

**ASHFORD LOCAL PLAN 2030**

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**Ashford Borough Council**

**ASHFORD TOWN CENTRE  
PARKING REVIEW**

**DECEMBER 2014**





# Ashford Parking Review

Final

On behalf of **Ashford Borough Council**

Project Ref: 30556/1001 | Rev: - | Date: December 2014

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Context

- 1.1.1 Ashford Borough Council (ABC) appointed Peter Brett Associates to provide a review and update of the existing parking strategy which relates to the 31,000 homes and 28,000 jobs envisaged at a time of prosperity and aspirational policy making. Since this time, there has been a recession, government funding cuts and changes in policy such as the removal of the South East Plan. Part of the purpose of this study is to respond to the changes in national policy through the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework that has come into effect since the Core Strategy was adopted.
- 1.1.2 The Council are now reviewing their current Core Strategy (which is now referred to as the Local Plan 2030) in light of these changes (amongst others) and in doing so need to understand how this affects the parking aspirations for the town. The number of homes and jobs are to be reduced from the previous figures as the allocated development areas are considered in relation to the current market in terms of need and viability.
- 1.1.3 The parking strategy forms part of an iterative process and has been produced to assist with informing the Local Plan 2030. It sets out the current position with respect to parking and should not be seen as a rigid plan dictating what is to happen in terms of parking, as there are many variables to consider. Rather it is a document which sets out the options for what could happen and the implications in a parking context.
- 1.1.4 It is particularly important that the strategy has an inherent level of flexibility to allow for any changes in development such as phasing, quantum or land use as the Local Plan develops and proposals come forward over time. This flexibility responds to the National Planning Policy Framework which highlights that “*Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change*” (para 14, NPPF). The NPPF further states that “*Local planning authorities should ensure that their assessment of and strategies for housing, employment and other uses are integrated, and that they take full account of relevant market and economic signals.*” (para 158, NPPF) Therefore, the parking strategy needs to be fully flexible to react to any such changes during the Local Plan period.
- 1.1.5 In addition, the NPPF makes it plain that deliverability is key to successful development and clearly states that “*Plans should be deliverable. Therefore, the sites and the scale of development identified in the plan should not be subject to such a scale of obligations and policy burdens that their ability to be developed viably is threatened.*” (para 173, NPPF) This is important in the context of parking, as providing a large proportion of parking on a particular site to accommodate the needs of other developments in the area for example could render that site unviable.
- 1.1.6 The NPPF recognises the importance of encouraging town centre viability and vitality. Never has this been more so than in recent years where many town centres have declined with shops forced to close, and vacant shop fronts boarded up for long periods of time. It is widely accepted that this has been due to a number of factors including the rise in popularity of online shopping and out of town shopping malls (including superstores), coupled with the economic downturn. It is apparent across the UK, and notably in Ashford which is not only competing with the online retailers, but also with the nearby Designer Outlet Village, retail facilities at Canterbury and Maidstone, out of town shopping/leisure at Eureka Park, out of town shopping at Ashford Business Park and the flagship Bluewater shopping centre located in North Kent.
- 1.1.7 Given the context of challenges for Town Centres and High Streets, the amount of parking and the price of parking is critical to its success. It is important that there is sufficient parking to encourage the local economy whilst at the same time being restrictive enough so as not to cause congestion on the local highway network. Whilst the amount of parking is not currently

an issue for Ashford, there are local hotspots of congestion which occur. Therefore, as development comes forward it is important to ensure adequate parking provision and arrangements for the various land uses. Therefore, this parking report focusses on Ashford town centre in relation to parking provision, but also makes reference to parking in Tenterden as an important rural town in the Borough.

1.1.8 The scope of the commission from ABC is set out as follows:

- Current suitability of existing car parks, both in council ownership and privately operated, in meeting current parking need
- A review of the previous town centre parking strategy, and whether the proposals are now necessary or deliverable
- The change in car parking requirements over the course of the local plan
- The impact on the local highway network and car parking stock at key intervals during the course of the Local Plan, and the specific impact arising from commuting
- Potential opportunities for increasing car parking, including the possibility of 'park and ride' proposals, and enhancing private parking facilities at large generators of parking
- The on-site parking standards that the council should seek to adopt for future residential and commercial development proposals

## 1.2 The Report

1.2.1 The report includes the scope of the commission and has been set out as follows:

- Existing conditions – a summary of the existing information and operation of public car parks in the town centre along with traffic distribution into the towns of workers to work census data;
- Adopted policy and evidence base documents – a review/summary of the Local Development Framework documents relevant to the potential development in Ashford and evidence documents relating to the parking strategy for Ashford;
- Delivery measures – a review of the park & ride and multi storey car parks proposed in the previous strategy;
- Future aspirations – considerations relating to the car parking requirements for Ashford based on the estimated demand;
- Parking standards – review of existing parking standards for residential and commercial land uses;
- Interventions – a menu of potential interventions which the council can consider for implementation;
- Tenterden Parking Review – a brief summary of the car parking issues in Tenterden along with the parking strategy to deal with them;
- Conclusions and recommendations.

## 2 Existing Conditions

2.1.1 The following chapter sets out the extent of the car parks considered, including details of how they operate along with the number of spaces available and their current demand. In addition, consideration has been given to the journey patterns into the town from data available in the public domain.

### 2.2 Description of existing car parks

2.2.1 A plan of the locations of the existing car parks in Ashford is included in Figure 2.1. It shows there are 7 No. car parks owned and operated by Ashford Borough Council, and 12 No. privately owned car parks operated by Southeastern, CP Plus (on behalf of HS1), NCP, Athena, Parking Eye, Euro Car Parks and Phoenix Parking.

2.2.2 The following table sets out how the car parks operate, the capacity and tariff structure:

Car Park	Type	Capacity	% of total spaces (market share)	Tariff
<b>ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL OPERATED PUBLIC CAR PARKS</b>				
Henwood	Surface Pay & Display	61	1%	40p minimum charge for 30 mins followed by linear charge of 5p increments up to 4 hours; 80p for 1 hour; £1.60 for 2 hours; £2.40 for 3 hours; £3.20 for 4 hours and above
*Flour Mills	Surface Pay & Display	79	2%	50p minimum charge for 30 mins followed by linear charge of 5p increments up to 4 hours; £1 for 1 hour; £2 for 2 hours; £3 for 3 hours; £4 for 4 hours and above
*Civic Centre and Stour Centre	Surface Pay & Display	518	11%	80p minimum charge for 2 hours followed by linear charge of 5p increments up to 4 hours; £2 for 2 hours; £3 for 3 hours; £4 for 4 hours; £10 (Mon –

				Fri) over 4 hours and £4.50 (Sat and Sun)
*Dover Place (temporary)	Surface Pay & Display	362	8%	50p minimum charge for 30 mins followed by linear charge of 5p increments up to 4 hours; £1 for 1 hour; £2 for 2 hours; £3 for 3 hours; £4 for 4 hours; £4.50 for over 4 hours
*Station Road	Surface Pay & Display	108	2%	50p minimum charge for 30 mins followed by linear charge of 5p increments up to 4 hours; £1 up to 1 hour; £2 up to 2 hours; £3 up to 3 hours; £4 for 4 hours; £4.50 for over 4 hours
*Vicarage Lane	Surface Pay & Display	162	3%	50p minimum charge for 30 mins followed by linear charge of 5p increments up to 4 hours; £1 up to 1 hour; £2 up to 2 hours; £3 up to 3 hours; £4 up to 4 hours; £10 over 4 hours
*Edinburgh Road	Multi storey Pay & Display	289	6%	50p minimum charge for 30 mins followed by linear charge of 5p increments up to 4 hours; £1 up to 1 hour; £2 up to 2 hours; £3 up to 3 hours; £4 up to 4 hours; £4.50 over 4 hours
<b>PRIVATELY OPERATED PUBLIC CAR PARKS</b>				

* <sub>2</sub> Park Street (Natwest)	Surface – for the use of customers to the bank  Pay & Display	40	1%	50p for 30 mins; £1 for 1 hour (max. stay)
* <sub>2</sub> Park Street (Wetherspoons)	Surface - £1 refunded to Wetherspoon customers who purchase a meal/drinks over £5  Pay & Display	20	<1%	£1 up to 1 hour; £2 up to 2 hours; £3 up to 3 hours
* <sub>3</sub> Park Mall	Multi storey  Pay & Display	307	6%	£1.10 up to 1 hour; £2.10 for 1-2 hours; £3.10 for 2-3 hours; £4.10 for 3-4 hours; £5.10 for 4+ hours
* <sub>3</sub> New Street (Farm Foods)	Surface  Pay & Display, and controlled through ANPR	52	1%	Free parking for up to 1 hour
* <sub>3</sub> New Street (LIDL)	Surface  Pay & Display, and controlled through ANPR	180	4%	Free parking for up to 1 hour for customers and up to 10 minutes for non-customers. Beyond these times the cost is £90.
* <sub>3</sub> County Square	Multi storey  Pay on foot or at barrier at the end of parking	564	12%	
* <sub>4</sub> Ashford International Car Parks A and B	Surface  Pay & Display	425 between A and B	9%	£1 minimum; £6.50 a day with weekly tickets available; monthly, quarterly, six monthly and yearly tickets are available in car park B

* <sub>4</sub> Ashford International Car Park F	Surface Pay & Display	160	3%	£1 minimum; £5 a day with weekly, monthly, quarterly, six monthly and yearly tickets available
* <sub>5</sub> HS1 MSCP	Multi Storey car park	750	16%	£2 up to 1 hour; £5 for 2-5 hours; £11 for 6-24 hours; weekly, monthly, quarterly and yearly tickets available
* <sub>5</sub> HS1 Car Parks D and E	Surface Pay on foot in Eurostar building	700 (total for car parks D and E)	15%	

Table 2.1: Existing car parks – operation, tariffs and capacity

\*No. of spaces taken from data provided by ABC Parking Services; \*<sub>2</sub>No. of spaces observed on site by PBA; \*<sub>3</sub>No. of spaces taken from Parkopedia website; \*<sub>4</sub> No. of spaces taken from data provided by Southeastern; \*<sub>5</sub> No. of spaces provided by HS1

2.2.3 The table above shows there are a total of 4777 car parking spaces in the town centre car parks. Of these, 33% of the spaces relate to publically owned car parks (ie owned by Ashford Borough Council) and the remaining 67% to privately owned car parks. Collectively, the car parks in the control of the railway interests make up 43% of the total stock.

## 2.3 KPI Car Park Character Appraisals

2.3.1 Derivation of character is fundamental to creating a comprehensive and comparative picture of a car park and how it contributes to the wider parking stock.

2.3.2 PBA have designed an approach which appraises a range of criteria to create a picture of the form of a car park. It is useful in considering how the car parks are operating and performing, where there are issues and in comparing to other sites within the wider study area.

2.3.3 As part of the appraisal, the following five Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are considered:

**Occupancy** - The percentage of the car park taken up by parked vehicles at a given time;

**Accessibility** - A standardised assessment based on a range of criterion including how close the site is to key attractions and how useable the car park is;

**Environment** - A standardised assessment based on a range of criteria of how safe and pleasant the site is;

**Revenue** - An estimation of the proportion achieved of the maximum daily income per space based on the peak revenue tariff (normally the tariff for a one hour stay); and

**Length of Stay** - The observed peak length of stay of the car park.

2.3.4 The five KPIs help in understanding how the car parks can be improved to provide a better experience for the customer and maximise use. It is understood that Ashford Borough Council are undertaking their own operational review, which will include considerations of revenue and length of stay so this has been excluded from this appraisal. The operational review will inform the understanding of the way in which each car park contributes to the wider parking stock.

**Occupancy**

2.3.5 The first indicator of a car parks character and performance is its occupancy. Occupancy survey data provides an understanding of the peak demand of each car park. The results of the occupancy data can inform the Council as to whether the demand exceeds effective capacity or perhaps whether the car park is significantly under-utilised.

2.3.6 Ideally this would be based on survey data, however for this more high level strategy worst case estimates have been provided by Ashford Borough Council for the public car parks, and HS1 have provided estimates for their car parks located to the south of the station. Southeastern have provided average occupancy data but this is aggregated across all three of their car parks. Data was not forthcoming from the private operators and so spot checks were undertaken by uss during the assumed busiest periods in the week to provide estimates.

2.3.7 In order to provide a measure of car park occupancy, a car park can be categorised under one of three headings – under-utilised, effectively utilised, highly utilised. The appropriate bands are set out below. A car park which has an occupancy level of less than 60% is said to be ‘under-utilised’. A car park which has an occupancy level of between 61% - 80% is said to be ‘effectively utilised’ and a car park which has an occupancy level of between 81% - 100% is said to be ‘highly utilised’.

- <60% = Under utilised;
- 61% - 80% = Effective utilisation;
- 81% - 100% = High utilisation – optimum usage.

2.3.8 The maximum occupancy for the parking stock during a typical weekday is shown in the following table (red colour denotes under- utilisation, amber = effective utilisation and green = high utilisation):

Ref	Car Park Name	Total Parking Spaces	Occupancy	Current Usage	Spaces Available
1	Henwood	61	20%	12	49
2	Flour Mills	79	1-2%	1-2	78-77
3a	Civic Centre	266	90%	239	27
3b	Stour Centre	252	90%	227	25
4	Dover Place (temporary)	362	60-65%	217-235	145-127
5	Station Road	108	90-95%	97-103	11-5
6	Vicarage Lane	162	90-100%	146-162	16-0
7	Edinburgh Road	289	60-65%	173-188	116-101

8	Park Street (Natwest)	40	100%	40	0
9	Park Street (Wetherspoons)	20	40%	8	12
10	Park Mall	307	50%	154	153
11	New Street (Farm Foods)	52	95%	49	3
12	New Street (LIDL)	180	85%	153	28
13	County Square	564	60%	338	226
14, 15, 16	Ashford International Car Parks A, B and F	585	91-92%	532-538	53-47
17	HS1 MSCP	750	25%	188	562
18	HS1 Car Park E	300	Negligible use	0	300
19	HS1 Car Parks D	400	80-90%	320-360	80-40

Table 2.2: Occupancy information for existing car parks in Ashford

- 2.3.9 In general, there are 37-39% of the total parking spaces available (ie currently unoccupied) during the weekdays. This reduces to 36-38% when Henwood and Flour Mills are removed from the capacity due to redevelopment potential.
- 2.3.10 In terms of the split between public and privately owned car parks, there are 24-20% of the total public car parking spaces available during the weekdays (with Henwood and Flour Mills removed). There are 43-44% of the total private car parking spaces available during the weekdays.
- 2.3.11 The results show that the permanent public surface car parks are largely well utilised with Vicarage Lane at full capacity at times. The Edinburgh Road multi storey car park located to the north of the town centre shows there is available parking for around 100 vehicles, and the temporary surface car park at Dover Place shows around 130/140 spaces are available.
- 2.3.12 Of the Ashford Borough Council operated car parks, Vicarage Lane, Civic Centre/Stour Centre, and Station Road are all considered to be in the 'Highly utilised' category.
- 2.3.13 Edinburgh Road and Dover Place car parks are listed under the 'effectively utilised', and Henwood and Flour Mills in the 'under- utilised' category. It should be noted that Flour Mills was used by Kent County Council staff permit holders who were up until recently located at the Civic Centre offices, and so did have an effective utilisation (noted as 65% at the time of the KPI survey by PBA). However, since this time they have relocated and it is estimated that the average occupancy is 1-2%, without the KCC permit holders using it.
- 2.3.14 The data for the Southeastern car parks (A, B and F) is aggregated. However, it is understood that car parks A and B are well used with full occupancy during the week. If we assume both A and B are fully occupied with 425 vehicles, and take this away from the 91% of the 585 spaces then this suggests an occupancy of around 67% for car park F. However, from the spot check undertaken at the time of the KPI assessment survey and from local knowledge it appears that the occupancy is more like 15-20%. Therefore, car parks A and B are listed as 'highly utilised' category and car park F as 'under-utilised'.

- 2.3.15 The data for the HS1 car parks suggest that the MSCP and car park E are under-utilised, and car park D is listed as 'highly utilised'.
- 2.3.16 The remaining private car parks suggest that Wetherspoons, and Park Mall are under-utilised, whereas the Natwest, Farm Foods and Lidl car parks have high utilisation rates. County Square is considered to be marginal in between under-utilised and effectively utilised. It is likely that the current months are the low season for retail activity compared to the winter/autumn months, and during periods of bad weather.

### Accessibility and Environment – Qualitative Analysis

- 2.3.17 The review of each car park derives a detailed qualitative analysis of the parking area which is used to inform two of the indices of the character for each site – Accessibility and Environment.
- 2.3.18 By way of assessing the general “quality” of each car park an assessment is made of each site against a range of sub-criteria, and include an assessment of:
- The general cleanliness and maintenance;
  - The feeling of security;
  - Ease of access and egress by vehicle and on foot;
  - The form of ticketing; and
  - The proximity to key attractions, such as the retail core.
- 2.3.19 Using the criteria, a detailed assessment has been undertaken for each car park. The assessment is carried out through personal observations. For example, an observation is made of the form of personal security equipment provided within the car park and also whether there are dedicated bays for the disabled.
- 2.3.20 Whilst it is recognised that the assessment contains an element of subjectivity which could influence the assessor’s perceptions of the car park, it is reasonable to suggest that this methodology provides a thorough method of assessment. In addition, the same assessor has been to all of the sites to provide a degree of consistency in the scoring.
- 2.3.21 Within the Accessibility analysis, a ‘transaction time’ is calculated using the formula below to assess driving to and from the parking space; paying for parking and the degree of occupancy. The formula used is:

$$\frac{((A/S) + (B/S) + (C \cdot T) + ((D \cdot 2)/W) + E)}{F}$$

- Where:
- A** = Distance to the centre of the car park (m);
  - B** = Distance from centre of the car park to the exit (m);
  - C** = Number of turns on the circulatory when going to/from the centre of the car park;
  - D** = Distance from the centre of the car park to the ticket machine (m);
  - E** = Time taken to get a ticket (s) (based on machine type);
  - F** = Occupancy (%);
  - S** = Vehicle speed (assumed to be an average 3mph);
  - W** = Walking speed (assumed to be 1.2m/s); and
  - T** = Turns allowance within the car park (5 seconds per turn).

- 2.3.22 The results for the individual car parks can be seen in the KPI sheets in Appendix B. A summary of the results can be seen below.

2.3.23 The British Parking Association operate a nationally recognised accreditation for car parks which are judged to be safe and user friendly. The Park Mark system is rigorously assessed by trained assessors and potentially awarded the status which can be displayed at the car park to demonstrate to its users that it has been judged a safe site. PBA's assessment does not seek to replicate the BPA assessment but supplements a review of the car parks. The table reports the KPI score and notes whether the car parks have been awarded Park Mark certification.

Car Park	Accessibility (%)	Environment (%)	Park Mark Awarded?
Henwood	72	26	X
Flour Mills	69	64	X
Civic Centre	72	50	X
Stour Centre	87	71	X
Dover Place (temporary)	68	52	X
Station Road	87	59	X
Vicarage Lane	78	62	X
Edinburgh Road	75	52	X
Park Street (Natwest)	78	47	X
Park Street (Wetherspoons)	72	50	X
Park Mall	78	43	X
New Street (Farm Foods)	90	59	X
New Street (LIDL)	96	52	X
County Square	69	69	X
Ashford International Car Parks A and B (Southeastern)	96	52	X
Ashford International Car Park F (Southeastern)	90	47	X
HS1 MSCP	84	64	✓
HS1 Car Park E	72	57	X
HS1 Car Park D	72	57	X

Table 2.3. Accessibility and Environment

2.3.24 The results of the assessment show that the car park which received the highest overall combined score for accessibility and environment was the Stour Centre with 87% and 71% respectively. This was closely followed by the Ashford International car parks A and B with 96% accessibility and 52% environment, the HS1 multi storey car park with 84% accessibility

and 64% environment, and the New Street car parks (Farm Foods and Lidl) with 90%/96% for accessibility and 59%/52% for environment.

- 2.3.25 The car park which received the lowest combined score was Henwood with 72% for accessibility and 26% for environment. Other car parks with low overall scores (close to 60%/61%) were Dover Place, Park Mall, Civic Centre and Park Street (Wetherspoons).
- 2.3.26 It is understood that Henwood is likely to be redeveloped and Dover Place is a temporary surface car park which is to be redeveloped as part of the Commercial Quarter. As a result of the assessment, the other low scoring car parks should be considered for comprehensive change to their existing format and appropriate investment should be made.
- 2.3.27 A score of between 61% - 80% is reasonably typical for a moderately maintained car park, however, the results of the assessment showed that 14 out of the 19 car parks achieved a score of less than 60% in either the 'accessibility' or 'environment' category.

## 2.4 Car Park Character Appraisal – Summary

- 2.4.1 Overall the Ashford International car parks A and B, Stour Centre, New Street, Vicarage Lane and Station Road all perform consistently high for accessibility and occupancy.
- 2.4.2 Whilst Dover Place scores well on accessibility and occupation, it scores relatively low on environment. However, this is a temporary car park and is due to be redeveloped. Therefore, changes to improve the environment will be included as part of the redevelopment.
- 2.4.3 Edinburgh Road is on the border of being well utilised and under- utilised, and the adjacent Park Mall car park is considered to be under- utilised. Both score well for accessibility but lose scores for the environment. Improvements to this aspect of the assessment should be considered to assist with improving the occupancy of these car parks.
- 2.4.4 The lowest performing car park is Henwood. This is earmarked for redevelopment, and so does not require investment to improve the overall score. The Civic Centre is well occupied due to its proximity for employees at Ashford Borough Council regardless of its low score for the environment. Therefore, it does not warrant improvements in relation to improving occupancy. However, if this was to be used to encourage other users in the future then the environment score may need to be improved to achieve this.

## 2.5 Operation of existing car parks

- 2.5.1 The following section considers the length of stay at the public car parks (data is unavailable for private car parks) to provide an understanding of how they are used at present. Data has been provided by Ashford Borough Council for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014. This is based on information taken from ticketing machines and relates to linear ticketing.
- 2.5.2 The following table summarises the percentage of all day users compared with short term users:

	Ticket type – all day	Ticket type – up to 4 hours	Average stay time (calculated from linear ticketing)
Dover Place	47.6%	52.4%	2 hrs 54 mins
Edinburgh Road	7.2%	92.8%	1 hr 45 mins

Civic & Stour Centre (excluding staff)	1.25%	98.75%	1 hr 10 mins
Flour Mills	37.6%	62.4%	2 hr 30 mins
Station Road	16%	84%	2 hr 12 mins
Vicarage Lane	0.4%	99.6%	1 hr 36 mins

Table 2.4: Durations and average stay times for public car parks

- 2.5.3 A large proportion of Dover Place is long stay parking compared to the town centre car parks such as Vicarage Lane, Station Road and Edinburgh Road. It has been observed that many cars parked at Dover Place may relate to passengers using Ashford train station, as the car park fills up from the bottom nearest the station rather than the top nearest to the town centre.
- 2.5.4 The Civic Centre/Stour Centre car park data shown above does not include for staff parking and so the average stay time relates mainly to the leisure use at the site, and visitors to the Civic Centre. There are 722 permits relating to ABC staff at the Civic Centre. It is understood that Kent County Council (KCC) staff at the Civic Centre had 161 permits relating to the car park but they have since relocated to other offices. The permit areas for KCC are temporarily being occupied by ABC staff until a new tenant is found.
- 2.5.5 Of the few people using the car park at Flour Mills, a large proportion were long stay parking, which is understood to relate to staff parking associated with KCC located at the Civic Centre. As mentioned above the staff have since relocated to other offices and so this will have an effect on the usage of this car park. KCC had permits for 29 vehicles at Flour Mills.
- 2.5.6 The remaining town centre car parks relate mainly to short stay users, suggesting the majority of vehicles are relating to retail/leisure uses.

## 2.6 Parking tariffs

- 2.6.1 There is much debate about whether lowering parking tariffs or providing free parking should be provided to encourage economic activity in a town. However, this should be considered in the context of competing neighbouring towns/cities. Therefore, the following table illustrates the parking tariffs for Maidstone, Canterbury and Folkestone in the central zones compared to Ashford's current structure:

Car Park	Up to 30mins	Up to 1 hour	Up to 3 hours	Up to 4 hours	Up to 5 hours	Over 5 hours
Maidstone	50p	90p	£2	£3	£4.50	£6
Canterbury	£1.20 - £1.50 per hour, 70p min £1.70 per hour up to 5 hours (Whitefriars), £1.70 min Sun-Fri and £3.40 Sat £3 park and ride daily rate					

Folkestone	60p		£3 max 3 hours (short term)		£6 for 5 or more hours
Ashford - Town Centre	50p	£1 (linear increments)	£3 (linear increments)	£4 (linear increments)	£4.50 (long term car parks) / £10 (short term car parks) over 4 hours
Ashford – Designer Outlet Village	£1 for up to 4 hours				£10
Ashford – Eureka Leisure Park	Free parking for visitors, restrictions on all day/night parking				

Table 2.5: Parking tariffs for local competing towns/city

- 2.6.2 As can be seen, Ashford’s parking tariff is comparable with Folkestone and Maidstone for short term parking. Although it is noted that Maidstone is slightly cheaper. Ashford’s long term parking tariff is cheaper than both Folkestone and Maidstone in the long term car parks such as Dover Place and Edinburgh Road.
- 2.6.3 As to be expected Canterbury’s short term tariffs are more expensive than Ashford’s reflecting the high demand for this type of parking in the city and the encouragement of people to use the park and ride.
- 2.6.4 The comparison of the tariff structures illustrate that Ashford is similarly priced to the local centres (excluding Canterbury) for short term tariffs. Therefore, in terms of encouraging retail activity it is competitive with the local market. However, it is clear from the tariffs that it does not compete with the Designer Outlet Village and Eureka Leisure Park for retail/leisure during the day. This issue is being considered by Ashford Borough Council in trying to link these attractions with the town centre to provide a cohesive leisure/retail offer.
- 2.6.5 It should be noted that the Ashford Borough Council parking tariffs operate from 0700-1800hrs and so the evening leisure market is encouraged in the town.

**2.7 Journey Patterns**

- 2.7.1 Journey to work data was extracted from the 2011 census to understand which area people travelled from by car from outside the Ashford town centre census areas to Ashford to work. The populations were assigned to the nearest node (junction) on the network using GIS software and the quickest route to Ashford was derived using a system called Navtech which holds data relating to vehicle speeds.

- 2.7.2 Journey to work data from 2011 shows the following percentages of traffic arriving via the five main routes into Ashford town centre:



**Figure 2.2: Census data for journey to work relating to 2011**

- 2.7.3 The above information illustrates that the main route for drivers travelling into the town centre is via the main route of A292 (A251 (assuming drivers using Trinity Road rather than A28)/M20 eastbound/A20 eastbound/A28 (S) (assuming drivers do not use Victoria Way)) at around 37%. The routes via Mace Lane/Hythe Road and Romney Marsh Road (south over railway) are similarly balanced with around 25%. Only around half as much use A28 from each direction when compared to the main routes. It is noted that 1% of traffic travelling into Ashford for a journey to work are from the local area to the west of the town and use the A292.
- 2.7.4 Data from the Ashford Park & Ride Study (RPS, August 2005) was extracted for 'other' journey purposes which would relate to leisure or retail, as this information is not available from census data. The number of vehicles on each of these routes was converted to a percentage of the total flow into the town and is shown as follows:



**Figure 2.3: Information taken from P&R Study Report (August 2005) – ‘other’ journeys**

- 2.7.5 The above information shows a similar distribution as the ‘journey to work’ data in that the majority of the traffic uses the A292 route (43%), followed by the M20 westbound (28%) which could use either Hythe Road or A2070. Traffic from the south is around 15 – 35% (depending on whether the M20 westbound traffic uses Badmunstereifel Road or Hythe Road to access town).

## 2.8 Existing on-street parking challenges

- 2.8.1 On street parking in the local residential streets surrounding the town centre is an ongoing challenge. Firstly, the areas which have minimal private driveways such as the area to the north of the town centre (ie Albert Road, Sussex Avenue, Kent Avenue) and to the west (ie Godinton Road) have parking permits for residents. However, as car ownership has increased over the years there is more demand for on street parking which cannot always be accommodated. This has led to extending the permit system to enable residents to park in public car parks. It is understood that a review of on-street markings in the area is also likely to be undertaken to try and extend the number of spaces that could be available.

- 2.8.2 The second issue is one of employee parking in residential streets. An example of this is on Jemmett Road which has a long length of on street parking available. In recent years, restrictions have been introduced in the area closest to the footbridge link into the town centre which enables parking for up to 2 hours Monday to Saturday to reduce commuter parking, but there are still lengths of carriageway available for 'free parking'. Other known areas include Quantock Drive, sections of Maidstone Road (A292) and Mill Court – all of which do not operate residential parking permits or parking restrictions.
- 2.8.3 Both of these issues impact the parking capacity in the town centre car parks. The residential permit holders using the public car park reduce the capacity, albeit often during off-peak times. In addition, the employee parking on street masks the actual demand for day time parking and does not create a regular day time income to assist with sustaining the car parks in the town centre. If parking restrictions were to be put in place then the commuters that currently park on residential streets will have a demand on public car parks which needs to be taken into account for future requirements.
- 2.8.4 Whilst the impact on parking capacity is likely to be minimal in the current market, it could become more of an issue in the future.

## 3 Adopted Policy and Evidence Base Documents

- 3.1.1 The starting point for this study is that there were high levels of development proposed in Ashford town centre which have not taken place. With the new policy context of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) there is a need to respond accordingly.
- 3.1.2 The following chapter summarises the existing adopted policy and evidence base documents with respect to parking in Ashford, and highlights whether it is still relevant to Ashford now. It includes reference to the following documents:
- Town Centre Area Action Plan (TCAAP), February 2010
  - Urban Sites and Infrastructure Development Plan Document (USIDP), October 2012
  - Ashford Park & Ride Study (include a description of the three P&R sites and Smartlink proposals taken from this report and the assumptions it is based on) – 2005
  - Ashford's Future Parking Strategy (November 2006)
  - Ashford's Future Car Parking Strategy: Technical Note (December 2010)
- 3.1.3 Relevant policies taken from the documents above are included in Appendix A.
- 3.1.4 The TCAAP highlights the importance of direct and quick access to retail, leisure and commercial opportunities and the need to carefully balance over-provision of parking which can lead to traffic congestion.
- 3.1.5 This is still relevant to Ashford today and important for the following reasons:
- Retail competition with out of town facilities such as the Designer Outlet Village, Eureka Park and Ashford Retail Park and other town/cities and retail destinations such as Canterbury, Maidstone and Bluewater
  - Whilst Ashford does not suffer from the level of congestion affecting Maidstone and Canterbury, there are clear peak times when localised queuing occurs - routes that could become more congested as a result of development are important to understand – this is considered in chapter 5
  - It is notable that both Maidstone & Canterbury locations have Park & Ride facilities on core routes into the town/city, along with bus lanes through congested areas. The Park & Ride facilities work well in these locations due to the large volume of traffic using the core routes, and to the level of congestion through the town/city. Consideration of park and ride in Ashford is given in chapter 4
  - the economic agenda of revitalising town centres- providing parking in the town centre as a mixture of on street and off street could be seen as a way of promoting levels of activity making the town appear busy and vibrant.
  - Encouraging commercial investment into the town – in particular close to the international train station. The amount of parking can be a key concern for businesses and is a way of remaining competitive with other sites in Kent and the rest of the UK
  - The parking needs for shoppers differ significantly to those of employees. Both groups are price sensitive, but convenience of access to their destination is generally more important to shoppers than it is to employees. Employees are generally prepared to walk a greater distance if the price is right. Shopping is more time critical.

- 3.1.6 The TCAAP sets out how parking for the town centre was to be provided with Park & Ride sites and new multi storey public car parks. Also, how parking standards were to be progressively reduced over time as public transport services improved in quality and frequency.
- 3.1.7 At the time, the policy related to intensive development around the town centre prior to the economic downturn. The level of development was driven by Ashford's status as a "growth area", and the number of residential units and number of jobs imposed on the local authority by Regional Planning Guidance (RPG).
- 3.1.8 However, since that time RPG has been scrapped and development targets are to be set by the local authority. Housing targets are to be determined following a calculation of the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) based upon a number of criteria including historic delivery rates. It is understood the targets are to be reduced and this is subject to the Local Plan review. Notwithstanding the likely reduction in targets, the original aspiration for a high density of development is unlikely to come forward due to economic reasons. The reasons include reduced land values, higher construction costs and lack of demand for certain types of development as well as a lack of government funding for infrastructure.
- 3.1.9 Establishing a gradual tightening of parking policy is appropriate per se, but needs to reflect how this would be managed for those who have already set their travel patterns.
- 3.1.10 There was previously an aspiration for non-residential development in the town centre to utilise the multi-storey car parks, and Park & Ride sites. This was on the basis of a high level of retail and office employment with an estimated 8,150 jobs generated. However, the realistic levels of development are likely to reduce as part of the Local Plan review and as a consequence a reduction in the amount of long term parking required through the day. Chapter 5 considers the parking demand based on likely development scenarios, as well as the form that the parking might take.
- 3.1.11 The USIDP document included a policy which identified a Park and Ride site at The Warren for up to 800 new parking spaces with access from Fougères Way, and bus only access via Drivers roundabout. Since this time development has taken place at this site for a John Lewis At Home store, and the new signalised junction is now operational..
- 3.1.12 It also suggested that this site would have the highest potential use and that the scale and cost of the A20 Drivers roundabout and M20, J9 improvements had been reduced on the basis of future car journeys being intercepted by the Park & Ride scheme.
- 3.1.13 As development has not come forward in the town centre as envisaged (due in main to the economic downturn and lack of developer appetite), there has been no requirement for the P&R to be delivered. With the revised level of development considered in the emerging Local Plan 2030 there is a need to re-evaluate the requirement for a P&R and consideration is given to this in the following chapter.
- 3.1.14 Ashford's Future Parking Strategy (November 2006) promoted the need for more sustainable modes of travel such as park and ride, particularly for commuters and long stay visitors to limit the peak hour traffic flows. In addition, significant levels of short stay parking was proposed close to the town centre in the form of multi storey car parks to support the existing and expanding commercial centre. It also highlighted that there was a need to restrain town centre parking to manage traffic flows.
- 3.1.15 Table 3 of the 2006 strategy sets out the future parking spaces and suggests that in 2021 long stay parking is required for 4950 vehicles and short stay parking for 4000 vehicles. This relates to development of 20,330 residential units and 17,500 jobs.
- 3.1.16 The strategy set out three sets of parking – 'park and shop', 'park and walk' and 'park and ride'.

- 3.1.17 The 'park and shop' related to the County Square development which has now been constructed and is operational. The extension was said to generate the need for up to an additional 1000 car parking spaces with 500 required off site. The off site spaces were provided at Dover Place as a temporary car park (as Dover Place is due to be developed as the Commercial Quarter close to the train station). In addition, the 'park and shop' related to the redevelopment of Park Mall which has not occurred.
- 3.1.18 From local knowledge it is clear there is minimal demand for retail parking at the weekend at Dover Place, and that County Square has sufficient capacity to deal with the existing demand for most of the year. This suggests that the predictions for County Square were not realised based upon the levels of development in the town centre and so caution is required moving forward.
- 3.1.19 Again, as with the P&R facilities, the proposed multi storey car parks have not been delivered as development has not progressed as envisaged (mainly due to the economic conditions and lack of developer appetite). With the reduction in development quantum included in the emerging Local Plan 2030 there is a need to review how much parking is necessary and what form it should take. This is considered in chapters 5 and 6.
- 3.1.20 The update of Ashford's Future Car Parking Strategy in December 2010 reviewed the parking demand as a result of a reduction in development quanta.
- 3.1.21 The approach taken to determine the amount of parking required in the Park & Ride sites was based on calculating the unrestrained parking demand for all development quanta in the revised Town Centre AAP. Then a constrained parking demand was calculated on the basis of a target level of traffic accommodated on the 'ring road' surrounding Ashford (85% of 2003 traffic levels). It was then suggested that 50% of the difference between the unrestrained and constrained parking levels defined the number of vehicles that would use the park and ride sites. The other 50% being catered for by modes other than car journeys to either town or park and ride.
- 3.1.22 This parking review now considers the unrestrained demand only as modelling is due to be completed as part of the review of Ashford town's AAP and Core Strategy. Our review also takes account of a reduced quantum of development which is set out in the following chapters and assumes that only commercial land uses would generate demand in park and ride sites.
- 3.1.23 In summary, this chapter summarises the starting position based on previous development aspirations for Ashford with 'growth area' status. However, with changes in national policy and a focus on deliverability, the previous development quanta has been reconsidered. This assessment is set out later in chapter 5 which highlights the implications on parking associated with the planning assumptions likely to be included in the current review of the Local Plan.

## 4 Review of delivery measures proposed in previous strategy

4.1.1 The previous parking policies and strategy foresaw a key role for the use of park and ride and new multi storey car parks in Ashford. Given that these have largely not been brought forward (other than the County Square extension), it is therefore important to review whether these instruments should be promoted through the Local Plan. This chapter is dedicated to a review of the previous Park & Ride Study and highlights how the sites could be taken forward (or not as the case may be). We then consider the previous proposals in relation to provision of new multi storey car parks and discuss the relevance of this policy today. In Section 5 we then go on to summarise the overall parking requirements needed for the development outlined in the emerging Local Plan 2030 and includes consideration of appropriate forms of parking.

### 4.2 Park & Ride Study (RPS, 2005)

4.2.1 The Ashford Park & Ride Study was undertaken in 2005 by RPS and was based on projections of an increase of 31,000 dwellings and 28,000 jobs in Ashford for the period 2001-2031. It proposed three Park & Ride sites at The Warren, Chart Green (associated with Chilmington Green) and Sevington (associated with Cheesemans Green).

4.2.2 The report considered existing people travelling to Ashford who would use the P&R facilities as well as the increase due to a larger population and higher employment. Roadside surveys for existing levels of travel from the edge of the urban area to Ashford town centre, showed the existing potential park and ride demand to be 14,000 people with 19% (2,700 people) relating to work based trips and 81% (11,300 people) to shopping / leisure / personal business.

4.2.3 In stated preference surveys, 79% of workers stated they had free parking at their workplace. Therefore, this reduces the potential park and ride demand for work trips to 567 people (79% of 2,700 people) as those with free parking are unlikely to pay to use the park and ride. This leaves total demand of 11,867 trips per day.

4.2.4 At the time of writing the Ashford Park & Ride study, the County Square extension had not been constructed with the associated retail parking and Dover Place was not an operational surface car park. At that time, it was concluded that with the existing short stay car parks full, the County Square development could effectively create a demand for park and rides. It was also suggested that with the increased retail offer in the town that average durations could increase which could therefore increase overall demand for the park and rides.

4.2.5 It now seems likely that the recent changes in retailing, including the growth of online models and closures of many high street outlets, mean that significantly increased levels of retail in the town centre are unlikely to be supported by the market. Instead, policy in Ashford town is likely to promote other forms of development to reflect its strengths as a business hub and improving daytime and night time leisure facilities for the residential growth envisaged. Therefore, it is anticipated that any demand at the park and ride sites would predominantly relate to workers.

4.2.6 The 2005 RPS Study showed that:

- Only 20% of traffic in the Ashford transport model area had the town centre as an origin or destination;
- Levels of congestion were minimal, with short journey times between the urban fringe and the town centre;
- 79% of those travelling into the town centre for work had access to free parking;

- In terms of both time and money, Park & Ride would be “more expensive” than driving into the town centre;
- There was a total demand of 1,805 daily trips based on all the main radial corridors into Ashford;
- Increased parking charges would be the most significant method of encouraging drivers to use Park & Ride;
- No bus priority measures would be needed due to the lack of congestion;
- Annual operating costs per bus were assumed to be approximately £80,000;
- The Warren site would attract the highest patronage, with 55% of the total demand in the base case;
- In the base case, all sites have operating ratios of less than 1, indicating that revenue would be insufficient to cover costs, and all sites have a negative Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) even if higher parking charges, bus priority and fare reductions are implemented;
- A positive BCR could be achieved at The Warren site only with a combination of up to 50% higher parking charges, bus priority saving 2 minutes of journey time, fare reductions and movement of car parking spaces from County Square to the park and ride site – a combination which is highly unlikely to be delivered; and
- Regardless of all the above, a strategy was recommended for development of The Warren site in the short term and at Chilmington Green and Sevington in the longer term with up to 1,000 spaces at each.

### 4.3 Success of Park & Ride

4.3.1 There are a number of factors that make Park & Ride operations a success:

- Proximity to, and visibility from, key radial corridors;
- Competitive Park & Ride pricing as compared to short stay and all day parking in the town centre;
- The availability of town centre parking, the suitability of the road network and the level of background congestion;
- Competitive journey times when compared to the car, aided by extensive and effective bus priority measures;
- Inclusion of key demand attractors in the service (e.g. convenient town centre stops, railway station, hospital etc);
- Delivery of a quality product (high specification vehicles, suitable terminal facilities and town centre bus stops);
- Potential for the site to be served by existing bus routes; and
- The potential for contra-flow or additional demand movements on the service (for example, by aligning the site to major residential development or employment areas)
- Ideally a significant number of casual visitors such as tourists visiting the centre due to historic attractions or the retail/leisure offer

- 4.3.2 Of the sites envisaged in the 2005 study, only The Warren (M20 J9) and Sevington (M20 J10) can be described as being in proximity to “key radial corridors”. These sites may, however, divert trips from other corridors such as the A28 and the A2070.
- 4.3.3 Short stay and all day parking costs in the town centre are currently not sufficiently prohibitive to make use of Park & Ride comparatively attractive. The three most successful Park & Ride networks in Britain – Oxford, Cambridge and York – charge £23, £24 and £18 respectively for all day parking, whereas the maximum cost in Ashford is currently £10 (but more commonly £4-£5). Short stay parking (for 2 hours) costs as little as £2, which would have a significant bearing on the ability of any Park & Ride to generate sufficient income to cover its operating costs. In addition, the analysis indicates that a significant proportion of businesses in the town centre have free parking (either in private non-residential car parks or public car parks with permits) which nullifies the financial benefit of Park & Ride for this potential market.
- 4.3.4 Whilst Ashford town centre suffers from congestion at peak times, it is not an endemic situation which would deter driving into the town centre. Whereas in Oxford, Cambridge, York and even potentially Canterbury, potential users are likely to be already aware that the historic street layout, expensive parking, inability to find a space and congestion are disincentives to driving all the way into the centre; this cannot currently be said to be the case in Ashford.
- 4.3.5 On the “key radial corridors” which could be potentially served by Park & Ride, there is currently no bus priority. On the corridor from Sevington there would appear to be limited scope for significant bus lanes, although there may be more scope on the route from The Warren as this is primarily dual carriageway. As a result of this, there is likely to be no time benefit for users of the Park & Ride, or at least too much of a significant disbenefit to outweigh other factors such as the cost and availability of parking in the town centre.
- 4.3.6 The key travel attractors in Ashford are concentrated in or around the town centre, with the exception of William Harvey Hospital and tertiary education facilities. The commercial and retail centre and the railway station are within easy walking distance of bus stops.
- 4.3.7 Facilities at other Park & Ride sites vary considerably and are not always commensurate with demand – for example, both Oxford and Exeter have high quality, well used Park & Ride services, but whilst Oxford has terminal buildings at each of its sites, Exeter’s sites use standard bus shelters. However, there is no doubt that attractive terminal facilities can add value to the Park & Ride offer, especially if frequencies are slightly lower than desired or there are times when no bus is scheduled to be waiting at the stop.
- 4.3.8 Table 4.1 below indicates the frequent bus routes that currently operate close to the proposed Park & Ride sites:

Site	Route	Destinations	Mon-Sat Daytime Frequency
The Warren	E	Ashford, Eureka Park, Orbital Park	15 mins
	10X	Ashford, Maidstone	60 mins
Chilmington Green	2	Ashford, Tenterden	60 mins
	A	Singleton, Ashford	10 mins
Sevington	E	Ashford, Eureka Park	30 mins
	K	William Harvey Hospital, Park Farm	30 mins

Table 4.1: Existing bus frequencies close to the three park and ride sites

- 4.3.9 The table above indicates that all three sites are close to or on existing bus routes. The Warren in particular is already on a bus route which runs at a frequency of 4 buses per hour and has a direct route to town. The sites at Chilmington Green and Sevington are more distant from the network but there is still potential to amend existing services to operate to sites at these locations – the principal downside is that both these routes are currently quite convoluted and therefore journey times to the town centre are sub-optimal.
- 4.3.10 There are therefore opportunities to extend existing bus services to Park & Ride sites which may provide a lower cost alternative to a dedicated service. This may be important, as significant increases in bus industry costs have arisen since 2005. The Park & Ride Study envisaged operating costs of approximately £80k per vehicle per annum, whereas the cost today is closer to £130-150k per vehicle per annum dependent on local circumstances. This will have a significant bearing on the ability of a Park & Ride service to become commercially viable, given there is a limit on the maximum fare which can be charged when town centre parking charges are so low.
- 4.3.11 The 2005 Park & Ride Study identified base case negative BCRs for all three sites at The Warren, Sevington and Chilmington Green, even with the high levels of forecast town centre development in the Core Strategy. Given significant increases in operating costs since then and an inability to raise revenue as a result of low parking charges, it is considered unlikely that any of the three previously identified Park & Ride sites are financially viable or sustainable as a standalone product within the Local Plan period and potentially beyond that
- 4.3.12 It has been previously noted that there is potential for existing services to be amended to serve Park & Ride sites, and in addition to this two potential Park & Ride sites are located where significant development is proposed:
- The A28 site is adjacent to the Chilmington Green development area where up to 5,750 homes will be built as a new “garden suburb”; and
  - The Sevington site (M20 J10) is adjacent to the Finberry (Cheeseman’s Green) development area where up to 1,180 homes will be built.
- 4.3.13 In these instances, whilst Park & Ride is not currently expected to be a viable option as a stand-alone service, working in combination with a development proposal of this magnitude means that a dual purpose solution could be introduced – the benefits of which would be:
- Promoters of Chilmington Green and Finberry development schemes will already be required to introduce and fund a bus service between their area and Ashford town centre;
  - Such a bus service could also serve a Park & Ride site, meaning that the complementary operation of bus services increase the chances of achieving commercial viability;
  - Whilst Park & Ride revenue would be insufficient to fund a dedicated service of sufficient frequency or quality, it could make a significant contribution to a wider revenue stream; and
  - The promoters of Chilmington Green and Finberry would also benefit through a reduction in revenue payments during the pump priming period.
- 4.3.14 In summary, it is recommended that Park & Ride does not form part of the solution within the Local Plan period. Should a park and ride site be required in the future (beyond the proposed Local Plan horizon) – perhaps as an intervention to deal with congestion or to allow for flexibility should Ashford develop beyond expectations – then the best of the currently proposed sites is that at The Warren. However, it would be for the Local Plan (at that time) to identify the best site for P&R in general, given the spatial pattern of development and commuting journeys that it is wished to intercept. It is acknowledged that long term

safeguarding of the site at the Warrant may be difficult should development proposals come forward in the meantime.

#### **4.4 New Multi Storey Car Parks envisaged in previous strategy**

4.4.1 As discussed in the previous chapter, the need for new multi storey car parks located around the edge of the town centre was driven by high growth expectations. They have not been built as development has not progressed as envisaged. This is mainly related to the economic downturn, and specifically to:

- land assembly difficulties where plots are controlled by multiple landowners
- reliance on the market when developers have no appetite to redevelop due to low returns on investment (or simply do not have the investment available)
- Land is in active use
- Difficulties obtaining public finance during the recession and to current monetary policy on spending
- Land that is subject to planning permission that was never likely to come forward in the way envisaged by that permission and allied s106 agreement due to viability issues (ie the former Powergen site).

4.4.2 Due to the reduction in development quanta proposed in the Local Plan 2030 from the previous Core Strategy / AAP it is unlikely that a number of new (particularly standalone) multi storey car parks are required in the locations previously envisaged. However, a multi storey car park could still be included as a potential form of parking if it was integrated into a development scheme for a site. Options include provision on part of a site or with vertical mixed use (for example residential and/or retail and parking combined).

4.4.3 Further work is considered necessary to review the funding and revenue forecasts based on the emerging Local Plan 2030 to determine viability. However, this is beyond the scope of this review.

4.4.4 Setting aside the issue of viability, there are a number of advantages and disadvantages to using multi storey car parks as a form of parking in the town centre and these are considered to be:

- Advantages: multi storey car parks can be operated remotely from a control room with CCTV for added security; they are easy to patrol and control compared to multiple surface car park sites spread out across the town; they minimise land take when compared to similar sized surface car parks and can be used to increase capacity by constructing over surface car parks
- Disadvantages: multi storey car parks can be seen as ugly, imposing buildings but this is very much subjective and dependent on location and design; the use of multi storey car parks concentrates vehicles in one place which can cause localised congestion – particularly if many vehicles arrive/ leave the building at one time (ie office workers); multi storey car parks can be a maintenance liability – this is particularly so when compared to surface car parks as owners of multi storey car parks have the maintenance of the structure itself to deal with as well as the surfacing, and payment systems; lack of phone signal in underground multi storey car parks which prevents the use of mobile phone parking systems (this can also impact on car clubs if using mobile phone systems to activate them); safety fears if used at night (unless adequate security measures are provided including potential staffing).

4.4.5 The key to success of a multi storey car park is considered to include the following:

- Proximity to, and visibility from, key corridors in the town centre;
- Competitive pricing as compared to other car parks in the town centre;
- The availability of town centre parking, the suitability of the road network and the level of background congestion close to the car park compared to others;
- Close to key demand attractors (for retail/leisure activities) but not so important to commuters who are more willing to walk longer distances if the price is right;
- Delivery of a quality product (high specification facilities which include convenient and reliable payment systems, short, attractive and convenient pedestrian routes to attractors, good lighting and secure surroundings);
- Clear signage to the car park, and importantly variable messaging signs indicating the number of spaces available

4.4.6 Further detail on the parking demand in Ashford town centre is considered in the next chapter, and the list of interventions in chapter 7 highlight the potential options for parking in terms of number of spaces provided within a zone. As to whether this takes the form of a multi storey car parking remains dependent on how development is phased, and crucially whether the model is viable.

## 5 Future Aspirations

5.1.1 The following chapter sets out the quantum of development to be considered. This has been tested to illustrate how the review of the Local Plan would impact on parking and is based on the current progress of the Plan. Whilst Ashford is to continue to grow, there is a change in the type of land use in the town with a focus on encouraging commercial, leisure and residential development close to the train station. The current requirements to plan for Objectively Assessed Need (OAN), suggests a reduction in the previous aspirations for the number of households in the town centre.

### 5.2 Parking Demand – Town Centre

5.2.1 To understand the parking demand associated with the future development of Ashford there is a need to set out some parameters for development quantum and mix. Rather than determine the demand for an individual site, four distinct zones have been considered which are bisected by Wellesley Road/Station Road and the train line. The zones are illustrated below and broadly relate to the areas set out in the Town Centre Area Action Plan (Town Centre Quarter, Southern Expansion Quarter, International Station Quarter and Commercial/Civic Quarter):



Figure 5.1: Development zones for Ashford Town Centre

5.2.2 Development across the zones will come forward in a phased manner and the implications of the phasing will need to be reviewed. Each land use will have different parking demands and profiles. These will need to be reflected in the parking provision within the town and the programme for how this is brought forward.

5.2.3 The end state scenarios to be tested are included in the following table:

	Retail / Leisure (GFA, sqm)		Commercial (GFA, sqm)		Residential (units)	Other (GFA, sqm)
	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 1 & 2	Scenario 1 & 2
<b>Town Centre Quarter</b>	2,250 cinema; 12,000 A3 retail; 2,500 hotel	2,250 cinema; 8,000 A3 retail; 2,500 hotel	-	-	250	1,500 education (college)
<b>Commercial/Civic Quarter</b>	-	-	35,000	25,000	150	-
<b>Southern Expansion Quarter</b>	2,000 foodstore; 2,500 hotel	2,000 foodstore; 2,500 hotel	-	-	750	-
<b>International Station Quarter</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	2,250 cinema; 12,000 A3 retail; 2,000 foodstore; 5,000 hotel	2,250 cinema; 8,000 A3 retail; 2,000 foodstore; 5,000 hotel	35,000	25,000	1,150	1,500 education (college)

Table 5.1: Development scenarios tested

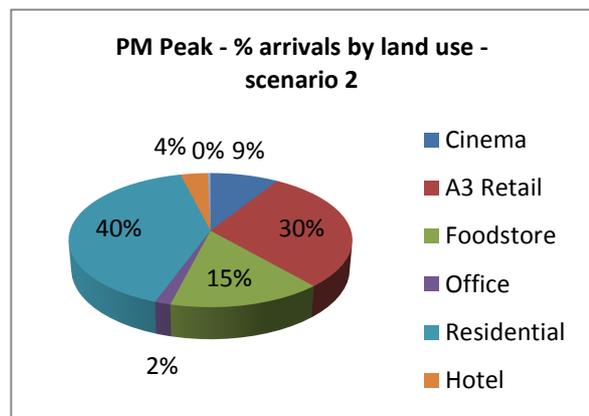
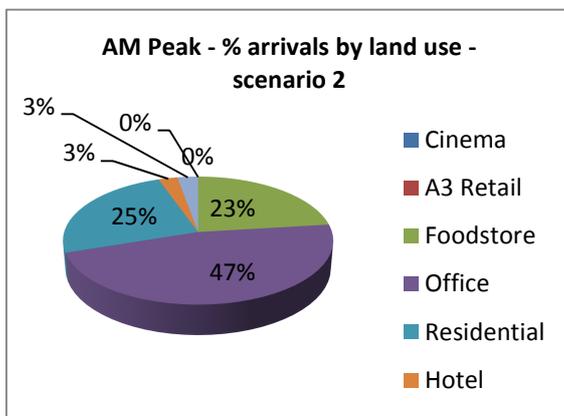
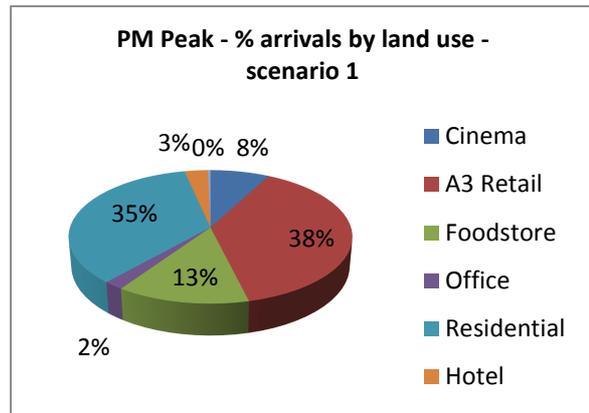
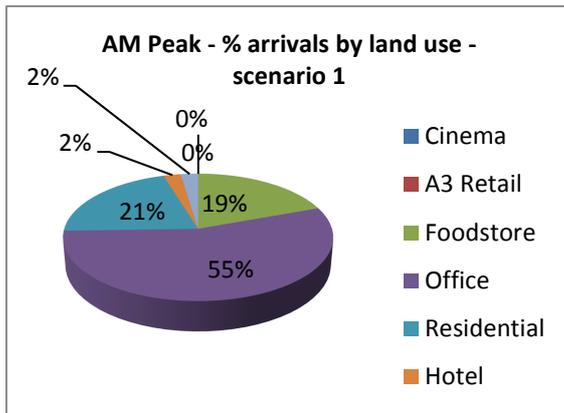
5.2.4 To calculate the possible demand for parking, the number of trips associated with each land use above was considered in the peak hours during the weekday as being the worst case. The trip generation was calculated using trip rates for the various land uses extracted from the TRICS database applied to the quantum of development (as set out in the above table). The trip rates for each land use and the output from TRICS is included at Appendix B.

5.2.5 Applying the trip rates to the quanta defined in Table 5.1 suggests the following \*trip generation arriving to the various land uses in the AM and PM peak:

- 590 vehicles in the AM peak and 946 vehicles in the PM peak for scenario 1
- 497 vehicles in the AM peak and 820 vehicles in the PM peak for scenario 2

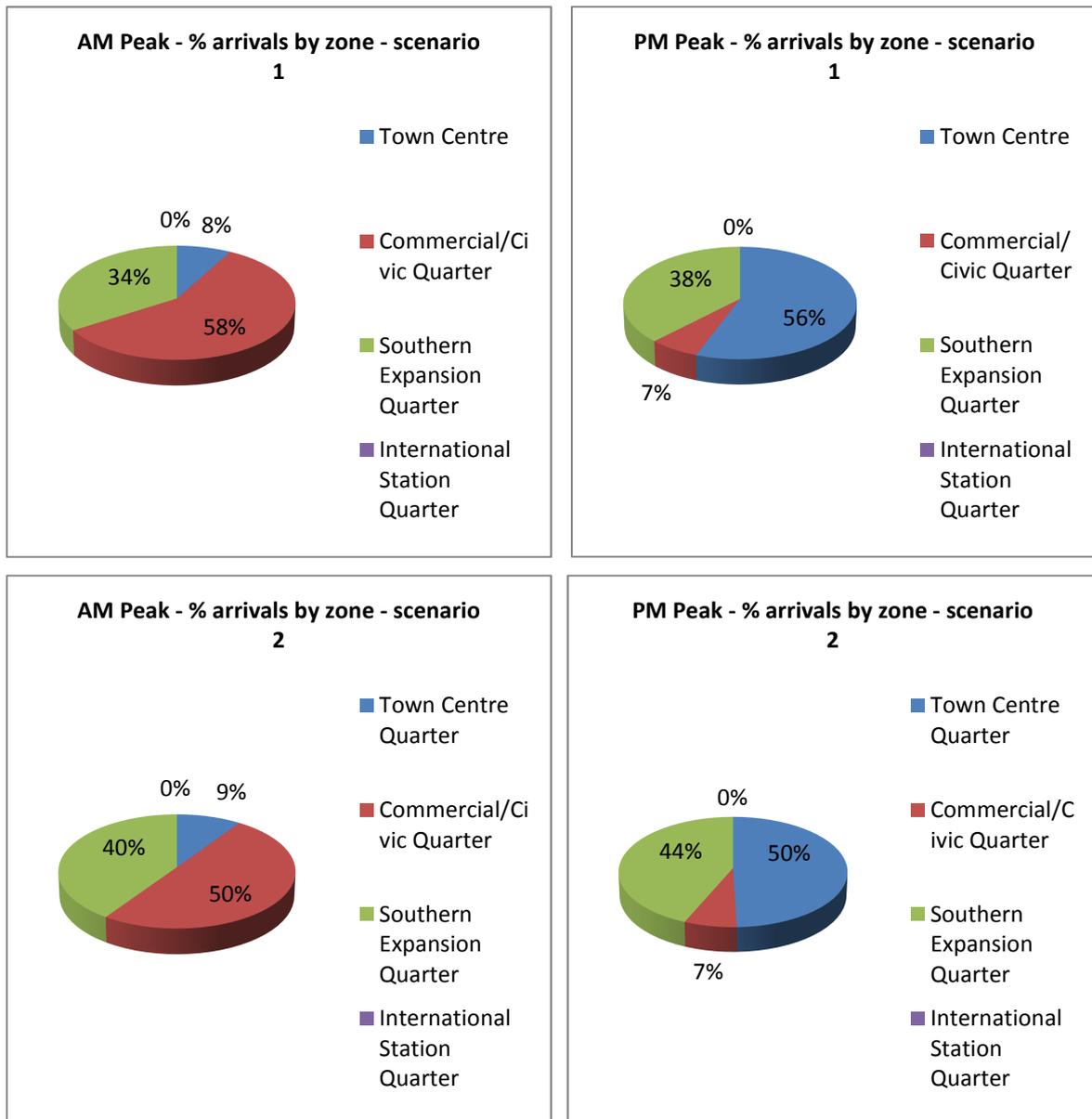
*\*It should be noted that the trip generation is an estimate and should not be used as a definitive figure – there are many underlying assumptions in the trip rates taken from the national TRICS database and should be considered with care. The trip rates used are considered reasonable for use in this work as this is a high level strategy rather than detailed traffic modelling work. Although we quote precise numbers in this section these are to be taken as a guide only.*

5.2.6 The following pie charts illustrate the percentage of vehicles associated with each land use for the AM and PM peak and each zone:



5.2.7 As can be seen, the land use with the highest amount of arrivals in the morning peak is office, followed by the foodstore and residential land uses (which combined are similar to the level of office trip generation).

5.2.8 In the evening peak, the highest amount of arrivals is A3 retail in scenario 1 followed by residential trips and residential in scenario 2 followed by A3 retail. However, it should be noted that the trips associated with the retail are likely to be linked to the cinema which would reduce the overall number of trips.



5.2.9 The pie charts above illustrate that the commercial quarter has the highest number of vehicles arriving in the morning peak which clearly relates to the office land use in this zone. In the evening peak, the town centre quarter has the highest number of vehicles arriving which mainly relate to the cinema and the associated A3 retail facilities.

### 5.3 Parking Demand – train commuters

5.3.1 In terms of future trends for train commuter parking, Southeastern have advised that as ‘rule of thumb’ 5-10% of people moving into an area would use the train to commute to work. This is dependent on a range of factors including the length of time to reach London and other local employment centres. In addition, information included in the 2005 RPS report for the P&R suggested a mode share of 4.5% for public transport (both bus and train) which was taken from the Ashford Area Transport Strategy (AATS).

- 5.3.2 To understand the current situation in Ashford, the total number of households in the Borough and the number of people travelling to work by train was taken from the 2011 census. It showed there were 47,787 households and 3,755 people travelling to work by train. Hence 7.86% of households generate a train trip to work. Clearly, not all would travel by car and park at or near the station. Therefore, to understand the demand for parking associated with the train commuters information was taken from National Rail Travel Survey (NRTS) data for two different types of stations. This data is from 2001, but the access mode proportions are not considered likely to change much and are illustrated as follows:
- Canterbury (East and West stations) - 13.7% accessing the station by car, 'parked at or near station' (i.e. not simply dropped off as a passenger). This is a situation with a fairly restricted parking situation.
  - Three Bridges in Crawley (Sussex) – 31.7% accessing the station by car. This is a fairly major station with a reasonable amount of parking.
- 5.3.3 The above provides an indication of the range of car-driver share for accessing a station (from home) that is considered fairly typical. If you applied a driver share of around 30% (top end) for Ashford from the above, to the 8% of households generating a trip to work by train, then you get about 2% of households generating a car trip that parks at (or near) a station for a rail trip to work. This would seem reasonable for an urban area where there are other mode options available, and potential congestion in the area discouraging driving to the train station car parking. However, for rural areas it is considered more realistic to assume that all of the 8% of households would drive and park.
- 5.3.4 To understand the proposed number of households in the borough, the indicative OANs testing for the Local Plan has been used which suggests around 12,740 homes. An assumption of 7%/93% has been made for the split between rural locations and urban locations on the basis of the previous household numbers given in the UDP, the adopted Chilmington Green Area Action Plan, Cheeseman's Green AAP: Options & Issues report and Tenterden and Rural DPD (12,250 homes in the urban area and 861 in Tenterden & rural areas). In addition, sensitivities have been considered for 15% and 20% rural housing.
- 5.3.5 On the basis of the above (using 2% applied to the number of households in the urban area), there is the potential for 237 extra vehicles parked in Ashford to use the train.
- 5.3.6 Using 8% for the rural sites applied to the 892 homes suggests 71 extra vehicles, as a worst case (not all drivers from rural areas will use Ashford International train station).
- 5.3.7 Therefore, the total number of extra parking spaces required for the additional train passengers in Ashford Borough is estimated to be 308.
- 5.3.8 The sensitivity testing for a rural/urban split of 15%/85% and 20%/80% in the total number of sites suggests an extra 369 and 408 parking spaces, respectively. Therefore, the range of estimates is 308 – 408 extra spaces are required for train commuters associated with the proposed increase in households in the borough.
- 5.3.9 It is anticipated that those commuting on the train into London would be arriving and departing outside of the peak hours of 0800-0900 and 1700-1800hrs. Therefore, the number of vehicles using the various routes into Ashford would not simply be those arriving to the various quarters as illustrated above plus the traffic associated with the train commuters into London. However, these figures illustrate the additional traffic associated with redevelopment in Ashford, and highlight the large parking demand required through the day for the commercial land use and commuting traffic.
- 5.3.10 The above future parking demand for the uplift in commuters due to residential development in the borough is considered robust as those located in Chilmington Green and Cheeseman's Green are more likely to have a lower mode share of drivers compared to other locations in

the borough due to the high quality bus services proposed. Also, the total number of units include dwellings in the town centre and residents from this location would most likely not use the car to drive to the train station car parks. The robustness of the figures therefore makes an allowance for additional parking requirements such as:

- the potential relocation of commuter parking from other ad hoc sites such as at the private car park located on the corner of Beaver Lane
- the potential relocation of commuter parking from residential streets surrounding Ashford town centre – for example, if parking restrictions were implemented
- the potential demand from people outside of the borough accessing Ashford train station from the east – however, this is not considered to have a large impact as improvements to train station parking in the east of Kent and access to rail services connecting to the high speed service are likely to discourage ‘rail heading’

## 5.4 Parking locations

- 5.4.1 It is important to consider each zone in turn so as to fully understand how much traffic is likely to arrive in the area in the morning peak, to inform discussions on where car parking should ideally be located. Therefore, the following paragraphs consider the distribution of the traffic based on the generation above.

### **Commercial/Civic Quarter (and station)**

- 5.4.2 The main zone for attracting traffic into the town during the morning peak (based on the quantum of development considered in the zones) is the commercial/civic quarter. The additional parking and traffic associated with this zone during the peak hour is estimated to be 342 vehicles for the worst case scenario 1 (326 associated with the office land use and 16 with the residential). In addition, the increase in train commuting needs to be taken into account as it is located so close to the Commercial/Civic Quarter.
- 5.4.3 The evening peak arrivals associated with the development at the commercial/civic quarter is estimated to be 62 vehicles (43 associated with residential and 19 with the employment land use).
- 5.4.4 Using the traffic distribution as illustrated in section 2.7 for existing journeys to work taken from the 2011 census for the employment uses, and the distribution for ‘other’ trips (as taken from 2005 RPS report) applied to the residential land use, the majority of the traffic will be entering from the north via A292 with the remaining traffic split between Hythe Road/Mace Lane, A28 Canterbury Road and Romney Marsh Road. The following table illustrates the distribution which has been applied to the number of vehicles estimated to arrive at the Commercial/Civic Quarter to provide an illustration of the traffic associated with the additional parking demand generated by the development in the peak periods:

Routes into the town	% arrivals (employment)	% arrivals ('other')	Vehicles (No.) associated with Commercial/Civic Quarter - AM Peak	Vehicles (No.) associated with Commercial/Civic Quarter – PM Peak	Train Commuters
*New Street (A292)	38% (assuming A251 use Trinity Road)	43%	124+7	7+18	129-171
**Hythe Road/Mace Lane	half of the 24% using J10 roundabout	8% + half of the 20% arriving at M20, J10	39+3	2+8	63-84
**Romney Marsh Road	half of the 24% using J10 roundabout + 23%	15% + half of the 20% arriving at M20, J10	114+4	7+11	69-92
Canterbury Road (A28)	15%	14%	49+2	3+6	46-61
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>308-408</b>

Table 4.7: Trip generation by route to Commercial/Civic Quarter

\*Assuming all the A28 (S) traffic use A292 rather than Victoria Way and Romney Marsh route and all A251 traffic use Trinity Road to access the A292 route

\*\*Assuming half of the traffic using J10 roundabout use Hythe Road/Mace Lane and the other half use Romney Marsh Road route

- 5.4.5 As can be seen from the table, the number of vehicles heading towards the Commercial/Civic Quarter from the north (southbound along Wellesley Road/Station Road) would relate to the New Street (A292) route, Hythe Road/Mace Lane route and Canterbury Road (A28) route. This would put additional pressure on Wellesley Road/Mace Lane traffic signalised junction as the traffic from the north west and east would converge at this point (around 265 vehicles).

### Southern Expansion

- 5.4.6 The second main zone for attracting traffic into the town during the morning peak (based on the quantum of development considered in the zones) is the Southern Expansion Quarter. The traffic associated with this zone is estimated to be 201 vehicles (115 associated with the superstore, 7 with the hotel and 80 with the residential).
- 5.4.7 Consideration has also been given to the evening peak, as there is a large demand due to the leisure land uses and residential units. The traffic associated with this zone is estimated to be 357 vehicles (217 associated with residential, 126 with the superstore and 15 with the hotel).
- 5.4.8 Using the traffic distribution as illustrated in section 2.7 for journeys relating to retail/leisure, the majority of the traffic will be entering from the north via A292 (43%) with the remaining

traffic split between Hythe Road/Mace Lane, A28 Canterbury Road and Romney Marsh Road. The following table illustrates the distribution which has been applied to the number of vehicles estimated to arrive at the Southern Expansion Quarter to provide an illustration of the potential traffic on the network associated with the additional parking demand for the peak period:

Routes into the town	% arrivals	Vehicles (No.) associated with Southern Expansion Quarter – AM peak	Vehicles (No.) associated with Southern Expansion Quarter – PM peak
New Street (A292)	43%	86	154
Hythe Road/Mace Lane (assuming half of the traffic using M20, J10 arrive on this route)	8% + half of the 20% arriving at M20, J10	36	64
Romney Marsh Road (assuming 50% of M20, J10 traffic uses this route)	15% + half of the 20% arriving at M20, J10	50	89
Canterbury Road (A28)	14%	28	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>200 (due to rounding)</b>	<b>357</b>

Table 4.8: Trip generation by route to Southern Expansion Quarter

#### Town Centre Quarter (and station)

- 5.4.9 The main zone for attracting traffic into the town during the evening peak (based on the quantum of development considered in the zones) is the Town Centre Quarter. The traffic associated with this zone is estimated to be 527 vehicles (364 associated with the restaurant land use, 73 with the cinema, 15 with the hotel, 72 with the residential and 3 for the education land use).
- 5.4.10 In the morning peak, the arrivals to this site are minimal with only 47 vehicles (27 relating to residential, 7 for the hotel and 14 for the education).
- 5.4.11 Using the traffic distribution as illustrated in section 2.7 for journeys relating to 'other', the majority of the traffic will be entering from the north via A292 (43%) with the remaining traffic split between Hythe Road/Mace Lane, A28 Canterbury Road and Romney Marsh Road. The following table illustrates the distribution which has been applied to the number of vehicles estimated to arrive at the Town Centre Quarter to provide an illustration of the potential traffic on the network (note that an assumption of 25% of train commuters would park in this area, with the remaining 75% in the International Station Quarter):

Routes into the town	% arrivals	Vehicles (No.) associated with Town Centre Quarter – AM peak	Vehicles (No.) associated with Town Centre Quarter – PM peak	Commuters (assume 25% use TCQ)
New Street (A292)	43%	20	227	32-43
Hythe Road/Mace Lane (assuming half of the traffic using M20,J10 arrive on this route)	8% + half of the 20% arriving at M20, J10	8	95	16-21
Romney Marsh Road (assuming 50% of M20, J10 traffic uses this route)	15% + half of the 20% arriving at M20, J10	12	132	17-23
Canterbury Road (A28)	14%	7	74	18-15
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>527</b>	<b>77-102</b>

Table 4.9: Trip generation by route to Town Centre Quarter

- 5.4.12 It should be noted that the traffic generation calculations shown above do not take account of the linked trips associated with the A3 retail and cinema. This is because the trip rates taken from the TRICS database assume the sites are standing in isolation. However, for the purposes of this report it is deemed appropriate to take a worst case scenario as it is a high level review that is being undertaken. Any future planning applications for this site would need to take account of linked trips and undertake a robust parking accumulation assessment to understand the parking profile through the day/evening, and perhaps consider the amount of linked trips based on surveys undertaken at Eureka Park (on the basis that this would be a similar model to the proposed site) albeit further out from the town centre.

## Cumulative Development

5.4.13 The following table illustrates the arrivals for the morning and evening peaks for the total traffic generation associated with the four zones, and the train commuter demand in the morning peak:

Routes into the town	Vehicles (No.) associated with all quarters – AM peak	Vehicles (No.) associated with all quarters – PM peak	Train Commuters
New Street (A292)	237	406	129-171
Hythe Road/Mace Lane (assuming half of the traffic using M20,J10 arrive on this route)	86	169	63-84
Romney Marsh Road (assuming 50% of M20, J10 traffic uses this route)	180	239	69-92
Canterbury Road (A28)	86	133	46-61
<b>Total</b>	<b>589</b>	<b>947</b>	<b>308-408</b>

Table 4.10: Trip generation by route for all quarters

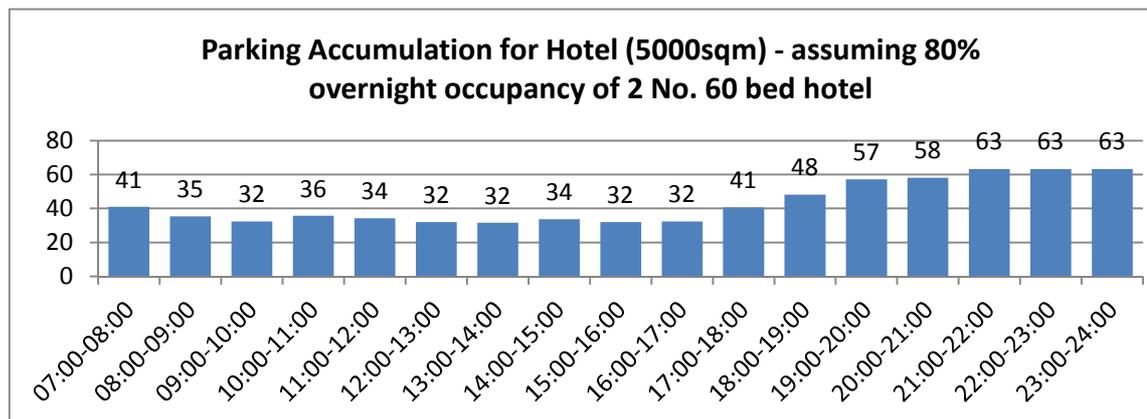
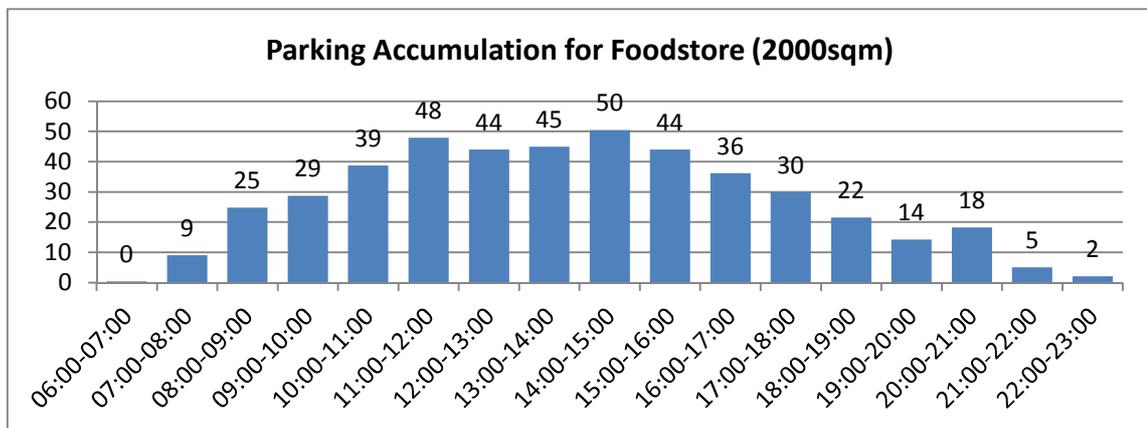
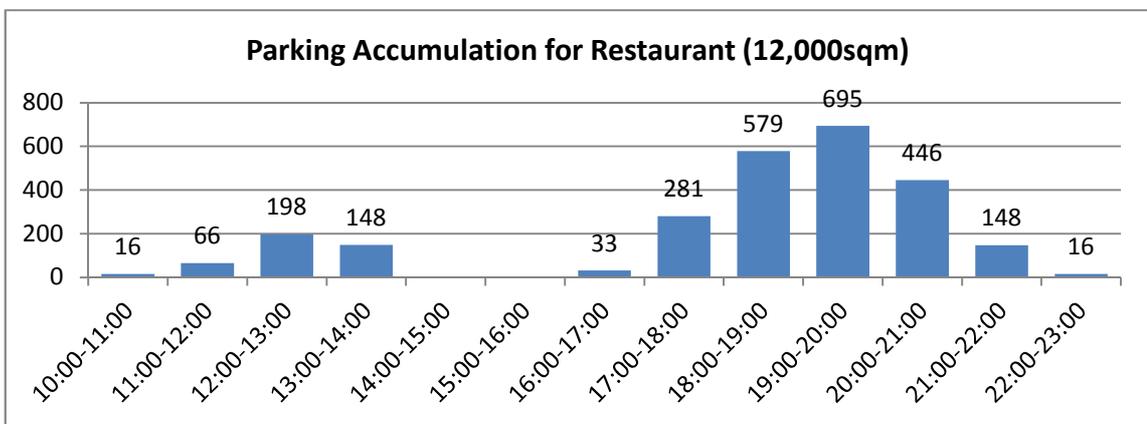
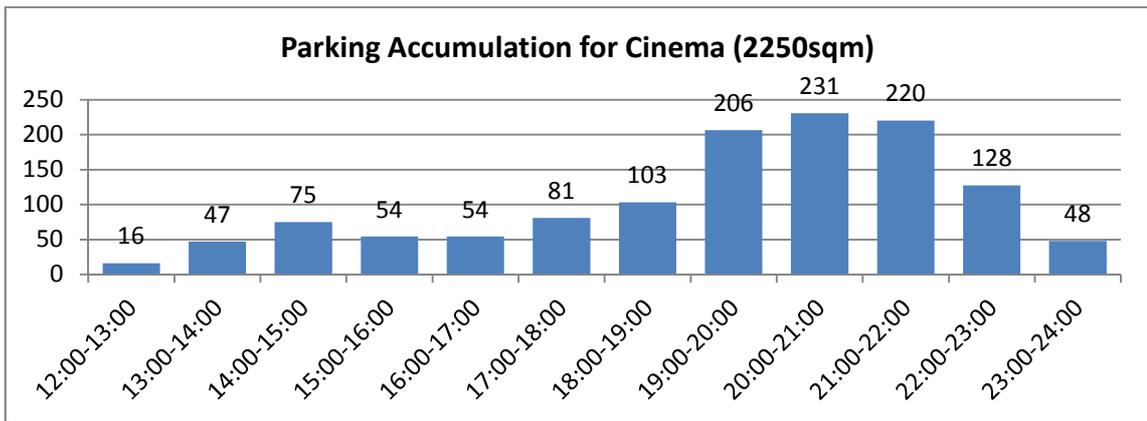
5.4.14 The above table shows the number of vehicles arriving in the morning peak is 897-997 which includes residential and non-residential development, and uplift in train commuters. This demand is unconstrained and relates to trip generation estimated from sites across England (excluding London) for each of the land uses.

## 5.5 Parking Demand

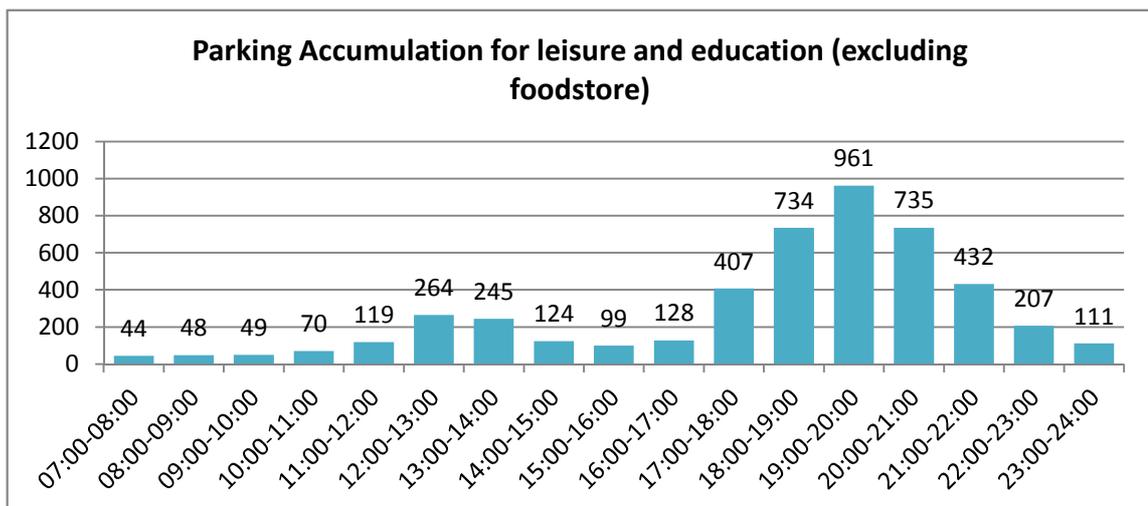
5.5.1 If we assume that the future train commuter parking associated with the new residential development can be accommodated in the HS1 car parks, along with the displaced parking from the car park F on Elwick Road and a proportion of Dover Place parking (current demand around 235 spaces) then the remaining non-residential and residential parking remains to be considered.

5.5.2 Parking accumulation has been considered for the development land uses through the day into the evening for the office, foodstore, hotel, cinema, restaurant and college facility so as to understand the demand profiles. This is based on the arrivals and departures estimated from trips rates taken from the TRICS database applied to the quantum of development for each land use, in the same way that the AM and PM peak periods were calculated.

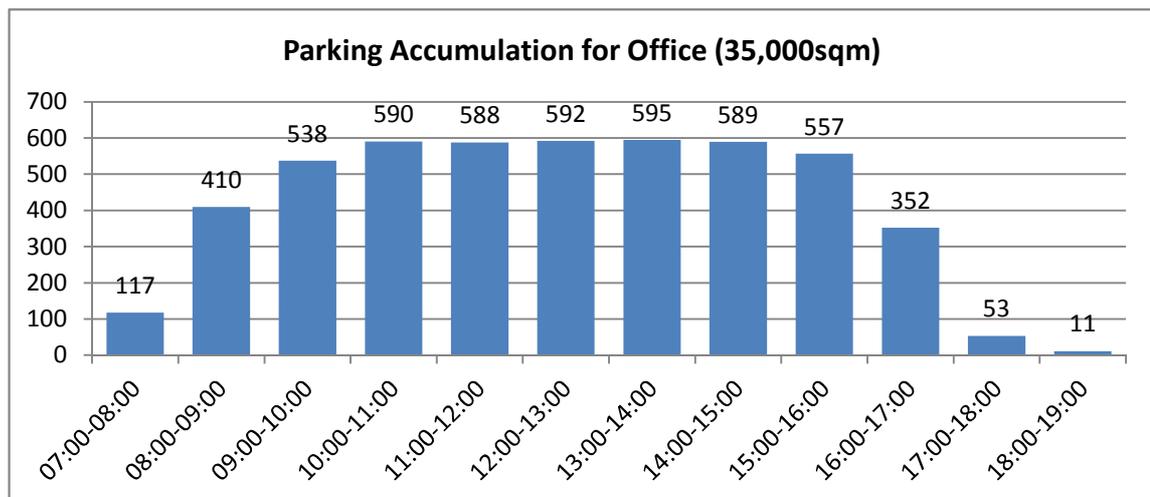
5.5.3 The following graphs illustrate the parking profile for each land use in the southern expansion and town centre quarters as follows. They are based on the arrivals and departures associated with the development quantum considered.



- 5.5.4 As can be seen, the main parking demand for the cinema and restaurant is in the evening and there is a modest demand through the day relating to the cinema, and small peak for the restaurant land uses at lunchtime. The accumulation graphs relate to discrete land uses, and so there is no allowance for linked trips associated with the cinema and restaurant. Therefore, the parking demand shown could be lower due to people using both land uses in one trip.
- 5.5.5 The parking accumulation for the combined 2 No. hotels show a similar level of demand through the day with a peak in the evening. The accumulation exercise is on the basis that 80% of the bedrooms would be occupied overnight and would relate to one vehicle per room. Due to the location of the hotel in relation to the train station and other nearby facilities it is likely that the number of vehicles using this site would be less than that shown in the graph – however, it illustrates a maximum demand. It is assumed that the hotels do not include conferencing facilities.
- 5.5.6 The parking accumulation for the foodstore shows demand increases during the morning, peaking in the afternoon and reducing through to the evening.
- 5.5.7 Consideration has been given to the potential for the various land uses to share parking (ie excluding the foodstore which is likely to have a dedicated car park). The following graph illustrates the accumulative effect of the parking demand for the leisure and education land uses as follows:



- 5.5.8 The parking accumulation for the leisure and educational land uses show there is a peak in the evening – albeit this may be reduced to take account of linked trips between the cinema and restaurants. Therefore, during the day there is potential capacity for the commercial development to share the car park as they predominantly arrive and depart during the peak hours of 0800-0900 and 1700-1800 hrs, and parking remains relatively stable over the day. For context, the parking accumulation of the office land use associated with the commercial quarter is shown as follows, and is based on trip rates extracted from the TRICS database for sites classified as ‘town centre’ locations (and therefore has an allowance for parking restraint included):



- 5.5.9 As can be seen, the maximum parking demand for the office use is around 600 spaces which could easily be accommodated during the day if the number of spaces provided in the car park for the Town Centre zone was around 850. This assumes that all office parking would be in the Town Centre zone, but it is likely that a proportion will be located in the Commercial Quarter zone. It also includes for a level of parking restraint as the trip rates extracted relate to 'town centre' sites.
- 5.5.10 To understand the demand in more detail for the cinema and restaurants, it would be beneficial to survey the Eureka Leisure Park as this is the model that the site would likely take. This would determine the maximum number of spaces that should be provided to accommodate the likely demand in the evening which appears to be the highest demand of all the land use quantum considered. The parking accumulation above shows a maximum of 961 spaces are required for the leisure and education uses but as suggested this includes an element of double counting relating to linked trips associated with the cinema and A3 uses and is not considered reasonable.
- 5.5.11 It is likely that a foodstore would be self-contained with dedicated parking, and operate in a similar fashion to the other stores in the town such as Lidl with free parking for customers for an hour, or 10 minutes for non-customers. Parking demand for a store of this size suggests around 50 spaces are required.
- 5.5.12 Residential parking demand is dependent on the type of housing proposed and the number of bedrooms, as well as location, demographic of residents and parking policy. Since the majority of these dependencies are unknown then providing a figure for parking demand for residential land uses in the town centre is not easy. It is anticipated that the parking requirements for the housing would be self-contained with on plot parking (ie private driveways or as communal parking areas). However, there could be an element of on street parking or shared use in public car parks. Therefore, an allowance should be made for residential parking in the parking demand figures for the quarters to take account of this in the public parking stock. For the purposes of providing this figure an average car ownership rate of 1.4 for Ashford Borough (using 2011 Census data of 47,787 households owning 68,054 cars/vans) has been applied to the total number of residential dwellings proposed in the Local Plan (1150). This equates to 1610 parking spaces.
- 5.5.13 Based on the total number of parking spaces required, a range has been considered between the on and off plot parking. It is noted in the Transport Statement accompanying the Charter House planning application (which was permitted in 2008) that 334 apartments had a total of 199 car parking spaces on plot – this equates to 60% on plot parking and 40% off plot (assuming one space per apartment). Therefore, on this basis a range has been considered

relating to 50-90% of parking provided on plot and 50-10% off plot in public car parks/on street. This equates to 805-161 spaces required in the public parking stock (ie off plot).

## 5.6 In Summary

- 5.6.1 To summarise, the following important points associated with the supply and demand of parking spaces are noted with respect to the figures derived in the previous chapter:

### Demand

- An additional 408 spaces are required for commuters driving to the station to use the train
- Approximately 850 spaces from the leisure, education and commercial land uses are required. These spaces exclude the foodstore (as this is assumed to be self-contained with dedicated parking) and the residential parking (an allowance needs to be made to remain flexible with respect to this land use).
- An allowance of between 805 and 161 spaces has been considered for the residential off plot parking
- **Taking account of the demand associated with development suggests a figure of around 1,400 – 2,000 (408+850+805/161) total spaces**

### Supply

- There is potential for 135 parking spaces to be taken up off plot associated with Charter House redevelopment (currently not occupied) – assuming a car ownership of 1 space per apartment
- There is a total of 1884-1782 spaces currently available – based on occupancy estimates for a weekday. This reduces to **1,222-1,120 spaces** when parking at Henwood, Flour Mills, Dover Place and Ashford International Car Park F is removed due to redevelopment

### Supply – Demand mismatch

- 5.6.2 Thus, across the town centre as a whole **there is likely to be a mismatch of demand against supply of between a minimum of 178 and a maximum of 880 spaces** (noting previous comments about figures not being precise). To these figures of course must be added the number of spaces lost to development which are required to be reprovided either on site or as part of an off-site solution.
- 5.6.3 It should be possible to make up for the equivalent of a significant proportion of these spaces by making better use of the existing car parks – ‘sweating the assets’. We do not foresee, therefore the need for new provision in the short-medium term. In the longer term additional provision as part of new development schemes may be appropriate but this should be monitored alongside implementation of the Local Plan.

## 6 Parking Standards – Future use

6.1.1 Existing parking standards have been reviewed on the basis of whether they are ‘fit for purpose’ for future development proposals going forward. They were reviewed on the basis that census data for 2011 is now available and suggests that car ownership in the town on average is 1.4 vehicles per household. Current parking standards are based on census data from 2001, and a small sample of sites in Kent. The following paragraphs consider the existing residential and non-residential parking standards

### Ashford’s ‘Residential Parking & Design Standards’ (SPD)

6.1.2 The residential parking standards for Ashford have been considered by comparing with Kent’s Residential parking standards (IGN3). Both consider the location of the development as an important factor in determining the required car parking spaces. The standards for both are illustrated in the table below under the particular location headings (note the IGN3 guidance has ‘edge of centre’ classification which is not included in the SPD):

Residential types	City/Town Centre		Suburban		Suburban edge/village/rural	
	IGN3 (Max)	SPD (Max)	IGN3 (Min)	SPD (Designing for need)	IGN3 (Min)	SPD (Designing for need)
1 bed flat	1 per unit	1 per unit	1 per unit	1 per unit	1 per unit	1.5 per unit
2 bed flat	1 per unit	1 per unit	1 per unit	1.5 per unit	1 per unit	1.5 per unit
1 bed house	1 per unit	1 per unit	1 per unit	1 per unit	1.5 per unit	1.5 per unit
2 bed house	1 per unit	1 per unit	1 per unit	2 per unit	1.5 per unit	2 per unit
3 bed house	1 per unit	1.5 per unit	1.5 per unit	2 per unit	2 per unit	2 per unit
4+ bed house	1 per unit	1.5 per unit	2 per unit	2 per unit	2 per unit	2 per unit

Table 6.1: Summary of existing residential parking standards

6.1.3 As can be seen the standards are very similar, although Ashford’s standards are slightly more generous for larger houses in the town centre and suburban locations. Ashford’s standards highlight the concept of ‘designing for need’. This is an important point, particularly when it is considered that inadequate parking can lead to indiscriminate parking which can spoil the local environment and setting of an area, overspill into neighbouring areas which reduces parking for existing communities, and potentially cause safety issues such as cars blocking footways/cycleways, reducing carriageway widths such that large vehicles (refuse collection,

emergency vehicles) cannot gain access to particular areas. In such circumstances parking becomes an antisocial behaviour issue as well as a transportation one.

- 6.1.4 Anecdotal evidence in Ashford suggests that there are parking issues in some newly built developments, for example in parts of Repton Manor with indiscriminate parking taking place and at the Fairview Drive development parking regularly occurs on the roundabout junction.
- 6.1.5 Some speculation can be made as to why these particular developments have issues. They both relate to developments masterplanned during an era when the former Planning Policy Guidance 3 (PPG3) on housing was in force. This promoted high density development and use of restraint of car parking provision was to be followed, it was hoped, by an increase in use of public transport.
- 6.1.6 Whatever the reason, it is worth noting that the IG3 guidance includes evidence from a small sample of sites around Kent and considers the car ownership rates from the 2001 census. It is clear that car ownership levels will have changed over time and as such car parking standards may need to be revisited. As an example, the Godinton ward (which Repton Manor is in) shows a 5% reduction in households owning one car between 2001 and 2011. However, there is a 6% increase in households owning 1+ cars/vans.
- 6.1.7 It is suggested that each site should be considered on its own merits with justification clearly provided on car ownership in the area, or an area similar in demographics to the site being considered. This should be the basis for determining the car parking requirements and not simply referring to the standards in the above table. It is right to set maximum standards for the town centre, as there should be an aspiration to have lower levels of parking in an area where there are good public transport links – particularly close to the train station. The town centre also has limited opportunity for overspill parking, and generally has on street restrictions which can be enforced as part of the larger area. There is also the ability to have parking permits in public car parks for use during the evening and at weekends which would complement the commuting workforce using the car parks during the week in the daytime.

#### **Kent Parking Standards (Supplementary Planning Guidance 4), 2003**

- 6.1.8 These historic standards relate primarily to non-residential development and are not based on location. The residential standards are replaced by Interim Guidance Note 3 (IGN3) and Ashford Borough Council's supplementary guidance. They define the maximum amount of parking. However, the location of a development in terms of sustainability is a key factor for employment destinations. For example, offices located at Eureka Park have the same standards as those located in the town centre.
- 6.1.9 Eureka Park is located adjacent to the motorway network and that is perhaps one of the reasons for it being an attractive proposition for businesses. However, it is not within a short walk of the train station (3.1km, 30 minutes). It is severed from the majority of Ashford by the motorway, and relies on the footbridge linking Sainsburys to Eureka Leisure Park for those arriving from the south and is not a direct route for many. As a result the number of pedestrian/cycle routes to Eureka are minimal when compared to the radial routes into the town centre.
- 6.1.10 It is reasonable to assume that the number of pedestrians and cyclists travelling to an office in the town centre are more likely to use these modes than if they had to travel to Eureka Park. If office space in the town were to have a reduced number of parking spaces to encourage other modes then it is realistic, as other modes are available. Whereas, having a reduced number of spaces at Eureka Park to encourage other modes is not as realistic as there are limited options available. It is understood from local knowledge that there are parking issues at Eureka Park as it is a car dominant 'out of town' development with minimal parking and limited realistic sustainable mode options.

- 6.1.11 Perhaps car parking need should also be considered for employment and retail based on a parking accumulation exercise using local trip rates from surveys or those extracted from TRICS. This exercise would define the maximum parking spaces required and would also show the daily parking profile. Depending on the Travel Plan proposals and the realistic existing sustainable modes available, a reduction would be discussed on the maximum parking need, and the ability to share parking with other land uses (if applicable). In this way, the parking could still have a 'maximum' standard but this would differ depending on the factors discussed (ie location and Travel Plan).
- 6.1.12 In relation to Ashford town centre parking, and in particular the Commercial Quarter it would be reasonable to reduce the car parking standards over time as the quantum of development rises. In this way, earlier phases would have higher parking ratios compared to later phases as there is a need for the council to promote this site competitively against others in Kent. It is important to understand that encouraging commercial businesses to Ashford is paramount to provide economic stimulation to the town, particularly in this Quarter which has the distinct advantage of connections to the high speed route into London.
- 6.1.13 The specific standards for this important commercial zone will need to be considered alongside traffic modelling of the town centre, along any with assumptions made on off- site parking locations and demand. However, a broad range could be set based on the calculations below as follows:
- Current maximum based upon the parking accumulation calculations we have undertaken for this study,, which equates to 595 spaces for 35,000 sqm of office space or 1 space per 59 sqm. This is based on trip rates extracted from the TRICS database for sites classified as a 'town centre' location and so already provides for significant restraint;
  - Current maximum based upon alternative parking accumulation calculations which are based on trip rates extracted from the TRICS database for sites described as 'edge of town centre', 'suburban' and 'edge of town'. This then would not incorporate as much restraint as for the sites classified as 'town centre' (as described in the bullet point above). This would equate to 943 spaces for 35,000 sqm of office space or 1 space per 37 sqm – significantly more provision with inherent implications for the effective operation of the town centre network; and
  - Then an aspiration to reduce this over time to say 1 space per 70 sqm. Applying the standard at this level from the outset would have reduced the total overall requirement to 500 spaces.
- 6.1.14 As stated, the specific standards would need to be based on the modelling of the town centre – so if the modelling showed that the maximum could be accommodated on the network without junctions failing (an unlikely situation) then the maximum standards/maximum demand could be applied to provide more or less unrestricted parking on site, However, if (say) 100 vehicles needed to be removed from the network to ensure the junctions around the town centre worked then the standard would need to be adjusted to take this into account. A sliding scale could then be achieved over time as development is implemented so that it is more generous to begin with (provided that the network can take it) and restricting later on as the Quarter becomes more developed.

#### **NPPF and the development of local standards**

- 6.1.15 In developing local parking standards, it is useful to refer to the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 39) which identifies that the following should be taken into account:
- the accessibility of the development;
  - the type, mix and use of development;

- the availability of and opportunities for public transport;
- local car ownership levels; and
- an overall need to reduce the use of high-emission vehicles.

6.1.16 As a way forward to set local parking standards, highway modelling is an important element to understanding how much restraint is necessary. In addition, gathering evidence of parking standards for commercial development that currently exist in the town centre would be worthwhile as this would give a useful starting point. Particularly, as there is a lack of evidence supporting the Kent Parking Standards for commercial development. As one of the larger employers in the town, it may be useful for example to understand the number of employees parking on any one day in the office car park of Ashford Borough Council. This could be a useful starting point as the highway modelling is considered in more detail.

6.1.17 In addition, parking standards for the Commercial Quarter would need to factor in the off-site parking to be provided in the existing or new car parks, (for example) any solutions that involved employee parking at either the HS1 MSCP or Edinburgh Road / Park Mall.

## 7 Possible Interventions

- 7.1.1 The following paragraphs set out a 'menu' of possible interventions to deal with parking as development comes forward. Figures are included to illustrate how the parking could operate for various scenarios. The existing situation is shown in Figure 7.1 with the number of spaces currently available during the weekday.
- 7.1.2 Figure 7.2 provides the baseline from which the future quarters are considered and assumes that the Car Park F on Elwick Road and Dover Place car parks are closed due to redevelopment. Therefore, the estimated number of vehicles parked at these sites have been relocated to the HS1 multi storey car park and car park E. The figure also reflects the additional commuters associated with new Ashford wide residential development (worst case figure of 408).
- 7.1.3 In considering potential interventions it is also necessary to consider that parking is required to facilitate trips for different reasons, ie:
- Short term for shopping or other leisure trips (such as eating out);
  - Long term for commuting to a place of employment;
  - Long term to park at the station (whether for commuting or leisure journeys).
- 7.1.4 So, as well as considering the number of spaces that might be required in the round, it is also necessary to consider the nature of the car parking requirement desired in a particular area. The provision of parking targeted at short or long term stays is primarily dictated by the pricing strategy; so in looking at the type of additional provision that might be provided in the town centre core in future it would be less appropriate to provide a significant amount of long-stay parking when it is short-term parking that is more likely to be needed.
- 7.1.5 Whilst such considerations might seem rather self-evident, it is an important factor to consider when looking at the relationship between the various quarters in future. For instance, long-stay parkers displaced from the surface car parks in the Commercial Quarter could not be simply provided for at Vicarage Lane without adjustment to the pricing strategy. A simple analysis of supply and demand figures would not reveal these factors.
- 7.1.6 Furthermore, rather than requiring the provision of more spaces, it is necessary to ensure that the use of existing infrastructure is maximised which will always be more cost effective than building new.
- 7.1.7 It is impossible to predict the phasing of development proposals across the town centre. Indeed the nature of the proposed development schemes themselves is far from certain, except for a few notable examples (such as the first permitted office development in the Commercial Quarter). As such our recommendations need to be flexible to permit the appropriate parking response at the appropriate time.
- 7.1.8 It could be that some temporary additional provision is necessary whilst existing car parks are redeveloped. Again, this is difficult to predict but may well be possible to address through temporary changes in the pricing structure on other car parks nearby.

### 7.2 'Menu' of interventions by quarter

#### Town Centre Quarter

- 7.2.1 As the key retail and leisure core, all parking is likely to be accommodated on site and generally short-term in its requirement, with the exception of employee parking. In the longer

term, it is possible that some parking could be provided outside the quarter, for example if some multi-storey provision is provided along Victoria Way as envisaged in the previously permitted scheme.

- 7.2.2 The redevelopment of the Elwick Place site is likely to come forward in the near future. This is unlikely to represent significant additional parking pressure, since there is potential for shared parking available at this site as the end users are anticipated to be a cinema with associated restaurant (similar in profile to Eureka Park) which would have low demand during the weekdays. This would need to be considered as part of the redevelopment proposals. Shared provision with County Square car park is also possible, with the latter staying open into the evening to provide both additional capacity and revenue.
- 7.2.3 Whilst there are potential challenges to the implementation of this strategy (in that the County Square car park is not within the control of the local authority), we believe that there are no in-principle barriers to introducing longer opening hours. It is likely to be commercially attractive to the owner / operators.
- 7.2.4 We have identified a number of car parks attached to town centre shopping malls which are open 24 hours per day rather than being restricted to the opening hours of the mall. These include the following:
- Bouverie Place, Folkestone
  - Eastgate Shopping Centre, Basildon
  - Royals Shopping Centre - Southend-on-Sea
  - Churchill Square, Brighton
  - The Mall, Bromley
  - Westfield Stratford City, London
  - Fulham Broadway Shopping Centre - Fulham
  - King's Cross - Hammersmith
- 7.2.5 Whilst many of the above malls are located in town centres with more footfall and a thriving night-time economy, the Bouverie Place example is useful, particularly as it is run by the same operator, NCP.
- 7.2.6 The Southeastern car park on Elwick Road can be relocated if demand requires it, with vehicles transferring to use the HS1 car parks where there is sufficient capacity available. There are no off-site parking requirements. This needs HS1 and Southeastern to promote their car park facilities to all users (not just railway commuters), and co-ordinate with Ashford Borough Council. See Figures 7.3a and 7.3b. The railway interests are likely to be supportive of such proposals as it would result in increased income (see below).
- 7.2.7 Together, the Park Mall and Edinburgh Road car parks provide 12% of the overall provision in the town and a significant proportion of the town centre short-term offer. However, Edinburgh Road clearly shows its age and requires investment. Park Mall as a whole has suffered through the recession and has higher vacancy rates than other parts of the town centre – the centre of gravity shifted southwards with the opening of the County Square extension and this is likely to be exacerbated further by the Elwick Place development and potential extension to the Designer Outlet.

- 7.2.8 A comprehensive redevelopment of Park Mall itself together with the Edinburgh Road Car Park for a mixed use development incorporating residential together with an improvement of the quality of the retail and/or leisure offer and reprovision of car parking would help to counterbalance the southwards creep of the centre of gravity. However, this would probably necessitate access direct to Somerset Road and may not be possible due to viability issues overall.
- 7.2.9 Nevertheless, some investment in this area will be necessary during the course of the local plan, and efforts should be made to address the quality of the parking offer. It would be possible to reserve some of the spaces for long-term parking for employees of the commercial quarter and to facilitate overnight use for town centre residents (including those of schemes which have been implemented under Permitted Development Rights and where the parking standards may not be so high as on conventional developments).

### **Southern Expansion Quarter**

- 7.2.10 The predominant mixed use nature of this part of the town is likely to continue in future with a variety of uses coming forward for development. Thus the parking needs could range from short-term to longer-term for commuting purposes.
- 7.2.11 The parking for this quarter is likely to be self-contained, with a dedicated car park associated with the foodstore which would operate in a similar fashion to the town centre store car park at Lidl. That car park enables free parking for customers up to one hour, and non-customers for 10 minutes. Beyond this time there is a fine of £90. This would discourage long term parking associated with the train commuters and/or employees to the Commercial Quarter. The hotel could potentially share with the foodstore with permits or white listing for hotel guests, or use the large car park situated in the Town Centre Quarter, but this would be dependent on the location of the hotel, pedestrian links between the car park and hotel and level of parking provided. This would need to be considered at the time of any planning applications and a parking accumulation exercise undertaken.
- 7.2.12 The hotel could potentially share the parking with the foodstore, or have their own privately owned car park. In either scenario, the parking would be self-contained. Alternatively, the hotel car parking could be provided in the public car park of the town centre quarter.
- 7.2.13 There is potential to have a public car park in this quarter to enable sharing between the employees of the commercial quarter and the residents within the southern expansion quarter. As an example, an 850 space multi storey car park was proposed as part of the Zed Homes scheme on the former Powergen site which now has a lapsed planning permission in this quarter. However, this would be subject to viability and adequate management arrangements. And as discussed in previous sections, we do not consider that there is a need for additional provision to serve the town centre in the short-medium term.
- 7.2.14 The location of any potential additional provision will dictate its use in parking terms. A location close to the pedestrian railway crossing would favour short term parking for retail and/or leisure visits to the town centre. However, any provision even a few minutes' walk away from the bridge location would tend to favour on site solutions (such as the potential foodstore) or longer-term commuting uses.
- 7.2.15 Residential parking would need to be considered carefully to avoid commuters/employees parking for free on street in this area. Parking restrictions with resident parking permits or off street parking bays could be used to discourage commuters/employee parking. It would be difficult to share residents parking with the other land uses close by, as the hotel would have a high demand overnight and the foodstore would have high demand during the day over the weekend, during which time there would be a high demand for parking from residents.
- 7.2.16 Whilst, residential parking could be constrained for the development due to its sustainable location close to the train station and town centre there would perhaps be a need to enable

leased parking in public car parks in the town. There is not sufficient parking nearby to facilitate this unless a public car park was provided in this zone that perhaps allowed spaces to be used by the commercial quarter for employees of the office space during the day, and was leased to residents in the evening and at weekends.

### **Commercial Quarter**

- 7.2.17 Office development with ancillary supporting uses is going to be the focus here. So parking requirements will be for employees working in the quarter. The strategy here should be a mixture of on and off site parking with a level of restraint for the on-site parking over time. The off-site parking would be subject to payment for the individuals who choose to drive to work in either existing car parks (such as the HS1 MSCP) or any new provision suitable for long-stay (hence unlikely to be those serving the Elwick Place development).
- 7.2.18 Figures 7.3a and 7.3b illustrate other options available which relate to whether Edinburgh Road/Park Mall multi storey car parks are retained for use by the commercial quarter employees or redeveloped, or whether Vicarage Lane is redeveloped for long term parking. It is assumed that some reprovision of parking at both Park Mall and Edinburgh Road (and Vicarage Lane if this were to be redeveloped) would be required.
- 7.2.19 Both these options assume that new car parks are required to accommodate the unconstrained demand from the commercial quarter – either fully on site, or a mixture of on/off site.
- 7.2.20 If parking were to be located at the Commercial/Civic Quarter then pressure would be placed on the Wellesley Road/Mace Lane junction, as well as the station access road (if access is to be from this road). Both of these junctions are already congested in the peak hours. Alternatively, if a new junction allowing all movements (or reuse of existing egress from Dover Place car park) were introduced onto Station Road from the Commercial Quarter, then this may interact with the nearby station access road junction which currently suffers delays.
- 7.2.21 If parking were to be in other existing car parks, then the closest long term car park is Elwick Road F, but this is likely to be redeveloped during the plan period. Parking accumulation over the day to determine the demand for all land uses would be necessary.

### **Station Quarter**

- 7.2.22 Whilst there may not be so much development coming forward in this quarter as in others, it should play a key role in future parking solutions for the town.
- 7.2.23 Discussions with HS1 have suggested that they want to have the MSCP available to other end users (for example, the Commercial/Civic Quarter) as well as for commuters so that the car park is more fully utilised. Currently, the multi storey is linked for pedestrians to the train station, via an internal bridge and so encourages train commuters only. In addition it is not marketed locally for general use. However, pedestrian links could be provided from the car park to the existing footway network to enable people to access the north of the station externally using the footway under the rail line to the south of the station.
- 7.2.24 It is currently well under-utilised with around 900-940 spaces available, and so could be an important car park to accommodate any uplift in commuters using the train as well as employees to the Commercial Quarter. It is likely that the majority of Commercial Quarter employees that may use this facility are those that travel in from the south as they would be passing by the car park (potentially 31-77 vehicles using Romney Marsh Road). The uplift in commuters arriving by car is around 400 vehicles. Therefore, there is sufficient space for parking at these HS1 car parks leaving around 400 spaces available.
- 7.2.25 This availability could be taken up when the Elwick Road (car park F) is redeveloped if a new car park is not reprovided for commuters, and for those currently parking in Dover Place who

will be displaced as a result of the Commercial Quarter development. The current demand in both of these car parks is around 400 spaces (160 at car park F and 235 at Dover Place). Although not all parking at Dover Place relates to commuters, it is expected that a reasonable proportion of the demand does.

- 7.2.26 Although there is spare capacity at the HS1 car parks currently which could accommodate commuters/employees of the Commercial Quarter, it is understood that there is potential for redevelopment of the surface car park (car park D) which would mean a loss of 400 spaces unless replaced as part of a development scheme (eg through a MSCP). If a complete loss of spaces were to occur then there would not be sufficient parking available to accommodate the uplift in commuters, the relocation of commuter parking and employees of the Commercial Quarter. But it is assumed that at least a good portion of the 400 spaces would be re-provided.
- 7.2.27 Whilst the HS1 car parks would likely attract employers of the Commercial Quarter driving in from the south, there is a possibility that others could divert from their routes to access these car parks if there was congestion in the town or lack of parking available in the town. ie those from the M20, J9 (eastbound) could divert to junction 10 and then travel in via Badmunstereifel Road/Romney Marsh Road, those from the west could use Victoria Way and those on Hythe Road could divert to Newtown Road. If this occurred, there would not be sufficient capacity available in the HS1 car parks, unless the Elwick Road (car park F) remained available or was reprovided elsewhere.

#### **Considerations for existing car parks**

- 7.2.28 As a result of the emerging strategy above, there are specific items that need to be considered in relation to the existing car parks as follows:
- HS1 to provide footway links from their car park to the surrounding network to improve pedestrian access to the Commercial Quarter, as at present the pedestrian link is over the connecting bridge from the multi storey through the station;
  - There is a need to invest in the Edinburgh Road/Park Mall car parks and change the pricing structure if these were to encourage employees from the commercial quarter during the week. In addition improving links to the commercial quarter should be considered to make it an attractive route, with good crossing facilities at strategic locations
  - It is understood that number plate recognition is being considered for Vicarage Lane to improve facilities. If this car park were to be converted to long term stay (either on a temporary or permanent basis) then this could assist with enabling parking permit holders to access the car park without the need for dealing with payment which would be a benefit to employees regularly using it. The tariff system would need to be converted in favour of long term stays if this was to be used for the employees of the commercial quarter. It would also require improvements to access/egress as currently there are issues with vehicles turning out into queuing traffic, as well as capacity issues at the junction of Vicarage Lane/Station Road. This would be exacerbated further by traffic exiting the site at the same time each day if the improvements were not made (ie by having a high percentage of commuter parking).
  - Where the Flour Mills site is proposed to be removed from the car park stock the current daytime usage is so low to be insignificant and evening usage is undoubtedly capable of being subsumed into neighbouring car parks and on street. The removal of the car park should therefore not represent a problem. The same is true of the current Henwood car park.

## 8 Tenterden Parking Review

### 8.1 Existing Parking Issues

- 8.1.1 The main point of contention in relation to parking in Tenterden is on street commuter ( mainly employees from the retail/business in Tenterden) parking in local residential streets. Anecdotally we understand that commuter parking on street is a particular issue for some local residents.
- 8.1.2 Discussions have taken place over the years with the Town Council and Ashford Borough Council parking services with respect to this issue. Residents have suggested implementing parking permits on street to discourage this type of parking and requesting additional parking in the town to accommodate commuters. There was also discussion about whether commuters could have a reduced rate to encourage them to use the public car parks, and whether putting in restrictions will simply push the problem further out of the town centre to other residential streets.
- 8.1.3 In addition to the challenges of commuter parking there is a parallel issue of encouraging the use of local bus services. It is understood that many bus services are subsidised, and if commuter parking tariffs were reduced then there is no encouragement for people to consider using the bus, and therefore not assisting with the future viability of the services.
- 8.1.4 At a public meeting in March 2012 at Tenterden Town Hall, Ashford Borough Council parking services set out the results from a survey undertaken on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2007. This showed that 165 long stay cars were parked on street and that there were 155 empty public car parking spaces in the town. It should be noted that this survey was undertaken prior to the recession and so parking demand may have been different than that shown in the current economic conditions.

### 8.2 Tenterden & Rural Sites Development Plan Document 2010

- 8.2.1 The TENT 01 development site allocation suggests there is an identified need for additional public car parking for the town centre of up to 200 spaces. It highlights an area to the south of the leisure centre as an appropriate location.
- 8.2.2 As part of the TENT 01 planning submission, the applicant commissioned parking beat surveys for both on street and in public car parks, during February 2013 and July 2013. The survey recorded the number of spaces and number of parked vehicles at hourly intervals during both survey periods.
- 8.2.3 Both surveys in 2013 showed sufficient capacity available in the public car parks (which have 567 spaces) as follows:
- a maximum weekday parking demand of 372 (66%) spaces during the February survey leaving a minimum of 195 (34%) spaces available.
  - a maximum weekday parking demand of 419 spaces during the July survey leaving a minimum of 148 spaces available.
  - a maximum parking demand of 430 (76%) spaces during the February survey for Saturday which left a minimum of 137 (24%) spaces available.
  - a maximum parking demand during the July survey for Saturday of 416 spaces leaving a minimum of 151 spaces available.

### **8.3 Challenges**

- 8.3.1 The challenge with regards to parking in Tenterden is influenced heavily by the rural location of the town. It would be unrealistic to expect people to welcome strong parking restrictions, high tariffs or low parking standards.
  
- 8.3.2 The health of the local economy is very reliant on residents, visitors and employees having access to their cars. However, it is perhaps reasonable to expect local employees and businesses not to cause disruption to the local road network especially where this would cause safety concerns. It would be reasonable in that instance to consider introducing parking controls which displace long stay on street parking into off street premises. The tariff structure could be set to cover enforcement costs and on going maintenance but retained at a moderate level. The most straight forward model would be to impose a 1 hour restriction in the middle of the day where working residents do not need to park. Other restrictions are possible.

## 9 Conclusions and Recommendations

9.1.1 The report considers the existing public car parking situation in terms of occupation, and the results show:

- the permanent council owned surface car parks are largely well utilised except Henwood and Flour Mills which are earmarked for redevelopment. The Edinburgh Road multi storey car park and the temporary surface car park at Dover Place show spare capacity available;
- the data for the Southeastern car parks (A, B and F) show that the car parks close to the station (A and B) are well used with full occupancy during the week. There is spare capacity available in car park F;
- the data for the HS1 car parks suggest that there is a lot of spare capacity in the MSCP and car park E which are both considered to be under-utilised during the week, and car park D is listed as 'highly utilised';
- the remaining private car parks suggest that Wetherspoons, and Park Mall are under-utilised, whereas the Natwest, Farm Foods and Lidl car parks have high utilisation rates. County Square is considered to be marginal in between under-utilised and effectively utilised.

9.1.2 A character appraisal was undertaken for the public car parks to consider accessibility and environment. The appraisal indicated that:

- overall the Ashford International car parks A and B, Stour Centre, New Street, Vicarage Lane and Station Road all perform consistently high for accessibility and occupancy;
- whilst Dover Place scores well on accessibility and occupation, it scores relatively low on environment. However, this is a temporary car park and is due to be redeveloped;
- Edinburgh Road is on the border of being well utilised and under- utilised, and the adjacent Park Mall car park is considered to be under- utilised. Both score well for accessibility but lose scores for the environment. Improvements to this aspect of the assessment should be considered to assist with improving the occupancy of these car parks;
- the lowest performing car park is Henwood. This is earmarked for redevelopment, and so does not require investment to improve the overall score.
- the Civic Centre is well occupied due to its proximity for employees at Ashford Borough Council regardless of its low score for the environment. Therefore, it does not warrant improvements in relation to improving occupancy.

9.1.3 Ashford's long term parking tariff is cheaper than both Folkestone and Maidstone in the long term car parks such as Dover Place and Edinburgh Road. Therefore, Ashford is competitive locally in relation to this market.

9.1.4 The comparison of the tariff structures illustrate that Ashford is similarly priced to the local centres (excluding Canterbury) for short term tariffs. Therefore, in terms of encouraging retail activity it is competitive with the local market. However, it is clear from the tariffs that it does not compete with the Designer Outlet Village and Eureka Leisure Park for retail/leisure during the day.

- 9.1.5 It is noted that the Ashford Borough Council parking tariffs operate from 0700-1800hrs and so the evening leisure market is encouraged in the town. However, the on street parking tariffs in the town centre operate until 2200hrs at night.
- 9.1.6 On street parking in the local residential streets surrounding the town centre is an ongoing challenge. Whilst the impact on parking capacity is likely to be minimal in the current market, it could become more of an issue in the future.
- 9.1.7 In relation to Park & Ride, it is considered that the current sites are not considered financially viable or sustainable on the basis of existing and projected figures in the current Local Plan period for standalone operations.
- 9.1.8 Parking demand was considered for each zone on the basis of the emerging land use and quanta in the Local Plan review. In addition, the routes to these zones was reviewed in relation to the location of car parking.

### Recommendations

- 9.1.9 We do not envisage the need for significant new public car parking provision to serve the town centre in the short-medium term. Monitoring of the parking situation would then lead to a decision about the requirement in the longer term.
- 9.1.10 Some temporary provision may be required during the course of individual schemes but this may be addressed through adjustments to the pricing structure on an interim basis.
- 9.1.11 The menu of interventions for Ashford town centre will need to respond to development proposals as they come forward and include:
- Town Centre Quarter - all parking accommodated on site, Southeastern car park relocated if demand requires it, or vehicles use other car parks where there is sufficient capacity available; investment in Park Mall / Edinburgh Road car park and potential adjustments to the pricing structure;
  - Southern Expansion Quarter – on site, self contained parking for the foodstore and hotel or shared use of hotel car parking with town centre quarter. On site residential parking or potential for a public car park to enable sharing between the employees of the commercial quarter and the residents within the southern expansion quarter;
  - Commercial Quarter - a mixture of on and off site parking with an increasing level of restraint of on-site parking over time once adequate alternatives are in place. Off-site parking would be subject to payment for the individuals who choose to drive to work in either existing car parks or new car parks in the town centre quarter or as part of a shared public car park with the residential development in the southern expansion quarter. The existing car parks relate to Edinburgh Road/Park Mall and Vicarage Lane in the town centre core.
- 9.1.12 As a result of the interventions above, there are specific items that need to be considered in relation to the existing car parks as follows:
- HS1 to provide footway links from their car park to the surrounding network to improve pedestrian access to the Commercial Quarter
  - investment in the Edinburgh Road/Park Mall car parks and routes to the commercial quarter to encourage employees to use them
  - investment in Vicarage Lane – new tariff system would need to be converted in favour of long term stays and improvements to access/egress

- removal of the Flour Mills and Henwood car parks assumes the daytime usage is so low as to be insignificant and evening usage is undoubtedly capable of being subsumed into neighbouring car parks and on street.

9.1.13 The main point of contention in relation to parking in Tenterden is on street commuter (mainly employees from the retail/business in Tenterden) parking in local residential streets.

9.1.14 Discussions have been had with residents over the years and include:

- the potential to implement parking permits on street vs the potential to push the problem further out of town to other residential streets;
- requesting additional parking in the town to accommodate commuters – although, parking surveys suggest there is sufficient parking available already but not used;
- whether commuters could have a reduced rate to encourage them to use the public car parks;
- the parallel issue of encouraging the use of local bus services. It is understood that many bus services are subsidised, and if commuter parking tariffs were reduced then there is no encouragement for people to consider using the bus, and therefore not assisting with the future viability of the services.

9.1.15 The health of the Tenterden local economy is very reliant on residents, visitors and employees having access to their cars. However, it is perhaps reasonable to expect local employees and businesses not to cause disruption to the local road network especially where this would cause safety concerns. Therefore, it would be reasonable in that instance to consider introducing parking controls which displace long stay on street parking into off street premises.

#### **Further work: next steps**

9.1.16 In relation to next steps, it is important to understand the impact of the parking strategy and development on the highway network. This review has considered an unrestrained parking demand during the day on the basis that employment uses are to be actively encouraged for the development of the commercial quarter. However, the impact on the highway network needs to be considered with these assumptions to assist with:

- the location of any new car parks;
- determining the parking standards relevant to the town centre in the future as a means of restraining demand (if necessary). A first step would be to undertake parking surveys at workplaces with large numbers of employees such as the Borough Council and Royal Mail;
- understanding the mitigation on the highway network (if necessary); and
- understanding the public transport demand and the infrastructure required to support this. As part of these activities active engagement with the bus operators during the course of the development of the new Local Plan could be extremely helpful, especially as it would enable consideration of the extension of existing bus services as an alternative to Park & Ride

9.1.17 In addition, the level of investment required to improve the existing car parks if they are to be used by employees of the Commercial Quarter needs further analysis, together with an understanding of how forthcoming development proposals can incorporate a level of public parking.

9.1.18 As work on the new Local Plan proceeds, the approach to town centre parking will need to be refined and developed on an iterative basis. The final approach will still need to be flexible to ensure that development proposals can be accommodated as they come forward.

## Figures

## Appendix A Policy Extracts

### Town Centre Area Action Plan (TCAAP), February 2010

*“Paragraph 1.59: Parking within a town centre provides people with direct and quick access to the retail, leisure and commercial facilities on offer. However, a careful balance is needed, as, over-providing for parking in a town centre can lead to problems of traffic congestion which could ultimately affect its accessibility and viability.”*

*“Paragraph 1.60: The Core Strategy sets out the strategic approach to parking (paragraphs 11.14 – 17) and, in particular, how parking that serves the town centre will be provided through a mix of spaces at out-of-centre Park & Ride sites and new multi-storey public car parks in the town centre. It also explains how parking standards should progressively reduce over time as public transport services improve in quality and frequency. Policies in this Plan cover the delivery of the new multi-storey car parks and set out detailed parking standards for new development in the town centre area.”*

*Policies TC11 and TC19 make provision for multi storey car parks on Victoria Way (500 space car park) and New Street South (400 space car park) to accommodate office, retail and leisure development in the town centre. In addition, there is mention of a potential need for a multi-storey car park provided at Mace Lane (400 space car park) dependent on all anticipated development coming forward before 2021.*

*“Policy TC25 – commuted parking: “Where retail, leisure and office development is proposed within the town centre, developers will be expected to provide the non-operational element of car parking requirement, as stipulated in policy TC22, in car parks available for public use, including new Park & Ride sites and multi-storey car parks. This will typically be achieved through appropriate agreements for commuted payments.*

*All office development coming forward within the town centre will provide funding for a minimum of 50% of the overall proposed parking requirement off site to be provided at the P&R sites (70%) and town centre multi-storey car parks (30%).*

*All retail/leisure development coming forward within the town centre will provide funding for a minimum of 90% of the overall proposed parking requirement to be provided at the proposed multi-storey car parks (minimum 70%) and Park & Ride sites (maximum 30%).”*

### Urban Sites and Infrastructure Development Plan Document, October 2012

*Policy U8: Warren Park & Ride: Land at the Warren is identified in the Core Strategy as the location of one of three proposed Park & Ride sites serving Ashford town centre. Sufficient land has been identified to provide up to 800 new parking spaces here which form a key part of the Council’s Parking Strategy for the town....Access for cars shall be provided from Fougères Way only by means of a new signal controlled junction. This new junction should be designed to ensure that Park & Ride/other bus services have adequate priority over other vehicles, although these services will also use a bus-only access via the Drivers roundabout.”*

*Paragraph 9.22: The proposed Park & Ride site at M20 Junction 9 close to The Warren has the highest potential use, being located close to where four main radial routes converge at Drivers roundabout – A20 (from the west); A28 (from the north east and south west); A251 (from the north west); and M20 (mainly from the west).*

*Paragraph 9.24: The scale and cost of the current improvements to the A20 Drivers roundabout and M20 Junction 9 has been reduced on the basis of future car journeys being intercepted by the Park & Ride scheme.*

## Appendix B Trip Generation

Land Use	TRICS classification	AM Peak (vehicles/100sqm GFA)		PM Peak (vehicles/100sqm GFA)	
		Arrivals	Departures	Arrivals	Departures
Cinema	Cinema	-	-	3.25	2.083
A3 Retail	Pub/Restaurant	0	0	3.034	0.966
Foodstore	Superstore	5.725	4.739	6.311	7.044
Office	Office	0.93	0.094	0.053	0.908
Residential	Mixed Private Housing	0.107	0.371	0.289	0.174
Hotel	Hotel	0.266	0.438	0.578	0.262
Education	College	0.924	0.249	0.203	0.429

Trip rates used for determining peak hour trip generation for various land uses