

## Neighbourhood Plan: Approach to parking policy - 2017

1. The issue of parking can seem to be contentious because of the absence of available flat sites in Hebden Bridge (and to a lesser extent in Mytholmroyd), and their role as visitor destinations which can attract a large amount of travel trips. As of summer 2017 there are a number of projects or proposals which are considering increases or changes to parking capacity, which need however to be developed within the framework of the Neighbourhood Plan, otherwise they could proceed in isolation from it and possibly undermine it. It suggested that therefore the NP needs to start to indicate an overall approach to parking policy and new capacity, in order to positively influence such individual projects, starting with an initial discussion as to what that approach might be.

This discussion note focuses on parking issues in Hebden Bridge; those relating to Mytholmroyd can be established when the masterplanning consultancy being provided by AECOM is available, whilst those in upland parishes will need to be separately identified.

### Existing policy frameworks

2. At present the Neighbourhood Plan's own Draft Policies document states this under 'Traffic and Parking': "In all instances, future development of key sites should seek to demonstrate how we will actively discourage, and thereby decrease, the need to rely road-based transport". Other policies in the transport section tend to reinforce this approach.

3. The draft Local Plan now out for consultation adopts a similar position: "Car parking strategies can have a significant impact upon assisting in a modal shift away from the car. The availability of car parking spaces can be a major influence on travel choices. The quantity and location of parking provision, time restrictions and pricing can be used to influence the habits of travellers, ensure that parking does not occupy an excessive amount of scarce land and support the economic vitality of town and local centres." 13.18 and Policy IM4 Sustainable Travel "Decision makers will aim to reduce travel demand, traffic growth and congestion through the promotion of sustainable development and travel modes. This will be achieved by a range of mechanisms that discourage inappropriate car use and encourage the use of other forms of transport with lower environmental impacts."

4. The transport assessment prepared for the Local Plan states this: "Hebden Bridge and Mytholmroyd can accommodate a low level of housing growth, significantly below Brighouse and Halifax and also below Todmorden and Sowerby Bridge. This is because there are few available sites in Hebden Bridge in sustainable locations within walking distance of bus or rail services. Development in these locations would be dependent on car travel. With the exception of improvements to the Calder Valley line, there are insufficient planned interventions in transport infrastructure in this area to support a higher level of housing growth. Preferred Strategy paragraph 3.6.1

5. The Cumulative impact transport assessment states this (although no data for the extent of present or future traffic congestion has yet been made available): "Hebden Bridge and the wider Upper Valley experiences a modest increase in traffic on the A646 as very little development is proposed for this area of Calderdale. ... In reality there will be smaller peaks of congestion which are less than an hour in the centres of Todmorden, Hebden Bridge and Mytholmroyd. These are expected to be addressed through the improvements planned for the A646 as part of the WY+TF corridor improvement programme." A WYCA A646 Corridor Improvement study has been commissioned with a first output due at the end of 2017.

6. A supporting document, the Calderdale Transport Strategy 2016, states: "Our towns should continue to cater for cars, but we should actively encourage people to make different travel choices by rationing highway and parking space, while the alternatives become more attractive." and "In urban areas, planners and developers are increasingly recognising that space once devoted to moving and parked cars can be put to more productive use as public realm, green space, housing or retail. ... While large cities are taking the lead in controlling parking and car use, smaller cities and towns are learning that effective management of car use increases competitiveness by releasing space for new development and sustainable modes of transport."

Overall the strategy seeks to “develop parking policies for town centres that ensure land is used efficiently and promote sustainable travel, while maintaining appropriate levels of car access.”

7. In terms of the air quality framework Hebden Bridge is one of the seven air quality management areas (AQMAs) in Calderdale, designated because air pollution exceeds the legal limit. At the moment, no proposals have been made in the various strategy frameworks to ameliorate these exceedances.

8. Overall it's clear that all these policy frameworks are not supporting measures which could encourage additional road traffic or substantial new parking provision in the Hebden Royd or Upper Calder Valley areas, with the exception of parking at rail stations so as to facilitate modal shift.

### **2017 proposals for possible additional capacity**

9. At present a number of proposals are being proposed or developed which cumulatively would result in a considerable increase in the number of parking spaces in Hebden Bridge and Mytholmroyd. In reviewing them, regard needs to be had not just to the land allocation of the car park site itself, but also for the additional traffic that will be catered for (and to that extent, therefore generated by) the increased parking provision, and also how and by what route it will access the car park site. There are further issues about the impact on heritage, and how both the capital and revenue costs of such schemes would be found. The existing parking capacity of Hebden Bridge is around 460 spaces (on/off street); the equivalent number for Mytholmroyd is not known.

a) Extension of the **Hebden Bridge station surface car park** - by 46 spaces (to total 127). The aspiration for this long-standing project is that the management regime of the entire car park should be changed so that at the weekend/bank holidays its spare capacity can also act as an overflow long stay car park for the town. The detailed plans for this proposal have just been received but as yet it's not known whether this essential change to the management regime has been accepted, but the scheme has been approved for inclusion in capital programmes.

b) Extension of **parking provision at Mytholmroyd station** - by 206 spaces. Detailed plans for this proposal have also just been seen and it seems likely that car park of this scale could generate additional traffic on New Road. Clarifications have been sought from WYCA.

c) the possibility of a new car park, either surface level or multi-storey on the site of the former **Vale Centre Stubbing Holme road**. At surface level this could provide 50-70 additional spaces, and notionally double that in a multi-storey configuration (100-120+). Access would need to be via the Stubbing Holme Road junction with the A646 and across the existing single track river bridge, unless this is replaced. It's unclear how a multi-storey development + new bridge could be funded. The Town Board at its meeting on 1st August approved funding for a scoping study for a multi-storey car park on this site.

d) Adjacent to this site, the existing 33 space car park **off Stubbing Holme Road** (not available at present for short-stay use because it is uncharged) could also be converted into a charged public car park, with access also by the same junction. About 12 of these spaces are at present leased for private use.

e) The Hebden Bridge and Mytholmroyd Town Board Parking working group is also reviewing the possibility of scoping a **multi-storey car park at Hebden station**, which could notionally add a further 75-100 spaces (to total 200+). There is no capital or revenue funding available for such a project.

f) Development proposals encouraged by the **Market Place Key Site** policy statement already approved by the NP committee could result in a reduction in the number of parking spaces at present available (69 at present in two separate car parks). The policy statement supports 'The provision of the existing number of parking spaces, and such additional capacity to the extent that this does not generate significant road traffic'. It requires that 'Proposals for new development should demonstrate that they will not generate significant road traffic in the area.'

10. One measure already approved – the decision by Calderdale Council to increase charges for both on- and off-street parking – should over coming months also act at the margin to increase

capacity by a incremental rebalancing of supply and demand.

11. In reviewing all these proposals the NP committee should also understand that at the moment there is no survey which actually quantifies the extent of parking 'need' in either Hebden Bridge or Mytholmroyd, or (since 'need' is an uncertain concept in this connection) the extent to which parking demand exceeds supply. Fortunately analysis of this should be available in/after December 2017 from a forthcoming Hebden Bridge parking study about to be commissioned by Calderdale Council. However, it is generally understood that, certainly because of Hebden Bridge's status as a visitor destination, increased demand is experienced at peak times (e.g. summer weekend events, weekdays between 11-2pm), but not outside these periods. This implies that substantial additional physical provision would be unused outside peak times, therefore representing an inefficient land allocation, and meaning that sites allocated for additional parking will be unavailable for other uses e.g. housing.

12. There is also available an alternative tool kit to provide additional parking 'opportunities' (rather than just more physical spaces: a critical distinction) by integrating multiple components of a parking management regime: available physical spaces + level of parking charge + adjusted length of stay + distribution of short/long stay needs to appropriate locations + better signing and information + diversion of journeys to more sustainable modes, and so on. This allows for a flexible and dynamic (re)balancing of supply and demand, and was the approach followed by the Hebden Bridge Traffic Review a decade ago.

### **Filtering of possible large parking sites**

13. At the committee's first consideration of this note in August councillors asked about the possible use for parking of a number of large sites, so this assessment is now provided:

**Walkleys site:** This is in Greenbelt (where parking is however a compatible use because 'openness' is not considered to be effected) and was previously used to park up to 200 vehicles when the mill was used irregularly for retailing (planning permission was eventually denied). The problem then and now is poor access: across the single-track Carr Lane bridge, and a junction with reduced sightlines to the A646 (these were some of the principal reasons for the planning refusal). The site is now used very occasionally as an overflow car park for large events, principally the vintage car show in August. But this requires substantial levels of staffing (unpaid volunteers) to operate in order to overcome the absence of signing and poor access difficulties. Drivers/passengers do seem willing to walk the distance between the car park and Calder Holmes, but this is probably because of the substantial attraction of a large event; and park & ride is not provided. The land is in private ownership; and its future use might better be resolved within proposals for the immediate Walkleys area. **Conclusion: not suitable on grounds of access.**

**Mayroyd:** This is also Greenbelt, but the substantial area is both floodplain and also has ground stability problems (because it was a former waste tip). More importantly access for any volume of cars is not possible because Mayroyd Lane is single-track and unadopted (effectively it's already at capacity); and there would also be problems created by increased loadings on the Station Road junction. **Conclusion: not suitable on grounds of access**

**Calder Holmes:** This is mentioned only because the consultant for the Hebden Bridge Traffic Review did actually propose (around 2005) that the park should be laid out so as to have a dual use as a car park. This idea was not accepted by the Traffic Review steering group.

**Stubbing Holme** (former Vale Centre) site: A parking use, either surface or multi-storey, has been suggested in other discussions during 2017, although for the next two years the site will act as the Environment Agency's flood alleviation works compound. In their initial assessment Calderdale officers have however not suggested its use as a public charged site but instead as a 'a free/long stay/residents car park' with 50-70 spaces, in order to free up the current Stubbing Holme Road car park so as to provide additional public provision at that location.

However the separate NP assessment in the draft policy statement for the Stubbing Holme 'Area of Interest' (SHA - also considered at this committee in August/September) concludes that the considerable access constraints at the sole entry point to the area (junction with A646/narrow river bridge/90° turn) precludes new preferred uses in the eastern part of SHA which require substantial vehicle access if the future regeneration of or investment in the SHA as a whole is not

to be choked off. Instead the proposed preferred use for the Vale Centre site is for housing/mixed use, but with low access and parking requirements. The policy statement also supports increased public parking capacity being newly provided at this end of Market Street by the redesignation of the existing Stubbing Holme car park, well located adjacent to the A646, as chargeable for short stay use. SHA residents parking on the other hand could be provided elsewhere. **Conclusion: not suitable on grounds of access; preferred use instead may be housing/mixed-use with low access requirements.**

**Brown's site, Mytholm:** This is an important 'gateway' site which has been lying vacant for a number of decades. The draft Calderdale Local Plan site assessment (LP0919) states: "This is a relatively flat greenfield site within the Urban Area. However 89% of the site lies within Flood Risk Zone 3b. The site is therefore filtered and will not be taken forward as a potential site allocation." Access is good, which permitted planning approval being granted in December 2013 for a medium-sized supermarket + hotel, with substantial associated parking. **Conclusion: is suitable on access grounds but is flood zone 3b and has planning permissions for other uses.**

14. Park-and-Ride is sometimes referred to in connection with possible use of these large sites, but - in addition to the lack of site availability - this service also encounters difficulties of an absence of funding and anticipated low use. P&R can work in [larger towns](#) (such as York and Cambridge) but not in smaller settlements.

### **Options for Neighbourhood Planning Committee discussion**

15. The issue about increased parking capacity should not, it is suggested, be considered in isolation. Additional road traffic seeking to access Hebden Bridge will impact adversely on air quality, which already exceeds legal limits. In Mytholmroyd additional traffic on New Road could impact on a strategic approach to regenerate a new heart for the town. More traffic seeking to access car parks could contradict other aspects of the NP that seek to encourage more pedestrian friendly or accessible spaces. More traffic congestion on the A646 could impact on the economies of both towns in multiple ways, and could discourage increased use for more sustainable public and active transport. Additionally more surface parking would take up more of the limited number flat valley-bottom sites that might otherwise be used for e.g housing.

16. In relation, therefore, to developing proposals for parking provision, the alternative options for the committee to consider might be identified as follows:

**Option 1:** To encourage the provision of additional parking spaces in order to cater for increased demand, particularly from visitors travelling to the area by road, and in order to generate additional footfall and economic benefits. **Or**

**Option 2:** Travel demand (including the provision of parking) will be considered within an overall context intended to discourage road traffic growth and congestion and promote more sustainable travel modes; whilst at the same time seeking to maintain broadly the existing parking provision and the opportunities this provides for access to the facilities of Hebden Bridge and Mytholmroyd town centres by residents and the hilltop parishes. **And**

**Option 3:** The demand for parking should be met by a sequential process that first seeks to achieve the most efficient use of the existing spaces (by a combination of management measures), and only secondly by the provision of additional spaces, in managed increments and only where these are consistent with other strategic frameworks and can be implemented without adverse environmental, social or heritage impacts. This will require a dynamic process which also quantifies changes in the use of the various transport modes and the extent of parking supply and demand.

17. Two things should be emphasised about the choice between these options:

- The difference between additional parking *spaces* and additional parking *opportunities* (see paragraph 12 for the definition of the latter). Option 1 would attempt to provide more parking capacity by increasing the supply of new physical spaces; whereas options 2-3 looks to provide more capacity by a combination of some increase in new spaces plus increased efficient use of the *existing* spaces - thus providing more parking 'opportunities'. The provision of additional parking 'opportunities' is generally recognised as the preferred technical approach to be pursued

- because it is more flexible and dynamic, and can increase parking capacity much more quickly/cheaply - particularly in locations where available/viable new sites are hard to find.

- But both option choices would still result in increases in the number of physical spaces, but at different scales. Option 1 would need to look for sites where large numbers of new spaces could be provided, but as has been examined above (paragraph 13) these are almost entirely absent, unsurprisingly given the basic topography of Hebden Bridge. Option 2-3 still involves the additional provision of 46 new spaces in the station car park (which could be available to all longstay users at weekends), 33 shortstay public spaces in the existing Stubbing Holme Road car park (at present blocked by its free use); and maybe 20 more public spaces that can be found in the Central Street area if charges are introduced there - so around 100 new spaces/opportunities in total (compared to the existing parking stock of around 460). There will be other such small scale incremental opportunities to be sought around the town.

### **Next Steps**

18. It seems increasingly likely that the choices between 'large increases in parking' versus 'balanced improvements to connectivity', and 'parking versus housing?', are likely to be key areas of discussion and debate within the eventual public consultation on the draft neighbourhood plan, and it is therefore suggested that this issue and these options should be specifically highlighted so that consultees may make their own informed response to the choices.

19. Accordingly the committee is requested to note this report as providing the basis for the eventual public consultation. This will also facilitate the development of other aspects of the draft Neighbourhood Plan - including the possible allocation of new brownfield housing sites - where choices increasingly need to be prioritised over the next 1-2 months.

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