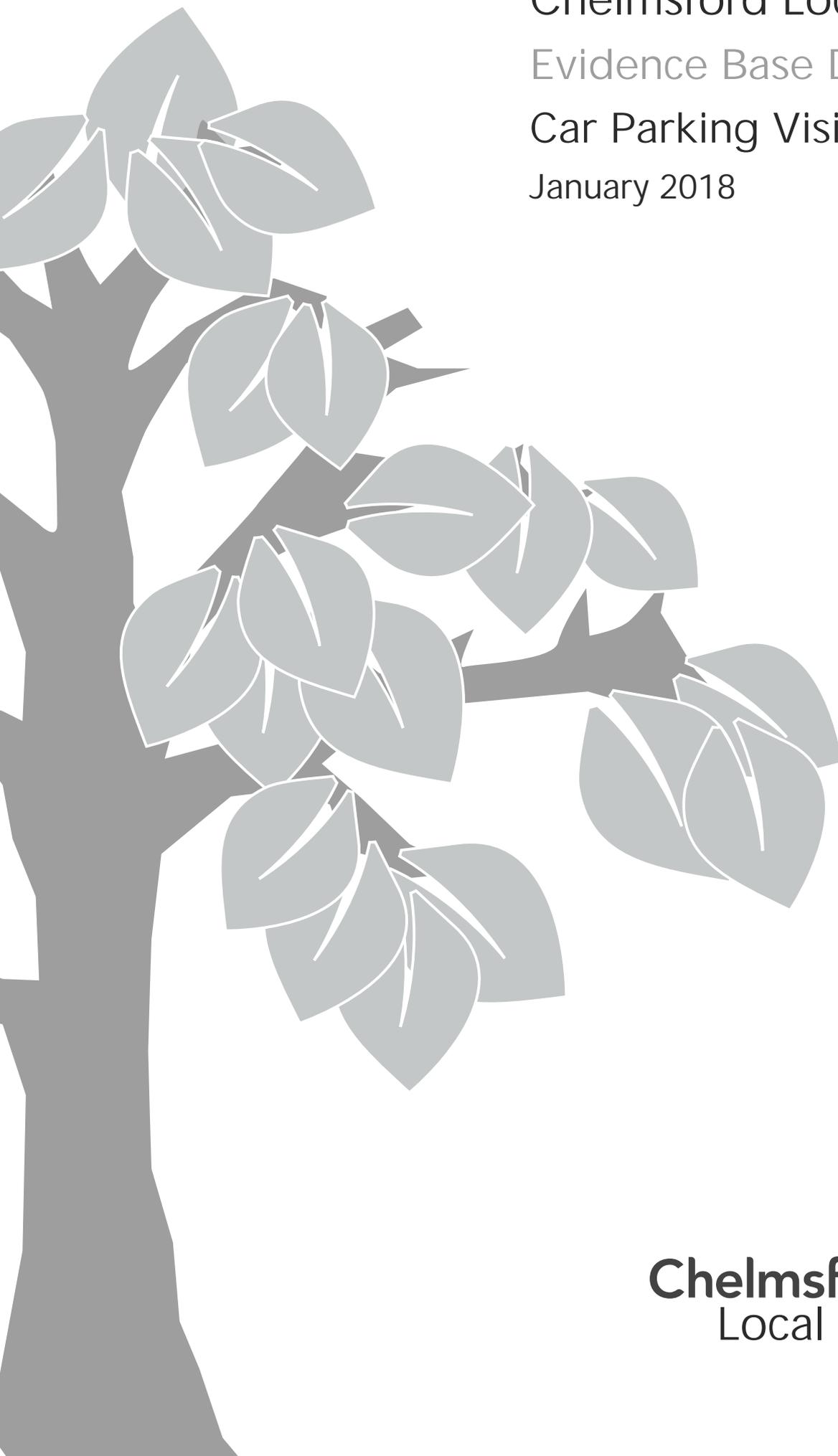


Chelmsford Local Plan
Evidence Base Document
Car Parking Vision
January 2018



Chelmsford Parking Vision

Introduction

The City of Chelmsford has been growing rapidly over the past 20 years and the production of our new Local Plan covering the period to 2036 makes this an appropriate time to review our car parking strategy. This document sets out our ambitions and objectives to ensure that Chelmsford both retains its position as the 'Capital of Essex' whilst at the same time addressing the environmental problems that this can cause and maximising opportunities for sustainable transport.

Context

The City Council has been working in partnership with Essex County Council as Highways and Transportation Authority to tackle congestion and encourage modal shift. There is a recognition from both authorities that increases in road capacity will be focused on schemes for the strategic road network in the future rather than new roads in the existing built-up areas.

With the City's road network currently having just 4% capacity in the peak hours, a different approach is required in the future. This is being recognised through the walking, cycling and public transport schemes and initiatives promoted through the current Chelmsford City Growth Package. Further development growth in Chelmsford contained within the City Council's emerging Local Plan will increase travel demands. Therefore, a balance needs to be struck between providing new homes and jobs to support Chelmsford's successful economy and easing congestion and improving air quality.

Chelmsford's wider sub-regional economic, transport and community functions means that significant levels of trips to Chelmsford originate from outside the City Council's area. For example, the neighbouring district of Maldon has no railway connection at all, and many residents commute to London as well as work in Chelmsford. This adds to the pressure on both the road network and parking in the City. Likewise, Chelmsford's second largest town, South Woodham Ferrers, is not served by a rail mainline. As such, the many residents who work or shop in Chelmsford will use their cars. Similarly, many of the villages have poor public transport links and are sufficiently far from the City Centre to make walking or cycling impractical or less desirable.

Key interventions to date

There has been significant action to date including:

- **Two successful Park and Ride sites at Sandon and Chelmer Valley**
- **Express bus service serving new developments at Beaulieu and Channels**
- **Improvements to Chelmsford Station capacity**
- **Reduction in public car parking provision in City Centre with redevelopment at Wharf Road, Riverside and Bond Street car parks**

Future interventions

Reducing the need to drive in to the city centre is central to the future, and whilst walking, cycling and public transport, are crucial, by themselves they are not sufficient to achieve wider objectives. The following key interventions will be promoted through the new Local Plan.

- **New rail station at north east Chelmsford**
- **Two further Park and Ride sites in west and north east Chelmsford**
- **Comprehensive package of cycling, walking and public transport schemes**
- **Chelmsford north east by-pass**
- **Redevelopment of further city centre car parks to provide both new housing and rationalised public car parking.**

Vision

Set out below is our vision of how Chelmsford will be in the future:

Chelmsford is a city offering sufficient, high quality and appropriately located parking which supports the economic and community activities of the city and balances this with reducing the number of car trips into the city centre to help ease congestion and improve air quality

Objectives

To fulfil the Vision, the following objectives and actions are set out below:

Objective 1
Ensure the appropriate provision, type and location of car parking to support and improve the economic vitality and community functions of Chelmsford City Centre.

The appropriate level of parking within the city has a crucial part to play in its economic vitality and to serve community needs. However, an overabundance of parking will add to the current traffic congestion problems, which will detract from the attractiveness of the city from an investment perspective as well as being detrimental to the urban environment.

The location of parking also has a crucial part to play. One large multi-storey parking site in the right location performing the same function of four or five small surface sites is a better use of valuable city centre land and more efficient in terms of traffic movements.

Actions

- Review current provision to ensure an appropriate provision in the right location to support economic vitality and community needs.
- Consider how optimal use can be made of surface car parks to best support city centre vitality and economic development in terms of alignment of provision.
- Identify opportunities to consolidate existing parking or alternative provision as an integral part of new development and consider provision of new multi storey car parks where appropriate.

Objective 2
Encourage and promote sustainable commuter travel options that help reduce traffic congestion and air pollution through additional park & ride sites, new rail station and improved access to the city centre by public transport, cycling and walking.

Parking availability, cost and ease of use have a direct impact on people’s choice of mode of transport and therefore there is potential to cause traffic congestion and to undermine the viability of sustainable transport options. The level, type and location of parking provision is therefore a key demand management tool, as managing the amount of parking provides a form of restraint that can help to limit traffic levels and also strongly influence a modal shift. Providing choice in travel modes can help influence people’s decisions.

Actions

- Continual review parking tariffs in the city centre to ensure sufficient short-stay parking facilities to support commercial and leisure activities and control long stay commuter parking.
- Consolidate parking provision and continue to rationalise numbers to help tackle traffic congestion ensuring new/expanded car parks are appropriately located to minimise impact on the highway network.
- Work with Essex County Council and developer partners to develop and improve the sustainable transport modes, particularly additional park & ride sites in west and north-east Chelmsford and the new Beaulieu rail station, for travel to and within the city providing alternatives to all day commuter parking in the city centre.
- Work with Essex County Council to help deliver improvements to cycling, walking and public transport, funded through developer contributions and other funding such as the Chelmsford City Growth Package and Route-based Strategy initiatives.

Objective 3

Improve the quality of parking and information available, ideally through technology.

The provision of high quality and safe car parks is an important element as it is often the first impression for visitors to the city. Better provision in terms of parking information and quality should be sought and importantly the need to ensure parking is sufficiently attractive to those with limited mobility or with families.

Actions

- Bring forward technological solutions to make it easier to navigate and park in the City Centre.
- Provide the necessary infrastructure and incentives for alternatively-fuelled cars, in particular electric vehicles and consider the future impact of driver-less vehicles.
- Encourage all public car park operators to invest in their facilities to the extent that they will achieve the Park Mark standard.
- Reduce supply of poor quality surface level space and replace with higher quality well-managed space.

Objective 4

Redevelop suitable car park sites for mixed use development to provide new housing and rationalised public car parking provision

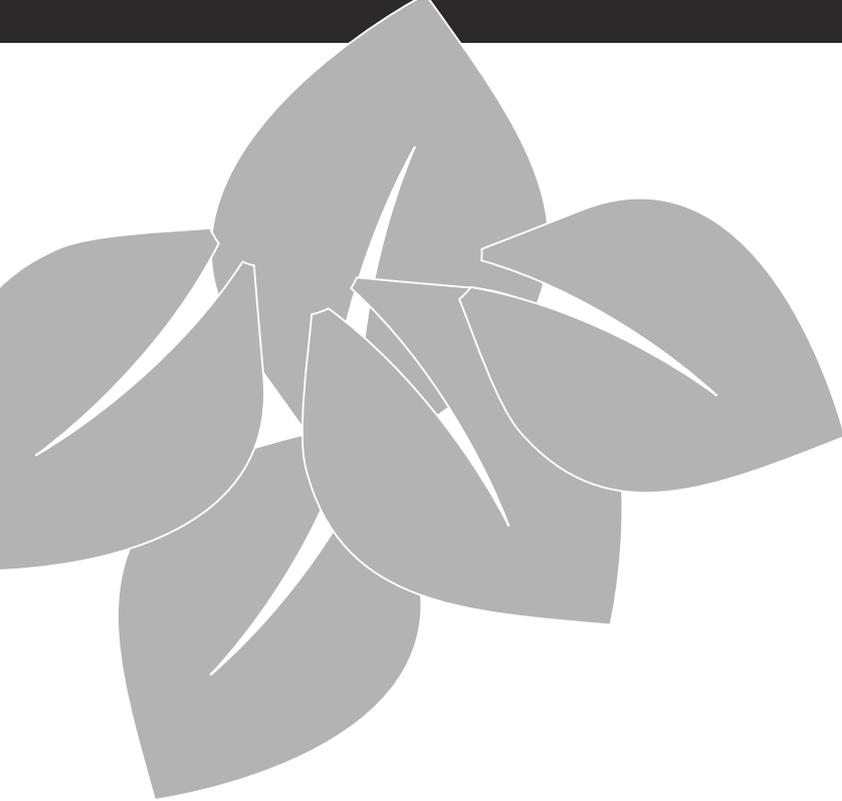
In land-use terms, surface car park sites do not represent an efficient use of land and tend to be located at highly sustainable locations. There is a requirement to balance the need to provide suitable car parking to sustain economic vitality and serve City Centre uses against the demand to provide much needed housing in locations close to existing services and facilities. As such, the rationalisation of car parking provision can provide opportunities to release site for redevelopment whilst still meeting other parking and sustainable transport objectives.

Actions

- Promote the future mixed-use redevelopment of Baddow Road, Fairfield Road (Civic Centre), Rectory Lane (East and West) and Rainsford Road (ECC) car parks which are allocated for new housing and rationalised car parking within the new local plan.
- Review the Council's car parks portfolio and identify any additional sites for mixed-use development
- Support the Council's requirement to maintain a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites by bringing forward suitable car park land for redevelopment in a timely manner
- To ensure best value capital receipts is obtained for sites released for redevelopment taking into account other factors such as new homes bonus, and planning gain through S106 and CIL.

Next Steps – Action Plan

A detailed Action Plan will be produced in 2018 for each of the Objectives.



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