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A. Our Proposals

We recognise that MDC must balance increasing its own income with its obligations as the local authority for the health of the Mendip towns. We wish to help MDC do do that.

We apologise for the length of this submission – we’ve said much of this before but where we think it is valid we will continue to say it.

1. Any review or strategy should be prepared jointly with SCC and with full consultation and in accordance with good practice.

MDC have a practical monopoly of off-street parking. SCC control on-street parking. These interact, especially when there are problems of capacity, as there are in Frome. We have repeatedly directed MDC to sources for good practice which are not followed in this review. Nothing should be done until that is complete.

2. We oppose increasing car parking charges until we have seen evidence that MDC is balancing its obligation between MDC’s short term economic interests and the longer term viability of towns.

MDC should publish information on usage and finances (e.g., as published by Sedgemoor DC¹). In contrast to all previous reviews the consultation says nothing about revenue or costs, how costs have been or could be reduced or how the profit is to be applied. These are required before they can be balanced with the negative effect of price increases.

3. No increases should be introduced until MDC has implemented the recommendation made by RTA in 2009.

MDC should expect to be able to increase income from better signage and better management without increasing charges. It is pointless designating car parks as Short Stay or Long Stay if visitors cannot find them, because the signage is so poor, or designating an HGV car park which is signed “unsuitable for HGVs”.

4. We oppose inflation busting automatic annual increases in car parking charges

Increases above inflation are unreasonable. Automatic increases are unjustified. Setting increases for 4 years abrogates MDC’s responsibility to

¹ See link at <https://www.sedgemoor.gov.uk/article/1304/Car-Park-Season-Tickets>

consider the effects of increases, or attempt to cut costs. It unreasonably prioritises MDC revenue over negative impacts during that period.

5. Car parking charges for Sundays should only be introduced after the impact of that has been assessed, and events organisers consulted.

Events are positive for the health and vitality of the town centre. MDC should not charge for these on a "full revenue" basis as that would be having its cake and eating it. This risks reducing MDCs net revenue and adversely affecting the town and traders,

6. MDC should only increase season ticket prices after full consultation. There must be a clear justification for a change in MDC policy for automatic inflation busting increases.

This should include all season tickets holders, and an assessment of the impact on low income workers and on-street parking.

7. We oppose the delegated authority being granted to for the development of the Cattle Market and North Parade.

Car parking capacity in Frome is already at a tipping point. Such decisions should only be made after wide consultation. The planning process is not adequate for this. This should only follow a proper strategic review of car parking capacity.

8. We are concerned that the strategy leaves open further increases but does not propose any further consultation, for e.g., disabled users and evening parking after 6pm.

MDC should rule these out at least for a minimum two years, and should commit to a proper review and consultation before changing these policies

B. Comments on the Draft Strategy

1. Introduction - Principles

Since 2013 the Chamber has asked for:-

- a) The implementation of the recommendations for signage in the RTA Report and an update of those

We are disappointed that MDC have been willing to pay outside consultants for advice on maximising their income from car parks, but have not been willing to spend money to implement the advice from RTA (which might reasonably be expected to increase their income)

- b) For a review of parking following good practice ²

The RTA Report is now ten years old. The review is only of off street parking. There needs to be a co-ordinated review of car parking in Frome including the relationship between off street and on-street parking. MDC's reviews do not follow good practice, to which we have referred MDC. They are too concentrated on revenue, on too few ways to increase revenue and do not adequately consider the wider impacts of the changes proposed.

- c) To be consulted on both

We have attempted to engage constructively recognising MDC's financial aims, not simply objecting but putting forward alternatives and drawing MDC's attention to good practice, effective alternatives and simple action. It is disappointing to have to make the same basic corrections every time there is a review.

- d) Data

This review gives no figures for income or expenditure, or net profit. In 2013 MDC's surplus (profit) from car parks was £1.161m (which put it 125th out of local authorities for income, when it was 208th for population). £359k of this was from Frome. The argument for increasing charges was increased costs

In the past MDC has made available income figures for individual car parks and usage during the day. MDC has to publish gross income, and expenditure overall, and has given a detailed breakdown of cost attributed to car parks in each town³. MDC has this information, it must/should have considered it. MDC should publish it to enable consultees to make informed responses, particularly on the balance of interests between exploiting car parks for revenue and using them to support towns.

² e.g., Re-Think! Parking on the High Street; Guidance on Parking Provision in Town and City Centres, ATCM, BPA, PDRI and Springboard 2013

³ FOI/2013/313

2. District Summary and Parking Policy

MDC has a virtual monopoly on off street car parking in Frome as it controls 84% of the car park spaces.

Review

In 2008 MDC said in 'A Portrait of Frome'

Car parking in the town centre is available in three principal locations (Old Cattle Market, Saxonvale and Cork Street) although this is perceived to be inadequate by traders and shoppers alike who cite this as a reason why the edge of town superstores are at an advantage in attracting trade. Also, parking charges are seen as a threat locally, particularly given the hilly nature of the town which lends itself less readily to cycling and walking. Furthermore, charges in nearby Trowbridge are 50% less than those in Frome.

The RTA Associates Report was based on research conducted in 2008. The conclusions in the 2009 Strategy should be expressed in the past tense, as they are a decade old.

There have been substantial changes in Frome since then and substantial increase in demand.

RTA was prepared at the height of the retail boom and before the "credit crunch" and substantial pressures on the high street/town centres from new OOT stores and online retail. In 2008 online sales were <3% of retail sales.

MDC has not taken into account that since 2008 Frome has attracted more visitors, who have different needs, as identified by RTA. See Appendix 1 Extracts from RTA Report.

MDC has not implemented the recommendations by RTA, despite requests and reminders to do so (see below and Appendix 2). Therefore MDC has not maximised the value of the car parks as assets, either to generate income or to support MDC policies.

NPPF & planning decisions

NPPF is not relevant except in relation to Saxonvale. This is about development, not car parking strategy. NPPF and the SCC Parking Strategy are guidance which MDC as the planning authority does not necessarily follow (e.g. for the development of HM Prison Shepton Mallet a large development in the town centre was consented without a compliant number of parking spaces) or enforce (e.g., Condition 10 of consent 2012/2411 for the SAF in Frome requiring approval of a Park & Stride scheme before the school opened, which has still not been approved).

The report fails to take into account:-

- a) We haven't seen the impact of all the consented housing yet. Once the Butler Tanner & Dennis site, Phase 2 and 3 of Edmund Park, the T.H. White site, the Vallis Road site etc. are all built out there will be a significant additional pressure on the town. These have assumed that new residents will use the town centre facilities and realistically they will use cars.
- b) That the increase in demand for car parking in Frome is likely to come not only from the large number of new dwellings in the draft Local Plan Part 2, (plus possibly Selwood Garden Village) but also the increasing popularity of the town as a visitor destination. That is likely to continue to increase demand more quickly than building new houses, and requires different provision.
- c) That the development of Saxonvale as a seamless extension of the town centre requires the use/loss of the Merchants Barton car park. Therefore any development at Saxonvale must replace 71 car parking spaces there, plus having at least accommodation for all of the new users on that site even to maintain the current status quo. The planning brief envisages 296 new spaces on Saxonvale for the use of the development.
- d) Who users are, their needs and whether they have alternatives modes of transport, or whether these can be improved.

Cooperation

There is no evidence of how:-

- SCC has or will work with MDC to prioritise the use of town centre car parks for short stay shopping for shoppers.
- SCC and MDC co-ordinate their policies for on-street and off street parking?

Is not a joint review the best way to do that?

3. Existing car parking provision

a) Usage Statistics

Car parking capacity in Frome is at or near full capacity for both on and off street provision. Although there are times when it is not at capacity there are increasingly times (e.g., Saturdays) when there is not enough capacity.

If the figures in the table on p.33 are based on tickets sold they underestimate usage because Sunday is not charged.

b) Tariff time boundaries

The major tariff boundary should be changed to 3 hours, and “short stay” limits increased to 3 hours.

ATCM and BPA both recommend 3 hours as a better period for generating footfall and spend per visit, and say that as between 2 and 3 hours there is only a marginal loss of revenue. The Marks & Spencer’s car park, the only other car park in Frome, allows 3 hours as the maximum stay, not 2 hours which is applied to MDC short stay car parks. This has been increased from 1.5 hours in 2013.

This argument for a change in tariff time boundaries was accepted when requested by the owners of Clarks Village⁴. Why not for Frome? If it because there are problems of capacity what will MDC do to address that?

c) Loss of 30 minutes free parking

When the Boyle Cross planning application was being considered one of MDC’s objections was that free short term parking was vital for the health of the town centre, and that the development should not start until alternative provision was found. The planning inspector did not order that but if MDC was correct MDC

⁴ Agenda Item 9 Cabinet 13 January 2014 recommended extending tariff periods on the grounds that:-

Due to the continuing development of the catering offer and other village improvements, Realm wish to provide customers the option of a slightly longer stay without committing to an all day option. With this in mind, they are proposing to remove the up to 4 hour tariff and replace with a 5 hour stay for £3.

The rationale for changing this tariff band is that Clarks Village customers are cutting short their visit. This has potentially detrimental impacts to Clarks Village and indeed the whole of Street, as a reasonable period of stay encourages customers to shop in both the Village and High Street. Realm is investing heavily in improving the Village shopping experience to encourage more visitors and enhanced dwell time and spends. They feel that the current 4 hour tariff will undermine this investment as customers do not generally pay for more parking in order to continue shopping once they have returned to their cars.

Part of the review aims at simplifying tariffs, Realm argue that a single tariff of £5 for over 5 hours will represent very good value for money and encourage visitors to Street to stay longer to shop within the whole town and use local facilities.

should be trying to find that alternative provision (with FTC). There were suggestions that MDC would replace this when MDC (finally) knocked down the public toilets which it closed about 10 years ago. As the sites are of little use for any other purpose why has that not happened?

4. On-street parking

We agree that in Frome the majority of the roads surrounding the Council's car parks tended to be filled all day with parked cars.

Frome is undersupplied with on-street limited waiting compared with other Mendip towns:-

Number of on-street parking spaces across Somerset County Council⁵		
	Limited Waiting (Free) e.g. 1 hour maximum	Population
Frome	127	26,200
Glastonbury	94	8,932
Shepton Mallet	111	10,369
Street	69	11,805
Wells	205	10,536

There is already tension between people working and visiting the town and residents over on-street parking. There is pressure on local SCC Councillors to request additional double yellow lines. If drivers are incentivised away from off street parking they will use on-street parking, which will increase this problem. The response to that will be to restrict off street parking or for the parking problem to spread further through the town.

The problems for residents in Frome are demonstrated by the waiting lists for resident's season tickets:-

- a) Wine Street (11 spaces) 63 people waiting,
- b) South Parade (24 spaces) 46 people waiting,
- c) Rook Lane, (8 spaces) 9 people waiting.

There is already pressure on on-street parking on the fringes of the town centre, and around schools, particularly the SAF which has still not delivered a travel plan, and continues to be operating in breach of its planning consent. (NB in the recent Safe Streets project the SAF came bottom of the participating schools for sustainable transport to school, both before and after the project).

This pressure is likely to increase substantially if the current proposal to allow fines for all parking on pavements, which if implemented will be an easy source of revenue

⁵ SCC Annual parking report 2015/16

for SCC. There are many streets in the historic centre of Frome not designed for cars and houses with no dedicated off street parking. In many of these streets parking on the pavements is sensible; the pavements are narrow, or made of setts, and it is safe to walk in the road because traffic flows are very low. In some cases there is no space to park in the road or doing so would cause an obstruction. There are also many pavements in the modern estates where there is a tidal flow which are pointless as pavements to which the same would apply. I would estimate Frome will need >100 extra parking spaces for residents. The best solution would be for SCC to “undesignate” these streets, if that will be permitted.

Enforcement

We do not agree that on-street parking enforcement by CEOs is effective.

We think MDC would find it hard to find a resident of Frome who thinks it is.

If there was a joint review MDC would find that SCC Councillors get regular complaints about this. The Chamber has attended a meeting convened by an SCC councillor in response to the concerns of residents.

What is the net outturn from the NSL contract for MDC? Is there any surplus? What is that spent on?

HGV parking

The overnight parking for HGVs in the Cattle Market car park is anomalous, which is why the income is so low. There a sign up at the entrance which says “not suitable for HGVs”! There is also a weight limit for the centre of Frome so there should not be any HGVs. This is not required.

Coaches

In Wells and Glastonbury some of the pressure on parking is released by coach parties and dedicated delivery options for coach parties.

Since MDC closed the car park at Cork Street/Waterloo, Frome no longer meets the criteria required for coach tours for access to public toilets and there is no alternative site that does. Therefore this flexibility has been lost.

Taxis

In practice the number of bays for taxis is substantially more than 7, as they park unofficially on Waterloo. That is sensible use of an anomalous bit of road.

The car park environment signage

MDC still have not implemented the recommendations of the Car Parking Strategy Report prepared by RTA Associates in 2009. Frome Chamber have been asking for improvements to signage since 2033. The Chamber, MDC and FTC agreed changes to signage in 2015, which have still not been implemented.

Signage is important for two reasons:-

- a) Poor signage contributes to a negative visitor experience⁶.
- b) Good signage would enable MDC to manage their resources as any competent private enterprise would.

Comments on signage issues

The analysis and the proposed changes are inadequate.

The Chamber has pointed out to MDC for years that signage directs visitors to car parks that are already overused and that directional signage to the Cattle Market and North Parade is poor. We are very disappointed that despite a programme including these having been agreed by an officer of MDC in February 2015 this has not been implemented and has been ignored in this review.⁷

We refer to Appendix 2 including the list which was sent to MDC in 2013 identifying improvement recommended by RTA in 2009 which had not been carried out (and about every 6 months since) and raised in meetings with Portfolio Holders and Council Officers since then.⁸

We also note that the action approved by Cabinet on 7th November 2011 *“To introduce signage in car parks indicating where cheaper parking is available for the same time limit”* has not been implemented.

The review proposes no deadline or target date for the work to be done. We cannot take it seriously as a statement of intent.

Cork Street is over used, the Cattle Market is under used. With good signage, that could be balanced and MDC could increase its income from the Cattle Market car park without increasing the charges. MDC have failed to do that despite numerous meetings and reminders and despite an officer having agreed action⁹. If MDC have to pay for this they should expect to recover any such expenditure easily from increased income.

There are signs which direct traffic from Warminster and the A303 to the Vicarage Street, Merchants Barton and M&S car parks all of which are at or over capacity, but none which direct that traffic to the town centre or town centre car parks.

⁶ See Re-Think fn 2

⁷ Appendix 2 Item 4.

⁸ Appendix 2 Items 1 - 3

⁹ There are signs at the car park, and at the end of Cork Street. They are not official SCC or MDC signs. They were put up by an officer of MDC, but I can't tell you how. I wouldn't want to get that officer into trouble for being helpful! Therefore MDC should not be given credit for them.

Car Park	Signage issues
South Parade	This car park should not be signposted. Access to this car park is poor. Availability is unpredictable and some visitors fail to notice the unusual public/residential cross over. It is likely to be used by people living in Frome who know about it and local residents. It is not sensible to direct visitors to it.
Vicarage Street	This car park is limited to two hours. It is signposted from the Warminster direction but there is no signage to Merchants Barton or M&S for people wanting to stay more than two hours (as e.g., at Union Street in Wells) despite requests and being told this would be done. There should not be signage from the Bath Street direction. Bath Street is the street out of the town centre, and people going up Bath Street will have passed the Cattle Market and North Parade and should have found those.
Cork Street	The directional signage should be removed. There is directional signage on the Westway centre which is more than sufficient. This car park is well over capacity. As the Chamber has pointed out, signage from Cork Street to the Cattle Market is very poor. People leaving Cork Street when it is full and going down Cork Street to the junction at the Market Place are still directed to go up Bath Street, not to turn left to the Cattle Market.
Cattle Market	As we have pointed out for many years the signage is confusing, out of date and difficult to see in both directions. The staff at the Information Centre also ask that the postcode for the Cattle Market is added to the car park signs. People who break down there and call breakdown services find that they have an extra wait as the breakdown services go to Standerwick, which is the cattle market (and is much better signposted)
North Parade	As this car park is the least well used of the main town centre car parks, better signage should result in greater usage.

Access

Access to and egress from the Cattle Market is restricted, particularly for HGVs and for wide trailers (which may be why it has a sign saying “unsuitable for HGVs”).

5. Car parking under utilisation

We have previously referred MDC to the guidance from ATCM/ACPA is that optimum usage is 90% of the number of spaces. Usage of car parks in Frome is 86% for MDC car parks and 87% overall.

There are not 95 “surplus” spaces in Frome. Where there are spaces they will not have a material effect on parking pressure except the return of full capacity at North Parade.

Frome and Wells are already at or over optimum capacity. Planning needs to take place now to deal with that now.

Wells has alternative ways to manage capacity, e.g., coaches, and the use of the flat access to the edge of town supermarket car parks which promised capacity and “linked trips” (as at Townsend Retail Park in Shepton).

Frome has fewer options. For car parking capacity Saxonvale is a threat rather than an opportunity.

Frome faces unique challenges for parking, because of the number of ancient streets and houses which do not have compliant parking provision and for which such provision cannot be made. Frome also faces competition from nearby towns which have better parking provision (e.g., Trowbridge). See Appendix 4

There is already a conflict between the need to increase footfall by lengthening the periods for short stay car parking, and the requirement to provide space for local visitors, and people working and living in the town centre.

There should be no erosion in capacity unless the loss of car parking spaces can be proven not to damage the health and vitality of the town centre, e.g., because they can be replaced.

6. Car park tariff review.

The elephant in the room

How much money does MDC presently make from off-street parking?

How much more money do MDC project it will make from these proposals?

We commend to MDC the Sedgemoor DC Annual Report on Parking Services 2016/17 which includes income, expenditure, and analysis of income per ticket type, per car park and changes since the previous year.¹⁰

On the last figures available MDC's net profit (after allowing very generous provision for central costs of £393k) was £1.273m.¹¹

The strategy does not mention any measures to reduce these costs.

MDC has not provided with this Strategy any data on income and running costs of car parks, or investment plans, which have been provided in various forms and used to justify increases in 2012 and 2014.

MDC is presently in default of its obligations under the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 para 46 to publish:

- a breakdown of income and expenditure on the authority's parking account.
The breakdown of income must include details of revenue collected from on street parking, off-street parking and Penalty Charge Notices, and
- a breakdown of how the authority has spent a surplus on its parking account

MDC has not provided data on the times when tickets are purchased which MDC has and has provided in the past. These would demonstrate whether capacity issues could be addressed and revenue increased by varying tariffs for different times of day, which is good practice. Tariffs could be reduced when car parks are under-used, encouraging people to switch from times when they are (over) full, and increasing income overall.

If Sunday charging is introduced in Frome that is an extra 62 days a year (52 Sundays plus 10 Bank Holidays). Based on MDC's 2013 figures MDC's average net income per day from Frome car parks was c.£1,560, so on a straight line basis this generates an extra c.£96,550 a year with minimal extra costs

¹⁰ See link at <https://www.sedgemoor.gov.uk/article/1304/Car-Park-Season-Tickets>

¹¹ FOI/2013/313

The review is too limited

The pricing review should also take into account:-

- (a) the impact on users
- (b) The impact on on-street parking.
- (c) the possible flexibility for users
- (d) the other ways to increase revenue from the car parks.

If income is to be increased some of the increased revenue must be spent on improving the alternatives. It should encourage the use of public transport, walking, cycling and other more sustainable methods. However, it can only do that where these are actually available as alternatives.

The review must also take into account the different character of the towns. In Wells, much of the demand is day visitors, who are less price sensitive, and where the attractions are unique, they have no direct competition and infrastructure is available for alternatives (i.e., coaches and buses).

Frome Car Parks

Badcox

This has the highest charges in Mendip. It is the only under-used car park in Frome. It serves a secondary shopping and eating area. Should not the charges be reduced there to encourage greater use and spread demand?

Cork Street. Cattle Market & Merchant's Barton

Cork Street is in part a premium car park because signage to the Cattle Market is so poor.

Even if Cork Street is a premium car park and justifies an above CPI increase there is no logic to increasing the Cattle Market price to meet Cork Street's price, and then increasing the Merchants Barton price to match the Cattle Market price.

South Parade

This is *sui generis* – it is poorly signposted, not known to most visitors and the park restrictions are poorly understood as between residents and non-residents. Detailed figures provided previously indicated MDC were making a loss on this car park – there is no mention of this or whether that has changed.

Season Tickets

MDC propose a 60% increase season tickets to £708 per year for the Cattle Market and Merchants Barton and a 67% increase to £372 per year for North Parade, South Parade and Rook Lane and Wine Street. Phasing over 3 years is an increase of 20% a year, or over 4 years an increase of 15% a year.

Many season ticket holders are shop workers who are on a low wages, and although they may get an increase in the NMW they will be having 2% taken out for pensions and the increase will result in a significant reduction in their incomes.

If MDC want to encourage the use of North Parade the differential between season tickets there and in the Cattle Market should be reduced, not increased.

Comparisons with neighbouring councils.

This is not a fair or true comparison.

Wiltshire Council is presently consulting an extensive public consultation on car parking charges, which includes charges in comparator towns, not comparator local authority car parks. From their figures the short stay car parking charges in Frome are higher than Andover, Bournemouth, Cirencester, and Swindon. In their chart only Bath and Southampton charge more.¹²

Local authorities do not operate in an open market but charge more than other operators. In Trowbridge Network Rail recently had to increase the charges at Trowbridge station because Wiltshire Council increased prices; rail users were unable to park because drivers had transferred from the Wiltshire Council car park.

As previously pointed out the main competitors to Frome for shoppers are Trowbridge or Radstock/Midsomer Norton, which are not included in the list. Both have substantial free parking.

- In Radstock/Midsomer Norton all local authority (B&NES) car parks (c.267 spaces) are free. Parking at Radco is free for 3 hours
- Trowbridge has 466 completely free unlimited car parking spaces in the town centre (i.e., 60% of the total charged for space in Frome town centre). Charges in the Shires with a capacity of >1,000 cars are about one third of charges in Frome.

Economists have finally realised that consumers are not “logical operators”. Many people from Frome already go to Trowbridge because the parking is cheaper – if it increased more will go. See the people’s comments in Appendix 4

¹² http://consult.wiltshire.gov.uk/portal/parking_and_transport/car_parking_charges_consultation

Season Tickets

In the past MDC has noted the level of discount and maintained it, as it supports the health & vitality of towns.

The comparators for season tickets are not genuine comparators and the figures are not accurate. They are either for locations which are not economically equivalent, fail to take into account substantially greater value for money offered, or are simply wrong.

When stripped down to real comparators the proposed discount is lower and the charges higher than comparables.

Any increase of 60% is unsustainable and unreasonable (£442 to £708) whether phased or not. If people see these as not being affordable or value for money they will park on the streets; see Appendix 4.

If MDC wishes to increase the use of the peripheral North Parade car park an increase in the season ticket price of 68% is exactly the wrong way to go about it. The differential increase between the Cattle Market and North Parade should be in favour of North Parade, not against it.

Business Rates

MDC has an opportunity to increase income by through the retention of Business Rates which is due to be implemented during this plan.

There is no assessment of the impact of that, or the opportunities.

There is no explanation of the impact on MDC's finances of its own payment to Business Rates on its own car parks. Will all that be a net return to MDC?

7. Regeneration and Development

What does this sentence mean in English?

“The context of car parking capacity within Frome will be fully embraced before any decisions relating to the release of the car parks is determined”

The town centre car parks in Frome are as a whole well utilised. There is high demand for car parking capacity. There is no overall surplus capacity within the town centre.

The release of land for development would not be a pragmatic way forward without alternative provision.

The Cattle Market should not be considered for redevelopment as it is already near optimum capacity and if better signage were put in place that usage would increase (unless it can be developed without any loss of spaces).

MDC has been awarded £112,000 from the Land Release Fund for North Parade on 16th February 2018 to “unlock” land for housing developments by private builders by March 2020¹³:-

- a) If MDC does not intend to use this money why did it bid for it?
- b) What consultations took place before the bid was made?
- c) What does MDC propose to do with the money awarded?
- d) How will that decision be made?

Given the pressure on parking in Frome the Chamber would like an absolute assurance from MDC that it will:-

- a) Not apply the funds awarded from the Land Release Fund in 2018 for the development of the North Parade Car park for residential development, and
- b) Will not apply to the Land Release Fund or otherwise consider the development of the North Parade car park for residential purposes.
- c) If MDC is not willing to give such an assurance MDC is asked to promise that there will be full consultation with the Chamber of Commerce and other interested parties before any application is made to the Land Release Fund.

¹³ <https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/housing-and-planning/one-public-estate/land-release-fund-announcement>

Appendix 1

Extracts from RTA Report for MDC prepared in 2008

8 (p.27)

People working in the centres will require longer stay parking; with the increase in part time working half day tariffs have become an important option for part-time workers.

Shoppers generally require shorter stay parking with the option to purchase a parking time tailored to their needs on each particular shopping trip.

Tourists require parking conveniently located for the attractors with a parking time option suitable for the likely length of stay generated by the attractions in the centre.

Although still the most common form of parking control, pay and display is an inflexible mechanism for tourists who can find it difficult to predict a length of stay especially if it is their first visit to a town.

The Mendip towns all have different attractors:

Frome is a market town where more people commute out, to Bath and West Wiltshire, than commute in to jobs in Frome. It functions as a local centre with a comparison goods role for the surrounding area. There are significant regeneration and redevelopment proposals for the town centre.

9.3 (p.30)

9.2.1 Frome

Mendip District, Somerset County and Frome Town Councils are working in partnership with the Regional Development Agency and others to achieve the regeneration of Frome Town Centre. The initiative includes the provision of a mixed use development in the Garsdale area which will include a retail site to anchor the existing town centre.

A planning brief was published for the development site. Two of the overarching planning principles for the site are:

- A balanced approach to car parking so that it is at the minimum required to make the development work effectively (and avoid undue impact on surrounding streets). Car parking on primary and secondary streets to be non-designated. Residential car parking to be off street other than in home zone type streets.*

- A main expanded car park, to be managed as part of the town centre car parking strategy. The brief requires that least 296 public car parking spaces are provided with the development of Saxonvale and that these are to be managed as part of the town centre car parking strategy.*

A planning application for this development is under consideration¹⁴. The development will have an effect on the provision of and demand for car parking. The site will include the current car park at Merchants Barton. This will need to be replaced in a suitable location and the development should ensure that it is self-sufficient in meeting any additional demand for parking that it generates. It is understood that the current proposal is to provide an additional 40-50 spaces. This would be less than the planning brief requirement.

MDC Parking Strategy Final Report

10 (p.33)

It is well established that tourists are less concerned about the cost of parking than the ease by which they can locate a suitable parking space. Good vehicular signage to the main tourist car parks and good pedestrian signage to and from the tourist attractions is, therefore essential. For this purpose the tourist attraction may simply be the town centre and the shopping facilities it contains (this is particularly true of Street). Detailed comments on the current signage are given in Section 21 and Appendix C. It is important, therefore, to try to ensure that there is a convenient supply of parking spaces available for visitors. In order to ensure that this is the case it will be necessary to implement appropriate controls on the spaces available. Of particular importance is the need to ensure that the short stay spaces designed for shoppers and visitors are not occupied by long stay parking. This can be achieved by the introduction of Traffic Regulation Orders setting charges and/or limiting the length of stay.

As the cost of travel increases it is likely that the number of tourists holidaying in the UK will increase and provision needs to be made for the consequent growth in demand for parking spaces. In the course of our discussions we have heard anecdotal tales about the difficulties for find parking spaces during the tourist season, particularly in Frome, Street and Wells. Clearly we have not had the opportunity to witness at first hand the parking situation in the peak tourist season.

It would be sensible to identify at least one car park in each town as the primary tourist car park and ensure that the direction signage is appropriate; the following car parks are suggested:

- *Frome – Cattle Market*

Ideally all of these car parks would have appropriate facilities – tourist information; good pedestrian signs to the attractions; toilets; etc

14 NB This related to the comprehensive application by Terramond.

Appendix 2
attached

Part 1 Frome Signage Update sent by Chamber to MDC March 2013 comparing RTA Report with actual signage, updated 2017

Part 2 Photographs from RTA Report Sept 2008

Part 3 Photographs Sept 2017

Part 4 List of signage changes required prepared by MDC following meeting with FTC the Chamber and FTC 2nd March 2015

Appendix 3

Attached

Season Ticket Comparison with Comparison

Appendix 4

Representative Examples of the polite responses on Facebook

Well done Mendip!! Frome's loss is Trowbridge's gain!! Just means more people go elsewhere to shop. The amount they spend on fuel they save on parking!!!

Trowbridge charge half of that in one car park and free parking in the other.

40p for an hour in the Shires car park and always plenty of room 😊

This is ridiculous. All you're going to achieve is driving, literally, people out of the town. It'll impact on the markets and other events too. The estates closest to town are already clogged with cars so that's going to get worse not better. This is all an attempt to cash in, if it wasn't they would be looking at improving local public transport and maybe a park and ride? To boot there aren't the shops in town to encourage people to pay these fees. You're targeting those that work in town and have to commute in, so need to park, business owners and tourists. Locals are just going to hold their hands up and go forget it, I'll go to ASDA, Sainsbury's, Trowbridge or shop online! How will that help the town's economy going forward?

As a resident in Badcox/Selwood road area. The parking situation is already awful. The resident's car parks are always full, as are the roads regardless of double yellows. I can rarely park anywhere near my home. This is just going to push more cars onto tiny residential streets that are already more than full to capacity. I can't see any way in which this policy helps the people of Frome.

*Spoken like a true snob Mr C***** 😊 For some people It's not just 10p, 20p, 30p. It's not just 'throw away' pocket change like it very clearly is to you. For some people (Like me) it's well over a hundred pounds and you want me to be eternally grateful to the council for raising the price of my parking permit by 67%? You need to take off and have a very firm word with yourself as you have clearly lost touch with how the majority of people in Frome live. Please tell me what benefit I get for paying £160 more a year. Do I get guaranteed a space? ... No. Will my car park be better maintained? ... No. Will there be CCTV for extra security? ... again the answer is No!*

We need more short term free parking in Frome and some more car parks wouldn't go amiss either. Went into town on Saturday for the first time in ages and couldn't find anywhere to park so went home again!