



**Submission to Wiltshire Council Cabinet
From, Salisbury City Centre Management,
Salisbury District Chamber of Commerce & Industry,
Federation of Small Businesses**

Subject: Review of the council's parking strategy including parking charges

Date: 26 September 2011

In common with most of the country's 'High Streets', Salisbury's businesses, and in particular its retail and associated sectors, are being badly affected by the widely reported downturn in consumer spending caused by the continuing recession. Footfall in Salisbury city centre has fallen in 28 out of the last 32 months with the figure for the first eight months of 2011 being 11% down on the same period just three years ago.

Businesses are now feeling the impact of fewer people spending even less money and this has been particularly evident since the introduction of the higher parking charges in April/May 2011. Since May businesses are reporting a drop in trade of anything from 5 – 20% which they attribute directly to the high parking charges in Salisbury compared to the charges in the city's competitors. The increase of a minimum two hour stay at £2.20 in Salisbury, until its abolition in late September, is considered to have been particularly damaging. The cost of parking in Salisbury and its main competitors is given in Table 1 which clearly shows that Salisbury is more expensive across all six timebands compared to Southampton.

Table 1

	Cost of Parking					
	1 hr	2 hrs	3 hrs	4 hrs	5 hrs	All day
Basingstoke	£0.90	£1.50	£2.00	£2.60	£3.30	£5.20
Bournemouth	£0.50	£1.00	£2.00	£3.50	£5.00	£8.00
Southampton	£1.00	£2.00	£2.50	£3.00	£3.50	£5.00
Salisbury	£1.50	£2.50	£4.00	£4.60	£5.50	£7.40
Basingstoke Festival Place	£1.00	£2.00	£2.80	£3.40	£4.50	£15.00
Bournemouth BIC	£1.50	£2.50	£4.00	£6.00	£7.00	£12.50
Southampton West Quay	£2.00	£2.00	£3.00	£4.00	£5.50	£8.00

We accept that parking charges are just one of the factors that people consider, consciously or sub-consciously, when deciding to visit a particular place to shop. Other factors include the length of journey, ease of access and parking, quality and variety of cafes, pubs and restaurants, experience last time or recommendation, and the general environment. But the most important factor is the variety and quality of the retail offer. Salisbury's retail offer is universally acknowledged as being less attractive than Southampton, Bournemouth and Basingstoke. Southampton is widely recognised as being Salisbury's principal retail competitor.

It is, then, more expensive to park in Salisbury than in the city's main competitor, Southampton and yet Southampton is considered to be far more attractive than Salisbury in terms of its retail and associated offer. It is also more expensive to park in Salisbury than in Basingstoke or Bournemouth although both towns have a superior retail offer. This is clearly an unsustainable situation; some would say a recipe for disaster.

Elsewhere in Wiltshire the situation is very different. The cost of parking in Trowbridge and Chippenham is significantly lower than it is Bath, their principal retail competitor. The cost of parking in Trowbridge, Chippenham and Bath is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

	Cost of Parking				
	1 Hour	2 Hours	3 Hours	4 Hours	All Day
Bath (Broad Street short-stay / Charlotte Street long-stay)	£1.60	£3.10	£4.30	£5.40	£8.50
Trowbridge / Chippenham (short-stay / long-stay)	£1.10	£1.30 / £1.50	£2.60 / £3.20	£3.10	£5.90

By saying that Southampton is Salisbury's principal retail competitor (or that Bath is Trowbridge's principal retail competitor) we are **not** saying that these places have a comparable retail offer. We are saying that there are tens of thousands of people, who because of where they live can make the choice to visit Salisbury or Southampton (or Trowbridge or Bath) for their shopping. If what they are considering buying can be bought in Salisbury and Southampton and if it as easy to visit Southampton as it is to visit Salisbury why would someone choose to visit Salisbury if it is more expensive to park? The same argument also applies to Bournemouth and Basingstoke two towns which are perceived as having a more attractive retail offer than Salisbury, and to Winchester and to a lesser extent Andover which have equivalent and inferior retail offers respectively. Why visit Salisbury if what you want to buy can be bought in these other places and where it is significantly cheaper to park.

The cost of parking is certainly not the main factor that people consider when deciding to visit a particular place for shopping; the main factor is the perceived attractiveness of the retail offer. But the cost of parking is undoubtedly an important factor. There is recent local evidence, for example, which suggests that the link between parking charges and footfall is highly significant. Last year Swindon Borough Council cut the cost of parking in the town centre and it is now possible to park for four hours for just £2.00. The result of this has been an increase of 286,000 in visitors to the Brunel Shopping Centre in the first six months of 2011.

We believe that the impact of the current economic turndown on Salisbury's economy can be significantly reduced by an amendment to the council's parking strategy. Policy PS3 of the strategy states:

Recommended parking charges (on and off street) will be set for each of the spatial bands taking account t of the following factors:

- *The service role and strength of the local economy*
- *The utilisation of existing parking spaces*
- *Traffic conditions on the local highway network*
- *The availability of sustainable transport modes*
- *The need to avoid ‘searching’ traffic*
- *Parking charges in other areas*
- *The convenience and quality of parking locations*
- *Local environmental conditions*
- *The requirement to provide an efficient Council parking service*
- *Relevant LTP objectives and targets, including support for council transport services*

We do not believe that this policy, as worded, places sufficient emphasis on the need to use parking charges to support the local economy. We, therefore, propose that this policy is amended. In addition we would also like to make a number of other proposals.

Proposal 1: Wiltshire Council Parking Strategy

That policy PS3 of the council’s parking strategy is amended as follows:

Recommended parking charges (on and off street) will be set for each of the spatial bands with the principal aim of supporting the local economy within the areas covered by these bands, by making the areas within these bands more attractive and easier places to visit for shopping, leisure and business purposes.

Recommended off street parking charges across all timebands for Chippenham, Salisbury and Trowbridge should be less than the equivalent cost of parking in their recognised principal retail competitors.

Proposal 2: Parking charges Monday to Saturday (off street)

Proposed short-stay parking charges:

1 hour	£1.20	
2 hours	£2.00	
3 hour	£3.00	
5 hours	£4.00	Brown Street car park only

The 5 hour charge in the Brown Street car park is particularly important for the hotels and other accommodation providers in the city centre some of which are reporting lost business, including the lucrative conference market, due to a lack of nearby long-stay car parking.

Proposed long-stay parking charges

4 hours	£4.00
5 hours	£5.00
All day	£6.00

We acknowledge that when the city has a park & ride service which meets the needs of people working in the city (see additional proposal 2 below) the cost of all-day parking in city centre car parks can be increased.

Proposal 3: Parking charges on Sunday's and Bank Holidays (off street)

- a) Introduce a flat rate parking charge of £1.00 when the park & ride service is not operating, i.e. on Sunday's and Bank Holidays

Proposal 4: Park & Ride

- a) With immediate effect extend the operating hours of the park & ride service from 6.00 am to 8.00 pm to make the service more attractive to city workers;
- b) Promote the new extended service to the city's businesses;
- c) Simplify the charges; and
- d) Introduce the following incentive aimed at boosting usage of the service by people working in the city.
 - Offer peak-time (7am – 8.45am and 4pm – 8pm) saver tickets (10 return tickets for £12.50)

Proposal 5: Christmas and New Year parking

- a) That Wiltshire Council enter into discussions with Salisbury City Centre Management, the Federation of Small Businesses, Salisbury and District Chamber of Commerce & Industry, and Salisbury City Council to agree special concessions for city centre car parks and the park & ride service for the 2011 Christmas and New Year sales period.

Proposal 6: Pay-on Exit

- a) That the Culver Street car park is converted to a pay-on-exit system as soon as possible and that in the longer term the Council similarly converts the city's other car parks.

Proposal 7: Future parking charges and arrangements

- a) That Wiltshire Council meet with Salisbury City Centre Management, the Federation of Small Businesses, Salisbury and District Chamber of Commerce & Industry, and Salisbury City Council to discuss any future changes to parking charges or arrangements at an early stage, i.e. before any decisions are taken.

Proposal 8: Promotion of Salisbury

- a) That Wiltshire Council implement a marketing campaign aimed at overturning any negative perceptions of Salisbury that may have been gained as a result of the current parking charges; this campaign to be designed to promote Salisbury as *the* place to shop for people living within a 40 minute drive-time of the city. This campaign will also counter competitive local advertising in Salisbury which we understand is planned by Bournemouth and Southampton.

Proposal 9: Wiltshire Council staff parking

- a) That Council staff currently using the Salt Lane car park at no or a subsidised charge be instructed to use the Culver Street car park instead; thus freeing up valuable short-stay spaces in a small central car park for paying customers.

The combination of a still deteriorating economic climate and high parking charges is, as has been shown, having a severe impact on the city's businesses. The proposals submitted, particularly those in respect of policy PS3 of the council's parking strategy and the off-street

parking charges, therefore need to be implemented immediately if businesses are to ride the economic storm that is currently hitting the city.

We fully understand that the council continues to find itself in a challenging financial situation and that this is inevitably having an impact on the council's ability to deliver services and also on the council's ability to commit to additional expenditure. We are, therefore, very prepared and willing to meet with the Cabinet member responsible for transportation and parking to discuss how and when our proposals can be implemented.

Ian Newman
Chairman, Salisbury City Centre Management

George Trytsman
Chairman, Federation of Small Businesses

Melanie Murrell
President, Salisbury and District Chamber of Commerce & Industry