

RENAISSANCE MARKET TOWNS PROGRAMME

CAR PARKING RESEARCH

Executive summary on how parking can be managed in the region's market towns



YORKSHIRE
FORWARD

The Region's
Development Agency

DEALING WITH PARKING PROBLEMS – SUCH AS A LACK OF SUPPLY OR THE DOMINANCE OF PARKED CARS IN BEAUTIFUL LOCATIONS WITHIN OUR TOWNS – IS OFTEN IMPORTANT IN ACHIEVING A TOWN'S RENAISSANCE OBJECTIVES.

CAR PARKING RESEARCH: KEY FINDINGS

FOREWORD

It is widely recognised that parking is one of the more controversial issues facing our Renaissance Market Towns.

Dealing with parking problems – such as a lack of supply or the dominance of parked cars in beautiful locations within our towns – is often important in achieving a town's renaissance objectives, but experience shows that overcoming them can initially appear difficult.

That is why Yorkshire Forward commissioned Steer Davies Gleave to research how parking can be managed in our market towns, and to investigate possible solutions.

The overall message of this research is a positive one: if done properly, managing parking is good for a town. The advantages are potentially numerous and sizeable: reducing the dominance of the car whilst enhancing, not reducing access. There is also evidence to suggest that introducing better managed parking can benefit a town's economy rather than damaging it.

Rhona Pringle

Renaissance Market Towns Programme Manager

PARKING PROVISION IS A CUSTOMER SERVICE, PROVIDING ACCESS TO TOWNS

- The aim of the service is ultimately to provide good access to towns for residents, workers, shoppers and other visitors. For those who drive, the act of parking is their first impression of the town.
- 'Good access' means making sure that customers can access appropriate parking at appropriate locations to suit their needs.
- Above all else, customers value the certainty of being able to park when and where they want it. Convenience is a quality which most are willing to pay for.
- Different customers (e.g. residents, shoppers, workers) have different needs and priorities.

PARKING IS AN ASSET WHICH NEEDS TO BE MANAGED

- Managing parking to maximise access is not the same as providing as many parking spaces as possible. Rather it is about managing the parking stock so that appropriate spaces are kept available for customers. It is the number of parking 'acts', rather than the number of parking spaces that is important.
- Proper management of parking benefits towns in many ways, including contributing positively to economic performance and visual amenity.
- A parking 'free for all' (with no restrictions or controls on parking and no enforcement) represents a failure to manage the asset and a failure to provide good customer service and will adversely affect economic performance.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARKING AND ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE IS WEAK, BUT GENERALLY POSITIVE

- Many people fear that making changes to parking will adversely affect the town's economy. The evidence that exists suggests that the opposite is actually the case.
- In fact, the primary factor affecting a town's competitiveness is the town's offer. Therefore, a town with a good retail offer will continue to attract customers despite poor parking facilities. Meanwhile a town with very good parking facilities but a limited retail offer will struggle to attract customers.
- The primary responses to the introduction of restrictions, charging or enforcement tend to be:
 - an acceptance of the new arrangements/behaviour broadly unchanged;
 - a change in parking location (e.g. park further away to avoid paying a charge); or
 - in some cases, a shorter duration of stay.
- There is little evidence of substitution of destination or change of transport mode - as long as there is sensitivity to local needs.

BETTER MANAGEMENT OF PARKING CAN ENABLE MORE PRODUCTIVE USE OF (SOMETIMES VERY LIMITED) PUBLIC SPACE WITHIN TOWNS

- Provided it is done sensitively and appropriately, management of parking can have a positive impact on economic viability by enabling 'better' (more productive) use to be made of the public space within towns. It is not uncommon for the most attractive parts of towns (historic market squares etc) to be hidden under a sea of parked cars.
- Where towns have appropriate sites on the approach routes to the town, there is an opportunity to utilise them as 'gateway' parking areas. This can free up space within more sensitive central areas for other

uses, and help to keep moving traffic out of these areas too.

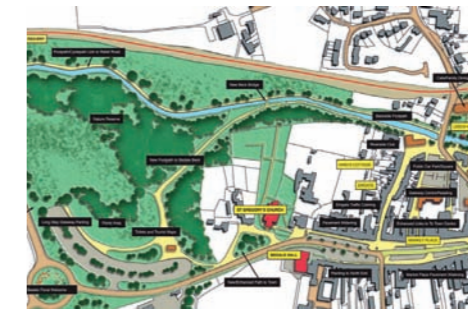
- Central areas can then be given over to activities which themselves provide an important 'draw' for visitors – markets, outdoor seating areas for cafés and restaurants, locations for outdoor performances, etc.
- However, such gateway parking needs to be complemented by other features – particularly good signposting to the car park on approach roads, as well as from the car park to the town centre itself – to be effective.

PARKING MANAGEMENT CAN BE A VERY POWERFUL TOOL

- Effectively managing parking supply and behaviour is a very powerful and direct way of supporting a town's broader objectives. In transport terms, Councils have more control over parking than virtually anything else.
- However, to be effective, a managed parking regime must be properly enforced. One way to achieve this is through Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE), where the Authority takes over control of the enforcement of parking regulations from the Police.
- Other attributes which can be managed to positive effect include:
 - the quality of the parking stock (CCTV, lighting, information, toilets and so on); and
 - signing and information to minimise searching traffic.

IN ORDER TO MANAGE PARKING EFFECTIVELY, THERE IS A NEED TO FIRST UNDERSTAND THE TOWN'S NEEDS

Informal surveys in a number of Renaissance Market Towns suggests that typically between 20%-40% of central short-stay parking spaces are being used by long-stay traffic.



Bedale masterplan



Bedale car park entrance

- It is important to understand the nature of a town and the travel behaviour of the town's users before making changes to how the parking is managed.
- Key features to consider include:
 - the size and nature of the employment, retail and visitor sectors;
 - the strength and vitality of the retail sector; and
 - the nature and proximity of competing settlements.
- As for the users of the town, the following factors should be considered:
 - the relative importance to the town's economy of workers, shoppers, visitors and residents;
 - the parking behaviour of each segment;
 - the factors which influence when and how often each visit the town; and
 - the attributes of the town and parking they value most (such as convenience, reliability, security and cost).

PARKING MANAGEMENT SHOULD BE PART OF A BROADER INTEGRATED APPROACH TO TRANSPORT

On-street and off-street parking must be managed as one...and linked to policies improving access by alternative modes.

- The parking management regime is one part of an integrated transport policy for market towns. Parking must be considered in parallel with:
 - measures to promote walking, cycling and public transport access into towns;
 - managing the demand for travel;
 - traffic management and highway issues; and
 - road safety.
- On-street and off-street parking must be managed as one. The fact that different

bodies (County and District Councils) may be responsible for them is of no interest to customers.

- The parking policy must be supported by the planning process. Applications for new housing, commercial and retail developments should be scrutinised to ensure the volume and nature of car parking fits the parking and broader policies. The Planning Authority has the opportunity to place conditions on how parking is used and managed in new developments, to support broader strategy.

PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION IS A GOOD THING!

Evidence shows that public acceptability grows following implementation.

- Parking is always a controversial issue and many people hold strident opinions. Those concerned about the welfare of their business or local environmental conditions are often most concerned.
- Public/stakeholder concerns are often based on anecdote. Use this research and market research to support strategy and allay public fears. Evidence shows that public acceptability grows following implementation and the benefits become clear.
- Engage early with stakeholders, so that all relevant concerns and worries are out in the open and it becomes possible to understand what needs to be done to assuage these concerns. Often, detailed design of the management regime can overcome many of the concerns.

- Effective consultation early in the development of a strategy ultimately reduces delivery and implementation time as it reduces the number of formal objections to detailed proposals and stakeholders may even assist in delivery.

CONTACT US

**Renaissance Market Towns
Yorkshire Forward
Victoria House
2 Victoria Place
Leeds LS11 5AE**

**Tel: 0113 394 9839
Fax: 0113 394 9880**

Email: rachel.jones@yorkshire-forward.com

www.rmtportal.com



Yorkshire Forward
Victoria House
2 Victoria Place
Leeds LS11 5AE

www.yorkshire-forward.com