
DARLINGTON PARKING STRATEGY

SUMMARY REPORT**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide Members with information on the emerging draft parking strategy for Darlington.
2. To provide an opportunity for Members to comment and make suggestions on the emerging proposals for changes and improvements to parking policy and infrastructure in Darlington.

Summary

3. Since the last parking strategy was produced in 2009 there have been several changes affecting parking, including the identification of sites in Darlington as potential development sites, the introduction of civil parking enforcement in 2010 and the downturn in the economy. It was felt that it was time to produce an up to date strategy addressing all aspects of parking in Darlington, but with a focus on maintaining the vitality of the town centre.
4. In spring 2012 a specialist parking consultancy was engaged to review the 2009 parking strategy, to identify issues related to parking in Darlington and to forecast future demand. The result was a technical report that provided data and made suggestions for future work to feed in to the draft strategy. The technical report was presented to Place Scrutiny Committee in June 2012 by Council officers and MVA, the consultancy responsible for the report.
5. Following the technical report additional survey work has been undertaken and a draft strategy is being developed. The draft strategy will be presented to Cabinet on 4 June 2013 and will then be subject to further consultation, including formal public consultation in June and July 2013. It is anticipated that the final strategy will be adopted in autumn 2013.

Recommendations

6. It is recommended that Members make comments on the content of the officers' presentation prior to a final draft document being produced for consideration by Cabinet.

**Richard Alty
Director of Place**

Background Papers

- i) Draft Darlington Parking Strategy 2014 to 2026.

S17 Crime and Disorder	The strategy's action plan recommends measures to improve safety and security in Council car parks so will have a positive impact on Crime and Disorder.
Health and Well Being	The parking strategy will not have any adverse impacts on the health and wellbeing of residents.
Sustainability	The parking strategy sets out a sustainable way of providing car parking while also promoting minimum adverse impact on the environment.
Diversity	The draft strategy is subject to ongoing equalities impact assessments to ensure all groups are considered in any potential actions. Blue Badge and disabled parking is explicitly considered in the draft strategy.
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	All
Budget and Policy Framework	The implementation of the parking strategy could have an impact on parking revenue and on development on Council owned land. The Strategy will inform the emerging Local Plan.
Key Decision	Yes
Urgent Decision	No
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	Delivering sufficient, good quality parking facilities and implementing comprehensive parking policy to meet the needs of residents, visitors and businesses strongly reflects the vision, themes and work strands of One Darlington: Perfectly Placed.
Efficiency	The parking strategy will not have any adverse impacts on efficiency of car parking in Darlington.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

7. Since the last parking strategy was produced in 2009 there have been several changes affecting parking, including the downturn in the economy, the identification of potential development sites in and around the town centre, and the introduction of civil parking enforcement in 2010. It was felt that there was a need to produce an up to date parking strategy addressing all aspects of parking in Darlington, but with a focus on maintaining the vitality of the town centre. The Strategy will be a key input to the emerging Local Plan.
8. In spring 2012 a specialist parking consultancy (MVA) was engaged to review the 2009 parking strategy, to identify issues related to parking in Darlington and to forecast future demand, taking into account any proposed developments and the town centre fringe masterplan.

9. The consultants' work involved various stages, including:-

- Review of the 2009 parking strategy
- Examination of current supply and demand
- Analysis of historical trends and patterns
- Identification of any parking issues
- A car park occupancy survey at 21 car parks in or near the town centre
- A questionnaire, completed by 423 respondents about their parking habits and preferences
- Consultation events with DBC officers, representatives of local businesses and protected characteristic groups.

8. Following completion of the data gathering, surveying and analysis, a technical report was produced that set out the findings, including:-

- There is sufficient **parking supply** in Darlington to satisfy current demand, but more is needed to cope with projected increases in future demand.
- **Parking charges** are considered to be at the right level when compared to similar towns but a little more flexibility may be required.
- More choice of **payment methods**, such as pay on foot is needed to add to the existing choice of pay and display.
- **Residents parking zones** on the whole work well but more options are needed for visitors and to mitigate the impact of non-residential parking.
- To maximise levels of **safety and security** CCTV should be used.
- Current policy on **disabled parking**, for example three free hours parking in any car park, is effective.
- There are generally no issues or problems in most of the district centres and villages, with the exception being **Cockerton**.
- Provision of long stay **HGV and coach** parking at Chesnut Street car park is effective.

9. The consultants report suggested that further survey work be done to give a more comprehensive picture of the habits and needs of car park users. To that end, surveys in on street parking areas and in residents parking zones were undertaken in February 2013.

10. All of the elements above will inform the production of the draft strategy and action plan which will include several actions to ensure parking in Darlington best meets the needs the needs of residents, visitors and businesses. The proposed action plan looks at the several key areas of parking, including:-

- Parking supply
- Parking charges
- Payment methods
- Safety and security

- Residents Parking Zones
- Disabled parking
- Traffic management
- District centres

11. Officers will present details of the emerging strategy at the meeting for discussion. Members are asked to make comments prior to a final draft document being produced for consideration by Cabinet.

Next Steps

12. Following Cabinet in June 2013 the draft strategy will be subject to further consultation in conjunction with the Local Plan consultation scheduled for June and July 2013.
13. Following any updates or amendments the strategy will be adopted in autumn 2013.