

## Opportunities for Shared Transport in Salisbury Square, Old Hatfield.

22/11/21

CoMoUK is the charity supporting the development of shared transport for the public good. We work with a range of stakeholders to conduct research, develop best practise guidance, facilitate cross sector events, and set standards through accreditation. Gascoyne Estates have commissioned CoMoUK to carry out a review of the Salisbury Square development in relation to the successful provision of shared transport and shift towards low car lifestyles.

### 1. Defining the local context

The proposed Salisbury Square development is located in Old Hatfield. The project will upgrade the area through public realm improvements and the provision of eight new mixed sized dwellings alongside new commercial space.

The site is only five minutes' walk from the bus and railway stations and has good access to shops and other services. As with many towns in the UK there is still a culture of car ownership and a mixed picture in terms of adoption of sustainable transport modes.

Transport links are strong on the north-south axis linking residents to London and Stevenage but are more challenging for local and regional trips, especially orbital ones. Development in the area has tended towards lower density, larger family homes with dedicated parking spaces – all of which encourage car dependency.

There are opportunities to switch the culture within the area which will enable low car developments and associated sustainable transport modes to thrive. These include:

- The development of a “HERT” Mass Rapid Transit system running along an east- west axis through Hatfield.
- Investment in local and regional cycling infrastructure.
- Potential for provision of shared transport options as part of the suite of options that enable people to move away from car ownership, particularly multiple car ownership
- Gascoyne Estates' plans for sustainably dense development which builds in sustainable transport behaviours.

Our overarching conclusion is that the site has significant potential to be an exemplar of sustainable development and lead the way in the transition of the area away from the dominance of the privately owned car. There is a need to be bold and to start making changes, otherwise a chicken and egg scenario of private car dependency emerges, and the town continues to wait in perpetuity for the ideal conditions to be in place whilst the spatial planning sector continues to build in car dependent housing.

## 2. Site assessment criteria

Shared transport flourishes in areas with sufficient potential customers who have attractive alternatives to private car travel, usually across a range of public and shared transport provision; as well as disincentives to private car use, often relating to parking.

Looking at these in more detail in relation to the proposed development site:

- **Restricted, charged and delinked car parking**

The proposed development has a parking ratio of 1:1 for the 5 flats and 1.5 for the 3 houses. Although this is lower than sector norms of around 1.5-2 spaces per dwelling the ratio for this development could be more ambitious and reduced to less than 1 to encourage greater take up of shared services and their viability. In CoMoUK's experience, a ratio of 1 private car parking space per dwelling or less is the tipping point for shared transport viability, particularly for shared car schemes.

It is positive to see the decoupling of the car parking spaces from the dwellings. The developer is proposing to place private cars in a shared space rather than outside each front door. This is an approach increasingly adopted by developers seeking to reduce the role of the private car in developments. Gascoyne Estates have stated their commitment to remove spaces over time and replace them with public realm improvements, although this always brings adaptability challenges – these must be carefully thought through before designs are first built.

It is important that the use of car parking spaces has a separate monthly charge which provides a regular incentive to compare costs with transition to a shared car club (we cover the proposed car club aspects in detail below). Annual charges do not work as well as they only prompt a review point on car ownership and use once a year. Charging for spaces separately to purchase or rental of the dwelling, sets expectations from the start to those moving into the development that car ownership is discouraged and use of sustainable modes alongside membership of a car club is a more attractive option. It can be made clear in the marketing that the permit costs support the provision of alternative, more sustainable, shared modes and cycling facilities.

It is important to also consider the cost of parking in surrounding streets to avoid an overspill of vehicles into neighbouring areas.

- **Amenities**

To support a low-car lifestyle residents need to be able to get to shops, schools, doctors etc within easy access by walking, cycling or public transport. The immediate area has restaurant, pubs and a small supermarket. There is a wider range of shops and services in the town centre 15 minutes' walk or a 5 minute bus ride away. Similarly, there is a primary school and medical centre within 10 – 15 minutes' walk.

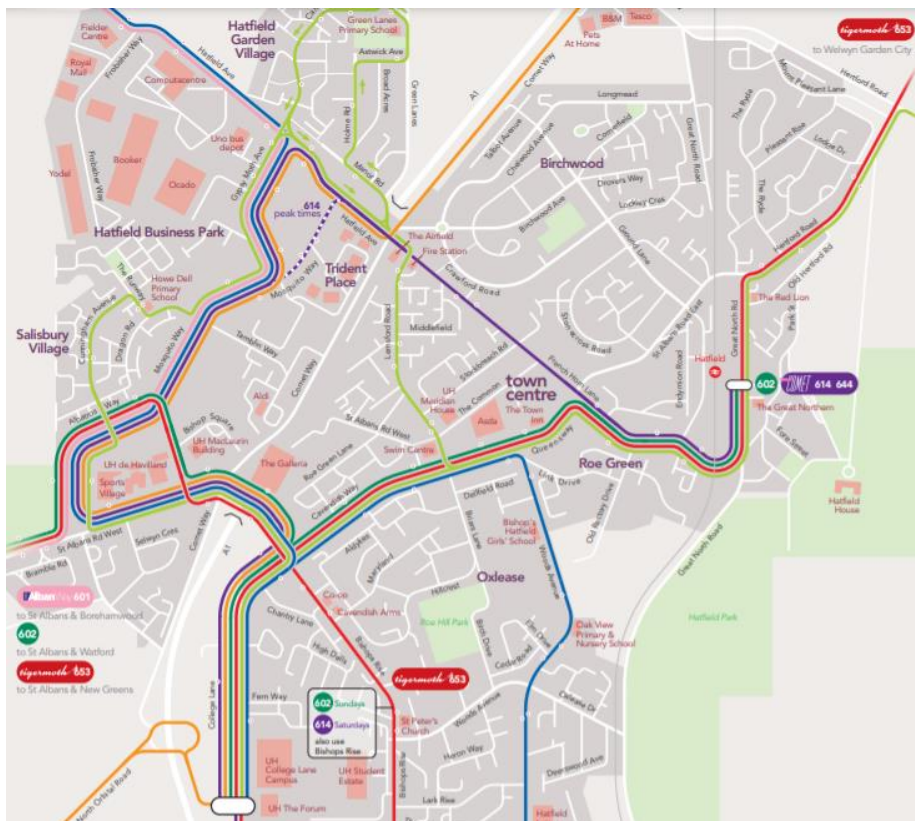
- **Public transport nodes**

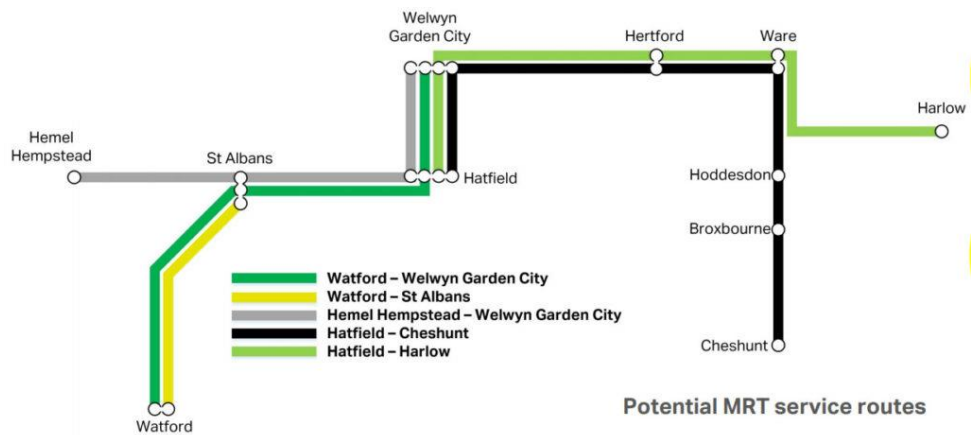
Train links south to London and north to Stevenage are strong.

There are four local bus services leaving from the nearby bus interchange, each link to the town centre and then connect satellite areas in each direction to the University, the business park and further out to Welwyn Garden City and Hertford. Some of these services are run frequently but others are only every 2 hours. If there are too many gaps in services, this encourages residents to buy a car, which in turn embeds car use (refer to research evidence outlined below).

The new proposed mass rapid transit service, “HERT”, would form an east-west transport corridor through Hatfield from Hemel Hempstead and West Watford, joining just south of St Albans in Hertfordshire, to Harlow in Essex and onwards to Stansted Airport. Once built this would significantly boost the public transport provision and support residents to live without owning their own car.

In order to break the cycle of car dependency it is vital that infrastructure like the HERT is put in place to offer attractive, reliable alternatives. Being proactive now will increase demand for and use of the HERT when implemented.





- **Cycling paths and cycle friendly roads**

As things stand there is limited cycle infrastructure around the site and the roads are relatively busy. This may not deter experienced cyclists but would make it harder to encourage new people onto this mode.

As outlined in the Hatfield Transport Plan for 2030<sup>1</sup> “As a Post-War New Town, Hatfield is afforded with a considerable range of dedicated cycle lanes and informal or bicycle friendly roads. However, although the Business Park and the surrounding residential areas benefit from a number of dedicated cycle lanes, the Town Centre and the south of Hatfield present a configuration of footways that could be considered bicycle friendly (some of these routes might meet the standards for dedicated cycle tracks, whilst others may require some works to bring them up to standard), but there are few or no formal cycle routes in most of these parts”.

To reach the potential shift from car dependency the option of use of bike, e-bikes and e-cargo bikes can help support mid-range trips. The range of improvements planned to both the cycle network and parking facilities in the Hatfield Transport Strategic Plan for 2020 will support this ambition.

- **Customers from a cluster of people living or working in the area**

The viability of shared modes is measured by the use of each shared car or bike locally but is also boosted by the development of a wider network in the area. Plugging services into the wider town centres and other new developments around Hatfield and more broadly St Albans, Watford and Harlow would better support the sustainability of the operations.

There are often concerns from planning committees about the appetite for the residents to adopt car club use versus owning their own car. However, Gascoyne Estates have found from their own community engagement that when offered genuine choices, there is broad support for a different approach to car ownership and parking. CoMoUK’s own research finds that car club members reported that they were very happy with their services, 82% of survey respondents stated they - ‘Would recommend car clubs to a friend’.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.hatfield2030.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Hatfield-2030-Transport-Strategy.pdf>

### 3. The shared transport offer

Gascoyne Estates are proposing the introduction of two car club vehicles for residents and businesses in the development as well as making them open to the wider community. There would be auto-enrolment for new residents. They state that the second car club space would be added shortly after completion, based on demand. However, CoMoUK recommends that the second car is added from the start to build stronger confidence in availability, provide more capacity and thereby overall deliver a more compelling offer at that crucial decision-making point of moving home. Making the cars available to the occupiers of the offices will help to spread use across the week by mixing the type of use cases.

The Hatfield Strategic Transport plan for 2030 looks at the potential for car clubs but stops short of recommending their roll-out. Although it can be possible for the two-car scheme to stand alone in the development as the plan states, it is preferable to have a wider network across the town and region to provide a more robust business opportunity to operators.

#### Short Term Policy Options

Policy	Benefit & Description	Considerations
Car Clubs and Car sharing schemes	Car clubs and other car sharing schemes have been recognised to help reduce the levels of private vehicle ownership. Reducing the number of private vehicles could help reduce local congestion and ease pressure on parking.	Car clubs are not always successful and it will be necessary to set up a sufficiently large network of vehicles and provide suitable parking locations for them in order for the scheme to be visible to potential users.

Gascoyne Estates are providing generous amounts of secure cycle storage for the occupiers of the flats and offices. They could also investigate offering a pool of shared bikes managed by an external provider. According to the Hatfield Strategic Transport plan for 2030: “A cycle hire scheme could be attractive to those people who currently have multiple parts to their journey, e.g., taking a train and then needing to take a taxi to the business park. A cycle hire scheme could allow them to get from the railway station to the Business Park by bicycle without having to worry about things like bicycle locks and parking after they complete their trip. A cycle hire scheme could be introduced between the two University campuses, before being expanded in a phased approach across the town.” This approach has occurred in a few locations across the UK, such as Stirling and Swansea Universities.

Integrating a shared bike station at either the development or the rail station would provide a valuable addition to the residents and also provide a vital link to the town centre and business park. Ideally this would be part of the wider area scheme but it could be done as a standalone station hire scheme as is sometimes done with services like Brompton Dock. It is important to consult on the best fit of scheme for the market.

### 4. The benefits of the shared transport offer

The independently verified CoMoUK annual research consistently finds that shared modes make positive contributions to environmental, spatial and health policy areas.

## Car club research results<sup>2</sup>

- **Cars removed:** on average in Great Britain each car club car removes 18.5 private cars.
- **Reduced miles driven by car:** The average net reduction of miles from members was 793 (2017 pre covid) and 1001 in 2016.
- **Reduced local and global emissions:** car club cars emit on average 26.5% less carbon, 89% less NOX and 72% less PM2.5 emissions.
- **Increased use of public transport:** Looking at 2017 (pre-covid data), on average car club members use public transport 1.9 times a week compared to national average of 0.69 trips per week (National Travel Survey 2017).
- **Increased cycling rates:** 25 -30% used a bicycle 3 times a week compared to an average in England and Wales of 14% of people cycle more than once a week

## Bike share research results<sup>3</sup>

- **Increased number of people cycling:** 55% of respondents reported that the bike share schemes was the catalyst to them starting or returning to cycling.
- **Increased regularity of cycling:** 60% of respondents said they were cycling more as a result of the bike share scheme.
- **Improved health:** 48% of respondents said they used the scheme for its physical health benefits and 32% for its mental health benefits.
- **Overcoming barriers of cost and maintenance of private cycles:** 32% of respondents said they used bike share to overcome the worry of maintenance and storage and 26% wanted to save on the cost of buying a bike.

## 5. Best practice examples

### Case study: Bremen Housing Developments (Germany)

Bremen, in north-western Germany, is an exemplar city for showcasing the possible with regards to car sharing, reportedly having replaced 6,000 private cars<sup>4</sup>. Through the introduction of a Car-sharing Action Plan in 2009, the city now (as of May 2021) has a total of 400 car sharing cars available at over 125 “car-sharing stations” to its 20,000 users. The city has a parking norm of 0.8 cars and 2 bike parking spaces per dwelling. In new developments, specifically, developers are required to fund a package of public transport tickets as incentives to buy and adopt low car lifestyle.

Impacts analysis	Developments with car clubs	Development without car clubs
% of car free households	34%	16%
% of residents using a car on a weekly basis	48%	67%
% of trips on public transport	17%	10%
% of trips on bike	34%	23%

### Case study – Aberdeen Co Wheels

<sup>2</sup> <https://como.org.uk/shared-mobility/shared-cars/why/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://como.org.uk/shared-mobility/shared-bikes/why/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://share-north.eu/2021/05/mission-accomplished-20000-people-in-bremen-are-using-car-sharing-over-6000-cars-replaced-goals-of-the-carsharing-action-plan-achieved/>

Aberdeen City Council have developed a mechanism for car club contributions as part of the “Planning Obligations” and “Transport and Accessibility” supplementary guidance to its Local Development Plan (2017). The policy makes explicit reference to car clubs: “To continue to facilitate and promote the car club in order to provide transport choice without necessitating individual car ownership.”

The council has a systematic approach in contrast to other authorities which are ad hoc. The process applies to residential developments of at least 3 units where full parking provision is limited. The developer makes contributions based on the parking shortfall based upon the scale. For every 17 space shortfall they provide support for 1 car club car, calculated on the basis of this being the ratio of cars displaced by each car club vehicles evidenced in CoMoUK research.

Size	Car club in area not at capacity	No car club or car club at capacity
Small developments (up to 50 units)	Developer contributes £400 for every unit with parking shortfall plus 2 memberships and driving credit	If more than 17 spaces shortfall, developer must fund additional vehicle plus 2 memberships and driving credit for each dwelling. Funding for 3 years including EV infrastructure
Large developments (50 units or more)	Developer contributes £400 for every unit with parking shortfall plus 2 memberships and driving credit	If more than 17 spaces shortfall, developer must fund additional vehicle usually up to 3 vehicles. Funding for 3 years including EV infrastructure

If new vehicles are being funded, the contribution has to be paid in full at start and not “drip fed” over 3 years although the number of vehicles can be added gradually as the build rolls out. Since 2017, £266k has been paid to the car club from 42 planning applications. This has funded 8 cars and many memberships. They hope the refreshed planning guidance in 2022 will include an automatic inclusion of car clubs rather than only in scenarios with parking shortfalls.

*Example – Dyce.*

*Flats for a social housing project. Co-Wheels were able to provide 3 vehicles in an area which is demographically challenged for normal key car club audience. Seed funding from S75 development can help tackle car poverty in some areas and introduce low and zero emission vehicles in some locations.*

This support has enabled the growth of the car club across the city and ensured the whole scheme is more sustainable. For example, for comparison of a similar sized area, Newcastle has only 23 cars compared to 44 in Aberdeen.

## 6. Conclusion

The proposed development at Salisbury Square, in Old Hatfield has the foundations to be exactly the type of sustainable development which is required moving forward to shift the prevailing culture of car dependency. It is only by breaking the cycle of building for current travel patterns that we can see patronage of sustainable transport modes begin to increase, and the case for further investment in low car development made. We are encouraged by the proposals for limited and separated car parking alongside the offer of shared cars. We would like to see this go further, if possible, with additional cars, monthly charges for private car parking and the offer of shared bikes too. This new approach will allow residents to take the money usual sunk into the cost of car ownership and

decide on the best mode for each trip. We hope that even bolder steps can be made going forward to tip the balance from private cars to cleaner, greener, healthier modes.