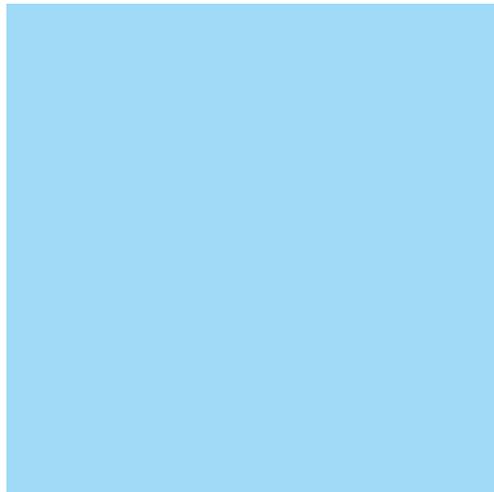




Parking Strategy 2021 - 2031

Traffic & Highways



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Parking Strategy 2021-2031

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1. Introduction

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council's shared ambition to transform the borough by 2050 is aligned to five themes, with related desired outcomes:

- **Pride & Joy** - By 2050 Southenders are fiercely proud of, and go out of their way, to champion what our city has to offer.
- **Safe & Well** - By 2050 people in Southend-on-Sea feel safe in all aspects of their lives and are well enough to live fulfilling lives.
- **Active & Involved** - By 2050 we have a thriving, active, and involved community that feel invested in our city.
- **Opportunity & Prosperity** - By 2050 Southend-on-Sea is a successful city and we share our prosperity amongst all of our people.
- **Connected & Smart** - By 2050 people can easily get in, out, and around our city and we have world class digital infrastructure.

1.2 This strategy supports the more specific desired outcomes for each theme, including: -

- Our streets and public spaces are valued and support the mental and physical wellbeing of residents/businesses and visitors. People in all parts of the borough feel safe and secure at all times.
- A range of initiatives help increase the capacity for communities to come together to enhance their neighbourhood and environment.
- We are leading the way in making public and private travel smart, clean and green.

1.3 To help achieve these goals, our approach requires effective joined-up regulation and compliance. We will use the results of the public consultation on the draft parking strategy to develop the parking policy and implementation plans for the next decade.

1.4 This strategy is intentionally at a high level as it cannot cover every eventuality, especially where there are specific local or national standards which have to be met.

1.5 In doing so we will follow the principles of:

- The Regulators Code www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulators-code;

- The Enforcement Concordant (Central and Local Government Enforcement Concordat, March 1998);
- Enforcement contained in the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006 (enforcement is proportionate, targeted, transparent consistent and accountable)

2. Background

- 2.1 Covid-19, the climate emergency, and the ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles in the UK from 2030 will see rapid change to the types and vehicle usage on the road network in the next decade. This in turn will impact on the demand for parking both on-street and in off-street car parks.
- 2.2 In order to be fully prepared for these challenges in Southend we believe it is time to formulate a new parking strategy for the borough covering the next decade.
- 2.3 The themes outlined in the draft strategy and the community engagement that accompanies its publication will be used to develop the policy framework and implementation plans to deliver the strategy in the coming years.

3. Vision for Parking

3.1 The Southend vision for parking is: -

- **To provide parking where possible;**
 - Minimise the use of vehicles in the busiest and congested areas at what experience and research shows to be the most appropriate times.
 - At the same time provide sufficient short-stay parking facilities to support shops/commercial organisations and leisure activities, thereby underpinning social and economic life.
 - Reduce the risk of accidents.
 - Safeguard the needs and requirements of residents, visitors, businesses and other organisations.
 - Improve traffic conditions.
 - Preserve and improve the infrastructure and the general environment.
 - Increase and improve pedestrian and cyclist mobility.
 - Regulate and control parking both on and off street.

- **Control parking where necessary;**
 - We will aim to get penalty charge notices right first time using accurate "hand-held" technology.
 - We will take every opportunity to develop online services to improve customer access to information.
 - We will develop the on-street parking service to include: Blue Badge enforcement, school patrols, advice and information and assistance at special events.
- **Enforce parking fairly and consistently;**
 - We will take consistent enforcement action to deter inconsiderate parking.
 - We will pursue people who try and evade penalty charges to recover debt owed to the Council.
 - We will work with the police to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and to protect our civil enforcement officers from abuse and violence.

Civil enforcement officers will adopt a helpful attitude and a consistent approach to enforcement in order to encourage lawful and considerate parking. Our customer promise is that we will always:

- Be professional, fair and courteous.
 - Be polite, calm and understanding.
 - Be open and honest.
 - Offer advice on the appeals procedure if requested.
- **Operate parking efficiently and cost effectively.**
 - We will reply as quickly as possible to representations against penalty charge notices, whilst properly investigating motorists' comments.
 - We will aim to get penalty charge notices right first time using accurate "hand-held" technology.
 - We will take every opportunity to develop online services to improve customer access to information.

4. Strategies

4.1. Climate change

- 4.1.1. According to scientists, the UK is already undergoing disruptive climate change with increased rainfall, sunshine and temperatures. 2020 was the third warmest, fifth wettest and eighth sunniest on record according to the 'UK State of the Climate' report. No other year is in the top 10 on all three criteria.
- 4.1.2. Climate change includes global warming through the emission of greenhouse gasses such as carbon dioxide (CO₂) and Methane (CH₄) resulting in the large-

- scale shift in weather patterns. A typical passenger vehicle emits about 4.6 metric tons of CO₂ per year along with nitrogen dioxide (NO₂).
- 4.1.3. Southend published its Low Emission Strategy in 2018 and currently has two Air Quality Management Areas (The Bell Junction and Victoria Avenue close to the junctions with Priory Crescent, East Street and West Street) where NO₂ levels exceed the national air quality goal.
 - 4.1.4. Roughly 72 percent of CO₂ emissions in Southend is from road transport which equated to 156 kt (3kt per person) in 2018. This is why the Council has declared a climate emergency and set the challenge to achieve net zero carbon by 2030.
 - 4.1.5. 2030 is the date when the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles is due to be banned in the UK. Hybrid vehicles are set to be banned from 2035. In order to stand a chance of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030 it will be necessary to influence motorists to change to less polluting means of transport beforehand.
 - 4.1.6. An increasing number of local authorities in the UK have introduced an emissions-based pricing structure for parking permits and paid parking, and evidence shows that it is an influencer in encouraging a switch to less-polluting means of transportation.
 - 4.1.7. We are considering introducing emissions-based parking charges aimed at addressing our poor air quality and lowering vehicle emissions. The aim is to encourage motorists to switch to less-polluting vehicles and/or to make more local trips by alternative sustainable modes of transport.

4.2. Electric vehicles and charging

- 4.2.1. The Government's 'Road to Zero' strategy has set the target of no new conventional petrol or diesel cars being sold by 2030 and no hybrid vehicles by 2035. Meeting this ambition is going to require a step change in the availability of electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure. EV charge points will need to be as commonplace as petrol stations are now.
- 4.2.2. The lack of a national strategic plan for the provision of a network of EV charge points is going to be a significant challenge to meet the Government's 2030 ambition. While the bulk of charging will take place at homes and workplaces where vehicles are parked for longer and it is generally cheaper and more

convenient to do so, not everyone has the ability to access these facilities.

While it does not fall to local councils to become the long-term default provider of EV charge points, they can have a role to play as a catalyst to the market.

- 4.2.3. Planning policies should facilitate the transition towards a low emission future.
- 4.2.4. To this end the Council has adopted an Interim Planning Statement regarding the provision of EV charge points in new developments and is moving towards adopting Supplementary Planning Guidance to embed this policy into the Local Development Framework for Planning moving forward through the emerging Local Plan process.
- 4.2.5. The Council's new Local Transport Plan 4 and Implementation Plan are currently being developed and it is anticipated this will set out the Council's EV and EV charge point policy.

4.3. Covid-19 recovery

- 4.3.1. The global pandemic has seen a significant change in the patterns of working, shopping, and travel. The enforced lockdown meant most people were not going out. Working from home and online shopping became the norm for most households. This in turn saw a sudden change to long-established parking patterns. On-street commuter parking largely abated. Residential parking spaces became harder to find when the majority of residents were working from home and residential vehicles did not move from day to day.
- 4.3.2. In mid-July 2021, the last of the Covid-19 lockdown measures were removed in England. While the population gets used to the freedom to move about, it is unclear if this will result in travel and parking patterns returning to pre-pandemic levels. It is predicted that the UK economy will grow significantly and at a rate not seen since 1948 which could indicate more vehicle movements, but it is also predicted that working from home is here to stay and will remain a preferred option for at least part of the week going forward. Similarly, the convenience of on-line shopping and household delivery of purchases is here to stay in some form or another. It is too soon to gauge if parking patterns will return to pre-Covid-19 numbers or normalised parking demand will be at a reduced capacity.
- 4.3.3. Providing a flexible approach to parking provision and control will be essential going forward as we cannot assume that post-pandemic parking patterns and growth will replicate those pre-2020. We propose that any parking schemes that

were previously approved but not implemented will be put on hold for 12 months to enable a review of the parking stress/demand to take place over the period; this will include all pending schemes and changes to existing unless there are high safety issues or formal consultation has already begun. If there is evidence of ongoing parking stress after the 12 month review the scheme will be implemented, if not, the scheme will not be implemented until such time that parking stress/demand returns to pre-Covid levels.

- 4.3.4. Existing commuter parking schemes may also need revision if commuters do not return to previous numbers. Resident parking areas may suffer from greater stress from residents themselves and measures to limit the number of permits per household may be an option. We propose to review all parking zones over the next six years to establish if they remain fit for purpose.

4.4 Business recovery

- 4.4.1. Even before the pandemic, there were widespread reports of the crisis facing the retail sector. A significant number of household retail names have disappeared forever from the high street during the pandemic. The shift towards online shopping was accelerated during lockdown and the lack of income for retailers during this period will put further pressure on their long-term viability and presence on the high street/secondary town centres.
- 4.4.2. Local authorities will need to support the high street businesses in their recovery and one of the potential ways of doing so is by making parking and loading easier for customers and businesses whilst also ensuring this does not adversely impact on measures designed to encourage modal shift to less polluting means of transportation. Options could include relaxing some parking controls either completely or at off-peak times, extending parking time or reduced charging. It may also be necessary to introduce measures to achieve a greater turnover of parking spaces if parking is in high demand.
- 4.4.3. We are also mindful that pre-Covid there were parts of the town where a strong night-time economy is present, and the Council were receiving requests/complaints about parking issues. These included issues about dangerous parking/accessibility issues and the difficulty of parking in the evenings and increased parking demand in some residential locations. If/when we see these issues developing, we may need to consider the need to extend

enforcement controls for safety reasons and to ensure a turnover of parking spaces.

4.5. Finance

- 4.5.1. When parking enforcement was originally decriminalised under the Road Traffic Act 1991 local authorities were required to operate their parking accounts so that they were 'at least self-financing'. The Statutory Guidance published at the time (March 2008) Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 made revisions so that local authorities were no longer required to operate parking accounts in surplus although it should still be the aspiration to do so where necessary so as to be reinvested.
- 4.5.2. Section 55 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 places conditions on how local authorities operate their parking account which is ring-fenced from the council's general account. The parking account is used for the operation of the parking service. Any surpluses left once the costs have been accounted for are firstly used for maintenance and safety enhancements after which it can only be spent on parking and traffic-related schemes.
- 4.5.3. In Southend, we aim to operate the parking account so there is a surplus. We believe that motorists who benefit from using parking bays and car parks or who park in contravention should pay for the parking enforcement service rather than non-motoring residents having to pay for a service they do not use through the council tax general account.
- 4.5.4. We will use surpluses to cover the full cost of parking enforcement and to maintain our car parks so they are safe and maintained where possible to the national 'ParkMark' standard. We are anticipating significant expenditure will be required for the repair and upgrade of some car park facilities to extend their life-expectancy well into the next decade. We will also use surpluses to pay for any new on-street parking schemes.

4.6. Efficiencies

- 4.6.1. We are committed to running the parking service as efficiently as possible and to make best use of new technologies to make the user experience easier and more cost effective. We out-source parking enforcement to a specialist parking enforcement contractor as we believe this is the most efficient and cost-effective process. The existing parking enforcement contract is coming to an end, and we

will be retendering the contract during 2021/22. This will be a new contract and it is anticipated that it will be for an initial 10 years with the potential for extensions if quality and key performance indicators are met.

- 4.6.2. We introduced virtual permits for resident permits during 2020/21. These replace the need to display paper-based permits in vehicles. They have cost and environmental savings as the process does not require the printing of permits on plasticised paper nor the need for fulfilment and posting. They also benefit the resident as the on-line process is largely automated and quicker to administer resulting in a permit approval and activation in a far shorter period than before. The success of the virtual permit means we propose to extend its use during 2021/22 for all permits and vouchers issued by the parking service. We will also be considering other technological options currently available to make the application and verification process easier and more efficient for the applicant. This could include, for example, dispensing with the need to resubmit 'proofs' each year for up to 3 years where the application details remain unchanged.
- 4.6.3. The Southend Pass Pilot was developed and introduced in 2021 which aims to enable an efficient and cashless process for customers to regularly move about the borough to be able to park at a discounted rate in car parks or paid on-street parking bays. The concept of the Southend Pass began before the pandemic when it was anticipated it would prove a popular choice for residents only. The timing of its introduction during a further UK lockdown was not auspicious and although extended to apply to anyone it has initially resulted in less uptake of the pass than what was originally predicted. The Council will need to extend the original monitoring / trial period and review annually until travel and parking patterns have normalised to establish the long-term viability of the scheme.
- 4.6.4. We offer an alternative to paying with cash at on-street paid parking bays and in our car parks. This has been in operation for a number of years and has proved popular with motorists. It reflects the growing trend in the UK population not to carry cash and particularly loose change. Cashless paid parking time can be purchased by debit/credit card, or by phone using the MOBON app. The latter also has the advantage of being able to top up parking time (up to the maximum length of stay) remotely via the app.

4.6.5. Since introducing the cashless payment methods, we have seen a significant increase in their use over cash payments. We anticipate this trend will continue as has been borne out by the experience of other local authorities. There is a considerable cost involved in facilitating cash payments for parking from the cost of the machines. This includes the technical operation and servicing, the printing and provision and replacement of parking tickets, cash collection, sorting, reconciliation, and banking of cash. We propose phasing out the cash payment option initially by reducing the number of existing pay and display machines except where card/contactless payment options are planned to be retained. We anticipate this transformation will be completed by 2023/24.

5. Public engagement

- 5.1. The Secretary of State for Transport's statutory guidance on enforcing parking restrictions recommends that local enforcement authorities should consult locally on their parking policies/strategies. We intend to follow this recommendation with an on-line consultation on the draft parking strategy. The results of the public engagement will be used to inform the finalisation of the parking strategy and the development of the Parking Implementation Plan which will set out the policies for the implementation of the parking strategy.
- 5.2. The public engagement period will commence at the beginning of October (pending agreement from Cabinet) for a period of 6 weeks and can be accessed here (www.yoursay.southend.gov.uk/parking-strategy-consultation-2021). A copy of the questionnaire is also contained in the Appendix.

6. Parking Implementation Plan

- 6.1 Once the parking strategy 2021-2031 is finalised the policies for implementing the strategy will be developed and published in our Parking Implementation Plan (PIP). We anticipate the PIP will be published in Q4/2021/22. This PIP will be a living document and will be reviewed and updated if/when statute or national standards or best practice requires it and annually for the life of the Parking Strategy.

Note: This is a working document that will be reviewed annually throughout its lifecycle

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Questionnaire

Climate change is a big challenge for Southend. 72 percent of CO₂ emissions is from road transport which equated to 156 kt (3kt per person) in 2018. This is why the Council has declared a climate emergency and set the challenge to achieve net zero carbon by 2030.

Please confirm what Ward you are currently living in _____

We are considering introducing emissions-based parking charges aimed at addressing our poor air quality and lowering vehicle emissions. The aim is to encourage motorists to switch to less-polluting vehicles and/or to make more local trips by sustainable modes of transport.

1. Do you support the concept that the most polluting vehicles should pay more than less polluting vehicles?

	Tick one box
Strongly agree	
Agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

We know some areas have parking issues where there is an active evening economy. Residents and Businesses have asked for extended parking controls where this occurs.

2. Do you support the concept of extended parking controls in areas with a large evening/night-time activity, subject to local consultation?

	Tick one box
Strongly agree	
Agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

We know that with more people working from home as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, some zones have a minimum number of free parking spaces available during the day.

3. Do you support the concept of limiting the number of permits per household as a means of increasing parking capacity?

	Tick one box
Strongly agree	
Agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

We receive a lot of complaints from residents near schools whereby there are poor driving behaviours. We propose to review all schools and the surrounding streets with the vision of installing stronger parking controls in the area?

4. Is this something you would support in principle?

	Tick one box
Strongly agree	
Agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

The use of cashless payments for parking (mobile phone and card) has proved popular with motorists as increasingly the population are carrying less loose change or cash around. The pay by phone option also has the benefit of allowing motorists to top up paid parking (up to the maximum length of stay) remotely if they are going to be later back to their vehicle than originally anticipated. We propose phasing out all cash payments within the lifetime of this Strategy for paid parking and rely on card only and mobile enabled technologies.

5. Is this something you would support in principle?

	Tick one box
Strongly agree	
Agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

We believe we need to help local shops and businesses during the post-Covid recovery. This could include changes to encourage greater use of town/local centre parking places to support people to use local shops and businesses.

6. Is this something you would support in principle?

	Tick one box
Strongly agree	
Agree	
neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

We understand that grass verges are an important part of our environment; however, in many areas of the borough they are unsightly due to ongoing damage and in some areas even becoming a safety issue.

7. Do you support the principle that where there is evidence of ongoing damage and safety conflicts for pedestrians that grass verge areas are considered for other use, eg: formalised parking bays (hardstanding); increasing the footpath width even if this may be at the detriment of the Council's vision for a green street scene

	Tick one box
Strongly agree	
Agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

We receive multiple complaints about the lack of turnover of vehicles on various limited waiting bays where there is a 1, 2 or 4 hour no return restriction.

8. Do you support the principle that the Council undertake a review of all limited waiting bays with the vision to change the restrictions to something better suited to the location?

	Tick one box
Strongly agree	
Agree	
neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

We receive multiple complaints about inconsiderate parking and bad driver behaviours along parts of the seafront.

9. Do you support the principle that the Council undertake a review of the seafront to look at times when certain areas may be pedestrianised at specific times of the day (with deliveries unaffected)?

	Tick one box
Strongly agree	
Agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

We regularly receive enquiries about Controlled Parking Zones and the use of the bays.

10. Do you support the principle of shared use bays within controlled parking zones; this would permit visitors to pay to park when there are free bays within the zone?

	Tick one box
Strongly agree	
Agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

We regularly receive enquiries about additional parking bays to be implemented in the Town Centre.

11. Do you support the principle a review be undertaken to look at the implementation of more parking bays in the town centre and restricting times for deliveries?

	Tick one box
Strongly agree	
Agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

We regularly receive enquiries that there are not enough loading and business parking bays to be implemented in the Borough.

12. Do you support in principle a review of all business and loading bays to ensure they are in the right place and service the right groups

	Tick one box
Strongly agree	
Agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

13. If you feel there are any issue you feel we should consider as part of the strategy, please state here in no more than 100 words:

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