

Parking
& Road Traffic Congestion
in
Swanley

Swanley Neighbourhood Plan - Transport

Introduction

The purpose of this evidence document is to visually illustrate the importance of maintaining the existing car parking provisions in the town, to ensure that the town remains a viable shopping centre. This document also evidences the various modes of transport used by the people of Swanley.

The NP questionnaire revealed that 52% thought that there was sufficient parking in the town centre. However, this was prior to the town centre redevelopment being approved by the Planning Inspectorate, with only 7 extra car parking spaces for an additional 4,300 square metres of shops, 930 square metres of community space and 303 1&2-bedroom flats. This planning application has now lapsed but the developer still owns the part of the car park that full planning permission was originally granted for on appeal. The remainder has been sold to new owners who are proposing to add an additional floor of flats and convert the existing first floor above the shops to flats all under permitted rights, retaining the existing car park provision.

The 2018 NP questionnaire also showed that 51% travelled by car to the shops in Swanley and 33% walked. Only 8% used the bus and 3% cycled to the shops. There is no evidence to suggest that there will be a significant increase in the use of the bus and cycling as a mode of transport, especially as 1 in 5 are over the age of 65. It must be acknowledged that the NP questionnaire results are based upon a response of around 500 residents. Unfortunately, the 2021 UK Census did not ask the question as to how people travelled to the shops and only dealt with travel to and from a place of work. The results for Swanley travel modes to work are shown in Table 18 of the NP, TS061, 2021 Census. It shows that 50.38% travel to work by car or as a passenger in a car. Only 2.79% used a bus and 0.57% cycled to work.

Market Day Photographs

The following photographs were taken on 08 November 2017, a market day, on a cold day with overcast, leaden sky, and rain in the air. You would have thought this would have been enough to keep anyone away from the town centre. Think again and look at the photographs - showing all the car parks full, cars queuing to gain access to ASDA's car park and gridlock around the roundabout opposite the library. Although all the photographs were taken on a single market day, they are relevant to most market days in the town.

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A view from Kennett Court retirement flats showing ASDA's low-level car park full.

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This is Nightingale Way - part of the one-way system. Notice the illegally parked cars on the right-hand side.



Cars queuing to get into ASDA's low-level car park all the way back to the roundabout and beyond.

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Gridlock looking towards the library roundabout from Bartholomew Way.



Traffic queuing down London Road to the library roundabout.

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ASDA's high-level car park which is full with cars circulating to find a space.



ASDA's high-level car park from opposite direction once again full

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Cars illegally parked in Nightingale way, everyone desperate to find a car parking space.



ALDI's car park full.

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ALDI's car park and part of the town centre car park full.



The town centre car park opposite the Oaks surgery full with cars circulating looking for a space.

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The town centre parking in front of the Oaks surgery full.



View of the town centre car park opposite Wilkinson's full.

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Traffic queuing within ASDA's low-level car park awaiting a car parking space.

Conclusion

It is clear from the photographic evidence that at peak times on a market day there is a severe shortage of car parking places which will become worse if the town centre regeneration is completed. There is a real risk that the viability of the town centre as a place to shop will lose out to the excellent shopping centres at the Nugent Sevenoaks Way; Tesco at Ruxley, Sainsbury's at Crayford and of course Bluewater all with adequate free parking. This is exactly the loss of income that the town cannot afford to suffer.

Although Government is encouraging an increase in walking, cycling and public transport use there is no evidence that there will be a significant switch to these modes of transport during the LP period to 2040. Indeed, the Government is encouraging people to switch to all electric vehicles, for which adequate parking will be required.

All future developments in the town, especially those built upon existing car parks, must not only make good the loss in parking spaces but include adequate additional parking for the new development.

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Typical working day Photographs

The following photographs were taken on 07 November 2017 the day before market day. The conditions were dry with light cloud cover on a cold day. The photographs demonstrate that even on non market days there are cars queuing for access to the ASDA car park, and, the high numbers of cars parked at mid-day. There are two photos showing the parking in Station Road taken on 31 October 2019.

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Traffic queuing to get into ASDA's car park the day **before** market day.



Queuing inside ASDA's car park the day **before** market day.

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ALDI's car park on the day **before** market day - full.



Town centres car park opposite the Oaks Surgery on the day **before** market day.

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Station Road car park on a weekday day 31-10-2019.



Station Road car park and Station Road on a weekday 31 -10-2019

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Conclusion

The photographs clearly show that even on the day before market day the car parks are quite full with traffic congestion at ASDA's car park entrance. Once again this is at a peak time.

Traffic Congestion Photographs

Traffic Congestion in the town occurs at peak periods which tends to be Mondays – Fridays between the hours of 3pm and 6pm or whenever there is a problem on the nearby M25 motorway. Congestion is at a peak on Market days.

The following photographs indicate the traffic congestion during peak periods on a market day:



A view from the roundabout at Nightingale Way of the High Street and London Road heading towards the M25/M20/A20 interchange.

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A view along the High Street back towards the railway bridge and the Nightingale Way roundabout.



A view from the Nightingale Way roundabout across the railway to the High Street.

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A view from Swanley Lane onto the Nightingale Way roundabout.



Traffic queuing along Goldsel Road towards the High Street/London Road roundabout.

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Residential Parking



Metered Parking along Goldsel Road used by railway commuters.



Restricted Parking in Goldsel Road till 10:00 am used by residents and railway commuters.

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The new Downsview 185 dwelling development on a weekday. Note no street lighting other than resident's porch lights and no pavements.



The new Downsview development at a weekend.

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The Newlands development at a weekend.



Pavement parking in Swanley Lane at pinch point. Houses do not have off street parking.

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Pavement parking in Swanley Lane. Houses to the left have no off-street parking.

Conclusion

Sevenoaks District Council employed SWECO to carry out a Transport Study for Swanley. The report concluded that there was very little that could be done to the road network in Swanley to ease traffic congestion, other than to avoid the use of the motor car at peak times and encourage the use of public transport, walking and cycling as an alternative mode of transport.

Our 2018 NP questionnaire indicates that a significant 33% of residents already walk to the shops. However, walking to the shops for one's weekly shopping is a big ask especially as 1 in 5 of the population is over 65.

Certainly, using a motor vehicle outside of peak periods needs to be encouraged.

There are effectively two bus routes that serve the town centre for residents in Swanley the 477, which is hourly, and the 233, which has a 20-minute service. For a lot of residents in Swanley there is a need to walk some distance to access these bus routes, and this coupled with the infrequent service, is probably the reason why only 8% of residents use the bus to travel to the shops.

Swanley is not a big town and the extremities are within 0.75 and 1.00 mile from the town centre as the crow flies, which is probably why there are a high proportion of residents that walk to the shops.

Cycling on our congested narrow roads could add to further traffic congestion at peak times and cycling on our narrow main roads is not safe. Swanley currently only has two dedicated cycle paths. A new off road cycle network is required that segregates cyclists from other vehicular traffic wherever possible. Only 3% use a bicycle to travel to the shops and 0.57% to travel to work. This is evidenced by the number of empty cycle racks shown in the following photographs.

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Bicycle Parking

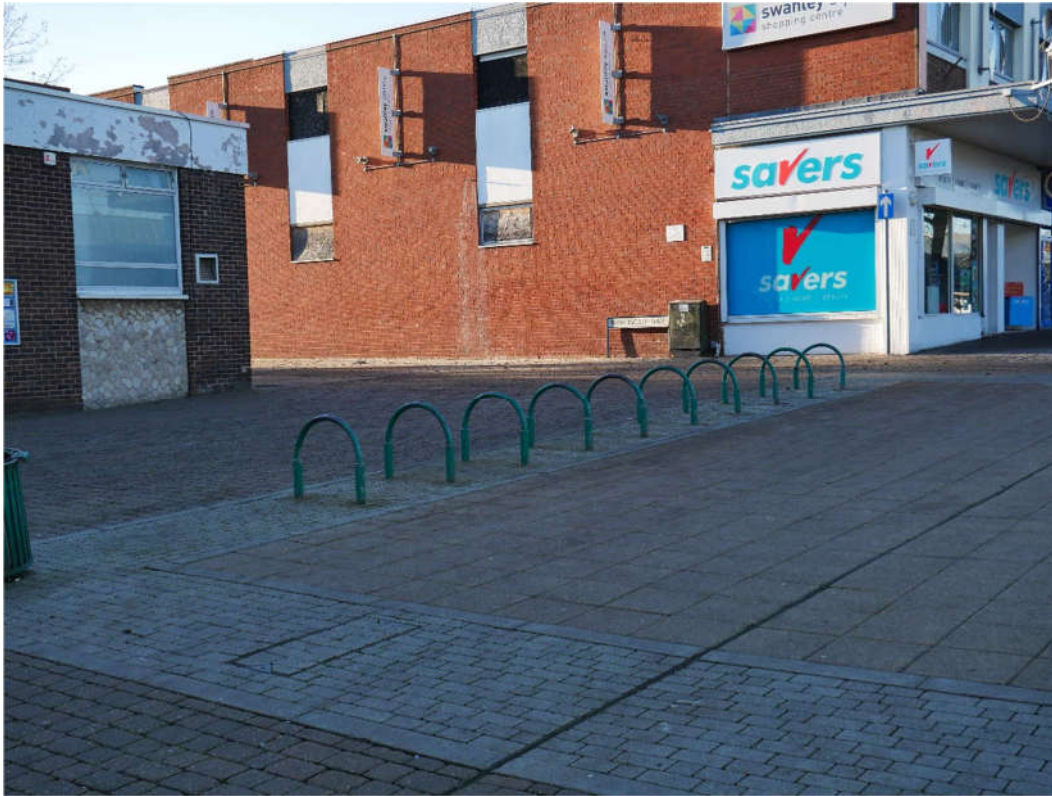


Bicycle parking at Swanley railway station on a weekday.



Bicycle parking inside Swanley Station on a weekday.

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Bicycle parking outside old Post Office and ASDA store on a weekday.



Bicycle Parking outside library on a weekday.

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Parking Restrictions in Swanley

There are a lot of parking restrictions in Swanley which makes it important that all new developments include adequate off-street parking. The parking restrictions are shown on an A4 size reduced map at the end of this document.

In the south east of Swanley there are a lot of restricted parking times, coloured yellow on the map, these are generally active from 8 am to 10 am and result in residents needing to park their vehicles off road within the confines of their own properties. There is very little restricted visitor parking, coloured light green, on these roads. These restrictions were introduced due to train commuters parking their cars on these roads.

Traditionally Swanley has always had free parking in the town centre, and this has continued with the time restricted free parking at the ASDA and Aldi stores, coloured light green shading on the map. ASDA's car parks provide 3 hours free parking and Aldi offers 1.5 hours free parking. The Swanley Centre car parks in Nightingale Way used to be free but are now pay and display, coloured light blue, which has resulted in more vehicles queuing to use the ASDA and Aldi free car parks.

There are a lot of alternatives to Swanley for shopping nearby all offering free car parking for example The Nugent's centre, Orpington, Tesco at Ruxley, Morrisons at Sidcup, Sainsburys at Crayford, and, of course Bluewater at Dartford. If Swanley is to survive as a viable shopping centre, then free and adequate parking will be required.

There are pay and display car parks, turquoise shading on map, in Swanley park which are free to local residents that register with Swanley town council.

Parking at Swanley station is very limited and is pay and display. A lot of residents in Swanley walk to the station. After 10 am there is free on-road parking close to the station.

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