively and congestion managed accordingly.

## **2.3 Parking to implement sustainable transport policies**

Car parking policy (i.e. the supply and location of spaces; the management of spaces; and charging regimes) is one of the few 'policy levers' that local authorities have available to them in their efforts to implement sustainable and coherent transport policies and strategies. It is also a key determinant of individual travel behaviour, along with:

- the price of fuel for private transport (petrol, diesel and LPG);
- the availability and flexibility of public transport services (whether buses, trains and trams 'go where people want to go' and at the 'right times of day');
- the cost of bus/train/tram fares;
- the flexibility of ticketing products (day tickets and season tickets); and
- the legibility of transport networks (whether people recognise and understand alternative travel options).

However, as not all car parking spaces are Council-owned or -managed, there is an acknowledgement that private provision can conflict with the Council's efforts to pursue a balanced approach, and ultimately the private provision needs to be controlled more effectively. The provision of on-street spaces in the town centre (and immediately adjacent to the centre), whether free or charged, also impacts on the attractiveness of off-street provision in town centre car parks.

### **3. The Need for Parking Policies and Management**

Walsall town centre is a diverse place with a wide range of activities and interests competing for limited space. To try to achieve the best balance between the different requirements, it is important to have a policy and management regime.

- Policies, especially planning policies, should help ensure that the parking needs of developments and the town centre as a whole are recognised, but also that this provision can be accommodated both physically and in traffic terms and reconciled with a strategy that will also encourage access by means other than the car.
- Policies will also include a management regime to ensure that the approach to parking is consistent across the town centre (so that, for example, an individual development cannot seek to discourage its users from visiting the wider centre), and that parking is used efficiently to the greatest benefit of the centre (for example so provision for shoppers and visitors is prioritised).
- Policies should ensure that the approach to parking is consistent with the delivery of local, regional and national air quality objectives.

It is recognised that such requirements and approaches impact on car park operators and on users, not least because car park management is likely to include a charging regime. However, policies and management are developed and applied in order to provide and maintain a supply of attractive car parking that can also support future investment in the town centre.

The application of suitable charging and management regimes is critical for the implementation of a successful parking strategy. These regimes will ensure that all parking providers operate within a common environment designed to maximise the attractiveness of the town centre as a whole and drive the necessary growth in the office, retail and leisure offer.

Parking charge competition would lead to a situation of unsustainable and unreliable parking provision with negative impacts on vehicular traffic movements across the town centre. This needs to be managed through the application of suitable charging regimes that reduce the likelihood of localised traffic congestion whilst removing the incentive for short term gain at the expense of long term sustainable improvement and growth in the attractiveness of the town centre.

### **4. Parking Quality Standards**

User perception is a significant factor in the attractiveness of a car park to its potential users. The Car Parking Strategy will drive an improvement in the overall quality of the parking offer through a common approach to the requirements in quality terms of all town centre car parks. The most significant improvements are likely to involve some or all of the following.

- Size of bays with a minimum and maximum bay size of 2.4m x 4.8m and 2.8m x 5.2m respectively
- Payment options by cash, debit/credit card, telephone, smart phone apps
- 10% of available spaces allocated as disabled bays
- 2% of available spaces allocated as parent and child bays

- For car parks with a capacity of 100 spaces or more a minimum of 1 electric vehicle charging point
- Minimum illumination levels for new build car parks in accordance with BS5489-1 and BS EN 12464-1 and BS5266-1
- Directional signage
- Real time electronic signage indicating the number of spaces free
- Quality standards, such as 'Park Mark' (<http://www.parkmark.co.uk/>).

The Council would expect any new car parks or schemes that involve improvements to existing car parks to include these measures.

## **5. Transport and Planning Strategies and Policies**

### **5.1 Walsall Transport Strategy**

Whilst the West Midlands Movement for Growth Strategy sets out the transport strategy for the whole of the metropolitan area, the [Walsall Transport Strategy 2010](#) sets out how transport strategy will be implemented in the Borough. The Walsall Strategy articulates: -

*To provide a transport system that focuses on delivering safer roads, with improved journey times, and encourages the use of sustainable travel, in order to improve the borough's air quality and the health and well-being of our people.*

Essential to the delivery of this Vision is the promotion of walking, cycling and public transport, and an acknowledgment of the need for 'demand management' measures to constrain road traffic growth and attendant congestion. The parking section of the Strategy notes that in Walsall town centre, the impact of commuter traffic places a significant demand on long-stay parking provision.

The Strategy recognises that there is a need to maintain an appropriate balance of long and short-stay parking provision that complements the Council's Duty to manage traffic congestion, whilst still supporting the local economy. Moreover, it states that some restraints on the supply and cost of parking will be needed if alternative (sustainable) modes of transport are to be made relatively more attractive.

### **5.2 Planning Policy**

Planning policy provides the context and justification for the planning of car parking provision in Walsall Town Centre. It also provides the framework in which new proposals for car parking provision and management will be assessed.

The Government's [National Planning Policy Framework](#) states that, if setting parking standards, local authorities should take account of several factors including accessibility, the type, mix and use of development, and the availability of public transport. It also says (in paragraph 40):

*"Local authorities should seek to improve the quality of parking in town centres so that it is convenient, safe and secure ... They should set appropriate parking charges that do not undermine the vitality of town centres. Parking enforcement should be proportionate."*

More recently the Government has made other statements on car parking for town centres.

- a) In the context of a stated keenness “to ensure that there is adequate parking provision both in new residential developments and around our town centres and high streets” in March 2015 the Secretary of State announced to Parliament that there should be additional text to read alongside the NPPF: “Local Planning authorities should only impose local parking standards for residential and non-residential development where there is clear and compelling justification that it is necessary to manage their local road network”.

[Planning Update:Written statement - HCWS488 - UK Parliament](#)<sup>1</sup>

- b) Also in March 2015 the Government consulted on a discussion paper ‘Parking reform: tackling unfair practices’. This was primarily concerned with the management of private sector car parking, but it did say that “One of the aims of parking, whether on public or private land, should be to support viable communities, including high streets and tourist destinations, and provide people with the facilities they need to go about their daily lives. “Effective parking management is essential for businesses to survive and grow.....”

[Parking reform: tackling unfair practices - Consultations - GOV.UK](#)<sup>2</sup>

The [Black Country Core Strategy](#) (BCCS), prepared by the four Black Country authorities, was adopted by the Council in February 2011. This strategic document seeks to direct investment in retail, office and leisure uses across the Black Country, and has set aspirational development targets for Walsall town centre to 2026 in terms of comparison retail floorspace, office development and new homes.

The BCCS expects that projected development targets will be planned for locally through the provision of a Walsall Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP). The BCCS also expects that the parking strategy in the town centre is established at the local level, in this instance by the AAP, so that the approach to parking can be cross-referenced with the requirements to plan for planned floor space targets to 2026. As such, this strategy has evolved to meet town centre parking requirements up to 2026.

Consultants DTZ were instructed by Walsall Council to provide a Demand Study and Development Sites Assessment for Walsall town centre, to help inform the AAP process. Part of this commission reviewed the timetable for delivery of the office and retail floor space targets noted above, as well as assessing the development potential of 24 development sites in the town centre. The conclusions of this study have been used to quantify the potential future parking requirements in the town centre (see section 6).

The BCCS also has specific car parking policies for town centres (Policies CEN8 and TRAN5 see Appendix 3). These can be summarised as:

- The pricing of parking will not be used as a tool for competition between Strategic Centres.

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<sup>1</sup> In July 2015 a Government Minister was quoted in the press as saying that local authorities should consider offering free car parking, albeit in “small” town centres

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/society/11747831/Free-parking-in-town-centres-to-save-the-high-street.html>. ATCM (July 2014) [In-Town Parking: What Works? Innovative Practices in Parking Provision](#) contradicts this in its findings that there is no such thing as free parking and documents parking charges to be lower down the priority order of factors compared with availability, quality and safety.

<sup>2</sup> In response to a Parliamentary question the DCLG is still to publish a response to the consultation “in due course”: <https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2016-09-06/45179/>

- The amount and charging of publicly available long stay parking will be managed to ensure a balance between provision of long stay parking and encouraging commuters to use more sustainable modes. Where appropriate, long stay car parking may be removed to support parking for leisure and retail customers.
- Except where there is an accepted need for secure dedicated provision, car parking within or on the edge of centres will generally be required to be available to the public to serve the centre as a whole. Adequate provision will be made for all types of users.
- The application of standards will be consistent with government guidance and enforced in new developments<sup>3</sup>.
- The location of car parks will be reviewed through the 'Network; Management Duty Strategy' to ensure that the flow of traffic around the town centre is as efficient as possible.

Walsall's [Unitary Development Plan](#) (UDP) was adopted in 2005 and many of its policies remain extant. It contains planning policies that apply across the borough as well as more detailed policies and proposals for specific issues and areas.

Some of the policies that relate to Walsall Town Centre alone will be superseded when the Town Centre AAP is adopted but others, relating to parking generally, will continue to be 'saved'. In this context any new proposals for parking need to be in general accordance with the principles of the UDP policies (S4, T7, T10, T13 and WA18 - see Appendix 3 for details). These can be summarised as follows<sup>4</sup>.

- The Council will maintain, enhance and, where necessary, increase short stay public parking provision for shoppers and visitors to Walsall's centres. Long-stay car parking for commuters will be strictly controlled or reduced.
- 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.
- 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.
- New car parks will generally be located where they have good access from the roads which encircle the Town Centre. The Council will seek to ensure car parks are well distributed around the centre. Any development that would remove public parking will be considered in the context of the overall parking strategy, and any benefits that might arise from the development.

The UDP also provides detailed guidance on car parking provision including the level of car parking required for different types of development, the standard car parking

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<sup>3</sup> The statement by the Secretary of State in March 2015 ('[Planning Update:Written Statement - HCWS488 - UK Parliament](#)') says: "

<sup>4</sup> UDP Saved Policy (Policy T7 d)) says it may be appropriate for developments 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. Now, of course, such an approach would have to be consistent with the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations (CIL) 2010 (as amended), which places limits on the ability to pool planning obligations.

size, and the required level of allocated spaces for disabled people (which are both noted in section 4).

The Area Action Plan for Walsall Town Centre builds on and reviews the policies of the Core Strategy and the UDP<sup>5</sup>, in light of Government policy. The aim will be to provide a positive basis to support investment in the town centre in a sustainable manner that helps to manage traffic impacts whilst maximising accessibility for all sections of the community.

Appendix 4 of this strategy provides an example of a planning condition that seeks to ensure that car park management will be established and maintained to be consistent with the approach set out in planning policy. The basis for this condition is the planning permission for the Crown Wharf Retail Park, which is on the edge of the town centre in shopping terms but which provides an important town centre car park<sup>6</sup>. The appendix also provides notes to explain how the approach can be applied in respect of new town centre developments.

## **6. Quantifying Future Car Parking Requirements**

Any attempt to quantify future car parking requirements in the town centre will require forecasting of a number of different variables. A key concern is that a 'predict and provide' approach based on 'best case' regeneration proposals will result in a significant increase in the amount of spaces believed to be required. Further, that these spaces are then delivered in advance of developments that may, or may not, ultimately come to fruition.

In this scenario, over-provision of spaces coupled with discounted charging regimes (to fill 'empty spaces'), may lead to an over-reliance of private car access to the town centre, simultaneously undermining the attractiveness and viability of bus and train services. The consequence would be a 'vicious circle' of decline in our transport networks, where traffic congestion is exacerbated and the proportion of public transport trips into the town centre declines.

It would therefore be prudent to pursue a phased approach to delivery of new parking spaces only when trigger points have been reached; the private sector, particularly if they were to be involved in the delivery of future parking provision, would expect this approach.

### **6.1 Assumptions**

The assumptions noted below need to be able to withstand challenge, from the private sector, and other interested parties, and to be applicable over the AAP period to 2026. For the purposes of seeking to quantify future town centre parking requirements, the following assumptions have been made:

- The parking requirements of the current development projects can be met from capacity within the existing parking provision or through their own new parking provision. For example, the cinema scheme at Waterfront, the Jhoots development and the Business & Sports Hub have additional parking provision,

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<sup>5</sup> In doing this the AAP will replace policy WA18 of Walsall's UDP as well as other 'Inset' policies for Walsall Town Centre.

<sup>6</sup> A similar approach has also been applied in respect of car park developments within and on the edge of the borough's district centres.

though only the cinema scheme will provide additional publicly available spaces (**83** spaces) in addition to what was originally provided for the Premier Inn hotel.

- With the exception of Day Street, Bate Street and Stafford Street/Green Lane car parks, it is considered that the Council's current short and long stay provision in the town centre is no longer fit for purpose and is capable of redevelopment. However, if the Council were to take a key political decision to seek to dispose of all of its town centre provision, (with the exception of those car parks which can not be redeveloped due to other constraints: High Street, Hatherton Street secure, Walhouse Road and Ward Street), there would be a major impact on parking provision in the town centre, leaving only **214** Council owned spaces, out of the 1,303 currently operated by the Council. Advice has been sought from the AAP consultants (DTZ), which has confirmed that all of these car parks represent potential disposal opportunities (see appendix 1 for a list of car park sites and their availability).
- Other small scale changes to the Council's provision, for example temporary additional spaces on the Challenge Building car park, have not been included.
- There are currently **4,099** privately owned parking spaces. Any changes to this provision, for example a loss of spaces in Station Street as a part of the electrification project or other public transport improvements, have not been taken into account.
- The busiest car parking day in the six months to January 2017 saw **3,457** of the town centre's 5,402 spaces occupied (64% occupancy), so this "worst case" scenario must be the baseline for calculations.
- If the next generation of development opportunities are delivered during the AAP period to 2026, they will generate considerable additional requirements. The consultancy team led by DTZ included specialist transport consultancy Fore Consulting Ltd. Fore applied the current UDP parking standards to the development potential of the 24 development sites assessed by DTZ in the town centre, and concluded that there could be a demand for an additional 3,670 parking spaces over the next 20 years, of which 2,904 spaces will be needed within the AAP period. At the current stage, it is difficult to apply further precision to these parking requirements, but as more details emerge for the proposed developments, it will be possible to apply further rigour to the anticipated demand.
- The additional 2,904 spaces by 2026 is based on a best case scenario comprising maximum development across the 24 development opportunities assessed. However, even a proposal to plan for only 25% of this total (reflective of the proportion currently operated by the Council in the town centre) would require an additional **726** spaces in the town centre by 2026.
- The overall provision for the town centre needs to be greater than what is actually required so that there is some 'slack' in system. If this does not exist, the perception would be that the town centre's car parks were always full. As such, it is assumed that an additional **15%** should be built into the town centre's car parking provision.



## 6.2 Calculation

If the assumptions noted above are brought together in one calculation, then it is estimated that there could be shortfall of approximately **497** car parking spaces in Walsall town centre over the AAP period to 2026.

Busiest occupancy	3457
Additional parking requirements to 2026, provided by the public, through the delivery of development opportunities	726
Plus 15% additional provision	627
<b>Anticipated parking demand</b>	<b>4,810</b>
Currently privately owned spaces	4099
Council owned spaces – those which can't be redeveloped	214
<b>Anticipated parking supply</b>	<b>4,313</b>
<b>Shortfall</b>	<b>497</b>

## 6.3 Implications

If all of the expected town centre development opportunities come to fruition in the period to 2026, even the application of a conservative parking space requirement will lead to a considerable shortfall in car parking requirements. There is at this stage no guarantee that all of these opportunities will be delivered, or any certainty that the Council would be willing to reconsider its approach to parking as assumed here, but it is considered prudent that the car parking strategy should be based on these assumptions.

However, these parking calculations do not include any complementary increase in walking and cycling or the use of public transport which, as a part of Walsall Transport Strategy noted above, is also being pursued. The current Walsall-Rugeley rail electrification project, which will be completed by 2018, will increase the frequency of trains to Walsall station, whilst studies are also ongoing into a proposal for tram-train usage and improvements to the bus interchanges in the town centre. If all these proposals are delivered, it is safe to assume that more town centre commuters and visitors will use public transport, but the exact implications for the number of car parking spaces can not accurately be calculated at this stage of the Area Action Plan process.

## 6.4 Phased approach

In respect of quantifying future parking needs in the town centre, based on the calculation as set out above, it is anticipated that there could be a minimum future requirement of 497 additional car parking spaces. However, given that uncertainties remain as to whether all of the anticipated developments will be delivered, the likely timescales, and what proportion of visitors to the town centre will use sustainable modes of transport, it is recommended that a phased approach to additional parking provision is pursued. This approach has been endorsed by Fore Consulting Ltd.

In the first instance, this should seek the delivery of a new multi-storey town centre car park of approximately 400-500 spaces by 2021, with further spaces, through a further 400-500 space car park delivered as and when required by actual rather than

anticipated demand. The calculation of an actual demand figure can be calculated by analysing transport assessments which accompany planning applications, and by monitoring actual travel behaviour associated with new developments.

## **7. Requirements**

If the potential parking shortfall of up to 497 spaces noted above is to be addressed, then the town centre will require two new multi-storey car parks. If these car parks are to enhance the town centre, they will need to meet the following requirements:

- Council land ownership, or relatively straightforward site assembly (e.g. single private ownership and a willing seller). However, the Council could consider using its CPO powers to secure ownership in order to secure delivery;
- Minimising/controlling the impact on the Key Route Network of strategically important roads and the impact on air/noise quality in the town centre;
- Accessibility for town centre workers and visitors, preferably within or on the ring road, to overcome any visitor perceptions that the ring road is a barrier to pedestrian movement;
- Reduce the likelihood of town centre visitors trying to find parking spaces by “rat-running” through the core of the town centre;
- Availability of safe, secure and attractive pedestrian routes from car parks to the core of the town centre;
- An ability to influence the routes taken by pedestrians, and to guide footfall into desired directions;
- Lack of site constraints that would limit development density (e.g. limestone mine consideration zone) or unnecessarily constrain design (natural and built environment matters);
- Limited or no impact on residential amenity or other town centre uses;
- Proximity to bus/rail interchanges for linked or onward journeys;
- Deliverability, noted through market testing/AAP viability work; and
- The potential for comprehensive regeneration activities, for example in mixed use development opportunities to enhance viability.

### **7.1 Potential locations for multi-storey provision**

Splitting the town centre into four quarters, it is considered that the additional spaces planned at Waterfront, when considered alongside existing provision at Crown Wharf, should be sufficient for traffic arriving at the town centre via the A454/M6 J10. Similarly, traffic arriving from the south should be well served by provision at Asda.

The lack in current provision is for town centre visitors arriving from the A34 and A461, and as such there should be additional provision along the Littleton Street corridor, for example at Day Street or Challenge Block. Furthermore, provision is required for visitors arriving at the town centre from the east, and the land in Intown

Row could be a possible location for multi-storey provision. These potential locations would meet many of the locational requirements listed above.

Fore Consulting Ltd has assessed the potential locations for additional multi-storey parking provision. This assessment has concluded that the first priority should be to deliver a new 400-500 space car park in the Littleton Street corridor within the period to 2021. Whilst both the Challenge Block and Day Street car park have their advantages and disadvantages, it is felt by Fore Consulting Ltd that the Challenge Block has a greater opportunity for integration into the town centre and with other uses to aid delivery. Therefore, Fore proposes that the Challenge Block should be the location for a multi-storey car park, with Day Street as an alternative if the Challenge Block cannot be delivered. It should however be noted that if the car park were delivered in the Challenge Block, it could require improvements to the capacity of nearby signal junctions to accommodate the new traffic movements.

If a second multi-storey car park is required in the second half of the plan period, then Fore Consulting Ltd agrees that the best location for this car park would be the Intown Row area. In this location, a multi-storey car park would take advantage of the change in levels in the area, but the constrained access would require improvements in the highway network.

These proposed locations for the future multi-storey parking provision have been reflected in the AAP Preferred Options version, and are also identified with a © symbol on the plan at Appendix 2.

## **8. Delivery Options**

Discussions to date have indicated that the private sector would be willing to work with the Council to explore options for delivery of additional car parking provision in the town centre.

It is understood that parking operators are willing to consider a range of delivery options for new car parks, including direct development of additional spaces as well as setting up a public-private sector partnership / joint venture company with the local authority.

None of the delivery options outlined above have been pursued in any great detail but Fore Consulting Ltd were asked to comment on potential delivery mechanisms for multi-storey car parks in the town centre. They concluded that a multi-storey car park in the Challenge Block, *“with publically available spaces, could be delivered either as a joint venture or as part of the development masterplan for this site subject to viability testing and potential cross subsidy from other uses. Here, parking demand would be comparatively high and could generate sufficient revenue to be attractive to a private sector developer partner from the outset.*

In terms of the Intown Row area, Fore Consulting Ltd feel that *“there is less likelihood of private sector involvement. In the short and medium terms, parking demand is likely to be lower in this area due to the existing and proposed mix of uses and the anticipated timeframe for redevelopment. Construction and operation of a new car park would therefore be less attractive to the private sector in the short to medium terms given a lack of an immediate revenue stream. Hence, WMBC’s intervention at Intown Row is likely to be more substantial, and include funding of the construction of any new car park, which may make early delivery more problematic.”*

Fore Consulting Ltd concluded that *“timing the involvement of the private sector in any discussions regarding the delivery of new car parks will require careful*

*consideration. At present, there may not be much interest, particularly when recent multi-storey car parks of a similar size in town centres have required a daily charge of around £6 to break even, which is double the current long stay charge in a Council car park. There is more opportunity at Challenge Block than at Intown Row to address at least part of the current gap in viability by bringing forward the car park alongside other uses.”*

## **9. Conclusions**

This Strategy has two objectives:

1. To explain the importance of having policies to control parking in Walsall town centre, and how these sit within the complex suite of regional, sub-regional and local strategic transport and planning policy documents which are in place.
2. To assess the likely future demand for publicly owned parking in Walsall town centre if the ambitious regeneration agenda in the AAP is delivered. This assessment of future demand has been based on a number of assumptions, including DTZ's assessment of the development potential of a number of town centre opportunities. Notwithstanding this, the general approach to assessing future parking demand, and the requirements for new parking provision in the town centre, have been endorsed by Fore Consulting Ltd. These requirements have also transferred into Policy AAPT5 in the Walsall Town Centre AAP and the accompanying Policies Map.

The assessment of town centre parking has resulted in the creation of a set of principles that shape the way the Council will seek to manage car parking in the town centre and the application of the Policy AAPT5. These principles advocated that all car parking in the town centre will be:

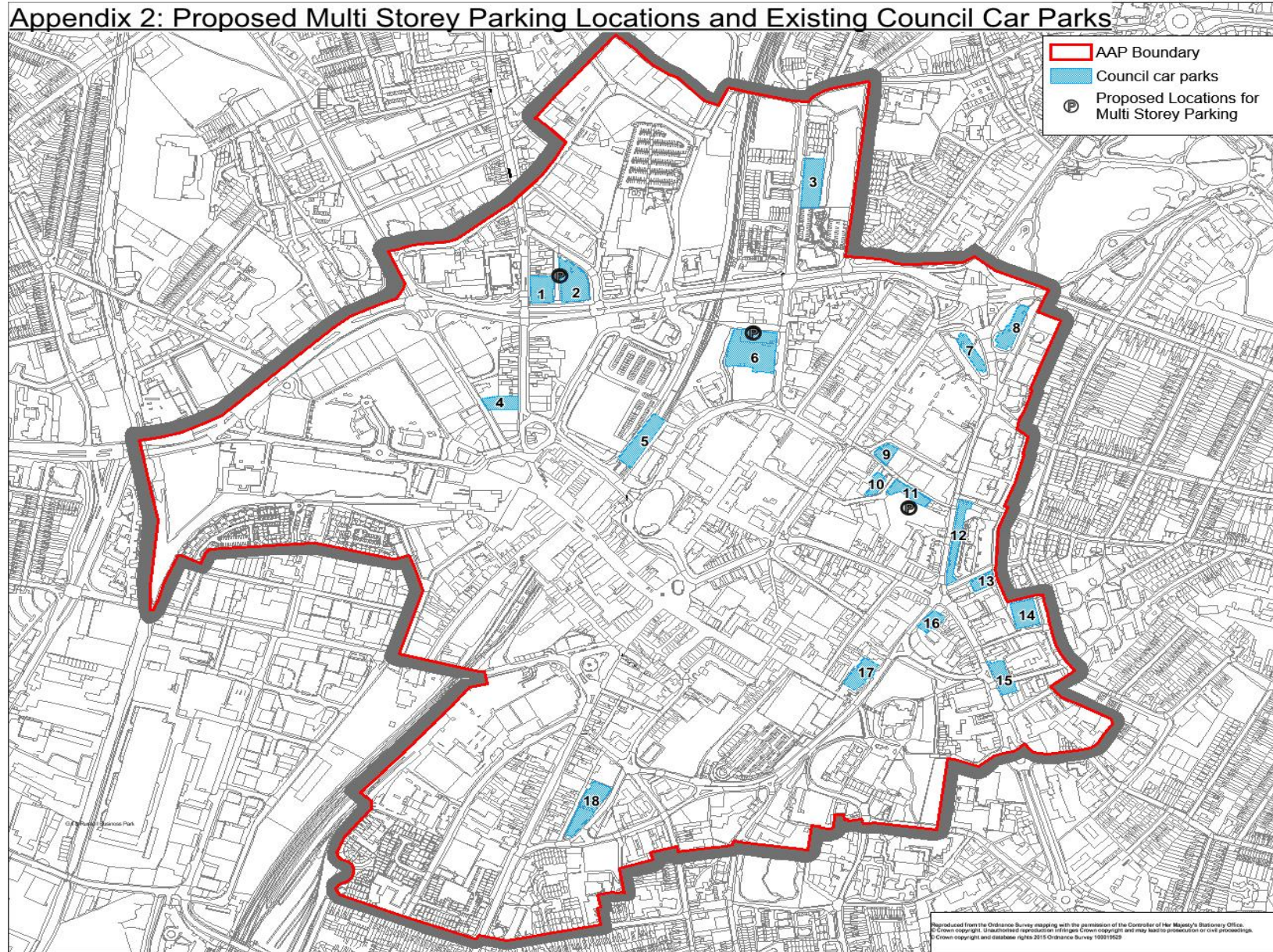
1. High quality and attractive to users meeting the parking standards set out in this strategy and in planning policy;
2. Accessible and well integrated in the centre, serving the key attractions with strong linkages to the rest of the centre;
3. Available to meet the needs of the centre as a whole rather than individual developments, unless otherwise justified;
4. Safe and secure;
5. Operated in line with the Council's charging management regime; and
6. Operated in line with the Council's air quality management objectives.

### Appendix 1: Existing Council Car Parks

The table below lists the Council's current parking provision (see blue sites on Appendix 2), and indicates whether these car parks are potentially available for redevelopment.

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Car Park</b>	<b>Available for redevelopment?</b>
1	Bate Street	Yes
2	Day Street	Yes
3	Hatherton Street (secure)	No – development restricted by culvert
4	Stafford Street/Green Lane	Yes
5	Hatherton Road Multi-storey	No – unlikely to be an opportunity due to location over railway lane
6	Hatherton Street (Challenge Building)	Yes
7	Walhouse Road	No – Council leased from Morrisons and restrictive covenant
8	Ward Street	No – development restricted by culvert
9	Whittimere Street	Yes
10	In Town Row	Yes
11	In Town Row	Yes
12	Lower Rushall Street	Yes
13	Warewell Street	Yes
14	Paddock Lane	Yes
15	Ablewell Street/Tantarra Street	Yes
16	Upper Rushall Street	Yes
17	High Street	No – restrictive covenant in place
18	Mountrath Street	Yes

## Appendix 2: Proposed Multi Storey Parking Locations and Existing Council Car Parks



## **Appendix 3: Relevant Pre-Existing Local Plan Policies**

### **Black Country Core Strategy**

#### **CEN8 Car Parking in Centres**

##### (a) Pricing

The pricing of parking will not be used as a tool for competition between Strategic Centres.

A lower pricing regime may be identified for Town Centres and District and Local Centres.

##### (b) Type of Parking

The amount and charging of publicly available long stay parking in centres will be managed to ensure a balance between provision of long stay parking and encouraging commuters to use more sustainable modes.

Except where there is an accepted need for secure dedicated provision, car parking within or on the edge of Strategic Centres, Town centres and District and Local Centres will generally be required to be available to the public to serve the centre as a whole.

Adequate provision will be made in centres as a whole and in new parking facilities for all types of users, including those with reduced mobility, cyclists and users of powered two wheelers.

##### (c) Maximum Parking Standards

The application of maximum parking standards will be consistent with PPG 13 and any subsequent government guidance, which, in the case of long stay provision, will encourage reduced levels of provision where public transport accessibility is highest.

A lower maximum standard for off street parking will be identified for development within Town Centres and District and Local Centres where the parking provision is to serve the centre as a whole.

#### **TRAN5 Influencing the Demand for Travel and Travel Choices**

The Black Country Local Authorities are committed to considering all aspects of traffic management in the centres and wider area in accordance with the Traffic Management Act 2004.

The priorities for traffic management in the Black Country are:

- The pricing of parking - ensuring that it is not used as a tool for competition between centres;
- The type of parking – ensuring that where appropriate long stay parking is removed near to town centres to support parking for leisure and retail customers and encourage commuters to use more sustainable means and reduce peak hour traffic flows;
- Maximum parking standards – ensuring that a consistent approach to maximum parking standards is enforced in new developments as set out in supplementary planning documents;
- The location of parking – by reviewing the location of town centre car parks through the “Network Management Duty Strategy” to ensure that the flow of traffic around the town centres is as efficient as possible;
- Identifying appropriate strategic and local Park and Ride sites on current public transport routes to ease traffic flows into centres;

- Working together with the rest of the region to manage region-wide traffic flows through the West Midlands Metropolitan Area Urban Traffic Control (UTC) scheme and further joint working;
- Promoting and implementing Smarter Choices measures that will help to reduce the need to travel and facilitate a shift towards using sustainable modes of transport (walking, cycling, public transport, car sharing).

### **Walsall's Unitary Development Plan Saved Policies**

#### **Policy S4: The Town and District Centres: General Principles**

- (a) The Council will seek to sustain and enhance the range and quality of shopping, leisure and other town centre uses which these centres provide, consistent with the role and function of a centre within the hierarchy defined in Policy S2, in order to meet the needs and aspirations of all who use the centres.

....

- (h) The Council will maintain, enhance and, where necessary, increase short stay public parking provision for shoppers and visitors to the centre as a whole in accordance with the principles set out in Policy T7.

#### **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.

#### **Policy T10: Accessibility Standards - General**

- (a) The standards for public transport, cycles, taxis and disabled car parking are minimum ones and developers are strongly encouraged to improve upon them. The standards for non-residential car parking (see Policy T13 C-F) are maximum ones as required by PPG13. The standards for residential car



parking should be seen as neither maximum nor minimum but the typical requirement. Certain site specific and locational circumstances will justify a reduction or increase as necessary (see Policy T13 B and paragraphs 7.62 – 7.63).

- (b) The standards will apply to all development proposals with the exception of the following, which are exempt from the standards in Policies T11 for walking and cycling and T12 for public transport:-
  - I. Small residential developments within existing residential areas including infill plots, redevelopment, conversions and extensions.
  - II. Extensions and infill developments within existing industrial and commercial areas.
  - III. Shops, offices, leisure and entertainment, other town centre uses and housing within or on the edge of a centre in accordance with policies in Chapter 5; any such uses which are to meet purely local needs in an out-of-centre location in accordance with Policy S6.
- (c) The Council will use planning conditions and/or planning obligations to ensure that accessibility standards for all transport modes continue to be met throughout the life of a development. This might also involve the use of commuted payments to support the provision of transport infrastructure where appropriate. Accessibility standards will be supplemented by Green Transport Plans, Traffic Regulation Orders and Residents' Parking Schemes as necessary.

### **Policy T13: Parking Provision for Cars, Cycles and Taxis**

#### **A. General**

- I. These standards are subject to the thresholds and notes as set out in PPG13 Annex D. Developers must, however, still demonstrate in all cases (including developments below the size thresholds) that the development will provide adequate on-site car parking to meet its own needs, and that there will be no adverse effect on highway safety and the environment. The parking standards for cycles and taxis are minimum standards in order to maintain an adequate level of provision.
- II. The standard car parking space should be 4.8m by 2.5m. This can be reduced to 4.8m by 2.2m where it can be shown that there is a low rate of turnover during the day. Provision should also be made for adequate circulation space. Parking should normally be visible from the highway; where this is not possible, there should be adequate signing. Parking should also, wherever possible, be visible from buildings, in the interests of security.
- III. Parking should be allocated for disabled people in all developments as near as possible to the most appropriate entrance to the building. 10% of all parking spaces should be reserved for this purpose, with a minimum of 1 reserved space. Each reserved space should be at least 4.8m by 3.6m. As specified in PPG13, parking for disabled people will be additional to the general level of parking permitted under the maximum parking standards.
- IV. Certain types of development (as indicated below) will also need to provide facilities for taxis, including a pick-up / drop-off point next to the entrance of the building and a telephone.
- V. Bike stands should be located near the entrance of buildings, or in other places where they are clearly visible from the building, in the interests of security. Any employment use which provides toilet facilities should also provide shower, changing and locker facilities for the use of cyclists.

- VI. In the Town and District Centres the Council will negotiate an appropriate level of parking provision with developers, taking into account Policies T7, S4 and the relevant policies in the Inset Plans.

### B. Residential Development

1, 2 and 3 bedroom houses	2 spaces per unit
4 bedroom houses and above	3 spaces per unit
Flats with individual parking spaces	2 spaces per unit
Flats with communal parking	1.5 spaces per unit
Residential homes	1 space per 3 beds
Nursing homes	1 space per 2 beds

### C. Retail Development

Food and convenience goods shops	1 car park space per 14m <sup>2</sup> of gross floorspace. At least 1 bike stand for every 20 car park spaces, and absolute minimum of 2 bike stands Taxi facilities.
Other shops	1 car park space per 20m <sup>2</sup> of gross floorspace. At least 1 bike stand for every 20 car park spaces, with absolute minimum of 2 bike stands. Taxi facilities.
Hot food takeaways	4 car park spaces for establishments with a gross floorspace up to 50m <sup>2</sup> ; then 1 space per 22m <sup>2</sup> of gross floorspace. At least 1 bike stand for every 5 car park spaces with an absolute minimum of 2 bike stands. Taxi facilities.
Garages and vehicle repair workshops	5 car park spaces per service bay. At least 1 bike stand for every 10 car park spaces, with an absolute minimum of 2 bike stands. Taxi facilities.
Car showrooms	10% of gross site area for car parking. At least 1 bike stand for every 10 car park spaces, with an absolute minimum of 2 bike stands. Taxi facilities.

### D. Industrial and Commercial Developments

Use class B1(a)	1 car park space per 30m <sup>2</sup> of gross floorspace. 1 bike locker for every 10 car parking spaces. Taxi facilities.
Use class B1(b)	1 car park space per 30m <sup>2</sup> of gross floorspace. 1 bike locker for every 10 car parking spaces. Taxi facilities.
Use class B1(c)	1 car park space per 30m <sup>2</sup> of gross floorspace. 1 bike locker for every 10 car parking spaces. Taxi facilities.
Use class B2	1 car park space per 50m <sup>2</sup> up to 250m <sup>2</sup> ,

	then 1 space for every additional 100m <sup>2</sup> of gross floorspace. 1 bike locker for every 10 car park spaces. Taxi facilities.
Use class B8	1 car park space per 50m <sup>2</sup> of gross floorspace up to 250m <sup>2</sup> ; then 1 space per 100m <sup>2</sup> up to 2500m <sup>2</sup> ; then 1 space for every 500m <sup>2</sup> of gross floorspace. 1 bike locker for every 10 car parking spaces. Taxi facilities.

### E. Health and Educational Facilities

Hospitals	1 car park space per 4 staff and 1 space per 3 daily visitors and patients. 1 bike locker for every 10 car parking spaces. Taxi facilities.
Health Centres and surgeries	4 car park spaces per consulting room. 1 bike stand for every 10 car parking spaces, with an absolute minimum of 2 bike stands. Taxi facilities.
Schools	2 car park spaces per classroom. 4 bike lockers for every car parking space. Taxi facilities.
Colleges	1 car park space per 2 staff and 1 space per 15 students. 1 bike locker for every car park space. Taxi facilities.
Other community facilities	1 car park space per 22m <sup>2</sup> of gross floorspace. 1 bike stand for every car park space. Taxi facilities.

### F. Leisure and Recreation Developments

Cinemas and conference facilities	1 space per 5 seats. 1 bike stand for every 10 car park spaces, with a minimum of 2 bike stands. Taxi facilities.
Other buildings for public assembly and food and drink	1 space per 22m <sup>2</sup> . 1 bike stand for every 10 car park spaces, with a minimum of 2 bike stands. Taxi facilities.
Sports Halls, swimming pools	1 car park space per 22m <sup>2</sup> of gross floorspace. 1 bike stand for every car parking space. Taxi facilities.
Health & Fitness clubs	1 car park space per 22m <sup>2</sup> of gross floorspace. 1 bike stand for every car park space. Taxi facilities.
Stadiums 1 space per 15 seats.	1 bike stand for every 10 parking spaces. Taxi and coach facilities.
Other outdoor sports pitches	15 car park spaces per pitch. 15 bike stands per pitch. Taxi and coach facilities.
Golf clubs	1 car park space per 22m <sup>2</sup> of gross floorspace of clubhouse. 1 bike stand for

	every 10 car park spaces, with an absolute minimum of 2 stands. Taxi facilities.
Golf driving ranges	1.5 car park spaces per bay. 1 bike stand for every 10 car park spaces. Taxi facilities.
Hotels and guest houses	1 car park space per bedroom, and 1 space per 22m <sup>2</sup> of remaining gross floorspace. 1 bike stand for every 10 car park spaces, with a minimum of 2 bike stands. Taxi facilities.

**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.

#### **Appendix 4: Example Planning Condition.**

It will be important that town centre car parking will operate now and in the future to maintain the parking strategy so that new developments will support and not conflict with the attractiveness of the town centre and to ensure that investment can be secured for the centre as a whole. Therefore, where new parking provision is proposed that will support the town centre it will need to be controlled by planning condition to ensure that it will be managed:

- as short stay parking where it is to support shopping and leisure visits, with long-stay parking allowed where it is justified to support the employment roles of the centre but not located nor managed so that it would detract from the supply of short stay parking;
- to serve the town centre as a whole, and not discourage customers from visiting the rest of the centre (with exceptions should only be allowed where there is strong justification – in respect of uses such as hotels and casinos); and
- in a way that is consistent with other short-stay parking serving the town centre.

#### **a) Example of a Condition Used Previously - Crown Wharf Retail Park<sup>7</sup> (1998)**

- (A) *The development will operate a scheme of parking controls to:-*
- i) prevent use of the car parks on the site by long-stay commuters;*
  - ii) maintain the use of the car parks on the site as short-stay parking for shoppers on the site, shoppers in the town centre and other non-commuter uses on the site and in the town centre.*
- (B) *Short-stay is defined as up to 4 hours, and the scheme will have a pricing structure similar to that of the Council's short-stay car parks, with the discretion for the site operator to allow free parking for customers of the retail park for a short initial period on each visit to the site.*
- (C) *The site operator shall consult the Council on initial proposals for, and any subsequent changes to, the management scheme, and have regard to any representations made.*

#### *Reason.*

*Planning policies, in particular national in PPG6 and PPG13<sup>8</sup>, and local in the Walsall M.B.C. U.D.P., intend that:-*

- *town centre developments should be functionally integrated;*
- *parking should support the Council's strategy of enhancing the centre;*
- *parking should serve the centre as a whole, to provide for shoppers and visitors, through management and pricing arrangements.*

*An inappropriate regime for parking could have an adverse impact on the vitality and viability of Walsall Town Centre, and the prospects for leisure*

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<sup>7</sup> From Decision Notice on Planning Application\_No: BC49736P/C

Land in Blue Lane West, Green Lane, Wolverhampton Street & Stafford Street (Town Wharf Phase 2).  
OUTLINE: Retail (non-food, A1), car sales, leisure (D2), cafe/takeaway/pub (A3), Design Exchange/offices (B1). Date of Decision: 3rd February 1998

The same condition has been imposed on a subsequent permission for the development (BC55194P: 21st December 1999) and the management regime has been maintained since that time, although the mechanisms to implement it have varied.

<sup>8</sup> This example pre-dates the publication of the NPPF, which replaced Planning Policy Guidance Notes as Government policy.

*investment at Town Wharf. The requirement to create and operate a scheme to control car use is therefore an essential component of the proper planning of the Borough.*

**b) Example of How the Strategy Can now be Reflected in a Planning Condition for Car Parking at a Retail Development**

*(A) The development hereby approved will operate a scheme of parking controls to:-*

- i) prevent use of the car parks on the site for long-stay purposes between 0900 and 1700 hours Mondays to Fridays inclusively;*
- ii) maintain the use of the car parks on the site as short-stay parking only (defined as parking for up to 4 hours only) between the times set out in part Ai of this condition.*

*(B) At all times between the hours of 0900 and 1700 hours Mondays to Fridays inclusive the parking regime will be operated subject to a pricing structure which charges fees at not less than the parking charges and not more than double the parking charges, charged from time to time on Council operated short stay car parks in the town centre.*

*(C) Following first use of the parking area by members of the public, the charges shall be reviewed annually thereafter and adjusted to ensure on-going compliance with part (B) of this condition.*

*Reason: To support the provision and operation of car parking to promote the vitality and viability of Walsall's town centre and for the management of traffic in accordance with Black Country Core Strategy policies CEN8 and TRAN5, Saved Unitary Development Plan policies S4, and T7, and emerging Walsall Town Centre AAP Policy AAPT5.*

**Note for Applicant**

**Details of the charges for Walsall Town Centre short stay parking are set out on the Councils web site at the following location:**

**[http://cms.walsall.gov.uk/index/transport\\_and\\_streets/motor\\_vehicles\\_roads\\_and\\_parking/parking\\_services/car\\_park\\_charges\\_and\\_season\\_tickets.htm](http://cms.walsall.gov.uk/index/transport_and_streets/motor_vehicles_roads_and_parking/parking_services/car_park_charges_and_season_tickets.htm)**

Other conditions may be developed in-line with the Car Parking Strategy in response to meeting the parking requirements of individual proposals.