

Church Stretton Town Council

Response to Shropshire Council

Draft Parking Strategy

Church Stretton Town Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft Parking Strategy.

1. **Standardisation of Parking Charges County-wide:** Whilst the Town Council understand that the proposed standardisation saves administrative costs, it does not serve the differing economic interests of the diverse market towns across the county.

For example, Shropshire Council introduced free Sunday parking across the county, supposedly to aid local traders, but it is only in the larger towns that many shops are open on that day. The effect in Church Stretton has been to provide free long term parking for walkers, mountain bikers and other visitors to the town, but not to benefit local traders. It is not clear whether Shropshire Council proposes to continue this policy?

Another example is the proposal to convert the Coach/HGV Park back to a Grade 6 Pay and Display car park, when it was similarly very poorly used, because of its walking distance to the shops. The reduced charge of 30p per hour, as compared to 50p on Easthope Rd. will not be sufficient incentive to increase usage of this space. That would require a bespoke scheme providing quarterly and annual virtual permits at a very discounted rate for town centre workers commuting in to the town, who currently clog residential streets and even then it would have to be part of a town wellbeing scheme to encourage more walking. It will also be vital to preserve the free concessionary parking for the Mayfair Ring & Ride coaches on this car park. If this Coach Park is to be lost, it is imperative for the local economy that two designated coach parking places are created on one of the Easthope Road car parks, when they are re-surfaced and re-lined this year.

2. **Control of Car Parks:** Car parks are a vital part of the local economy and, if the argument above is accepted that the economic interests and circumstances in market towns across the county differ, then this logic points to car parks being managed locally. This issue assumes an even greater relevance in the current context in which Shropshire Council is expecting these towns like Church Stretton to develop their resilience and withdrawing funding of other revenue-costing local services, in the case of Church Stretton, the Visitor Information Centre, the Library and community use of the Leisure Centre. Precedents have already been set, under the previous Council Leader, for such trade-offs in other small towns including the transfer of responsibility for the car parks.

3. **Extension of charged hours:** The proposal to extend the charged hours from 6.00pm to 8.00pm will have an adverse effect on the early evening economy of eateries and will also impact on adjacent evening entertainment venues e.g. Silvester Horne Institute. This point was discussed at the SALC Consultation event dated 11th September 2017, where the majority of Town and Parish Councils present expressed the same concern. We strongly urge Shropshire Council to reconsider this proposal.

Any proposal to extend the chargeable hours may put pressure on free off street parking in residential areas, as drivers look to avoid paying the new fee. The timing of this (after 6pm) coincides with the return of commuting workers in their vehicles, who would normally park on the road outside their home. Church Stretton doesn't currently have any residents parking schemes, however it is a concern that if the extended time is introduced, then the pressure on free 'on street parking' may increase, in turn causing problems for residents.

4. **Ending "pop and shop" 15 minute concession:** In terms of the Co-op's business, with the three surrounding car parks, it will be important to publicise the 10 minute grace period, afforded by the 2015 amendment to the 2007 Civil Enforcement of Parking Regulations to allow for residents making single item purchases.

5. **Blue Badge concession:** With an increasing number of disabled residents in Church Stretton, it is important to retain the existing concession and keep under review the number of disabled parking bays.
6. **Electric charging points:** The Town Council's electric charging point has now had over 1,000 customers and a progressive increase in the number of such charging points would re-inforce the "green tourism" credentials of the Shropshire Hills AONB.
7. **Residents parking:** The proposed increase of the cost per resident of any residents' parking permits which met the criteria from £50 to £100 per year will, in all probability ensure no take-up. However, parking in residential streets is under increasing pressure because of town centre workers having to live in areas of cheaper housing. It is, therefore, imperative that the parking strategy runs in tandem with the public transport strategy that ensures a regular bus and train time-table to reduce commuting by car.
8. **Lutwyche Road car park:** In the light of these Shropshire changes, the Town Council will need to review its charging policy for the Lutwyche Road car park and potentially the time allocation for parking in the Square.

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