

SHAFTESBURY TOWN COUNCIL

JUSTIFICATION FOR ADDITIONAL PUBLIC OFF-STREET PARKING CLOSE TO THE TOWN CENTRE

May 2004

Introduction and Summary

1. This brief report has been prepared to accompany an outline planning application, made by Shaftesbury Town Council on the cattle market site for the provision of additional public off-street parking spaces. The report justifies the urgent need for additional public off-street parking in addition to the proposed new car park at Barton Hill.

2. The off-street parking situation in Shaftesbury has been critical for some time and the Town Council have been lobbying the local planning authority (North Dorset District Council – NDDC) on this matter for over 40 years. In the last year there have been two events which justify the urgent need for additional public off-street parking spaces to be provided immediately. These are:
 - a) the sale of the 100 space Coppice Street long-stay car park to enable a food superstore to be constructed immediately to the east of the town centre
 - b) a traffic and parking survey undertaken by DEC on behalf of Dorset CC in April 2003 which quantified the use of the off-street car parks.

3. These two factors are described in more detail below, but the overall effect is that the previous shortage of short term parking close to the town centre, capable of being used by both shoppers and tourists, has been further reduced since the beginning of 2004 when the construction of the food-store commenced.

4. This report summarises the findings of the DEC report and describes the effect of the changes emanating from both the food store development and the recent

decision by NDDC to fund and implement the 2003 permission for additional car parking at Barton Hill.

5. The car parking associated with the new food store will be managed by the operator (Tesco) and will not be available to tourists and commuters. With the loss of the Coppice Street car park the shortfall in publicly available parking close to the town centre is estimated to be at least 200 spaces, or some 65% more than is currently available. The implementation of the Barton Hill site will provide additional spaces but these will not be available until late summer 2004 at the earliest, so the situation during the summer of 2004 is likely to be especially difficult. Even these additional spaces at Barton Hill will not restore the level of parking provision in Shaftesbury to the amount provided throughout 2003, which was considered inadequate anyway. There is a clear demand for additional town centre parking now if Shaftesbury is to continue to be able to cater for commuters and tourists and function as both a market town and as a 'Town for Major Growth' as defined in Policy 1.2 of the NDDC adopted Local Plan.
6. The situation throughout the summer of 2004 is likely to be especially difficult as the combination of a shortage of town-centre parking, plus the loss of the 100 spaces in Coppice Street, the non-availability of any new facility at Barton Hill and the difficulty of accessing some of the existing car parks (ie the cattle-market overflow) will have a significant impact on the town centre throughout the summer tourist season.

Existing situation – Spring 2003

7. In early April 2003 Dorset Engineering Consultancy (DEC) undertook a comprehensive traffic and parking survey in Shaftesbury on behalf of Dorset County Council. By recording the registration number of vehicles crossing a cordon around the town they were able to determine the number of vehicles passing through or around the town and those travelling into the town and stopping. At the same time regular (15 minute) observations made in the public car parks to enable the usage and the parking duration of vehicles in the car park to be determined.
8. Four car parks were surveyed by DEC but one (Longmead) lies east of Christy's Lane (which effectively is the 'eastern bypass' to the town) and is not relevant to town centre parking, as it is only used by people working on the Longmead industrial estate. Even via the most direct pedestrian route, this car park is 300m from the pedestrian crossing on Christy's Lane by the junction with Barton Hill

and some 800m from the town centre. Visitors to the town centre will not use the Longmead car park.

9. The other three car parks surveyed were:

Town-centre off-street car park provision in April 2003		
Bell Street	Short term - pay and display	167 spaces
Angel Lane	Short term - pay and display	61 spaces
Coppice Street	free short/long term	110 spaces - on NDDC land + 84 spaces on Cattle market site with access off the council land (ie the 'cattle market overflow') + 47 spaces within the Cattle Market but only accessible through the cattle market and used only by cattle market visitors

The DEC report incorrectly identified the capacity of the Coppice Street car park as 241 spaces. Only 194 spaces were regularly available for public use as the other 47 spaces were behind a locked barrier and used by the cattle market operators.

10. The April 2003 parking surveys gave the following results. The comments are mine, not DEC's.

car park	capacity	maximum recorded use	comments on car-park usage in April 2003
Bell Street	167	194	fully occupied from 10.15 until 12.45. Typically cars circulating in aisles waiting for space to become available. Located adjacent to only food supermarket in town
Angel Lane	61	44	never full. Usage exceeded 40 vehicles between 11.45 and 12.30. Requires better signing to advise non-locals of its existence
Coppice Street	194	173	usage exceeded 160 cars between 10.15 and 14.00. 97 cars parked for over 4 hours
total	422	390*	

* Max demand occurred at different times in different car parks. This overall maximum demand occurred at 10.45

11. These results however relate to April 2003. This is a neutral month when traffic flows are neither at their greatest nor their lowest. The day of the survey (Wednesday 9th April 2003) therefore represents at best only average demand and the following must be taken into account in assessing the maximum parking demand;
- a) the survey (10/April/2003) was 10 days before the Easter holiday during a normal 'school' day.
 - b) Wednesday is not market day (Thursday is).
 - c) traffic flows in July/August on the approach roads to Shaftesbury are 15% higher than the those in April (source LTP Vol. 2)
 - d) local knowledge informs that parking demand increase between May-September because of tourists and in July/August during school holidays.

On this basis, it is likely that the 390 maximum demand that occurred around 10.15am-10.30am on Wednesday 9th April could increase to around 500 on a July / August weekday and even more on a market day in 2004. There is no allowance for growth so with the proposed additional housing to the east of the town (700 – 800 houses) and the high car ownership in the area the figure could rise to 550 or 600 spaces.

12. Even on the basis of the April 2003 survey information, demand for parking in the town centre when 110 spaces in Coppice Street are lost, will exceed the supply from 10am until 2pm. Hence there is no margin for growth, tourism, seasonal traffic or any reduction in the amount of on-street parking.

Current situation (mid-2004)

13. Permission was granted in March 2003 for a 3,500m² (37,500ft²) food store, including 237 parking spaces, on a site immediately to the east of the town centre. Part of the site would incorporate all of the 110 NDDC owned spaces in the Coppice Street car park, however the cattle market 'overflow' car park would remain unaffected.
14. Work commenced in February 2004 on the construction of the food store and so the 110 spaces in the Coppice Street car park were no longer available for public use. However as part of the land ownership issue, the retailer (Tesco) granted an unrestricted right of access to the cattle market 'overflow' car park. In early 2004 as construction commenced this access was through the previous Coppice Street car park, but by mid May with the new access onto Christy's Lane

complete the access to the ‘overflow’ car park was diverted to run along the new access directly off the Christy’s Lane/Pound Lane roundabout. As this report is prepared, difficulties remain with the pedestrian access from this ‘overflow’ car park to the town centre.

15. The food store is scheduled to open for trading by Christmas 2004. Until then the publicly-available town centre parking spaces comprise:

Bell Street	167 spaces
Angel Lane	61 spaces
<u>Cattle Market overflow</u>	<u>84 spaces</u>
total	312 spaces

Note: the use of the cattle market ‘overflow’ car park is understood to be through a long-standing agreement between the operators of the site (who are lessees of the site from NDDC) and NDDC. The continued right to use this space is not guaranteed.

16. Permission was granted by NDDC in September 2003 (ref 2003/0372) for an additional car park at Barton Hill, on land owned by the Town Council and currently used for amenity/recreational use. Access would be taken off Bleke Street, just to the west of the Ivy Cross roundabout. The car park could accommodate up to 100 spaces, although as a number of spaces will be required to serve the bowling club and swimming pool, the effective additional spaces may only be around 60.
17. Recent press reports indicate that NDDC have allocated some £200,000 in the current financial year to enable the necessary construction works to be undertaken. However this car park is unlikely to be available before the end of August 2004.

Food store proposal

18. The food store is being developed by Tesco and is scheduled to open by Christmas 2004. They are obliged to provide a vehicular access to the cattle market overflow parking area throughout the construction phase and then along the new access off Christy’s Lane once that is completed. Therefore, provided the Cattle Market owners are prepared to allow the use of their site then these 84 spaces should be available for the foreseeable future.

19. The parking associated with the Tesco store will not add to the publicly available parking supply in the town centre. Tesco will manage the car park for the benefit of their shoppers and their staff. Discussions with Tesco indicate that, whilst they are reluctant to introduce a ticketing/barrier system, any abuse of their car park by long-term parking will force them to introduce an enforcement system. As the parking provision (of 237 spaces for 3500m²) is at the lower end of what Tesco normally provide, then the likelihood is that at busy times (ie Thursday, Friday and Saturday) the Tesco car park will be fully utilised by shoppers.

New parking provision

20. The DEC survey indicated that over half of the demand for parking originated within the Shaftesbury urban area (ie those vehicles that did not cross the cordon before entering a car park). Moreover the disposition of the residential areas and the road network mean that any additional parking should be provided close to, or easily accessible from Christy's Lane. To provide additional parking anywhere else would result in cars having to drive into or through the town centre.
21. Any additional parking needs to be incorporated into an effective car-park charging policy to ensure that the car parks closest to the shops and services are only available for the short-term parker and that car parking more distant from the town centre is used for longer term parking. This management is best effected through a charging structure, with maximum duration of stay in each car park.
22. This effective management of car parks is also part of the County Council's transport strategy to ensure effective management of the off-street car parks to discourage use of town centre car parks by commuters (ref. LTP section 7.9).
23. The size of the maximum demand is not known. However it is also clear that there is a regular demand for at least 500 publicly-available town centre spaces, excluding the Tesco car park. This demand is derived from the April 2003 'neutral month' surveys on a Wednesday set out in paragraph 11 above of 390 cars at the busiest time and then allowing for additional demands on a Thursday, in the summer, from tourists and from growth. The removal of existing on-street spaces, growth or the introduction of residents parking areas will increase this demand to 550 or 600 off-street spaces.

24. The current 'supply' amounts to:

Bell Street	167
Angel Lane	61
Cattle market 'overflow'	<u>84</u>
	312

The addition of up to 100 spaces at Barton Hill will increase this 'supply' to a maximum of 412 spaces, still at least 100 spaces short of a comfortable figure that will enable visitors and tourists to find a parking space reasonably easily. However the Barton Hill spaces are unlikely to be available through the summer of 2004, when the situation will be critical.

25. On-street car parking has been excluded from this equation because it is common throughout. It is assumed that virtually all the on-street spaces (both the 1 hour duration and the unrestricted all-day spaces) are known to local people and used to their maximum. However when (not if) NDDC decide to extend the on-street restrictions and introduce residents parking zones then the 500 demand will increase.

Cattle Market site

26. On the basis of the locational criteria set out in paragraph 20 (ie that any additional car parking must be close to Christy's Lane), the only site that is suitable and is a previously-developed site, is the cattle market. The only alternative would be either to build on the remaining green fields adjacent to Christy's Lane (which are in recreation / sports use) or to construct a multi-storey deck on an existing car park.

27. The granting of planning permission to use the cattle market site for car parking would be an important stage in providing more car parking in Shaftesbury. Clearly its use as a public car park will be dependent on both the owner (NDDC) and the lessee agreeing.

28. The access off Christy's Lane into the cattle market is a simple priority junction. Visibility out of this access is good, amounting to 4.5m x 120m to the left and 3.5m x 120m to the right. Christy's Lane is subject to a 40mph restriction. The visibility to the right could be improved by lowering part of the bank (within highway land), however as the Pound Lane roundabout lies only 150m away, safety is unlikely to be compromised by the slight reduction in visibility. This

access has served the cattle market for 25 years and has accommodated high flows, including many large HGV's.

- 29. It would be possible to introduce a small splitter island in the mouth of the access to ensure that vehicles did not turn right into the car park and hence delay other vehicles travelling south along Christy's Lane. In this situation any vehicle wishing to turn into the car park from the north would be required to travel to Pound Lane and make a 'U' turn around the roundabout. This modification could be the subject of discussions with the highway authority.

- 30. The application only relates to the surfaced part of the cattle market (ie its excludes the buildings) and could accommodate around 100 cars. This provision allied with the 60 - 100 spaces to be provided at Barton Hill would replace those spaces lost as part of the food superstore development and also contribute to the shortfall in Shaftesbury town centre. It would provide a few years grace whilst the long-term proposals for the rest of the cattle market site are finalised.

Car park management

- 31. In order to create a hierarchy of parking within Shaftesbury the two new car parks should be subject to a nominal parking charge. The present arrangement (from May 2004) is set out below along with proposals for the new car parks;

Bell Street	2 hour maximum	up to 1 hour £0.40 up to 2 hour £ 0.70
Angel Lane	4 hour maximum	up to 1 hour £0.40 up to 2 hour £ 0.70 up to 4 hour £1.00
Barton Hill	12 hour maximum	up to 4 hrs 0.70p up to 8 hrs £1.00 up to 12 hrs £1.20
Cattle Market overflow and new area	12 hour maximum	up to 4 hrs 0.70p up to 8 hrs £1.00 up to 12 hrs £1.20

Any commuter who does not wish to pay for all-day parking at Barton Hill or the cattle market has the option of parking in Longmead and walking.