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Southend
Boroughwide Parking
and Access Strategy

Southend-on-Sea Borough
Council

Report
April 2018

Our ref: 23121701
Client ref: PM

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Executive Summary

This Boroughwide Parking and Access Strategy has an overall vision to provide the best experience for residents and visitors to Southend-on-Sea, by providing comprehensive information on travel and parking options enabling visitors to choose the most convenient travel option, location, choice and competitive price when visiting Southend.

The strategy proposes technological and management solutions to the specific parking issues in Southend-on-Sea Borough, including difficulties in accommodating peak season demand for parking, co-ordination of peak season traffic and provision of information to visitors.

Improvements are already underway including:

- A new method of recording car park occupancy using camera technology is being trialled (Cleverciti trial in Civic North Car Park);
- A new contactless payment app (Mobon);
- New ticket machines offering easy payment and live communication of data;
- A user-friendly map showing live car park occupancy data on the Visit Southend website;
- A Connected Digital Platform to host a range of information feeds and free wi-fi in the town centre which enables systems to communicate with users;
- Provision of new temporary car parking at the gas works site on the seafront;
- Brief trial of the Park and Ride concept at the Civic Centre; and
- Revisions to car parking tariffs based on analysis of the survey data collected from the car park guidance system.

There is scope for much greater collection and integration of data through investing in new technologies to monitor car park occupancy and using this data to better plan traffic management and parking arrangements. The strategy will inform the specification of a new Boroughwide parking guidance system and vehicle messaging system covering the main car parks across the Borough, giving reliable up-to-date and easily accessible information to users about parking availability. A more detailed project plan, developed with input from all relevant teams within the Council, will set out in more detail the timescales and dependencies and split the required work into workstreams with allocated responsibilities.

Improvements to management systems and information provision will be delivered through an agile, iterative approach with flexibility and interoperability adopted as fundamental principles. A more flexible parking system based on an open data platform is envisaged to upgrade the existing systems which lack co-ordination and data sharing and which limits the potential to fully inform system users of parking availability across the key car parks in the Borough.

The strategy will be supported by improvements to access options for visitors to Southend Central Area, including changes to road layouts to provide easier, direct and more intuitive access to car parks as part of the Town-centre Redevelopment Improvement Project (TRIP). The improvements will enable car park users to access parking from Queensway, reducing access traffic on roads within the core of the town centre which will in turn improve the pedestrian experience within Southend Central Area-on-Sea.

This strategy aims to:

1. Achieve a step-change in travel information provision, adopting an approach centred on meeting the needs of travellers and addressing their pain points of queuing to access Southend-on-Sea, finding car parks and finding a space to park.
2. Provide a framework for moving from a fragmented network of traffic control, car parking occupancy, payment and information providers to an integrated smart city data platform into which a network of specialist providers provide reliable, access-controlled feeds.
3. Effectively manage peak periods of visitor demand through a range of measures including:

- Encouraging travel behaviour change by Southend residents and visitors on peak days through dedicated peak-day communications.
- Improving existing information resources and extensive use of websites and social media.
- Providing visitors to the Borough with comprehensive, up to date **pre-trip** and **pre-arrival** information about all travel and payment options available through a range of media.
- Provide visitors to the Borough with improved travel information **during** their trip to Southend through a range of media and systems.
- Improving wayfinding from car parks to key visitor destinations.
- Actively manage traffic on days of high visitor demand through a range of on the ground interventions.
- Continually improve the visitor experience through engagement with visitors to understand their experiences and behaviours.

4. Improve signage to principal car parks across the Borough through:

- Directing drivers to the most appropriate car park.
- Raising awareness of other seafront locations in the Borough from Leigh and Chalkwell to Shoeburyness to spread the demand.
- Encouraging use of less well used car parks, particularly on days of high demand.
- Providing guidance on the most appropriate route to the car parks, particularly on days of high demand.
- Adopting state of the art dynamic signage infrastructure to allow for variable signage which responds to the different patterns of demand in Southend.

5. Support the visitor economy through dynamic changes to parking tariffs for periods of high demand for example Summer weekends and bank holidays to better balance the demand for parking between the seafront and town centre car parks.
6. **Engage stakeholders** early and frequently during implementation of the strategy.

To realise these aims a series of deliverables has been produced:

- An outline Smart City Technology Plan:
  - Identifies current pain points of queuing to access Southend, finding car parks and finding a space to park.
  - Considers how the current car park infrastructure, technology and management could be better integrated.
  - Considers how the operational aspects could be centralised together with the Council`s traffic control systems, public safety and other aspects to be developed as part of the Data Platform – to be developed further as part of Intelligence Hub.
- A **Visitor Access and Parking Management Plan** for times of peak demand and congestion on the highway network in Southend-on-Sea Borough, for example Public Holidays and during the school summer holidays. The plan includes a range of communications with

visitors arriving in Southend to help them better plan journeys and find parking, improvements to existing travel information resources, signage and wayfinding and provision of a designated traffic management response crew on busy visitor days to manage the circulation of vehicles, divert traffic away from full car parks and prevent the obstruction of key junctions within Southend Central Area. It also considers the potential for park and ride using existing car parks and public transport routes as well as new shuttle bus services.

- A **Signage plan** to improve signage to the principal car parks across the Borough, using a combination of static and dynamic, permanent and temporary signage to respond to the changing needs of the visitors, commuters and shoppers who visit Southend-on-Sea. The plan considers how improved signage could encourage use of car parks away from the central area where traffic flows are lighter and there is more opportunity to park. It also identifies the key decision points for drivers arriving in the Borough and appropriate signage to fully inform them of appropriate routes to key attractions, including a strategy for signing alternative routes to the seafront at periods of peak visitor demand. It also includes proposals for how the Council can maximise potential benefits of improvements in signage technology.

- Proposals to modify **parking tariffs and season tickets** to take a more responsive approach to charging for car parking, taking into account the varying levels of demand on different days and at different times of the year.

- An **Implementation plan** which sets out each of the strategy actions, funding type (revenue or capital), estimated funding required, timescale for delivery and key partners involved.

- A **Stakeholder Engagement and Management Plan** which identifies key sectors, stakeholders and suppliers and sets out a plan for ensuring that there is the opportunity to contribute and engage with the emerging proposals and wherever possible achieve buy-in from the various sectors.