PLANNING AND HOUSING COMMISSION

DATE : 9th July 2014

TIME : 2:30 - 3:30pm

PLACE : Council Chamber Ante Room, Manchester Town Hall
(Access from the bridge on level 2 of the Old Town Hall)

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES

2. LOCAL AUTHORITY APPOINTMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Member</th>
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<td>Bolton</td>
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<td>Bury</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manchester</td>
<td>Jeff Smith</td>
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<td>Oldham</td>
<td>Dave Hibbert</td>
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<td>Rochdale</td>
<td>Jacqueline Beswick</td>
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<td>Salford</td>
<td>Derek Antrobus</td>
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<td>Stockport</td>
<td>Sue Derbyshire</td>
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<td>Tameside</td>
<td>Gerald Cooney</td>
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<td>Trafford</td>
<td>Michael Hyman</td>
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<td>Wigan</td>
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3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive declarations of interest in any item for discussion at the meeting. A blank form for declaring interests has been circulated with the agenda; please ensure that this is returned to the GMIST officer at the start of the meeting.

4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9th APRIL 2014 - attached

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 9th April 2014 as a correct record and to raise any matters not covered elsewhere on this agenda.

5. UPDATE ON GM HOUSING INVESTMENT BOARD

Verbal report of Eamonn Boylan

6. GM HOUSING PROVIDERS AND THE GM STRATEGY

Verbal report of Ian Munroe

7. TOWN CENTRES PROJECT: EVIDENCE ON BEST PRACTICE & CAR PARKING IN TOWN CENTRES - attached

Report of Lucy Woodbine

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS
**Planning & Housing Commission Meeting on 9 July 2014**

**Declaration Of Councillors’ Interests in Items Appearing on the Agenda**

**NAME OF COUNCILLOR ______________________________**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minute Item No. / Agenda Item No.</th>
<th>Nature of Interest</th>
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1. APOLOGY

Ian Munro National Housing Federation
David Chilton HCA

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received.
3. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 13 JANUARY 2014

RESOLVED/-

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2014 as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

4i PRIVATE SECTOR MEMBERSHIP

The Commission received a verbal update from Garreth Bruff and Paul Beardmore regarding recruitment of a private sector member following the resignation of Joe Isle.

Following January’s commission meeting discussion took place around staggering the terms of office for current members, at one, two or three years, to maintain some continuity and ensure non-elected members do not all leave at the same time.

RESOLVED/-

1. that Stephen Trusler be sent an invite to become a private sector member on the commission for a 3 year term.
2. that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the AGMA Executive Board to ratify the appointment of Stephen Trusler as a private sector member to the commission.
3. that a thank you letter be sent to Joe Isle for his contribution to the work of the Planning and Housing Commission since it’s establishment.
4. That current private sector membership terms of office be set at 3 years, staggered in the first instance as-
   Simon Bedford - term of office of 12 months
   Jayne Healey Brown - term of office of two years
   Stephen Trusler - terms of office of three years

5. HOUSING MARKET MONITOR

The Commission received a report from Steve Fyfe presenting the latest draft Housing Market Monitor report updating members on developments in the GM housing market, including updated data on:

- Empty homes
- Value and numbers of sales, length of time on market and difference between initial and current asking prices
- New build sales
- Help to Buy Equity loans
- Affordability and access to mortgage finance
- Residential lettings, including rent levels, number of properties available and length of time on market including specific data on the city centre and Salford Quays markets
- HCA-funded starts and completions for the first half of the financial year
RESOLVED/-

1. to note the information presented on trends in the GM market.
2. that the Housing Market Monitor report be shared more widely, including to lead members with planning and housing responsibilities.
3. to receive further updates to future meetings detailing finer analysis of the figures and the key drivers of housing markets in GM.

6. BUILD TO RENT AND GET BRITAIN BUILDING PROGRAMMES IN GM

The Commission received a report presented by Steve Fyfe and Bethan Jackson setting out progress to date under the Get Britain Building and Build to Rent recoverable investment programmes within Greater Manchester, showing the level of market interest and site intelligence generated as part of the funding bidding rounds.

The programmes were launched by Government as commercial, recoverable forms of development finance in order to stimulate private sector housing supply, with Build to Rent focussed specifically for the development of private rented housing. Considerable progress has been made to date on the 14 schemes (870 units) within Greater Manchester under the GBB programme.

Both programmes were launched over two competition rounds, offering loan and/or equity development finance, Get Britain Building for stalled private housing schemes and Build to Rent to support the delivery of housing for private rent of a quality to generate national institutional investor interest in the UK. Approvals under the first round of the programme are now complete with GM securing the first BtR scheme nationally for 192 units at the Three Towers, Manchester City Fringe.

RESOLVED/-

The Commission AGREED to note the report.

7. UPDATE ON GM HOUSING INVESTMENT BOARD

The Commission received a verbal update from Eamonn Boylan on Housing Investment Board work being taken forward jointly by the GMCA and the HCA focussing on dynamic collaboration. Work has started on a joint venture between HIB and HCA to create a mechanism to provide a pipeline of development that may draw down infrastructure funding.

RESOLVED/-

The Commission AGREED to note the update.

8. UPDATE ON REVIEW OF HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT LAND

The Commission received an update from Chris Findley on work being carried out to develop a GM Position on Growth and the associated work to review Greater Manchester’s housing and employment land requirements. This work
will ensure that we have a clear spatial and sectoral understanding of current and emerging occupier demand to support a market facing strategy for housing and employment growth. The following reporting timetable was agreed at the GMCA meeting held on 31 January:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Report To GMCA</th>
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<tr>
<td>Evidence Base</td>
<td>June 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agree GM Requirement</td>
<td>July 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spatial Options</td>
<td>September 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree Draft Strategy</td>
<td>December 2014</td>
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**RESOLVED/-**

1. to note the update.
2. to note the importance of wider engagement as this work develops, including with Executive members with responsibility for planning.
3. that a report to the GMCA would include the need for a working session with lead executive members for planning.

**9. SPRING BUDGET 2014 – PLANNING AND HOUSING HEADLINES**

The Commission received a report presented by Anne Morgan providing members with a summary of the Spring Budget, highlighting the main headlines relating to planning and housing.

**RESOLVED/-**

The Commission AGREED to note the budget briefing.

**10. 2014 MEETING DATES:**

- Wednesday 9 July 2014
- Wednesday 8 October 2014
- Wednesday 14 January 2015
- Wednesday 15 April 2015

All meetings will be held from 2:30pm-4:30pm in Room 312, Manchester Town Hall
PLANNING AND HOUSING COMMISSION

Date: 9th July 2014

Subject: Town Centres Project: evidence on best practice and car parking

Report of: Lucy Woodbine, New Economy

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This paper presents further evidence from the GM Town Centres project –

- a report on some of the ‘best practice’ identified through the review of different town centres; and
- a report on the relationship between car parking policies and town centre vitality.

Evidence within both reports has been developed to help inform work on town centres by Districts and their partners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Commission:

1. Discuss and comment on the evidence in these reports

2. Agree the reports and the conclusion of this stage of work

CONTACT OFFICERS:

Lucy Woodbine, Principal, Planning, Housing and Environment Research, New Economy

Garreth Bruff, Policy Manager, GM Integrated Support Team
1. BACKGROUND

Town Centres are a strategic priority within the refreshed Greater Manchester strategy, with a commitment to reshape their offer and respond to changing market demands with a much more innovative and entrepreneurial approach.

Following reviews of GMs eight principal town centres, a Town Centres Report was agreed by the GMCA setting out the need for fundamental restructuring across all of the town centres and containing a number of recommendations for achieving this.

As part of this, the report identified a number of areas where further research and evidence would be important to help inform ongoing work within town centres – particularly in terms of defining current ‘best practice’ in revitalising town centres and in managing car parking to help support town centres.

The Planning, Housing and Environment Research Team, within New Economy, were commissioned to undertake further research on these issues.

2. CURRENT EVIDENCE

Two research reports have recently been prepared by New Economy to help inform work on town centres within Districts.

The first collates evidence on best practice in town centres, utilising experience within Greater Manchester as well as from experience across the country. The paper draws on a number of council or partner led initiatives which could be deemed best practice in terms of revitalising town centres or addressing specific issues. Several of these are within Greater Manchester town centres, but it is acknowledged that experience from elsewhere also needs to be applied more widely across GM.

The second report, on car parking policy within town centres, is designed to explore the issue of car parking and the impact this may have on generating (or limiting) footfall in town centres. The paper sets out a range town centre car parking issues and looks at practice and experience within Greater Manchester as well as from other parts of the country, seeking to explore and identify evidence of causal links between car parking policy and the wider vitality of a town centre.

Both reports are attached (Annex One and Two) for discussion by the Commission.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The views of Planning and Commission Members are welcome on this evidence. Copies of the reports have also been shared with Districts through the Team Manchester Economic Development Leads group.

However, it is acknowledged that this is a very dynamic area of work where practice and experience are constantly developing and so it will be important to ensure evidence is kept up to date.
Town Centre
Best Practice
(Draft)

Date: 18th June 2014

ew economy
CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Introduction  7
2. Best Practice Examples  9
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document sets out examples of best practice both within Greater Manchester (GM) and across the country in relation to delivering a sustainable future for town centres. The work was based on desktop research primarily looking at council policies and practice. The research is, therefore limited to what is available publicly through published research and on-line, and there proved to be very little hard evaluation work on best practice in town centres that give any definitive and clear case studies. A number of council policies which could be deemed best practice are cited that could be rolled out across other towns, taking individuality into account where relevant. These “best in class” examples are highlighted under the following themes.

Business Engagement and Leadership

Trafford, through its Altrincham Forward initiative demonstrates strong leadership thorough well engaged partners, including the Chamber of Commerce, retailers, developers and letting agents to engage stakeholders and potential investors. Within this theme there are clear links to Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) such as in Skipton whose higher business rate contribution, as voted on by the businesses themselves through its BID goes towards marketing and events in the town.

Managing Town Centre Services

Wigan provides an excellent example of town centre management particularly in acting as the interface between the public and private sector. This is built around a number of capital projects under a strong management strategy with 6 clear priorities. Dartford, through their Portas Pilot bid have diversified services in the town centre to actively encourage community based services.

High Street Business Support

Rochdale’s High Street Foundation offers a range of funding support in the shape of mentoring, training and some funding and grants under an agreed set of principals. In Brighton, support is shown through the Business Rates Empty Property Discount Scheme.
Place Marketing

Bolton has led the way in marketing, branding itself as a “proper town centre”, emphasising its strong assets and traditional town centre appeal. Retailers are engaged with the campaign and contribute financially. The benefits of marketing through councils working together is demonstrated in South Wales where eight towns with limited marketing resources have worked together to promote particular aspects of their town centres.

Public Sector investment and risk bearing

The Knowledge Quarter in Bolton has been highlighted for some time as an exemplar regeneration project to demonstrate the viability of the location for private sector investment. This strength is being built on via the Bolton Innovation Zone. Oldham council has looked at innovative ways of de-risking investment for potential investors in the area particularly under its clear town centre vision, this is particularly evident in the support given to the development of the leisure offer in the old town hall. Stockport council has a pro-active strategy, purchasing both land and individual buildings for strategic interventions such as with the Stockport Exchange office and hotel scheme.

Brixton have developed a Brixton Green Community Land Trust where a Community Land Trust buys land at a reduced rate from the local council to provide useful collateral against which to borrow.

Public Realm

Investment in new and high quality public realm is a key part of the place shaping role of all local authorities across the country. In Greater Manchester it will particularly be important in the development of Metrolink service and footfall to the key town centre locations. Altrincham have used public realm to facilitate business growth. Leicester’s Street and Spaces initiative provides some evidence that investment in public realm has improved and attracted new businesses.
Traditional Markets

Bury is a prime example of a successful traditional market which is regionally significant and has a strong brand. Similarly, Ashton-under-Lyne’s indoor and outdoor markets are trading strongly and provide a real focus for town centre activity. Bradford’s market celebrates and reflects the cultural and social diversity of the area and the Boqueria market in Barcelona is an international example of traders having greater responsibility for, and hence a greater stake in, the upkeep and promotion of the market.

Meanwhile Use

The term ‘meanwhile use’ refers to the temporary use of vacant land or buildings for a public benefit, initiated with the aim of helping to support wider rejuvenation of an area. The concept can cover a number of the themes outlined above. Examples of best practice in meanwhile use are plentiful, both locally and nationally as well as even internationally, and many not specifically in a town centre location are still relevant.

The first stage of this desktop research has been developed further by adding in depth case studies of those best practice examples that are of most interest to the local authorities. The following schemes outside of GM have been explored further to add most value to our evidence:

- Business Improvement Districts – such as in Skipton
- Darford’s community based Portas pilot scheme
- Brighton: The Business Rate Empty Property Occupation Discount Scheme
- Brixton: Green Community Land Trust
- Bradford: International Markets
- A more detailed look at public realm and in particular Leicester: Streets and Spaces
- A more detailed look at meanwhile use and in particular Glasgow: Stalled Spaces
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Our town centres lie at the heart of communities but are facing a series of fundamental challenges. The growth of e-commerce and large out-of-town retailers means the retail sector is going through a revolution, and town centres are struggling to adapt. This trend is set to continue and accelerate with the amount of retail space required within town centres set to contract by nearly a third by 2020. It is essential that we redesign the offer that our town centres make, based on an evidenced understanding of their unique characteristics and the changing market to both consolidate existing strengths and develop an offer that meets emerging demand.

1.2 A comprehensive review of Greater Manchester’s (GM) eight principal town centres was undertaken over autumn 2012. Using an independent team of private sector experts, the reviews tested the thinking and approach behind local town centre strategies and made a number of specific recommendations for enhancing them. Outcomes were agreed by the GMCA\(^1\), which tasked New Economy with implementing the research recommendations.

1.3 Individual Councils are now updating their town centre strategies in light of the reviews, developing a sequenced programme of interventions to enable the centres to respond to changing markets and consumer demand. The reviews also pointed to the need for further collaborative work to better understand the role of town centre marketing, car parking and business rates in revitalizing our town centres as well as the need to support more independent business and build much closer relationships with large multiple retailers and leisure organisations.

1.4 As part of this shared plan of action, a broader piece of research has also been prepared to bring together examples of best practice from across GM and the country in general. This has been a desktop data gathering exercise, but seeks to identify innovative practice, new solutions to common challenges and critical success factors so that these can be applied more widely and rapidly within GM. The desk top assessment was carried out during Autumn 2013/Spring 2014. Individual town centre strategies will each have their own focus, shaped by local priorities and the different assets in each centre. However, a strategic approach to all town centres will include a number of common elements and the examples of best practice are structured around these common elements:

- **Business Engagement and Leadership:** meaningful private sector engagement at all levels, setting a clear vision and strategy as well as coordinating decisions or activities to maintain progress towards the vision

\(^1\) The full GM Town Centre Report can be accessed at http://www.agma.gov.uk/cms_media/files/12_gm_town_centres_project.pdf
• **Managing Town Centre Services**: ensuring that basic public services meet the needs of local businesses and their customers

• **High Street Business Support**: practical support to make it as easy as possible for business to locate and grow in a town centre context

• **Place Marketing**: a clear brand that is strongly promoted to target markets

• **Public Sector Investment and Risk Bearing**: direct investment to attract or de-risk private sector development, utilising measures like local authority covenants to provide confidence for further investment in town centre schemes.

• **Improving the Public Realm**: investing in the public realm of a town centre to develop the sense of place and create vitality by raising footfall and lengthening dwell time

• **Traditional Markets**: managing a successful and distinctive market
2 BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

The concluding report of the GM Town Centre Study identified a number of policy themes to engage town centre management teams to focus on a way forward in the light of declining retail potential in town centres not just in GM but across the country. The following highlights these themes with examples of best practice from within GM and nationally.

2.1 Business Engagement and leadership

Success is far more likely when local authorities, private sector businesses, landowners, investors, and the wider community share a vision for their area and, through strong local leadership, work together to deliver that vision.

**Trafford** council has high levels of engagement with local businesses and takes the lead on where the town centre should go in the future through their Altrincham Forward initiative\(^2\). The council has a policy of actively finding businesses to move into vacant properties in the town centre with the aim of reducing vacancy periods. The council has also helped to promote business-led initiatives such as *drive2thrive* (a competition among the local community to come up with town centre policy ideas). Strong leadership through Altrincham Forward and well engaged partners, including the Chamber of Commerce, retailers, developers, letting agents, and the civic society has engaged stakeholders and potential investors, promoting regeneration from the bottom up.

**Wigan** have engaged with business directly through the development of their Wigan Plus Card\(^3\), similar schemes have been implemented across the country such as Kensington and Chelsea Wedgecard\(^4\) and smaller schemes, such as in Haselmere in Surrey have also had similar success in terms of number of businesses engaged. These are often linked to local currency schemes, such as the Totnes Pound in Devon and the Lewes Pound in Sussex and have a similar beneficial effect for local shops in terms of keeping more money circulating locally.

**Skipton** is one example of businesses being engaged through the development of a Business Improvement District (BID)\(^5\) where businesses voted to add one percent to their business rates to go towards town centre marketing, festival funding, public realm improvement and training for all members. Having this single organisation has helped Skipton to negotiate with national firms and make sure they compete with other independent shops on a fair basis.\(^6\)

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\(^4\) NEF (2012) *Reimagining the high Street: Escape from Clone town Britain*

\(^5\) [http://www.ukbids.org/](http://www.ukbids.org/)

2.2 Managing Town Centre Services

Town Centres have a leading role as a focus of public and private sector services as well as a community role and local authorities have a key role in managing this diverse range of services. **Wigan** Council provides an excellent example of Town Centre management. This management acts as the interface between the public and private sector and aims to encourage retail businesses to participate in and contribute, financially or otherwise, to a range of services and development of the town centre. There is a strong planning framework for the town centre built on a number of capital projects, especially in terms of major gateways and transport improvements. Key elements are the relocation of council employees through the Town Hall refurbishment and the Life Centre and the Northern Crescent Learning Quarter (new college and University Technical College, with a Youth Zone and public realm improvements). The broader management strategy has six clear priorities - rebalancing the town centre, the quality of the environment, accessibility, broadening the leisure offer, learning facilities and change within the Town Centre.

**Dartford's** Portas Pilot bid was based on trying to diversify town centre services by giving the high street a community centre type role rather than just a functional retail location. Dartford Council have provided suitable venues in the town centre and the shopping centre hosts regular 'fun days'/arts and crafts events.

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**Case Study – Skipton’s Business Improvement District**

The Skipton Business Improvement District (BID) was established in 2009 to support the changes from an old market town to a contemporary tourist destination and gateway to the Yorkshire Dales. There is a high proportion of independent retailers in Skipton which is why the BID is seen to bear an important role. The vote determining the future of the BID is due in January 2014 and the ATCM predicts the loss of the BID might mean the loss of independent shops with a further effect on the retail balance in the town (ATCM Successful Town Centres – Developing Effective Strategies, Annex B: Case Studies). The cost of the BID based on the 1% of rateable value charge, is less than £100 for more than half of the businesses involved. During its first term, the BID has invested excess £485,000 to the town’s benefit with a further £391,496 invested via third party or partner funding stimulating the economic activity in Skipton. During its second term the BID is aiming to ensure a thriving business community remains in Skipton which is not only an attractive place to visit but a pleasant area to carry out business. The BID has funded a range of initiatives during its first term, ranging from festivals to training and business support. (Skipton Business Improvement District Detailed Proposal Document and Business Plan.)
days in empty units aiming to get people into the town centre through actively encouraging community based services and groups.  

**Case Study – Dartford My Street**

A Portas Pilot scheme was carried out in Dartford over 18 months to revitalise the town centre. The bid brought in total £159,000 of funding with half matched by Dartford Borough Council to deliver the Dartford My Street programme. The scheme included twenty £1,000 bursaries for entrepreneurs to start up new market stalls, six new pop-up market stalls, seed funding for a six-month Sunday Market pilot and free Sunday parking, events to boost the evening economy, equipment for community activities, a loyalty card scheme and Dartford My Street App in addition to specialist training and business support. £15,000 was invested in community activity equipment with a further £30,000 earmarked for purchasing an event space in a High Street location. The bid aimed to create social capital and added value to existing regeneration projects in the town centre. Announced in May 2012, further evaluation of the scheme is yet to be published. However, the number of empty shopping outlets has been reported to increase in 10 out of the 12 towns, Dartford included. The success of the programme should be evaluated in full including reviewing details of footfall levels and other than retail based town centre activity, as the majority of the support provided by the programme was invested in market, pop-up and event based activities.

**2.2 High Street Business Support**

The Portas Review and the Grimsey response to Portas believe there needs to a more joined up approach to planning for the town centre to engage and support business and towns as a whole. Rochdale Council has set up the High Street Foundation which aims to enable local businesses to work together with Rochdale Council to create a vibrant and sustainable high street both now and in the future. A range of business support is offered in the shape of mentoring, training and some funding and grants. The foundation has an agreed plan and eight principles which mean that all the members are in broad agreement with the council on where they want the town centre to go.

Brighton has engaged with and assisted businesses with The Business Rates Empty Property Occupation Discount scheme which started operation on 1st October 2013 and is scheduled to operate until the 31st March 2015. It provides a six month discount to business rate payers who occupy long term empty (over

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7 Respublica (June 2012) 'Clubbing together: The Hidden Wealth of Communities'  
6 months) non domestic properties. The amount of discount will vary according to the Rateable Value (RV) of the property, so that smaller and medium-sized businesses would benefit proportionately more than larger ones. Opinion was sought from various interested parties, including City Regeneration, Planning and the Property Estates team as well as commercial agents Cluttons. All felt that there was merit in the scheme and that it would only serve to support local business. There was positive support for the focus on more support for smaller and medium sized businesses via a tapering effect of aiming the discount at lower Rateable Values. Further feedback was gleaned from informal discussions with the Chamber of Commerce and the Brighton and Hove Economic Partnership. As the overall feedback was positive and the initiative was supported. The scheme had originally been designed with three months of support in mind but as a result of these discussions and some further analysis of the caseload, the scheme now covers six months of discount. A review of the costs and the effectiveness of the scheme will be reported the Council after the end of the financial year 2013/14. Similar schemes have been trialled in Northern Ireland and in Scotland offering 50% reduction in business rates for 12 months for occupiers of premises which have been vacant for more than 1 year. Towards the end of 2012, 52 businesses had benefitted from a 50% reduction on rates totalling £143,000 since the introduction of this rate relief in April 2012.

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**Case Study – Brighton’s Empty Property Occupation Discount Scheme**

Brighton City Council has set aside £100,000 of its 2013/2014 budget for a new business rate relief to assist businesses in Brighton & Hove. The Empty Property Occupation Discount is part of the council’s broader economic development objectives with prospects of revenue increases from business rates in the longer term. The scheme is set to run from 1 October to 31 March 2015 offering a six month discount for businesses occupying non-domestic properties that have been empty for at least six months. The discount varies according to the Rateable Value (RV) of a property with smaller and medium-sized businesses benefitting proportionally more than larger businesses. Businesses with RV £24,999 or under, receive a 100% discount and businesses with RV of £25,000-£34,999 receive a 50% discount. There were 506 empty properties in Brighton & Hove in August, which could qualify for the discount, with 86% of the properties having RV lower than £35,000 (http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/press-release/council-proposes-new-discount-help-local-businesses). The scheme applies to a range of properties from shop units and office blocks to medium-sized businesses and as such it is a contribution to the council’s commitment of creating 6,000 jobs in the city. (Brighton & Hove City Council Policy & Resources Committee Agenda Item 47.)

In their reviews of UK town centres, Both Grimsey and Portas recognise the importance of the planning system in the management of town centres. Grimsey\(^\text{10}\) recommends that the business plan for the town centre should come first with planning applications fitting around it and Portas \(^\text{11}\) urges the Government to cut planning red tape. They believe that the change of the planning use class system could be used effectively to prevent empty units on the high street and recognise that engagement with landlords plays a key part in minimising the number of empty shops. For example, Grimsey suggests in particular that the change of use process could be used to convert entire sub-high streets to residential or other uses within the agreed high street plan and relocate the successful independent retailers into the main commercial centre.

2.3 Place Marketing

The promotion of town centres which highlights a particular strength and/or exploits how a particular town centre is different is particularly important within such a competitive environment. In Greater Manchester Bolton has led the way in place marketing. It has branded itself as a “proper town centre”, emphasising its strong retail assets, public and leisure amenity and traditional town centre appeal A key strength of the campaign is that retailers are fully on board, to the extent that they are contributing 50% of the cost of the campaign. This “bottom up” approach to understanding branding and marketing was specifically recognised in the town centre reviews and the AGMA report recommended that other local authorities liaise with Bolton in order to learn from and adapt their experiences.

The advantages of town centres working together has been highlighted in the marketing of the Rhonda Cynon Taff area in South Wales. The eight towns in the area, with limited individual marketing and promotional resources worked together to promote particular aspects of their town centres and tourist attractions.

\(^{10}\) http://www.vanishinghighstreet.com/the-grimsey-review/

2.4 Public Sector Investment

Initiating public sector investment can demonstrate confidence in the town centre, and to develop a pro-active strategy as well as de-risk private sector investment. **Bolton** Council were highlighted in the 2010 GM Town Centres’ study as using public sector investment to develop a strong business case for their emerging Knowledge Quarter. They have built on this strength with the Bolton Innovation Zone (BIZ), a project aiming to regenerate the area around the University to demonstrate its viability as a location for private sector investment. It includes a new Health Centre (Bolton ONE), expansion of the university and the relocation of two of the town’s FE colleges and as well as a refurbishment of Bolton market. There is the potential to further increase the impact of the Knowledge Quarter by utilising a number of sites within the town centre for incubator space to support entrepreneurs and small businesses linked to the university and colleges.

**Oldham** council has looked at innovative ways of de-risking investment for potential investors in the area. The Council has a clear vision for the Borough outlined in the Invest in Oldham prospectus. The town centre is a critical element of Invest in Oldham, with over 50% of the investment (circa £56m) of public funds being allocated to developing the town centre. The Council’s approach of direct financial intervention is innovative and bold but driven by necessity given the market position. The review of the town centre strongly support proposals for The Old Town Hall, redeveloping this listed building into a landmark multiplex cinema with the Council putting significant funds into the scheme.

**Stockport** council has a similarly pro-active strategy, purchasing both land and individual buildings for strategic interventions. Key investment priorities are the Stockport Exchange office and hotel scheme, relocation of cinema and restaurants/retail at Bridgefield and regeneration around Underbanks and Market Place for independent business.

Another approach is the use of council support is working with Community land trusts, one example is being tested in **Brixton**\(^\text{12}\). This Community Land Trust has bought land at a reduced rate from the local council and another landowner, local

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\(^{12}\) [http://sbsd.net/nefoundation/default/page/-/publications/Reimagining_the_high_street_2.pdf](http://sbsd.net/nefoundation/default/page/-/publications/Reimagining_the_high_street_2.pdf) p.28
people then buy shares in the Trust. This provides useful collateral against which to borrow and is a clear example of the community getting a genuine stake in the future development of Brixton by purchasing land for themselves. The Trusts work enables occupiers to pay for the use of buildings and services at prices they can afford, while the value of land, subsidies, planning gain and other equity benefits are permanently locked in, on behalf of them and future occupiers, by the Trust, helping small independent businesses and new kinds of green businesses such as recycling and repair workshops get a foothold in the town centre. The challenge of the Trust has always been raising the capital to purchase land in urban areas but the Brixton Green Trust do this through a community share issue which has proven to be an attractive alternative way of locals investing their savings rather than through banks.

### Case Study – Brixton’s Green Community Land Trust

The Brixton Green Community Land Trust (GCLT) is working in partnership with Lambeth Council ensuring a strong level of community involvement in the plans to redevelop part of Somerleyton Road in the heart of Brixton. The site is situated 400 yards from the Brixton Underground station but has seen significantly less activity than the area on the other side of the tracks, which means it has had reduced economic activity and has been seen as a community safety issue. The project is set to run from December 2013 to April 2017 including studies and team selection, community stakeholder meetings and workshops scheduled to take place throughout the project. The first stage of the project includes detailed planning and funding proposal production with a review before entering the second stage, which includes the actual planning application process in 2015 with construction running from July 2015 to April 2017. The project has been identified as a major opportunity to boost local community engagement as the Council is committed to work with the community to lead the regeneration project and offer longer term management once the site is built.

### 2.5 Public Realm

Investment in new and high quality public realm is a key part of the place-shaping role of all local authorities. High quality and attractive environments can play a fundamental role in increasing the time people spent in an area and in raising and directing footfall. This can directly help to grow turnover for neighbouring businesses and can lead to new business investment. The importance of this will be paramount in Ashton under Lyne, Oldham and Rochdale, where investment in public realm will help to connect passengers using the new Metrolink service to the main town centre services. There are a number of public realm strategies
across GM with a particular focus on the town centres. One example is that put forward by Altrincham\textsuperscript{13} and one recommendation of the town centre reviews across the centres was further investment in public realm in particular to facilitate business growth. In light of this more specific and detailed case studies will be sought from the districts.

There are various examples of public realm being used throughout the country and various good practice guides. Living Streets commissioned research company Just Economics to bring together the evidence of the commercial and consumer benefits of good walking environments.\textsuperscript{14} Research shows that making places better for walking can boost footfall and trading by up to 40\% and that good urban design can raise retail rents by up to 20\%. The report found that Leicester, previously described as having a traditional city centre, lacking public open spaces and suffering from dereliction and underinvestment in many areas had made significant efforts to improve and enhance its public realm. In 2005, a public realm strategy was initiated in response to the redevelopment and expansion of the Shires Shopping Centre (re-launched as the Highcross) in the centre of Leicester. This three year programme of investment – the Streets and Spaces initiative – led to £19 million of improvements across the centre, to regenerate and transform its appearance to help it to benefit from and attract new visitors. Measures included pedestrianisation, de-cluttering, new street paving and street furniture, tree planting and changes to street lighting. A survey of business carried out during the project’s implementation found that 91 per cent felt that the space surrounding their business location had recently improved, and 64 per cent agreed that these improvements have been good for business. Furthermore, 73 per cent stated that the improvements had helped to attract visitors. It was also noted that the flagship John Lewis store, the retail anchor of the new Highcross development, would not have been secured without the Streets and Spaces initiative.

\textsuperscript{13}http://www.altrinchamforward.com/doc/130404%20%20Altrincham%20Town%20Centre%20Public%20Realm%20Strategy%20%20%20FINAL.pdf

\textsuperscript{14}http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/make-a-change/library/the-pedestrian-pound-the-business-case-for-better-streets-and-places
2.6 Traditional Markets

Traditional markets provide an opportunity in many town centres for existing market trading to be used and extended in terms of both location and diversity of offer so that the market brings benefits across more areas of the town centre.

Bury is a prime example of a successful traditional market which is regionally significant and has a strong brand. It provides a distinct role and contributes to the town being a visitor destination. In a report by the CLG looking at traditional markets Bury was sourced as an exemplar of good practice in using the market to link with other parts of the town centre. Also within GM, Ashton-under-Lyne’s market area including the indoor and outdoor markets are trading strongly and provide a strong focus as a functioning core of the town centre.

The Retail Markets Association in the CLG report also noted that one reason for the success of Bradford International Market was that it celebrated “the cultural and social diversity of the area with "signature market events" held over a number of bank holiday weekends. The report also noted that England could learn from the relationship between trader and authority organisations in Europe. In the Boqueria market in Barcelona for example traders have greater responsibility for,

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15 Communities and Local Government Committee - Ninth Report Market Failure?: Can the traditional market survive?  
http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmcomloc/308/30802.htm
and hence a greater stake in, the upkeep and promotion of the market than do their counterparts in English markets. All traders as part of their licence are required to join the trader organisation. The traders in turn employ staff to promote the market and liaise with the city authority, who in turn employ specific staff to look after the interests of the market.

2.7 Meanwhile Use

One overarching example of best practice which is emerging within the realm of the work around town centres is that known as “meanwhile uses”. Meanwhile use is best defined as “the temporary use of vacant buildings or land for a socially [and ultimately economically] beneficial purpose until such time when they can be brought back into commercial use again.”16 Some examples have already been touched upon previously but it is worth looking at this concept in more detail. The concept covers a number of the themes derived from the GM Town Centre Review, in particular business engagement and leadership, managing town centre services, high street business support, strategic public sector investment as well as leveraging council assets to support town centre investment.

The practice of meanwhile use has had national attention as one option that is currently being explored in a number of towns and cities in order to fill vacant spaces with the aim of helping to rejuvenate public spaces. The previous government used pilot initiatives to enable community uses of an increasing

16 www.meanwhile.org.uk
number of vacant property and sites. This work was led by Meanwhile Space, a community interest company, who support diverse initiatives such as pop-up shops for young entrepreneurs to revitalising derelict land through community gardens. These pilots were highlighted as good practice in the Portas Review. The Coalition government has brought forward a number of acts and policy interventions which are increasingly starting to make the use of ‘meanwhile space’ a more viable and necessary proposition to all stakeholders. These include the Empty Property Rates Relief introduced in 2010, bringing a huge financial incentive for landlords to make space available in the meanwhile period; the Localism Act 2011 enabling local authorities to retain a significant proportion of the business rates generated in their area and new powers to reduce the business rates as they see fit and in 2011, the rateable value threshold for empty property rates dropped from £18,000 to £2,600, which increased the number of landlords affected from 30% to 95%. In 2012, DCLG announced changes to the planning system use class to facilitate temporary uses for up to 2 years.

A website has been developed to enable potential landlords to be matched with potential occupiers as well as a toolkit to get meanwhile use off the ground www.meanwhilespace.com. However, this facility appears to be somewhat underused but is a resource that could be utilised in the future.

Whilst stakeholders seem keen on the idea of meanwhile use in principal, there a number of conditions that will need to be in place in order to encourage take up of this scheme. There are a number of key themes that emerge from the evidence around meanwhile use that need to be taken into consideration. These include the central role of business rates as well as the restrictive nature of “use class” regulations. Business rates in particular could prove vital to the success of meanwhile uses, as financial benefits to the key stakeholders are vital to encourage involvement. There are clear benefits of the scheme to property owners or leaseholders such as the security of active occupation, lower costs during vacant periods and increased prospect of future commercial occupancy. The potential future use of the space could be of interest to community groups and occupiers who would take advantage of some prime locations perhaps giving a low risk space for innovation and growth and preventing knock on blight.

Examples of best practice in meanwhile use are plentiful locally and nationally as well as even internationally, and some not specifically in a town centre location are still relevant. For example, locally, Stagecoach Manchester ended its century-long association with its Princess Road site in August 2011, when it moved to new
purpose-built premises on the Sharston industrial estate in Wythenshawe. The land was acquired by Manchester City Council, who invited the community to make suggestions for a ‘meanwhile’ use of the land, while its long-term future was discussed. One of these suggestions was an urban orchard\textsuperscript{17} which was implemented with very limited funding and revitalized the area through involvement of the local community. In Oldham, a small community led cinema was developed in an empty shop unit in Oldham Town Centre\textsuperscript{18} where there was a leisure opportunity identified which was not being met by the town. This was developed with an initial Arts Council grant and continued support of Oldham Council’s Arts Development team the project is going from strength to strength.

In the rest of the UK Glasgow Stalled Spaces\textsuperscript{19} is a good award winning model of meanwhile use with an impressive number of community based projects that they have funded in 2011/12. Projects that are part of the scheme include public realm, local food production and play areas run on a volunteer basis. Sheffield have developed a community scheme that aims to use temporary 'meanwhile use' leases to get creative entrepreneurs and independent businesses into empty shops\textsuperscript{20} In Sheffield there are also opportunities within meanwhile use\textsuperscript{21} for the arts and cultural uses. The Island, in Bristol\textsuperscript{22} is a temporary use of an old police station in Bristol city centre which is awaiting development in a partnership between Urban Splash (owners) and Artspace Lifespace\textsuperscript{23}. Similarly the college project, also in Bristol is a 2 year temporary use of an ex-vocational college in Bristol agreed between also with Artspace Lifespace and the HCA. Both these spaces operate with discretionary business rates relief as multi-use arts and community resources incorporating studios, training spaces, events, urban agriculture, galleries and performance.

Belfast’s strategic approach to high street decline has led them to conclude that ‘meanwhile uses’ can be more than a ‘pop-up’ craze and that they can be meaningful and generate a long term and sustainable future for many of its vacant

\textsuperscript{17}http://www.manchester.gov.uk/news/article/6577/time_is_ripe_for_urban_orchard_on_former_stagecoach_depot_site
\textsuperscript{18}http://thesmallcinema.com/about-us/
\textsuperscript{19}http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=13600&p=0
\textsuperscript{20}http://www.theguardian.com/uk/the-northerner/2013/may/17/sheffield-high-street-common-people
\textsuperscript{21}http://artspacelifespace.com/index.php/?current/the-college
\textsuperscript{22}http://www.theislandbristol.com/
\textsuperscript{23}http://artspacelifespace.com/
A more indirect approach to historic empty buildings has been developed by Liverpool\textsuperscript{24}. A project from Liverpool based social enterprise PLACED that explores some of the city's empty buildings by inviting residents and visitors to share memories, stories and images of buildings that they worked in, visited and used but can no longer access. These memories will form the starting point for considering what the future of these buildings could be; developing ideas about how the potential for these buildings can be unlocked.

In Greater London there are various examples of a ‘pop up’ approach to revitalising and making town centres more interesting and attractive. These include a pop up mall in Shoreditch (BoxPark)\textsuperscript{26} and a pop-up theatre (Arcola Tent) in Hackney\textsuperscript{27} The concept continues to restaurants/cafes in Greenwich\textsuperscript{28}, Peckham\textsuperscript{29} and Kings Cross\textsuperscript{30}, to the reuse of an old underground train for business in Shoreditch\textsuperscript{31}

There are linkages between meanwhile use and Business Improvements Districts \textsuperscript{32} with examples being in Gabriels Wharf on the South Bank\textsuperscript{33} where old garages, now with shop-fronts added, now make excellent retail design studios and in Camden Town where businesses have set up Camden Town Unlimited\textsuperscript{34} which incorporates various business led initiatives including a pop-up shop programme

Internationally, the USA and in particular Australia have taken ambitious strides to counter the threat of empty or vacant properties and sites to their economy. In New York, 596 Acres\textsuperscript{35} is a scheme with the aim of providing new community spaces in neighbourhoods where green and recreational areas are scarce. Through its interactive mapping it is also a good example of how to integrate and hybridize physical fieldwork with digital and programming work. In Australia, funded by the New South Wales government and the University of Technology in

\textsuperscript{24} \url{http://www.uahs.org.uk/cmsfiles/Meanwhile-to-Meaningful–Meanwhile-Uses-for-vacant-historic-buildings-UAHS-April-2013.pdf}
\textsuperscript{25} \url{http://www.hiddenliverpool.org.uk}
\textsuperscript{26} \url{http://www.boxpark.co.uk/about/#}
\textsuperscript{27} \url{http://www.hackney.gov.uk/art-in-empty-sapces-arcola-tent.htm}
\textsuperscript{28} \url{http://www.themovementgreenwich.com}
\textsuperscript{29} \url{http://www.londonpopups.com/2013/06/franks-cafe-rooftop-pop-up-in-peckham.html}
\textsuperscript{30} \url{http://www.kingscross.co.uk/press-release-2012-05-17}
\textsuperscript{31} \url{http://villageunderground.co.uk/about}
\textsuperscript{32} \url{http://www.ukbids.org/}
\textsuperscript{33} \url{http://www.coinstreet.org/developments/gabrielswharf.html}
\textsuperscript{34} \url{http://www.camdentownunlimited.com}
\textsuperscript{35} \url{http://www.ciudadesaescalahumana.org/2012/09/crowdsourcing-underused-urban-assets.html}
Sydney, a toolkit has been developed to promote short-term reuses of empty shops and spaces for creative and community development. The site publishes tools for empty space coordinators to start a ‘pop-up’ initiative, success stories, information for landlords and local government about creative space reuse for local development and an online community to share knowledge.

From a brief review of literature and case studies in relation to meanwhile uses and general best practice above there is clearly a wide range of creative and innovative practice acting in relative isolation. This raises the question as to whether, if GM co-ordinates, particularly its meanwhile use activity, it could leverage in significant economic benefits as well as social, cultural and environmental improvements and is clearly one thing that could be explored further strategically.

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**Case Study – Glasgow Stalled Spaces**

Glasgow Stalled Spaces is a meanwhile project started by Glasgow City Council and Glasgow Housing Association in 2010 to address the high level of vacant sites in Glasgow, which is more than in the rest of Scotland put together. The project has successfully brought 13 hectares of land into temporary use – out of which 8ha are located within the worst 15% of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation dataset according to the Central Scotland Green Network. The range of purposes is broad with a focus on green spaces within the city. Examples of use include green gym/outdoor exercise, exhibition space and arts projects, outdoor education, pop up park and other innovative ideas. The project brings new temporary purposes for vacant land, open space and earmarked development sites that remain under utilised. Stalled Spaces has been awarded the City to City Barcelona Fostering Art and Design (FAD) Award marking the project’s success. The project does not only put vacant space into good use but develops projects with community groups improving people’s social, economic and environmental wellbeing. Stalled Spaces has received nearly £500,000 match funding (up until 2012) as a result of Community Support in addition to smaller investments from Glasgow City Council and Glasgow Housing Association. The value of in-kind support for the project has been estimated to £56,000. The Stalled Spaces website is linked to the Glasgow City Council website (http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=10691).

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3 CONCLUSION

3.1 It is clear from the examples highlighted in this brief just how diverse the range of projects and schemes are in relation to the strengthening of town centres, not only within GM but nationally. Common threads do emerge including the need to diversify the offer away from retail, working in partnership with business as well as other town centres in the area, embracing new technology and encourage new ways of working to engage local people.

3.2 It is also clear that the examples must be finely tuned to an individual area. What works in Bradford, for example, focusing on the cultural and social diversity of the area and other areas encouraging visitors to certain aspects of a town’s heritage, exploits the individual aspects of a local area and its population. Finding areas of individuality is just as important as finding areas of common interest and working together is possible in both respects.

3.3 Only some of the case studies discussed in this brief have been subject to thorough evaluations, however, with continuation depending on the success of the project. While Brighton’s empty property occupation discount scheme is deemed to be worthwhile based on previous business rate relief schemes, for example Dartford’s community based Portas pilot scheme awaits further evaluation despite the significant funding the scheme has received.

3.4 A clear issue to emerge from this broad look at best practice is the lack of any strong and consistent evaluation framework for many of the initiatives that are currently working on the ground, both within and beyond GM. Evaluation is key not only to assess if money is being spent wisely and to its maximum effect, but also in being able to learn from what initiatives have, and perhaps more importantly, have not worked well.
Car Parking in Town Centres
(Draft)

18th June 2014
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to create further discussion on the car parking strategies in Greater Manchester (GM) with an overview of the current debate and examples of best practice linking the paper to the national context. The wider framework for this work has been set by the Greater Manchester Town Centre Action Report published in March 2013, which recognises car parking as a key measure of town centre management. Further co-operation between the 8 principal town centres in GM is needed in order to respond to the major challenges town centres are facing and ensuring car parking policy is seen as a measure to generate footfall.

Car parking policy has been inconsistent during the past decade at the national, regional and local level. The scope of the national parking policy has shifted from urging the maximum use of parking provision to emphasise the role of local conditions and reasonable tariffs combined with practical parking locations. It is the local authorities who are responsible for both setting their own parking policy and collecting car parking revenue.

The link between town centre prosperity and car parking is weak. There are several reasons why people turn away from the high street and there is a lack of clear evidence and evaluation of town centre car parking. Out-of-town retail complexes and e-commerce pose major challenges to town centres, as specialist shops, more varied retail offers and free parking lure customers away from town centres. Footfall levels reflect town centre performance while a practical and efficient car parking policy can help generate more footfall. A coherent and correctly applied car parking strategy can be used as a tool to enhance town centre activity taking into consideration the current trading conditions in the principal GM town centres.

Town centre car parking strategy can be influenced in four broad areas by the local authorities: setting the correct tariff, offering limited free parking, having fair parking enforcement and improving the overall car parking experience. The right tariff depends heavily on local factors and there is a delicate balance between collecting revenue and offering a practical parking service, which also supports local businesses. Delivering thorough evaluation and continuous car parking reviews can help maintain this balance and to determine the level of efficient car parking offers, including an element of free parking, which according to evidence gathered boost town centre activity. Fair parking enforcement and a well maintained parking stock with several payment methods and technological applications provided for motorists’ convenience help enhance the overall parking experience having an improving effect on the town centre image.

Car parking policy in the principal GM town centres is broadly similar with the differences in pricing reflecting the needs and demands of individual town
centres. The majority of the eight town centres have parking offers and limited free parking but the use of new technology is not wide spread. A lack of evaluation of existing parking policy and possible free parking trials means that it is difficult to show what works best. Few examples exist but in Swindon, a reduced tariff was assessed to have increased the length of time people stayed in the town centre and in Middlesborough a free car parking element led to a doubling of use of the parking spaces. More locally, Bolton and Oldham's free parking offers have produced positive feedback from retailers in their evaluation of the schemes that have taken place.

Overall, a clear and evidence based car parking strategy designed around the needs of local business and with an understanding of the existing car parking occupancy can attract visitors back to town centres and boost the overall town centre vitality.
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The principal town centres in Greater Manchester (GM) are working together in a unique plan to ensure they co-ordinate to earn new investment and achieve the greatest possible success. The eight principal centres all recognise they are facing major challenges primarily from e-commerce and out-of-town developments placing unprecedented pressure on their retail offers.

1.2 AGMAs Planning and Housing Commission have recently carried out some research to review each of these principal town centres with an ultimate aim of combining forces so that the centres complement each other and develop in their own style to exploit the key features of their “offer”¹. Experts in the public and private sectors have worked together to analyse the unique character and potential for development in the 8 principal town centres (Altrincham, Ashton, Bolton, Bury, Oldham, Rochdale, Stockport and Wigan).

1.3 A GM town centre action report was considered by the GM Combined Authority in March and the recommendations are now being implemented. The report included recommendations for further research on town centre marketing, best practice, car parking, business rates and working with landlords and retailers to support town centre transition.

1.4 This brief gathers together information around the town centre car parking issue and its link to the vitality of the town centres.

¹ GM Town Centres Project: Concluding Report Greater Manchester Combined Authority March 2013
2 CAR PARKING AND THE SUCCESS OF TOWN CENTRES

Policy Background

2.1 Over the past decade parking policy has been inconsistent at the national, regional, and subsequently, local level. National parking policy was contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 13 on Transport (2001) which initiated the change from minimum to maximum levels of parking provision. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in March 2012 introduced a more holistic approach to parking planning, emphasizing the importance of local conditions. This national policy made it clear that car parking charges should not inhibit town centre vitality while encouraging proportionate parking enforcement. On setting local parking standards, local planning authorities are to take into account public transport, car ownership levels, need to reduce use of high-emission vehicles, accessibility, and the type and use of new developments. In essence, parking policy is now set at the local level giving local authorities the possibility to take into consideration local conditions. This also means local authorities have the power to manage car parking revenue.²

2.2 At the regional level two sets of standards were introduced in the North West to reflect areas of differing accessibility and from this the Parking Standards for Greater Manchester (GM) were developed and included in the second GM Local Transport Plan in 2006. The partial review of the Regional Spatial Strategy contained a revised set of standards which all authorities were to comply with thereby creating consistency across GM. The Coalition Government abolished the statutory basis for Regional Strategies in July 2010 and as a consequence a non-statutory framework is now in place for the North West. The North West of England Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 mentions reducing private car use as a goal while encouraging the use of ‘smarter choices’ alongside effective parking charges, enforcement and provision when managing travel demand. North West Parking Standards define the upper limit of parking linked to developments and are in line with PPG13 (Planning Policy Guidance on Transport) for North West Regional Parking Standards.³

2.3 Parking provision is recognised as an essential part of a functioning local economy. Commuters have identified cost and ease of car parking as a key priority for road travel in GM. GM’s third Local Transport Plan 2011/2012-2015/16 emphasises the challenge of balancing high levels of parking with restricted parking availability which supports the need for greater use of

² National Planning Policy Framework 2012
³ North West of England Plan. Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021
more sustainable transport modes. GM Councils have parking policies designed to support the economy of the Regional Centre and the town centres. The suggested policy framework encourages reasonably priced short stay parking for shoppers and visitors close to the centre while long stay parking should be available towards the fringe of a town. As a strategy to encourage more sustainable modes of transport the amount of long-term parking is to be reduced and cost increased over time.  

2.4

It is mandatory for local authorities to provide details of their finances – including the collection and use of parking revenue – to the Department of Communities and Local Government. Local authorities in England are estimated to collect around £1.4 billion from parking tickets, permits and penalties. Around £0.8 billion of the raised revenue is reinvested leaving a £0.6 billion surplus (based on data from 2007 – 2012). The Transport Committee urges local authorities to publish their annual parking revenue accounts in full in order to add more transparency into the process and ensuring parking charges are used in a practical way, not in order to increase revenue. In 2011-2012 Greater Manchester boroughs had parking operations revenue outturns ranging from £224,000 in Oldham to £1,361,000 in Stockport (excluding Salford and Manchester).

Table 1: Parking operations revenue outturn in the local authorities with the 8 preliminary town centres in Greater Manchester (current account surplus/deficit excluding capital costs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Authority</th>
<th>2011 – 2012 in thousands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bolton</td>
<td>£1,324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bury</td>
<td>£1,232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oldham</td>
<td>£224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rochdale</td>
<td>£623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockport</td>
<td>£1,361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tameside</td>
<td>£893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trafford</td>
<td>£412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wigan</td>
<td>£720</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: RAC Foundation: Local Authority Parking Finances report (2013)

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4 Greater Manchester’s third Local Transport Plan 2011/12 – 2015/16

5 http://www.racfoundation.org/assets/rac_foundation/content/downloadables/local_authority_parking_finances_report_david_leibling_010813.pdf

6 http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/transport-committee/news/parking-substantive/

7 http://www.racfoundation.org/assets/rac_foundation/content/downloadables/local_authority_parking_finances_report_david_leibling_010813.pdf
Scope of current debate

2.5 As discussed in the GM Town Centre Review, there are many reasons why people are turning away from the High Street which is why trying to find a conclusive link between town centre prosperity and car parking provision is extremely difficult. The proven relationship between car parking and economic performance is weak, but generally positive. Many people fear that making changes to the way that parking is managed will adversely affect the town’s economy but there is little clear evidence of such a relationship one way or the other and a significant amount of anecdotal evidence, opinion and speculation has risen over the relationship between car parking provision and town centre prosperity.

2.6 The majority of town centres pre-date the existence of cars and common car ownership – historic town centres especially posing a challenge. They are not purpose-built to accommodate the car and their density and high concentration of land use along with multiple land ownership make them difficult and expensive to adapt. This is why tariffs became a necessity in many locations, to ease congestion as well as to cover costs. However, there are concerns that fees are being introduced in areas where congestion is not an issue, or being raised to levels which stifle local trade. Concerns also surround the diversion of funds away from car parks, not allowing for the necessary reinvestment to take place.

2.7 Of the variables that influence the success of a town centre footfall does appear to reflect directly on town centre performance. Towns with higher footfall levels generate a higher spend and have a better quality retail offer. For example, in towns with an average footfall of over 300,000 per week, annual spend is over £500 million. This compares to towns with footfall of between 150,000 and 200,000 per week in which annual spend is around £150 million. Thus, it is the level of footfall that is the key in the success and survival of town centres - and therefore the influence that car parking can have on these levels.

2.8 Footfall is falling in many town centres whilst out-of-town retail and e-commerce continue to grow. In 2012 there were 287,100 retail outlets in the UK with a third of consumer spending going through shops. Internet retail sales in 2012 amounted to £29 billion forming around 9% of total retail sales following strong growth.

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9 RAC Foundation. English Local Authority Parking Finances http://www.racfoundation.org/assets/rac_foundation/content/downloadables/local_authority_parking_finances_report_david_leibling_010813.pdf
12 http://www.brc.org.uk/brc_stats_and_facts.asp?Cat=668&sCat=Sector+Stats+%26
have increased year-on-year in every month since 2007.\(^{13}\) The challenge of large retail complexes is also significant as local town centres cannot compete on the same terms as out-of-town retail centres, which offer a wide range of services under one roof – including large scale, modern parking which is usually free of charge. Increased car ownership levels give consumers the ability to travel further to larger retail centres and bringing back more purchases per trip. The key factors determining the level of threat to town centres are especially the size of out-of-town developments, the type of retailing and how well the complexes are linked to town centres.\(^{14}\) The key issue for town centres in relation to car parking is whether adjustments in car parking policy (such as tariffs and pricing structures) are enough to counteract the competition from out of town shopping/visitor offers, to encouraging more town centre visits.

2.9

It has been argued that shopkeepers overestimate the share of their customers arriving by car and evidence shows that, while car drivers spend more on a single trip, walkers and public transport users spend more over a week or a month. For example, in 2011 walkers in London town centres spent £147 more per month than those travelling by car – and the amount has risen compared to data from 2004.\(^ {15}\) It should be noted that these results are linked to a major urban centre and walking distance is a crucial variable when applying these figures outside of London. Contradictions remain as the government has stated ‘anti-car dogma’ councils are hurting local economies, while another London based study has reported pedestrians spend between two to six times more in their local shops than shoppers arriving by car.\(^ {16}\) This research concluded that more parking does not necessarily mean more trade but a well managed parking scheme where spaces turn over frequently can help to increase the number of visitors to a town centre. Similarly, a retail study by GVA Grimley looked at Richmond as a case study revealing it is the limited range of shops, and in particular its lack of specialist shops, that are the most important reasons for people shopping elsewhere. Poor parking facilities were identified as the third most important reason.\(^ {17}\)

2.10

The role of retail indicators in assessing the success of town centres has been criticised by several recent studies.\(^ {18}\) The Scottish National Review of Town Centres (2013) for example recognises town centres as a vital part of economic recovery and sustainable economic growth, but argues that town centre data ignores aspects of high street vitality that have cultural, heritage and leisure uses. These should be included in town centre performance

\(^{13}\) http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/rsi/retail-sales/october-2013/stb-rsi-october-2013.html#tab-Focus-on-Internet-Sales
\(^{14}\) http://www.britishparking.co.uk/write/Documents/Library/GVA_-MeasuringandImprovingTownCentreViabilitySpring2011.pdf
\(^{17}\) http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/news/current/pressdetail.htm?pk=1549
frameworks which form a basis for more robust town centre planning. Access and car parking are linked to the wider people and footfall theme with other indicators including footfall, geographical catchment and community spirit.\textsuperscript{19} A dynamic picture of activity levels in the town centre can be achieved by combining the measuring and monitoring of car park usage with footfall and retail sales. Such data can provide a basis for comparison between variances of activity and the impacts of events, special offers or changes in high profile business presence.\textsuperscript{20}

2.11 Given the present trading conditions in the town centres, the GM town centre reviews highlighted that car parking was one of the major tools available to town centre managers rather than car parking itself being a major influence on a town centres decline.

2.12 A successful town centre parking strategy means understanding car park occupancy, moderating demand, collaborating between public and private parking providers while ensuring parking enforcement is fair and practical.\textsuperscript{21} Impacts of competing town centres can be alleviated by furthering collaboration between neighbouring areas and producing annual parking reports increasing transparency of parking expenditure.\textsuperscript{22} Town centres with a wider range of services and facilities should charge more in order to manage their greater level of demand, while smaller centres should charge less. Further collaboration and increased transparency can also help reduce administration costs as information from what works is more widely available making it possible to create more standardised parking policy.

2.13 The Government has recognised the need for further reform in parking policy and a parking consultation was launched in December 2013 closing 14 February 2014. The consultation aims to discuss especially the use of CCTV in parking enforcement, enhancing communities and businesses rights to require parking reviews, the use of grace periods and the need for updates in parking enforcement guidance.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{19} http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0042/00426972.pdf
\textsuperscript{20} http://pascalobservatory.org/sites/default/files/Successful%20town%20centres%20-%20report_0.pdf
\textsuperscript{21} Re-Think! Parking on the High Street Guidance on Parking Provision in Town and City Centres http://www.britishparking.co.uk/write/Documents/Re-thinking_Car_Parking.pdf
\textsuperscript{22} http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/transport-committee/news/parking-substantive/
Car Parking Strategies

2.14 There are four broad areas that can be influenced with regards to car parking strategy in town centres by a local authority, that of setting the correct tariff, free parking offers, parking enforcement and improving the overall car parking visitor experience. These are explained in more detail as critical elements of local car parking strategies.

Setting the correct tariff

2.15 Ultimately, there is no simple formula that can be given on determining the right kind of tariff to be introduced nationally because every location is exposed to an individual set of dynamics and factors. The only universal answer is that local authorities and other operators must develop a plan for parking provision that faces up to the question, “What and who is our parking for?” and compliments a wider strategy for accessibility that again, fits with a strategy for the town centre or local authority area. One suggestion in tackling this is the introduction of ‘Town Teams’ and voluntary ‘Town Rangers’ not only to plan transport infrastructure but also to oversee the delivery of policies and patrol the town centres making them a safer and more pleasant place to shop and socialise. The Neighbourhood Planning Front Runners Programme is a good example of localism in practice to monitor and keep on top of who and what the parking provision needs to be.24

2.16 The answer to the issue of parking charges is clear for private operators. Their assets need to make a profit. For local authorities it is less clear. Is parking about raising revenue for local services? Is it a service to the public, residents and visitors alike? Or, is it to support businesses as part of an economic regeneration strategy? One thing clear from the evidence available is that successful parking tariffs should identify the correct balance of these factors. Having a clear strategy for parking, and in particular parking charges, as part of a wider transport strategy is vital and must be customised to the local circumstances. Strong arguments have been made on how the increasing cost of parking is curtailing the appeal of town centre locations, while the transparency of how parking revenue is used and whether the revenue is invested in transport and improving parking services is often unclear.25 Effective information exchange between local authorities should include good practice examples and case studies of successful delivery of high street support.

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24 The Portas Review
25 Portas Review
2.17 When changes to parking restrictions, charges or enforcement are made, the evidence suggests that the primary behavioural responses to the change tend to be either:

- an acceptance of the new arrangements, in which case people’s behaviour broadly remains unchanged;
- a change in parking location, people park further away from their destination in an attempt to avoid paying a charge or
- a reduction in the length of stay in order to reduce parking costs.

2.18 Despite fears to the contrary, there is little evidence to suggest that the primary response to parking management is any more extreme than this. There is no evidence that visitors use alternative destinations more. However, these arguments only hold true as long as you are sensitive to local needs and influences which should be taken into account before changes to parking management are implemented.

2.19 The key issue with car parking charges is not only how much the tariff should be, but which payment systems are in use and what the pricing structure is. Parking management has been used to suppress demand during peak-time and encourage demand during off-peak. Interventions have also been used to entice shoppers into the town centre but encourage commuters to park edge-of-town to ensure town centres are able to capture spend. Parking management has also been used to influence a modal shift in the transport choices of people from private transport to public transport.

2.20 The balance is a very hard one to achieve and car parking policies in town centres can soon be criticised as being too rigid, with unwelcoming enforcement staff with arbitrary pricing policies with little evidence of reinvestment.

2.21 There are various examples of town centre car parking policy and practice which are clearly evidence based. For example, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council introduced a borough-wide parking strategy in March 2012. Independent market research was commissioned seeking views of residents, businesses and visitors. As a result a need to increase availability of short stay spaces was recognized as well as making charging clear and uniform. Long term parking charges of £2.40 all day have been introduced for Monday-Saturday 9am-5pm and free parking for 30 minutes, after 5pm and on Sundays in short-stay pay and display parking spaces across the borough.

2.22 There is little evidence, however, of evaluation of car parking policy after new initiatives like this have been implemented, at least in the public domain. One example, however, was action taken by Swindon town centre in relation to concerns raised by local retailers on the impact that car parking charges might be having on footfall and turnover particularly in the context of the

recession. In June 2010 the Council responded by reducing short stay car parking charges in the three premium rate ‘pay on foot’ multi-storey car parks and all car parks in Old Town for the period to 31st July 2011, with the aim of encouraging more people into Swindon town centre and Old Town and increasing the length of stay of shoppers. Importantly, the Council undertook detailed monitoring and evaluation of the scheme, using quantitative data relating to car parking usage and footfall (up by 8.17% against a national fall of 2.2%), and qualitative data from retailers on retail performance. General feedback on retail performance gathered through surveys was overwhelmingly positive from both retailers and customers, with many anecdotal comments on increased dwell time and spend, brought about by the revised charging structure which encouraged a 4 hour stay.

2.23 The Council also reported that interest in letting units was on the increase. It was anticipated that two more units were on the verge of being let to national operators previously not interested in Swindon. Data revealed that, whilst the reduction in tariff had not increased the overall volume of cars in town centre car parks, car bourne visitors were probably staying longer – resulting in the positive changes to footfall and performance. Sensibly, the evaluation also took into account other factors that might have had an impact on the scheme, including new development/store openings, and public realm improvements. The Council also considered the costs of the scheme, which were anticipated to result in a reduction of car parking income by £0.5m in the financial year. Despite this, the Council made the changes permanent, subject to a normal annual review process. This highlight the importance of a well thought out and evaluated policy as well as the effects a change in car parking tariffs can have on footfall.

Free Parking

2.24 It is important to note that, in reality, there is no such thing as a free parking space; someone, somewhere is paying for it to be provided, serviced and maintained. The important question is who pays and how are the costs covered? Is it the Local Authority, local businesses or the users? Over time, car parking has proved to be a good tool for generating revenue for local authorities. DCLG estimates that, for England alone, parking income from fees and penalties for 2009/10 comes to £1.35 billion and legislation does prescribe how income from on-street car parking can be used by local authorities (but not that generated from off street parking).

2.25 Free parking schemes with limitations offer more flexibility without causing major issues in terms of parking revenue, as compared to unrestricted free for all parking. Free short stay provision promotes customer satisfaction and can increase footfall to favour, for example, visits of up to 3 hours. 28 Local tariffs should take into consideration the parking offers nearby urban centres have in use to minimize the effects of displacement. Seasonal free parking is

28 Parking and Town Centres. Parking Forum position paper 12
probably the most long standing form of free parking scheme to attract footfall in November and December, which are the most important retail trading months. There are numerous examples of free car parking, or schemes with elements of free car parking throughout the country, but again there is little evidence of any evaluation of the schemes as to whether they have had a positive impact on the town or have changed behaviour. The following examples do show some evidence of evaluation.

2.26 In Middlesborough, the Council introduced new parking measures in February 2013 on a trial basis in order to boost town centre shopping. Public car parks offer free parking for two hours and a rate of £1 per hour or £1 all day depending on the car park. The initiative followed a consultation with local business leaders, employers and traders with the aim to ensure the town centre kept attracting visitors. Assessment of the scheme showed that the number of car parking spaces being used in the town centre doubled. The trial was estimated to cost the council £300,000 in revenue but is seen as a success in boosting footfall in the town centre. Reducing car park usage had been a continuing trend in Middlesborough since 2008 so this represented a real turnaround and the review of parking charges complimented the Council’s sustainable regeneration objectives for the town.

2.27 Rotherham Borough Council introduced a “free after 3pm” parking initiative in May 2009, offering free of charge parking in Council owned off-street car parks and on-street parking bays between 3pm-6pm Monday-Friday. After a limited evaluation of the scheme the Council ended the free parking initiative in October 2010, returning to normal parking fees - mainly as a result of funding to the scheme being cut and deciding that the costs outweighed the benefits. As a compromise, a suggested 10% increase for on-street and off-street parking was deferred in an effort to continue supporting town centre traders despite discontinuance of the ‘free after three’ scheme.

2.28 More locally, and most recently, the free car parking scheme in Bolton has been extended for a longer period from weekend to weekdays after 3 p.m. with the offer running until after Christmas. This is in recognition of feedback from retailers that the free parking scheme has had a positive impact on their sales. Similar feedback was received from the free pilot parking scheme in Oldham. The pilot came to an end in April this year and saw town centre car park use increasing by 31% along with positive feedback from businesses and shoppers leading to an extension in the project.

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29 Re-Think! Parking on the High Street Guidance on Parking Provision in Town and City Centres
http://www.britishparking.co.uk/write/Documents/Re-thinking_Car_Parking.pdf

30 Middlesbrough car parking discounts

31 http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-tees-2323367

32 Middlesbrough Annual Parking Report 2012-2013
http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/CHandler.ashx?id=8568&p=0

33 http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/news/article/309/free_after_3_scheme_ends
2.29 There are some examples of how a combination of elements of free car parking and reduced but consistent tariffs have shown a real difference in terms of footfall in some town centres. With benefits encouraging some councils to continue the schemes and take on the cost burden of maintaining a free parking element to fulfil their leadership role in economic regeneration of the town centres.

2.30 As discussed previously, where there is a lack of clarity between the car parking charge and the quality of the offer of a location, then customers will be deterred from visiting and be attracted to other areas such as out of town locations. The worse case scenario is that a town is considered to be over charging relatively to the benefit of visiting the town centre, or that it is being over zealous and rigid in terms of enforcement. It is clear that charges for car parking in town centres, as elsewhere, must be consistent, clear and justified. Once shoppers are deterred, be it through car parking or for any other reason, it is often very difficult to reverse or change shopping habits back to a town centre location.

**Enforcement**

2.31 A further issue relating to car parking tariffs in town centres is that of enforcement. Rigid enforcement can result in a very negative image of the town centre and could in effect deter visitors. Whether the enforcement is carried out by the local authorities or by private contractors, enforcement has to be seen to be clear, fair and reasonably flexible. For example, as in most local authorities, parking enforcement in Torquay town centre (along with Torbay Council) is carried out by Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) who are directly employed and managed by the Council and use hand held computers and printers. Enforcement by CEOs benefits from on street monitoring by a supervisor, constant analysis of data from hand held computers, daily staff briefings, customer contact and an appeals procedure.\(^34\)

2.32 Grace periods make sure enforcement is fair so that the time on the pay and display machine is noted by the CEO and compared to their handheld computer to avoid any discrepancies. CEOs also use observation periods where vehicles parked in contravention of the regulations can be observed for a time before a penalty charge notice is issued to make sure vehicles are not involved in activity that might make them exempt from immediate regulations.\(^35\)

\(^34\) Torbay Council Parking Annual Report 2011/2012
http://www.britishparking.co.uk/write/parkingannreport1112.pdf

\(^35\) Torbay Parking Enforcement Policy 2012
http://www.torbay.gov.uk/index/yourservices/parking/enforcementpolicyjan2012.doc
Enhancing the customer experience

2.33 There are a number of factors within the realm of car parking, other than pricing, that can make a town centre more attractive. Practice linked to enhanced customer experiences includes integration between parking facilities in terms of design and style, encouraging high standards through reinvestment and introducing new payment methods, taking advantage of new technological advances. Most of the best examples increase the convenience of using car parks as well as making the visit a much more pleasurable experience in a safe and clean environment. Town centre car parks can be seen as the gateway to the town centre for many and is often the first impression visitors get of the town centre. Informative signage is an example of how to improve the ease of use of car parks and in the Northampton town centre strategy, for example, the need for better signage to improve access to the town was emphasised along with the need for positive parking experiences. On this basis, Northampton invested £200k into new electronic parking signs to provide live information about available parking spaces and free parking as a tool to promote and optimize town centre car parking and management.

2.34 Technology plays an increasingly important role in the promotion and use of car parking in town centres. A number of Local Authorities are exploring new ways of using technology to manage the use of their car parks. In Bedford, for example, the proposed parking strategy suggests managing parking stock so that maximum capacity is available during peak times, developing existing surface car park sites increasing the number of spaces and encouraging short term parking as their main priorities in terms of car parking in their town centres. The Council has introduced a mobile app ‘RingGo!’ to enable motorists to pay for their parking using their mobile phones. Horsham Council’s website offers live information on the status of the council-run car parks. The data is fed from Horsham’s main car parks via the West Sussex Urban Traffic Management and Control System (UTMC) with updates every two minutes. As well as a similar mobile app to the Bedford case, the Horsham service also enables the use of reminder text messages for when the parking session is about to end as well as extending the stay by using a mobile phone instead of having to return to the car.

2.35 A reward system linked to parking payment based on smart technology can also encourage visitors to return to town centres. A simple example being a free visit for every 5 visits made to the town centre managed electronically. Similarly, ticket machines, such as in Chesterfield, may have notices and vouchers of business offers in the area and if used this can be redeemed for free parking.

36 Parking in Northampton Town Centre
37 http://www.northamptonchron.co.uk/news/politics/northampton-to-get-200-000-parking-signs-1-4835147
2.36 Additional services within the car parks could also be offered to enhance the user experience. In Lewisham shopping centre, for example, customer satisfaction is enhanced by offering free AA roadside assistance to all customers experiencing a car break down in the multi-storey car park as well as Car Valet UK providing car cleaning services while customers shop in the shopping centre.38

2.37 This balance of service and the correct charging policy is one element in maximizing the potential footfall for a town centre. Parking management is a very powerful tool when used correctly and a direct way of supporting broader local authority objectives. In transport terms, councils have more control over parking than virtually anything else in terms of the number of car parking spaces, availability, as well as the setting of tariffs and price bands. A successful parking management strategy is most importantly flexible and can bring many benefits when used in conjunction with local authorities priorities as well as being tailored to the known customer profile.

Summary

2.38 There are some examples of how a combination of elements of free car parking and reduced, yet consistent, tariffs have shown a real difference in terms of footfall in some town centres - enough for some councils to continue the schemes and take on the cost burden of maintaining the schemes to fulfil their leadership role in economic regeneration of the town centres. Where there is a lack of clarity between the car parking charge and the quality of the offer of a location, then customers will be deterred from visiting and be attracted to other areas such as out of town locations. Each local authority needs to reach the correct balance in terms of the car parking tariff as well as in the use of enforcement, technology and the general car parking customer service experience.

38 http://www.lewishamshopping.co.uk/getting-here/car-parking
3 CAR PARKING MEASURES IN
THE PRINCIPAL TOWN CENTRES
OF GM

3.1 As discussed in Chapter 2, car parking is a key tool for town centre
managers to use in order to maximise footfall. As such, it is useful to look in
a little more detail at what policy, quantity and tariffs levels currently exist in
the principal town centres of GM, as outlined below. Publicly available
information has been updated based on a town centre questionnaire with
responses received from over autumn 2013.

Altrincham

Altrincham has a number of private and council owned car parks. One of
the key car parks being the modern multi-level car park facility at the
Stamford Quarter with 24 hour security, eco lighting, strategically positioned
ticket machines, higher than average spaces for disabled drivers and lift and
stair access directly into the town centre. There are reduced car parking
charges during the most popular periods on Regent Road car park and free
Sunday parking on all Council car parks and on-street pay and display
areas.

Further car parking measures have been introduced, particularly in response
to the town centres decline. Visitors can park for 10p for 1 hour in all Council
car parks and on-street parking bays, 30p for 2 hours and 70p for 3 hours
parking. As a balance, however, all day parking prices in off-street car parks
increased slightly in the review to £3. The only exception to this all day
charge is Regent Road car park, recognised as attracting commuters to park
there all day, which is £6. Future plans include improvements for enhanced
visitor experience including an "iapp" for drivers to download information
showing the current availability in car parks in Altrincham as well as clearer
town centre access signs. The option to pay for parking by debit or credit
cards will also be introduced.

Ashton-under-Lyne

Most of the car parking facilities in Ashton town centre are surface facilities
which despite being functional can restrict efficient use of land. Non-surface
parking facilities are linked to retail centres such as the Arcades and
Ladysmith Shopping Centre, with multi-storey car parks providing up to 700
spaces. There are two privately owned car parks, one close to the train
station charging £40 monthly and one within 500 yards of the town hall and
main market with £10 a week charge. Parking across council owned car
parks is free after 3pm on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. The biggest
parking facilities in Ashton are Union Street with 212 spaces, Camp Street
with 165 spaces and Old Cross Street with 149 spaces. There are two zones
for parking in the town centre with costs from £1/hour to £2.50 for 4 hours, reduced evening rates and zone 1 offering all day Sunday parking for £2.

The need for more car parking has been recognised; however, especially challenging in terms of parking provision are the Old Town and Portland Basin areas due to their conservation status. A new multi-storey car park is being proposed on Dale Street East in St Petersfield providing 244 spaces with 44 designated for the use of Ashton Magistrates Court. However, this car park is to be operated as a private car park for the tenants of the St Petersfield Development. The package for the recently opened Metrolink from Droylsden to Ashton includes funding for two Park and Ride sites at Ashton Moss and Ashton West with spaces for up to 600 cars.

Bolton

NCP are the operators of 16 surface site car parks and 3 multi-storey car parks within Bolton town centre. The multi-stories in the centre are Topp Way with 800 spaces; the Deane Road with 815 spaces; and the Octagon with 508 spaces, all offering season tickets for business and the public including validation deals for businesses. Costs range from 70p for an hour to £3 for all day. Motorists parking in Bolton town centre can now pay without cash via RingGo, acting as an alternative to pay and display parking with coins. There is also no ticket needed as Enforcement Officers can check which vehicles have paid using internet connected handhelds.

From May 2013 shoppers have been parking in Bolton town centre for free at weekends in a new attempt to boost business. The scheme will run for a year in three of the town centre multi-storey car parks operated by NCP, and will be reviewed thereafter. It has also been agreed that there will be free parking on weekdays after 3pm in the same car parks over the Christmas period between early November and January 2014. The council ran a similar free scheme last Christmas at four multi-storeys. This will cost the council an estimated £280,000 from a budget that has been set aside to boost the borough’s economy. As part of the plan, however, there will be charges at surface car parks on Sundays, which are currently free. In 2006 Bolton carried out a study into car parking in the town centre which these parking tariffs reflect.

Bury

Bury Council manages and maintains 36% of the car parking in the town centres, which comprises of on-street and off-street public parking. Currently the council manages 1,545 car parking spaces in 12 surface car parks, 364 on-street spaces. In addition there are 2 privately run multi-storey car parks with 1,250 and 600 spaces, totalling to 4,940 car parking spaces in Bury’s town centre. Whilst the actual number of off-street spaces operated by the

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40 www.tameside.gov.uk/28aug13/agenda/item11.pdf August 2013
41 http://www.tameside.gov.uk/pressrelease/metrolink
17 http://www.theboltonnews.co.uk/news/10417865.Free_parking_boost_for_shops/?ref=rc
43 http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-19946797
Council has not altered in recent years, it has dropped proportionally with the opening of the privately owned Rock and Q Car Parks.

Within Bury town centre itself, there are just over 20 car parks, 12 of which are council managed. The public car parks are operated based on pay and display, whereas the private multi-storey car parks use pay-on-exit. On average parking up to 30 minutes costs £1 and up to 1 hour £1.70 using on-street parking. Council owned car parks charge £2 for up to 2 hours of parking, Moorgate being the only car park with a £1 up to an hour charge. Sunday parking is available in public car parks for a standard rate of £1. The Rock car park is the newest addition to the car parking offer and rates start at £1.20 rising to over £5 for over 5 hours and £10 for up to 24 hours. Parking is free in the evening.

Other key car parks in Bury include the Mill Gate multi-storey car park, which has 572 long stay spaces and the largest surface car park is at Woodfields Retail Park which provides 1,032 short stay spaces. Most of the off-street short stay spaces are located around the outside of the eastern and southern part of the ring road – the larger being the Market car park (445 spaces). The market car park is crucial to the success of the market and it is noted that there may be scope for an additional deck of parking. Car parking and transport more generally was reviewed by URBED in 2009 in the Bury but Better report.

Oldham

There are 12 council provided car parks in Oldham Town Centre. Hobson Street has 750 spaces, Cannon Street 250 spaces and Bradshaw Street 138 spaces. The rest of the parking services range between 20 to 126 in size. Overall there are 3,500 off-street car parking spaces and 293 on street spaces. Payment in all the car parks is based on pay and display with ticket machines operating with cash only. The council-owned car parks offer free parking up to 3 hours on Saturdays and Sundays. A ticket from the pay and display machine must be displayed in order to claim the offer. Thirty minute on-street parking is possible holding a pay and display ticket. Hobson Street has free all day parking on Saturdays and Sundays. This scheme was introduced in January 2013 with the hope of boosting footfall and trade. Changing from two hours of free parking to three hours of free parking on Saturdays and Sundays, the offer was extended for the rest of 2013 in April and has recently been extended for a longer period after positive feedback. Covering almost 2,000 parking spaces in the town centre area, the new scheme is expected to cost the council an extra £244,000 over a 12 month period.

Rochdale

Rochdale council provides free parking in Rochdale and Middleton town centres after 3pm on Saturdays and Sundays on council run car parking. Christmas time parking offers are currently being considered. There are 17

car parks, including the Bus Station multi-storey car park offering 413 spaces. Other major car parks include Whitworth Road with 250 spaces and Town Hall square with 152 spaces, altogether providing 2,571 car parking spaces in the town centre. Rates for parking are between 50-90p an hour and £2.80-£6.60 for over 6 hours with the exception of the Holme which offers unlimited contract parking with 251 spaces. There are also several on-street parking options with the largest being the Esplanade with 84 spaces and rates from 90p an hour to £1.50 for 3 hours.

There have been major transformation works taking place in Rochdale town centre over a period of about 5 years. Metrolink started operating at Rochdale train station in February 2013 and is due to be extended to the town centre in 2014. The overall transformation of Rochdale town centre includes plans to make the town centre more pedestrian and cycle friendly. There are no current plans for improvement in parking in the town centre area.47

**Stockport**

The council provides a combination of surface and multi-storey car parks in Stockport town centre offering 2,750 parking spaces in total. Spaces range from 798 in the Heaton Lane multi-storey car park to 200 spaces in Newbridge Lane to 138 in Stopford House. The Merseyway shopping centre offers 835 spaces with 31 disabled bays. Two of the town centre car parks have been awarded with a Park Mark which indicates measures for safer parking have been met and assessed by the Police. Managed by the British Parking Association, the scheme helps to prevent criminal activity and anti-social behaviour by the parking operators. Most of the car parks operate with pay and display with fares ranging from £0.60 an hour to £1.20-£2.20 for two hours. The town centre is divided into two classes of fares with both operating a reduced cost for Sundays with £0.50 for 2 hours and £1.00 for over 2 hours. Contract parking is available for a number of town centre car parks and on-street parking. Parking payment is based on pay and display as well as pay by mobile phone.

A major transformation has been put into place to improve the parking facilities in Merseyway multi-storey car park. Stockport Council, UK Asset Resolution and the landlord of Merseyway shopping centre have jointly invested £1.84m to refurbish the car park. New pay on exit machines means visitors can drive straight into the car park without a ticket allowing more flexibility in the length of stays. Work in the car park is planned to be completed in early 2014.48 Stockport council also offered free parking in council-owned pay and display car parks and bays on Sundays in December and free afternoon parking in the run up to Christmas.49

**Wigan**

There are two multi-storey car parks in Wigan town centre offering over 1,000 parking spaces and both operating a pay on exit system instead of

47 [http://www.rochdaletowncentre.com/home/access_to_parking](http://www.rochdaletowncentre.com/home/access_to_parking)
48 [http://www.stockport.gov.uk/newsroom/merseywaycarparkfacilitboosthighstreet](http://www.stockport.gov.uk/newsroom/merseywaycarparkfacilitboosthighstreet)
pay and display. Galleries car park is situated within the Galleries Shopping Centre and Water Street within a short walk to the town centre. Both multi-storey car parks have limited opening hours from 6.30am or 7am to 7pm Monday to Saturday and 10.30am to 5.30pm on Sundays. The Galleries car park offers an additional hour on Thursday evenings. Out of the two large car parks, Water Street offers a quarterly, biannual and annual permit charges. The rest of the car parks in Wigan town centre offer surface parking based on pay and display and permit parking. Overall there are approximately 3,500 car parking spaces in Wigan town centre.

Except for the two multi-storey car parks, parking in town centre is free of charge on Sundays and at a reduced rate of £2 all day on Saturdays for the majority of car parks. Standard fares are £1.10 for the first hour, £1.90 for two hours and £2.70 for three hours applying to most car parks in the town centre. Pay and display is in operation between 8am and 6pm Monday to Saturday and is operated by phone and card as well as cash in five of the largest car parks. There is an ongoing debate about parking fees in Wigan and it has been highlighted in local media that the council collected over £475,000 in parking fines and some £2m in parking fees last year.\(^{50}\) The car parking policy in Wigan is aiming to provide cost effective parking to drive the economy of the town with promotional free parking initiatives taking place throughout the year. The cost of car parking in the town centre as compared to out-of-town developments has been identified as one major barrier hindering the use of Wigan town centre.

**Case study – use of technology**

Manchester City Council launched a 6 month parking application trial in September 2013 running until March 2014. The innovative smart parking technology provided by US-based company Streetline offers real-time parking availability information via the Parker app, which directs motorists to free parking spaces via Sat Nav. The trial is funded by the City Council’s contractor NSL and is based on electronic sensors which have been placed in 200 parking bays in the Northern Quarter, Chinatown and King Street areas. Parking charges can also be paid via the PayByPhone payment option the app provides which means no cash payment is needed. Using PayByPhone, motorists can also extend their parking time without returning to the car as well as receive reminders via text message when their parking time is about to expire. The Parker app also provides information of the costs of parking, time limits and metered hours of operation in a specific location.\(^{51}\)

The free Parker app is available for smart phones and tablet devices and can be downloaded from the Council website. American cities such as Los Angeles, Washington DC and New York use the technology, while Manchester is leading the first major trial in the UK. If the trial is successful the system could be extended to other parts of Manchester city centre. The trial aims to increase Parker app awareness and downloads, enhance


parking guidance and payment efficiency, and to provide insight into user behaviour. Manchester City Council is hoping the system will help motorists find parking, optimize the utilization of parking inventory, reduce congestion and increase commerce for merchants.\footnote{Streetline Inc marketing material}

Summary

3.2 It is clear from the evidence above that policy in GM town centres is broadly similar, with similar pricing and an offer of both surface and multi-storey car parking with a mixture of both public and private ownership. The differences in pricing reflect the needs and demands of the town centres. The majority of the principal town centres in GM have some element of free parking within their pricing structures.

3.3 There is limited evidence, however, of the broad take up and use of new technology within the car parking offer. As showed by the technology case study, there are services available to make parking as convenient as possible for the motorist.
4 CAR PARKING EVALUATION

4.1 The lack of evidence of a direct correlation between car parking policy and town centre vitality is persistent primarily because there have been a very limited number of full evaluations of existing parking policy. While the need for an evaluation framework is evident, a lack of reliable parking information can make evaluation difficult. The examples below show how evaluation can be used to both review separate parking schemes as well as to form an overall review of the whole parking policy. Parking evaluation usually focuses on short term effects while longer term effects of parking policy have not yet received detailed attention.

4.2 Oldham Council introduced a free parking pilot scheme in January 2013 offering free parking seven days a week for two hours in off street car parks. An evaluation followed the pilot showing that off-street parking in Oldham town centre increased by 31%. However, the impact was seen to be less productive during weekdays, mostly due to town centre-based office workers and business users benefiting from the free parking. The evaluation led to a more limited parking scheme being introduced offering three hours free weekend parking which is more clearly targeted to boost the town centre economy. The new scheme running from April 2013 is estimated to cost Oldham Council an additional £224,000 over its existing budget in the next 12 months.  

4.3 Bolton Council’s Car Parking Study delivered by Peter Brett Associates (PBA) in 2006 used three key performance indicators to assess the car parking process in Bolton town centre which could be deemed as important in any town centre evaluation. The indicators, with weightings based on their level of importance, are accessibility (55% weighting), internal environment (30% weighting) and cost of parking (15% weighting). Each indicator considers a series of influential factors in order to show why motorists choose to park in certain locations, while the weighting is based on results of individual car park user surveys carried out in Bolton town centre in November 2005 by the Greater Manchester Transportation Unit. Each car park was then scored based on the three indicators thus forming an overall town centre quality score. This ‘InFocus’ approach gave Bolton town centre a score of 68% which PBA saw typical for a town centre with several relatively small car parks close to key anchor points with some accessibility issues. The overall analysis included car park utilization data for the financial year 2005/2006 provided by Bolton Council and APCOA as well as additional spot check site visits. The car parking assessment concluded that there will be a shortage of car parking spaces by 2012, which will require further action (assessment delivered 2005/2006).
4.4 TRL Limited carried out a Parking Measures and Policies Research Review for the Department for Transport identifying pricing, changes in supply, location, Park & Ride, Workplace Parking Levy, parking provision in new developments and parking standards in new residential developments as the main policies and measures forming a car parking review. While this review focused on a wider area than town centre parking, the review discussed parking review methodology such as time series analysis and survey work. The use of surveys especially in mapping stated preference and scenarios is seen common in parking evaluation.\(^55\)

4.5 The Traffic Restraint Model developed for Bristol focused on mapping responses to transport changes. The change indicators included change of use and location or intensity of activities. Forecasts were then made to model four scenarios: a fall in the supply of Park & Ride spaces, increase in parking tariffs, increased charges for short stay parking and changes to parking enforcement. The main objectives of the study were to build a comprehensive parking inventory, develop a parking demand model and identifying areas with shortfalls in parking facilities, as well as to recommend solutions to arising problems.\(^56\)

4.6 In order for an area specific robust evaluation framework to be established, the purpose and criteria of what will be evaluated along with the key evaluation questions, data collection methodology and analysis tools need to be agreed. Data for evaluation must be gathered at regular intervals in order to form a basis for further comparison. Parking evaluation is also linked to determining the correct parking supply: efficiency-based standards for example take into account geographic, demographic and economic factors that affect parking demand simultaneously reflecting the relative costs and benefits of different options.\(^57\) Setting benchmark is also essential, for example the AMT suggests that car parking is well managed when car parks are 85% full on a busy day.\(^58\)

4.7 An evaluation framework should be made part of a wider “integrated parking plan” which defines the geographic scope of analysis, identifies existing parking problems, is in line with the existing strategic planning context, includes a parking supply survey, identifies and evaluates current options, as well as including an implementation plan. The evaluation framework should be comprehensive and take into consideration at least the scope of the analysis, geographic range, time-scale of impacts, goals and objectives, a list of performance indicators and a base case forming a comparison standard. Specific evaluation methods depend on the goals and impacts of the evaluation process. Any time-limited parking schemes should be

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\(^{55}\) TRL Limited: Parking Measures and Policies Research Review, May 2010  
\(^{58}\) http://towns.org.uk/2013/12/12/parallel-parking-solutions/
evaluated prior to their termination so that a need for any new programs can be established.\textsuperscript{59}

Summary

4.8 While full reports of how parking evaluations have been carried out are sparsely available, the examples above show that evaluation should be in line with the parking policy or plan in a certain area. Forming a distinct parking policy that suits local needs will help establish how and when data should be gathered for thorough evaluations taking place at regular intervals.

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5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 There is no clear evidence of a direct correlation between car parking policy and town centre vitality primarily because there have been no full evaluations.

5.2 Towns with a good general offer will be able to attract customers despite having poor parking facilities and tariffs. However, there are some good accounts of experience that suggest that there are some clear positive relationships which can ultimately fulfil the goal of maximizing possible footfall. For example.

- A clear and evidenced car parking strategy designed around the needs of local business can change the trends in footfall as in Middlesborough where success was documented through anecdotal evidence from retailers.

- Free car parking costs can outweigh the benefits for a Council as highlighted in Rotherham, but can bring increased benefits if tied into wider initiatives such as sharing of costs with retailers as in Bolton.

- It is not just about free parking, but reducing costs to encourage short stay parking as in Swindon. Positive feedback from surveys showed increased dwell time and spend encouraged directly through a four hour free pricing strategy. The scheme also highlighted that car parking practice can also attract new businesses to a town centre location.

5.3 Evidence points towards the benefits of an element of free parking within a clear pricing structure being the most effective.

5.4 Most of the principal town centres in GM have adopted a free parking element with differences being in the length of time the free offer is available based on the town’s needs.

5.5 The use of technology in a number of the GM principal town centres remains limited in enhancing the car parking experience.

5.6 The pace of change of town centres means that car parking policy needs to be regularly and consistently reviewed.

5.7 Evidence through evaluation of car parking practice is crucial to move the issue of car parking policy away from instinct and opinion towards an informed view looking at the individual needs of the town centre, set within a strategic context.