

## Introduction

At the October 2014 meeting of the Asset Management & Economic Development Cabinet Committee the issue of utilising North Weald Airfield for a Park and Ride Scheme to Epping was raised. It was agreed that this would be looked into further and that rather than commission consultants immediately we would start to look into the experiences at Chelmsford and see if there were lessons to be learned from them.

This briefing paper will summarise some of the facts learned from a desktop review of Essex County Council and Chelmsford City Council reports. Whilst the source of each piece of text is not acknowledged at every stage the original reports are held on file should further information be

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## The Chelmsford Park and Ride Experience

### Sandon

Park and Ride was initially identified in Chelmsford during the first Local Transport Plan period (2001-2006) and the Essex Structure Plan highlighted the provision of Park & Ride on key radial routes into Chelmsford as **a priority tool to develop the use of public transport in the town centre and to accommodate future growth.**

In 2004, Essex County Council commissioned SA2000 to undertake analysis of the potential market for Park & Ride in Chelmsford. SA2000 acknowledged strong demand for several sites. A Park & Ride to serve the east of Chelmsford, located at Sandon, was identified as both Chelmsford's and Essex's first Park & Ride.

The key aims of the Sandon scheme were:

- Remove vehicles from Baddow Road and the Baddow Bypass and the Army and Navy junction, especially during the peak period.
- Provide a sustainable alternative to the car.
- To minimise the impact of traffic in the town and improve air quality.
- **Increase the attractiveness of the town to shoppers and visitors.**
- **Help to assist growth in Chelmsford.**
- Contribute to the revised parking strategy and **free up land in the Town Centre for alternative use.**
- **Provide high quality and designated bus priority measures, offering fast, reliable and direct links to the town centre and onward transport links.**

Use of Sandon has grown year on year since opening

The number of people using the Park & Ride annually grew from 247,300 in 2006/07 to 398,692 in 2010/11. Number of cars entering the site grew from 230,181 to 341,465 over the same period.

The main reason people chose to use the Park and Ride is because it is cheaper than parking in Chelmsford town centre (60% of respondents stated this). The second most popular reason is that it is more convenient (14% overall).

The main journey purpose for using the Park and ride in the weekday morning peak is to work in Chelmsford (66%), with education and train trips also made. The main journey purposes in the weekday inter-peak are shopping (39%), work (32%) and the train station (15%) and on a Saturday the main journey purpose is for shopping (78%). As a broad split across all periods the main journey purposes of Park and Ride users are: work in Chelmsford (40%), shopping (35%), onward trips using the train station (15%), education (6%) and other (4%).

The vast majority of Park and Ride users previously parked in public car parks in the town centre (93%). Of those travelling in the AM peak, 84% previously parked in long-stay car parks, whilst in the off-peak and on Saturdays, over half parked in short stay car parks.

Average weekday car park occupancy rates at the Sandon Park and Ride site show that by 9am the car park is 74% full. The majority of morning peak users are commuters who park at the Sandon site for either 4 – 9 hours (62%) or over 9 hours (35%). Because of this, the Park and Ride service helps to reduce the number of cars on the road network during both the morning and evening peaks.

The operational contracts were awarded in September 2005 with First Essex Buses winning the bus operation and Chelmsford Borough Council the site management and car park operation. Since Sandon opened, the County Council has received many compliments from passengers about the service including many relating to the staff working on site. Staff at both Chelmsford Borough Council and First Essex Buses have worked extremely well in delivering the service to generate these compliments working well together to ensure the desired quality of service was provided.

### **Financing Park and Ride**

The total capital cost of the Sandon scheme, including the 2 subsequent extensions, is in the region of £7.4 million. To construct Sandon, Essex County Council made a successful submission for capital funding from the Local Transport Plan. The funding was secured in July 2004 with delivery required by the end of the first LTP period (April 2006). The two subsequent extensions were funded from Essex County Council capital monies.

The final cost of the Chelmer Valley scheme is expected to come in at around £6.6 million, over £1 million under the original budget. This has been achieved through value engineering and working with the design teams to identify further savings during the construction phases. Essex County Council has funded the scheme through capital monies and Chelmsford Borough Council has contributed £800,000 of Growth Area Funding.

The annual costs and subsidy required to support Sandon Park and Ride can be seen below. The high usage of the site, the expansions and increased fares has resulted in a reduced subsidy over the four years of its operation.

Key:

(A) Gross cost of Bus Operation

(B) Gross cost of Site Management (including overheads, rates, marketing)

(C) Total Revenue (including concessionary fare reimbursement)

(D) Net Cost / Subsidy required to support service

	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)
	Gross cost Bus Operation	Gross cost Site Mgmt	Total revenue	Net Cost / Subsidy to support service
2006/07	£492,051	£237,831	£340,421	£389,461
2007/08	£536,889	£261,070	£573,582	£224,377
2008/09	£530,394	£258,687	£622,505	£166,576
2009/10	£540,760	£256,447	£657,963	£139,244
2010/11	£522,616	£275,604	£670,864	£127,356
TOTAL	£2,622,711	£1,289,640	£2,865,335	£1,047,014

### Charging Structure

Before Park and Ride was implemented an assessment of the charging structure was undertaken. Essex County Council commissioned TAS (specialist consultants in public transport) to undertake a review of managing Park and Rides and pricing mechanisms.

The recommendation was to adopt a per person pricing strategy. The charging structure at both Park and Rides in Chelmsford is therefore based on the principle that it is free to park and users of the site pay for the bus journey. The original bus fare at Sandon was £1.50 which was increased to £2.00 in March 2007 and £2.20 in June 2008. The current bus fare for Sandon and Chelmer Valley is £3.00 per day and weekly tickets can be purchased for £15 or a monthly ticket for £55. Children aged between 5 and 15 years inclusive rates are daily £1, weekly £5, monthly £20, and children under 5 years old travel for free at all times

### Town centre parking

It was realised that this shift to the Park and Ride was predominantly due to cost; users stated that the Park and Ride was cheaper than parking in the town centre. The provision of Park and Ride makes the town more attractive, specifically for shoppers, therefore encouraging people to use the town and boost income in the Borough.

### Lessons learned

With such a successful and popular service it could potentially operate without financial support; however it is accepted that Park and Ride forms part of a wider strategy to tackle congestion, improve air quality, help accommodate growth and improve the accessibility and attractiveness of Chelmsford town centre. Measures to reduce the subsidy could be considered.

Bus priority measures have been acknowledged as an essential part of Park and Ride, offering journey time savings and journey time reliability to passengers, encouraging them to switch from their private cars onto the service. The bus priority measures also advertise the service to motorists as they will see the Park and Ride buses bypass them using bus lanes or with priority at junctions.

At the operational Sandon Park and Ride, a significant saving in respect of kilometres travelled by private cars, and the quantity of pollution produced as a result, has been seen. Based on an average weekly demand of 900 vehicles using the site a day (and taking into account the operation of the buses), the scheme has seen the following estimated benefits;

- Annual net reduction in vehicle kms – 1.79 million
- Annual net reduction in CO2 emissions (kgs) – 113,718
- Annual net reduction in carbon (kgs) – 31,014

This has resulted in improved congestion, safety and air quality.

### **Essex Regiment Way / Chelmer Valley**

Following on from the success of Sandon, the County Council has been keen to provide further Park and Ride sites on key radial routes into Chelmsford. Park and Ride was identified in Essex's second Local Transport Plan (LTP2) as a measure to tackle congestion in Chelmsford. Chelmsford Borough Council's Local Development Framework also identified Park and Ride in North Chelmsford as a key scheme to help promote more sustainable travel patterns and to assist in the provision of new development. A large proportion of Chelmsford Borough's housing growth is planned for North East Chelmsford with the provision of a new neighbourhood accommodating up to 4,000 new homes. Additionally, new employment, retail and leisure developments are all planned for Chelmsford by 2021.

To support this growth, new and improved transport infrastructure is required and Park and Ride is identified as a key measure. The key aims of Chelmer Valley Park and Ride are the same as those identified above for Sandon with the only difference being the removal of vehicles from another key corridor into Chelmsford, those travelling from the north along the A130 Essex Regiment Way, Broomfield Road, Chelmer Valley Road and into the Town Centre.

### **Chelmsford Local Development Framework - Core Strategy**

Published in November 2006, the Core Strategy identifies a Park and Ride in North Chelmsford as a Strategic Transportation Scheme in the Infrastructure Priority List. Park and Ride is recognised as a key component in the transport strategy required to support the Local Development Framework (LDF) proposals and the overall strategy to manage future transport demands in Chelmsford.

Policy DC 65 states that, **in the correct location, a Park and Ride will help promote more sustainable travel patterns and improve the accessibility and attractiveness of town centres. The provision of appropriate bus priority measures to serve the Park and Ride is a key requirement for their long term success.** The aim is to provide alternative long-stay parking and this links with the policy of progressively reducing the amount of long-stay parking within Chelmsford Town Centre.

In order to maintain the quality of service that has been enjoyed at Sandon a rigorous tender assessment was undertaken. There was interest from a number of organisations, including one new to Essex, but the successful bidders were First Essex buses for the bus operation and Chelmsford Borough Council for the site management. The operation has been secured at no increased cost than the original contract price submitted in 2006.

The scheme was forecast to cost £7.553m, including identified risks. CIF2 funding requirements would be limited to £3.8million. The final cost of the Chelmer Valley scheme is expected to come in at around £6.6 million, over £1 million under the original budget. This has been achieved through value engineering and working with the design teams to identify further savings during the construction phases. Essex County Council has funded the scheme through capital monies and Chelmsford Borough Council has contributed £800,000 of Growth Area Funding.

For Chelmer Valley work was undertaken to identify the key locations where bus priority measures would be required. These measures have been implemented along the whole route and include sections of bus lane and also priority at junctions.

The aims of the scheme were to:

- relieve congestion in Chelmsford town centre and on the immediate approach roads, especially during peak periods;
- unlock sustainable development in the new neighbourhood and the town centre - directly unlocking housing in North East Chelmsford by removing vehicles from the network and allowing for new trips from the housing development;
- allow the development of town centre car parks by providing alternative parking on the outskirts of town;
- provide access to the town centre, key employment, retail sites and public transport interchanges;
- increase the attractiveness of the town to shoppers and visitors, by helping to improve the environment through the minimisation of the impact of traffic on the town;
- provide fast journey times and increased service reliability;
- provide an accessible vehicle for all; and
- improve air quality and road safety.

Accommodating additional parking at the Park and Ride site allows 1,300 long-stay parking sites in the town centre to be redeveloped. Furthermore, the Park and Ride scheme would offer substantial benefits to the provision of 170,000m<sup>2</sup> of commercial space (employment and retail development) as proposed in the Chelmsford Town Centre Area Action Plan.

- Providing long-stay parking spaces on the outskirts of town allows long-stay car parks to be redeveloped into this type of development;
- The Park and Ride would provide access to the new employment, retail and leisure sites in the town centre;
- The removal of traffic on the town centre network allows released capacity to be backfilled by new trips; and
- The removal of traffic on the town centre network will improve the environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

## 2013 ECC Report on the elimination of Park & Ride Subsidies

In 2013 ECC sought to amend the pricing structure of its Park & Ride Schemes.

Although the Park and Ride sites in Chelmsford had been extremely successful in terms of usage and easing city centre congestion, the operation of both Sandon and Chelmer Valley Park and Ride sites required a subsidy of £357,000 a year.

It was therefore proposed that adult fares be increased and child fares be introduced in order to raise an estimated additional income of £223,000 (a deficit would therefore still remain of +£130,000).

A consultation exercise on the proposals was undertaken and many suggested that the price differential against city centre parking would reduce, encouraging more people to return to parking in the city centre. ECC argued that the comparison of town centre parking charges levied by Chelmsford City Council at the time and those charged for Park & Ride suggested that Park & Ride remained a more cost effective option than city centre parking. For information this conclusion was based on the following figures:

Proposed adult daily charge increased from £2.50 to £3.00

A selection of the typical City centre car park charges were:

Short Stay:		Long Stay (All day):
4 hours	£4.30	A - £6.00
5 hours	£7.00	B - £4.80
7 hours	£10.00	C - £4.50
8 hours	£14.00	

So even at the lowest end the Park & ride still offered a 33% reduction against Long Stay parking. At the extreme of Short Stay parking a full day's Park & Ride charge could offer an £11.00 or 78% discount on an 8 hour 'short stay'.

## November 2015 – Desktop research Update – Colchester Park & Ride

Since completing the above research, a new Park & Ride scheme has opened in Colchester. Reports and reviews of the service have been difficult to locate given its very short period of operation however some facts can be observed.

Colchester Park & Ride is a key component of the infrastructure identified in the Colchester Local Development Framework (now Local Plan) as being required to deliver the level of growth planned for Colchester.

The Park and Ride (P&R) is the first purpose-built P&R in Colchester and is located to the north of Junction 28 of the A12, directly off the trunk road network. The scheme comprises a 1,000 space car parking facility, along with bus priority measures along the route and new bus stops at key locations, served by a frequent and direct service.

It offers commuters and visitors the opportunity to park up and enjoy comfortable and convenient transport to destinations and attractions in the historic town centre of Colchester.

## Construction

A continuous programme of works to complete the Park and Ride facilities and associated bus priority measures in 2014-15 was undertaken, including:

- Creating access from Junction 28 of the A12
- Construction of 1000 space car parking facility in a landscaped environment
- Construction of the terminus building
- Signalisation of the NAR/A134 junction
- Improvements to signals at Bruff Close/North Station Roundabout
- Bus priority measures along the route, in the area of Colchester Station and in key locations
- Installation of new bus stops, providing access to High Street, St John's Street, Head Street and Colchester Station
- Construction of a pedestrian and cycle link to Boxted Road,, enabling access to Boxted Road and the Community Stadium

The terminal building has been designed to include a waiting area and seating, toilets (including disabled and baby change facilities), real-time information and cycle parking facilities.

Further bus priority lanes alongside the existing Northern Approach Road have been granted planning permission, and responsibility for their delivery lies with the developers of the Severalls Hospital site as part of the Section 106 obligations on the site.

## Benefits

Colchester P&R enables efficient and reliable journeys to Colchester station and the town centre via a dedicated bus priority route, and assists in delivering sustainable economic and housing growth for Colchester.

The scheme enables increased numbers of people to access Colchester town centre via the Northern Approach Road (NAR) Rapid Transit Corridor, relieving a current pinch point on the network and facilitating improvements to congestion and air quality locally and across the wider network.

As with the Chelmsford schemes fares are £3.00 per day. Weekly tickets can be purchased for £12 or a monthly ticket for £48. Children aged between 5 and 15 years inclusive rates are daily £1 and children under 5 years old travel for free at all times.

A Freedom of Information request to ECC (ECC-060685-15 ) in July 2015 revealed in the response that:

- 30,480 passengers used the P&R between 13th April and 30th June 2015. Unfortunately we do not have a breakdown of the number of adult and child passengers.
- Using the figures above and considering the approximate annual cost of running the P&R, the actual cost per journey to date is £4.48. It should be noted however that this includes the



initial 8 week period when it was free to travel. No reimbursement for any concessionary fares has been included in this figure as this income is unknown yet.

- The total cost of the P&R to ECC to date is £1.9m. Please note that the majority of the funding for the project has been Local Growth Funding from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership.

A subsequent FOI request (ECC 061099-15) in September 2015 also revealed that:

- £29,099 (June £6136, July £8955, August £11,075) has been made on sales at Colchester P&R. There is no advertising income.
- Anticipated running costs for the first year, including wages, petrol, and vehicle maintenance are £742,600, broken down by how the money has been spent as the bus contract £596,600 and the facilities management contract is £146,000.

A Colchester Borough Council (CBC) Report to Council in January 2015 “2015/16 General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Medium Term Financial Forecast” identified a cost pressure of £300,000 to be included in the budget for a reduction in car park income arising from the introduction of park and ride.

However, at a CBC Scrutiny Panel meeting in August 2015 it was noted that car park income had not reduced as anticipated. Whilst it was expected in the budget that the introduction of the Park and Ride would reduce income by £300,000, evidence to date showed this had not occurred during quarter one.

According to an Essex CC Key Decision from June 2014 (FP/623/04/14) the total cost of the Colchester Park & Ride was £6.4m. The construction contract for the scheme was £3.6m with the remainder being for professional fees and risk allowances for access to site difficulties. The same report saw a mid-range estimated break-even / profitability position being reached between years 6 to 8 of a fully operational scheme and in the prior years an ongoing subsidy of a maximum of £200,000 per annum being required.

The operational contract for the scheme was awarded to TGM Group (Arriva) running for five years to March 2020 with a total value of just over £3.01m.

### **Colchester Town Centre Parking**

With a Park & Ride fee of £3 per day, it is worth comparing this with some of the town centre car park rates for Colchester. The rates used, show an equivalent cost for an extended stay at these car parks although they each have different combinations of lower rate and shorter parking periods and occasional special offers are run on specific car parks which would affect the pricing differential.

St Mary's	Up to 8 hours	£6.50
St. John's	Over 12 hours	£16.50
Priory Street	Over 4 hours	£10.00
Britannia	Over 4 hours	£10.00
Middleborough	Over 4 hours	£6.00
Sheepen Rd	Over 4 hours	£5.60



(All prices based on weekday rates)

For information it is worth noting the current 'full day' and 'longest period' parking prices in Epping Town Centre

Epping - Bakers Lane Over 2 hours      £3.80

Epping – Cottis Lane – Up to 5 hours      £3.70

Epping – Civic Offices – Up to 5 hours      £3.70

Epping - Stonards Hill      Free although opening hours are restricted

(All prices based on weekday rates)