

Road Space Audit Response from the Chichester Society
(originally submitted 30 November 2016)

SUMMARY

The Chichester Society welcomes the Road Space Audit, and the decision taken to adopt a wide remit that looks beyond just parking to the question of travel patterns more generally.

The Society's response is two fold; divided into the short term and the long term.

In the short term, the Society is supportive of the idea of using residential spaces, which are currently under-used during the daytime, in order to accommodate parking for commuters and visitors (collectively referred to as "outsiders" below). This seems to be a "no-brainer" provided that, as suggested in the Audit, such outsider parking spaces can indeed be inserted without inconveniencing residents.

However, the Society also believes that (1) not all of the roads suggested for outsider parking are suitable, (2) some of the proposed changes would impact adversely on walking and cycling, and (3) we are very likely on the cusp of major changes in travel patterns.

This means that, looking to the longer term, it would be advisable to see what develops before taking any irreversible action. In the context of the Audit, particularly relevant future trends would seem to be autonomous vehicles, lightweight "pods", and "platooning" of both cars and freight (see Conclusion section below for further discussion).

These considerations have the following two ramifications:

Firstly, the amount of appropriate space for "outsider parking" on residential streets is likely to be less than the Audit envisages, and there is therefore a more pressing need than the Audit suggests to look at *park and ride*. This being the case, there should be no major outlay spent on introducing outsider parking into residential areas (depending the actual cost, "no major outlay" probably excludes new ticketing machines and web-based ticketing systems). Instead, the majority of such moneys as now exist and as may be found in the future should be ear-marked for park and ride.

Secondly, given that travel (and also freight) patterns are in a state of flux but no one knows precisely if the expected trajectory will be the actual trajectory, no precipitate action should be taken in terms of building on the existing car parks.

Also, any building that does take place on edge-of-centre car parks ("cornerstone" car parks) should be largely (perhaps exclusively) residential, not commercial (and the proposal for a multi-storey car park hard-up against the historic city centre should be positively resisted).

DETAILS

"Outsider" parking - largely welcomed

Subject to the above caveats, introducing "outsider" parking into residential areas seems to be a "no-brainer" in terms of more efficient use of space.

However there are problems with a good number of the specific cases which the Audit details. In particular, the Audit suggests inserting new parking spaces along the *Avenue de Chartres* and the *Via Ravenna*, and intensification of the current parking along *Westgate*.

It would be crass in the extreme to introduce parking along the *Avenue de Chartres*. The views across the Prebendal playing fields to the city walls and to the cathedral beyond are rightly celebrated, and are part of the Conservation Area which the Councils have a duty to protect and enhance. Hopefully this particular suggestion is confined to the realms of "blue skies thinking"? In practice, there should be no talk of introducing lines of parked cars here. Moreover, the greenery and other 'soft features' (such as the trees and the rural wooden fencing, rather than stark metal fencing) are features that encourage walking and cycling. To detract from these with lines of parked cars would undermine another key aim of the Audit, namely fostering the sort of "human environment" that encourages walking and cycling (not to mention simply taking time out to refresh the spirit).

Also, *on the Avenue de Chartres*, the Audit suggests inserting a cycle lane alongside the proposed line of parked cars. This is a recipe for "car dooring" accidents, which can be fatal (i.e. accidents where a car door is opened in the path of a cyclist approaching unseen from the rear). Also, car movements in and out of the suggested parking places would "design in" an increased risk of accidents between cyclists and cars, and so does not promote an environment conducive to greener journeys.

The *Via Ravenna* is a somewhat less aesthetically sensitive location, but otherwise similar considerations apply as for the *Avenue de Chartres*. Which is to say, carving out space for parking here seems only to be possible at the expense of the very existence, or at least the ambience, of the current shared walking and cycling route passing underneath the mature trees along the *Via Ravenna*. This route is much used by students and others. Hence, any parking here would again work against the aim of making Chichester a city which is highly "permeable" and conducive to walking and cycling.

On *Westgate*, the Audit's proposes introducing a more intensive parking pattern than the one currently used; switching to perpendicular parking (i.e. parking perpendicular to the kerb, as opposed to the current parallel arrangement). However, *Westgate* forms part of an important local cycle route used for school and work commutes and for leisure. It is also designated as being part of National Cycle Route 2. Despite this, provision for cycling on the road is poorly designed (as illustrated by the fact that, instead of going inside the bollards as the design intends, something like half of all cyclists are more comfortable keeping to the outside). The incoming Whitehouse Farm development, with its 1,600 houses, can be expected to introduce a hugely increased number of car-movements along *Westgate*. There is therefore a pressing need to improve the current cycle provision on this road to mitigate the impact of the increased traffic. The existing car parking on *Westgate* does provide a degree of traffic calming, but otherwise, from the cycling perspective, rather than intensify the current parking provision it would be desirable to remove even the existing parking spaces and create a "best practice" fully segregated cycle lane (possibly combined with pavement widening for pedestrians). Perpendicular parking simply makes things more difficult by

taking away the width of road available for anything but parked cars (and possibly introduces issues of loss of "humanising features" such as greenery too).¹

The above are just three stretches of road where the problems that would be introduced by increased "outsider" parking are fairly obvious, both in terms of aesthetics and in terms of significant adverse impact on 'greener' transport choices. It is likely that there will be other stretches where similar problems come to light.

We also note that, as things currently stand, during the day the empty parking spaces in residential areas create *de facto* passing zones on narrower roads. Hence, if an "outsider" parking scheme is implemented, on certain of the City's narrower roads space will need to be formally set aside to ensure that the current informal passing arrangements still work. Oving Road comes particularly to mind. This again will likely mean that the number of spaces available for outsider parking on residential roads is lower than the Audit estimates.

All in all, the above considerations suggest that the Audit is likely to prove optimistic in the number of parking places residential areas can provide, and how sensitively such parking can be implemented.

That said, there is obviously quite some space currently available on residential roads, and it is considered that rather than implement the scheme wholesale city wide, it is brought in gradually starting from roads nearer the city centre. There is a risk that the more far-flung roads will not prove popular for outsider parking.

There is also some concern that, despite best hopes, "outsider parking" will in fact inconvenience residents in that:

(1) by expanding the paid-for zone outwards, the city's less affluent residents, who currently park for free, will find themselves facing yet another charge on a tight budget. This is another reason to recommend a measured roll-out; staying clear of such areas, at least in the first instance. And (2) one of our members reports that, at least in their particular location within Zone E, the parking-space occupancy feels in excess even of the stated 78% (Table 4, p46), and residents have problems finding parking close to where they live at all times of day; suggesting that the capacity to take more is low. This member also notes that market days are the most difficult; suggesting that, in some residential zones, the assumption that all weekdays will have similar demand may not fit the facts on the ground. (Whyke experiences a similar peak demand on Sundays, brought on by the car-boot market).

"To Not Through" Schemes

The audit raises the possibility of a "To Not Through" scheme, whereby certain road re-arrangements render the city impassable (or at least difficult) for through journeys.

This is an attractive idea, but, again, there are problems with the detail. One recurrent sticking point is that roads that cater for "through" journeys made by out-of-town traffic also cater for "to" journeys by inner-city residents, and it is difficult to see where a barrier (or simply even a "pinch point") could be inserted to deter the former without also thwarting the latter. (For example, the Audit proposes "*a bus/cycle/taxi only restriction to prevent through movements between Avenue De Chartres and Market Avenue*" (p.101). This would impinge on many a 'legitimate' journey that could be characterised as a "To" journey, such as journeys from the East and Southeast of the city to Waitrose).

¹ There is also the consideration that current discussions between WSCC Highways and the developers of WHF seek to improve traffic calming and cycle access, not increase on-road parking.

The Society was also concerned that "To Not Through" can lead to the unintended consequence of forcing traffic onto other equally unsuitable routes.

That said, the problems identified by the Audit are very real – notably the "severance" at the Northgate Roundabout – and the hoped for effects of making the city easier to walk and cycle through are very desirable.

The Society wonders if some of the desired effects of the "To not through" concept might be achieved by a blanket, city-wide 20 mph zone, which would not only be more immediately comprehensible to drivers than a series of complex and initially unfamiliar rearrangements to the roads, but would also be cheaper to implement than a series of reworkings, each one of which would not be cheap, and taken in combination would involve quite some expenditure.

Re-Purposing of the Car Parks

The Audit suggests closing down a number of the city-centre car parks, and building over them for other purposes.

The Society feels that any such action would be precipitate.

The Audit suggests that Baffins Lane and Little London car parks might be closed to all but Blue Badge holders and other scenarios where there is an "operational necessity". On the one hand, these car parks would seem to be unviable if reserved for Blue Badge holders only. On the other hand, there has long been a fear that M&S on East Street would disappear if the Little London car park were to be taken away. To avoid this risk, the definition of "operational necessity" might be a broad one which includes loading bulky shopping from M&S (and bulky items from Robert Dyas etc.). Then the definition might be widened further to include people who don't have a Blue Badge but are elderly or physically weak and unable to walk far. Pretty soon we revert to a situation little different from the present one.

As a less drastic measure, the parking here could be better tailored to attract "desirable" traffic and deter "undesirable" traffic. For example the Audit states that, at Little London, pollution is a particular issue. To address this, a lower tariff could be set to encourage lower-polluting vehicles such as motorcycles, electric cars and compact cars (like the "Smart Car" and "Toyota IQ").

This could even be a source of increased parking revenue, since a greater number of compact cars can be fitted into the available parking space, and since some areas that are currently unused, as they are too small for a "normal" space, could be brought into use for compact cars. It could also ease tail-back congestion, since more compact cars can be fitted in the same length of road (assuming an occupancy of no more than 2 people per car). Conversely, the new generation of cars which are too big for a standard parking space could be charged a premium for outsized parking spaces. The full benefits of a more tailored parking scheme of this kind might take time to bed in, requiring time before the system becomes known and local resident's vehicle-purchasing choices (or more likely second-vehicle-purchasing choices) to follow on accordingly. The bed-in time could, however, be speeded up by increased use of compact cars/electric cars in the Chichester Car Club, and by ensuring that compact car/electric car/carclub car parking was placed in desirable locations (e.g. in parking bays closest to the shops, rather than at the 'back end' of the car park).

Bearing in mind that the Baffins Lane and Little London car parks have a social as well as a commercial importance, such "tailoring" could also involve the issuing of swipe cards affording a reduced parking charge, and preferential parking location, to the elderly.

The Audit also considers allowing the city's commercial centre to spill over into repurposed car parks (notably into the Cattle Market). This is felt to be, on balance, a bad idea. The city-centre commercial area should be kept compact. Any expansion would detract from the walkability of the centre. If the car parks are to be re-purposed, it is felt that edge-of centre ones like the Cattle Market should be largely reserved for residential schemes (particularly given the need to meet the housing quotas imposed on the city).

Again, the Audit suggests that part of the Cattle Market might be re-purposed as a multi storey car park (Appendix, p. 115). This is also felt to be inappropriate. Multi storeys (even the "award-winning" Avenue de Chartres car park) are not structures that invite cyclists and pedestrians (including shoppers) to pass by, let alone linger. Any multi-storey placed hard-up against the historic centre would have a significant adverse impact on the attractiveness of greener travel choices, and on lingering to shop nearby. Specifically, a multi-story in the Cattle Market would have a significant deterrent impact on journeys currently made on foot and by bike from a whole quadrant of the outer city, from the far East to the far South, which meet up at the corner of the Amphitheatre and the top of Whyke Lane and currently pass either through the Cattle Market or through the Whyke twitten.

In similar vein, the Audit has a brief comment "*Cattlemarket car park - revised access via The Hornet*" (Appendix, p.112). This comment is so brief that it is possible that we have misunderstood what is being suggested. However, assuming that we have understood correctly, a road here would again have a deterrent effect on green journeys from widespread areas of Chichester. (It is also reminiscent of a previous proposal to bring traffic down the Twitten, which so disrupted pedestrian journeys that it led to the formation of the Whyke Residents Association).

In short, we would hope to see the final version of the Audit tread lightly on recommendations of spill-over of commercial activity outside the city walls, and drop any mention of multi storey car parks anywhere impinging on the historic centre and/or green routes (and residential areas), and also any mention of a new road from the Hornet.

In considering the cornerstone car parks, there is actually much that could be done to alter them to encourage greener journey choices, and thereby help the ambitious Smarter Choices targets by reducing the comparative attractiveness of journeys by car. A fairly obvious "quick win" that could be made would be if a direct and attractively landscaped path could be provided across the Northgate car park, between the pedestrian entrance of the subway and the entrances to the theatres. This might also start to help address the issue of surprisingly little "cross-fertilization" between theatre audiences and the city centre. (As an aside, the architect of the recent Festival Theatre renovations was itching to design such a path, and disappointed that it was outside his brief).

Railway Barriers

One issue not mentioned in the Audit, is the question of the timings of the railway-crossing barriers. In small measure these have the effect of calming traffic and deterring unnecessary journeys, not unlike the "To not Through" concept. But there seems little point in, say, adopting one of the Highways England schemes for the A27 and speeding traffic into the city, only for it to be held up at the barriers. And the pollution here must be just as great as any other black spot in the city. It would be highly desirable for any "wide-remit" Road Space Audit to look into whether the timings of these barriers can be improved.

One estimate suggests that these barriers are closed 20 minutes every hour. And, anecdotally, longer term residents suggest that the barriers operated more efficiently when they were fully manually

controlled; before being "improved" by automation. There is also a rumour, which seems to fit the observed reality, that the barriers are operated with greater or lesser efficiency depending on who is on duty supervising their operation.

Park and Ride

As indicated above, there now seems to be a case for looking harder at park and ride (P&R) in terms of 1) planning for the future and locating an appropriate space now, before it potentially gets lost to housing or industrial sheds, and 2) whether, in light of the above observations about the limits on parking in residential areas, the need to move to P&R will arise sooner than the Audit expects.

As regards issue 1), namely planning for the future and finding a location for P&R, one candidate site would seem to be South of the A27 in the fields somewhere between Fishbourne and Donnington. If others agree, however, a cut-across (underpass) would need to be created across the A27. And the time to do that would seem to be the same time as the other A27 roadworks proposed by Highways England are being constructed.

As regards issue 2), namely whether the time to introduce P&R is imminent, we are unable to say for certain but, as suggested above, we suspect maybe so. Moreover, we would suggest that, in order to achieve the other aims of the Audit and the Smarter Choices strategy, it may anyway be desirable to move to P&R more quickly than envisaged in the Chichester District Car Park Strategy 2010-2020, which merely states that "*if spare capacity in the city's car parks falls below a specified level, the need to introduce Park and Ride should be considered*". (For further discussion, see the Conclusion section below).

There also seems to be (understandably) quite some caution in the Council as to whether P&R would be financially self-funding. We suspect it could be, either if cross-financed by the increased revenue from more daytime commuter parking on residential roads in conjunction with the more tailored and more revenue-generating city-centre car park fees discussed above, or else, in the future, by the proceeds from sale and re-purposing of car-parks and by incoming technical developments. (For further discussion, again see Conclusion below).

One might also ask the question of whether P&R should necessarily be treated as a stand-alone operation needing to be self financing.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Society supports a measured expansion of "outsider" parking into residential areas. It would seem that the obvious first step (which involves little cost and likely increased revenue) would be to simply better advertise the currently little-known fact that "*In those [residential] zones where there is deemed to be spare capacity, permits can be purchased for use by those commuting to the city*" (Audit Section 3.4, page 31).

Otherwise, for the reasons detailed above, our conclusions are similar to those of the Audit authors, namely that "*There are other trends that cause us to support a wait and see approach autonomous vehicles may begin to remove the extent to which much city centre parking is required. Rather cities will be serviced by large edge of town autonomous vehicle servicing and storage hubs, and vehicles will visit the centre but won't be kept there*".

It may be useful to flesh out just what this could mean. The expression "*vehicle servicing and storage hub*" could refer to a hub which combines park and ride with the kind of "freight

consolidation centre" mentioned in the Audit², which allows "*last mile consolidated deliveries, potentially via electric LGV³ or cycle freight*" (p.115). This is an attractive idea, and P&R might be even more financially viable in Chichester if combined with such a consolidation centre. To elaborate, in the Chichester context, a consolidation centre would allow large lorries travelling the A27 to discharge their wares, either for people to collect personally or for transfer into small vans for last-leg deliveries (say across the Manhood and into the city). It may cost hauliers more to unload and then re-load their wares, but these large lorries then wouldn't be wasting time and money sitting in congestion, and adding to congestion, on the minor roads of the city and the Manhood in order to deliver a relatively small fraction of their overall load. Also, goods held on the outskirts of the city could be delivered on a "just in time" basis – with shops never (or rarely) running out of anything. Which would help give Chichester's physical retailers a much needed advantage over the comparatively slow next-day service offered by Internet retailers.

Autonomous vehicles are potentially just as "game changing". They will allow drivers to alight in a city centre area, and then the vehicle will drive itself away (and park itself!) in an out of town location. Alternatively, autonomous "pods" could complete the last leg from an out-of-town P&R, and deliver people into the city (and, notably, to St Richard's Hospital), before again driving themselves away. One advantage of a pod over a traditional shuttle bus is that there is no wait for the bus. In a well managed system, a row of pods is always there waiting when you want one. Another advantage is that autonomous pods could be put into service immediately the technology and legislation allow. It would take far longer to replace the country's current stock of non-autonomous vehicles with autonomous ones.

For the record, anyone unfamiliar with the concepts, or unaware just how far the technology has come, might want to look at the following YouTube videos:

Autonomous driving in cars (2:07 mins): <http://tinyurl.com/gl6psof>

(Don't miss the car self parking at the very end.)

A semi-autonomous lorry delivering beer: (3:29) <http://tinyurl.com/gukdmr7>

Pods let loose in Milton Keynes (1:20 mins): <http://tinyurl.com/zrgdgb2>

Finally, if autonomous cars/pods into town (or traffic along the A27, for that matter) were to be "platooned", the available road space could be more efficiently used – and time in the platoon could be more profitably spent (even in congestion). For details of platooning see:

Platooning (3:23 mins): <http://tinyurl.com/jsxa347>

(This clip has been selected as having the best accompanying commentary. In the clip, the technology is demonstrated on an off-road test track. However, it should be noted that on-road trials have also been held.)

<p>The comments in this Response might usefully feed into the CDC Vision document. Conversely, the Vision conclusions might modify some of the ideas advanced in this Response.</p>

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² **Consolidation centre:** A facility that channels suppliers' deliveries into one central point. The goods are then sorted onto fewer vehicles for the final 'leg' (last mile) of the journey.

³ **LGV:** Light Goods Van/Vehicle

